

Envisioning Windham's Future

Planning for Sustainable Growth

One of New Hampshire's premier residential communities, the Town of Windham has been discovered – offering its residents a peaceful, rural sense of place, the Town seeks to preserve its open spaces and small town charm amid growth that has more than quadrupled its population over the past four decades. Managing and shaping this growth to preserve and complement Windham's existing character is a central challenge for its local government.

Likewise, Windham's town governance strives to provide “the highest quality public service through professionalism dedicated to excellence.”¹ Identifying ways to maintain and improve service while fixed costs increase at higher rates than revenues is equally challenging to town officials and staff.

The Town has done an admirable job of planning for and responding to new development. Through the creation and updating of its Master Plan, Windham is continuing its diligent effort to ensure the community and its future generations will enjoy an enduring high quality of life. Its mission is rooted in the principle of sustainability in its most basic sense: that is, to meet today's needs in a manner that does not compromise the ability of tomorrow's residents to meet their own needs.

The Process – Windham's Assets and Liabilities

One of the two required components of a Master Plan, per State statute, is a vision statement. The reasoning behind this mandate is well founded – numerous studies have proven that goals and objectives have a significantly increased chance of being achieved when people can see them, and can imagine the steps needed to take en route to success.

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.

NH RSA Chapter 674:2

In 2014, several events sponsored by the Community Development Department brought together a cross section of community members to share and discuss the

¹ Town's Mission statement.

Town's future. Following a general introduction to the Master Plan process, people broke into small groups to address three main questions:

1. What do you like best about Windham? What should be preserved?
2. What do you like least about Windham? What should change?
3. What would you like to see happen in Windham? Taking into account these strengths and weaknesses, what are the key changes that could make Windham a better community in the next 10 to 20 years?

Participants enthusiastically offered their opinion on hundreds of topics. The main issues discussed generally reflected a great deal of consensus.

There was universal agreement that people love living in Windham. Residents are passionate about protecting the characteristics that have made this such a pleasant place to live:



- family-oriented
- conservation land/ open spaces/ natural beauty / lakes, streams, ponds
- accessible town government
- no “big box” retail
- Good road network
- sense of community/small town, “country” character
- recreational programs and opportunities
- great schools
- convenient location
- Quality Homes

There were, however, a number of items that residents thought could be improved to make Windham an even better place. Among the most-often cited examples were:

- vehicular traffic
- more transportation options
- increase school capacity for Windham residents
- lack of street & path connectivity/ lack of pedestrian & bicycle amenities
- no village center/ lack of retail options
- Protect water supply and drinking water quality
- need for additional recreation facilities, programs, and organization
- need to improve water supply protection efforts
- new economic development to keep tax rate reasonable

Windham Today / Windham Tomorrow



The visioning session was followed by a Resident Survey to encourage input from residents who could not attend the live sessions. The Survey was available at various locations throughout Town and on-line at the Town's web site. Participants were asked to think about the qualities that make up present-day Windham, what types of changes are occurring, and how might Windham act in order to achieve its vision for tomorrow. Following are brief snapshots of each subject matter residents were asked to provide input on:

Natural and Cultural Resources and Recreation:

- Preserve the Town's remaining agricultural and open space lands, and offer strategies for continued protection of key parcels and the creation of linkages between open lands;
- Water quality, pollution concerns, and water supply adequacy;
- Trail development, recreational programs, facilities, and field maintenance; and
- Potential threats to historic properties and methods of protection



Economic Development and Transportation:

- The need to consider the topic of economic development through a larger prism that carefully assesses the associated costs (**re: infrastructure, environment, etc.) and benefits (net revenue increase)** of commercial use; the desire to address local needs, and the potential for strengthening the community. Regulatory and non-regulatory obstacles to economic development were cited.
- Solutions to vehicle traffic on Route 111 and secondary roads continue to be a priority. Street connections, bike paths, public transit, and sidewalks were suggested. Impacts of roadway changes should be carefully weighed.
- Promote town as a destination place for business growth & local shopping
- Participate in business outreach and best economic development practices which can help grow the town's tax base
- Develop a vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown and village center and attractive walkable retail centers
- Road connections must be made to alleviate Route 111 congestion. The use of Service Roads in the Village Center district, and along Route 111 are encouraged.



