

Town of Amherst Massachusetts



Master Plan



Adopted by the Amherst Planning Board
February 3, 2010

The resulting Master Plan records and synthesizes the intentions of the hundreds of community residents participating, spells out priorities and actions, and identifies implementation and public decision-making procedures through which future priorities and actions can be identified and pursued in a timely and responsible fashion.

C. Key Directions for the Community

This section summarizes the key directions that the community has said it wants Amherst to go in the foreseeable future. Taken together, these directions constitute the vision inherent in this Plan. These directions arise from public sentiment expressed throughout the *Planning Amherst Together* process, an analysis of the Plan's objectives and strategies, and the deliberations of the CPC. Although the Master Plan consists of distinctive elements, these key directions highlight the principal shared themes found in the following chapters.

Sustainability is a primary integrating goal of the Amherst community and this Master Plan. A broadly-accepted definition of sustainability first appeared in *Our Common Future*, a 1987 report commissioned by the United Nations:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The goal of sustainability underlies each of the key directions for Amherst's Master Plan:

- **Maintain Amherst's existing community character.** The preservation of Amherst's community character will require a variety of different approaches, including protecting and promoting adaptive reuse of historic buildings and landscapes, focusing development in already-developed areas, creating design standards that ensure new development is in accord with existing neighborhood character, protecting critical conservation lands and farmland, and promoting the local agricultural economy. The residents of Amherst have a strong interest in maintaining the character of their community for years to come, and the use of appropriate tools such as form-based zoning and conservation easements will help to ensure that this goal is achieved.
- **Encourage vitality in the downtown and village centers.** Amherst's downtown and village centers should be a focus for the community's economic life, cultural vigor, and social activity. Vitality in these areas can be pursued through a variety of initiatives, including encouraging additional housing development, economic investment, expansion of cultural facilities, promotion of a mix of uses, and improvements to the public realm (parks,

streetscapes, and public squares). These initiatives will lead to a more walkable community, allow for more day-to-day interactions among residents, and attract more visitors to the community while enhancing Amherst's growing tourism industry.

- **Balance land preservation objectives with more intensive development in appropriate areas.** Perhaps the most significant theme that surfaced throughout the *Planning Amherst Together* process is the need to protect the Town's significant open spaces, including wildlife habitats, farmland, recreational lands, scenic vistas, and environmentally sensitive areas. Conservation of large tracts of land will require trade-offs in other areas. For example, in order to deal with rising land prices that can result from reducing the supply of buildable land, higher density development must be allowed and incentives must be developed to direct more growth and increased economic activity to the appropriate areas. A mix of uses should likewise be promoted to encourage a more walkable community and bring residents closer to jobs, shops, and services. This Master Plan tries to address these trade-offs, striking a balance between land preservation and the need for intensified responsible development in Amherst.
- **Provide housing that meets the needs of all residents while minimizing impacts on the environment.** Amherst values its economic and cultural diversity. Sustaining this diversity now and into the future will require addressing the needs of large segments of the population, including both renters and homeowners, that are financially strained by rising housing costs. It is critically important to encourage a broad mix of housing types with a full range of initiatives designed to preserve, develop, and/or replenish the community's low and moderate income affordable housing inventory. Housing strategies must also ensure that the mix of housing in the Town meets the varying physical needs of all residents and is affordable to the broadest spectrum of a growing community while minimizing the impact of housing development on the environment.
- **Provide community services to meet the needs of all residents.** Amherst is becoming an increasingly diverse community in terms of ethnicity, age, income, education, physical ability, and in many other ways. Amherst's services and facilities must keep pace with the population's changing needs, including maintaining its historically strong schools, planning for needed fire department, public works, school, library, and recreation facilities, and providing critical social support services.
- **Diversify and expand the economic base.** Amherst should pursue policies and regulations that encourage the diversification and

Goals and Objectives

This Plan includes goals, objectives, and strategies which are described in detail in the following seven chapters and summarized in Chapter 10: Implementation. The goals and objectives are listed below.

Land Use: A sustainable, attractive town with a vital downtown and viable mixed-use village centers well connected to livable and diverse neighborhoods and campuses, and interwoven with protected open space, natural resources, and active farmland.

