

## 2. COMMUNITY VISION

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The community vision contained in the 2019 Dunbarton Master Plan begins with the preservation of the Town's small town and agricultural character, while at the same time meeting the needs of both current and future residents. Support for the rural atmosphere, with the accommodation of some level of commercial and housing growth and community services is apparent. At the same time, many are happy with the way that Dunbarton is now, and hope that the community retains its community feel and small town way of life well into the future.

### FROM DUNBARTON TODAY TO DUNBARTON TOMORROW...

Throughout the development of the Master Plan, engaging residents and other community stakeholders was a key goal. A 34-question community survey was available to residents during the outreach process and a visioning session invited people to a discussion forum to tell the Town what was important to them. The visioning session and the community survey gave the Planning Board important information on resident opinions on many topics related to Dunbarton's land use, housing, transportation, natural resources, community facilities and regulations as well as other thoughts on priorities and concerns. Broad themes have been based on the public outreach and other stakeholder input, themes which often overlap one another in their identification of important ideas in Town.

Small town/rural atmosphere (89.1%), natural resources (80.2%), location (78.8%) and people/community spirit (78.1%) were rated in the community survey as the most important features in Dunbarton. Also highly ranked was historic character (70.4%), educational system (67.8%), and town services (57.6%). Also demonstrated in the Community Survey, support for development that maintains the Town's rural character, including agricultural-related businesses was given (55.2%), as well as support for a country convenience store (54.1%).

Regarding growth, the majority of survey results indicate that residential growth is growing at an acceptable rate (64.3%), while some said the Town was growing too fast (21.1%). Others said the Town was growing too slowly or had no opinion (14.6%). Accessory dwelling units were highly supported and desired, as well as senior housing. While most were not concerned about parking in the Town center, various opinions and locations were mentioned regarding the implantation of sidewalks and other accommodations for cyclists and pedestrians.

A total of 71% of survey responses indicated that preserving open space was important, and many indicated that they would like more conservation lands in Town, specifically available for recreation opportunities. There was a large amount of support for the development of a comprehensive trail network, particularly for non-motorized uses.

## REGIONAL CONCERNS

Housing growth, transportation improvements, and natural resource protection are all areas where working as part of a regional effort can have many benefits for a community like Dunbarton.

With regard to housing, the Regional Housing Needs Assessment notes that to assist in meeting the future need for housing in the region, Dunbarton would need about 218 additional housing units (including Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs) between 2010 and 2040 – about seven per year, with less than one being rental. This suggests modest growth over a thirty-year period. Regionally speaking, these factors are consistent with regional trends: an aging population coupled with slower growth. Dunbarton is uniquely positioned between Manchester and Concord within the region and this will impact how it meets these changing trends. The Housing Chapter outlines that 1) Dunbarton’s existing regulatory framework appears to be responding well to the current housing market demands; and 2) there may be a need for smaller homes to prevent future vacancy rates as demographic demands begin shifting to smaller homes rather than larger ones.

Key regional transportation issues include potential short and long-term safety improvements to the intersection of NH77 and NH13, or “Page’s Corner,” planned improvements to the I-89 Exit 2 NB and SB ramps slated for construction in 2023, and the continued support and enhancement of the regional volunteer driver program that provides essential social services and medical appointments related trips to the region’s elderly and disabled populations.

Natural resource protection often benefits from a regional focus. Wildlife corridors, habitat ecosystems and trail systems don’t stop at municipal borders and need a broader approach to be successful in protection efforts. The 2015 NH Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) mapped wildlife habitat areas in Dunbarton, with many areas of Town included in the State’s highest ranked habitat for conservation. The WAP can be used as an informational tool to inform local efforts to identify wildlife habitats and educate residents on the importance of wildlife habitat and diversity.