Land Use and Housing:

- Attract uses that will generate positive tax revenue. Locate them appropriately.
 - Wetlands and watershed protection ordinances have been very successful in preserving open space, but perhaps should be fine-tuned to allow flexibility on a site-by-site basis for desired development.
 - Remaining farms are important to the town's character.
 - Scenic views and roadways could be better protected, without unduly impacting private property rights.
 - Street trees and usable open space from cluster subdivisions should be addressed in subdivision regulations.
- Providing housing opportunities for all ages
- Continue to promote community pride and character

Community Facilities and Utilities:

- Need to better plan for adequate parking at Town facilities – Police station, Nashua Road recreation area, and schools need additional parking.

- Police may grow by 4-6 people in the future, highway may add up to 10 employees.
- Town Center development would require a safe crossing to Fellows Road, a bridge/wetlands crossing, change in road network, and reuse plan for town center properties. Village center properties have recently sold and mixed use development is likely to occur soon.
- Need a long range plan for Open Space and Conservation Lands management. Can conservation and/or Wetland and Watershed Protection District (WWPD) land be used to fulfill additional community needs?
- Public Health is growing issue – immunizations, medical issues.
- Traffic is biggest threat to quality of life. Alternatives to Route 111 must be developed. The establishment of Service Roads should be a priority for the local Boards.
- Identify true costs/benefits of limited, municipal water and/or sewer before consideration. If supported by the residents at the polls, proceed with great caution, while remaining open to an opportunity for economic development without creating a domino effect.

Recreation:

- Playing fields are in very, very high demand. Maintenance is difficult amid overuse. Soccer is popular.
- Development of safe walking routes to recreational facilities (Griffin, Nashua Rd.) should be a priority.
- Bike lanes should be targeted for major roadways – in many instances, widths can support a painted lane.
- Integrate school planning with community recreational needs.
- Amphitheatre, outdoor skating, non-athletic programs for younger children, town pool, appropriate hunting areas, and trail signage are desired.

Transportation:

- Improve traffic flow on Route 111 and at Exit 3, off I-93
- Provide more transportation choices and opportunities for residents to walk, bike and commute to work
- Improve pedestrian/bicycle connections throughout the town and between recreation facilities, population and commercial centers and accommodations.



- Rerouting of Route 111A and its impact on traffic flow and the area's businesses
- Proliferation of stop lights along Route 111 and their impact on traffic flow and area businesses should be closely monitored and solutions explored
- The utilization of Service Roads should be further explored and increased connectivity between adjacent parcels encouraged at every opportunity
- Traffic flows within residential neighborhoods and connectivity to through roads should be closely reviewed as the Town expands to preserve the character of our residential neighborhoods



Old Values New Horizons ✨ Vision Statement



Source www.windhamnh.gov

One of the first observations Windham residents will make when asked to describe the town is that Windham is a great place to live. Embodying the best of old-fashioned Yankee conservatism, residents enjoy **a strong sense of community**, complimented by a volunteer spirit that prompts neighbors to lend helping hands to each other and to civic government. **Above all, the people of Windham value this shared sense of responsibility, cooperation, and friendship, and seek to ensure this ethic continues** to define the Town amid future changes in population and land use. Windham's recently adopted motto of "Old Values, New Horizons" celebrates the community's respect for the past, and its optimistic outlook towards the future.

Windham residents also retain a close relationship to the land, its open spaces, lakes, ponds, streams, and forests. Although recent growth may cause some to observe that Windham is no longer “rural” in nature, the Town takes pride in conserving its environmental resources and natural beauty. **Future development should be shaped to preserve scenic landscapes, allow for contiguous habitats and recreational trails, and protect water quality and the night sky.** [DG1]



Source: www.windhambaseball.org

Growth has brought a major challenge to town in the form of traffic congestion. Relatively few of Windham’s paved streets pre-date the 1950’s, when a rural pattern of development still characterized land uses. Subdivision development since then has resulted in many new cul de sacs without the paralleled construction of through routes to provide alternatives to the Town’s main arterials. There is currently no public transit available to residents. Consequently, traffic congestion is a serious threat to the community’s quality of life, and is an obstacle to the Town’s emergency response capabilities. **Improving overall circulation to, from, and across Town is critical to Windham’s future.**



Source: www.windhamcommunityband.org

Economic development is another key issue brought into sharp focus by growth. Although residents are grateful that strip development has been successfully discouraged thus far, there is a desire for additional retail options to be conveniently located in Town, such as the relatively new drug store and grocery store². The primary thrust, however, behind the clarion call for an increase in commercial uses relates to the town’s tax base, and the strong will to moderate the tax burden on residents while meeting the community’s growing needs for high quality public services. **Attracting new and expanded commercial enterprise, encouraging uses that fulfill local needs, managing their contribution to the built environment through complementary siting and design, and fostering long-term business investment that is in Windham’s best interest are important components of the town’s vision.** At a minimum, some of these new uses should promote the evolution of a mixed-use, **pedestrian-friendly village center**, a widely supported amenity.