- Preferentially direct future development to existing built-up areas.
- Create vital downtown and village centers (areas of mixed use, including retail, commercial, and residential elements) that are walkable, attractive and efficient.
- Preserve key un-developed lands.
- Protect key farmland and farming in Amherst.
- Identify and inventory key locations for business development, and adopt land use regulations that can help broaden the Town's business tax base while avoiding inappropriate businesses, big boxes, heavy industry, etc.
- Guide new housing growth so as to minimize impact on Amherst's open space and small-town rural character.
- Identify appropriate locations for future municipal recreation facilities.
- Create a process/committee/mechanism for sorting competing public and private interests in public projects and on individual properties.
- Honor the historical/cultural character and beauty of neighborhoods.
- Utilize "greenways" and walkways to tie neighborhoods, public spaces, etc. together and make it easier for Amherst residents to walk or bicycle to more destinations.

Demographics and Housing: A mix of housing that meets the physical needs of and is affordable to the broadest possible spectrum of our community, and that minimizes the impact on the environment.

- Encourage a greater mix of housing types, sizes, and prices serving a wider range of income levels than is currently available throughout Amherst. Encourage the development of economically diverse neighborhoods.
- Preserve and expand the number of affordable and moderately priced rental and ownership units in the housing stock.
- Revise the zoning code to promote infill development in strategic locations.
- Increase the opportunity for infill development and the location of housing development near services.
- Encourage the production of housing in an environmentally sound manner, with respect to design, siting, materials and resource use.

- Encourage housing that meets the needs of special populations.
- Improve housing and services for people in the area who are homeless.
- Support the creation of taxable student housing that will lessen the pressures on residential neighborhoods.
- Build and sustain the Town's capacity for regulatory oversight over Amherst's housing stock, and pursue ways to enhance security.

Economic Development: To strengthen, diversify and grow the economic base and employment opportunities in the town, through smart development in the downtown, village centers, and commercial zones. Initiatives will be focused on clusters of businesses, mixed services, high technology/clean industries, cultural attractions, education, tourism and agricultural resources. Such development will maintain, improve and sustain quality of life, ecological consciousness and social values.

- Support sustainable growth of existing businesses and attract new ones while protecting environmental values.
- Support "relocalization" of the Amherst economy.
- Promote downtown as a key cultural, commercial and entertainment center of Amherst.
- Broaden and leverage partnerships with UMass and the Colleges.
- Improve regulatory environment to encourage business development.
- Create an Integrated Economic Development Program.
- Encourage physical and technological infrastructure that support business & industrial growth.
- Develop the current and future workforce to enhance economic opportunities.
- Advocate for changes to state tax regulation in order to allow a reformulation of the town's tax structure.

Natural and Cultural Resources: Preserve the town's historic fabric and agrarian and academic heritage, and protect the quality of our natural resources, to ensure a vibrant, diverse, sustainable community.

- Promote the preservation, appreciation, and sustainable use of our historical and cultural resources for residents and visitors.
- Provide support for a rich variety of cultural opportunities, and activities for all groups and individuals in the community.
- Conserve land in sufficient quantity and quality to meet agricultural, recreational, and wildlife needs.
- Apply principles of environmental sustainability town-wide.

Open Space and Recreation: Protect and enhance our rural character and agricultural viability, and provide and develop multi-use and multi-generational recreational opportunities that bring townspeople together.

to accommodate new residents. This is an indicator of “sprawl”. Since the year 2000, the total developed land area in Amherst that consists of residential lots larger than ½ acre grew by 65 percent, while Amherst’s population remained relatively stable.