Like many other small New Hampshire communities, Dunbarton residents expressed concern that the rural character often viewed as central to Dunbarton’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 Dunbarton – traditional buildings, agricultural fields, protected lands, stone walls, natural forests, and many treasured scenic views. 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, rivers, open space and forests. In Dunbarton, small-scale agriculture is a land use to highly encourage and support in the future to contribute to a strong local identity.

Respondents were asked what they saw as Dunbarton’s strengths and what they would want the perception of Dunbarton to be. Responses related to Dunbarton’s strengths were oriented towards location, rural setting and community spirit. Responses related to the future perception emphasized the Town’s country feel, quiet and safe setting, and offering a high quality of life.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS DUNBARTON'S STRENGTHS?

*"Location is ideal. It is beautiful with great homes. Family Community. Large lots, agriculture."*

*"Its small size, its active volunteer groups, its cheerful citizens and its natural beauty."*

*"Small town, community feel."*

*"Citizens, rural nature, location, the people that are dedicated to fair governing and proper stewardship of the town."*

*"Rural yet convenient to both Manchester and Concord."*

*"Rural community with open spaces."*

*"Community spirit – ability to convene for school and town meetings for comprehensive exploration and discussion of issue up for a vote."*

*"Good community flavor. Wonderful volunteer efforts."*

*"People care – when someone gets up at town meeting and there is a "right" thing to do, it gets done. If we can't afford something we'd like to see done, we say sorry."*

## WHAT DO YOU WANT THE PERCEPTION OF DUNBARTON TO BE?

*“A nice place to live with high quality of life.”*

*“Friendly, vibrant, welcoming  
active rural community.”*

*“A small town that has stayed true to its  
history.”*

*“A small community great to live in and visit. Destination  
for all your recreational desires, be it on water or land.”*

*“A small town that takes care of its assets  
and is responsible in its planning. A town  
that’s beautiful to live in both physically and  
otherwise. A town that feels neighborly and  
cheerful.”*

*“Rural living, in a town that takes care of its  
land for future generations, where people  
respect each other and each other’s  
property.”*

*“That it is a good place to live for all age  
groups, that services are adequate, and that  
taxes are reasonable.”*

*“Great place to live and raise a family.”*

## A VISION BY CHAPTER

The Master Plan chapters, with their data analysis, community survey consideration, and recommendations for implementation, support the future vision of Dunbarton within their pages. The following are the individual vision statements from each of the plan's chapters.

### **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Continue to appreciate and preserve Dunbarton's historic character and cultural resources for current and future generations.

### **HOUSING**

Continue to preserve and enhance Dunbarton's rural character and protect existing residential neighborhoods while at the same time providing for a variety of housing types to meet current and future needs.

### **NATURAL FEATURES**

Promote good stewardship of our natural resources and continue working to preserve Dunbarton's high quality of life and rural character by supporting open space, agriculture, forestry, wildlife, outdoor recreation, clean water, and wetlands.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Continue to provide delivery of quality Town Services to the residents of Dunbarton that meet future facility and service needs and will continue to serve the greater community over the coming years.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Promote the improvement of public roads in Dunbarton; 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 Dunbarton and throughout the region; maintain a commitment to the rural and historical character of the

## MAINTAINING A SMALL TOWN WAY OF LIFE

When asked what residents would like to see done in Dunbarton, many noted how they want it to stay the same, while at the same time some expressed an interest in the promotion of agriculture and light commercial uses that grows in a slow and steady way.

Support for the preservation of open spaces and retention of the town's rural character were described, while at the same time there was interest in improvements and the development of small retail shops or services to the Village District in an effort to bring more activity to the area.

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.

### **ENERGY**

Protect and maintain Dunbarton's rural character while looking for opportunities to pursue energy efficiency that will generate reduction in municipal expenditures and promote efficient development that supports the concept of energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy generation. The development of Dunbarton'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.

### **EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE**

Preserve and enhance Dunbarton's rural character. The community continues to value the protection of residential neighborhoods, forest lands and open space, yet equally values the continuation of traditional types of agriculture and the further development of low impact commercial activities.