

Town of Bedford, NH

CTAP Community Planning Road Map



**Prepared for the I-93
Community Technical Assistance Program**

**Adopted by Bedford Planning Board
January 26, 2009**

Introduction

The development of this **Community Planning Road Map** is part of the I-93 Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP). The CTAP program is a New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) **5 year** initiative to assist **26 communities** that will be affected by the rebuilding and expansion of Interstate 93. These 26 communities include: Allenstown, Atkinson, Auburn, Bedford, Bow, Candia, Chester, Concord, Danville, Deerfield, Derry, Dunbarton, Fremont, Goffstown, Hampstead, Hooksett, Hudson, Litchfield, Londonderry, Manchester, Pelham, Raymond, Salem, and Sandown (see following Attachment A, CTAP area map).

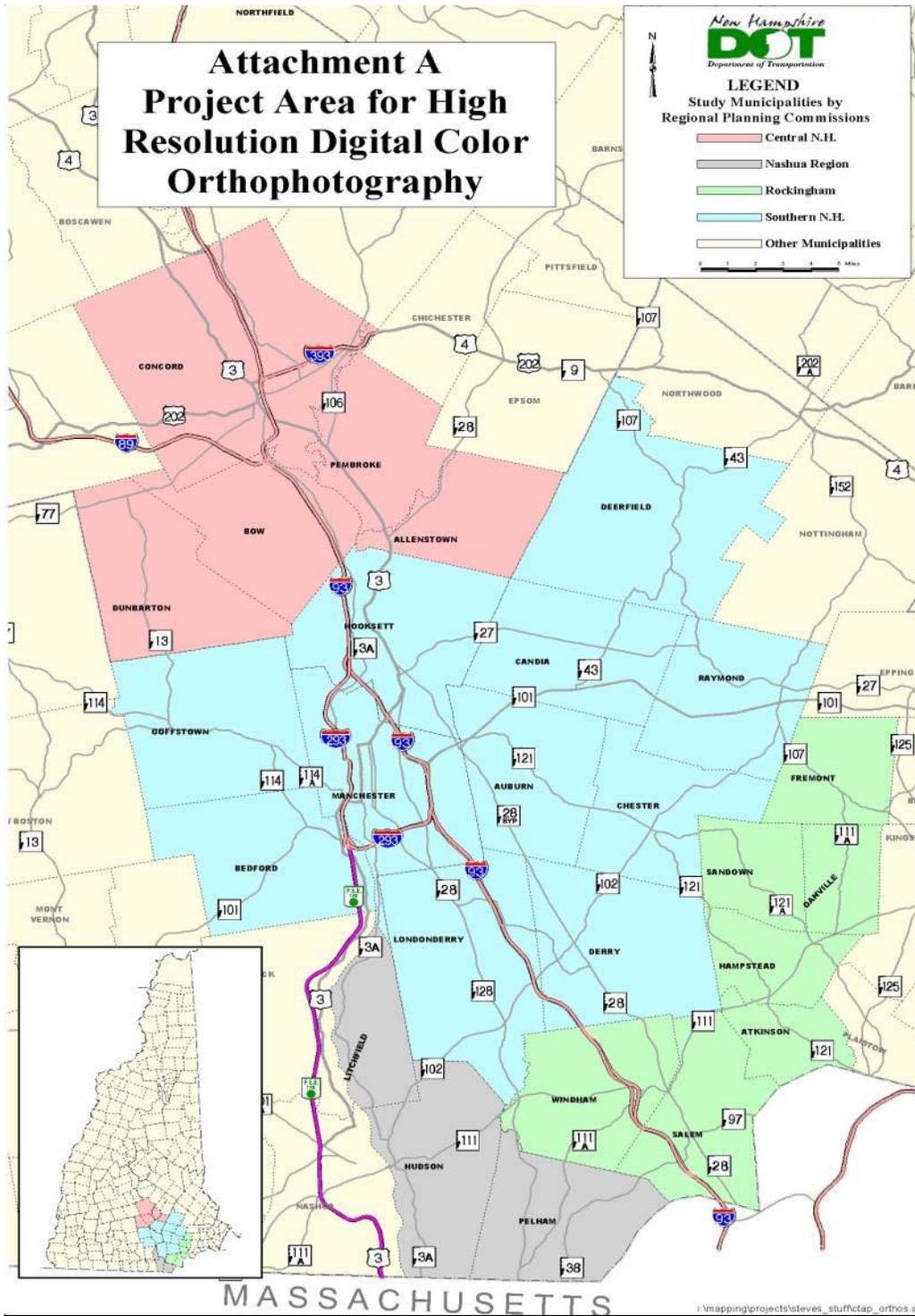
The purpose of CTAP is to promote beneficial patterns of growth among all 26 communities to minimize the negative effects of growth on community services, open space, school systems, traffic, environmental quality, and existing residential and commercial development. More information about the CTAP program is available at the NH DOT website at: www.nhctap.com and in the attached CTAP brochure.

