

CHAPTER i

INTRODUCTION

A Master Plan is a long range plan that guides development in a town towards a vision of what residents would like the future to be. It is a comprehensive document that looks at all aspects of a community including Natural Resources, Historic Resources, Transportation, Public Infrastructure & Municipal Services, Economic Development, and Land Use and Zoning. This includes mapping, inventory, analysis, and recommended strategies for accomplishing the objectives of the town. It may also include a Capital Improvement Program to coordinate large-scale expenditures with the goals of the Master Plan. Most importantly, it is a plan created by and for the citizens of a community.

The Towns of Buckland and Shelburne began their Master Planning process with an extensive community survey, Buckland in 1996 and Shelburne in 1997. These surveys are an integral part of the Master Plan (See Appendix I) and provided guidance and a framework for the completion of this document. Over 32% of households in each community responded to the survey providing an excellent sample of the residents' vision for the future of their communities. The survey process was funded by two Municipal Incentive Grants provided by the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development.

The catalyst for both communities to undertake this major project is reflected in the responses to the community surveys. Threats to prime farmland, rural character, environmental resources, and historic features, which make both communities such wonderful places to live, are increasing. The Planning Boards in Buckland and Shelburne decided to take a proactive stance and complete a Master Plan. The Master Plan identifies changes needed in the land use regulations to protect community character and environmental resources. It will guide development if those changes are implemented. It also provides information to help municipal officials make decisions on topics ranging from open space to economic development. The completion of a joint Master Plan for Buckland and Shelburne was funded by a grant provided by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' Planning for Growth Program.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department was hired to conduct all the Master Planning work including the survey, mapping, inventory, and analysis. Their work was overseen by an approximately 70 member Master Planning Committee with municipal officials from both towns as well as interested residents. Members of the Master Planning Committee also signed up for subcommittees to work on specific topics of interest such as natural resources, land use, or economic development. The result of all this hard work is this document. It is filled with information and maps about the towns of Buckland and Shelburne and guidance about how to grow wisely in the future. Our next challenge will be to implement the recommendations this Master Plan contains.

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