

# **STEERING COMMITTEE'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS**

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## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Steering Committee created a set of fourteen guiding principles that established the basic direction of the Master Plan update, served as a benchmark for the work of the Master Plan, and reflected the community's values. These guiding principles are as follows:

### **TOWN CHARACTER**

Preserve Durham's small-town character and ambiance while retaining the rural New England characteristics of the rural portions of Durham.

### **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

Enhance Durham's sense of community through improved communication, greater resident involvement, and creation of a Town center for social interaction of the townspeople.

### **DOWNTOWN AND COMMERCIAL CORE**

Retain, invigorate, and improve the appearance of the downtown and commercial cores of Durham to serve as the commercial center of the Town in providing services to both the Town and UNH populations.

## **TAX BASE**

Expand and diversify Durham's tax base so that it stabilizes the residential tax burden, and yet retains the character of the community. Any approach to resolve the tax base issue should consider the net benefits and costs to the Town.

## **GROWTH**

Manage and guide the Town's residential growth so that the following principles are met: growth occurs at a rate that the Town and school system can sustain, growth occurs in locations for efficient service developments are diverse in type and cost, and development are designed with principles of open space and human interaction.

## **UNH COOPERATION**

Work cooperatively with the University of New Hampshire in a noncompetitive manner, recognize the importance of the University to the success of the Town, and support its continued success.

## **RECREATION**

Improve and expand recreational opportunities in the Town for young people as well as adults.

## **RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

Conserve, through various regulatory and non-regulatory approaches, Durham's open space and natural and cultural resources for the benefit of existing and future residents.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Establish and continually update an interconnected system of roads, sidewalks, bikeways, trails, bus service, rail connections, and other forms of transportation, that provides for the efficient and safe movement of people into, out of, and within the Town which is in scale and in character with the community.

## **PARKING**

Improve parking throughout the Town and abutting University areas so that it is sufficient, is aesthetically designed, and has minimal impact on

adjoining areas. Work cooperatively with the University of New Hampshire in areas adjoining the University.

## **UTILITIES AND SERVICES**

Provide public utilities and services that effectively and efficiently support the Town now and will continue to do so into the future, with a recognition that levels of service may vary based on location in the Town.

## **EFFICIENCY IN SERVICES**

Seek operating efficiencies for all services, including consolidation and cooperation with the University, where appropriate.

## **REGULATIONS AND ORDINANCES**

Establish regulations and ordinances that implement the vision set forth in the Master Plan and that are fair, flexible, and enforceable.

## **ELEVATE THE MASTER PLAN**

Make the Durham Master Plan the official document to guide the future development of Durham. The Plan's recommendations should be acted upon irrespective of personnel changes in the Town administration or Town government.

## **PEDESTRIAN ORIENTATION**

Previously unspecified, but always a part of Durham, has been the desire to keep Durham a pedestrian friendly town with safe and easy walking system for our children, UNH students, and the elderly.

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## **GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

The goals of this update have been to create a Master Plan that achieves the following:

- Express the wishes of the community;
- Be future oriented – reaching out 50 years; and
- Generate action and implementation.

The Steering Committee sought community participation, regularly reported its progress, and held numerous public forums. All meetings were open to the public and were posted for anyone to attend. All comments were recorded and considered by the Steering Committee.

This Plan makes some recommendations that demand immediate consideration, simply because opportunities or concerns that should be acted upon have emerged in the process of investigation. However, the emphasis has been to create a “device” that will guide and set policy over a 50-year period.

How much will this cost? This may be the first question raised. An honest answer requires analysis beyond the time and expertise available to the Steering Committee. However, the committee has been mindful of dollars and we believe the recommendations are within the capabilities of the Town and its taxpayer resources over a 50-year period. This is stated with an obvious recognition that not all of the recommendations can be implemented at once. There are also recommendations that we believe will raise additional income or reduce spending.

The very nature and political impact of a Master Plan creates an opportunity for interpretation of its focus and content. We have been as detailed as possible in the hope that specificity will lead to action and eliminate misinterpretation. The Steering Committee has attempted to tackle controversial issues head on. When unable to reach genuine consensus, a “subcommittee viewpoint” has also been presented. In spite of our best efforts, many recommendations are for study or further analysis when more specificity was beyond our resources or time available.

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## **AMENDING THE MASTER PLAN**

There is no established procedure to amend the Master Plan other than a complete update, which requires an exceptional commitment of time and energy. Because we live in a changing world, the Master Plan must have some of the qualities of a living document or it will simply be ignored and subject to the political winds of the moment.

The Steering Committee respectfully submits the following general recommendation for amending the Master Plan when meaningful changes are deemed necessary:

- An amendment to the plan is prepared.

- The amendment is brought before the Town Council. The Council holds a public hearing on the amendment and sends a recommendation to the Planning Board.
- The Planning Board then holds a public hearing before acting on the recommended change.

The Town should adopt a formal policy or ordinance on the procedure for updating the Master Plan. The procedure can be based upon the above general recommendations and the existing procedure for amending the Zoning Ordinance.

In addition, the plan should be reviewed and used regularly for all Town policy and land use decisions. Complete updates of the Plan should occur on no longer than a ten-year cycle.