CTAP is coordinated by NH DOT, four of the state's regional planning commissions (Central, Nashua, Rockingham and Southern New Hampshire), as well as a number of non-governmental organizations such as the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests as directed by a CTAP Steering Committee made up of representatives from each of these groups.

CTAP consists of three main planning stages:

- 1. Community Planning Assessment**
A questionnaire designed to help communities determine where they are on the planning curve and where their current planning and zoning will take them in the future.
- 2. Visioning and Planning**
The process in which a community pictures the future it wants and plans how to achieve it.
- 3. Implementation**
Utilizing the community assessment and existing community plans actions are developed and implemented that move the community forward to its ultimate vision.

Currently, the CTAP program is moving into the Visioning and Planning and Implementation stages via the **CTAP Community Planning Road Map**. The CTAP Community Planning Road Map is designed to engage communities in evaluating how they can achieve their planning goals using the planning products, resources and services available to them through the CTAP program.



This **CTAP Community Planning Road Map** prepared for the Town of Bedford identifies and sets forth recommendations and priority actions to guide the town's current and future participation in the CTAP program.

Because Year One of the CTAP program is nearing completion (Year 1 of the program officially ends as of April 2009), this Community Planning Road Map is designed to guide and help assist the Town of Bedford in applying for future CTAP grant funds and utilizing future CTAP resources.

Road Map Planning Process

Development of the CTAP Community Planning Road Map consists of three simple steps:

1. Initial Community Engagement Meeting

This meeting is held in each community to: (1) reintroduce CTAP to community officials; (2) evaluate CTAP products that have been developed for each community to date; and (3) develop a prioritized action plan for the community.

2. Road Map Planning Process

Communities select either the "Plan A" or "Plan B" planning process:

- Plan A: Consists of a pre-meeting review and screening of the Community Planning Assessment; facilitating a public workshop to evaluate recommendations; and developing an action plan.
- Plan B: Consists of an internal review process in which town officials, planning board members, the regional planning commission, CTAP representatives and planning commissioners met to complete a Road Map Plan for the community.

3. Concluding Presentation

The purpose of the concluding presentation is to present the CTAP Community Road Map to the public at an all boards meeting and to describe what it consists of and how it can be implemented.

Bedford's CTAP Community Planning Road Map

The Town of Bedford's Community Planning Road Map is provided in the following attachment. A summary of the Road Map and how it was developed follows.

TOWN OF BEDFORD, NH COMMUNITY PLANNING ROADMAP

Assessment

Completed

- Community Planning Assessment
- Enhanced GIS-based Information
- Conservation Commission Institute
- Open Space Assessment

In Progress

- Land Use/Transportation Connection
- Open Space Planning

Future

- Build Out Study
- Community Survey (Discretionary CTAP Grant)

Visioning/Planning

Completed

In Progress

- Master Plan Update
- Open Space Planning
- Economic Development Planning

Future

- Village Plan—Mixed Use
- Open Space Plan

Implementation

Short term (1 –3 years)

- Land Use Ordinance Development (Targeted CTAP Grant)
- Wallace Road Corridor Study (Local CTAP Collaborative Grant)
- Workforce/Affordable Housing Zoning
- Economic Development Website

Medium term (3–5 years)

- New Boston Road Corridor Study
- Groundwater Ordinance

Longer term (5–10 years)

- Rt. 114 Corridor Study

Developing Bedford's Community Planning Road Map

In developing Bedford's CTAP Community Planning Road Map, town officials selected the "Plan B" road map planning process. The "Plan B" road map process consisted of an internal review and screening of the Community Planning Assessment (see following Executive Summary and Summary of Recommendations as well as the following Impact/Feasibility Grid) to create the Road Map. This Road Map was then presented to the planning board and the public as part of a concluding presentation held on January 26, 2009 at which time the Bedford Planning Board adopted the Road Map.