- **Land preservation priorities:** Preservation of the community’s unique rural landscape is a key priority in Amherst. Approximately half of the Town’s land currently enjoys some form of protection from development, and a significant percentage (4,850 acres, or 27.3 percent) of the community’s total land area (17,762.5 acres) is permanently protected. Amherst’s principal tool for managing growth has been 40 years of an aggressive conservation land acquisition program resulting in Town ownership of over 1,700 acres of open space, and development limitations of other kinds on an equivalent additional area. The continued protection of these significant land areas will help the community retain its rural character, even as growth occurs.
- **Increasing land values and affordability concerns:** Due to the nature of supply and demand, land prices will continue to rise as more demands are placed on finite land resources. Increasing land values drive up housing costs in the community, leading to growing concerns about housing affordability. Other demographic trends such as the shift towards smaller households place additional pressure on the housing stock, as more units are needed to house the same population.
- **Need for intensified development:** Ultimately, the preservation of land in Amherst must be coupled with the intensification of development in appropriate areas of the community. More land can be conserved if higher density development is directed to the downtown, village centers and specific districts and neighborhoods.
- **Need to protect community character:** The Amherst community takes pride in the historic character of its developed areas. Even as higher density development occurs, design standards can

help to ensure that such new development is in accordance with the character and needs of the community. Design standards can also be used to support the development of well-connected, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods.

- **Need to revise zoning codes:** Revision of Amherst’s current zoning is necessary in order to address the land use needs listed above and to facilitate implementation of the strategies described in the following section.

The Objectives and Strategies and the Land Use Plan Map discussed in the remainder of this chapter provide a coherent framework for approaching Amherst’s future land use and reconciling the need to preserve land while supporting growth that benefits residents and businesses alike.

D. Objectives and Strategies

This section describes the objectives and strategies that will support the Land Use goals for the Town of Amherst.

OBJECTIVE LU.1 – Preferentially direct future development to existing built-up areas.

The following strategies recommend ways to manage future growth so as to take full advantage of the Town’s existing infrastructure, and reduce sprawl.

STRATEGIES

LU.1.A Inventory and identify existing developed areas that are appropriate for density increases and redevelopment.

Certain portions of the downtown, village centers, and specific districts and neighborhoods may be appropriate for higher densities of development. The Town should update its regulatory code to ensure that such development is permitted and encouraged, particularly as infill and redevelopment initiatives are pursued.

LU.1.B Evaluate built-up areas on the basis of their character, quality, and priority, and then identify areas to:

buildings, streets, and open spaces that will be featured in the plan. The objective is to create a setting that accommodates diverse uses over time, but is highly specific in terms of physical form. Using tools such as form-based codes, Amherst can increase the flexibility of development regulations, promote a mix of uses, and ensure that its desired character is retained.

LU.1.D Undertake rezoning efforts that direct more intensive development to appropriate areas and limit development in key resource areas.

The Town should engage in a comprehensive review and update of its zoning bylaw and map to ensure that the regulations reflect the community's vision for future development, as captured in the land use principles that preface this chapter. Permitted densities may need to be increased in built-up areas like village centers, and reduced in key resource areas or in agricultural zones.

LU.1.E Revise existing zoning to encourage and include incentives for well-designed, energy-efficient infill/redevelopment projects.

Incentives such as density bonuses and more flexible dimensional regulations should be available for infill and redevelopment projects that demonstrate specific characteristics of high quality, sustainable design.

Infill and redevelopment projects provide many benefits to the community, but can often cost more when considering the expense of cleaning up a polluted brownfield site (see LU.5.F) or redeveloping and adaptively reusing an historic structure. Accommodating parking needs is also a big hurdle to overcome in infill and redevelopment projects. Incentives that promote infill and redevelopment while protecting existing historic character and protecting residential neighborhoods should be built into the development standards. Specifically, minimum lot sizes for residential districts and parking standards for all districts should be re-evaluated.

The Town should also develop incentives to encourage energy-efficient development. For example, density bonuses could be offered to development projects that are LEED-certified and/or which meet other appropriate standards. (LEED is one national benchmark for green

building established by the US Green Building Council – see <http://www.usgbc.org/> for more information.)

LU.1.F Establish programs to encourage economic development in existing developed areas (e.g., Economic Opportunity Area (EOA) type programs).

Economic development can be encouraged in predetermined areas through the creation of additional Economic Opportunity Areas. These EOAs should already have sewer, water and other necessary utilities, except where it serves the community's interests to extend those services. By encouraging infill and redevelopment, the need for additional infrastructure investments can be minimized; therefore, developments within the area will help the region and the community economize on utility infrastructure.