Natives and newcomers alike support excellence in Windham’s schools, and are interested in meeting the challenge of educating the Town’s students as they **pursue solutions to the significant overcrowding that plagues our elementary and middle schools.**

Recreational programs and facilities enjoy heavy participation by Windham residents, and play an important role in knitting the community together. Griffin Park hosts much of this activity, and has recently undergone major improvements. Trails and access to lakes and ponds are extremely popular recreational outlets as well. Ensuring that Windham’s recreational programs address users of all ages and abilities,

² Subsequent to the visioning session, final approval has been given to a new Shaw’s supermarket to be located in Windham.

managing the use and proper maintenance of existing facilities, and planning for expanded future capacity is of high priority.

Residents are generally pleased with the Town's high property values, and seek to maintain this standard. **Providing appropriate housing options and continuing care facilities for the town's senior citizens and allowing for the market-driven provision of multifamily housing affordable to people of mixed incomes are key components of the town's housing planning activity.** In addition, the trend in conversion of seasonal homes to year-round occupancy provides both a unique avenue into the Windham market, as well an opportunity for the Town to work cooperatively with home owners to address environmental and infrastructure issues.

Preserving the Town's historical resources, including homes, landscapes, cemeteries, and archaeological sites is vital. Local historical districts should be augmented as necessary to protect pieces of Windham's heritage that exist outside district boundaries. Continuing to share the stories that make up the town's legacy is another way residents build and sustain their sense of place and community.

Windham to date has struck **a prudent balance between fiscal restraint and a commitment to providing excellent public services and infrastructure that are forward-thinking, efficient, and responsive.** Windham will meet the increasing demands of its growing population by supporting the work of its dedicated administrators, and ensuring that public investment continues to be guided by long range planning, innovation, and fiscal conservatism.

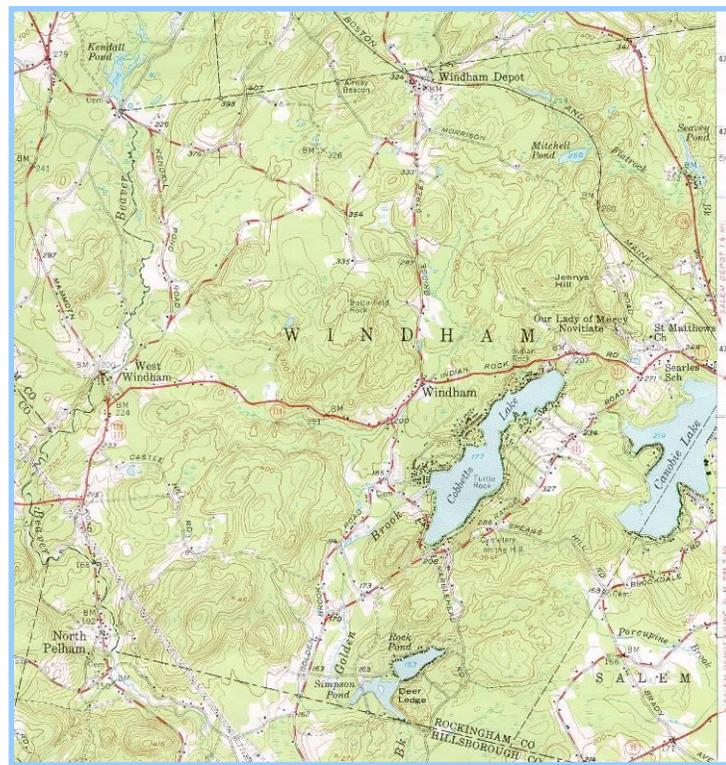
Priorities for Action

Although the Windham Master Plan is a comprehensive guidance document for Town policies and actions, there are clearly a few specific issues that have the potential to substantially affect the community's ability to realize its vision for the future. Public discussion that took place during the visioning process repeatedly centered around these inter-related topics, which represent the major challenges Windham will face during the next several years. In an effort to frame the pages to follow, these themes are presented at the start of this document.

