



## Master Plan

# 1. Introduction

## A. General

Town Meeting voted funds for Amherst’s Master Plan in 2006. The effort was led by the appointed Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) with at-large members and others from town committees and civic groups. The CPC worked closely with the national consulting firm of ACP–Visioning and Planning in order to facilitate the process, known as *Planning Amherst Together*, and to develop the draft Master Plan that was presented to the Planning Board for its review and adoption.

A Master Plan is a community’s “blueprint” for its future. As such, it is the broadest policy document a community can have to guide decision-making on long-term physical development over a period of decades or even generations. The Town of Amherst’s Master Plan addresses a variety of topics including land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, parks and open space, community services and facilities/utilities, transportation, and implementation.

Although a Master Plan is required under Massachusetts state law, the Town of Amherst hasn’t prepared a Master Plan since 1969. While Amherst has undertaken many innovative planning projects over the past 38 years, none of these studies were comprehensive in nature and none were formally adopted.

This Plan—the first in nearly 40 years—was based on significant public input throughout the planning process. This input was integrated with research on the community’s existing conditions and anticipated trends for the future. It was the charge of the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) to understand these findings and deliberate on appropriate recommendations for the future. This Master Plan represents the community’s best effort to balance competing interests and complex and intertwined issues.

## B. Organization of the Report

M.G.L. Chapter 41, Section 81D of Massachusetts law requires a local planning board to develop a master plan for its community. (See <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/41-81d.htm>.) The law requires the plan to be consistent in its policies, forecasts, and standards. It also outlines a series of elements that must be addressed in the plan. Accordingly, this Master Plan for the Town of Amherst is organized based on the following structure:

- **Chapter 2: Goals & Policies** - Addresses the overarching vision, goals, and priorities for the community as developed through the interactive public process.
- **Chapter 3: Land Use** – Describes the proposed distribution, location, inter-relationship, and character of land uses in the

community. This chapter provides a land use map and identifies specific planning initiatives to guide future development in Amherst.

- **Chapter 4: Demographics and Housing** – Outlines housing needs and objectives, including approaches for the preservation of existing housing stock and development of new units that will diversify Amherst’s housing choices. Strategies to promote affordability represent a key component of this element.
- **Chapter 5: Economic Development** – Identifies policies to support expansion of the Town’s economic base and provide for further employment opportunities.
- **Chapter 6: Natural and Cultural Resources** – Provides a number of strategies designed to protect and enhance the Town’s significant natural, cultural, and historic resources.
- **Chapter 7: Open Space and Recreation** – Outlines information about significant open spaces and recreational facilities in Amherst, and provides policies and strategies to support the protection, management, and expansion of such areas.
- **Chapter 8: Services and Facilities** – Analyzes existing and forecasted needs for public services and facilities in Amherst, and provides policies to guide their expansion.
- **Chapter 9: Transportation and Circulation** – Examines existing and proposed circulation and transportation systems. This chapter emphasizes the importance of expanding alternative and public transportation options and reducing reliance on the private automobile.
- **Chapter 10: Implementation** – Identifies specific actions that are necessary to achieve the objectives of the Master Plan. Steps to be taken by the Planning Board, the Master Plan Implementation Committee and the Town boards/committees and departments responsible for specific areas of Amherst’s public interest include developing action plans that identify appropriate responsible entities and establish timelines for completion of strategies.

### **Appendix**

- A. **Implementation Matrix** – This checklist of Master Plan strategies is to be used by those responsible for developing action plans.

### **Supporting Documents**

The following supporting documents were prepared as part of the master planning process. Copies can be obtained from the Amherst Planning Department or and can be accessed through the Town’s webpage:

- A. Existing Conditions and Trends Report. This report compiles research and analysis that formed the technical foundation of the Plan.

- B. Ideas for the Future. This represents a complete list of ideas collected from the public, and organized by topic.
- C. Community Choices Public Meeting Results. This report details the results of the Community Choices event held in early 2007, which was designed to gather feedback from the public on the draft goals and land use principles.
- D. Community Survey Results. This document represents a compilation of the survey responses arranged numerically.