LU.1.G Reduce energy use by encouraging new residences near supporting goods and services and transit.

A better integration of land uses can help to reduce the need for car travel. When residences are in close proximity to shopping, services, jobs, parks, public transit facilities, and other public amenities, residents spend less time driving and consume fewer energy resources. Energy consumption is further reduced when streets are designed to be more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.

LU.1.H Create mechanisms for transfers of development rights (TDRs) from key resource areas and agricultural lands to village centers, downtown, and other specific districts and neighborhoods where denser development is more appropriate.

Property ownership can be described as a bundle of specific rights to use and control land (including mineral rights, timber rights, air rights, development rights, etc.), which the government can constrain to varying degrees. In a transfer of development rights, the right to develop a parcel of land is severed from the land itself, and can be bought, sold, and transferred elsewhere. The original land is subsequently protected from development, the property owners are paid the value of the development rights, and developers who purchase those rights can move them and use them to build at

higher densities in a different location, where such density is desired and appropriate. Amherst should explore the implementation of a TDR program in order to manage future growth.

OBJECTIVE LU.2 - Create vital downtown and village centers (areas of mixed-use, including retail, commercial, and residential elements) that are walkable, attractive and efficient.

Through infrastructure investment, incentives, and improved regulations, the Town should foster increased economic, cultural and social activity in the downtown and outlying village centers by encouraging a variety of mixed-uses including live-work units. These areas should foster interactions through attractive public spaces and the creation of a walkable environment.

STRATEGIES

LU.2.A Change zoning to allow denser residential occupancy near existing services and public transit.

Residential development near or in combination with shops, services, and public transit can greatly contribute to a more vital community, particularly when streetscapes are designed to promote walking and biking. Such development can reduce energy consumption, help build a sense of community, and improve community health overall. Residents are more likely to interact on the street and enjoy public spaces when they can walk or bicycle to many of their daily destinations.

LU.2.B Encourage increased upper floor residential development in downtown and village centers to support a vital economic and social setting.

The Town should review and update its development ordinances to encourage additional upper floor residential development in the downtown and village centers.

LU.2.C Support the development of live/work spaces (e.g. artists' lofts, high tech small business offices).

Live-work units may take variable forms including renovated lofts and mixed-use townhouses. This type of housing encourages adaptive reuse of older buildings, leads to lower car emissions for workers who no longer need to

commute, reduces start-up costs for small businesses, and can help revitalize local economies. The Town should encourage the development of live/work spaces throughout the Amherst community. For more information on the subject see the Live Work Network at <http://www.liveworknet.com>.

LU.2.D Build a permanent farmer’s market facility.

Developing a facility in which Amherst’s current seasonal farmer’s market could operate year-round in downtown Amherst could benefit the community in a variety of ways. It can help support the economic viability and sustainability of local agriculture, serve as a community gathering place, and provide a new attraction to draw visitors from the broader region.

LU.2.E Develop more public art in downtown and village centers.

Public art helps celebrate and enhance the unique character of Amherst’s downtown and village centers. The Public Arts Commission could involve the Amherst community in a public process to identify additional locations where they would like to see public art installations, host design competitions, recruit artists to contribute more public art to the community on a permanent or temporary basis, and seek to establish mechanisms for funding ongoing maintenance of permanent public artworks.

LU.2.F Use downtown green spaces more intensively, adding play spaces to encourage people of all ages to congregate.

Public green spaces are significant assets to urban areas, particularly when they are well-loved and frequently used by community members. Amherst should examine whether additional amenities, activities, or events could be provided in order to enhance the use of downtown green spaces by all members of the community.

LU.2.G Create music/dance/meeting venues downtown.

Entertainment venues such as music venues, nightclubs, theaters, and restaurants can greatly increase the

STRATEGIES

LU.5.A Identify and inventory areas suitable for different kinds of commercial development in Amherst.

The community should develop an inventory of the lands most suitable for targeted economic development in Amherst. This may include small lots for retail and mixed-use development in the downtown and village centers, or larger lots in selected outlying areas appropriate for research and technology firms or light industry.