Alleviating Traffic and Improving Transportation Options

Without question, traffic congestion in Windham is a serious threat to the quality of life enjoyed by residents of this formerly rural community. Roadway construction that has occurred since the completion of Interstate 93 in 1962 has fundamentally altered the Town's character, from one with few country roads cutting across town (see Figure 1) to a more complex system of collectors, subdivision streets and cul de sacs, all ultimately feeding in to these historic roadways.

Figure 1: Topographic Map of Windham, 1953



Source: USGS, 1953

Route 111

As further detailed in the Transportation chapter, peak hour delays experienced on Route 111 are causing widespread discontent among Windham commuters, and have resulted in unacceptable emergency response times in certain areas of town. Few alternative east-west routes exist, with only 3 opportunities (Route 111, 111A, and Lowell Road) to cross Interstate 93. The perpetuation of cul de sacs exacerbates pressure on existing collector roads that lead to Route 111 access, such as Lowell/North Lowell Road.

A fundamental question facing Windham involves how Route 111, west of the Interstate 93 interchange, will move people through Town into the future. While a significant portion of the roadway has recently been expanded to 4 lanes, a bottle neck still builds at Wall Street and continues west through Town each evening rush hour. Route 111 is designed to serve vehicular traffic, without sidewalks or bicycles lanes. Its wide pavement lends the roadway an expansive appearance that divides Town in half. It is relatively difficult to travel across Route 111 unless in a car. When discussing congestion on this roadway, the question asked repeatedly is “to widen or not to widen?” As part of the Master Planning process, however, answers to the broader questions of how the Town envisions a future Route 111 fitting into the community’s character, and how future land use along the corridor will affect Route 111, should be considered as a precursor to decision-making regarding potential solutions to traffic backups.

Windham’s 2000 Master Plan recommended that the Town strongly advocate for the road to remain a Limited Access route, and that existing access points be consolidated to achieve the goal of no more than 7 or 8 signalized intersections along its length in Windham. This recommendation has already been placed in jeopardy as the State DOT has plans to add additional stop lights along this stretch in the near future. Overall, this congestion may be enhanced by several additional factors, for example:

- Continued encouragement of the creation of a Village Center, which may provide some services which are presently only accessible by traveling to Salem or Derry via Routes 111 and 28;
- Consideration of bicycle lanes, parallel travel paths between developments, and/or sidewalks in targeted locations to allow for non-vehicular travel between destinations;
- Introduction of street trees with all new development;
- Strict control/discouragement of additional roadside signage.
- Service Roads in the areas of Route 111/111A, Village Center District and Route 111 east of North Lowell Road.

Route 111 will continue to serve as Windham's main east-west travel corridor, and for this reason, planning for its future should remain a top priority. Though Route 111 is ultimately under the State of New Hampshire's control, the Town may want to explore with the DOT a future vision for the roadway corridor prior to addressing any obvious defects. This type of pre-planning effort is becoming more common in recognition of the larger role such prominent roadway corridors play in relation to community character and economic development, as well as transportation. Londonderry, for example, has applied a Performance Overlay District to Route 102 (and Route 28) in an attempt to minimize traffic impacts, preserve rural character, and promote high quality economic development.

Windham has similarly enacted an Access Management Overlay to Route 28, and is advanced in its thinking about the role corridors play in the community. It has already implemented village center zoning along 111, and seeks to encourage parallel service roads where appropriate. Given the degree to which Route 111 continues to be debated in public discussions, and the high likelihood of it undergoing construction in the not too distant future, it is important that the Town build consensus for this corridor's future profile.

Interstate 93

The expansion of Interstate 93 promises to have both short and long term implications for Windham. The estimated \$440 million project is nearing the end of its 6 year construction plan. Anticipated pressure on Routes 111 and Route 28 is the subject of pre-planning efforts, particularly with regard to emergency response strategies. At a minimum, Windham should continue to communicate with Salem and Derry to maximize traffic management opportunities.

Windham has experienced a wide range of direct and secondary impacts from the project. Regular monitoring of water resources within the project impact area will be needed to ensure that planned detention basins and grassed swales are operating as intended to filter runoff and prevent flooding. Although construction of wetlands and the purchase of additional land for conservation will help to lessen impacts overall, the loss of approximately \$6-8 million in Windham properties, mainly commercial, will be an issue that the Town will be left to address with private developers as the reconstruction of Exit 3 nears completion.

