

LOUDON TOMORROW

Our Vision

Loudon is committed to supporting a high quality of life and sense of community for all residents. These commitments need to be reflected in our community programs and services as well as our facilities. Loudon residents value their natural resources and cultural and historic heritage and want to ensure that they are preserved for future generations. Looking toward the future, Loudon’s vision builds on what we heard from residents, the demographic trends that are described in this master plan and the story that our history, community values and present-day environment tells us.

Loudon residents live in Loudon for a number of reasons, including the Town’s small town and rural character (over 89% ranked it as important), proximity to cities (83%), and people and community spirit (56%). Not as highly ranked, but still important, was the Town’s scenic areas (52%), historical character (39%) and available town services (29%). The majority respondents want the Town to be actively encouraging any type of development designed to help preserve Loudon’s quality of life, ranking this as their highest priority. There is also strong interest in seeing industrial and commercial development, including restaurants, personal offices, and agriculture-related businesses.

Approximately 87% felt that Loudon’s efforts should be focused on preservation of farmland and traffic control. Ranked nearly as high was operation of parks and recreation facilities (86%), preservation

of historic sites and buildings (84%), and protection of ground and surface water (84%).

Like many other New Hampshire communities, Loudon residents expressed concern that the rural character often viewed as central to Loudon’s identity may be lost due to additional residential growth over the next few decades. There are many types of “rural character” images that shape Loudon – historic structures, agricultural lands, natural forests, the Soucook River and many treasured scenic areas. Often, it is the mix of landscapes that contributes to the concept of rural character, including current development patterns and the scenic vistas of hills, agricultural fields, open space and forests.

Among its recommendations, the Master Plan encourages consideration for the establishment of four new Committees: the Road Advisory Committee, Economic Development Committee, Energy Committee, and Trails Committee. These committees could help to guide the community toward its future vision contained in the Master Plan:

- Residents living in Loudon for its small-town feel, rural atmosphere, historic character and high quality of life;
- A landscaped Route 106 corridor attracting new businesses that build the Town’s economy;

- Enhanced, technologically contemporary Town buildings are energy efficient;
- Some additional clustered housing nestles between large lot, active agricultural and forestry lands;
- Important natural resources, fields, wetlands and agricultural lands are protected from development;
- Residents bring canoes and kayaks to access to the Soucook River;
- Town events like a farmer’s market, Old Home Day and Library programs entice residents and visitors to the Village;
- Sidewalks, crosswalks and bicycle lanes enable families to safely journey along Village Road to reach the Recreational Field, Town Offices, Maxfield Public Library and other Town facilities;
- Village businesses thrive with tax relief incentives, drawing in customers running Town errands and commuters driving by;
- Hikers trek a connected trail system that winds through conserved land and around water bodies;
- Fast broadband internet and telecommunications service are available throughout the Town, enabling small home businesses and industries alike to establish and thrive;
- An educated citizenry learns about agriculture, natural resources, bicycling safety, the Town’s history and more - and a new generation of volunteers is produced;
- Wildlife and fish flourish in and around water bodies and wetlands that are protected by a lush, vegetated buffer; and

- Well-maintained roads direct vehicle traffic where it needs to go, over solid bridges and firm roadways with little time delay.

Common themes emerged during the preparation of the Master Plan update. As mentioned previously, appreciation of community values and access to natural resources were repeated, valued strengths identified by residents. The themes of connection and sustainability of what we already have are important to keep in mind as we develop not only a vision for the future but recommendations on how to achieve that vision.

The following represent the major themes to be carried forward throughout this Master Plan.

Improving connections: Residents identified the need for improved connections and access for recreational activities like walking, hiking, fishing and boating on Clough Pond and the Soucook River, as well as for economic development and transportation.

Continuing preservation, protection and enhancement of our open spaces, recreational trails, and water resources: Striving to improve management of our water resources and improving access to recreational resources are all important priorities as Loudon looks for opportunities to support these activities through partnerships and grant opportunities.