LU.5.B Amend the zoning regulations to encourage business development in appropriate undeveloped and under-developed areas.

Increasing permitted business densities in appropriate, strategic locations where existing natural resources are not of high quality or of critical importance can help to limit sprawl and reduce development pressure on critical rural lands. In areas targeted by the community as appropriate for future development, zoning amendments should be pursued to allow for higher densities.

LU.5.C Encourage commercial and mixed-use development in downtown and village center business districts.

In order to reduce development pressures on scenic rural landscapes, the Town should create a favorable regulatory environment that removes obstacles and provides incentives for compact, well-designed development in the downtown and village centers.

LU.5.D Revise and expand zoning districts to accommodate clean, sustainable industry.

Certain categories of industry are desirable for Amherst because they can bring skilled, well-paid, high-demand jobs to the community and enhance and diversify the economic tax base. Zoning districts should be expanded and/or new districts created to facilitate this type of economic development.

LU.5.E Identify and inventory existing and potential areas appropriate or already zoned for the development of business parks, then extend or

4. Demographics and Housing



Master Plan

A. Goal

A mix of housing that meets the physical needs of and is affordable to the broadest possible spectrum of our community, and that minimizes the impact on the environment.

B. Overview

The presence of higher education institutions in Amherst has a significant impact on the character of the Town's population, as well as its housing needs. The Town has a relatively young, well-educated population, and a relatively high percentage of residents living in multi-family housing or group quarters. Affordability is a concern in Amherst, and as more demands are placed on finite land resources, land prices will continue to rise. A number of themes recur throughout this chapter, including: the desire for more diverse, moderately priced and affordable housing types; the strategic placement of housing near necessary goods and services; the promotion of environmentally-sound housing design; and the desire to create economically diverse neighborhoods that meet the needs of all populations, from students to families to seniors.

In this chapter the concept of affordability is addressed in two different ways. The term “affordable” refers to federal and state definitions of affordable housing (for purposes of housing subsidies) for individuals and households earning up to 80 percent of the median income for this region. However, ensuring a supply of housing that is affordable for middle income households—which do not qualify for state and federal housing programs and subsidies, yet are increasingly finding themselves priced out of the Amherst housing market—is also a concern. The term “moderately priced housing” refers to housing accessible to such middle-income households.

C. Existing Conditions

This section summarizes key points related to current demographics and housing:

Population growth trends: Amherst's population grew at a remarkable pace from 1940 to 1980, increasing five-fold from 6,410 to 33,229 residents. Growth continued in the 1980s at a much slower pace. Between 1990 and 2008, the population increased only slightly from 35,228 to 35,962, an increase of only 734 persons, or about 2 percent.

Influence of higher education on demographics: Amherst's population growth is closely linked to the growth in student enrollment. With over 25,000 students living in Amherst and surrounding communities, the presence of higher education

Relevant plans and policy documents:

- *Affordable Housing Plan [2008 update]*

financial incentives ranging from \$10,000 for 20 units to \$600,000 for 501 or more units developed. The Amherst community should lobby the State legislature to develop a similar matching fund/incentive payment program for acquiring (and thereby reducing the cost of) land for affordable housing development.

(See http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-40R.html for more information on Chapter 40R.)

H.2.K Support the development of affordable and moderately priced units that have equity-building provisions.

Equity-building programs should be pursued to help low- and middle-income families become homeowners. Such provisions will help Amherst maintain a strong, economically diverse community in the long-term.

OBJECTIVE H.3 - Increase the opportunity for infill development and the location of housing developments near services.

Appropriately-designed infill development can promote neighborhood revitalization, produce higher densities that lead to a more efficient use of land and infrastructure, and bring residents closer to necessary goods and services. The following strategies suggest ways to promote additional infill development in Amherst.

STRATEGIES

H.3.A Revise the zoning regulations to promote infill development in strategic locations.

Outdated zoning regulations can hinder infill development. The Town should modify zoning district lines and zoning setback/dimensional requirements, and evaluate building form (design) standards to provide for development that diversifies the housing stock while respecting the architectural and landscape character of existing neighborhoods and the community. It should also create a mechanism whereby small infill homes are allowed on some lots in exchange for an affordable housing deed restriction.

