

# **Vision Statement**

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Plaistow has always played a vital role in the area's economy. Even as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Plaistow's taverns and waysides provided services to the commercial traffic traveling the County Road en route from Concord, NH to Newburyport, MA. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Plaistow was a small community whose residents contributed to the Haverhill, MA factory workforce. The transportation network allowed Plaistow residents to easily commute to Haverhill for work and for shopping. In the latter half of the century, Plaistow's commercial and industrial sector started to expand so that many Plaistow residents could live, work, and shop in Plaistow. As this expansion occurred so did the population. In 1900 there were 1408 people living in Plaistow, in 1950 there were 2082 people living in Plaistow, and in 2000 there were 7,747 people living in Plaistow.

Route 125 is now clearly established as a regional commercial center for communities on both sides of the Massachusetts/New Hampshire border. Unfortunately the transportation infrastructure did not keep pace with the growth and a substantial effort has been spent in the last 10-15 years in getting plans in place to make necessary improvements that include not only road improvements but public transportation improvements as well.

In planning for the future years we must clearly decide how and where we want to live, go to school, go to shop, go to work, and go to play at all age levels from pre-school aged children to senior citizens. All require different activities throughout the year and all are important as we strive to maintain family-based lifestyles and activities.

An old saying states, "There are only two things in life that are certain – death and taxes". It seems that in the recent past and surely in the near future, we can add to that list – more people, more traffic. How we plan for these increases in people, traffic and services is certainly the focus of this Master Plan.

The Pentucket Mall (Walmart/Staples/Home Depot) was opened for business in the late 1980's and since that time there have not been any major changes along Route 125. Although there have been some changes to the major shopping centers (State Line Plaza, and Shaw's Plaza) there has not been any new large commercial enterprises constructed since Pentucket. Many former residences along Route 125 have been converted to small businesses and there are now very few residences left on Route 125. In the next 5 to 10 years it is possible that Route 125 will again see major growth such that there will no longer be any undeveloped commercial land available along Route 125. This growth will also affect residential growth with a corresponding need for more teachers and classrooms. This growth is bound to spill over onto Route 108 as well where the pressures may come not only from Plaistow but a very large increase in residential units being built in Haverhill.

Plaistow is a gateway to New Hampshire and as such people expect to see quaint Town Centers, residential neighborhoods, small farms, forests, and scenic vistas. Although we

cannot tear down already built up areas, we can put plans in place to maintain as many of the above characteristics as we can.

We must always protect our water resources – both surface waters and subsurface waters. This is the water that is the source of our drinking water and we need to protect both the quantity and quality of the source water. The Conservation Commission with the help of a source water committee has adopted a Source Water Protection Plan for Plaistow. We must make sure that all the tenets of this plan are met and that the education and outreach portions of the plan are continually updated and presented to the public.

The Conservation Law Foundation recently completed a review of our water resource ordinances and has made some general recommendations and some specific recommendations regarding the continuing preservation of water quality and quantity. We need to carefully review these recommendations and adopt those that we believe make sense for Plaistow.

We need to protect open space areas and forested lands. The Land Needs Committee and the Conservation Commission have been working together and independently to identify those parcels of land that are already protected or need protecting so that a comprehensive Open Space Plan can be adopted. The Conservation Commission has already adopted a Forest Management Plan for the Town Forest and we must insure that as we obtain clear title to forest lands that we add those parcels to the Town Forest and keep the Forest Management Plan current.

We have all seen how devastating the effects of polluting the ground water can be. A leaky underground storage tank at a former Lido gas station on Route 125 and polluted many residents' wells and they now have to bring bottled water into their homes to drink or had to endure the expense of drilling a new well. As we all found out soon enough, this spill paled in comparison to the horrendous misuse and abuse of the land that occurred at the Beede/Cash Oil site that is now a superfund site. Through an EPA grant, a reuse committee was formed whose charter was to develop a plan to reuse the 40-acres Beede site. This plan is complete and provides for conservation areas and hiking trails along Kelley Brook, recreational areas including ball fields, a 10,000 to 12,000 square foot recreation building, and 18 units of elderly housing at the easterly end of the site. This plan helps to address many of Plaistow's future needs when it can finally be implemented.

We need to determine how residential growth will go forward. Recently there have been a number of options passed by the legislature that permit towns to declare that all residential subdivisions will conform to requirement for a conservation subdivision or a village plan subdivision. We need to understand the options to see if they can accommodate the expected residential growth. All of the options strive to maintain as much open space or undeveloped space as possible with the resulting residential units (single or multi-family dwellings) being closer together than current zoning allows. These options are similar to our existing Planned Residential Development (PRD) ordinance but

are more specific in how much land is to be protected as well as stating how the land is to be protected.

Residential growth must include housing opportunities for elderly and handicapped residents at all levels of affordability.

We have seen our industrially zoned land be used or converted to residential or commercial use. In many cases these former parcels of industrial land were adjacent to the railroad tracks and it has been clear for some time that the railroad was not going to provide any incentive for industrial growth. The parcels were in many cases too small and none of them have access to roads where industrial traffic would be encouraged. That makes the remaining industrial parcels along Route 125 and Route 121 even more valuable. Although commercial uses are now permitted in industrial zones, we should be careful to make sure it will provide a substantial number of jobs however the land ultimately gets used.

Finally we must plan for and implement a transportation infrastructure that will accommodate as safely and efficiently as possible all the current needs as well as the future needs that will arise from the growth. We need to continually think of alternate transportation methods such as walking, cycling, public busses, and commuter and intercity rail. Not any one method can completely solve the transportation puzzle, but several in combination can result in a safe, efficient, and healthy transportation network.

Each Master Plan section identifies current situations, future needs, and detailed plans to meet the future needs. This edition of the Master Plan is based on the needs as we know them today, but keep in mind the Master Plan is intended to be a “living document”, and will be updated periodically to include the latest developments and plans for future growth.