

TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN



CHAPTER I - VISION

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A. INTRODUCTION

New Hampshire state law mandates planning boards to “prepare and amend from time to time a master plan to guide the development of the municipality.”¹ The sole purpose of the master plan is to aid the planning board in the performance of its duties. The duties of the planning board are varied, but the only duty specifically required² is the maintenance of the town’s master plan.

The statute goes on to say that the master plan may include consideration of any areas outside of the town which, in the judgment of the planning board, bear a relation to or have an impact on the planning of the town.

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

The master plan may be comprised of a collection of reports, statements, land use and development proposals, with accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and other descriptive matter that show as fully as possible and practical the planning board’s recommendations for the desirable development of the town. The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections³:

- a. “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.”
- b. “A land use section upon which all other sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural and historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land uses.”

The master plan may also include the following sections (RSA 674:2.III):

- a. Transportation section;
- b. Community facilities section;
- c. Economic development section;
- d. Natural resources section;
- e. Natural hazards section;
- f. Recreation section;

1-RSA 674:1.

2-Other planning board duties, such as subdivision and site plan review, etc., are actually allowed only if the voters at town meeting authorize the planning board to take on these responsibilities.

3-RSA 674:2.

TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN
CHAPTER I - VISION

- g. Utility and public service section;
- h. Cultural and historic resources section;
- i. Regional concern section;
- j. Neighborhood plan section;
- k. Community design section;
- l. Housing section;
- m. Implementation section.

Where appropriate, the Plan may contain appendices or separate reports that contain the underlying scientific and statistical data that support the various elements of the Plan.

WHAT WILL THE MASTER PLAN ACCOMPLISH?

The master plan provides a framework for the Planning Board in particular and the town as a whole to use in shaping the future over a period of years (5-10 years is recommended for master plan updates⁴). The Planning Board should be able to refer to the town's Master Plan whenever a development proposal comes before it, to determine whether development that is being proposed is consistent with the Master Plan.

Most importantly, in order for any municipality in the State of New Hampshire to adopt a zoning ordinance, a Planning Board must have adopted, at a minimum, a general statement of goals and objectives and the land use section of the master plan. In Lisbon's case, the Town does have a zoning ordinance and the current Master Plan was completed in 1991; in the ensuing 13 years, many changes have occurred in town. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Planning Board to bring the Master Plan up to date with current conditions.

This Master Plan represents - to the best ability of the Planning Board to determine - the wishes of the residents of Lisbon regarding the present and future vision of the town for the next 5-10 years. Throughout this process, the Planning Board has informed the public and solicited comment in order to reach the concluding recommendations.

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

This Plan is intended not as an edict, but rather to serve as a guide for the community as a whole to use in shaping its future over a period of years to come. It is therefore sufficiently general to permit wide interpretation without damage to its basic intent, sufficiently flexible to allow modification as conditions change, and reasonable enough to encourage good, enforceable legislation with due respect to the rights of all.

4-RSA 674:3.II.

TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN
CHAPTER I - VISION

The Master Plan is not a town regulation, and has no power in law. However, if well-framed and practicable, it should suggest laws, regulations, or ordinances which may serve to carry out its prime purposes. It does not embody solutions to all municipal problems; rather it is a guide to aid town officials in attacking these problems. Unless it is understood and used, unless it is consulted often and amended when necessary, it will be little value to the Town's future generations.

VISION STATEMENT FOR THE LISBON MASTER PLAN

THIS MASTER PLAN, ADOPTED IN THE YEAR 2005, IS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND GENERAL WELFARE OF THE INHABITANTS OF LISBON AND TO PROTECT THE VALUE OF PROPERTY, TO PREVENT OVERCROWDING OF LAND, TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE AIR AND LIGHT, AND TO FACILITATE THE ADEQUATE PROVISION OF THE OTHER PUBLIC REQUIREMENTS.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE TOWN OF LISBON IS OF SUCH DIVERSIFIED NATURE THAT RESIDENTIAL, AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, RECREATIONAL AND CONSERVATION-BASED DEVELOPMENTS ARE INVOLVED. THIS MASTER PLAN, THEREFORE, IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT, TO PRESERVE AND TO ENCOURAGE THESE MANY DEVELOPMENTS.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

LAND USE

GOAL:

- Create a positive balance of land use that allows Lisbon to grow economically while maintaining its small New England town characteristics.

Objectives:

- Preserve green space and rural charm in visible areas while providing residential, commercial and industrial space in accessible areas.
- Ensure that Lisbon has a diverse mix of residential, recreational, commercial and light industrial uses consistent with the goals, objectives and actions of this Master Plan.
- Ensure that development occurs at a rate consistent with the capacity of the land to support it and the Town's ability to provide services.
- Balance new development with protection of Lisbon's sensitive and significant natural, cultural, and historic resources.
- Reevaluate the Town Cluster Development ordinance to ensure effectiveness of regulations.
- Develop schedule and process for the annual monitoring of gravel pits and review the process of approval for the future addition of gravel pits.

TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN
CHAPTER I - VISION

Actions:

- Clearly define zoning districts, creating new ones if needed and market them to desired prospective home owners and businesses.
- Study the existing subdivision requirements of the rural district to determine if minimum requirements are appropriate to meet this goal and revise these minimums as necessary.
- Assess each subdivision and site plan proposal regarding the scale and location of the proposed development in order to evaluate impacts on the Town.
- Review the Zoning Ordinance on an annual basis, in conjunction with the other Town Boards, to ensure that it reflects goals and objectives of the Master Plan and meets the needs of current local conditions.
- Consider innovative development concepts such as conservation subdivision which encourage variety in residential architecture and landscape design, in conjunction with the preservation of open space and critical resource areas.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL:

- Promote economic development in Lisbon in a fashion that protects and enhances the Town's quality of life in a manner consistent with the Master Plan and Lisbon's history.

