



# *Topsham*

## Comprehensive Plan 2005

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Prepared By: Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update Committee  
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With Assistance From:  
Planning Decisions, Inc.

# *Introduction*

A comprehensive plan has one purpose: to improve the manner in which services and facilities are provided to the Town's residents and businesses. This was the goal of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, and it remains the goal of Topsham's 2005 Comprehensive Plan. This update improves on the original plan by cataloguing the changes that have occurred since 1992 and refining the direction in which the community should be headed.

The Topsham Selectmen created the Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update Committee to review the Town's 1992 Comprehensive Plan.

The following plan is the result of more than four years of analysis and discussion by the Update Committee. During this period, the Committee met more than 100 times, sponsored public forums, interviewed dozens of community leaders, operated a webpage, and received meaningful input from hundreds of Topsham residents and businesspeople.

The Comprehensive Plan itself is a guide – not a law or a regulation. The plan is designed to coordinate the efforts of our Town's elected leaders, appointed officials, and local organizations so that they can work as efficiently as possible. In addition, the Plan serves as the foundation for the community's land use standards and regulations. Maine State Law requires that the Town's zoning ordinance and map be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

***Part 1 is the plan in a nutshell.*** It introduces the vision of where Topsham should be headed, a history of where we have

been, a summary of the major forces that are changing our town, and a summary of how Topsham can use these forces of change to attain its vision.

***Part 2 identifies what we should do to make our future better.*** It describes the goals, objectives, and strategies our town should follow to attain our vision. The Future Land Use Plan describes in detail how our land use standards and regulations could be updated to provide better protection and more flexibility for our pattern of land use in the future.

***Part 3 identifies how we will get there.*** This describes in detail who should be involved when addressing each issue, how each issue should be approached, and which issues are the most important to address to ensure our town's future.

***Part 4 provides an inventory of the existing conditions in Topsham*** and analyzes how these conditions may influence the future growth and development of the community. This section serves as the foundation for the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies.

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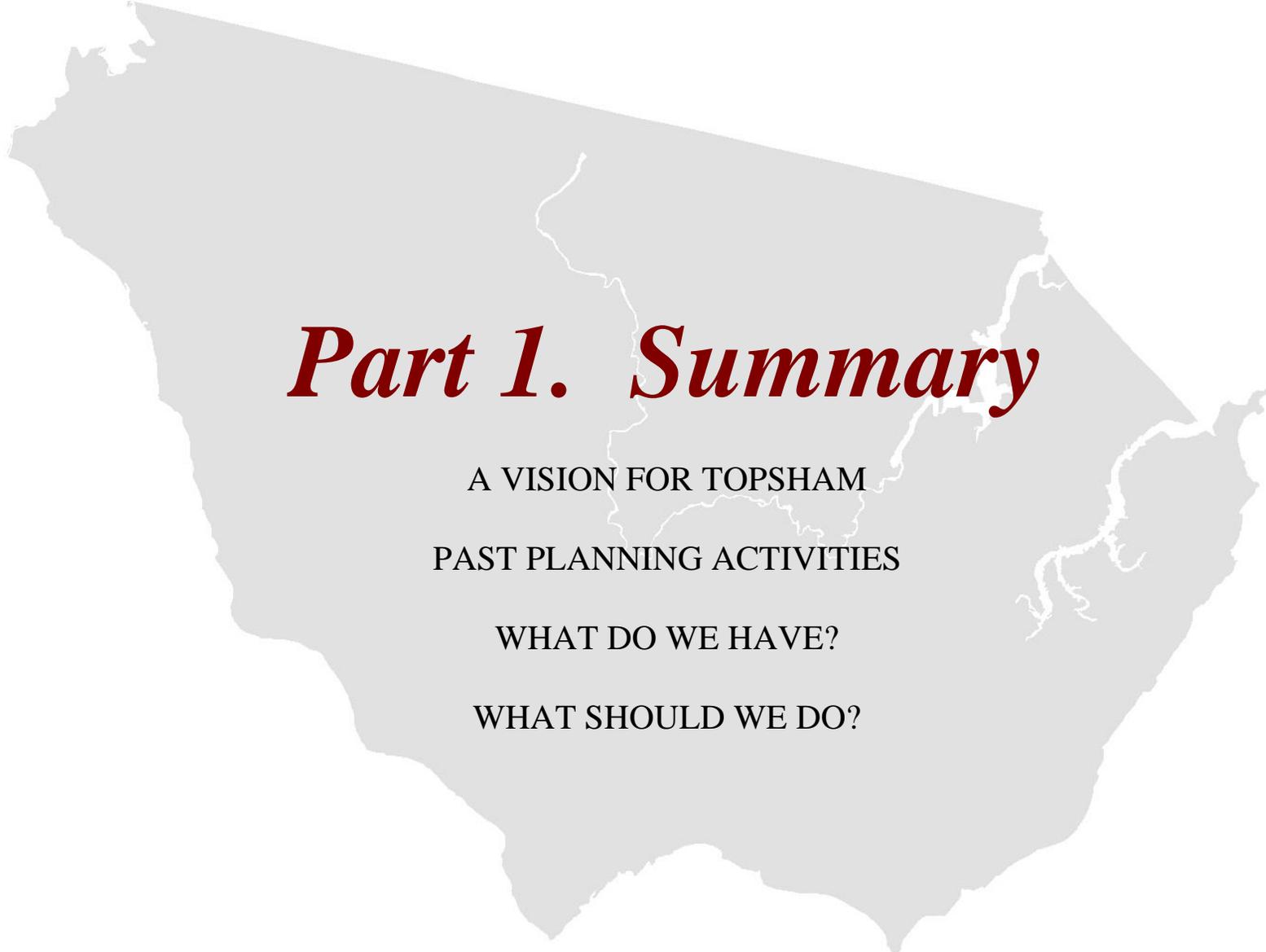
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# *Part 1. Summary*

A VISION FOR TOPSHAM

PAST PLANNING ACTIVITIES

WHAT DO WE HAVE?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

# *A Vision for Topsham*

Topsham has something for everyone. We have historic homes in the heart of our village, established neighborhoods, retirement and assisted living facilities, apartment complexes, new residential subdivisions, and an active-adult community. We have small, locally-owned shops, working farms, artisans, regional big-box retailers, and a rapidly growing service industry. We have rolling wooded landscapes, quiet tidal marshes, and boiling waterfalls.

Topsham is a vintage New England community that is full of special places. The more densely-developed village is highly prized for its historic homes and mills into which recent redevelopment has breathed a new life. Our schools, K – 12, are all located in or adjacent to the village. The swinging pedestrian bridge across the Androscoggin River was built by the same engineering firm that built the Brooklyn Bridge. And the Topsham Fairgrounds are widely considered one of our town's most important community resources.

The fringe that surrounds this historic downtown has many of our town's special community resources. These include the hustle and bustle of the Topsham Fair Mall – the midcoast region's newest commercial and employment center – and most of our town's locally-owned businesses. The new library and the recreation fields on Foreside Road are important community resources.

Surrounding this fringe are the special places in our town's rural landscape. This area has several working farms that are widely appreciated. Bradley Pond and its hiking trails are

important places for Topsham residents. The Cathance River and its watershed is the most widely recognized special place in our town.

These are the resources that make our town special, and if they were to change in the future, our community's character would be threatened. It is important to understand that change is inevitable and believe that change can be used to continue improving our town. The rest of this chapter identifies our vision for Topsham's future.

In two decades, the *Village* will remain the core of our community, containing smaller-scale shops and businesses, historic homes, a waterfront park, and many of our town's public services (town hall, police, fire, rescue, schools, post office, etc). Pedestrians will be able to move about in safety and with ease, thanks to more sidewalks, better traffic flow, more parking, more bike trails, and safe crosswalks. More of the Village's historic buildings will be renovated and improved. The commercial cluster at the Bowdoin Mill will spark additional commercial and mixed-use (commercial and residential) redevelopment opportunities farther up Main Street, possibly including professional offices, bakeries, art galleries, and small retail businesses. Despite these changes, the Village will retain its New England character through high design standards, more landscaping, and infill development that complements the character of the area.

The *Crossroads* is a mixed use area, and includes the Naval Annex, the Middle and High Schools, Topsham Fair Mall, and

the Route 196/Interstate 295 interchange. This section of Town will continue to be the principal commercial corridor in our town. The intensity of development will generally increase with its proximity to the Topsham Fair Mall. A broader range of business activity should be allowed, but only if good planning with design and performance standards protects the character of the area (for example this stretch should never resemble Western Avenue in Augusta). The one major change to the area will be traffic. While the volume of traffic moving through this commercial corridor will always be high, new road connections and traffic management tools will decrease the impact of this traffic on residents and neighborhoods. Bicycle and pedestrian paths will link the community resources (schools, athletic fields, etc) with the commercial areas and residential neighborhoods. While there remains debate about extending public water and sewer across Interstate 295, we feel that new development in the Route 196 corridor should be preceded by good planning to ensure that safety, traffic volume, and impacts to neighborhoods are addressed. The Naval Annex could become a new, pedestrian-oriented village.

The **Lewiston Road Corridor** will always be our town's major connection with Lewiston/Auburn and Lisbon, but this corridor should function differently in the future. Exactly what this corridor becomes will require more discussion and choices by the Town (expanding commercial opportunities, changing the pattern of development, improving our Industrial Zone, curtailing new development), but everyone agrees that traffic volume and pedestrian safety will need to be addressed along Route 196. Access to the Androscoggin River will be improved, and Pejepscot will be redeveloped to a commercial center or residential village. The River Road corridor will have more, denser residential development.

**Rural Topsham** will exist much as it exists today – rural with large areas of undeveloped land, low density residential

development, and working farms and forests. Most of the important scenic and wildlife habitats in this part of our town will be protected (with voluntary land protection agreements, clustered residential development, innovative policy mechanisms, and other market-based conservation tools). Once these resources are protected, access to them will be improved, especially our town's many rivers and forests. Home occupations in this area (and town wide) will continue to be an important part of our town's economy.

The **Foreside Road/Middlesex Road** area will not change significantly, except that the number of recreation opportunities in the area will expand. Scenic views of the rivers, farms, and Merrymeeting Bay will be protected, and a limited amount of residential development will occur to the north (in clustered developments). In towards the Downtown there will be more infill development on expanded public utilities. More bicycle and pedestrian paths (including a connection across the Androscoggin to the bike path), hiking trails, water access points, sidewalks, and recreation opportunities at the recreation complex will make this a regional recreation center.

In general, approximately two-thirds of our town's residential development should be in more urban areas while two-thirds of the conservation effort should be in more rural areas. Development in more urban areas should be on small lots or in multi-family developments. Development in rural areas should be on large lots or in clustered subdivisions. Conservation efforts should focus on Bradley Pond/Cathance River watershed, scenic farms and views, waterfront access points (Cathance and Androscoggin River), a waterfront park in the Downtown, and as paths/trails in the denser areas of town.

# *Past Planning Activities*

This comprehensive plan update is designed to improve on the existing 1992 Comprehensive Plan and adjust the direction in which our community should be going. Much has changed in Topsham in the last 15 years, and the Town of Topsham has been working hard to accommodate the changing needs of our community. Our Town's recent planning efforts are included in this list:

- Wastewater Facilities Plan Update, 1990;
- Analysis and Recommendations for the Topsham Economy, 1991;
- Comprehensive Plan, 1992
- Lower Village Study, 1993
- Quality Maine Street Grant Main Street Vision Plan, 1996;
- Main Street Revitalization, Lower Village Redevelopment, 1997;
- Topsham Shoreline Access Project, 1997;
- Mallett Drive Traffic Calming Study, 1997;
- Phase II CDBG A plan to reclaim Main Street, 1998;
- CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant, 1998;
- Historic District Design Review Manual – Barba Architects and Adopted by HDC, 2000;
- Zoning and Design Standards, 2000;
- Municipal Facilities, 2000;
- Fire Station (Town Office) Siting Committee, 2001 – 2005;
- Project Canopy Downtown Tree Study, 2001;
- Cathance Water Tower Study, 2002;
- Town-owned Property Inventory, 2002;
- Comprehensive Plan Update, 2001 - 2005;
- Bike Path, 2004;
- West Side Water & Sewer Extensions Study, 2004
- Comprehensive Transportation Plan, 2005;
- New High Pressure Service Zone for Water System Study, 2005, and
- Main Street Plan, 2005.

In addition, our Town's land use zoning ordinance has been adjusted several times in the last 15 years to reflect changes in town policy. Even with these changes, the ordinance still closely resembles the original plan that was established in the 1992 Comprehensive Plan.

# *What Do We Have?*

Our town's population is growing and its demographics are changing. Our economy is diversifying, and the number of community activities is expanding. Topsham is building new facilities and infrastructure, and rural areas are under pressure.

This section describes what Topsham has in the early 2000s and identifies the major issues that will have to be addressed in the future. For more information on what Topsham has, the Comprehensive Plan Update Appendix includes detailed inventories of:

- Population and Demographics,
- Housing,
- Local Economy,
- Transportation,
- Public Utilities,
- Public Facilities and Governance,
- Land Use,
- Parks and Recreation,
- Open Space, Agriculture, and Forestry,
- Historic and Archaeological Resources,
- Natural Resources,
- Marine Resources, and
- Fiscal Capacity

By 2003, our town had an estimated **9,631 year-round residents**. This was larger than most of our neighbors (Lisbon had 9,000, Bowdoin had 2,700, and Bowdoinham had 2,600), but still half the size of Brunswick (21,000).

Our town's *population has been growing* modestly, but not as quickly as it has in the past. In the decades from the 1950s through the 1980s, our town grew by between 27% and 42% each decade. In the 1990s, this growth rate moderated to 6%. The growth rate was held down because of the real estate recession in the early 1990s and the steady decrease in the average number of people living in each housing unit.

Topsham's *demographic profile* is changing as well. Our population is getting older, more likely to be working in white collar and service-oriented jobs, and earning more annually than ten years ago. At the same time, our town is becoming less diverse (in employment and household income) than it was a decade ago, and residents are now commuting farther to work than they have in the past.

These demographic changes can alter the needs of the community dramatically. Older residents may demand different services. More educated households are likely to have higher expectations from the education system. The available supply of civic volunteers tends to decrease as more

residents work outside of the community (this affects the volunteer fire department the most).

In the next decade, these shifts in our community's demographics are projected to continue, and our population is projected to grow by 11%, to **10,700 residents by 2015**. This population projection is based on the more modest population growth that our town has experienced in the 1990s.

It is important to note that, despite the more moderate population growth rate, the **rate of residential development is projected to continue at a faster rate**. By 2015, the number of housing units in our town is projected to increase by 17%. This apparent discrepancy is explained by steadily decreasing household sizes.

If current trends continue, most of this **residential development is projected to occur in more rural areas**. The availability of undeveloped land and lower development costs will drive this trend. Growth in these more rural areas tends to have a greater impact on important natural resources, affect scenic views, increase traffic on the rural transportation corridors, and could cost more for the Town to serve than development in the village.

Our **housing profile is diverse** (rentals versus owner-occupied units, single-family versus multi-family, condominiums, etc). Even as many other communities experienced largely single family development in the 1990s, Topsham maintained a mix of new housing alternatives. This diverse housing profile is an important ingredient for a diverse community.

**Housing affordability** has become an ever-greater issue in Topsham. Property values have increased faster than income levels for many in the community. Currently, there are a

sufficient number of units to meet the demand of Moderate and Low Income Households, but the housing market for Very Low Income Households is very tight. This is often an income category that includes young families and retirees living on fixed incomes.

