

NEW HAMPSHIRE
Growth & Development Roundtable

THE HOUSING/CONSERVATION NEXUS:

The Housing and Conservation Planning Program in Chichester

Chichester's Master Plan Advisory Committee, working with the UNH Cooperative Extension, and the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, created a "build-out" scenario to illustrate what Chichester would look like if the community did not plan proactively to address the dual needs of conserving open space and planning for workforce housing. That build-out scenario showed that under current regulations, scattered development could spread across the agricultural lands that people want to maintain as open space.

Fortunately, in 2008, Chichester received a small grant from the Housing and Conservation Planning Program. Instead of falling into the trap of scattered development, this rural community of 2,500 just outside the state capital is now working on plans to conserve open space and historic resources, to maintain its agricultural landscape and to create opportunities for housing for working families. And it is doing so in New Hampshire town meeting style: engaging the citizenry to give as much input as possible.

Jamie Pike, Administrative Assistant for the Town of Chichester, has taken a lead role in the planning process. "This is a very good program for a small town to go through," Pike said. The town, he said, wants "to get that education out there, get the people involved... This is your town. How do you want it to look? [We've] seen some excitement from people."

The town hosted educational programs to prepare residents for the planning process, including sessions on workforce housing, agricultural commissions and historic preservation.

Approximately 80 residents completed a Master Plan survey,

outlining preferences for conservation and preservation while at the same time maintaining the town's tax base with residential and small commercial development.

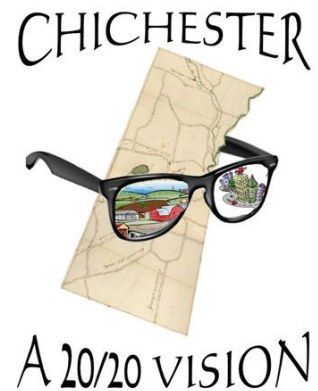
Preliminary results were shared at a public forum where residents were asked to think about what they'd like to see Chichester look like

five to ten years in the future in the areas of housing, business and industry, transportation, natural resources, education and community services. Participants were also asked to indicate "where growth should be directed" and "where priority open space areas should be located."

Current zoning will also be examined to determine if there should be changes to the zoning ordinances to better suit future development in the community.

A second community forum will follow to share final Master Plan survey results, get input on final build-out scenarios and finalize the vision for Chichester's Master Plan.

Previous town Master Plans, Pike said, "haven't really put together a broad picture of 'this is where we want to go from here.' We really want to put that vision forward."



"In communities reflecting the best New Hampshire has to offer, conservation and affordable housing are not seen as an either-or choice, but as two sides of the same coin."

- Founding Statement, NH Growth & Development Roundtable