Responding to population changes and demographic shifts by addressing any emerging issues in housing, broadband availability, economic development and transportation: Loudon should continue to seek investment in transportation improvements, broadband availability and economic development as a way to attract new opportunities and be a participant in a more visible and vibrant economy for the Central New Hampshire Region. Recognizing that

there is an aging population throughout Loudon and all of New Hampshire is an important factors for the future planning of housing, infrastructure, and transportation needs.

Keeping Loudon’s rural character while addressing the challenge of continued growth and broadening the tax base through balanced economic development: This value continues to have strong appeal to residents. One of the most common desires voiced by residents was a strong interest in preserving Loudon’s rural character and its associated historical assets, agricultural lands, open spaces and other natural resources. Residents also desired additional economic development to help offset the tax rate and attract a sustainable workforce.

WHAT IS RURAL CHARACTER?

When asked what residents like about their community, rural character is no doubt one of the most popular responses in many communities. While there really isn’t a textbook definition for rural character, it’s clear that there are some shared images that come to mind; farmlands, historic villages, stone walls, waterways, hills, etc. However, it also refers to a community’s social structure that is demonstrated by the community spirit and “help your neighbor” attitude posed by Loudon’s residents. Agricultural land, open space, and forested areas is another component of rural character and is reflected in settlement patterns. **Preserving** this character is very often expressed as the highest priority in community surveys and other public outreach events. Each community, including Loudon, has something unique about it that contributes to its rural character. “You know it when you see it or feel it” is one way to think about it and, while the definition of rural character is unique to each community, it does highlight one of the most common themes in master plan goals or vision statements.

Our Vision...

“Loudon is a connected, vibrant, and livable community with a strong quality of life for its residents.”

What do we know from Today? What makes Loudon a great place to live?

- “Healthy and diverse environments, our river and ponds, rural character and a sense of community.” These are the values that need to be kept in mind as we plan for and accommodate the necessary growth that is important in order to maintain quality of life and services that residents need and expect.

What do we value as important amenities?

- Our quality of life must be supported. In terms of employment as well as leisure, recreation, and preserving rural character.
- We need to continue to be good stewards of our cultural heritage and natural environments. There continues to be a strong emphasis on water quality for all of our watersheds, in particular our rivers and aquifers. Our historic homes, scenic areas, agricultural resources and workforce are important to preserve as part of our heritage.
- Infrastructure – in terms of roads, bridges, community facilities and services, and broadband are vital to our community.

How do we respond to the challenge of making needed changes?

- An aging population brings into focus new challenges as many retirees are remaining in rural areas to be close to family or to enjoy the scenic, recreation, and community amenities available in a community like Loudon. How we address the potential demands for smaller houses for downsizing families is important as we adapt to an aging population.
- We need to ensure that tomorrow’s workforce comes to Loudon. Strategies must help us attract the workforce of the future.
- We welcome businesses that align with our development patterns and rural character while supporting economic growth.
- We support housing choices for those residents throughout their life cycle, from young adults, families with children, to retirees.
- We look for opportunities to work with other communities on issues of regional concern, such as watershed management, water quality, land protection, economic development and transportation infrastructure.

A SUMMARY BY CHAPTER

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Vision Statement: Loudon supports and preserves its historic and cultural resources by protecting them for current and future generations and by expanding opportunities for community awareness of the Town's rich cultural heritage.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Preserve the historical resources of Loudon, including stone walls, old buildings, landmarks, cemeteries, and cellar holes and to encourage their stewardship. Maintain a thorough inventory of scenic, abandoned, and discontinued roads within Town and research where old rangeways once fell.

Promote the collection and preservation of historical artifacts relative to the history of Loudon. Develop, maintain, and update the history of the Town of Loudon. Nominate sites or buildings of particular historic importance to the Town for the National Register of Historic Places.

Encourage cultural events and the participation of residents in such events within Town through workshops, guest presentations, Old Home Day, and the Historical Society.