The following Bedford Planning Board members, town staff, Bedford's CTAP representatives and planning commissioners, and staff of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission participated at an internal screening and review meeting held at the Bedford Town Offices on January 9, 2009:

Paul Goldberg, Planning Board member
Dave Danielson, CTAP Representative and Planning Commissioner
Mike Izbicki, Town Council Chair and Planning Commissioner
Karen McGrinley, Planning Board member and Planning Commissioner
Russ Marcoux, Town Manager and Planning Board member
Jon Levenstein, Planning Board Chair
Cynthia May, Planning staff
Rick Sawyer, Planning staff
Jack Munn, Southern New Hampshire Planning staff
Mary Brundage, Southern New Hampshire Planning staff

As a result of this meeting, the following important planning goals and projects for the Town of Bedford were identified and discussed, including:

- Completion of a build out study of the town to be completed by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) to assist the town's current master planning efforts;
- Developing corridor studies for Wallace Road and New Boston Road and Rt. 114;
- Conducting a community-wide master plan survey through assistance of UNH Survey Center and SNHPC;
- Promoting Bedford's farmers' market;
- Developing an economic development website;
- Creating low impact development regulations/practices;
- Ordinance development upon completion of existing Master Plan Update: mixed use village plan; workforce housing and groundwater

Also recognized at this meeting are the CTAP work products which have been completed for Town of Bedford to date, including the Community Planning Assessment; enhanced GIS-based information (land use and aerial photo mapping); Conservation Commission Institute workshops, and a recent open space planning assessment prepared by the SPNHF. In addition, SNHPC staff described the CTAP work products currently in progress, including developing an open space plan for the community and a power point presentation on the connection between land use and transportation.

IMPACT:

How much will it matter?

Moderate

High

LOW

Rt. 114 Corridor Study	Wallace Rd Corridor Study New Boston Road Corridor Study Workforce/Affordable Housing Zoning	Land Use- Ordinance Development Open Space Plan Community Survey for Master Plan Economic Development Website Economic
	Groundwater Ordinance Village Plan-Mixed Use	Build Out Study

Low

Moderate

High

FEASIBILITY: How possible is it in our community?



Key Elements of Bedford's CTAP Community Planning Road Map

Bedford's CTAP Community Planning Road Map is divided into three parts: projects which have been completed; projects in progress; and future projects (Short Term, Medium Term and Longer Term).

In the Short Term (1-3 years), the Southern New Hampshire Planning will provide Bedford with (1) a Build Out Study utilizing Community Viz software and (2) assist the town in the implementation of a Community Wide Survey of residents as part of the town's current master plan update.

The Town of Bedford intends to apply for a \$15,000 CTAP discretionary grant in February 2009 for this project to be completed before April 2009. The Build Out Study is currently funded through the CTAP program and is being conducted for other CTAP communities within the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission region.

Bedford's CTAP Community Planning Road Map also recommends several additional Short Term projects, including:

- Land Use Ordinance Development (the Town of Bedford intends to seek assistance by applying for a \$10,000 CTAP Target Grant upon completion of the master plan update);
- conducting a Corridor Study for Wallace Road to be funded through a \$10,000 CTAP Collaborative Grant in cooperation with the towns of Goffstown and Merrimack, as feasible; and
- implementing the town's workforce/affordable housing zoning amendments currently in progress as well as an economic development website for the town.

In the Medium Term (3-5 years), the Road Map recommends that the Town of Bedford consider the development of a Corridor Study for New Boston Road and a Groundwater Ordinance for the community.

In the Longer Term (5-10 years), the Road Map suggests that the Town of Bedford pursue a Corridor Study for Rt. 114.

A summary of current available CTAP programs and resources is provided in the following attachment.

COMMUNITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CTAP: helping communities in the I-93 corridor to proactively plan for growth



The **Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP)** provides resources and tools to help NH communities take a proactive role in achieving the future they desire. CTAP is designed to assist communities with the changes that will arise from the I-93 expansion as well as ongoing growth in the region. By taking a proactive approach to planning, CTAP helps communities to minimize the negative effects of growth on community services, remaining open space, schools, traffic patterns, environmental quality, and existing residential & commercial development.



The CTAP process follows three main stages, each with its own set of programs and resources. The first stage is **Assessment**, which helps communities to determine where they are and where their current planning and zoning will take them in the future. Once assessments have been made, communities can use this information to begin the second stage, **Visioning and Planning**. Visioning is the process in which a community pictures the future it wants and plans how to achieve it. The final stage of the CTAP process is **Implementation**. Implementation takes the assessments and plans that have been developed and turns them into actions that move the community towards its ultimate vision.

ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Assessment is the first stage in the CTAP process. It helps communities to determine where they are and where their current planning and zoning will take them in the future.

Community Planning Assessment ~ an expert analysis of your community's current planning status and a roadmap to help you make the best use of CTAP programs. Assessments review a wide range of information including existing zoning and regulations, capital improvement plans, open space plans, and master plans.

Economic Assets Profile ~ an inventory of local assets is key to a solid economic development plan. This program will inventory all assets in your community and incorporate additional data to provide a regional snapshot that will help formulate a long range strategic economic plan.

Community Build-out Analysis and Alternatives ~ using enhanced GIS, this program provides build-out views of your community based on current zoning regulations as well as alternative scenarios under different zoning options. These community analyses will be combined to show how the entire region will be affected by the I-93 expansion and local growth decisions.

Open Space Assessment ~ the Regional Planning Commissions and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF) will work with your community to identify and map land that should remain undeveloped and create ecologically, financially, and legally viable strategies for the protection of these lands.

Enhanced GIS-based Information ~ using the latest land use and conservation GIS data, this program will prepare an updated Natural Services Network for the CTAP region that identifies critical natural services such as water supply, flood control, forestry and agricultural soils, and wildlife habitat. Your community can then use this information to guide both development and conservation practices.



<flip over>

VISIONING & PLANNING PROGRAMS

Once assessments have been made, communities can use this information to begin Visioning and Planning. Visioning is the process in which a community pictures the future it wants and plans how to achieve it.

Transportation & Land Use Integration Planning ~ this program assists communities in developing a better way to integrate and deliver transportation and land-use planning in and across local and regional master plans.

Open Space & Conservation Planning ~ by identifying open space locations and recommending methods to preserve them, this program will assist your community in improving, enhancing, or creating an open space plan that fits seamlessly into your Master Plan.

High Priority Natural Resource Protection Plan ~ using zoning, regulatory, and voluntary techniques that have worked elsewhere, this program provides the most up-to-date methods to protect high-priority natural resources identified in your Open Space Plan. A public outreach and education component is available to help others see the value of future land use planning.

Agricultural Resources Assistance ~ training and startup technical assistance is available through CTAP for newly formed Local Agricultural Commissions, whose purpose is to promote, protect, and enhance local agriculture and agricultural resources. In addition, a mini-grant program can help your community to create an Agricultural Commission or develop and implement work plans for an established Commission.

Local Government Workshops ~ designed for 3-4 towns to identify and discuss common planning problems and solutions, including those that cross regional boundaries. Workshop topics can be geared to your specific needs.

Conservation Commission Institute ~ a year long series of regional training sessions for those serving on Conservation Commissions. Topics vary based on community needs, but may include land conservation, support for working landscapes, and preservation of local agriculture. A regional environmental protection roundtable will be established to encourage communication, education, and a regional approach to environmental issues.



IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

The final stage of the CTAP process is Implementation. Implementation takes the assessments and plans that have been developed and turns them into actions that move the community towards its ultimate vision.

Innovative Training for Local Government Officials ~ this program provides your local government officials with customized training on topics that address the interests and needs of your community. Innovative delivery methods will be utilized, including discussion boards, post-training support, customized 1-on-1 training, and peer-to-peer training.

Discretionary/Targeted Local Funding ~ your community has access to upwards of \$10,000 for activities that are consistent with CTAP goals but not already covered by CTAP funding. Your local Regional Planning Commission will counsel you on how the funds may be spent.

