

## **Chapter I. Vision**

The vision articulated below is built upon the response to a citizen survey taken at the beginning of the master planning process, as well as the direct input of the Planning Board and the public. It consists of a set of the guiding principles which, taken together, make up the vision of Bristol, given the community's setting in the region and state. Each of these principles is accompanied by an outline of approaches which could be taken locally to implement the vision.

- **Safeguard the rural quality of the Town of Bristol.**

The Newfound Lake area is a region of small towns and villages, surrounded by agricultural lands, forests and wild lands. As the population grows in Bristol, maintaining the rural character outside the village center is one of the major challenges facing the community. Growth is inevitable, but it needs to be directed in such a way that the rural character which attracts both visitors and new residents to our community and to the region is maintained and enhanced.

*One of the most effective ways to maintain the rural character of the town is through sensible zoning regulations. Commercial areas should be concentrated as much as possible, and preferably located close to the traditional village center. Zoning should allow for clustered residential development along with the preservation of open space. In addition, efforts to conserve our natural assets, to maintain the viability of agricultural lands and forests, and to enhance the natural systems that support life in Bristol, which are included later in this vision statement, all contribute to the effort to retain the rural character of the town.*

- **Preserve historic assets.**

Historic buildings and sites are irreplaceable assets. One of the most critical steps Bristol and other communities throughout the state can take to maintain their distinct identity is to preserve their historic assets.

*The first step in preserving historic assets is to identify those natural features, structures and areas of historic significance. The Historical Society can play a role by enhancing the public's awareness and appreciation of historic assets. The town should consider the creation of a historic district along with an Historic District Commission to help owners maintain historic authenticity when renovating their buildings. Great care should be taken to assure that such a commission does not place an unreasonable burden on property owners.*

- **Build to create enduring value and beauty.**

The quality and visual appeal of individual projects --- whether residences, businesses or public buildings --- affect current and future private property values throughout the community. Well-designed, well-sited structures

enhance a town's beauty and increase the value of neighboring properties and the community as a whole. As Bristol expands to accommodate new residents and businesses, public and private investors should be encouraged to build structures that will add enduring value and beauty to the community.

*The town should set an example in the construction of any new public buildings and the renovation of existing buildings. Through Site Plan Review, the Planning Board can help assure the proper location of buildings on a lot and should encourage tasteful architectural design which is in keeping with the existing structures. The town should consider passing an architectural review ordinance to allow for more formal oversight of proposed plans.*

- **Enhance Bristol's economic vitality through ongoing reinvestment in the downtown core.**

Bristol has long been the hub of commercial activity in the Newfound region. Ongoing public and private investment in the downtown core is critical to maintaining and enhancing Bristol's economic vitality. Small or large, these public and private investments build a community's economic strength and contribute to the economic vitality of the region and state.

*The town needs to be more aware of the potential offered by its unique and historic downtown square. Some kind of public-private partnership should be established so that Bristol's long-neglected downtown area receives the attention it deserves. The effort to revitalize the downtown area should have the highest priority, since the positive effects of a successful revitalization effort will extend far beyond the downtown area.*

- **Anticipate and address the housing needs of all community residents.**

The growing appeal of New Hampshire's Lakes Region as a place to live and do business has drawn new residents & wealth to the region; property values, average personal income and the cost of living have risen in most Newfound Area communities. At the same time, economic growth throughout the region has created demand for workers at all age levels. As Bristol's economy continues to grow, the community needs to anticipate and address the housing needs of all residents to ensure that employees of local businesses have convenient access to housing they can afford, and that long-standing local residents --- particularly senior citizens --- can remain in their communities.

*The town should encourage efforts to create affordable housing by avoiding such exclusionary tactics as large-lot zoning. The town should also encourage the creation of residential units in existing buildings in and around the downtown area. Existing property tax credits for senior citizens should be maintained.*

- **Conserve and showcase our natural assets.**

The Newfound Area is blessed with lovely natural features that define and enrich daily existence: Newfound Lake, rivers, old trees, wetlands,

meadows, forests, hills, peaks and sweeping vistas. Conserving and showcasing the unique natural assets in our community is one of the best investments Bristol can make, and should also be a goal for communities throughout the region and the state.

*The preservation of natural assets is addressed quite extensively by legislation at the state level. Such approaches as the current use regulations and the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) have been highly successful and deserve continued support. At the local level, The Conservation Commission has an obvious role to play in increasing public awareness of the town's natural assets and helping to educate the public about such approaches as conservation easements. The Planning Board should review the existing overlay districts to be sure they provide adequate protection for the most sensitive areas.*

- **Maintain the economic viability of Bristol's agricultural lands and forests.**

Bristol's agricultural lands and forests are essential elements in creating the rural character which we seek to preserve. New Hampshire's agricultural areas and forests face many challenges today, not the least of which is encroaching urbanization. If agriculture and forestry are to be retained, concerted efforts must be made to support their economic viability.

*Municipal authorities, business associations, private organizations and community leaders must work together to ensure the long-term health of the region's working landscape. Town ordinances should be friendly toward the agricultural and forest industries while encouraging the use of Best Management Practices.*

- **Maintain the health of the natural systems that support life in Bristol.**

The region's natural resources are more than just a beautiful backdrop for communities. The air, forests, lakes, rivers, streams, meadows, agricultural lands and marshes are the life support system for human settlement and for the plants and wildlife that inhabit the Newfound Area. Maintaining the health of natural systems is essential to the sustainability of natural resources and to the economic stability of the region.

*While a good deal of federal and state legislation addresses such concerns as clean water and clean air, local awareness and concern play an important role in implementing this vision. The town should work closely with groups which are devoted to the preservation of forests, rivers, etc. to assure that vital natural systems are preserved.*

- **Maintain and improve community assets supporting public safety, recreation, transportation and the general welfare.**

One of the primary responsibilities of governments at all levels is to provide the infrastructure which helps to make the state, region and town a safe, pleasant and desirable place to live. The Master Plan seeks to assure that

this infrastructure at the local level is continuously updated and upgraded to meet the current and future needs of the community.

*Although legislation was passed several years ago authorizing the Planning Board to create a Capital Improvements Program, the Board has never adequately addressed this responsibility. A Capital Improvements Committee, reporting to the Planning Board, should be created so that planning for community facilities takes place on a regular basis and in an organized way.*