

# Sandwich 2011 Master Plan



**Sandwich, New Hampshire**

**February 17, 2011**

# Table of Contents

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**Executive Summary**

**Introduction and Vision Statement**

**1. Population and Housing**

**2. Natural Resources**

Appendices

A. Squam Range-Beebe River—An Area of High Conservation Value

B. Conservation Lands List

C. Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species and Communities

D. Map Appendix

**3. Land Use**

**4. Historic Resources**

**5. Village Centers**

**6. Economic Base**

**7. Transportation and Circulation**

Appendices

A. State Roadway Classifications

B. Roadway Maps

C. Proposed Local Roadway Functional Class Standards

**8. Energy**

**9. Community Facilities**

**Maps**

**2009 Community Survey**

**Implementation Guide**

# *Introduction and Vision Statement*

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## **The Master Plan is a Blueprint for the Future**

This Master Plan for Sandwich is a publicly prepared “blueprint” or document that represents the citizens’ view of what the town should look like in ten to twenty years (The Vision) and how they intend to achieve it (Implementation Guide). This document includes maps, charts and supporting text that describe current conditions and trends within Sandwich. This plan also addresses issues of concern, such as protection of rural character, and provides guidance to help the community manage change and develop in a manner that is orderly and meets its Vision.

## **Master Planning has a Legal Basis**

In New Hampshire, one of the major responsibilities of the Planning Board is to prepare and update Master Plans (RSA 674:1-4). It is recommended that these plans be updated every five to ten years.

“The purpose of the master plan is to set down as clearly and as practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire.....” (RSA 674:2)

## **Sandwich Has an Existing Plan with Updates**

Sandwich has a long history of planning and zoning. In the late 1970’s, it adopted its first zoning ordinance as a means to protect and enhance its rural character while accommodating growth. Its first full Master Plan was completed in 1970 and rewritten in 1981 with the assistance of the Lakes Region Planning Commission. The Plan was partially updated several times since then including 1997, 2002, 2003 and 2005. The 2003 Plan Update had an extensive section on the various community and social organizations in Sandwich and how they contribute to the town’s fabric. While this Plan Update identified a number of issues, it provided only limited recommendations to guide future growth and change. The 2005 Plan Update concentrated on Land Use, Economic Base and Recreation. During the last 30 years, the town conducted several community surveys and forums to better gauge the community’s attitudes toward growth, resource protection and community services. Consistently, the town identified several important community values that provided the foundation for plan updates:

- Protection of the natural, historic and scenic environment, and
- Providing opportunity for economic growth consistent with the community’s rural character

## The Sandwich Planning Process

The current Master Plan process began in the spring of 2008 with the selection of the Master Plan Update Committee by the Planning Board. The Committee members represent a broad range of the Sandwich Community. Since the Master Plan had not been fully updated since 1981, the Committee felt a significant effort would be required to produce a credible and useful document. To assist in this effort, the Committee selected Mettee Planning Consultants. Before the process began, the Town Meeting committed community funds to the project in March 2009 with a second vote in the 2010 Town Meeting with a 50% contribution from the Quimby Fund. With the support of the town, the Committee then set out an ambitious program to develop the 2011 Master Plan. This effort included a Community Survey, three public forums, numerous drafts of various sections of the Plan and dozens of meetings over the past two years. The result is a completed Master Plan that is in three parts:

- *An Executive Summary* that provides an overall view of the Master Plan Update and identifies areas for future action.
- *An Implementation Guide* that provides a list of the Master Plan recommendations, a priority rating for each and the entity responsible for completing the action.
- *A Complete Master Plan* that includes a full inventory and assessment of the community along with an Action Plan for each chapter.

## The Community Has Spoken

The Committee was very keen on soliciting as much input from the community as possible in an effort to reflect their views in the Master Plan Update. The first step in this process was to prepare and disseminate a Community Survey. This effort was followed by three community forums that delved deeper into some of the opportunities and issues highlighted by the survey.