Local CTAP Collaborative Grants ~ funding is available for two or more local governments to pursue a collaborative project that addresses an immediate concern to their communities and helps to achieve the broad goals of CTAP.

Grant Writing Assistance ~ a Grant Resources Guide, grant workshops, and grant consultation are available to help you prepare proposals for non-CTAP grants that support goals & objectives identified in the CTAP strategic planning process.

Affordable Housing Initiatives ~ the Inclusionary Zoning Implementation Program (IZIP) was created by the NH Housing Finance Authority to provide communities with direct technical assistance grants to address shortages in workforce housing by developing and adopting inclusionary zoning ordinances. CTAP funds will be used to leverage IZIP technical assistance for CTAP communities on a competitive basis.



Bedford CTAP Community Assessment Summary of Recommendations

Theme A:

- Considering TIFDs or CROP zones to help fund needed infrastructure improvements within specific areas of the community.
- Include public utilities, road repairs, drainage and other improvements in association with new development
- Develop Dark Skies Ordinance
- Make recycling mandatory
- Establishment of a Housing Commission
- Consider participating in Cities for Climate Protection, the Clean Air and Cool Planet, and other energy conservation programs

Theme B:

- Develop an Open Space Plan with the newly formed Open Space Committee
- Improve cluster development regulations, to balance its open space and land protection efforts.
- Establish brownfields redevelopment and a demolition delay ordinance designed to help protect the town's historic resources.
- Update the Natural Resources Inventory
- Develop aquifer protection ordinance

Theme C:

- Develop a strong village center plan and village district zone
- Evaluate landscaping requirements and address the need to protect and replace street trees along existing and proposed roadways

Theme D:

- Consider participating in the Main Street program
- Evaluate the feasibility of allowing mixed use in the town's zoning districts where appropriate
- Establish an Agricultural Commission
- Include a basic definition of agriculture in its zoning ordinance
- Include right to farm laws in zoning ordinance

Overall Recommendations:

- 1) **Develop and adopt Groundwater/Aquifer Protection Ordinance;**
- 2) **Draft and implement Low Impact Development Practices (LID) and Regulations;**
- 3) **Continue to develop and adopt an Economic Development Plan with the newly formed Economic Development Committee;**
- 4) **Draft and adopt an Infill Policy;**
- 5) **Establish Housing and Agricultural Commissions.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Planning Assessment Report

This report is a summary of the CTAP Community Planning Assessment which was completed for the Town of Bedford using information gathered from the Community Planning Assessment Questionnaire. This questionnaire is attached at the end of the Executive Summary.

History and Purpose:

The Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) is in the second year of a five-year process. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) initiated CTAP to provide support to communities projected to experience growth as a result of the Interstate 93 Expansion Project which stretches from Salem to Concord. The goal of the first phase of the program is to conduct Community Planning Assessments of those municipalities designated by the NH DOT as most likely to be affected by the expected increase in population. There are 26 CTAP-designated communities along the I93 corridor and a Community Planning Assessment has been conducted for each town. Eleven of these municipalities are located within the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission Region and include Auburn, Bedford, Candia, Chester, Deerfield, Derry, Goffstown, Hooksett, Londonderry, Manchester, and Raymond. The primary purpose of the Community Planning Assessment is to identify the policies and regulations these municipalities currently have in place to effectively prepare and manage growth.

Process:

The Community Planning Assessment consists of more than 100 questions. The survey is centered around the following four major planning themes:

- Theme A. – Community Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation
- Theme B. – Environmental Protection, Land Use, and Open Space
- Theme C. – Downtowns, Village Centers, and Community Vitality
- Theme D. - The Local Economy

The CTAP Steering Committee determined that the questions developed from these themes should address most of the growth concerns of municipalities affected by the Interstate 93 Expansion Project. The attached Community Planning Assessment for the Town of Bedford, New Hampshire was completed through a review by Town officials, Planning Board members, and staff at the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission. The results are intended to provide community leaders and municipal officials with a basis to make decisions concerning the implementation of policies to address potential growth issues. These results are identified in this Executive Summary.