Town leaders have re-zoned this gateway area to entice projects that will redefine this primary entry point with well-designed commercial uses that incorporate multi-modal transit into their facilities (bike paths and racks, sidewalks, etc.). Guarding against uses such as fast food chains, drive-through establishments, and large-scale, free-standing signage will be critical to preventing this exit from resembling any other along the Interstate. In addition, the landscaping and site plans of these future uses can signal to drivers the need to slow their speed as they exit the highway environment and enter into Town. Consideration of design and use at gateway areas should remain at the forefront of Town officials' minds as they seek to replace the lost tax base at this location.

**Expanding
Transportation
Options**

In order to realize improvements to its traffic condition, Windham needs to remain mindful that roadway widening alone is unlikely to yield desirable results, and that expanding its options for travel to, from, and throughout Town is critical to achieving long term success.

Windham's 2005 Master Plan called for several strategies to encourage both non-vehicular travel and improved automobile circulation. These recommendations included:

- Expansion of bicycle and walking routes on heavily traveled corridors;
- Active support of mass transit and public transportation, especially for elderly and handicapped persons;
- Requiring key connector streets be constructed in conjunction with subdivision and site plan approvals, without traversing large tracts of open space.

While progress on these items is on-going, this Master Plan must set forth specific steps, define measurable goals, and assign responsible parties to accelerate the achievement of the advisable, yet at times elusive, goal of expanding non-vehicular travel options.

Growth Management: Maintaining High Quality Public Services and Facilities

The Vision Statement reflects a strong appreciation in the Windham community for living amid the Town's scenic natural areas, its high quality public services and facilities, and fairly stable tax rate. A repeated theme from the previous Master Plan highlighted the need to protect conservation land of high value, and the Town's Conservation Commission has responded to this need through outright purchases, attracting gifts, and working with the Planning Board to support open space subdivisions. And, to a large extent, Windham seems to be fairly satisfied with the quality and appearance of its new developments. As a result, the term "growth management" is used here to reference the relationship between growth and public services – as NH Statutes would state, it is a matter of avoiding "scattered and premature" development by planning for staff, programs, and facilities that will meet the needs of a growing community.

One of the main thrusts of this plan will be to address how the Town can continue to be highly responsive to the needs of its residents and businesses while avoiding burdensome residential tax bills. To a large degree, this question is central to all fast-growing communities, and easy answers are non-existent.

In simple terms, the Town has two fundamental options to address a growing gap between services and the ability to pay for them: raise revenue or cut costs. Complex,

however, are the myriad of consequences associated with both options, and acceptable solutions may ultimately require constant assessment and adjustment. While this happens annually during preparation of the Town's budget, the Master Plan must take a longer view and provide both information and direction for future decision-makers.

Town officials appear to stretch resources, staff, and facilities wherever possible – an in-depth analysis of operational practices is being discussed by the Board of Selectmen. The intent of such a study would be, in part, to maximize efficiencies and identify any cost recovery opportunities.

From a land use perspective, cutting costs that result from particular uses is a challenge. Commonly-held notions suggest that residential uses typically result in net losses to town budgets, as home owner taxes do not fully cover the costs to serve families (especially those with children who attend public school). In contrast, non-residential uses are often regarded as net benefits to the tax base. Open space can be tax base neutral, or can be indirectly positive, as the intrinsic value of open land may raise the value of properties throughout the community. All of these assumptions, however, warrant rigorous testing should Windham desire to further explore an updated “cost of community services” study. And, this type of study can never stand-alone without the context of existing reality to ground it – in other words, there is no optimal proportion of land uses that are present in most desirable communities with reasonable tax rates. Extreme scenarios prove that cost/benefit analyses must weigh their conclusions carefully – e.g. in a community that is 100% residential, homes do “pay for themselves.”

That said, however, the public discussion that has centered on the option of raising revenues through additional economic development is an important one. Residents who support additional commercial use do so with an understanding that the Town will benefit from new tax revenue. Those who question the need to attract new business are suspect that the new revenue will outweigh the potential impacts (environmental, traffic, aesthetic, etc.) that may accompany the uses. In addition, a “net benefit analysis should be conducted to ensure that any new revenue is not consumed by an increase in the cost of community services (roads, police, fire) that can be associated with new development. The Economic Development chapter of the plan thoroughly explores both sides of this issue. In addition, new businesses can enhance Windham's overall desirability, providing convenient stores, employment, and public gathering spaces. Properly located, they also hold the potential of improving traffic congestion by reducing the distances traveled in pursuit of goods and services.