### Community Survey—Key Results

- Most community services rated well except for state roads.
- *Choices for future initiatives*-The highest rated:--Acquisition of additional land for conservation (65%); implementing digital system for tax maps, town records (59%)
- *Read the Town Newsletter*: (79%)
- *Preferred housing*:--single family homes (50%); adding “mother-in law “apartment (71%); senior housing (57%)
- *Changes to town roads*:--Bicycle paths/lanes/trails (59%); increased rebuilding of existing paved roads (57%); increased rebuilding of gravel road beds (58%); better ditching (57%)
- *Preferred future activities to be encouraged*: (all greater than 50%) -tourism, arts/crafts businesses, home business, professional offices, agriculture, health practices, B&B's/inns, and restaurants/cafes/coffee shops

- Generally satisfied with protection of town's natural resources.
- *Historic District*:--permit modern bldg. methods/materials (80% yes); more businesses if consistent with current building style: (71% yes)
- *View of Sandwich 20 years from now*:—highest rating = rural, quiet, much like today
- *Most important to future of town*:—highest rating = Maintaining our rural, small-town character

## Forum 1

This first community forum was held in May of 2009 to determine the strengths and challenges facing Sandwich. Strengths included the town's:

- natural and water resources,
- small town and community character, and
- active and caring attitude.

Challenges included the need:

- for more jobs/retail/services
- to maintain municipal services without raising taxes
- to retain high levels of social connectivity/volunteerism
- to embrace sustainability/climate change and energy conservation

## Forum 2

Held in August of 2009, this forum considered more closely two of the major themes from the first forum in May—natural resources and economic opportunity. Based on discussion in small groups the following actions were suggested.

For natural resources:

- Greater municipal intervention in land use regulation to protect natural resources and water quality
- More effort to protect land through acquisition & easement
- Provide more educational outreach about importance of natural resource protection
- Protect and enhance opportunities for agriculture

For economic opportunity:

- Improving Internet access
- Keeping the Central School viable
- More diversified and affordable housing
- Encouraging economic development
- Encouraging a green economy (sustainable energy, buy local, sustainable land use/agriculture-forestry)
- Promoting local agriculture and forestry

### **Forum 3**

This forum was held in November of 2009 and focused on two major issues for the town:

- Techniques for protecting rural character
- Protecting and managing village character

The “rural character” group generally recognized that relatively large residential subdivisions were not likely to occur in the near term. However, they also felt that in the long term an improved cluster or Open Space Development (OSD) regulation that provides high quality open space is an approach the town should consider. This would help to preserve the town’s rural character.

The Village Character Group identified several items for consideration:

- Study the Center Sandwich sewer capacity and options
- Re-examine village land use regulations
- Encourage tax incentive programs for historic preservation and maintenance
- Encourage sustainable village energy system or district

This community outreach effort along with the inventory of Sandwich’s assets led directly to the Master Plan Vision as presented below.

## **The Vision—The Future of Sandwich**

The following vision statement reflects Sandwich’s common values and defines the future of the town—a community that will be prepared to accommodate modest growth and change while preserving its existing rural and village character. It also offers the guiding principles and priorities upon which this Master Plan is based. While the vision does not have the force of law, local officials and the public should consider the Vision Statement in all local plans, actions and decisions.

## THE VISION

### **Sandwich Should:**

Remain a highly desirable place to live and work by retaining its quiet, rural, small-town character through protection of its valuable natural resources, preservation of its cultural and architectural heritage and scenic beauty;

Be vibrant and diverse by promoting social, cultural, housing, and recreational opportunities for all age groups;

Maintain its high quality of community facilities and services in a cost effective manner; and

Provide opportunities for employment and small-scale businesses consistent with our rural character.

