

Staying the Course in Hollis Planning Guideposts

RSA 674:2, which sets forth the purpose and description of a Master Plan, states that every Master Plan is required to have *“a vision section that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.”*

One component of the Strategic Planning Committees Mission was to solicit the views of the Hollis community. To that end, the Committee conducted a town wide survey with a mailing to all households (2,737), with a response of 953 (34% return). This survey was crafted similarly to past community surveys completed in 1985, 1990 and 1996. Based upon the high response rate from this survey and the fact that similar surveys have been conducted over the last 25 years, a reliable “sense” of the community can be garnered from the survey results. These findings, along with concerns outlined from other community planning documents, were relied upon to craft a series of guiding vision statements for this master plan update. *In 2016 the Planning Board again reached out to the community, mailing a survey to every household in Hollis. Over 800 responses were received.*

It is clear from these surveys that the citizens of Hollis treasure the rural surroundings in which they live. The forest and farm lands that envelop much of the community are both beautiful and cherished. Any change to this landscape is lamented. Needless to say, growth and development, along with protecting the environment are also are key concerns.

As we move into the future, maintaining this atmosphere that Hollis residents enjoy so much will be a challenge as development pressures continue in our region. Accommodating this change and living with the “flip side” of residing in a rural community will also continue to confront to us. Our rural areas consist of active agricultural lands, horse farms, and wood lots. All of these uses can have “perceived” negative consequences to abutting homeowners, many who are relatively new to the community and enjoy the “rural life”, but could do without the “rural noise”. Balancing these conflicting ways of life will be our community’s challenge over the next ten years and beyond. We can continue to accept the negative along with the positive aspects of an active rural community or lose this lifestyle and be left with nothing but memories of our pastoral heritage.

Community Wide Vision: ¹

- ✚ We must preserve our rural character. We must keep some of our fields, our orchards, our forests, protected against development. We must preserve our historic sites. We must know where our water resources are, and protect them. We must be a town friendly to our agricultural businesses.
- ✚ We must understand, appreciate, and encourage a high rate of participation and volunteerism by town residents.
- ✚ We must maintain the many other aspects necessary for a well-functioning town. These include our schools, our community facilities, our police, fire, and emergency services, our roads, our utilities and communication systems.
- ✚ We must address emerging issues which reflect our growth and aging demographics. These include elderly services, recreational facilities, and public transportation.
- ✚ Hollis residents recognize that growth is inevitable and wish to develop a strong Master Plan to guide policy makers and when appropriate, create regulations as needed to direct and regulate this growth.

Population and Housing

- ✚ The demographics of Hollis are changing, therefore housing types will change to meet the needs, along with service demands to meet these needs.
- ✚ Well-planned residential development will not negatively impact areas of sensitive open space, wildlife corridors, working forests and farms, aquifers, rivers, wetlands, steep slopes, and viewsheds.
- ✚ Workforce housing, both rental and owned, is an important factor in maintaining a diverse population in Hollis, allowing young residents the opportunity to reside in the community in which they grew up.
- ✚ The reuse and adaptation of existing historical buildings and outbuildings, where feasible, is preferred over new housing construction.
- ✚ Appropriate land use regulations can guide new development at a rate and in locations that will maintain the “look and feel of our Town.”

¹ From Final Report, Hollis Strategic Planning Committee, March 2008

Natural Resources

- ✚ Open space is highly valued by residents and regarded as essential to maintaining quality of life and the “look and feel” of Hollis.
- ✚ Preservation of open space should be pursued strategically, following established priorities and assisted by the Land Protection Study Committee, Conservation Commission and Heritage Commission.
- ✚ Hollis has a wealth of natural assets that can be protected and enhanced, while at the same time supporting economic vitality. They are:
 - Water resources including town aquifers, wetlands and shoreland buffers, ponds, rivers, and streams.
 - Scenic views such as ridgelines, rivers, wetlands, farmlands, and larger expanses of undeveloped forestland.
 - Sufficient open space that preserves healthy ecological processes including water, air, and soil quality, as well as wildlife habitat and corridors, and the survival of native flora and fauna.
 - Agricultural lands for producing locally-grown food, both now and for future generations.
 - Open space lands for a variety of passive recreation uses including hiking, cross country skiing, hunting, fishing, and nature study.
 - Forests for sources of timber and fuel wood, watershed protection, climate moderation, air quality protection, wildlife habitat, recreation, and education opportunities.
 - Cultural and natural features that help to define the region, such as Class VI roads, stonewalls, cellar holes, mill sites, barns, hayfields, orchards, etc.
- ✚ The protection of our water resources and aquifers is critical to meeting the current and future needs for water.
- ✚ Stormwater management is an integral component of protecting our water resources – both above and below ground.

Historic Resources

- ✚ Historic resources are important to Hollis because they:
 - Give character and memory to a place;
 - Provide a framework for the present and the future;
 - Add to the quality and diversity of a place;
 - Provide a tangible link to the past, thereby creating a sense of continuity of time and place.
 - Therefore, Hollis should protect, enhance, maintain and preserve these resources.

- ✚ Reuse and adaptation of historic buildings and barns can save important buildings, offer housing diversity and affordability, and add density and vitality to existing neighborhoods.

- ✚ Hollis should retain its unique character. The way the Town “looks and feels” is an important component of economic vitality and serves as an attraction and inspiration for people and businesses.

- ✚ Continued maintenance of the information contained in Town records, archival material, photography, and town histories is vital to creating a legacy for future generations and providing a way for the future to build on the past.

- ✚ The planning process should be an integral part of the preservation efforts to avoid and/or mitigate the gradual and pervasive erosion of historical character that can result from incremental changes to buildings, places and landscapes.

Transportation

- ✚ Trails are highly desired throughout Town to create connections between open space areas and neighborhoods.

- ✚ Pedestrian safety can be encouraged through the installation of sidewalks in neighborhoods in the town center and school areas.

- ✚ Streetscaping and landscaping of town streets create perceived friction/obstructions to both slow vehicles down and enhance aesthetics.

- ✚ While maintaining public safety, continue to support road design standards that maintain and enhance the rural character of the community.

- ✚ Expanding public transportation options in the community can assist in accommodating population growth and aging demographics.

Economic Development

-  Agriculture is a vital part of the local economy and preserving our farming community should be supported.
-  Existing businesses should be encouraged to grow and remain in the community, helping to maintain the tax base and provide local employment opportunities.
-  Economic development need not have a negative impact on the environment; in addition, it can be the vehicle for providing resources and energy for positive actions to preserve both natural and cultural resources.
-  All commercial/industrial developments must be carefully designed, in order to harmonize and be consistent with the scale and character of Hollis.

Community Facilities

-  The maintenance of public facilities is a sound investment and in the long run, reduces future tax ramifications.
-  The renovation of Town Hall should be a high priority within the community.
-  The availability of recreational assets for all age groups should be maintained and when appropriate, expanded to meet demand.
-  School enrollment levels and projections should continue to be monitored to anticipate potential capital facility needs.