Ironically, phased development/building permit cap ordinances, while aimed at slowing the rate of increasing demand for public services, would have the unintended consequence of slowing the collection of new tax revenues. The recent years of high residential growth have enabled the Town to fund needed improvements to several of its public facilities; there seems to be an overall sense, however, that there is a demand for services that needs to be addressed before additional growth can be

accommodated. This services gap appears to apply to several areas, from highway maintenance to recreation, and from affordable housing to the transfer/recycling operation.

Ensuring Long-term Water Quality and Supply Protection and Wastewater Treatment

Windham's water resources are important considerations for community planning. There are numerous lakes, ponds, brooks and streams as well as freshwater wetlands. There are also substantial groundwater resources particularly associated with the Windham-Cobbetts Pond Aquifer.

Cognizant of the value of these resources, the town has undertaken a program of water resource protection involving land use regulation, water quality monitoring and conservation land acquisition. Specific efforts, such as the Wetland and Watershed Protection and Aquifer Protection districts to the Board of Health Regulations and water quality monitoring are discussed in detail in the Utilities and Natural Resources elements. Master Plan discussions have placed high priority on the need for the Town and its residents to be vigilant and creative as they work to protect Windham's water resources in step with a shared desire to support both residential and commercial development. Ultimately, Windham seeks to ensure that it can rely on its own water resources to provide private drinking water supplies into the foreseeable future.

Like many New Hampshire communities, the town provides neither municipal water nor sewer to the community, opting instead to accommodate development through the use of soil-based lot sizing, and private and community wells. As residential development continues to increase and seasonal homes are converted to year round occupancy, Master Plan discussions have raised the question as to whether the Town's policy should be modified to respond to a) the desire to attract additional commercial uses in order to offset rising tax rates and b) potential water quality issues, especially in the Cobbetts Pond and Canobie Lake areas. Based on such hydrogeological studies as the 1992 US Geologic Survey, the community has concluded that adequate groundwater resources exist, and in a number of instances, the Town has allowed for Pennichuck to provide water to homes that are unable to sufficiently draw upon groundwater resources on their properties. Windham could continue to rely on local water resources for community supplies or reach agreement with Salem to allow it to expand into Windham. At present, the Town has been reluctant to pursue the latter course because of the potential expense.

The issue of allowing or providing for sewage to targeted areas to support commercial development has frequently been raised as large-scale septic can be both expensive and requires active monitoring to ensure against groundwater contamination. While in some instances, lack of sewer availability can be a major obstacle to attracting desirable business uses to town, recent commercial developments and proposals have proven that it need not be a barrier to commercial development.

Windham has a standing agreement with the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District which would allow the Town to send approximately 300,000 gallons of wastewater/day via pipes that would connect through Salem. This availability raises the possibility of limited sewer, though the construction of a connection to Salem would involve substantial investment³. In addition, if water is withdrawn from Windham and discharged into a regional sewer system, a source of groundwater recharge to Windham's aquifers will be eliminated. Alternatives to this traditional approach exist as well, including the use of shared systems and small waste water treatment plants. These issues keep the debate open as to whether Windham should consider municipal sewer.

To another degree, water quality protection in Windham's densest neighborhoods is an on-going concern. While testing has not indicated serious long term problems stemming from residential septic system failures, the conversion of seasonal to year-round homes in these areas pose questions as to whether the cumulative effect of multiple septic systems on fairly small lot sizes will provide safe separation from the wells for on-going use. The Town of Salem has concluded that it is not sustainable to continue to allow septic systems in the areas around Canobie Lake, Millville Lake, and Arlington Pond; consequently it is implementing a \$71 million infrastructure program to deliver sewer service to these property owners, with an optional connection to public water as well.

Windham has valid, practical concerns about how to properly and justifiably make a public policy decision to allow for limited sewage. Its concerns relate to the loss of its rural heritage in the face of potentially unleashed development, establishing a fair process to decide which areas would and would not be able to connect into any new system, what the financial investment would be, and whether there would be a long-term impact on water supply. If requested by the residents through their input at the polls, it may be advisable for the Town to consider forming a committee of residents and Town officials to further investigate these issues and make recommendations.