H.3.B Increase residential densities in the downtown and village centers.

The zoning for the downtown and village centers should be revised to allow for more downtown housing and higher residential densities. By increasing relative densities and allowing small businesses and residences to coexist, the Town can create more walkable neighborhoods that provide residents easy access to jobs, goods, services, and public transit. Intensified residential development above ground-floor shops and restaurants can help to create a more vibrant downtown community. An integrated mix of uses

coupled with a pedestrian-friendly environment can also generate positive impacts in terms of reducing traffic, commute times, and energy consumption.

The community should:

- Intensify upper story housing development by revising zoning to eliminate unit count and total residential area limitations.
- Rezone Limited Business (B-L) areas near downtown to General Business (B-G) or another appropriate district to make it easier to create multi-family residential units and residential units in conjunction with businesses.

H.3.C Revise zoning regulations to encourage mixed-use, multi-family development projects.

The Town’s zoning regulations should be revised to remove impediments to building mixed-use or multi-family development projects. Such development should be permitted by right in targeted areas. Attention to design and the adoption of design standards (See LU.1.C and LU.9) can ensure that new development fits the desired scale and character of the community.

H.3.D Address the impacts of the student housing market in any revisions of zoning and other regulations.

New zoning, development/design regulations, and density incentives must take into account the potential impacts of strong student housing pressures, including the issues which arise as a result of absentee landlords. In campus-edge neighborhoods in particular, new regulations should be undertaken in tandem with other regulatory or program efforts. These should include:

- a. Increasing the capacity for code inspections and enforcement (see H.8 and S.3.F);
- b. Reevaluating, clarifying, and strengthening existing zoning and rental registration regulations (see LU.1.B, LU.9 and H.7.B);
- c. Encouraging the provision of alternative student housing (see E.4.E and H.7) , and;
- d. Working with the colleges and University to address student behavior (see S.3.G and S.7.D).

OBJECTIVE H.4 - Encourage the production of housing in an environmentally sound manner with respect to design, siting, materials and resource use.

New housing development provides the opportunity to promote environmentally friendly design. The following strategies suggest ways to promote the growth of “green” housing in Amherst.

STRATEGIES

H.4.A. Modify Amherst’s cluster development zoning regulations to require higher-density clustering of housing in the more rural parts of Town to achieve a smaller development footprint and greater retention of open space.

Greater density on the developed part of the land allows more common and open space to be retained. A revised development calculation could allow for a few more units, but less overall impact due to a significantly more compact development footprint.

H.4.B Adopt Low Impact Development standards for all new residential developments.

Low Impact Development (LID) represents a sustainable storm-water management strategy that uses appropriate site design techniques in order to protect environmental resources. The Town of Amherst should consider requiring LID standards in all new residential development. More information is available at www.lowimpactdevelopment.org.

H.4.C Provide incentives for developments that meet energy efficiency standards in new buildings.

Incentives such as tax rebates on costs related to making buildings energy-efficient can encourage developers to build more environmentally sustainable buildings, which benefit the environment and the general health of the community. See LU.1.E and NC.4.A.

OBJECTIVE H.5 - Encourage housing that meets the needs of special populations.

Housing options in Amherst should meet the needs of all residents, regardless of age or ability. Development of incentives, regulations, zoning, and favorable financing are a few of the tools that can be used to spur housing development that meets the needs of special populations.

STRATEGIES

H.5.A Encourage the production of affordable units for seniors.

Nationwide, an aging population is creating an increased need for housing for seniors. Eighty-two million Baby Boomers are moving to the empty-nest stage of life and are looking for more compact housing types. Amherst should take steps now to promote the development of smaller, affordable housing options that will be appropriate for a growing senior population and allow its residents to “age in place.” This could be accomplished using the same zoning mechanisms proposed herein that are intended to create smaller housing options and more accessible housing.

the fiscal burden for providing municipal services rests heavily on the Town's residential property owners.