Objectives:

- Bring stabilized small business into the community.
- Get more non-local people to spend money in Lisbon, supporting local business.
- Improve physical appearance and character of existing local businesses.
- Improve tax base without impacting (minimal impact to) the school or the town's infrastructure.
- Consider home occupations and home-based businesses as a way to encourage economic development.
- Encourage small-scale commercial development in the Lisbon downtown area.
- Create and maintain a balanced tax base by promoting and increasing the overall commercial and industrial base to reduce the tax burden borne by individual property owners.
- Ensure the housing stock and residential development opportunities in Lisbon support Lisbon's economic development goals.

Actions:

- Continually monitor the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that it reflects the changing nature of home occupations and businesses.
- Market Lisbon in urban areas.
- Provide more and easier access to parking in business district.
- Improve traffic patterns to promote stopping in Lisbon – attractive nuisance, 302 improvements.
- Search for Main Street grants to improve existing facilities.
- Identify specific sites for additional industrial growth.
- Continue to pursue the Tri-town initiative as well as other industrial development in other areas of Lisbon.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL:

- Continue to maintain and upgrade the existing transportation infrastructures in town.

Objectives:

- Encourage the improvement of the existing Route 302 corridor through the Lisbon Village Center over the construction of a bypass.
- Strongly support a more aggressive program to upgrade the town's roads.
- Improve and repair sidewalks in the Village Center and around the school.
- Evaluate the parking configuration along Main Street and make necessary changes to increase safety.
- Develop a transportation system/network that supports alternatives to motorized modes of travel.

Actions:

- Prepare an inventory of town roads that would include pavement width, shoulder width, longitudinal cracking, etc.
- Prepare an inventory of sidewalks in the Village area including locations, materials, width, major problems, etc.
- Develop a priority list for town roads and sidewalks improvements.
- Provide for pedestrian walkways wherever warranted by traffic and development.

TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN
CHAPTER I - VISION

- Use traffic calming measures to reduce speed on Main Street (Route 302) and thus improve safety.
- Evaluate the possibility of classifying some town roads as Scenic Roads, pursuant to RSA 231:158, II.

HOUSING

GOAL:

- Ensure the availability of a variety of housing types, which meet the needs of the Town's diverse residential population.

Objectives:

- Encourage high end second homes in rural areas.
- Maintain and improve Lisbon's housing code and building inspection program.
- Support the development of additional elderly housing opportunities both privately through incentive programs and publicly through seeking available state and federal assistance and programs.
- Promote home ownership by supporting existing state and federal homeowner programs.

Actions:

- Market Lisbon in rural areas.
- Evaluate minimum lot requirements in some of the rural districts to further protect and preserve open space.
- Assess the impact of regional development and land use regulations in neighboring towns on housing demands for Lisbon.

PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES, UTILITIES AND RECREATION

GOAL:

- Assure the availability and continue to provide affordable and quality recreational opportunities and community facilities/utilities for community residents as well as tourists of all ages.

Objectives:

- Ensure that telecommunications facilities have the least possible visual and environmental impact, while providing adequate opportunity for these facilities.
- Coordinate the operations and expenditures of Town governance, through routine communication among department heads, in order to provide services in a cost-effective manner.
- Consider developing and adopting an impact fee ordinance to help minimize the impact of capital expenditures on the tax rate.
- Bring out more than the usual core volunteers into the community to assist in local events.
- Get more individual involvement within the community.
- Develop recreational programs and opportunities for senior citizens such as recreational walking, fitness/wellness activities, group outing, etc.

Actions:

- Prepare and adopt a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as allowed by RSA 674:5 to establish priorities for projects on the basis of need and cost. The main purpose of a CIP is to aid selectmen in their consideration of the annual budget.
- Learn what events that are not currently being done in Lisbon should be pursued so as to bring forward new volunteers.
- Create spaces (built or open) for seniors and children with the option of interaction.
- Participate in the Rails to Trails program to improve and enhance bicycle and pedestrian opportunities in Lisbon.

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL:

- Balance new development with protection and preservation of the town's natural resources.

Objectives:

- Take advantage of the wonderful asset Lisbon has by promoting it and utilizing it as an attraction and resource for recreation time in Lisbon.
- Be better stewards of the Ammonoosuc River and its banks.
- Preserve and protect agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands to enhance the open space characteristics of the Town.

TOWN OF LISBON MASTER PLAN
CHAPTER I - VISION

- Protect the rural character of the 302 corridor coming into the village from the Littleton side.
- Protect critical natural resource areas by preventing development in and on: wetlands, slopes over 25% and floodplain soils.

Actions:

- Develop and promote access areas to the river along Lisbon roads and Route 302.
- Develop a river walk in the village area and on the island.
- Promote the recreational use of the river as an attraction to enhance economic opportunities in Lisbon village.
- Continue to enforce the Floodplain Development Ordinance included in the Zoning Ordinance
- Prepare a Natural Resource Inventory of which findings could be included in the Lisbon Master Plan.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

GOAL:

- Preserve the town's historical, cultural and aesthetic characteristics.

Objectives:

- Support the creation of a historic preservation district for the Lisbon Main Street.
- Recognize and encourage the activities of the Lisbon Main Street Program.

Actions:

- Identify buildings to be preserved in the town.
- Continue the former railroad station renovation efforts.
- Inventory Lisbon's historic resources.
- Support the use of the Significant Historic and Agricultural Structure law and Preservation Easement Program to preserve Lisbon's historic structures.