Findings:

The major planning needs and weaknesses identified by the Community Planning Assessment prepared for the Town of Bedford, New Hampshire are listed as follows:

- Limited use of Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIF) for infrastructure improvement and economic development;
- Lack of a Dark Sky Ordinance in the Town's Zoning or as part of the Planning Board's Site Plan Regulations;
- Lack of a Groundwater Protection Ordinance for the town;
- Limited inclusion of energy conservation practices in town government, building codes and zoning regulations;
- Limited use and development of traffic calming techniques;
- Town's current master plan is out of date, but the town has recently begun a new master plan update in November 2008;
- No demolition delay ordinance;
- Limited brownfields redevelopment;
- No formally adopted open space plan;
- Out of date natural resources inventory and maps;
- No prime wetland regulations;
- No riparian buffer regulations for streams and tributaries;
- No mandatory use and limited open space requirements in the town's conservation development regulations;
- No infill development policy;
- No formally adopted economic development plan, although an Economic Development Commission was recently formed in November 2008;
- No mandatory recycling for town residents;
- No Agricultural Commission or agricultural audit; and
- No Housing Commission.

Key Recommendations:

The Town of Bedford has achieved and performed extensive planning to manage growth and to prepare for the future. This Community Planning Assessment Report contains an analysis of the key findings and recommendations to continue to address a variety of existing and future growth related issues and policies in Bedford. Some of the key recommendations are identified below:

- 1) Update the Town's Master Plan – this is now in progress;
- 2) Develop and adopt a Town Open Space Plan;
- 3) Develop and adopt Groundwater/Aquifer Protection Ordinance;
- 4) Update Natural Resources Inventory and Maps;
- 5) Draft and implement Low Impact Development Practices and Regulations;
- 6) Establish and/or update Riparian Buffer requirements for 1st, 2nd and 3rd order streams;

- 7) Develop and adopt an Economic Development Plan;
- 8) Draft and adopt an Infill Policy;
- 9) Establish Housing and Agricultural Commissions; and
- 10) Participate in Cities for Climate Protection, the Clean Air and Cool Planet, US EPA Energy Star, and other energy conservation programs.

CTAP COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Part I

Introduction

The Community Technical Assistance Project (CTAP) was implemented in an attempt to help member communities grapple with potential growth issues due to the expansion of Interstate 93. The first phase of the five-year process was to conduct Community Planning Assessments of those municipalities most likely to experience growth due to the expansion of I-93. The ultimate goal of the Community Planning Assessment process is to determine whether communities have policies and regulations in place to manage potential growth effectively.

The I-93 expansion is projected to last until 2012. In an effort to minimize the effects of potential growth, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) identified 26 municipalities stretched out along the I93 as areas most likely to be impacted.

Some of the potential growth impacts that the CTAP communities could experience include, increased population, traffic, and a greater demand for housing. Consequently, if growth does occur in some or all of these areas, increased demand in municipal services across the board will be expected. CTAP communities will have to plan accordingly.

More than 100 questions were developed by professional planners and municipal officials involved in the CTAP process in an effort to determine if CTAP communities have policies and regulations in place to adequately address potential growth issues. These assessment questions were answered by reviewing existing town web sites, ordinances, regulations and city policies. The assessment questions were also answered with assistance from the municipal planners and other officials in each community.

Many of the assessment questions provide insight as to the status of the community's growth policies and the vision of the CTAP community towards its future development. The questions deal with many different planning issues including land use and mixed-use policies, zoning, minimum-lot requirements, historical preservation, open space, environmental protection, housing, water quality, economic development, and transportation. Furthermore, the assessment is designed to gauge the level at which public participation is present in each of the communities.

Prior to the publication of this report, municipal officials and Planning Board members of the Town of Bedford were asked to review the preliminary findings of the community planning assessment and any possible growth issues that may have come to light as a result of the survey. This was accomplished at a regular scheduled meeting of the

Bedford Planning Board. The assessment questions provided discussion venues where municipal officials and planning board members could voice concerns and ask questions.

In developing this report, the SNHPC considered the insights, concerns, and recommendations offered, as well as other communications provided throughout the process and has included these where appropriate. As a result, this report should be viewed as a starting point or as a guide for future planning activities and goals. A copy of the Community Planning Assessment prepared for Bedford is attached.

