

A Vision for Canterbury's Future

The Canterbury Plan for Tomorrow is created as a living document that is periodically updated. It articulates the vision, desires, and concerns of the community. It serves as a road map for the future. This Plan describes Canterbury today and the community's shared vision for the future. Most importantly, it defines what the Town will need to do over the next several years to fulfill that vision.

This Plan provides recommendations on ways to maintain or improve the features of the community and aims to serve as a blueprint for planning Canterbury's future. This Plan can help support economic development efforts, amendments to land use regulations, environmental and historic preservation efforts, expansion of community facilities and services, transportation enhancements, and much more over the next several years.

The Town's Master Plan is intended to be the guidebook that supports the creation, interpretation, and implementation of laws and procedures which give shape and direction to the community. A Master Plan's purpose and description are outlined by New Hampshire statute (RSA 674:2), but it has no force of law and no way to generate the resources required for implementation. The Master Plan can be a powerful tool to help shape a community by giving suggested direction to appointed and elected officials for decision-making. However, the true power of the document is derived from the residents who approve the staffing, funding, regulatory alternatives, and strategies identified by this Plan.



COMMUNITY INPUT

Throughout the development of this Master Plan, engaging residents and other community stakeholders was a necessity. Two well-attended Visioning Sessions were held in June and October of 2022 and a Community Survey was also conducted in 2020 with over 200 responses. The visioning sessions and the survey both provided the Planning Board with important information on residents' opinions on many topics related to Canterbury's land use, housing, transportation, natural resources, community facilities, economic development, and many local priorities and concerns. Stakeholder attendance at Planning Board meetings related to master plan topics provided additional information and insight for this document.

Respondents and stakeholders were most supportive of small-scale farming, farming cooperatives, home occupation, outdoor recreation businesses and restaurants as the preferred types of commercial development types.

Keeping the Canterbury Center amenities as they currently stand was of high importance. Priorities for conservation and open space included wildlife corridors, wildlife and plant habitat, and large forest blocks. Favorite locations frequently mentioned in the Survey were Morrill Pond, Kimball Pond, Deepwood Forest, Shaker Village, the Merrimack River, and the Town Beach.

Additional marked and maintained trails, more waterfront recreation and a Merrimack River boat launch were preferred Town recreational facilities. The community also expressed support for the construction of new facilities, including soccer fields, softball/baseball fields, and basketball courts.

Regarding housing in Canterbury, there was strong support for workforce and affordable housing that will continue to keep Canterbury accessible for all ages and incomes, including housing for downsizing seniors wishing to remain in Canterbury as well as homes for young families and those in the workforce. This desire for new housing reflects the needs of residents, but residents would also like to consider how to preserve and protect Canterbury's current landscape.

Community input highlighted residents' appreciation of the Town's rural landscape and small-town atmosphere, including a vast selection of natural resources, recreational opportunities, and historical character of Canterbury Center. Concern was expressed about the current tax rate and its potential for forcing residents out of the community. To balance the traditional with the contemporary needs, strong support was identified for additional commercial development in areas of town which do not compromise Canterbury's rural character, including the areas around Exit 17 and 18 of I-93 and in the Commercial Zone along NH 106.

With limited municipal financial resources, respondents preferred town budget investment in road maintenance, fire protection, recycling, and police protection over other Town services.

A strong desire for adequate broadband internet service and town-wide cellular coverage was expressed. The lack of both discourages home occupations, local businesses, emergency services, and new residents from moving to Canterbury. Additional support for other emerging technologies, such as those for harvesting solar energy will set Canterbury on a path for future success.

“Welcoming, supportive, community oriented, neighbors helping neighbors, natural beauty.”

“Lack of affordable housing available for different age groups and income levels.”

“Maintain the rural character of Canterbury. Promote land conservation/open space and a vital Town Center .”

“Expanding the tax base and supporting mixed uses near Interstate 93, Exits 17 and 18.”

“Opportunities for people who live here to work here.”

“Need to balance services to lower the tax burden .”