Our town's **economy is growing and diversifying**. Topsham is becoming a retail and service center in the region, and these jobs are expanding rapidly. While the retail growth around the Topsham Fair Mall is the most obvious change in the economy, the growth in higher-paying service jobs has been dramatic. This growth has not been without concerns – namely the increase in traffic moving through the heart of our town.

The **region's economy** is still largely dependent on national defense. Employment at the Brunswick Naval Air Station and Bath Iron Works will continue to change as the Department of Defense continues its realignment from a Cold War stance. However, environmentally-benign industries are taking its place – health care, adult living, education, and creative economies.

Our town is a **transportation center**. Several arterial roadways (i.e. Route 196, Route 201, and Coastal Connector) meet with Interstate 295 in the heart of our town's commercial area. The growing economy and regional residential development patterns are placing an ever-growing strain on the existing transportation infrastructure. New vehicular connections have been created to alleviate the pressure on this infrastructure and create more alternative connections to improve traffic movement for local residents (i.e. Topsham Fair Mall Road, Coastal Connector, Tedford Road connection to the Annex).

As traffic volumes have increased, the **safety of this transportation infrastructure** has degraded for pedestrians and

cyclists. While the number of pedestrian and bicycle connections is growing, the number of alternatives is still modest.

The denser areas of Topsham are *served by a public water and sewer network*. These facilities allow denser development without affecting important natural resources. These facilities have an excess capacity, and development that links into these systems could increase their efficiency while protecting important natural resources from degradation.

*Extending public utilities* to accommodate new development is difficult, as well as expensive, and current policies by the Water and Sewer Districts prevent investments in system extensions. Typically, extensions linked to a specific project are funded by the project. However, since extensions are expensive, developers often choose to not make them and develop in the more rural areas of the community instead – with greater impacts on natural resources and rural character.

Topsham's *public facilities* have improved dramatically in recent years. The growing population and changing demographics have strained many of our facilities. Recent investments – such as the public works facility, public library, and schools – will alleviate some of this new strain for the foreseeable future. However, the public safety departments, general government, and high school are in need of space upgrades in order to continue providing a high level of service.

The *recreation needs* of our community are changing. The population is getting older, participation in recreation activities has increased, and the type of recreation activities being provided is changing. While there is an adequate supply of outdoor recreation space for the foreseeable future, the supply of indoor recreation space is severely limited. Also, the

Recreation Department does not have a master plan to prepare it for future needs.

*Working farms and forests* are under pressure. These activities dominate much of our rural areas, and are integral to the rural character of our community. However, large working farms are fast becoming relics of a bygone time as the economics of farming in the coastal region have shifted to favor smaller operations producing high-value produce for local markets. While the current use tax program has been successful in Topsham, the future of these working farms is far from certain.

The efforts of *conservation organizations* (both local/regional nonprofit groups and the State) have protected many pockets of important natural areas – namely Bradley Pond and the lower Muddy River. These groups have entered into market-based agreements to purchase land or development rights from the landowners. Conversely, the cluster development provision in our subdivision ordinance, which is designed to protect habitat while encouraging development, has not been popular the way it is designed.

Topsham is virtually *surrounded by water*. Most of these water bodies have improved in their water quality dramatically in recent decades. The result of this is a natural resource that has been largely ignored, but is now becoming an attractive community resource. Waterfront land is now a valuable resource, and our town has miles of undeveloped shorelines. Access to these new resources is limited in Topsham, but available in neighboring communities.

Topsham has many *important natural resources*. These include high-value wetlands, large undeveloped blocks of land and rare/natural communities. At the same time, a full natural

resource inventory has never been completed in Topsham. Development in or around these important natural resources could threaten their health.

Topsham is rich in *historic and archaeological resources*. Our community has leveraged outside funding to protect several important sites, and has successfully used private investment as a tool to protect the Great Bowdoin Mill and much of the Historic Districts. Some of our protection measures in the land use ordinance could be updated to be more pertinent.

The *tax burden* on landowners in Topsham is about average when compared with surrounding communities. Smaller towns (Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Freeport, and Durham) tend to have a smaller tax burden, while several neighboring communities (Brunswick, Lisbon, Bath) tend to have a higher tax burden. Communities with more services and facilities tend to have higher tax burdens. While Topsham's tax rate has been dropping in the past couple of years, changes in the State Homestead Exemption program have resulted in higher tax burdens for many residents.

The *Town of Topsham is strong financially*. The Town has very little long-term debt, only recently borrowing money to help construct the new public library. Tax collections increased by 28% between 1997 and 2002, while total revenues increased by 35% (charges for services and transfers from the State raised the most). Education expenses (which account for about half of our town's budget) increased by 29%. Topsham has been aggressive when recruiting businesses to our town and has used creative development tools to help attract and/or shelter new taxes from these businesses.

# *What Should We Do?*

Our town is changing. Topsham is going to have to address many issues in the future. Each of these issues could have implications for our town’s future. The following table summarizes the actions that are recommended in this Comprehensive Plan to ensure our town takes full advantage of our opportunities.

	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
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## *Improve the Efficiency of the Town of Topsham.*

<p><i>a. Examine ways to improve the form of government in the community.</i> Topsham has changed a lot in the last 20 years, and will continue to change in the future. Our town has become more sophisticated and it is becoming increasingly complex to operate. The Town of Topsham should create a Committee whose task is to study town government and recommend the most appropriate and efficient form of governance for the future.</p>	1	Public Facilities Population Housing Local Economy
<p><i>b. Support the efforts of quasi-governmental groups (for example, Topsham Development Inc) and other outside organizations</i> that provide services to our community and its residents.</p>	2, 7, 11	Historic Resources Housing Local Economy Natural Resources Marine Resources Parks and Recreation
<p><i>c. Create a more responsive property tax system in Topsham</i> by re-evaluating property more often.</p>	9, 26	Fiscal Capacity Public Facilities Regional Issues

	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
<i>d. Seek out public-private partnerships</i> as a strategy to improve the level of service available in our town. Topsham can benefit significantly by leveraging the knowledge, resources, and flexibility of private and other public organizations to improve the level of service for Topsham residents.	13, 27, 82a	Parks and Recreation Open Space Natural Resources Marine Resources Historic Resources
<i>e. Educate our community</i> about our unique natural resources and history. These resources are important to our town's character.	8, 15, 16 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 81 82a, 82b	Natural Resources Marine Resources Parks and Recreation Open Space Historic Resources
<i>f. Expand the number of local services that are provided by regional organizations.</i> Topsham should seek to regionalize services when the same level of service can be provided to the town more efficiently.	3, 10, 15, 27, 37	Regional Coordination
<i>g. Improve the efficiency of our local government</i> by investing in newer technology, planning for future growth, and managing town operations efficiently.	21, 22, 45, 50, 53b	Public Facility

## *Plan for Our Future.*

<i>a. Improve the safety and efficiency of our transportation network.</i> As our town and the surrounding region have grown, the demands on our town's transportation network have increased dramatically. Until recently, our transportation network had not grown to alleviate some of the demand placed on it. Our town should proactively consider the impacts that development has on the safety and efficiency of our town's transportation network.	4, 32, 39, 40, 44, 46, 49, 51, 59, 67, 73, 74, 76, 79, 83 53a	Transportation Land Use Housing Local Economy
<i>b. Create a master plan for our major road corridors.</i> This includes the Route 196/Interstate 295 Interchange, the Route 201 Corridor, and the Route 196 Corridor. The Town of Topsham should start a master planning process that considers residential/industrial/commercial land uses, transportation safety/efficiency, potential public utility infrastructure expansion, and rural character. (underway)	32, 39, 40, 44, 54	Transportation Land Use Housing Local Economy

	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
c. <b>Create a master plan for the Upper Village.</b> With the potential closing of the Naval Air Station Annex, redevelopment of the Upper Village could be a tremendous opportunity. The Town of Topsham should develop a master plan that identifies a common vision for the development of dense, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use village that builds on this growing role as a community center.	32, 38	Transportation Land Use Housing Local Economy
d. <b>Plan for the protection of important natural and scenic resources.</b> Topsham currently protects land on a case-by-case basis. The Town of Topsham should create a more formal and comprehensive approach to these protection efforts. This includes detailed inventories of the town’s important natural and scenic resources, regional efforts to protect habitat, a master plan for the Cathance/Muddy River corridor, and a watershed management plan for Topsham Fairground Stream.	8, 15, 16, 29, 35, 36, 36a, 42, 56, 69, 75	Natural Resources Housing Population Marine Resources Parks and Recreation Open Space
e. <b>Create a recreation master plan.</b> As our town grows and our demographics change, the recreation needs of our community are changing and in high demand. The Town of Topsham should create a recreation master plan to ensure a high level of service to residents in the future.	14, 47, 61	Parks and Recreation Open Space Housing Population Transportation
f. <b>Plan for future growth.</b> Topsham has been growing quickly, both commercially and residentially. The Town of Topsham should update its impact fee program, create a wetland banking program, review the areas set aside for commercial and industrial development, and update its Tax Increment Financing policy to ensure future development does not adversely impact current residents and businesses.	33, 34, 35, 41, 48, 63, 64	Housing Local Economy Fiscal Capacity
g. <b>Encourage SAD 75 to plan its future space needs.</b> While the rest of Topsham’s schools are in good condition, Mount Ararat High School is in need of updating and renovation to provide appropriate program space. The Town of Topsham should support SAD 75’s to redevelopment/renovation plan that to improve the school.	11, 53	Public Facilities Population

	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
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### *Maintain a High Level of Service at Town Facilities.*

a. <b>Centralize public safety and municipal services in one location.</b> The public safety needs of our community are growing as our town grows, and our public safety facilities will not provide an adequate level of service in the future. Topsham should centralize these services, and possibly municipal offices and other services, in one location. (underway)	12, 55, 62	Public Facilities Historic Resources
b. <b>The Town of Topsham should minimize the environmental impacts of its operations, including energy efficiency, promoting recycling, and conserving resources.</b>	58	Public Facilities

### *Improve the pattern of land use in Topsham.*

a. <b>Update our Land Use Ordinance</b> so that it meets the needs of our community. Topsham has well-defined rural and village areas. The character of each of these areas is important to our community’s quality of life. We believe that while the underlying principles of our existing land use ordinance are important, oftentimes the requirements of the land use ordinance do not provide enough flexibility to attract “good development” nor provide enough protection to existing landowners from the negative impacts of development.	63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 72	Land Use Natural Resources Marine Resources Parks and Recreation Open Space Housing Local Economy
b. <b>Create new alternatives for development</b> in Topsham. Many of our town’s important natural and scenic areas are being threatened as we use our land changes. We believe that Topsham has an opportunity to both protect these important areas while encouraging new development. Topsham should create a program that encourages more development in the denser areas of town served by public water and sewer in exchange for purchasing development rights from landowners in important natural and scenic areas. To assure that development is consistent with this pattern, the Town should institute a development monitoring system to track the development pattern.	35, 69, 71, 72, 75, 80, 82f	Public Utilities Land Use Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Open Space Local Economy Housing

	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
<p>c. <b><i>Make more efficient use of our public water and sewer systems.</i></b> The public water and sewer network allows denser development while minimizing that development’s impact on our natural resources. It also allows development to occur in a denser, more neighborhood-friendly pattern. We believe that there are opportunities to use development as a tool to expand these public utilities.</p>	5, 6, 18, 70, 71	Public Utilities Housing Land Use Local Economy
<p>d. <b><i>Maintain high standards for new development</i></b> in our community. Our town already has a wide variety of development standards to ensure public safety, protect the Village’s historical character, etc. We believe that Topsham should update these development standards to ensure that new development provides adequate public safety, minimizes external costs to Town Government, and protects the character of our community.</p>	34, 64, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 78, 81, 82, 82b, 82c, 82d, 82e	Historic Resources Land Use Housing Local Economy
<p>e. <b><i>Create more affordable housing opportunities</i></b> in our community. The cost of living in our town has increased rapidly and it is becoming more difficult to create affordable housing opportunities. We believe that Topsham can increase opportunities by updating our Land Use Ordinance, adopting an affordable housing program, and creating a Tax Increment Financing policy for affordable housing.</p>	77, 77a, 78, 80	Housing Land Use Fiscal Capacity Local Economy
<p><b><i>Increase connections throughout our community.</i></b></p>		
<p>a. <b><i>Connect Topsham</i></b> residential areas with commercial areas and with community facilities. As our town grows, it is becoming increasingly important for Topsham residents to have ways to stay connected with each other, commercial areas, and community facilities. We believe that our town has opportunities to create these automobile routes, bicycle paths, and pedestrian trails/sidewalks. Whenever possible, we should require that appropriate connections are made within the community.</p>	57, 83, 84, 85	Transportation Housing Local Economy Public Facilities Parks and Recreation Open Space

	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
b. <b>Ensure that connections within our town are safe.</b> As traffic volumes increase, road shoulders are becoming less safe as bicycle and pedestrian connections. Of particular concern are school children and off-road vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles, etc) crossing busy transportation corridors. We believe the Town of Topsham should examine and implement strategies to ensure that connections throughout the community remain as safe as possible.	59, 83, 85, 88	Transportation Parks and Recreation Open Space Housing Local Economy
c. <b>Connect Topsham to the rest of the region.</b> As the bicycle and pedestrian network in the region grows, we believe our town has a tremendous opportunity to connect communities together and provide our residents with a higher level of service. These important connections include the Androscoggin River Swinging Bridge, the Frank Wood Bridge, a potential Androscoggin River Bike Path, and trail corridors in rural Topsham.	87	Transportation Parks and Recreation Open Space
d. <b>Create more connections with our natural environment.</b> Topsham’s network of natural resources creates opportunities for education, economic activity, and quality of life. We need to identify these connections.	57, 84, 86	Transportation Natural Resources Marine Resources Parks and Recreation Open Space

***Preserve our existing neighborhoods.***

e. <b>Protect our existing neighborhoods</b> from the adverse impacts of new development. As our town grows, the potential for adverse impacts on existing neighborhoods increases. We believe that our town can accommodate new development while respecting the quality of life of existing residents by minimizing the adverse impacts from traffic, noise, lighting at night, and air quality.	49, 66	Transportation Housing Local Economy
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	Refer to Strategy # (in Section G)	Refer to: Goals and Objectives (in Section E), and Inventory Chapters (in Part 4)
<p>f. <i>Use new development and redevelopment as a tool</i> to strengthen existing neighborhoods. New development and redevelopment create opportunities to improve residents’ quality of life and protect historic structures. These investments can include upgrading existing infrastructure (sidewalks, roads, paths, water/sewer lines, etc), building new infrastructure, and reinvigorating investment in neighborhoods. Topsham should use these opportunities to ensure our neighborhoods are great places to live, work, and play.</p>	68, 71, 72, 74, 78, 81, 82	Transportation Housing Local Economy Recreation Historic Resources
<p>g. <i>Provide safe connections</i> with our homes and our neighborhoods, commercial areas, natural areas, and community facilities. As our town grows, it is becoming increasingly important for Topsham residents to have safe ways to stay connected. We believe that our town has opportunities to create these safe connections and that these new connections will improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods.</p>	85, 86, 87, 88	Transportation Housing Local Economy Recreation Historic Resources Marine Resources Natural Resources



# *Part 2. What Should We Do?*

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

# *Goals, Objectives, and Strategies*

To address the issues our town will be facing in the future, Topsham recognizes the following goals, objectives, and strategies. The Implementation Strategy (Section F) provides more detail concerning who should be responsible for each strategy and the level of importance assigned to each strategy.