The Objectives and Strategies discussed in the remainder of this chapter provide a coherent framework for meeting Amherst's goals for economic development. They focus on a variety of initiatives, including creating vibrancy in the downtown and village centers, as well as attracting more businesses in the research, technology, and creative industries.

D. Objectives and Strategies

This section describes the objectives and strategies that will support the Economic Development goal for the Town of Amherst.

OBJECTIVE E.1 - Support sustainable growth of existing businesses and attract new ones while protecting environmental values.

Smart growth principles (see www.smartgrowth.org) should be used to support sustainable business growth while preserving Amherst's character and protecting the environment. The following strategies address issues of zoning, infrastructure, and economic policy that can attract targeted industries to Amherst.

STRATEGIES

E.1.A Develop zoning that encourages sustainable high-density mixed-use and residential development within the village centers and downtown.

Higher density, mixed-use development can be encouraged to enhance and revitalize the village centers and downtown. Connecting and integrating residential areas with businesses and retail uses that provide goods, services, and jobs reduces infrastructure costs and transportation impacts. It creates a mutually-supportive environment in which residents have easier access to services and businesses have better access to a substantial customer base.

E.1.B Market and promote Amherst to targeted business.

The community should identify the specific types of businesses or industries that it would like to attract to Amherst, and the kinds of growth it wants to see. The Town should work with the business community and other stakeholders (UMass, colleges, property owners, adjacent communities) to conduct a comprehensive market study to identify specific businesses and industries currently missing from the community that might strengthen Amherst's overall economic fabric. Incentives and marketing tools should then be developed to promote the community and attract the desired types of businesses and industries.

E.1.C Make downtown/village centers vital, attractive, and convenient to use.

Several kinds of strategic improvements should be pursued in the downtown and village centers to create a mutually supportive mix of retail, professional, and residential uses, and an attractive, enjoyable environment for residents and visitors.

Marketing Studies - The Town should work with the businesses and property owners in the downtown and village centers to conduct targeted market studies specific to those areas to identify missing goods and services and then act to attract specific types of desired businesses.

Regulations - Development regulations should be revised to encourage downtown and village center upper floor residences.

Physical Improvements - Attention should be paid to pedestrian amenities, streetscapes, public spaces, parking, wayfinding signs, public art, and other improvements to attract more people to the downtown and village centers.

E.1.D Increase the amount of suitably zoned research park, business, and commercial areas that are provided with appropriate Town infrastructure.

The Town should evaluate its zoning map and infrastructure plans to see if appropriate lands are available and readily usable for desirable economic growth. New areas may need to be provided with key infrastructure in order to make Amherst a more competitive destination for business investments.

E.1.E Increase land zoned for professional, light industrial and commercial use.

Amherst has a relatively small amount of land area zoned for business activity. The Town should identify and increase the overall acreage of land in Amherst zoned to allow professional and light industrial areas, as well as commercial centers.

E.1.F Provide incentives for high priority, targeted development.

The Town should identify its development priorities, design a package of incentives, and undertake pre-development activities to facilitate development in these areas. These priorities should include evaluating and developing professional research park areas, identifying and redeveloping brown-fields sites, as well as pursuing mixed-use infill and redevelopment projects in downtown and village centers, and carefully expanding those centers. To accomplish this, Amherst could seek out state grant programs, provide density bonuses, provide infrastructure improvements, and/or explore tax incentives.

Tourism provides a net economic benefit to the community by bringing outside dollars into Amherst. The community should examine ways to further enhance the attractions and amenities found in the downtown and surrounding natural areas in order to emphasize tourism as a key component of the Town's economy, while planning for ways to protect these important resources and mitigate the impacts of tourism. See NC.1.

E.3.E Capture “secondary (follow-on) market” of visitors to colleges and university.

UMass and the Colleges attract a large number of visitors throughout the year (families, prospective students, conference attendees, etc.). The Town should collaborate with educational institutions in order to market local attractions and amenities and fully capture the follow-on tourism market associated with these schools.

OBJECTIVE E.4 - Broaden and leverage partnerships with UMass and the Colleges.

The Town, UMass, and the Colleges should pursue mutually beneficial partnerships in order to promote economic development, undertake research and technology enterprises, and create more learning and job opportunities for college and university students.

