

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. HANOVER TODAY

The Hanover of 2003 reflects more than two centuries of growth and development guided by, and a mirror of, a wide variety of social and economic factors, private and public decisions, and associated consequences, intended and unintended. It possesses many of the desirable attributes of a small New England college town.

Hanover residents enjoy a vibrant urban center adjacent to the Dartmouth College campus, the New England village centers of Etna and Hanover Center, and a currently sparse scattering of homes in the rural area. The rural landscape of open fields, meadows, stone walls, barns, wooded hillsides, clear streams, uncluttered hill tops and ridges and unimpeded views of the night sky provides ample opportunities for recreation and aesthetic enjoyment. The visual appeal of these varied elements of Hanover is one of the reasons people are strongly attracted to the Town. A desire to preserve these aesthetic attributes has been incorporated into this Master Plan. (see Map 1-1, Location Map)

At the present time about 75% of residents live in “urban” parts of Hanover, but recent growth patterns and our current zoning regulations indicate that future growth would be increasingly concentrated in the “rural” areas. This would result in a diminished rural New England atmosphere, degradation of wildlife habitat and the natural environment and resource base, increased traffic and increased demands for expansion of our municipal services and infrastructure. A wide variety of public surveys and planning studies carried out over the past years leads the Planning Board to conclude that such a pattern of suburban sprawl would severely compromise many of the features which make Hanover such a desirable and livable community. The 2003 Master Plan therefore proposes a number of changes in our land use strategies aimed at managing our future growth in ways which will preserve and enhance the essential elements of our community.

2. CORE PRINCIPLES

To provide a foundation and context for guiding future development in the Town of Hanover, the Planning Board has developed a set of "Core Principles," summarized below. These state that as a community we must:

1. *Protect and preserve our natural resources:* These include both urban and rural open space, wildlife habitat, water and wetlands, agricultural and forestry lands and associated recreational resources.
2. *Respect, protect and strengthen the distinctive qualities of the urban and rural parts of Hanover:* We should strive to sustain the present 3:1 urban/rural population ratio. We should enhance the vitality and small, college-town character of the urban area and its neighborhoods. Green space should be sustained as a background to the urban area. We should preserve the character of our rural areas and villages.
3. *Actively manage future growth:* We need to manage the rate, nature, and location of growth in view of their effects on municipal capital expenditures and the tax rate and to ensure that future growth is in keeping with the existing character of the community.

4. *Encourage affordable and diverse housing and development where served by existing municipal infrastructure:* The current public water and sewer service area should not be extended beyond its current extent, and development should be managed to minimize the need for new roads, schools, and other municipal infrastructure.
5. *Expand opportunities for, and accessibility to, outdoor recreation:* All residents and neighborhoods should be within easy walking distance of publicly accessible open space and natural recreation areas.
6. *Reduce excessive reliance on automobile transportation and its adverse impacts:* We should work with area employers and neighboring communities to manage local and through traffic, minimize its impacts on our community, and make the community more pedestrian-friendly. Development should be directed to transit-accessible areas, and multi-modal transportation should be promoted.
7. *Preserve a healthy balance between community and campus so that neither dominates nor has an adverse impact on the other:* Maintenance of this balance is central to retaining and preserving the essential attributes of Hanover as a small, attractive and livable New England college town. A key element in maintaining the core characteristics of the existing community is the need for enhanced interaction between the Town government, residents of the Town, and Dartmouth College.

3. GUIDING DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT 25 YEARS

Implementing these core principles while accommodating future growth will require a number of changes in how we use our land and how we manage and regulate development. The 2003 Master Plan identifies areas for protection and/or closely controlled development, as well as areas where growth can be accommodated with minimal or manageable impacts on adjacent lands and neighbors.

Key elements of the 2003 Master Plan include:

- A commitment to preserve over the long term the approximate current population balance between the urban areas (three-fourths) and the rural areas (one-fourth),
- Restrict development in areas not served by municipal water and sewer to minimize impacts on natural resources and to prevent further spread of sprawled residential use of those areas,
- Restrict development in the high elevation and the more isolated parts of remote Hanover, to maintain an intact forested landscape, preserve the natural character, and limit the costly provision of municipal services,
- Controlled change in the downtown neighborhoods consistent with the character of those neighborhoods, with preservation of the forested backdrop and associated natural areas through appropriately managed development,
- Provide a more diversified and varied stock of housing affordable to the full income spectrum of the town's residents and workforce,

- Managed residential development in areas served by existing infrastructure including along and adjacent to the Greensboro Road and Lyme Road corridors and in proposed village centers,
- The creation of two new neighborhood-oriented village centers to accommodate future growth while minimizing adverse impacts on existing neighborhoods. The first will be in and around Rivercrest and the new Middle School location on Lyme Road. The second would be a mixed-use neighborhood at Centerra North off of Route 120,
- Increased emphasis on requiring preservation of open space and outdoor recreational areas accessible to adjacent neighbors. This applies to both urban and rural development,
- Enhancement of the downtown business area through encouragement of greater diversity of businesses, integration of residential housing with commercial uses, more open space and greater pedestrian access,
- Keep civic uses such as the Town Offices, Howe Library, Post Office and high school in the downtown; similarly, keep the Town Library, Post Office and Fire Station in Etna,
- Identification of urban in-fill opportunities for higher residential densities with minimal neighborhood impacts. Candidate locations include the Sand Hill area, in the area of the new Lyme Road village center, and along the West Wheelock corridor.

4. A VISION FOR HANOVER

Success in implementing these changes and managing future development will ensure that Hanover continues to enjoy a vital urban and campus core surrounded by a traditional rural New England countryside, with varied quality of life experiences all over Town, and that all are able to share in the benefits of each.

All of our residents will have convenient and accessible access to open space and year-round recreational opportunities. The various neighborhoods and their sense of community will be strengthened, and the distancing associated with scattered development will be reduced. Automobiles will play less of a role, and residents and the community will be healthier for it. Critical and fragile natural resources will be preserved for the health, enjoyment and education of future generations, and Hanover will continue to be an exciting, livable town.