## **A. HOUSING**

**Our Goal** is to promote residential development that is safe and allows affordable housing to a variety of income levels.

**Objective 1.** Use development as a tool to improve the integrity and character of Topsham's residential areas.

**Strategy a.** Update our open space development subdivision ordinance to create financial incentives (such as a density bonus) for developers to protect significant amounts of natural/scenic areas whenever development occurs in the rural zone.

**Strategy b.** Create a program that determines when and how new growth-area subdivisions with densities higher than the underlying zone allows could be developed contingent on preserving an appropriate amount of developable land in another area of Topsham. This program depends on a list of priority parks, recreation, conservation, and scenic resources in Topsham that should be the target of these development offsets. This program depends on creating a fund into which developers pay their offset fees. The proceeds of this fund are then used to purchase land or development easements.

**Strategy c.** Encourage the preservation of the Lower Village’s character by maintaining the historic development standards in the Lower Village.

**Strategy d.** Review the Land Use Ordinance to ensure that residential areas are adequately buffered from the adverse impacts of new development and new transportation connections.

**Strategy f.** Create hierarchical design standards for all new public and private roads that require appropriate landscaping, tree lines, travelways, bicycle/pedestrian ways, and accessible shoulders.

**Objective 2.** To increase the amount of affordable housing available in Topsham and work to see that 10% of all new housing meets affordability criteria.

**Strategy a.** Adjust the Land Use Ordinance to promote the development of affordable housing in our community with increased densities in appropriate areas, manufactured housing, and multi-unit buildings.

**Strategy b.** Adjust the Land Use Ordinance to allow renovated buildings in our current R2 district to convert to multi-family housing, so long as the volume of the renovated building doesn’t change, the character of the residential neighborhood remains intact, and adequate parking facilities are provided.

**Strategy c.** Create a program that allows density bonuses to a development in the growth areas if that development contributes fees to an affordable housing fund. This affordable housing fund will be used by local affordable housing providers, such as the Topsham Housing Authority, to create affordable housing opportunities within the community.

**Strategy d.** Review and revise the Mobile Home Park Overlay Districts to allow for the expansion of existing mobile home parks that are located within the Growth Area where such expansion is feasible.

**Objective 3.** Use residential development as part of a strategy to manage growth.

**Strategy a.** Adjust the Land Use Ordinance and decrease lot sizes on land serviced by public water and sewer, with special attention to the potential for infill development within the denser areas of the village. This also requires adjustments to the space and bulk standards in the Land Use Ordinance.

**Strategy b.** Work with the Topsham Sewer District and Brunswick-Topsham Water District to create a capital recovery program for individuals or entities that extend the public water and public sewer networks. This capital recovery program will create more financial incentives for privately-financed utility extensions by allowing those that extend public utilities to recoup some of their investment from new utility users.

**Strategy c.** Create a master plan for the Upper Village that creates a common vision for the development of dense, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use village that builds on the area's growing role as a community center (at current Naval Air Station Annex).

**Strategy d.** Require all new development in the growth areas (identified in the Future Land Use Plan) to connect to public utilities if the expansion to those utilities is financially practical.

**Strategy e.** Update and extend the Main Street Plan to at least the Rt. 196/Rt. 201 Intersection, evaluating desired land uses, densities and type of businesses that should be encouraged in this area in order to enhance Topsham's Village.

**Objective 4.** Improve the connectivity of residential neighborhoods.

**Strategy a.** Require that new residential developments have bicycle and/or pedestrian connections with existing developments. The type of connections should depend on where the development exists in the community – trails/rights-of-way in less dense areas and sidewalks/paths in more dense areas.

**Strategy b.** Improve automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian connections throughout the Town between residential neighborhoods, community facilities, recreation areas, and commercial areas. Special attention should be given to designs that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.

## **B. LOCAL ECONOMY**

**Our Goal** is to expand the local economy to enhance the community's quality of life for its residents.

**Objective 1.** Continue expanding the local economy and tax base to minimize the local tax burden.

**Strategy a.** Maintain an active community and economic development program through Topsham Development, Inc.

**Strategy b.** An economic development study should be completed, to include plans for future economic growth, potential impacts and contingency plans stemming from a closure of BIW and/or BNAS. This study should be used to guide future investment of economic development funds by the Town.

**Objective 2.** Encourage businesses that have good-paying jobs to locate in Topsham.

**Strategy a.** Focus economic development incentives and assistance on businesses that will return a significant portion of their revenues back to the local economy (such as high wages, or local/regional ownership).

**Strategy b.** Develop a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy that identifies appropriate commercial and affordable housing uses of TIFs for community and/or economic development.

**Strategy c.** Review the Land Use Ordinance and Performance Standards to ensure that home occupations and home businesses remain a viable component of Topsham's economy.

**Strategy d.** Develop a policy that identifies when conservation banking/mitigation efforts are appropriate to facilitate both development and preservation in appropriate areas of the community.

**Objective 3.** Diversify the local business economy to encourage a balance between the various sectors of Topsham's economy.

**Strategy a.** Ensure that appropriate areas are zoned for economic growth and allow office, service, and manufacturing uses according to the Future Land Use Plan.

**Strategy b.** Work with landowners to develop a business park (similar to the Topsham Business Park) west of Interstate 295.

**Objective 4.** Strengthen neighborhoods by encouraging neighborhood-scale retail and service opportunities.

**Strategy a.** Review the Land Use Ordinance to allow neighborhood grocery stores enough square footage to adequately provide retail and service opportunities to local residents, and to allow limited gasoline sales, in the Growth Area only. Appropriate buffer and siting standards will have to be developed.

**Objective 5.** Assure that non-residential development is of a high-quality and that it mitigates its impact on existing neighborhoods, the environment, and the community as a whole.

**Strategy a.** Create a master transportation plan for the entire town. Current and future development scenarios envisioned in the Future Land Use Plan shall be included. Special attention shall be paid to the Route 196 corridor from the Lisbon town line to Interstate 295, the Interstate 295 interchange, and between Interstate 295 and the Coastal Connector.

**Strategy b.** Review the Table of Permitted Uses in the Land Use Ordinance to ensure that appropriate businesses are permitted in each zone and that lot and building size restrictions are appropriate.

**Strategy c.** Improve automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian connections throughout the Town between residential neighborhoods, community facilities, recreation areas, and commercial areas. Special attention should be given to designs that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.

**Strategy d.** Review the Land Use Ordinance to ensure that residential areas are adequately buffered from the adverse impacts of new development and new transportation connections.

**Strategy e.** Develop a policy that identifies when conservation banking/mitigation efforts are appropriate to facilitate both development and preservation in appropriate areas of the community.

**Objective 6.** Use non-residential growth as part of a strategy to manage residential growth.

**Strategy a.** Create a master plan for the Upper Village that creates a common vision for the development of dense, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use village that builds on the area's growing role as a community center (at current Naval Air Station Annex).

**Objective 7.** Capitalize on Topsham's location and natural resources by encouraging ecologically-based tourism.

**Strategy a.** Seek capital funding opportunities to expand the number of natural resource-based tourism facilities available in Topsham, including bicycle/pedestrian paths, trails, access points to natural resource areas, and water access facilities.

## C. TRANSPORTATION

**Our Goal** is to create a flexible transportation network that allows residents, visitors, and commuters to move safely and efficiently within and through Topsham.

**Objective 1.** Improve the quality and safety of Topsham’s existing transportation network.

**Strategy a.** Develop a five-year infrastructure maintenance and capital improvements program that details the level of service at which Topsham’s roads will be maintained and for what cost.

**Strategy b.** Continue to monitor and, where appropriate, take measures to improve the safety of high-crash locations in Topsham and areas of significant speeding.

**Strategy c.** Study means to improve the safety of off-road vehicle crossings in Topsham (snowmobile, ATV, etc).

**Strategy d.** Create a Gateway Plan to ensure that the entrances to our town are distinct. This plan should examine signage as well as land use management.

**Objective 2.** Improve traffic flows to ensure that the transportation network will not become over-burdened by future development.

**Strategy a.** Create a master transportation plan for the entire town. Current and future development scenarios envisioned in the Future Land Use Plan shall be included. Special attention shall be paid to the Route 196 corridor from the Lisbon town line to Interstate 295, the Interstate 295 interchange, and between Interstate 295 and the Coastal Connector.

**Objective 3.** Ensure that regional traffic does not overburden Topsham’s arterial road network.

**Strategy a.** Work on regional efforts to improve the transportation network.

**Strategy b.** Develop standards to manage new curb cuts on arterial roadways. Traffic volume and speed on our town’s arterial roadways are creating safety concerns.

**Strategy c.** Anticipate the need for standards to manage new curb cuts on rural collector roads.

**Objective 4.** Protect neighborhoods by minimizing the negative impacts that new developments or new connections might have on existing neighborhoods.

**Strategy a.** Develop and implement traffic management strategies in residential neighborhoods that are adversely impacted by new residential or non-residential development.

**Strategy b.** Ensure that traffic along Main Street is not harmful to the pedestrian-oriented businesses in the Lower, Middle, and Upper Villages.

**Strategy c.** Review the Land Use Ordinance to ensure that residential neighborhoods are adequately buffered from new transportation connections.

**Objective 5.** Improve the local transportation network so that neighborhoods, commercial centers, schools, and community facilities are better connected to each other.

**Strategy a.** Evaluate the need for new roadways that provide options for local traffic in Topsham (for example, between Routes 196 and 201, between Main Street and the Topsham Fair Mall, and between Route 201 and the Tedford Road).

**Objective 6.** Increase the number of bicycle and/or pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, commercial centers, schools, and community facilities.

**Strategy a.** Create a bicycle and pedestrian plan that identifies where bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be located, what functions they will serve, and how they should be funded.

**Strategy b.** Improve automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian connections throughout the Town between residential neighborhoods, community facilities, recreation areas, and commercial areas. Special attention should be given to designs that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.

**Strategy c.** Improve the bicycle and pedestrian connections between our town and neighboring communities. Special attention should be given to the Swinging Bridge and the Frank Wood Bridge.

**Strategy d.** Seek capital funding opportunities to expand the number of natural resource-based tourism facilities available in Topsham, including bicycle/pedestrian paths, trails, access points to natural resource areas, and water access facilities.

**Strategy e.** Establish a Downtown Waterfront Park that increases the attractiveness of the Village and provides water access to the Androscoggin River.

**Objective 7.** Use transportation planning as part of a strategy to manage growth.

**Strategy a.** Update the Land Use Ordinance to allow more flexible on-site parking arrangements in the pedestrian-oriented Lower, Middle, and Upper Villages.

**Strategy b.** Require that new residential developments have bicycle and/or pedestrian connections to each other. The type of connections should depend on where the development exists in the community (for example, trails/right-of-ways in less dense areas and sidewalks/paths in more dense areas).

**Strategy c.** Create hierarchical design standards for all new public and private roads that require appropriate landscaping, tree lines, travelways, bicycle/pedestrian ways, and accessible shoulders.

**Strategy d.** Increase the minimum standards for new private roads to more closely resemble the minimum standards for new public roads.

**Strategy e.** Require that new developments upgrade adjoining public infrastructure to minimum standards when permitting new development.

**Strategy f.** Adjust the Land Use Ordinance to allow renovated buildings in our current R2 district to become multi-family housing, so long as the volume of the renovated building doesn't change, the character of the residential neighborhood remains intact, and adequate parking facilities are provided.

**Objective 8.** The Town will not accept substandard private roads as new public roads unless the private road is brought up to the minimum standards for a new public road.

## D. PUBLIC UTILITIES

**Our Goal** is to provide safe and efficient public utilities to Topsham's current and future residents and businesses.

**Objective 1.** The Town should encourage expansion of public utilities within designated growth areas.

**Strategy a.** Support the Topsham Sewer District's efforts to expand its boundaries to match the designated growth areas in this comprehensive plan's Future Land Use Plan.

**Strategy b.** Pursue alternative financing methods such as impact fees and special assessment districts for expansion of the public utilities in areas of need and create predictability for developers.

**Strategy c.** Work with the Topsham Sewer District and Brunswick-Topsham Water District to create a capital recovery program for individuals or entities that extend the public water and public sewer networks. This capital recovery program will create more financial incentives for privately-financed utility extensions by allowing those that extend public utilities to recoup some of their investment from new utility users.

**Strategy d.** Require all new development in the growth areas (identified in the Future Land Use Plan) to connect to public utilities if the expansion to those utilities is financially practical.

**Strategy e.** Adjust the Land Use Ordinance and decrease lot sizes on land serviced by public water and sewer, with special attention to the potential for infill development within the denser areas of the village. This also requires adjustments to the space and bulk standards in the Land Use Ordinance.

## E. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND GOVERNANCE

**Our Goal** is to provide adequate and efficient programs for the provision of municipal services.

**Objective 1.** Provide adequate space for current Town government operations.

**Strategy a.** Support the construction of a new public safety facility that includes fire and public safety services. This new facility should be large enough to meet existing and future space needs and should be centrally located to improve

response times throughout the community. There is a significant cost advantage to the community if this new facility is consolidated with a new municipal building. (underway)

**Strategy b.** Create a master plan to identify the future indoor and outdoor recreation needs of our town. This plan will include a detailed inventory of recreation facilities (including water access points). Special attention will be given to indoor recreation facilities and programs for all age groups.

**Strategy c.** Ensure that the History Committee has adequate and secure space to store its growing archive and display information about our town's history.

**Strategy d.** Analyze providing pre-school or organized activities to pre-kindergarten children as part of the Recreation Master Plan.

**Strategy e.** Update the Town's development impact fee schedule to ensure that Town is being appropriately compensated for the costs of providing services directly attributable to this new development.

**Strategy f.** Upgrade the Town's technological capabilities by improving our Geographic Information System and by making Town records and activities more accessible on the internet.

**Strategy g.** The Town of Topsham should lessen its impact on the environment by improving energy efficiency, promoting recycling, and conserving resources when cost effective. These concerns should be considered for both capital investments and on-going operations.

**Objective 2.** Use the relocation of new municipal facilities as an opportunity to maintain a 'civic center' of public operations in the heart of Topsham's downtown.

**Strategy a.** Seek opportunities to keep most of the municipality's public facilities in Topsham's downtown areas.

**Strategy b.** Create a master plan for the Upper Village that creates a common vision for the development of dense, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use village that builds on the area's growing role as a community center (at current Naval Air Station Annex).

**Objective 3.** Provide adequate education facilities for the town's residents.

**Strategy a.** Support SAD 75's redevelopment/renovation plan to improve the program space in the Mt. Ararat High School.

**Strategy b.** Work to improve the level of communication and cooperation between Topsham residents, staff, and officials at SAD 75.

**Objective 4.** Ensure that Topsham's governance structure is adequate to meet the needs of the community in the next decade.

**Strategy a.** Create a Governance Committee whose task is to analyze our town's form of government and recommend the most appropriate and responsive form of government for the future. The Governance Committee shall review this analysis once every ten years in conjunction with the Town of Topsham's existing government operations review process.

**Strategy b.** Create an on-going administrative assessment of each department's capacity to handle future demands placed on it as the result of growth and changes within Topsham. This assessment should be conducted on a two-year cycle.

**Strategy c.** Evaluate staffing levels for Fire and Police Departments over a five-year period.

**Objective 5.** Ensure that the recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan Update are addressed in a timely manner and that this plan is updated when more detailed studies are completed.

**Strategy a.** Create an Implementation Committee to implement the strategies identified in this Comprehensive Plan Update and propose ordinance changes to the Planning Board and Town Selectmen.