### **Vision Goals**

To maintain these qualities for our community now and in the future, Sandwich will strive to:

1. *Allow for modest growth of residential development of a size, design and quality compatible with Sandwich's small town, rural character and recognizes Sandwich's evolving demographics.*
2. *Provide reasonable opportunity for housing choice so that greater age and income diversity can be achieved.*
3. *Protect historic resources, natural environment, scenic beauty, open space, clean water, and wildlife through well-managed growth and careful planning.*
4. *Support and encourage protection and management of high value conservation and open space lands that are linked by trails and/or wildlife and natural resource corridors.*
5. *Preserve the town's rural, small town character and the traditional New England style of its villages.*
6. *Provide opportunity for limited village business activity (e.g., general store/professional offices) that is consistent with the architectural qualities that the town values.*
7. *Encourage home occupations that are compatible with and supportive of the town's rural character.*

8. *Provide a balanced transportation system with well-maintained public roadways lined with stone walls, open fields and trees; and encourage opportunities and facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and recreational users.*
9. *Encourage a sustainable community, one that meets our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.*
10. *Provide, in a cost effective manner, the quality and level of municipal services and facilities that are enjoyed in Sandwich today.*
11. *Encourage modern communication facilities, systems and services to meet the needs and diversity of Sandwich's residents and businesses, now and in the years to come.*
12. *Encourage and foster high levels of citizen volunteerism in both public and non-profit activities to promote social capital and keep the cost of municipal services at a reasonable level.*

## **The Future of Sandwich is tied to Future of the Region**

Although the focus of this Master Plan is the Town of Sandwich, the town is also part of a larger region that sits in a transition area geographically between the Lakes Region and the White Mountains. Actions that Sandwich may take to implement its Master Plan will affect such adjacent communities as Tamworth and Center Harbor. Similarly actions that adjacent communities may take will also affect Sandwich.

The primary connection among area towns is the roadway system that is described in its regional context in the Transportation Chapter. Changes to these roadways or increased development in adjacent communities may have impacts in Sandwich. Many of the area's natural resources and open spaces as described in the Natural Resources Chapter are also intertwined. Since Sandwich sits at the headwaters of three watersheds, any activities in these area affecting surface waters will have an impact on the downstream waters of adjacent communities. The aquifer area in eastern Sandwich extends into Tamworth and Ossipee. Appropriate land use regulations to protect this resource need to be considered in all communities. There are also a number of conservation areas and trails that cross town boundaries. Management and maintenance of these will take cooperation from members of all area communities.

At present, there are a number of areas of cooperation in place including the practice of mutual aid and assistance for fire/safety and police. Sandwich schools have been consolidated internally over the years and as of the 1960's the single Central School has become part of the Inter-Lake School District. As municipal budgets increase there may be opportunity for greater cooperation among area communities.

Finally, the Planning Board has the responsibility of considering the regional impacts of development as per RSA 36:54-57. Area community planning boards have the same

responsibility. An area of opportunity may be the consideration of consistent land use regulations that would benefit the region.

## **Many People Contributed to this Master Plan**

Among the groups that assisted with the preparation of this plan was the Master Plan Update Committee established by the Planning Board. Over a period of almost 3 years this group met, selected a consultant and worked diligently with the consultant for 18-months to develop the final plan. This committee included:

Carroll Bewley, Chairman  
Janet Brown  
Joan Cook  
Gerry Gingras  
Linda Marshall

Susan Mitchel  
Adam Peaslee  
Roger Plimmer  
Boone Porter

Town Hall staff members were also particularly helpful in providing information to the Consultant Team and answering the many questions the Team had about Sandwich. Assisting the Committee and the Consultant Team were the Conservation Commission and in particular Rick Van de Poll who provided much input into the Natural Resources Chapter of the Plan. Ronald Lawler provided data on timber harvesting, the Energy Chapter, and suggestions on the Housing Chapter. The Historic District Commission provided helpful insights and suggestions on the Village Center Chapter, while the Sandwich Historical Society and staff were very helpful in providing resources for the Historic District Chapter, in particular Joan Cook and Tom Shevenell. Town Department Heads were also instrumental in providing information about the various community facilities and services.

## **Master Plan Approval**

This Master Plan was approved by the Sandwich Planning Board on February 17, 2011.

## **Next Steps—Plan Implementation**

This Master Plan should be considered a work plan to be implemented over the next five to ten years. During this period the Planning Board and other relevant town boards should work cooperatively to ensure the plan recommendations are considered and implemented. The Implementation Guide will greatly assist the Board in determining priorities. This Guide should be reviewed annually and adjustments made as needed. In this way the Master Plan will be a living document and not a plan that “sits idly on the shelf”. By approximately 2016, the Planning Board may want to update this plan.