

Preface

The Planning Board is proud to present to the citizens of Hamilton a comprehensive plan to carefully guide preservation and development of the town's precious land and natural resources.

We are fortunate that nature bestowed Hamilton with a beautiful landscape and abundant natural resources. We are also indebted to our predecessors and many generous landowning families who have done much to preserve it. Entering the 21st century, we find this legacy threatened by intensifying economic and demographic pressures to develop the land. In 2002, the Planning Board recognized the urgent need to design a comprehensive blueprint to wisely guide the future use and protection of these finite land and natural resources.

From the outset, the priority was to actively engage citizen participation to identify key priorities, and carefully evaluate options to ensure broad-based support of workable recommendations. To this end, the Planning Board formed the Citizens Action Planning Committee (CAPC) comprised of over 50 public-spirited volunteers with interest and expertise in the key planning areas: land use, economic development, open space preservation, capital planning, housing, and historic and natural resource preservation. Town-wide participation and input were encouraged at every stage of the two-year process, through:

- A detailed questionnaire sent to every household in town, with a 21% response rate.
- A questionnaire specific to downtown businesses.
- A forum with the large landowners, farmers, and equestrian business owners.
- Two half-day, town-wide forums at the Miles River Middle School.
- Over 100 open public meetings of the 7 separate CAPC subcommittees.
- Progress reports and issue-discussion articles placed in the *Hamilton Chronicle*.
- A formal public hearing on the draft plan.
- Individual discussions and presentations to land use boards, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Selectmen.
- Progress updates at relevant Town Meetings.
- Public access to all documents and CAPC members via a dedicated website.

The result is a plan by and for the citizens of Hamilton. It has been carefully crafted through thousands of hours of volunteer labor with the guiding hand and expertise of the town's professional master plan consultant, Community Opportunities Group, Inc.. It should be viewed as living document that offers options and recommendations for protecting what we like best about the town, while recognizing the need to grow and change over time. We hope it serves as the focal point for building on the legacy that has been given to all the citizens of Hamilton.

Hamilton Planning Board

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