**Strategy b.** Ensure that the comprehensive planning process is ongoing by presenting the planning efforts recommended in this Comprehensive Plan Update for approval at Town Meeting. These master planning efforts should be intended as ongoing updates to this plan.

## F. PARKS AND RECREATION

**Our Goal** is to provide an opportunity for all of Topsham's residents to meet their recreation needs.

**Objective 1.** The Town of Topsham should ensure that the town has enough space to provide recreation opportunities to young, middle-age, and senior residents.

**Strategy a.** Evaluate the creation of satellite recreation areas in different parts of town as part of the Recreation Master Plan, including West Topsham. These satellites should not detract from the central recreation facility on the Foreside Road, but could offer modest and convenient recreation opportunities in throughout the community.

**Strategy b.** The Recreation Department and Public Works Department should coordinate to ensure that current and new parks, recreation areas, and water access points are maintained in adequate condition.

**Objective 2.** The Town of Topsham should ensure that recreation opportunities reflect the needs of our changing demographics and patterns of land use.

**Strategy a.** Provide recreation opportunities, directly or through local/regional organizations, to the young, adult and senior residents.

**Strategy b.** Explore partnership opportunities with private and nonprofit recreation providers. These partnerships will expand the variety of recreation services available to all Topsham residents while improving efficiency.

**Strategy c.** Analyze providing pre-school or organized activities to pre-kindergarten children as part of the Recreation Master Plan.

**Strategy d.** Work with private landowners to ensure that conflicts over public recreation activities on a landowner's private property are minimized. This is particularly important because so many of our town's recreation opportunities occur on private land.

**Strategy e.** Work with local snowmobile/ATV club to protect preserve trail access, as well as to improve the safety of road crossings.

**Objective 3.** The Town should create a detailed recreation master plan for the future.

**Strategy a.** Create a master plan to identify the future indoor and outdoor recreation needs of our town. This plan will include a detailed inventory of recreation facilities (including water access points). Special attention will be given to indoor recreation facilities and programs for all age groups.

**Objective 4.** Increase the number of safe pedestrian and bicycle connections in our town.

**Strategy a.** Require that new residential developments have bicycle and/or pedestrian connections to each other. The type of connections should depend on where the development exists in the community – trails/rights-of-way in less dense areas and sidewalks/paths in more dense areas.

**Strategy b.** Improve automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian connections throughout the Town between residential neighborhoods, community facilities, recreation areas, and commercial areas. Special attention should be given to designs that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.

**Strategy c.** Seek capital funding opportunities to expand the number of natural resource-based tourism facilities available in Topsham, including bicycle/pedestrian paths, trails, access points to natural resource areas, and water access facilities.

**Strategy d.** Study means to improve the safety of off-road vehicle crossings in Topsham (snowmobile, ATV, etc).

**Strategy e.** Improve the bicycle and pedestrian connections between our town and neighboring communities. Special attention shall be given to the Swinging Bridge and the Frank Wood Bridge.

**Strategy f.** Establish a Downtown Waterfront Park that increases the attractiveness of the Village and provides water access to the Androscoggin River.

## G. OPEN SPACE, AGRICULTURE, AND FORESTRY

**Our Goal** is to maintain our town's rural character by preserving its working farms, forests, and natural areas.

**Objective 1.** To promote the economic viability of working farms and working forests. Economically viable farms and forests are the best means of maintaining the rural character of Topsham.

**Strategy a.** Continue encouraging working farms and forests to participate in the Farmland and Tree Growth Tax Programs.

**Strategy b.** Work with farmers and the Maine Farmland Trust to promote the viability and preservation of the town's farms with various farmland conservation strategies.

**Strategy c.** Work with private landowners to ensure that conflicts over public recreation activities on a landowner's private property are minimized. This is particularly important because so many of our town's recreation opportunities occur on private land.

**Strategy d.** Create an education program that highlights the importance of maintaining natural resource-based occupations (working farms and forests) as the most effective tool for keeping rural areas from being developed.

**Objective 2.** Use development as a tool to improve the integrity and character of Topsham's rural areas.

**Strategy a.** Update our open space development subdivision ordinance to create financial incentives (such as a density bonus) for developers to protect significant amounts natural/scenic areas whenever development occurs in the rural zones.

**Strategy b.** Create a program that determines when and how new growth-area subdivisions with densities higher than the underlying zone allows could be developed contingent on preserving an appropriate amount of developable land in another area of Topsham. This program depends on a list of priority parks, recreation, conservation, and scenic resources in Topsham that should be the target of these development offsets. This program depends on creating a fund into which developers pay their offset fees; the proceeds of this fund are then used to purchase land or development easements.

**Objective 3.** Promote the preservation of natural areas and scenic resources.

**Strategy a.** Promote the use of the Open Space Tax Program as a strategy to protect important scenic resources and open spaces in Topsham.

**Strategy b.** Develop a land acquisition program that is designed to preserve our town's most important natural areas and scenic views. This program shall identify the type and location of land that is appropriate for conservation. This program could be funded with a land acquisition bond, growth-area developer fees, grants, state programs, the Economic and Community Development Plan Fund, or private sources. The program should require an analysis of how the decreased tax revenue to the Town will affect the provision of municipal services.

**Strategy c.** Initiate a planning effort with neighboring communities to protect larger blocks of unfragmented land and important wildlife corridors that extend into neighboring communities.

**Strategy d.** Create an education program that increases the community's knowledge of the region's unique natural environment. It is particularly important to highlight the improvements in water quality throughout the community in the past several decades.

**Strategy e.** Create a detailed inventory of our town's natural resources and identify the role these resources have in the health of the region's ecosystem. This inventory will be used as the basis for future planning efforts and shall include information on plant and animal species, ravines, wildlife corridors, large blocks of unfragmented land, wetlands, and riverine/estuarine environments.

## **H. HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

**Our Goal** is to identify and preserve Topsham's important historic and archaeological resources for future generations.

**Objective 1.** Support our historic organizations' efforts to identify and preserve important historic and archaeological resources.

**Strategy a.** Support the History Committee's and the Historic District Commission's efforts to archive resources and preserve the historic character of the town's historic district. Each of these organizations serves an important and distinct role.

**Strategy b.** Support the Pejepscot Historical Society's role as an educational organization and repository for the greater Pejepscot region's history.

**Strategy c.** Ensure that the History Committee has adequate and secure space to store its growing archive and display information about our town's history.

**Strategy d.** Improve the awareness and availability of Topsham's historic resources by cataloguing them and adding a webpage to the town's server detailing the resources that are available.

**Objective 2.** Use opportunities to leverage outside resources as a tool to improve the level of protection for Topsham's historic and archaeological resources.

**Strategy a.** Seek opportunities to capitalize on Topsham's status as one of only eight communities in Maine with the National Park Service's Certified Local Government status.

**Strategy b.** Seek opportunities to use development or redevelopment as a tool to preserve historic sites. Recent private development has preserved several historic buildings in Topsham while updating their function to more contemporary standards.

**Strategy c.** Identify tax incentive programs and economic hardship strategies to assist in the maintenance of historic structures.

**Objective 3.** Review and revise the town's current regulations that are designed to protect historic and archaeological resources.

**Strategy a.** Encourage the preservation of the Lower Village's character by maintaining the historic development standards in the Lower Village.

**Strategy b.** Update historic structure inventory, identify significant cultural landscapes and evaluate potential for expansions to Historic Districts.

**Strategy c.** Update Historic District ordinance to develop standards for contributing structures.

**Strategy d.** Review and update Design Review Manual for Historic Districts.

**Strategy e.** Review and update the development review requirements so that similar requirements apply to subdivisions as well as projects subject to Site Plan Review and that both include consideration of historic archaeological sites.

## I. NATURAL RESOURCES

**Our Goal** is to ensure that Topsham's wide variety of natural resources is protected for current and future generations.

**Objective 1.** Improve our town's organizational ability to preserve important natural resources.

**Strategy a.** Create the Topsham Conservation Commission from the Topsham Conservation Committee and charge it with the goal of overseeing the coordination and implementation of the Town's natural resource objectives and strategies.

**Strategy b.** Initiate a planning effort with neighboring communities to protect larger blocks of unfragmented land and important wildlife corridors that extend into neighboring communities.

**Strategy c.** Coordinate with neighboring communities and organizations to monitor water quality in the region's rivers and ponds as well as the Merrymeeting Bay watershed. As water quality concerns arise, the Conservation Committee shall document the issues and recommend solutions to the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen.

**Strategy d.** Create an education program for residents and business owners on the importance of groundwater protection in Topsham. This should concentrate on the large number of aquifers in the community as well as many households' reliance on private water supplies in areas not serviced by public water infrastructure.

**Strategy e.** Create an education program that increases the community's knowledge of the region's unique natural environment. It is particularly important to highlight the improvements in water quality throughout the community in the past several decades.

**Strategy f.** Create a detailed inventory of our town's natural resources and identify the role these resources have in the health of the region's ecosystem. This inventory will be used as the basis for future planning efforts and shall include information on plant and animal species, ravines, wildlife corridors, large blocks of unfragmented land, wetlands, and riverine/estuarine environments.

**Strategy g.** Create an education program that highlights the importance of maintaining natural resource-based occupations (working farms and forests) as the most effective tool for keeping rural areas from being developed.

**Strategy h.** Develop a land acquisition program that is designed to preserve our town's most important natural areas and scenic views. This program shall identify the type and location of land that is appropriate for conservation. This program could be funded with a land acquisition bond, growth-area developer fees, grants, state programs, the Economic and Community Development Plan Fund, or private sources. The program should require an analysis of how the decreased tax revenue to the Town will affect the provision of municipal services.

**Strategy i.** Work with private landowners to ensure that conflicts over public recreation activities on a landowner's private property are minimized. This is particularly important because so many of our town's recreation opportunities occur on private land.

**Objective 2.** Use development as an opportunity to improve the level of protection for important natural resources.

**Strategy a.** Update our open space development subdivision ordinance to create financial incentives (such as a density bonus) for developers to protect significant amounts of natural/scenic areas whenever development occurs in the rural zones.

**Strategy b.** Create a program that determines when and how new growth-area subdivisions with densities higher than the underlying zone allows could be developed contingent on preserving an appropriate amount of developable land in another area of Topsham. This program depends on a list of priority parks, recreation, conservation, and scenic resources in Topsham that should be the target of these development offsets. This program depends on creating a fund

into which developers pay their offset fees; the proceeds of this fund are then used to purchase land or development easements.

**Strategy c.** Develop a policy that identifies when conservation banking/mitigation efforts are appropriate to facilitate both development and preservation in appropriate areas of the community.

**Strategy d.** Develop a watershed management plan for the watershed of Topsham Fairground Stream to improve the water quality of the stream and allow for continued development within this “urban-impaired” watershed.

**Objective 3.** Create and preserve public access to the town’s important scenic and natural resources.

**Strategy a.** Seek capital funding opportunities to expand the number of natural resource-based tourism facilities available in Topsham, including bicycle/pedestrian paths, trails, access points to natural resource areas, and water access facilities.

**Strategy b.** Promote the use of the Open Space Tax Program as a strategy to protect important scenic resources and open spaces in Topsham.

## J. MARINE RESOURCES

**Our Goal** is to protect, preserve, enhance, and manage our town’s marine resources for the benefit of its citizens.

**Objective 1.** Identify and protect historic access points to the Androscoggin River and Merrymeeting Bay.

**Strategy a.** Create a master plan to identify the future indoor and outdoor recreation needs of our town. This plan will include a detailed inventory of recreation facilities (including water access points). Special attention will be given to indoor recreation facilities and programs for all age groups.

**Strategy b.** Work with private landowners to ensure that conflicts over public recreation activities on a landowner’s private property are minimized. This is particularly important because so many of our town’s recreation opportunities occur on private land.

**Objective 2.** Create controlled public access points to our town's waterways.

**Strategy a.** Coordinate with the Public Works Department to ensure that our community's parks, recreation areas, and water access points are maintained in adequate condition.

**Strategy b.** Seek capital funding opportunities to expand the number of natural resource-based tourism facilities available in Topsham, including bicycle/pedestrian paths, trails, access points to natural resource areas, and water access facilities.

**Strategy c.** Create a program that determines when and how new growth-area subdivisions with densities higher than the underlying zone allows could be developed contingent on preserving an appropriate amount of developable land in another area of Topsham. This program depends on a list of priority parks, recreation, conservation, and scenic resources in Topsham that should be the target of these development offsets. This program depends on creating a fund into which developers pay their offset fees; the proceeds of this fund are then used to purchase land or development easements.

**Strategy d.** Establish a Downtown Waterfront Park that increases the attractiveness of the Village and provides water access to the Androscoggin River.

**Objective 3.** Monitor our town's surface water quality and participate in regional efforts to maintain a high level of water quality.

**Strategy a.** Coordinate with neighboring communities and organizations to monitor water quality in the region's rivers and ponds as well as the Merrymeeting Bay watershed. As water quality concerns arise, the Conservation Committee shall document the issues and recommend solutions to the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen.

**Strategy b.** Create an education program that increases the community's knowledge of the region's unique natural environment. It is particularly important to highlight the improvements in water quality throughout the community in the past several decades.

**Objective 4.** Create an educational effort that highlights Topsham's unique water-bound geography as a valuable community and economic resource.

**Strategy a.** Create a detailed inventory of our town's natural resources and identify the role these resources have in the health of the region's ecosystem. This inventory will be used as the basis for future planning efforts and shall include information on plant and animal species, ravines, wildlife corridors, large blocks of unfragmented land, wetlands, and riverine/estuarine environments.

## K. FISCAL CAPACITY

**Our Goal** is to maintain the Town's fiscal capacity through proper management of municipal resources.

**Objective 1.** Continue to use a Capital Investment Program as a strategy to plan for capital investments and reduce fluctuations in the tax rate.

**Strategy a.** Consider bonding and other types of long-term financing to pay for large capital investments.

**Objective 2.** To require new development to finance the cost of public improvements directly attributable to a development project.

**Strategy a.** Update the Town's development impact fee schedule to ensure that Topsham is being appropriately compensated for the costs of providing services directly attributable to this new development.

**Strategy b.** Pursue alternative financing methods such as impact fees and special assessment districts for expansion of the public utility system.

**Strategy c.** Develop a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy that identifies appropriate commercial and affordable housing uses of TIFs for community and/or economic development.

**Strategy d.** An economic development study should be completed, to include plans for future economic growth, potential impacts and contingency plans stemming from a closure of BIW and/or BNAS. This study should be used to guide future investment of economic development funds by the Town.

**Objective 3.** Ensure that all property owners in Topsham are paying a fair share of property taxes.

**Strategy a.** Review the list of tax-exempt properties every five years to ensure that their tax-exempt status is justified.

**Strategy b.** Revalue all of the property in Topsham as soon as the certified ratio drops to 80%, or every ten years, whichever comes first.

**Objective 4.** Investigate the possibility of providing services on a regional level as a means of reducing cost to Topsham.

**Strategy a.** Investigate regionalizing municipal services when efficiencies can be improved and a high level of service can be maintained.

# *Future Land Use Plan*

The 1992 Comprehensive Plan established a policy framework for managing the growth and development of the community. The land use objectives of the 1992 plan were essentially implemented through various land use regulations adopted by the Town in the last decade.

