

Littleton Master Plan

Littleton, New Hampshire



2016

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Overview Statement

THE VISION

Through an extensive survey and public dialogue process, the Littleton Master Plan Committee feels that the goal of the plan should be to

Make Littleton the preferred White Mountain destination for recreation, services, and living by carefully balancing growth and quality of life issues.

People like living and working in Littleton. They find this a friendly, small-town kind of community. People know each other. They help and respect each other. They like the mix of income and social backgrounds within the population.

People like Littleton's role as a regional center. They like its location, with convenient access to the White Mountains, whether for recreation or simply for the majestic views that are available from many parts of town.

THE SETTING

People value Littleton's natural resources. They like its rural setting as well as its vibrant Main Street. They value its cultural and historic resources. They like its economic opportunities and wish there were a few more of them. They hope that younger residents will be able to stay in the area if they choose to.

Over half of Littleton's area is either tree covered or active farmland, but less than 1% of its residents are engaged in either agriculture or forestry. Retail trade (19%), health and education (18%), and manufacturing (17%) are the major employers here. While those activities were traditionally centered in Littleton's downtown business district, all three of these primary employers have demonstrated a move toward the outskirts, with large commercial retailers locating along Meadow Street/Route 302, the new hospital on Route 18, and manufacturing in the Littleton Industrial Park on Mount Eustis, and perhaps, in the future, on the Brook Road just over the town line in Bethlehem.

Despite this outward migration, Main Street and the central business district remain a strong focus for the community. There is an active Main Street Program. As an adjunct to this current planning process, there has been an intensive analysis as to how to make the downtown a friendlier place for pedestrian workers, shoppers, residents, and visitors. The downtown is seeing considerable public and private re-investment, with the new River Glen Elderly Housing project, a new pedestrian bridge across the Ammonoosuc River, and the pending reconstruction of Main Street itself. The center of Littleton contains many historic buildings, and is the home to a variety

of cultural events and facilities. These are both important to its citizens.

Littleton is experiencing modest growth, as development pressure moves northward through New Hampshire. Although its population was relatively constant through the 1990s, all population forecasts project some level of growth in the next few years. This study estimates that the population will increase from 5800 in 2000 to 6300 in 2020.

As with growth in any community, there are concerns about where it will occur, what natural resources will be impacted, and what views will be lost to development. There is a willingness to accommodate some new growth, but a concern that it be appropriately placed, and that it not undermine existing development.

THE FUTURE

The overarching thought in surveys, in public forums, and in discussion amongst the members of the Master Plan Committee is that people are very pleased with Littleton as it currently exists, and are hopeful that the future, while it may bring additional economic activity, will not unduly disrupt the community as it now exists. The Planning Board, as it works to implement recommendations contained in this plan, envisions the following tasks for itself and others:

Exit 44, Interstate 93

There exists a commercial zoning district in the vicinity of Moore Dam, Exit 43, and the Vermont/New Hampshire state line. The general thought is that this Commercial Zone should be reduced in size to reflect the existing business activity, and the remainder re-designated as a Rural Zone.

Rural Development

Littleton desires to provide a variety of housing options for its current and future citizens. There is concern, however, that development along rural roads not be strictly along the road frontage, and that efforts be undertaken to encourage more sensitive design standards. The plan recommends that the current 3 acres/unit density be retained in the Rural Zone, but that techniques and incentives be developed to make open space subdivisions a more attractive alternative for developers. There is also an interest in pursuing development controls for projects on steep slopes and on ridgelines.

Intown Residential Development

In an effort to pursue the variety of residential opportunities noted above, the plan recommends some additional utility extensions/expansions so as to achieve that. In particular, the plan recommends that additional lots might be served by water and sewer utilities in the area between Farr Hill Road and the current reservoir. If an additional water tank could be placed above this area, there appears to be a considerable amount of

land available for intown residential development.

Downtown Development

This plan recognizes the classic, downtown development dilemma: historic areas with dense development patterns are being asked to accommodate a type and volume of traffic that they were never designed to handle when they were initially laid out.

As noted above, concurrent with this master planning effort, there has been an extensive examination of the developed core of Littleton, along Union, Main, Cottage, West Main, and Meadow Streets. The overall thrust of that effort is to seek ways to accommodate necessary vehicular traffic, while giving a stronger, safer presence for pedestrian workers, residents, and shoppers.

This plan recognizes the historic and cultural importance of downtown Littleton, and urges that the efforts begun under the current downtown planning effort be continued with an eye towards implementation.

Brook Road Industrial Park

The Mount Eustis Industrial Park is nearly full. There have been ongoing discussions with the Towns of Bethlehem and Lisbon about the opportunity to create multi-town industrial parks. One of these is likely to be on the Brook Road in Bethlehem and another on Mount Eustis Road in Lisbon. The first would likely be at the Bethlehem site. This plan supports that effort.

Commercial Development/Exit 43

Littleton has experienced considerable commercial development outside of the historic downtown center over the past five years. Although there were initial concerns as to how these large scale, retail projects might impact the Main Street businesses, the opinion to date is that it has had a positive impact, drawing more regional shoppers into the community, who shop both at the outlying stores and at downtown locations as well.

Of late, there has been a serious interest in additional commercial development in the vicinity of Exit 43, which is not yet zoned for that type of development. This plan recommends that:

- Further commercial development be first focused on development and re-development opportunities along Route 302.
- Discussions be undertaken to explore the instituting of at least minimum development controls for non-residential projects with buildings in excess of 40,000 square feet.

- Any discussions about a re-zoning of the area in the vicinity of Exit 43 be tied to the presence of site plan review and other development controls for projects with non-residential buildings in excess of 40,000 square feet.

THE SUMMARY

Littleton is a wonderful town, with a small-town atmosphere and attitude. It cherishes its location, its views, its employment base, its mix of intown and rural environments, and its function as a regional center. All efforts should be focused on seeing that those characteristics are retained and enhanced as Littleton moves its way into the 21st Century.