Part II

Theme A

Community Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation

The purpose of this theme is to determine how CTAP communities have planned for the future in terms of the provision and funding for municipal services. This may include new facilities and other infrastructure improvements to help meet these needs. In addition, Theme A considers how effective CTAP communities have been, and will be, regarding regional cooperation with other local municipalities in an effort to better serve constituents. Special attention is given to communication strategies and cooperation initiatives between communities within the region.

Theme A generated 42 questions dealing with the funding and delivery of municipal services, regional cooperation among local governments, housing, and transportation. The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Promote the establishment of consistent funding approaches to help pay for improved and expanding public infrastructure and services. Local governments should make certain that their funding strategies are adequate to meet the new level of service provision to meet projected growth needs.
- Evaluate the need for regional cooperation between local governments. Regional approaches can often embellish the delivery of public services and environmental quality, avoid the possible duplication of services, and better allocate financial resources.
- Plan for an adequate supply of housing. The housing stock should reflect local needs and priorities and include housing for a range of income levels.
- Implement strategies to promote safe and efficient multi-modal transportation systems.

Findings:

- The Town of Bedford regularly participates in mutual aid as well as wastewater and water service agreements with adjacent communities. A new town High School was constructed and open for town residents in 2008.
- The Town of Bedford has never utilized Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFD) or the Community Reinvestment and Opportunity Program (CROP) zones to help fund or stimulate infrastructure improvement in specific areas of the community.
- The Town of Bedford has an outstanding Capital Improvement Program (CIP) which is updated annually.
- A procedure to determine whether a project qualifies as a “Development of Regional Impact” is regularly addressed at the beginning of each Planning Board meeting.
- The town has adopted impact fees for schools and recreational facilities. The Kilton Road intersection improvement has now been completed.
- The community has no outdoor dark skies lighting ordinance.
- Bedford has initiated extensive planning for future utilities and water supply needs and the town charges exactions for both on-site and off-site improvements.
- Utilities are required to be placed underground in new developments.
- The town provides a transfer station for residents, but recycling is not mandatory. However, the town adopted single stream recycling in September 2008.
- The town has affordable housing requirements within its elderly housing and age-restricted housing regulations and accessory apartments are permitted in single-family homes by Special Exception from the ZBA. A proposed workforce housing ordinance will be on the town’s March 2009 ballot.
- Bedford’s zoning regulations do not specifically encourage or require energy conservation standards in new development.

Recommendations:

The Town of Bedford could benefit in the future by considering TIFDs or CROP zones to help fund needed infrastructure improvements within specific areas of the community. This could include public utilities, street, drainage and other improvements in association with new development. In addition, the town has no dark skies ordinance. Developing such an ordinance would be beneficial in helping to reduce overall light glare and improve star gazing within the community. The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) and the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) is currently developing a Model Lighting Ordinance and Design Guide to address the need for strong, consistent outdoor lighting regulation. Bedford may wish to keep track of the release of this model ordinance and compare it to the town’s current lighting requirements for improvements. Also the town may also wish to consider making recycling mandatory within the community which would help to increase recyclable volumes and revenues to the town. In addition, Bedford should consider participating in Cities for Climate Protection, Clean Air and Cool Planet, and other energy conservation programs. The town is currently participating in the US EPA Energy Star program. The Town of Bedford could also benefit from the establishment of a Housing Commission to continue to stay on top of affordable housing issues and strategies.

Theme B

Environmental Protection, Land Use, and Open Space

The purpose of this theme is to determine how CTAP communities have planned for the protection of land in a way that is consistent and compatible with future growth trends. To achieve these goals communities must focus on future land use strategies and determine how these would help to promote the preservation of natural resources, open space, and environmental protection.

Theme B generated 38 questions dealing with natural resources, green infrastructure, parks and recreational opportunities, rural character, and the preservation of agricultural lands and forests.

The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Promote the preservation and protection of natural resources when addressing the economic needs of the community and region.
- Protect natural resources and the environment including ground water, aquifers, wildlife, and wildlife corridors.
- Establish and conserve an interconnected green infrastructure and ensure public access to open space, parks, and other recreational opportunities.
- Maintain rural character whenever possible especially forests and farms.