This updated Future Land Use Plan builds upon the concepts of land use contained in the 1992 Plan and envisions that the general pattern of future growth and development in Topsham will continue to reflect the following key policy directions:

1. ***Environmentally sensitive areas*** of the community, including the significant wetlands associated with the Cathance, Androscoggin, and Muddy Rivers will remain essentially undeveloped and any development or natural resource activity that does occur in these areas will protect both the scenic and environmental quality of the community;
2. The community's ***other important natural resources*** such as wetlands, river corridors, view sheds, natural areas, ravines, Merrymeeting Bay and important habitat areas will be protected from development or activities that diminish their natural resource value.
3. ***Intensive residential, recreational, and non-residential development*** will be concentrated in areas where

infrastructure and public services are available or can be provided. Development in rural areas of the community will be done in a manner that preserves scenic character and maintains large blocks of unfragmented land;

4. The ***Route 196 corridor*** between Route 201 and Interstate 295 will continue to be the spine of the community's commercial areas. A wide mix of uses will be allowed in different areas and with different characters that maintains the scenic character and visual integrity of the corridor and prevents the creation of an unattractive strip;

This Comprehensive Plan Update recommends several more detailed planning efforts to address specific issues in several areas of Topsham. These are included in "Planning for the Future" in the Implementation Plan. As detailed plans are completed, their recommendations will be approved at Town Meeting and appended to this plan as updates to the Future Land Use Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan identifies two broad categories of areas in accordance with the State Growth Management Law; "Rural Areas" in which significant development will be discouraged and the rural, natural character retained and "Growth Areas" in which anticipated residential and nonresidential development will be accommodated.

## Overall Growth Management Strategy

The Future Land Use Plan, in coordination with the related objectives and strategies set forth in the previous section, is designed to result in a pattern of development that is consistent with the concept of Rural Areas and Growth Areas. Taken together, the land use designations set out in the Future Land Use Plan in combination with the related strategies are anticipated to result in the majority of residential development and virtually all non-residential development occurring within designated Growth Areas. This growth management strategy is intended to be a comprehensive and integrated program in which the various components are interrelated.

The growth management strategy is based upon “a market approach” that works to preserve Rural Areas without creating a financial penalty for the owners of this land by creating incentives for development within the Growth Area and a financial transfer mechanism to compensate rural landowners who do not develop their land or limit the amount of development. The growth management strategy embodies the following basic concepts (the number(s) refer to the strategies set forth in the implementation strategy):

1. Assure that there is adequate land available within the Growth Area that is appropriately zoned and serviced to accommodate anticipated and desired nonresidential development (33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 63, 64, and 65).
2. Allow residential development that is served by public water and sewer at higher densities than currently permitted within the Growth Area including provisions for the full use/reuse of existing large, older buildings in built-up areas and density bonuses for affordable housing while maintaining the integrity of established neighborhoods (38, 39, 44, 71, 72, 77, 78, and 80).

3. Create a development transfer mechanism in which developments within the Growth Area that take advantage of the higher allowed densities pay an “offset fee” that is used to buy land or development rights from property owners in Rural Areas (75).

4. Work cooperatively with the utility districts to create a viable mechanism for the funding of public water and sewer systems to serve development within the Growth Area (6, 18, and 70).

5. Work cooperatively with landowners in Rural Areas to maintain their land as rural without economically penalizing them for this (8, 16, and 29).

6. Revise the land use regulations in the Rural Area to create incentives for property owners who do chose to develop their property to maintain a significant portion of it in open space including reduced density for projects that do not preserve open space (69).

7. Create and fund a land acquisition program to acquire land or easements to protect important natural areas and scenic views (56).

The Town believes that this growth management strategy will be successful in the objectives of accommodating growth within the designated Growth Area while limiting development within the Rural Area. Because of the need for the various components to be interrelated, the Future Land Use Plan does not include specific proposals as to the increased density within the zones in the Growth Area, details for the development transfer mechanism, or revisions to the Rural Area zoning requirements. These details will be developed as part of the implementation of the growth management strategy. To assure that the objectives

of the Town are met, the Town will institute a development monitoring system that tracks where both residential and non-residential development is occurring within the community and analyzes the share of growth occurring within the Growth Area on an annual and three-year rolling average basis. If less than 65% of new residential units or 90% of non-residential floor area does not occur within the designated Growth Area in any three year period, the Town will re-evaluate the growth management strategy and make any necessary changes to achieve this objective.

## PROPOSED RURAL AREAS

The following land use designations establish the areas of the community in which residential or nonresidential development should be discouraged and natural resource uses should be encouraged.

1. **Rural** This designation applies to the principal parts of the Cathance/Muddy River watersheds as well as the Ward Road corridor. This area is intended to retain its current rural character and natural resource based uses. Where development does occur, it should be designed to preserve scenic views, allow connectivity for wildlife, and protect the character of the area.

- ***Uses*** – Lands in the *Rural Area* are intended to retain their existing rural character. New development should preserve scenic views and vistas. New residential development should be designed to provide for significant amounts of open space and connectivity with surrounding lands and neighboring developments. Nonresidential development should be discouraged, unless it is related to natural resource based uses or home occupations.

***Special Issues to Address*** –Topsham should provide a higher level of protection to the character and resources in the rural area

while ensuring landowners have enough financial incentives and flexibility to create a more appropriate pattern of development. In an effort to retain the character of rural Topsham, the minimum lot size in the rural designation should be increased from the current R3 zoning density, with financial and market-based incentives to create opportunities for density bonuses for projects that balance development with conservation (for example, open space developments that set aside undeveloped areas contiguous with existing undeveloped land, or for projects that conserve identified significant natural resources).

Topsham should study the natural resources throughout the community in order to locate the most important resources (for wildlife area/corridors and scenic views). Once these resources are identified, the town can create a market-based development strategy that allows development to be transferred to areas that are more appropriate. A Cathance/Muddy River Corridor Plan should inventory the area's important natural and scenic resources.

Access to the transportation corridors from new developments should ensure that safety is not impaired – larger developments should be required to improve the sections of road they are accessing.

Appropriate connections between new developments should be required (by trail easement, path, or sidewalks depending on the type of development).

2. **Resource Protection** This designation is intended for areas with significant natural resource value such as wetlands and floodplains where little or no development should occur and where activities that can potentially impact the resource are regulated.

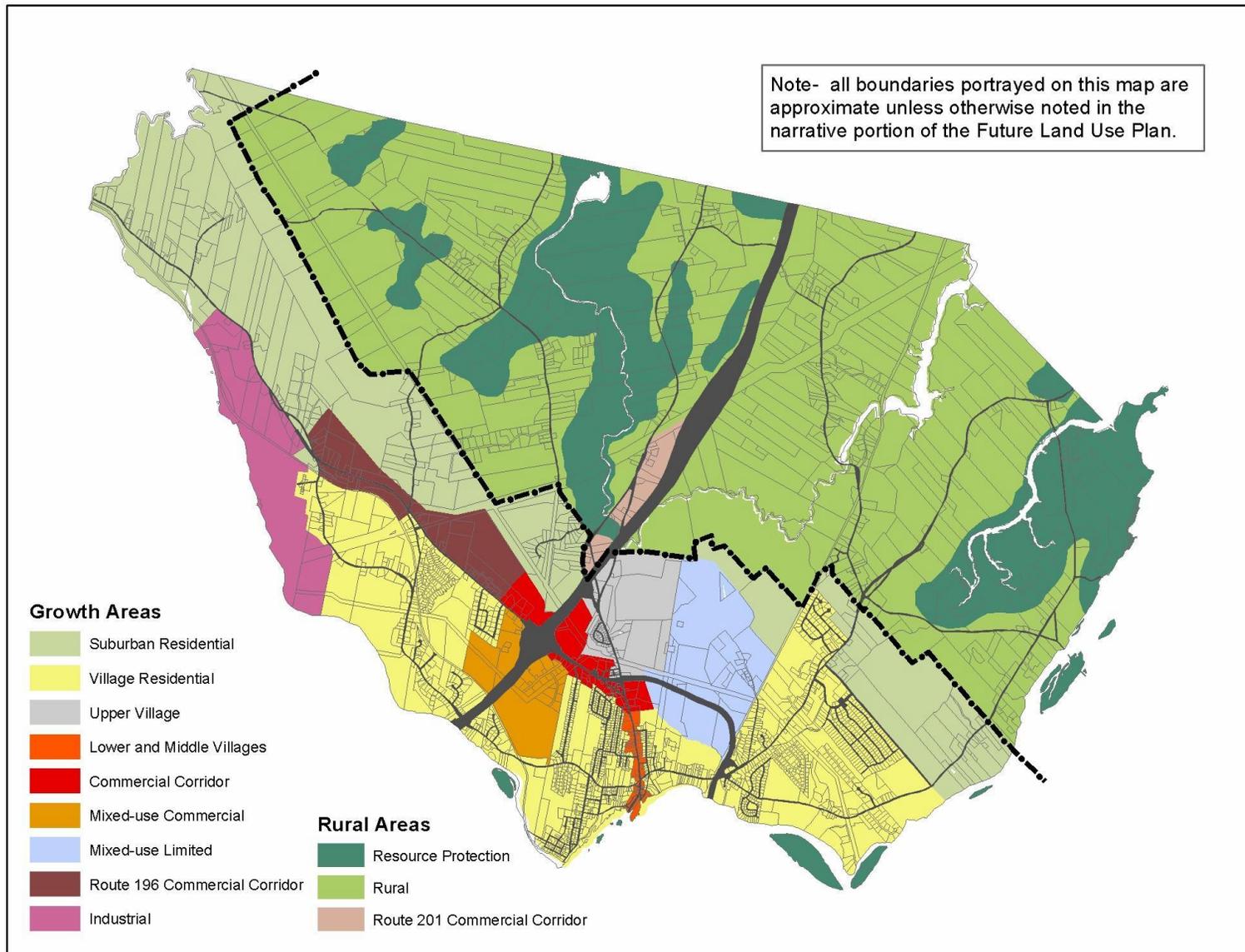
- *Uses* - Uses in the *Resource Protection Area* should generally be limited to low impact and non-structural uses in the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Expansions to existing residences in the resource protection designation should be allowed to proceed so long as they maintain adequate buffering and don't encroach on the resource.
3. **Route 201 Commercial Corridor** This designation applies to the areas east of Route 201, north of Interstate 295, and south of the utility corridor. This area is intended to remain a rural gateway to Topsham Village, while also allowing a range of professional and commercial uses for small and medium-sized businesses that want to locate in Topsham but don't need high-traffic-volume locations.
- *Uses* - This designation is intended to create the potential for the continued development of smaller and medium sized businesses that don't rely on high-traffic-volume locations to be viable. This area is intended to promote retail, light manufacturing, office, and service businesses, while maintaining the rural feel of the outer Route 201 corridor. Whenever possible, access to Route 201 should be made with joint driveways in order to maintain flow.
  - *Special Issues to Address* – The Route 201 corridor is one of the few places where growing local businesses might be able to grow in our town. The Town should prepare a Route 201 Corridor Plan that examines zoning, land use patterns, transportation patterns, and safety issues in more detail.

## PROPOSED GROWTH AREAS

The following land use designations establish the areas of the community that will accommodate a significant share of the Town's anticipated residential and nonresidential development.

1. **Lower Village** This designation includes the Main Street corridor from Melcher Place to the Androscoggin River. The Lower Village designation is intended to encourage redevelopment that complements the existing dense, mixed-use pedestrian scaled village. The Lower Village should be developed according to the Lower Village Master Plan.

- *Uses* - This designation is intended to promote a mixed-use village that reflects the area's historic development pattern. The Lower Village should have a more traditional pedestrian-oriented development pattern.
  - *Special Issues to Address* - Parking restrictions in the Lower Village should be more flexible so that new development and redevelopment are not constrained. A significant number of both on-street spaces and public off-street parking is available in the area, which will compensate for the decreased amount of on-site parking required.
2. **Middle Village** This designation includes the Main Street corridor from Route 196 to Melcher Place. The Middle Village designation is intended to encourage redevelopment that complements the existing dense, mixed-use pedestrian scaled village. The Middle Village should retain its residential village scale while attracting a mix of uses. The Middle Village should retain its strict parking and landscaping standards.
- *Uses* - This designation is intended to promote a mixed-use village that reflects the area's historic development pattern. The Middle Village should retain its pedestrian-village character while allowing smaller scale uses, such as office, and service. Retail activities should be allowed only when accessory to a permitted use.



- **Special Issues to Address** – Infill development and redevelopment in the Middle Village should respect the area’s denser and pedestrian-oriented development pattern. To ensure appropriate development and redevelopment, the Main Street Plan should be updated and extended to at least the Rt. 196/Rt. 201 intersection, evaluating desired land uses, densities and type of businesses that should be encouraged in this area in order to enhance Topsham’s Village.

3. **Upper Village** The Upper Village designation is given to areas on either side of Route 201 between Route 196 and Interstate 295. This designation promotes the development of a pedestrian-oriented village with its center on the site of the Naval Air Station Annex. The village should complement the existing community resources available in the vicinity (fields, schools, trails, services).

- **Uses** - The Upper Village is intended to encourage the continued development of a pedestrian-oriented village along Route 201, with the potential for a large-scale redevelopment of the Naval Air Station Annex. The heart of the village should include small-scale retail uses, restaurants, offices, and services. It should be surrounded by higher-density housing that is affordable, accessible to nearby community resources, and in-scale with traditional New England village development.
- **Special Issues to Address** - Large-scale redevelopment of the Annex site should only be undertaken after a more detailed Upper Village Master Plan is completed with input from local residents. Existing non-conforming uses, such as concrete product manufacturing, should be addressed in the Area Plan.

4. **Village Residential** This designation includes all of the more compact residential neighborhoods between the

Androscoggin River and Route 196 to the west of Main Street as well as the dense neighborhoods to the east of Main Street. East of the Coastal Connector this designation extends out Middlesex and Foreside Roads and includes the Bay Park development. The Village Residential designation promotes compact development closer to community services and infrastructure.

- **Uses** - The Village Residential designation will be primarily residential, but new businesses that cater to the needs of the immediate neighborhood could be allowed. Densities in this designation will depend on the availability of public water and sewer. Areas with public sewer and water service will allow the most compact development. Areas with public water will allow moderately compact development.
- **Special Issues to Address** - New development in the Village Residential designation should be encouraged to utilize public utilities. Therefore, higher densities will be allowed whenever development occurs on the public water and sewer system. Planned developments should be encouraged in this designation. Appropriate pedestrian connections between residential neighborhoods should be required with any new development plan. Appropriate pedestrian connections between new developments should be required (by trail easement, path, sidewalks etc).

5. **Mixed-Use Limited** The Mixed-Use Limited designation includes all of the current Mixed-use Limited zone, and is expanded to include the end of the Tedford Road on the west side of the rail line. This designation should continue to protect the rural character of the Coastal Connector while allowing a range of mixed residential and commercial development to create an attractive gateway to Topsham.