Sustainability

As one of the more fortunate communities in New Hampshire, Windham's residents consistently express a desire to participate in the preservation of our environment. This is evidenced in many ways, including but not limited to our large tracts of Conservation Land and our high levels of recycling seen at our transfer station.

In this Master Plan we see our first chapter on "Energy", conceived and written by a local, volunteer committee. The Board would like to see this chapter expand to its own section of the Master Plan in coming years.

³ In past discussions with the Planning Board, developers have expressed interest in the idea of an upgrade to the current system along Route 28 as well as construction of a new system to support commercial development in the Exit 3 area. No commitment, however, has been made.

The 2014 Community Master Plan Survey

- ***Summarize each section of the survey, maybe the top 3 items under each.***



ion to the Visioning Workshop, the Windham Planning Board prepared and advertised a community-wide master plan for Windham residents and businesses. The survey was carried out during the month of June 2014 and was placed on the website for easy circulation and ease of use. Paper copies were also made available at the Community Development, Library and Town Hall.

ere a total of 373 respondents to the survey.

Findings and results of the master plan survey are summarized in the highlights below.

General Issues Identified as being of Highest Priority:

- *Protecting drinking water quality and quantity*
- *Protect lakes, streams and wetlands*
- *Maintain Windham's unique character*
- *Increase school capacity*
- *Preserve open space, and forests and agricultural lands*
- *Improve traffic flow*
- *Decrease the rate of residential growth*
- *Protect historic properties and sites*
- *Attract new retail development*
- *Attract new office development*

Overall Ranking of Town Facilities:

- *Excellent: high school (275 votes), rail trail (228 Votes), Griffin Park (219 Votes)*
- *Good: transfer station/recycling (183 votes), town beach (173 votes), recreation fields (172 votes)*
- *Adequate: Bartley House/town administration (137 votes), community development building (133 votes)*
- *Poor: Golden Brook School (132 votes), Middle School (100 votes), Center School (120 votes)*

Town Services Identified in Most Need of Improvement:

- *Increase capacity of schools, build/renovate schools*
- *Increase transfer station hours*
- *Bring in more viable businesses*
- *More recreation programs for elderly/teens/young adults*
- *Repave old roads; road general repairs; more sidewalks; drainage; reduce traffic*

Should Town Seek Public Water to Commercial and/or Residential Development or Both?

- *For Both Commercial and Residential – 29% (111 votes)*
- *For Commercial – 19% (70 Votes)*
- *None – 34% (129 Votes)*
- *For Residential – 3% (12 votes)*
- *Don't know 15% (55 votes)*

Should Town Seek Public Sewer to Commercial and/or Residential Development or Both?

- None - 37% (139 votes)
- For Both Commercial and Residential – 27% (101 votes)
- For Commercial – 18% (67 votes)
- For Residential – 3% (10 votes)
- Don't Know 15% (57%)
- 45% of respondents in favor when combining responses received for both commercial/ residential (27%) and commercial (18%) and residential (3%)

Should Town Seek to Provide Natural Gas to Commercial and/or Residential Development or Both?

- For Residential - 6% (23 votes)
- For Commercial – 5% (18 votes)
- Both Residential and Commercial – 42% (160 votes)
- None – 27% (101 votes)
- Don't know – 20% (76 votes)

Types of Development Windham Should Encourage:

- **High Priority:** Commercial – business/ office/ technology (122 votes); neighborhood business (104 votes) & commercial retail centers and services (98 votes)
- **Medium Priority:** Commercial – neighborhood business (131 votes); business/ office/ technology (113 votes); and light manufacturing (99 votes); assisted living (99 votes)
- **Low Priority:** Age 55 over (102 votes); assisted living (94 votes); commercial/ retail centers (88 votes)
- **Not a Priority:** Residential multi-family (260 votes); workforce housing (245); two-family housing (237 Votes); commercial “big box”; commercial – regional shopping centers/ malls (219 Votes)

Does Windham Need to Increase Minimum Residential Lot Size:

- Yes 34% (128 votes)
- No 48% (178 votes)
- Don't Know 18% (67 votes)

Should Town Propose a Growth Management Ordinance?