ECONOMIC BASE

Vision Statement: Promote future economic growth in Loudon that provides a sense of community and promotes quality of life while retaining our Town's rural character through proper planning.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Promote "quality of life" economic development that capitalizes on the Soucook River, trail systems, cultural areas, farms, bed-and-breakfasts, and other recreational and tourism opportunities in

order to preserve these resources, as well as encourage appropriate businesses that support these enterprises.

Promote appropriate economic development opportunities throughout Loudon by reestablishing the Loudon Economic Development Committee. Promote commercial and industrial enterprises in orderly, well-landscaped developments which take advantage of highway accessibility through the use of access roads and existing commercial/industrial parks. Establish Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs) and support the initiation of a Business Retention and Expansion Program. Consider adoption of Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA 79-e) to assist development in the Village. Consider the need to assess the need to undertake a NH 106 Water/Sewer Feasibility Analysis in the future.

HOUSING

Vision Statement: Retain the following core community values as expressed in the survey and visioning session while continuing to ensure a variety of housing options, both in design and levels of affordability, and pursue housing strategies that will meet changing demographic needs and attract the workforce of the future.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Continue to monitor development and population trends and legislation in an effort to ensure there is an adequate supply of housing options for residents. Monitor legislation, such as the newly amended RSA 674:71-73 related to accessory dwelling units, to ensure compliance with state law and providing adequate opportunities for these units in Loudon. Undertake a periodic evaluation of the future need for a Growth Management Ordinance based on current growth trends in the housing market.

Support agricultural sustainability by evaluating new residential development that occurs in nearby agricultural areas to ensure that continued agricultural activities are not adversely impacted.

Guide development and redevelopment in the Village District to maintain and enhance the economic vitality and livability of the Town Center and provide for more non-traditional housing opportunities. Those opportunities include: 1) Consider allowing Cottage/Pocket Development in the Commercial/Industrial and Village Zoning Districts; and (2) Review the Open Space Development regulations to allow for more housing alternatives including detached single-family condominiums with/without individual lots and public road frontage, duplexes and up to four unit townhouses, agricultural based open space development and resort development.

NATURAL FEATURES

Vision Statement: To promote good stewardship of our natural resources, continuing to work towards preserving Loudon's high quality of life and rural character by working to support open space, agriculture, wildlife, recreation and clean water.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Preserve the scenic character of the Town of Loudon by protecting its natural, historic, scenic, and agricultural resources through (1) the Identification of opportunities to acquire land for permanent protection through available funding mechanisms to ensure the long-term protection of resources; (2) promoting the preservation of agricultural lands in the community through state, federal and nonprofit grant opportunities; (3) continuing to seek conservation and public access easements to parcels located along the Soucook River; (4) updating the Zoning Ordinance and land use regulations as necessary; and (5) continuing to evaluate current protection of the

Town's future water supplies including the large aquifer under the Soucook River.

Look for opportunities to reduce nonpoint source pollution, including educating farmers, residents, and businesses on the use of fertilizers, biosolids and cleaned soil and create low salt areas on Town roads where water resources could be impacted. Identify critical wetlands, wildlife habitats and unique natural communities for future protection efforts in high priority areas.

Provide recreational opportunities for all ages and user groups and educate the citizens and Town officials in Loudon on the importance of protecting the Town's natural resources and open space.

Involve Town boards, and public, private, and state organizations in the protection of Loudon's resources by encouraging other communities along the Soucook River watershed to work with the Loudon Conservation Commission on developing a designated corridor to promote the conservation of the shoreline and to provide public access to a valuable local and regional asset. Explore the feasibility of utilizing the Rivers Protection and Management Program (RMPP) of DES to assess the potential of creating a corridor along the Soucook River.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Vision Statement: To ensure continued delivery of quality Town Services to the residents of Loudon by meeting the needs of the facilities that serve the greater community over the coming years.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Consider a study for redesign of the Village Center to allow safe and easy pedestrian access to the Village and community facilities, including the traffic impact of such a redesign.