- *Uses* - Planned residential and commercial uses are allowed in this designation so long as adequate setbacks from the Coastal Connector are applied.
6. **Suburban Residential** This designation is intended as the transition area between the denser village and the more rural areas of Topsham. It includes most of the Route 196 corridor to the west of Pejepscoot Village, along the Meadow Cross Road, Jesse Lane, and areas north of the Mixed-Use Limited and Village Residential designations.
- *Uses* - This designation is intended to promote a less dense suburban residential area that buffers the more compact village with the rural area. Open space subdivisions are encouraged in this area, but the density will not change from the current R3 zone.
7. **Commercial Corridor Area** The Commercial Corridor Area should continue to attract retail and service-based development. The Commercial Corridor area stretches along Route 196 from Route 201 to just past the Interstate 295 intersection and includes the Topsham Fair Mall and Topsham Business Park. This area is intended to accommodate large-scale retail, service, and office uses. The area's high-traffic volumes, visibility, and accessibility make it the best location for these uses in Topsham. High landscaping and design standards will help ensure that high-quality development is attracted to this area.
- *Uses* - This area should provide many of the retail, office, and service opportunities for the community.
  - *Special Issues to Address* - High-visibility and easy access to the Crooker land across from the Topsham Fair Mall creates many redevelopment opportunities. These include, but are not limited to: a bypass road from Route 196 to the Route

201 corridor (ease traffic congestion at the Route 201/Route 196 intersection); traffic improvements for a left-hand turn from Route 196 into the Topsham Fair Mall; and large-scale redevelopment (office, hotel/convention center, etc). The Town should consider studying this parcel to determine the best mix of redevelopment opportunities if the land ever becomes available for redevelopment. If town resources or assistance are spent on developing the Commercial Corridor area west of Interstate 295, then the area should develop in part as a business park, similar to the Topsham Business Park. In exchange for the Town's support, these businesses should be smaller in scale and return a significant portion of their revenue back to the local economy. Light manufacturing, service, and office uses should be allowed in this park.

8. **Route 196 Commercial Corridor** The Route 196 Commercial Corridor designation is given to the existing Rural Commercial Use zone. This area is intended to maintain its rural feel while attracting high-quality development. Service, office, and light manufacturing uses will be promoted while retail uses will be limited.

- *Uses* - This designation should allow a variety of office, service, and light-manufacturing uses while limiting retail activity. Setbacks should be large enough to maintain the rural 'feel' of the corridor. Development east of the Route 196 intersection with Whitehouse Crossing should generally be smaller in scale, and development west of this intersection should be larger in scale. Any sewer and water utility expansion up this corridor should not be completed until a Route 196 Corridor Master Plan is approved.
- *Special Issues to Address* - To make room for lots large enough to attract high-quality development, the size of this designated area should be expanded along its northern

boundary to the east of Whitehouse Crossing. These new businesses should have adequate setbacks to protect the rural feel of the corridor. Back lots in this area should allow light manufacturing and light industrial development. Light manufacturing facilities should be allowed with larger sizes than presently permitted. These deeper lots should have shared driveways, thereby improving traffic flow on Route 196. A Route 196 Corridor Master Plan should be conducted to address these issues in more detail. TDI should be deeply involved in this study and it should address the issue of a lack of suitable lots for future commercial, industrial and service development.

9. **Industrial Area** This designation is given to lands that are currently within the Industrial Zone (south of Route 196 and west of the River Road). The Industrial Area is intended to accommodate good quality businesses that would have difficulty locating elsewhere in Topsham, including industrial, warehousing, and assembly uses.

- ***Uses*** - The Industrial Area designation should allow a variety of industrial, warehousing, assembly, and office uses while limiting retail and service activity. While a major industrial user might choose to extend water and sewer utilities out to this area, the Town will not pro-actively extend these utilities as a means to attract development. As a consequence, development densities will likely be lower and many types of industrial/assembly uses that rely on public water and sewer will effectively be restricted from locating here.
- ***Special Issues to Address*** - To improve access to the Industrial Area, the current Industrial Zone should be moved up to Route 196. Access to this area should be controlled to maintain the traffic flow in the Route 196 corridor. Restrictions on driveways and setbacks should be created to protect existing residential development from harmful side

effects. Except in the Pejepscot Village area, the zone's boundary should be moved away from the Androscoggin River to protect water quality and the steep slopes along the river. An Industrial Use Plan should examine in more detail where in Topsham industrial uses are appropriate and what types of uses should be allowed in the community. This plan should also evaluate options for providing sewer and water to the current Industrial District.

**10. Mixed Use Commercial Area** The Mixed Use Commercial Area should remain an area of varied uses, including large-scale commercial and service businesses, as well as office/business/light industrial parks. This area is also suitable for residential uses in mixed-use setting. This area includes the Topsham Fair Mall, Park Drive Business Park, and the area across I-295.

- ***Uses*** - Large-scale mixed used developments should be limited to this area, along with new office/industrial park development, and large commercial developments.
- ***Special Issues to Address*** - The high visibility of this area, along with good access to I-295, make this a very desirable location for large-scale developments. However, this can lead to major traffic issues that will have to be addressed through a combination of private, local and state funds. The proximity of residential areas is also an issue that will require attention, with an evaluation of existing buffer requirements, performance standards, site design criteria and architectural standards. The Town should consider studying this area to determine the best mix of uses, appropriate development standards, buffer requirements and mitigation measures for future development.

## OVERLAY DISTRICTS

In addition to the various land use designations listed above, the Town has four overlay districts that address special situations or resources (see Existing Overlay Districts Map) These districts establish additional standards that supplement the provisions of the underlying zoning. The Town should maintain these districts with the modifications discussed in other sections of this Plan:

- Shoreland Zoning Overlay Districts
- Aquifer Protection Overlay District
- Historic Overlay District
- Mobile Home Park Overlay Districts

### 1. Shoreland Zoning Overlay Districts

The Town has shoreland zoning in conformance with the state Shoreland Zoning Law and proposes to continue this approach with updates as necessary to conform to any revisions in state requirements. The Town treats shoreland zoning as a series of overlay districts that apply in addition to the underlying zoning requirements. These include the following: 1) Stream Protection, 2) Resource Protection, 3) Limited Residential, 4) Limited Commercial, and 5) General Development. The location of the five districts is shown on the Existing Overlay Districts Map. The shoreland zoning provisions establish use and dimension/space standards for each of the districts as well as performance standards that apply to all of the districts.

### 2. Aquifer Protection Overlay District

The Town has established an Aquifer Protection Overlay District to promote the protection and wise utilization of significant

groundwater resources. The district is an overlay that imposes additional standards on uses and development within designated areas (see the Existing Overlay Districts Map). The standards restrict certain land uses within the overlay district, establish additional dimensional and stormwater management requirements, and provide safeguards when development occurs. The Town envisions that these standards will remain in place to protect this resource.

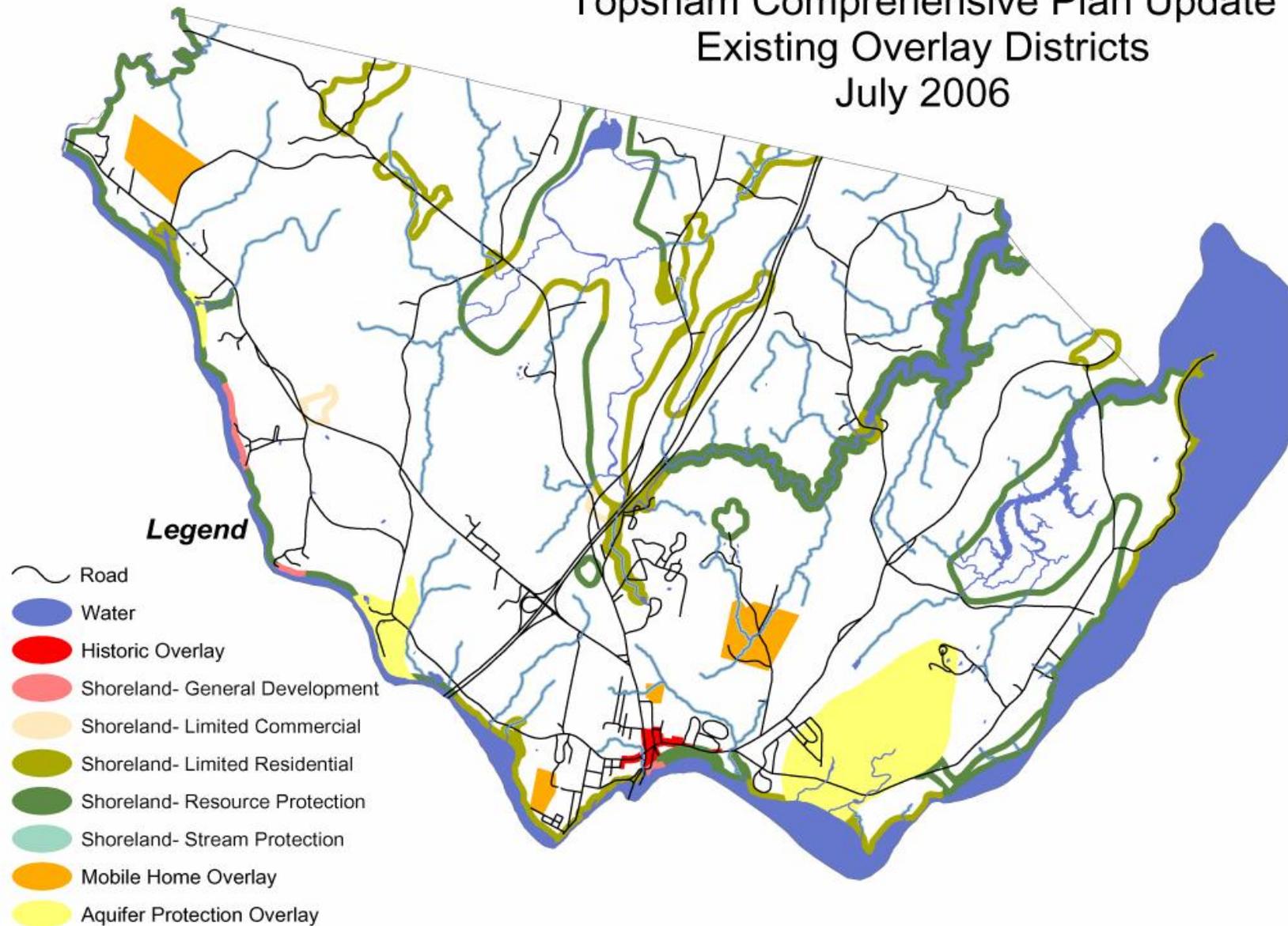
### 3. Historic Overlay District

The Town has established a Historical Overlay District to protect designated historic buildings, sites, monuments, structures, and areas of historic and prehistoric value. Changes to historic properties and new development within the five historic districts are required to obtain certificates of appropriateness that demonstrate that the construction will be done in a manner that is in conformance with the established standards. The five historic districts are shown on the Existing Overlay Districts Map. The Town intends to maintain the current level of protection of these properties and districts.

### 4. Mobile Home Park Overlay District

The Town has established overlay districts within which new mobile home parks may be located and existing parks expanded (see the Existing Overlay Districts Map). The Town intends to review and revise these districts to better accommodate the expansion of existing mobile home parks. The overlay district establishes standards for mobile home parks that conform to state law.

# Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update Existing Overlay Districts July 2006





# *Part 3. How Should We Do It?*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

REGIONAL COORDINATION

CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

# *Implementation Strategy*

This section of the Comprehensive Plan is a work plan to help coordinate the efforts of the Board of Selectmen, the administration, boards, committees, and interested citizens and organizations.

The following table details all of the strategies from Section E: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies. For each strategy, the table identifies who should be responsible and who should have input. The table also assigns a high, medium, or low priority to each strategy. This priority ranking is meant to signify, given a limited amount of resources, the most important steps our community can take in order to take full advantage of our opportunities.

#	Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
<b><i>Improve the Efficiency of the Town of Topsham.</i></b>			
1	<b>Board of Select.</b>	High	Public Facilities
Create a Governance Committee whose task is to analyze our town’s form of government and recommend the most appropriate and responsive form of government for the future. The Governance Committee shall review this analysis once every ten years in conjunction with the Town of Topsham’s existing government operations review process.			
2	<b>TDI</b>	High	Local Economy
Maintain an active economic and community development program through Topsham Development, Inc.			
3	<b>Planning Dept. TDI DPW</b>	High	Transportation
Work on regional efforts to improve the transportation network			

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
4	Continue to monitor and, where appropriate, take measures to improve the safety of high-crash locations in Topsham and areas of significant speeding.	<b>Police Dept.</b> Public Works	High	Transportation
5	Pursue alternative financing methods such as impact fees and special assessment districts for expansion of the public utilities to areas of need and create predictability for developers.	<b>Planning Dept</b> TDI Utility Dist.	Medium	Fiscal Capacity Public Utilities
6	Work with the Topsham Sewer District and Brunswick-Topsham Water District to create a capital recovery program for individuals or entities that extend the public water and public sewer networks. This capital recovery program will create more financial incentives for privately-financed utility extensions by allowing those that extend public utilities to recoup some of their investment from new utility users.	<b>TDI</b> Planning Board Sewer District Water District	Medium	Public Utilities Housing
7	Focus economic development incentives and assistance on businesses that will return a significant portion of their revenues back to the local economy (such as high wages or local/regional ownership).	<b>TDI</b>	Medium	Local Economy
8	Continue encouraging working farms and forests to participate in the Farmland and Tree Growth Tax Programs.	<b>Conserv. Cmte</b> Assessing Dept.	Medium	Open Space
9	Revalue all of the property in our town as soon as the certified ratio drops to 80% or every ten years, whichever comes first.	<b>Assessing Dept.</b> Board of Select.	Medium	Fiscal Capacity
10	Investigate regionalizing municipal services when efficiencies can be improved and a high level of service can be maintained.	<b>Town Manager</b> Board of Select.	Medium	Fiscal Capacity
11	Work to improve the level of communication and cooperation between Topsham residents, staff, and officials at SAD 75.	<b>School Cmte</b> Board of Select	Medium	Public Facilities
12	Seek opportunities to keep most of the municipality's public facilities in Topsham's village areas.	<b>Town Manager</b> Planning Dept. Board of Select	Medium	Public Facilities
13	Work with private landowners to ensure that conflicts over public recreation activities on a landowner's private property are minimized. This is particularly important because so many of our town's recreation opportunities occur on private land.	<b>Recreation Dpt</b> Conserv. Cmte.	Medium	Parks, Recreation Open Space Natural Resources Marine Resources
14	Provide recreation opportunities, directly or through local/regional organizations, to the young, adult and senior residents.	<b>Recreation Dpt.</b>	Medium	Parks, Recreation

#		<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Goal &amp; Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)</b>
15	Coordinate with neighboring communities and organizations to monitor water quality in the region's rivers and ponds as well as the Merrymeeting Bay watershed. As water quality concerns arise, the Conservation Committee shall document the issues and recommend solutions to the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen.	<b>Conserv. Cmte.</b>	Medium	Natural Resources Marine Resources
16	Promote the use of the Open Space Tax Program as a strategy to protect important scenic resources and open spaces in Topsham.	<b>Conserv. Cmte.</b> Assessing Dpt. Planning Dept.	Medium	Natural Resources Open Space
17	Create an education program that increases the community's knowledge of the region's unique natural environment. It is particularly important to highlight the improvements in water quality throughout the community in the past several decades.	<b>Conserv. Cmte.</b>	Medium	Natural Resources Open Space Marine Resources
18	Support the Topsham Sewer District's efforts to expand its boundaries to match the designated growth areas in this comprehensive plan's Future Land Use Plan.	<b>Board of Select.</b>	Medium	Public Utilities Future Land Use Plan
19	Seek opportunities to capitalize on Topsham's status as one of only eight communities in Maine with the National Park Service's Certified Local Government status.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> History Cmte. Historic Dis Com	Medium	Historic Resources
20	Support the History Committee's and the Historic District Commission's efforts to archive resources and preserve the historic character of the town's historic district. Each of these organizations serves an important and distinct role.	<b>Board of Select.</b>	Medium	Historic Resources
21	The Recreation Department and Public Works Department should coordinate to ensure that current and new parks, recreation areas, and water access points are maintained in adequate condition.	Public Works Recreation Dpt.	Medium	Marine Resources Parks, Recreation
22	Upgrade the Town's technological capabilities by improving our Geographic Information System and by making Town records and activities more accessible on the internet.	<b>Town Manager</b> Planning Dept Assessing Dpt	Medium	Public Facilities