“ A cross section of social economic diversity. Tradespeople, professionals, artist, agricultural. White and blue collar. Diverse age groups from young to old.”



OUR VISION

The vision for Canterbury's future is crafted from what residents and community stakeholders value about the Town today and what they hope to see in the Town for the future.

Existing and Future Land Use

To balance appreciation of the Town's rural landscape and small-town atmosphere, including a vast selection of natural resources, recreational opportunities, and the historical character of Canterbury Center, with the opportunity for commercial expansion at I-93 Exits 17 and 18 to enhance the local tax base.

Transportation

To provide a well-maintained and safe transportation system that meets the Town's needs; to encourage a transportation system that will meet the mobility needs of all residents within Canterbury and throughout the region; and to continue to develop trails for transportation and recreation.

Housing

To enhance and diversify Canterbury's housing inventory for residents of all ages while preserving the character of the Town and quality of life that are so highly valued.

Community Facilities

To evaluate and enhance Canterbury's community facilities, recreational facilities, and utilities; to provide and maintain the essential services needed for Canterbury residents and businesses to thrive; and to adjust services and their delivery to the changing needs of the population.

Natural Features

To maintain Canterbury's defining characteristics of open space and natural resources, a small, rural town that is proud to continue farming, forestry, and enjoying the natural world; and to ensure permanent conservation of farm soils, water resources, and high-value natural areas to support a variety of plants and animals, provide clean water, create connectivity for climate adaptation, and provide space for human enjoyment.

HOW TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The following objectives are derived from each of the Master Plan's chapters. They reflect the long term direction for Canterbury's future as a thriving community. Working to achieve each of these items will enable Canterbury to

LAND USE

- Encourage a mix of uses and densities in appropriate parts of town.
- Promote and preserve Canterbury's agricultural heritage.
- Continue to promote economic development in areas of town that are well-suited for business uses.
- Encourage the construction of housing for residents of all ages and income levels.

TRANSPORTATION

- Preserve and maintain the existing conditions of the transportation system.
- Address capital improvement projects strategically important to Canterbury's transportation network.
- Prioritize safety for all modes of transportation.

HOUSING

- Support a mix of housing densities and types in Canterbury.

- Promote the use of cluster subdivisions and other zoning tools to increase the availability of housing.
- Encourage the development of additional residential units that are smaller and more affordable to accommodate downsizing seniors and young families.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- Develop the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) with annual updates to transparently engage in long-term planning for community facility and capital needs projects.
- Continue to evaluate options for obtaining widely available high-speed internet access, as well as address the need to increase reliable cellular service in town. *Community-wide broadband is expected to be available by the end of 2024.*
- Promote regular water quality testing and reporting for contaminants and PFAS-type chemicals by residents, businesses and Town facilities.
- Continue to explore Community Power options via the newly formed Community Power Committee with the goal of reducing electrical costs for all Canterbury customers.

NATURAL FEATURES

- Conserve natural resources and habitats for plants and wildlife and promote climate resilience locally and regionally.
- Protect and conserve the resources that contribute to human health and quality of life, including clean air, clean water, and biological diversity.
- Conserve working landscapes for agriculture and forestry.
- Conserve land, water bodies, and landscapes that can maintain the Town’s rural character and beauty and provide and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

Regional Concerns

Canterbury can benefit from working regionally in many areas including population and housing growth, transportation improvements, natural resource protection, and watershed management.

Partnering with neighboring communities can cultivate strong momentum for projects that benefit Canterbury and the surrounding region. Shared services such as waste disposal, mutual aid, school systems, and emergency response sometimes make sense for smaller communities like Canterbury.

Wildlife corridors, habitat ecosystems, water bodies, and trail systems cross municipal borders, as do natural disasters. Broader approaches are required for successful protection and enhancement efforts.

Transportation networks are interconnected regionally, and most Canterbury residents travel out of the town for work and daily services. Ensuring all modes of transportation safely reach beyond the Town is essential for future success.

Chapters in this Plan for Tomorrow discuss regional issues – collaboration has the potential to achieve many important shared benefits.