

# ALLENSTOWN TOMORROW

## Our Vision

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Allenstown 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. Allenstown 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, Allenstown'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.

### FROM ALLENSTOWN TODAY TO ALLENSTOWN TOMORROW...

Throughout the development of the master plan, engaging residents and other community stakeholders was a key goal. The visioning session and the survey gave the planning board important information on residents' opinions on many topics related to Allenstown's land use and regulations as well as other thoughts on priorities and concerns. What you see below are some broad

themes that are based on the public outreach and other stakeholder input. Allenstown residents live in Allenstown for a number of reasons, including the Town's costs of housing (over 95% ranked it as very important/somewhat important), quality of life (90%), and rural community character (83%). Not as highly ranked, but still important, was the Town's proximity to jobs (80%), cost of living (76%) and proximity to lakes, rivers, and nature (70%). Over 81% of respondents want the Town to be actively encouraging more stores and shops while 59% felt the Town should encourage more light industry. There is also strong interest (95%) in seeing additional services and restaurants (92%). While not a large majority, 61% of residents were interested in seeing more housing for 55 and over as well as additional single family units (50%).

Approximately 50% felt that tax money should be spent to protect cultural and historic resources while over 42% felt that tax money should be spent on conservation purposes. Respondents also indicated that improving maintenance of the existing transportation system is one of the most important issues to be addressed over the next 25 years.

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Like many other NH communities, Allenstown residents expressed concern that the rural character often viewed as central to Allenstown’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 Allenstown – historic structures, natural forests, Suncook River, Bear Brook State Park 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, open space and forests.

Common themes emerged from a close examination of the public outreach efforts throughout the master plan development. 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.

### 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 book definition for rural character, it’s clear that there are some shared images that come to mind; forests, historic villages, farms, waterways, hills, etc. However, it also refers to a community’s social structures that are created by activities and settlement patterns. **Preserving** this character is very often expressed as the highest priority in community surveys and other public outreach events. Each community 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. Nearly every NH community identifies rural character as an important value to preserve in the future.

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### *Improving connections:*

Residents identified the need for improved connections and access for recreational activities like walking, hiking boating and biking 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 Allenstown continues to look 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:*

Allenstown needs to be proactive in seeking 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 NH Region.

### *Keeping Allenstown's rural character while addressing the challenge of meeting the needs of residents:*

This value continues to have strong appeal to residents. One of the most common desires voiced by residents was a strong interest in preserving Allenstown's rural character and its associated historical assets, open spaces and other natural resources.

### *Keeping fiscal responsibility a priority:*

There is concern with increasing expenditures and impacts on property taxes. While residents generally supported a wide variety of objectives and recommendations as described in the other master plan chapters, there are also challenges regarding taxes and any potential new burdens. As municipal government makes public investments – in infrastructure, land protection, new programs and initiatives, keeping in mind the “bottom line” needs to be considered.

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