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
23	Create an education program for residents and business owners on the importance of groundwater protection in Topsham. This should concentrate on the large number of aquifers in the community as well as many households' reliance on private water supplies in areas not serviced by public water infrastructure.	<b>Conserv. Cmte.</b>	Low	Natural Resources
24	Support the Pejepscot Historical Society's role as an educational organization and repository for the greater Pejepscot region's history. Left Blank Intentionally	<b>History Cmte. Board of Select.</b>	Low	Historic Resources
26	Review the list of tax-exempt properties in Topsham every five years to ensure that the tax-exempt status is justified.	<b>Assessing Dpt.</b>	Low	Fiscal Capacity
27	Explore partnership opportunities with private and nonprofit recreation providers. These partnerships will expand the variety of recreation services available to all Topsham residents while improving efficiency.	<b>Recreation Dpt.</b>	Low	Parks, Recreation
28	Create an education program that highlights the importance of maintaining natural resource-based occupations (working farms and forests) as the most effective tool for keeping rural areas from being developed.	<b>Conserv Cmte. Planning Dept</b>	Low	Natural Resource Open Space
29	Work with farmers and the Maine Farmland Trust to promote the viability and preservation of the town's farms with various farmland conservation strategies.	<b>Conserv. Cmte.</b>	Low	Open Space
30	Create the Topsham Conservation Commission from the Topsham Conservation Committee and charge it with the goal of overseeing the coordination and implementation of the Town's natural resource objectives and strategies.	<b>Board of Select.</b>	Low	Natural Resources
31	Improve the awareness and availability of Topsham's historic resources by cataloguing them and adding a webpage to the town's server detailing the resources that are available.	<b>History Cmte.</b>	Low	Historic Resources

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
<b><i>Plan for Our Future.</i></b>				
32	Create a master transportation plan for the entire town. Current and future development scenarios envisioned in the Future Land Use Plan shall be included. Special attention shall be paid to the Route 196 corridor from the Lisbon town line to Interstate 295, the Interstate 295 interchange, and between Interstate 295 and the Coastal Connector. (underway)	<b>Planning Dept</b> Public Works TDI	High	Transportation Local Economy
33	Work with landowners to develop a business park (similar to the Topsham Business Park) west of Interstate 295.	<b>TDI</b> Board of Select. Town Manager Planning Dept.	High	Local Economy
34	Update the Town’s development impact fee schedule to ensure that Town is being appropriately compensated for the costs of providing services directly attributable to this new development.	<b>TDI</b> Planning Dept.	High	Fiscal Capacity Public Facilities
35	Develop a policy that identifies when conservation banking/mitigation efforts are appropriate to facilitate both development and preservation in appropriate areas of the community.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> TDI Conserv. Cmte.	High	Natural Resources Local Economy
36	Create a detailed inventory of our town’s natural resources and identify the role these resources have in the health of the region’s ecosystem. This inventory will be used as the basis for future planning efforts and shall include information on plant and animal species, ravines, wildlife corridors, large blocks of unfragmented land, wetlands, and riverine/estuarine environments.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> Conserv. Cmte.	High	Natural Resources Marine Resources Open Space
36a	Develop a watershed management plan for the watershed of Topsham Fairground Stream.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> TDI Conserv. Cmte.	High	Natural Resources
37	Initiate a planning effort with neighboring communities to protect larger blocks of unfragmented land and important wildlife corridors that extend into neighboring communities.	<b>Conserv. Cmte.</b> Planning Dept	High	Natural Resources Open Space Marine Resources

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
38	Create a master plan for the Upper Village that creates a common vision for the development of dense, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use village that builds on the area's growing role as a community center (at current Naval Air Station Annex).	Planning Dept TDI	High	Public Facilities Local Economy Land Use Future Land Use Plan
39	Create a detailed Route 196 Corridor Plan that defines a vision for the future of this corridor. This plan should examine zoning, land use patterns, transportation patterns, safety, and utility extensions.	Planning Dept TDI DPW	High	Future Land Use Plan
40	Create a Route 201 Corridor Plan that defines a vision for the future of this corridor. This plan should examine zoning, land use patterns, transportation patterns, and safety issues.	Planning Dept TDI DPW	High	Future Land Use Plan
41	Create an Industrial Use Plan that identifies where industrial activity should occur in Topsham and what types of industrial activities should be permitted.	Planning Dept TDI	High	Future Land Use Plan
42	Create a Cathance and Muddy River Corridor Plan to ensure that wildlife diversity and water quality in this important area remain high for generations to come.	Planning Dept Conserv. Cmte.	High	Future Land Use Plan
43	Create an Implementation Committee to implement the strategies identified in this Comprehensive Plan Update and propose ordinance changes to the Planning Board and Town Selectmen.	Town Manager Town Selectmen Planning Dept Planning Board	High	Public Facilities
44	Create a Master Plan for the Route 196 and Interstate 295 intersection that addresses land use patterns, traffic volumes, safety, and zoning.	Planning Dept TDI DPW	High	Local Economy
45	Create an on-going administrative assessment of each department's capacity to handle future demands placed on it as the result of growth and changes within Topsham. This assessment should be conducted on a two-year cycle.	Town Manager Board of Select	High	Public Facilities
46	Develop a five-year infrastructure maintenance and capital improvements program that details the level of service at which Topsham's roads will be maintained and for what cost.	Public Works	Medium	Transportation

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
47	Create a master plan to identify the future indoor and outdoor recreation needs of our town. This plan will include a detailed inventory of recreation facilities (including water access points). Special attention will be given to indoor recreation facilities and programs for all age groups.	<b>Recreation Dpt.</b>	Medium	Parks, Recreation Public Facilities Marine Resources
48	Develop a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy that identifies appropriate commercial and affordable housing uses of TIFs for community and/or economic development.	<b>Town Manager</b> TDI Planning Dept Housing Author.	Medium	Local Economy Fiscal Capacity
49	Develop and implement traffic management strategies in residential neighborhoods that are adversely impacted by new residential or non-residential development.	<b>Public Works</b> Police Dept Planning Dept.	Medium	Transportation
50	An economic development study should be completed, to include plans for future economic growth, potential impacts and contingency plans stemming from a closure of BIW and/or BNAS. This study should be used to guide future investment of economic development funds by the Town.	<b>TDI</b> Planning Dept.	Medium	Local Economy Fiscal Capacity
50	Consider bonding and other types of long-term financing to pay for large capital investments.	<b>Town Manager</b> Board of Select.	Medium	Fiscal Capacity
51	Create a bicycle and pedestrian plan that identifies where bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be located, what functions they will serve, and how they should be funded.	<b>Planning Dept</b> TDI Parks & Rec Public Works	Medium	Transportation
52	Ensure that the comprehensive planning process is ongoing by presenting the planning efforts recommended in this Comprehensive Plan Update for approval at Town Meeting. These master planning efforts should be intended as ongoing updates to this plan	<b>Planning Dept</b> Board of Selectm	Medium	Public Facilities
53	Support SAD 75's redevelopment/renovation plan to improve the program space in the Mt. Ararat High School.	<b>Board of Select.</b>	Low	Public Facilities
53a	Update and extend the Main Street Plan at least the Rt. 196/Rt. 201 intersection, evaluating desired land uses, densities and type of businesses that should be encouraged in this area in order to enhance Topsham's Village.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> TDI	High	Future Land Use

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
53b	Evaluate staffing levels for Fire and Police Departments over a five-year period.	<b>Fire Dept Police Dept</b>	Medium	Public Facilities
54	Create a Gateway Plan to ensure that the entrances to our town are distinct. This plan should examine signage as well as land use management.	<b>Planning Dept Conserv. Cmte. Parks &amp; Rec</b>	Low	Transportation

***Maintain a High Level of Services at Town Facilities.***

55	Support the construction of a new public safety facility that includes fire and public safety services. This new facility should be large enough to meet existing and future space needs and should be centrally located to improve response times throughout the community. There is a significant cost advantage to the community if this new facility is consolidated with a new municipal building.	<b>Town Manager Board of Select.</b>	High	Public Facilities
56	Develop a land acquisition program that is designed to preserve our town’s most important natural areas and scenic views. This program shall identify the type and location of land that is appropriate for conservation. This program could be funded with a land acquisition bond, growth-area developer fees, grants, state programs, the Economic and Community Development Plan Fund, or private sources. The program should require an analysis of how the decreased tax revenue to the Town will affect the provision of municipal services.	<b>Planning Dept. Conserv. Cmte.</b>	High	Natural Resources Open Space
57	Establish a Downtown Waterfront Park that increases the attractiveness of the Village and provides water access to the Androscoggin River.	<b>Recreation Dpt Planning Dept Conserv. Cmte TDI</b>	High	Transportation Parks, Recreation Marine Resour.
58	The Town of Topsham should lessen its impact on the environment by improving energy efficiency, promoting recycling, and conserving resources when cost effective. These concerns should be considered for both capital investments and ongoing operations.	<b>Town Manager Board of Select Solid Waste</b>	High	Public Facilities

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
59	Ensure that traffic along Main Street is not harmful to the pedestrian-oriented businesses in the Lower, Middle, and Upper Villages.	<b>Planning Dept</b> TDI Public Works Police Dept Recreation Dpt	Medium	Transportation Future Land Use Plan
60	Evaluate the creation of satellite recreation areas in different parts of town, as part of the Recreation Master Plan, including West Topsham. These satellites should not detract from the central recreation facility on the Foreside Road, but could offer modest and convenient recreation opportunities in throughout the community.	<b>Recreation Dpt.</b>	Low	Parks, Recreation
61	Analyze providing pre-school or organized activities to pre-kindergarten children as part of the Recreation Master Plan.	<b>Topsh. Library</b> Recreation Dpt. SAD 75	Low	Parks, Recreation Public Facilities
62	Ensure that the History Committee has adequate and secure space to store its growing archive and display information about our town’s history.	<b>Board of Select.</b>	Low	Historic Resources Public Facilities

***Improve the Pattern of Land Use in Topsham.***

63	Ensure that appropriate areas are zoned for economic growth and allow office, service, and manufacturing uses according to the Future Land Use Plan.	<b>Implement Cm.</b> Planning Dept. TDI	High	Local Economy
64	Review the Table of Permitted Uses in the Land Use Ordinance to ensure that appropriate businesses are permitted in each zone and that lot and building size restrictions are appropriate.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	High	Local Economy
65	Review the Land Use Ordinance to allow neighborhood grocery stores enough square footage to adequately provide retail and service opportunities to local residents, and to allow limited gasoline sales, in the Growth Area only. Appropriate buffer and siting standards will have to be developed.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	High	Local Economy

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
66	Review the Land Use Ordinance to ensure that residential areas are adequately buffered from the adverse impacts of new development and new transportation connections.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept TDI DPW	High	Housing Transportation
67	Develop standards to manage new curb cuts on arterial roadways. Traffic volume and speed on our town's arterial roadways are creating safety concerns.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept TDI DPW	High	Transportation
68	Review the Land Use Ordinance and Performance Standards to ensure that home occupations and home businesses remain a viable component of Topsham's economy.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	High	Local Economy
69	Update our open space development subdivision ordinance to create financial incentives (such as a density bonus) for developers to protect significant amounts of natural/scenic areas whenever development occurs in the rural zone.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept Conserv. Cmte.	High	Land Use Housing Natural Resources Open Space Future Land Use Plan
70	Require all new development in the growth areas (identified in the Future Land Use Plan) to connect to public utilities if the expansion to those utilities is financially practical.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	High	Public Utilities Housing
71	Adjust the Land Use Ordinance and decrease lot sizes on land serviced by public water and sewer, with special attention to the potential for infill development within the denser areas of the village. This also requires adjustments to the space and bulk standards in the Land Use Ordinance.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	High	Public Utilities Housing
72	Update the Land Use Ordinance to allow more flexible on-site parking arrangements in the pedestrian-oriented Lower, Middle, and Upper Villages.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept TDI	High	Transportation
73	Anticipate the need for standards to manage new curb cuts on rural collector roads.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept Public Works	Medium	Transportation

#		<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
74	Require that new developments upgrade adjoining public infrastructure to minimum standards when permitting new development.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept Public Works	Medium	Transportation
75	Create a program that determines when and how new growth-area subdivisions with densities higher than the underlying zone allows could be developed contingent on preserving an appropriate amount of developable land in another area of Topsham. This program depends on a list of priority parks, recreation, conservation, and scenic resources in Topsham that should be the target of these development offsets. This program depends on creating a fund into which developers pay their offset fees; the proceeds of this fund are then used to purchase land or development easements.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept. Parks & Rec Conserv Cmte	Medium	Public Utilities Housing Natural Resources Marine Resources Open Space
76	Create hierarchical design standards for all new public and private roads that require appropriate landscaping, tree lines, travelways, bicycle/pedestrian ways, and accessible shoulders.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Parks & Rec Planning Dept Public Works	Medium	Transportation Housing
77	Adjust the Land Use Ordinance to promote the development of affordable housing in our community with increased densities in appropriate areas, manufactured housing, and multi-unit buildings.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	Medium	Housing
77a	Review and revise the Mobile Home Park Overlay Districts to allow for the expansion of existing mobile home parks that are located within the designated Growth Area where such expansion is feasible.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	Medium	Housing
78	Adjust the Land Use Ordinance to allow renovated buildings in the suburban district to convert to multi-family housing, so long as the volume of the renovated building doesn't change the character of the residential neighborhood, and adequate parking facilities are provided.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept	Medium	Transportation Housing Future Land Use Plan
79	Increase the minimum standards for new private roads to more closely resemble the minimum standards for new public roads.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept DPW	Medium	Transportation

#		Lead Responsibility	Priority	Goal & Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)
80	Create a program that allows density bonuses to a development in the growth areas if that development contributes fees to an affordable housing fund. This affordable housing fund will be used by local affordable housing providers, such as the Topsham Housing Authority, to create affordable housing opportunities within the community.	<b>Implement. C.</b> Planning Dept Housing Auth	Medium	Housing
81	Seek opportunities to use development or redevelopment as a tool to preserve historic sites. Recent private development has preserved several historic buildings in Topsham while updating their function to more contemporary standards.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> History Cmte Historic District	Medium	Historic Resources
82	Encourage the preservation of the Lower Village's character by maintaining the historic development standards in the Lower Village.	<b>Planning Dept</b>	Low	Housing Historic Resources
82a	Identify tax incentive programs and economic hardship strategies to assist in the maintenance of historic structures.	<b>Planning Dept.</b>	Low	Historic Resources
82b	Update Historic District ordinance to develop standards for contributing structures.	<b>Planning Dept</b>	Med	Historic Resources
82c	Update Historic structure inventory, identify significant cultural landscapes and evaluate potential for expansions to the Historic Districts.	<b>Planning Dept</b>	Med	Historic Resources
82d	Review and update Design Review Manual for Historic Districts.	<b>Planning Dept</b>	Low	Historic Resources
82e	Review and update the treatment of historic and archaeological resources in the development review process.	<b>Planning Dept</b>	Med	Historic Resources
82f	Institute a development monitoring system that tracks where both residential and non-residential development is occurring within the community and analyzes the share of growth occurring within the Growth Area.	<b>Planning Dept</b>	High	Land Use

### ***Increase Connections throughout Our Community.***

83	Evaluate the need for new roadways that provide options for local traffic in Topsham (for example, between Routes 196 and 201, between Main Street and the Topsham Fair Mall, and between Route 201 and the Tedford Road.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> Public Works TDI	High	Transportation
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#		<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Goal &amp; Objective (in Section E) and Inventory Reference (Part 4)</b>
84	Require that new residential developments have bicycle and/or pedestrian connections with existing development. The type of connections should depend on where the development exists in the community – trails/rights-of-way in less dense areas and sidewalks/paths in more dense areas.	<b>Planning Dept</b> Planning Board Public Works Recreation Dpt	High	Transportation Parks, Recreation Housing
85	Improve automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian connections throughout the Town between residential neighborhoods, community facilities, recreation areas, and commercial areas. Special attention should be given to designs that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.	<b>Planning Dept</b> Parks & Rec TDI	High	Transportation Parks, Recreation Housing Local Economy
86	Seek capital funding opportunities to expand the number of natural resource-based tourism facilities available in Topsham, including bicycle/pedestrian paths, trails, access points to natural resource areas, and water access facilities.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> Conserv. Cmte. TDI Parks & Rec Police Dept	Medium	Transportation Natural Resources Marine Resources Parks, Recreation Local Economy
87	Improve the bicycle and pedestrian connections between our town and neighboring communities. Special attention shall be given to the Swinging Bridge and the Frank Wood Bridge.	<b>Planning Dept.</b> Public Works TDI Parks & Rec	Medium	Transportation Parks, Recreation
88	Work with local snowmobile/ATV club to protect and preserve trail access, as well as to improve the safety of road crossings.	<b>Public Works</b> Planning Dept Parks & Rec Police	Low	Transportation Parks, Recreation
89	An economic development study should be completed, to include plans for future economic growth, potential impacts and contingency plans stemming from a closure of BIW and/or BNAS. This study should be used to guide future investment of economic development funds by the Town.	<b>TDI</b> Planning Dept.	Medium	Local Economy Fiscal Capacity

# *Regional Coordination*

Many of the issues facing Topsham extend beyond the boundaries of the Town and therefore require cooperation and coordination among municipalities and regional interests to be successfully addressed.