Develop a plan to acquire additional land for community facility use, particularly land adjacent to any land currently owned by the Town. A new Highway Garage would be a good use of Town land.

Consider developing a plan for how the community would handle future development. The limited infrastructure (such as no Town water or sewer, some natural gas areas, areas of high-speed internet) and existing Town services (such as maintaining the existing roads, Transfer Station intake and Fire and Police services) could accommodate some additional economic growth and population, but not too much.

Work to ensure high-speed internet (broadband, DSL, fiber optic, etc.) coverage is available to the entire community.

Continue supporting the Liberty Utilities natural gas pipeline upgrade project and consider if gas should be made available to other locations in Town.

Continue to review the locations of new development and consider the need for a future potential municipal water system in the denser areas of the community.

Consider, outside of any cable franchise negotiations, a policy stating the basic municipal objectives sought through cable franchising (i.e. ubiquitous, cable plant extension, access programming service to public library and other public buildings). Consider adopting policies governing the public rights-of-way for the installation of telecommunications facilities within those rights-of-way.

Identify the reuse options of the Community Building meeting space with the assistance of the Historical Society if the building would no longer be used for Town Board and Committee meetings.

Continue to work to improve water quality at the Clough Pond Town Beach. Determine whether the access to the Soucook River could be obtained and made available for public recreational use, such as through tax deeded parcels. Explore the development of a non-motorized trail system and publicity brochures/maps on public conservation lands.

ENERGY

Vision Statement: The overall vision for Loudon is a community that supports and preserves its rural character while looking for opportunities to improve economic development, reduce municipal expenditures and promote efficient development that embraces the concept of energy efficiency. The development of Loudon's energy policies as they relate to energy generation, building standards, transportation and land use development patterns can have a direct impact on the community's vitality and long-term sustainability.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Reduce municipal energy usage and costs and improve energy efficiency in municipal operations through (1) active monitoring of municipal energy usage and costs to track progress resulting from any energy saving initiatives; (2) considering the adoption of energy policies to save energy through behavioral changes (such as programming thermostats, turning out unnecessary lights, and turning off electronic equipment when not in use); (3) seeking opportunities to implement building energy improvement plans to increase the efficiency of municipal buildings, and incorporate planned improvements into the municipal budgeting process; and (4) investigating renewable energy options for municipal buildings.

Encouraging and supporting energy-conscious development throughout Loudon Review and revise existing land use regulations as necessary to provide for energy-conscious development, such as

mixed use, infill development, outdoor lighting, and incentives for green building design.

Provide information to Loudon residents and business owners on energy conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy measures and where to find additional information and funding.

TRANSPORTATION

Vision Statement: Promote the improvement of public roads in Loudon, encourage a system of transportation that will meet the mobility needs of all local residents by providing for the efficient movement of people, goods, and services within Loudon and throughout the Region; maintain a commitment to the rural and historic character of the community; and provide a well-maintained and safe transportation system that meets the functional and aesthetic needs of the community, in a cost-effective manner.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Work to ensure that state and locally maintained roadways within the Town of Loudon are adequately maintained and achieve a reasonable service life. Participate in regional and statewide planning processes to ensure that Loudon's transportation needs and priorities are adequately represented. Place emphasis on the acceleration of the NH106/Village Road/Chichester Road intersection improvements as part of the NH106 improvement project.

Identify and prioritize locations that need improvement due to safety issues and actively work with NHDOT to repair, replace, and/or upgrade bridges that have fallen into a serious state of disrepair by continuing to annually contribute to a bridge maintenance/capital reserve fund and through annual inspections.

Create a Road Advisory Committee to assist the Highway Department in the review of proposals for road construction and improvement projects.

Implement a Road Surface Management System to guide the selection and prioritization of infrastructure improvements and maintenance activities, including road widening, improvements to horizontal and vertical alignments (grading and curves), drainage system improvements, and paving/resurfacing.

