

# I. THE TOWN WE WANT

## BACKGROUND

As members of the Lancaster community, notwithstanding our diversity, we are united in wanting our Town to maintain and strengthen the qualities which make it the town we want.

The things we cherish most about Lancaster include its heritage, its farmland, woods and open space, its beautiful rivers and ponds, education, and its people. We want to preserve its rural, historic character at the same time as we want business and job opportunities for local residents to expand. We want the new homes and buildings that come to Lancaster to be located, designed, and used in harmony with the historic land use tradition and pattern of the town. Too often, in Lancaster as in other towns, this hasn't been achieved in the current era.

We also want affordable opportunities for our young people to have their own homes and to be able to continue living in the town in which they grew up. We want to continue to preserve and protect the Town Green and its ring of historic buildings – the jewel and centerpiece of our community. At the same time, we look forward to having an enhanced ability to walk among both businesses and public facilities that serve our needs within an integrated town center where we can encounter and mingle with our community neighbors from around the town.

We value all the residents of our community, and we want a town government that continues to give priority to services to meet citizen needs, at the same time as it continues mindful monitoring of municipal expenditures and seeks appropriate expansions of the tax base. We cherish our children and our youth, their enthusiasm and their energy, and are committed to working to meet their needs for activities, gathering places, and ability to move safely around the town. We respect and value our elders, and are dedicated to working to ensure that they can remain living in their own community in their later years, and that they, too, have a gathering place which they can call their own. We will work to improve communication between town government and the community it serves, between the town and its institutions, and among town departments

themselves.

We see a future where visitors and tourists come to Lancaster to admire its beautiful, historic buildings, its traditional New England green, to canoe and kayak on the lovely Nashua River; and to pick apples and buy fresh produce from local farms.

We look forward to the day when our working citizens no longer have to commute long distances to far away jobs and endure hours of traffic congestion, but rather can work at locations in or near Lancaster, or even telecommute from their own homes. We see a time when the currently ever-increasing traffic through our town begins to decrease as a result of our efforts to work together with the other communities in our region to better coordinate land use, new development, and improve public transportation. We see the day when we and our children can bike and walk through large areas of town on trails connecting to neighboring communities and the larger region, safe from traffic.

Even as the town has grown larger, the quality of life here has remained high, in large measure owing to our good public and private schools, the institutions of higher learning in our community, and our ability to preserve our small town atmosphere and history. We recognize the value and increasing fragility of our natural resources – our water, our river, our woods and open fields with their wildlife inhabitants – and we understand their critical importance to both the local and regional ecosystems and to our quality of life as residents of our town and also members of that ecosystem. We have come to understand better how our human behavior directly affects that ecosystem – for better or for worse – and we are committed to being good ecological citizens within that ecosystem.

The Lancaster we want in 25 years will be as different from today as today's Town is from that of the 1970s; but we want it to be recognizable as Lancaster – its historic village character intact, open space, woodlands, wild river frontage, and rural character preserved - a place for people of all ages and types.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

These are our most basic goals and objectives for the town we want.

- To protect and preserve the Town’s rural and historic character, its ponds, rivers and wetlands, its physical landscape and historic buildings, its classic New England pattern of village and working countryside. We recognize that the regulatory structure of our Town is largely what will make this possible.
- To create a Town Center where people of all ages can come together at gathering places, where small businesses of appropriate scale and type thrive, and where people can safely walk among these businesses and civic places for service, visiting, and recreation.
- To encourage business development that is appropriate in type, location, and design so that it enhances its surroundings, rather than having to be shielded from them.
- To participate in long term regional initiatives to reduce the volume of traffic flowing through Lancaster, and in shorter-term initiatives for safer traffic flow and control.
- To promote and increase safe biking and pedestrian alternatives and, if feasible, public transportation alternatives to drive-alone car travel.
- To continue to preserve and manage important farmland, open space and woodlands in Lancaster, including:
  - Improvement and support for recreation facilities such as trails, fields, and public beach areas;
  - Protection for Lancaster’s important natural resources, including the Town water supply, ponds, wildlife habitat, and the Nashua River.
- To increase the supply of affordable housing in Lancaster so as to enable Lancaster’s young people and elders to continue to live in their home community.
- To continue to maintain a balance among appropriate service provision, community investment, and a moderate tax burden.
- To reflect in all that we do the uniqueness and

diversity of the various villages, neighborhoods, and other distinctive areas of the Town, while at the same time unifying them in terms of connectedness, shared vision, and equitable services.

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