This chapter briefly discusses existing regional efforts between the Town of Topsham and adjacent municipalities and regional interests as well as identifying additional issues that the Town could address on a regional level.

## **A. Existing Regional Coordination**

### *1. Public Education*

The Town of Topsham provides public education as the largest member of School Administrative District 75 – a quasi-public agency comprised of Topsham, Harpswell, Bowdoin, and Bowdoinham. The SAD’s middle school and high school are adjacent to each other in the Upper Village. In addition, Merrymeeting Adult Education provides GED programs and continuing education opportunities to residents in SAD 75 communities and Brunswick.

### *2. Topsham Sewer District*

While the Topsham Sewer District is its own entity, it has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Brunswick Sewer District. The agreement ensures that the Brunswick Sewer District treats the effluent from the Topsham Sewer District’s system, which allows the Topsham Sewer District to operate without a wastewater treatment facility. The two entities renegotiate contracts on a regular basis.

### *3. Brunswick-Topsham Water District*

The Brunswick-Topsham Water District is a quasi-municipal public utility that provides public water to residents and businesses in the more built-up areas of Topsham and Brunswick. Four of the six voting members are appointed by the Brunswick Town Council and the remaining two are appointed by the Topsham Selectmen. The District’s central office is located in Topsham, and its well fields and storage tanks are in both Brunswick and Topsham.

### *4. Nonprofit Organizations*

Many extra-governmental services are provided by nonprofit organizations serving several of the

communities in the region. A sample of these organizations include conservation groups (i.e. Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Cathance River Education Alliance, the Nature Conservancy), affordable housing providers (Habitat for Humanity, Volunteers of America), social service organizations (i.e. Big Brother/Big Sister), cultural activities (i.e. Midcoast REACH), historic preservation groups (i.e. Pejepscot Historical Society), economic development (i.e. Midcoast Council for Business Development and Planning, Chamber of Commerce), and recreation organizations (i.e. People Plus Center). In addition, the Town of Topsham supports joint committees with neighboring communities to address particular issues (i.e. Save Our Bridge).

#### **5. *Transportation Planning***

The Town of Topsham participates in regional transportation planning activities through the Androscoggin River Bikeway, the Midcoast Transportation Collaborative, and local initiatives with adjoining communities.

#### **6. *Affordable Housing***

The Topsham Housing Authority, a quasi-governmental agency, cooperates with the Brunswick Housing Authority to promote affordable housing opportunities in our community.

#### **7. *Sagadahoc Regional Rural Initiative***

Topsham is participating with several other communities in Sagadahoc and Cumberland Counties to

examine cooperative policy initiatives that could preserve more rural areas throughout the region.

### **B. Issues of Regional Concern**

#### **1. *Public Safety Services***

Both Topsham and Brunswick provide full-time police services to their respective communities. Brunswick also provides full-time fire protection services while Topsham has a largely volunteer firefighting staff. Despite this different level of service, there may be services and equipment that the two communities could share. The two public safety services should examine the range of services and equipment they provide and seek opportunities where cooperation could provide an efficient and high level of service. In addition, Topsham has opportunities to coordinate with the Navy and its facilities at the Naval Air Station Annex.

#### **2. *The Scenic Character of the Region***

One of Topsham's characteristics is the high quality of its natural and scenic environment. This environment does not stop at the municipal boundaries. While the Town of Topsham is largely responsible for the stewardship of the environment within its own boundaries, it also should play an important role as a leader in regional efforts to maintain the character and scenic quality in the region. Given the importance of this resource to the community and its future, it is vital that the Town support regional planning initiatives that seek to preserve its natural and scenic environment. This could include an examination of tax-base sharing with communities that consider our community to be their growth area.

### ***3. Transportation Issues***

Transportation is often considered a local issue. However, in Topsham's case it is an important regional issue as well. Topsham is a transportation center. People come to Topsham to work and play, but they also pass through Topsham on their way to work and play. Because development in surrounding communities (particularly rural communities) is growing quickly, transportation will continue to be a problem for the foreseeable future and will have to be addressed on a regional scale in order to improve the situation. Issues that should be addressed include a Route 196 Corridor Plan (like the MDOT's Gateway 1 project and should include Lisbon and Lewiston), public transportation initiatives, and a Route 201 Corridor Plan (including Bowdoin and Bowdoinham).

### ***4. Mission Change at Naval Air Station Brunswick***

As the Department of Defense continues to realign itself after the end of the Cold War, it is likely that the mission of the Naval Air Station Brunswick will change in the future. The Town of Brunswick is currently preparing for mission changes at the Naval Air Station or a closing of the air base altogether. Since the Naval Air Station Annex is in the heart of our community, Topsham should seek a participatory role in these discussions. A similar investigation should be conducted relative to Bath Iron Works.

### ***5. Recreation Opportunities***

Topsham cooperates with surrounding communities with many of its recreation resources. However, both

Topsham and Brunswick have a limited amount of indoor recreation space. These two communities should cooperate on providing better indoor recreation opportunities and services to their residents. This should include consideration of a joint pre-school program available to residents of both communities, redevelopment of the Naval Air Station Annex to a community recreation center, and the extension of trail corridors throughout the region.

### ***6. Solid waste***

Many of the surrounding towns have, like Topsham, a dedicated solid waste facility. The Town of Topsham should seek opportunities to work with surrounding communities to create joint facilities or share equipment.

### ***7. Provision of Affordable Housing***

Those working in our community are drawn from a regional labor pool, and those seeking to live in our community may work regionally. Market forces determine the price of housing in a community, and oftentimes it is difficult for a community to guarantee a supply of affordable housing. The provision of affordable housing is an issue that should be approached on a regional level.

# *Capital Investment Strategy*

This capital investment strategy is designed to assist the Town of Topsham in planning for the capital investments needed to service the projected growth and maintenance of services and facilities in our town.

## **Projected Growth**

By 2003, our town had an estimated 9,631 year-round residents. The population has been growing modestly, but not as quickly as it has in the past. Growth rates of 27% to 42% were standards for each decade from the 1950s through the 1980s. However, in the 1990s this growth rate slowed to 6%. This more moderate growth rate is projected to continue through 2015 (town's population will total 10,700 residents).

Despite this more moderate population projection, the rates of residential and commercial growth are projected to be more robust. The number of housing units in Topsham is projected to increase by 17% between 2003 and 2015. The growth in our town's economy has been significant in the last decade, and this growth is projected to continue for the next decade. The evolution of our town's economy into a regional service center is going to attract customers from a much larger region that we have in the past.

## **Capital Improvement Planning Process**

The Town of Topsham currently recognizes the importance of having a multi-year plan for its capital expenditures (any activity or purchase that exceeds \$5,000 and has a life expectancy of greater than 5 years).

Examples of items that the Town has identified as Capital Improvement include Police Cars, Fire trucks, Public Works equipment, Road reconstruction, ambulances and other similar items.

The Board of Selectmen and the Topsham Finance Committee have adopted the concept of a 5 year plan. The funding model of the 5 year plan is attached to this memo. Each year has the items identified by Department. These items represent what the Department has identified as anticipated needs. Each year the plan will be reviewed at staff level and new projections for the outlying year will be made.

The adoption of the concept by the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee is not a commitment by either of those committees to support the plan on a year-by-year basis but rather it is an endorsement of the planning and prioritization methodology. Furthermore, the action being requested of the Town Meeting vote does not commit the Town to specific future action. The vote to endorse the proposed **Capital Improvement Plan** only states that the Town supports multi-year planning for large capital expenditures.

This table is the Town of Topsham's current Capital Improvement Plan that was adopted at the May, 2004 Town Meeting.

Department	Current Balance	Capital Expenditure					Total
		2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	
PUBLIC WORKS (SIDEWALKS)		10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$50,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS (USED GRADER)			\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000		\$45,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS (SWEEPER)			\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$100,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS (TRUCK #27)					\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS (LOADER #16)		\$70,000					\$70,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS (TRUCK #3)					\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS (TRUCK #2)			\$50,000	\$50,000			\$100,000.0
PUBLIC WORKS ROAD CONST.		\$200,000	\$200,000	\$225,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$1,125,000.0
ASSESSING (REVALUATION)	\$70,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$		\$190,000.0
POLICE (SOFTWARE)							
POLICE (VEHICLE REPLACEMENT)		\$70,000	\$52,000	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$70,000	\$302,000.0
POLICE (VEHICLE PURCHASE)							
POLICE (BUILDING REPAIR)	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$23,000.0
POLICE (COMPUTERS IN CRUISERS)		\$15,000					\$15,000.0
POLICE (COMPUTER REPLACEMENT)	\$20,000		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$40,000.0
EMS (CRUISER REPLACEMENT)				\$9,000	\$10,000	\$9,000	\$28,000.0
EMS (AMBULANCE REPLACEMENT)	\$111,000	\$20,000			\$20,000	\$20,000	\$171,000.0
EMS (2ND AMBULANCE)	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000			\$144,000.0
RECREATION (EQUIPMENT)		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$25,000.0
RECREATION (PLAYGROUND EQUIP)	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$				\$12,000.0
RECREATION (MAINTENANCE TRUCK)		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$25,000.0
RECREATION (LIGHTING)		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$20,000.0
RECREATION (HILLSIDE PARKING)		\$12,000					\$12,000.0
RECREATION (TENNIS COURTS)		\$8,000	\$8,000				\$16,000.0
RECREATION (BASKETBALL)	\$12,000		\$				\$12,000.0
FIRE DEPT (TANK TRUCK)		\$75,000	\$75,000				\$150,000.0
FIRE DEPT( TRAINING TOWER)							
FIRE DEPT (PUMPER REPLACEMENT)							
FIRE DEPT (LADDER TRUCK)		\$25,000		\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$175,000.0
FIRE DEPT (BREATHING AIR SYSTEM)						\$25,000	\$25,000.0
FIRE DEPT (VEHICLE REPLACEMENT)		\$30,000					
PULBIC SAFETY BUILDING		\$100,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$900,000.0
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN							
MUNICIPAL BUILDING							
TOTALS		\$735,000	\$730,000	\$739,000	\$764,000	\$779,000	\$3,975,000

## Capital Investment Strategy

The Town of Topsham and other government entities have made several recent investments at several of their facilities to accommodate future growth. These include:

- Public Works Department's new garage,
- Topsham Public Library's new facility,
- Elementary school renovations,
- Middle School construction,
- Coastal Connector construction,
- Lower Village (Maine Street) transportation improvements, and
- Route 196 transportation improvements.

The implementation of the goals, objectives, and strategies set forth in this Comprehensive Plan Update will require that the Town make investments in its infrastructure and facilities if it is going to continue to offer the same high level of facilities and services to the residents of the community. This section identifies the capital investments that will probably be necessary over the next ten years to accommodate the projected growth in the community.

- Public sewer and water expansion across Interstate 295 – Public water and sewer lines can only be extended across Interstate 295 at considerable expense. Currently, a developer of the land at the Route 196/Interstate 295 interchange would have to finance that extension privately. The Town of Topsham will only help finance this extension into the Route 196/Interstate 295 interchange area once the master plan for this area is complete. The Town of Topsham will consider financing a public sewer and water extension further up Route 196 only after a separate Route 196 Corridor Plan is completed. The Town of Topsham will finance these extensions if the extensions benefit

businesses that return a significant portion of their revenue back to the local economy.

- Public water and sewer expansions to residential neighborhoods – To accommodate residential development in the more dense areas of our town, this plan recommends creating fees, special assessments, and financing options for developers to help recoup the expense of expanding the public utility network. The Town of Topsham does not intend to pay for these expansions itself.
- Construct a new public safety and municipal building – The Police and Fire Departments as well as the general government functions at Town Hall currently do not have enough space to continue providing a high level of service to the community. A municipal facilities committee has been working on a plan to relocate these services for several years. The Town of Topsham is seeking opportunities to combine these services in one central location in the town. While a site has not yet been finalized, the cost of building this public safety/municipal is estimated to be \$11,000,000. Funding for this project will likely be raised by selling existing municipal property, using Municipal TIF Revenue, and issuing long-term bonds.
- Traffic Improvements – Despite the traffic improvements that the Town has made in the past and the current (2006) construction of the Monument Place Connector, the Town-wide Transportation Study identifies a number of major improvements that may need to be made over the next twenty years to accommodate growth and development. The preliminary costs (2005) for the full set of possible improvements is estimated to be in the range of \$7-8 million but these costs do not include right-of-way and some other costs. The approach for funding these

improvements has not been determined. Some of the improvements may be constructed or funded as part of private development activities. If any public funding is required for future transportation improvements, it would require Town Meeting approval and would likely be paid for by Municipal TIF revenue and/or a long-term bond.

- Recreation Infrastructure – the number of recreation opportunities in our town is growing, and the recreation needs of our residents are changing. The Recreation Master Plan will identify unmet recreation needs and opportunities in our community. While some of these proposals will be designed to increase the level of service provided by the town, others will identify needs that are the result of new growth. Funding sources for any new recreation infrastructure has not been identified, but could include operating revenues, developer fees, long-term bonds, and private sources.

# *Part 4. Inventory*

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

HOUSING

LOCAL ECONOMY

TRANSPORTATION

PUBLIC UTILITIES

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND GOVERNANCE

LAND USE

PARKS AND RECREATION

OPEN SPACE, AGRICULTURE, AND FORESTRY

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

NAUTRAL RESOURCES

MARINE RESOURCES

FISCAL CAPACITY