- Yes 58% (218 votes)
- No 18% (67 votes)
- Don't know 24 percent don't know

Priorities Town Should Give for Economic Development:

- **High Priority:** *Attract arts/entertainment/dining (164 votes); new small scale retail (115 votes); new office (109 votes)*
- **Medium Priority:** *Attract educational institutions (129 votes); arts/entertainment/dining (129 votes); new office; small scale retail (121 votes); medical offices & services (112 votes)*
- **Low Priority:** *Attract medical offices/services (81 votes); new large scale retail (78 votes); new light industrial development (73 votes)*
- **Not a Priority:** *Attract large scale retail (165 votes); new light industrial (116 votes); medical offices/services (81 votes); new office development (73 votes)*

Desired Businesses Residents Would Like to See in Windham:

- *Restaurants – e.g. Panera/Starbucks – upscale family*
- *Entertainment/Arts – movie theater; gallery; mini golf; activities for seniors*
- *Retail Stores – upscale shopping, boutiques and outlets*
- *High Quality Grocery Store – Trader’s Joe or Whole Foods*
- *Office/Industrial – companies that bring in high paying jobs/science/technology*
- *Small Scale Retail – strong desire to support local small businesses*
- *Education – satellite college campus or enrichment programs*
- *Outdoor Shopping – walkable/pedestrian friendly – Lynnfield Marketplace example*
- *No More Development – keep Windham as a small town w/ rural feel*
- *Medical Offices – great career opportunities and allow residents to stay in town for medical visits*

What are Windham’s Most Pressing Transportation Problems?

- **Major Problem:** *Traffic volume; school traffic; lack of pedestrian crossings/sidewalks*
- **Minor Problem:** *Speeding; Road quality/maintenance; lack of bicycle lanes/heavy trucking*
- **No Problem:** *Lack of regional public transit; road maintenance/quality; lack of pedestrian crossings/sidewalks/trucking*

Level of Importance of Natural Resources and Conservation:

- **Very Important:** *Protect drinking water/surface waters; preserve/protect forests; discourage hillside- steep slope development; preservation of agriculture and additional conservation lands*
- **Important:** *Promote fish/wildlife management; protect wildlife corridors; preserve forests areas, open lands/agricultural lands*
- **Somewhat Important:** *Preserve additional conservation lands; preserve natural resources through land purchase/easements; protect wildlife corridors & promote fish and wildlife management*

Level of Importance of Historic/Cultural Preservation:

- **Very Important:** *Re-use of existing historic structures; preservation of barns & buildings*
- **Important:** *Re-use of existing historic structures; update historic survey & purchase buildings*
- **Somewhat Important:** *Update historic survey; create more districts; purchase historic buildings*
- **Not Important:** *Create more districts; purchase historic buildings; preservation of barns*

Top Three Historic Features/Sites:

Searles Castle; Searles School and Chapel; Town Hall

Areas of Greatest Regional Concern:

- *State of NH School Funding*
- *Traffic*
- *Groundwater Quality/Quantity*
- *Residential Growth*
- *I-93 Expansion*

Best Things About Windham:

- *Small Town Charm*
- *Sense of Community & Involvement;*
- *Location Close to Boston/Easy Highway Access;*
- *Natural Areas/Resources/Rail Trail;*
- *Schools/Teachers*
- *Safe Community/Family/Friends*

One Thing About Windham You Would Change:

- *Overcrowded schools/expansion is necessary*
- *School Board and funding*
- *Less Residential Development/Limit Sprawl*
- *Need Tax Revenue/Decrease Burden on Residents*
- *Traffic on Route 111; Addition of Rt. 111 Roundabouts*
- *More Dining and Shopping Opportunities – Sustainable Businesses*
- *Town Center – More Open/Walkable*

Vision for Windham:

- *Small Town Charm with Amenities/Bedroom Community/Family Friendly/Aesthetically Pleasing Area*
- *Vibrant Downtown – Small, local businesses, walkable village green – similar to Andover, MA*
- *More Schools/Improve Schools – schools are too small for population size*
- *Slow Residential Development – revert to rural feel – town is already overpopulated*
- *Promote small commercial development – need to increase tax revenue generated from businesses/develop in existing commercial areas such as Route 111*
- *Smart Growth – promote viable business only/limit sprawl by clustering development – encourage sustainable practices*
- *Protect Conservation Areas/Old Buildings - Maintain historical significance and natural beauty of the area*

Community Pride & Character – residents acknowledge importance of remaining a tight-knit community