STRATEGIES

E.4.A Develop and implement a shared town-gown strategy for economic development to achieve common goals.

The Town, the business community, and the University and Colleges should work together to develop a set of shared economic development goals that can be effectively pursued through town-gown partnerships.

E.4.B Promote economic development projects at the University and colleges that produce tax revenues for the Town.

Through partnerships between the Town and the University and colleges, it is possible to create economic development projects that will produce additional revenues for the Town and benefit all Amherst residents.

E.4.C Establish the real cost of the University and colleges to the Town and negotiate fair compensation.

The Town provides a variety of public services that support the University and colleges. An external, impartial fiscal analysis should be undertaken to examine the real costs and benefits that these institutions bring to the Town. Once this is established, agreements can be made to ensure that the Town is compensated fairly.

the Priority Implementation actions listed in Chapter 2, the matrix provides a format for Town policy-makers to use in moving from a ‘work list’ to action plans under each area of public interest that identify who will be responsible for and involved in implementation, and what the timelines should be for undertaking specific strategies.

A. How to Use the Plan

The Plan is to be used on a regular basis as public and private decisions are made concerning development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives, and other matters affecting the community. The following is a summary of how it should be used.

1. Annual Work Programs and Budgets

Individual departments and administrators should be cognizant of the recommendations of the Plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. Several strategies can be implemented in this way. Review of these work programs by Select Board, Town Manager, Town Meeting, Finance Committee, School Committee, School Superintendent, Library Trustees and Library Director should likewise occur in accordance with the Plan’s strategies.

2. Development Approvals

Administrative and legislative approvals of development proposals, including rezoning and subdivision plats, should be a central means of implementing the Plan. In fact, zoning codes can and should be updated in response to regulatory strategies presented in the Plan.

3. Capital Plans

Annual and five-year capital plans should be consistent with the Plan’s land use policies and infrastructure recommendations. New improvements that are not reflected in the Plan – and which could dramatically impact the Plan’s land use recommendations – should necessitate at least a minor update to the Plan.

4. Economic Incentives

Economic incentives such as Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs) enabling tax increment financing (as has been developed for the Cushman General Store and Atkins Farm Market) should be reviewed in light of recommendations of the Plan. These incentives should be integrated with other Plan policies to ensure consistency, particularly with the Plan’s land use recommendations.

5. Private Development Decisions

Property owners and developers should consider the recommendations of the Plan in their planning and investment decisions. Public decision-

makers will be using the Plan as a guide in their development-related deliberations, such as zoning matters and infrastructure requests. Property owners and developers should have an understanding of the Master Plan when submitting proposals to public bodies.

6. Future Interpretation

The Planning Board and other responsible entities should provide a written interpretation of major items that are unclear or which are not fully addressed in the Plan. These bodies may call upon outside experts and other groups for advice.

B. Actions

Outlined below are the strategies which support the implementation of the Plan. For their successful implementation, each strategy will require development of a timeframe and identification of key entities responsible for implementation, including Town departments, boards and committees, and appropriate others. A matrix of this Plan's strategies is included in the Appendix.

<p>OBJECTIVE IM.1 Provide sufficient resources to implement the Master Plan.</p>

<p>The Plan identifies the need to provide adequate resources to implement certain strategies. For the successful completion of many strategies, new resources will need to be obtained; for others, reallocating existing resources may be appropriate.</p>
--

STRATEGIES

IM.1.A Develop a Long-term Financial Planning Process.

The Town should conduct a public process for determining short- and long-term financial priorities for the operating and capital budget needs of the community, in coordination with the policies, objectives, and strategies of this Plan.

IM.1.B Update Capital Plans based on the Master Plan.

Five year capital Plans will be updated in line with the Master Plan. A Capital Plan is a fundamental management document that outlines projected capital needs, funding estimates and sources, and timeframes for completion. In updating Capital Plans each year, the Town should monitor implementation to ensure that they are consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan.

IM.1.C Prepare annual departmental work programs and operating budgets with awareness of the Master Plan.

Departmental work programs and operating budgets will demonstrate consistency with the Master Plan.