Promote connectivity through the requirement of local street connections between existing, new and future developments. Where applicable, the Planning Board should require developers to provide rights-of-way and/or direct access to connect both new and existing developments thus creating parallel access routes which will help to reduce congestion and slow the need to expand highway capacity.

Establish a set of access management guidelines. Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with NHDOT District Engineer to coordinate permitting for access to new and redeveloped development along state-maintained highways in Loudon. Investigate potential traffic calming techniques to make Loudon more accessible and safer for all road users.

Identify potential scenic routes and roads in Loudon to ensure that the intrinsic aesthetic and historic qualities of the Town are protected and preserved.

Facilitate the creation of a bicycle & pedestrian infrastructure network that allows safe, efficient and reliable transportation options in certain locations in Loudon. Where applicable, consider widening, striping, and paving the shoulders of Town roads to accommodate bike lanes.

Identify Class VI roads, as well as existing paths, and areas along the various water bodies in Town, that connect open space, forest, conservation, and/or agricultural land, that would help create a greenway trail network. Identify for designation, as Class A Trails, some of the Class VI roads within Town by working with abutting landowners. Discourage inappropriate, scattered and premature development along Class VI roads in Loudon.

Ensure that transportation options are available to all residents of Loudon regardless of socio-economic status through (1) researching the possibility and feasibility of implementing a ride-share, carpool, or shuttle program; and (2) continuing to support and promote the volunteer driver programs currently serving Loudon.

Continue to work with the NHMS, NHDOT and the State Police to ensure that the New Hampshire Motor Speedway continues to maintain steady traffic flows at all major events.

EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE

Vision Statement: Loudon will continue to be a largely rural, residential community with unique opportunities for conservation and economic development. Loudon will maintain its rural character and feel, while encouraging appropriate development along Route 106 and the Village. The NH 106 corridor should develop into a focused, commercial area that will supplement the tax base and support keeping good jobs in the community.

KEY STRATEGIES/THEMES

Consider revisions to the zoning ordinance related to (1) the existing C/I Zone and the creation of an Industrial Zone in the vicinity of International Drive; (2) allowing and promoting mixed use developments in specific areas within the existing C/I zone; (3) allowing and promoting agricultural supported residential developments in the RR and AFP zones; (4) protecting the Soucook

River's aquifer under NH 106 and the Commercial/Industrial Zone, including the consideration of groundwater performance standards to mitigate potential damage to the Town's aquifers; (5) incorporating a 20-foot wide landscaped buffer into NH 106 setbacks to lessen the impact of commercial development on Loudon's rural landscape; and (6) Review and revise, as needed, the Open Space Development Ordinance to reflect current open space development practices.

Review and revise as necessary, the July 2001 Open Space Trail System Plan's recommendations to expand the areas currently protected around the Hunting Swamp, Broken Ground, LCIP lands, Bumfagon Swamp, the Hoit Road Marsh/Town Forest area, and areas listed in the Plan.

Update the Land Development Regulations to address (1) specific stormwater management performance; (2) planting requirements and performance standards for site plans and landscaped buffers; (3) access management standards on NH 106 north of Shaker Road; (4) driveway construction standards in regard to driveway geometry including maximum length, minimum grade, alignment, site distances, etc. to simplify the current site plan and subdivision application process; and (5) the minimum required amount of landscaping along road frontages and internal parking lots, as well as establishing planting requirements and performance standards for required buffers.

Continue planning for appropriate redevelopment of depleted and/or inactive excavation sites by (1) working with pit owners who are nearing completion of their operations to ensure that a reclamation plan is consistent with any known future uses of the land; (2) considering the establishment of wetland buffer regulations adjacent to gravel operations; and (3) Continuing to

implement the system established by the Planning Board to monitor all excavations in town as outlined in is RSA 155-E and Loudon's Excavation Regulations.