Findings:

- The Town's existing Master plan is currently being updated. The existing plan has not been updated within the past seven years and is scheduled for an update in 2009.
- The Town's existing Zoning Ordinance is consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan and provides for a range of lot sizes, increased densities where public water and sewer exist, and a variety of innovative land use techniques, including cluster/open space development, transfer of development rights (within clusters), performance zoning along Route 3, inclusionary zoning (elderly linked to affordable housing) and impact fees.
- Bedford's Zoning Ordinance (Commercial Zone and Rt. 3 Performance Zone) allows for a mix of residential and commercial uses and there are opportunities for brownfields redevelopment.
- Backlots are not allowed and nonresidential development is encouraged to be concentrated at intersections or in "village" nodes.

- The Planning Board has architectural and design guidelines in place to encourage traditional development and the development of new villages.
- Bedford has completed extensive inventories of its historic structures, but the Town has no demolition delay bylaw or ordinance in effect.
- The Town offers a property tax exemption for alternative energy installations for senior citizens, veterans and disabled persons.
- The community has actively pursued open space protection and has adopted a wetlands conservation ordinance. However, the town has no formal Open Space Plan and has not adopted an aquifer or groundwater protection ordinance, wellhead protection program, or prime wetland regulations. In recognition of these issues, the town is currently setting up a committee.
- The Town's existing Master Plan references a Natural Resources Inventory, but this inventory is now out of date and needs to be updated. A new NRI will be conducted as part of the new master plan update.
- Bedford participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and has in place adequate floodplain, stormwater, and erosion control and sedimentation ordinances. However, these ordinances do not encourage or require Low Impact Development (LID) practices.
- Portions of the Merrimack River in Bedford are subject to the State Shoreland Protection Act, but there are no shoreland or riparian buffer requirements for the town's streams and tributaries.
- While the town allows cluster development, this development is not a mandatory and the open space requirements in the ordinance are minimal.

Recommendations:

Bedford's environmental protection, land use planning, and open space activities have been effective over the years, but the town's Master Plan is out of date and needs to be updated. In addition, the Town of Bedford needs a formal Open Space Plan, as well as improved cluster development regulations, to balance its open space and land protection efforts. Bedford could also benefit from brownfields redevelopment and a demolition delay ordinance designed to help protect the town's historic resources. An updated version of the Natural Resources Inventory would also be a valuable project for the town. The last inventory was completed as part of the Master Plan in 2000. An updated inventory would identify new areas of importance and designate areas that would be a high priority for preservation. Taking steps to adopt an aquifer protection ordinance was also mentioned in the 2000 Master Plan, but has yet to be put into effect, making it another valuable priority for Bedford. Protecting prime wetlands (although voted down at the 2007 town meeting) and the town's overall groundwater supplies, including a wellhead protection program along with Low Impact Development (LID) standards, should also be important steps in Bedford as the town continues to grow.

Theme C

Downtown/Village Centers and Community Vitality

The purpose of this theme is to determine how the CTAP communities have planned for the development and preservation of vibrant community centers which would include an

extensive array of cultural and recreational resources. The overall intent is to enhance public participation by establishing areas for community activities around the downtown or common community village center which would add rural character and promote a sense of vitality to the village center.

Theme C generated 16 questions dealing with the development of village center districts and the promotion of walkable downtown areas in an effort to maintain the small town New England community tradition. Special emphasis was given to the development of main streets, historic preservation, and landscaping.

The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Develop or enhance downtowns and village centers through the reuse of existing infrastructure and the rehabilitation of buildings with historic value.
- Promote the development of walkable downtown areas which are consistent with historic patterns.
- Enhance Main streets and promote a small, New England town atmosphere.

Findings:

- Bedford is currently working on a new master plan update. It is not known at this time if this master plan update will emphasize creating a Town Center on both sides of Route 101 to promote community connectivity. While Rt. 101 is recognized as a constraint toward accomplishing this, the town's existing Master Plan identifies the Town Center as a future village center or "People Place" that needs to be expanded.
- While Bedford lacks a policy to encourage or locate new public buildings near the town's community center, the town has recently purchased land to provide a large central green and a "Village Common" on Route 101/Bell Road and the construction of this common area has begun.
- Currently, only elderly housing is allowed in the commercial zoning within the "Village Center". The town may wish to consider a mixed use or Village District zone in the future.
- Bedford Planning Board has adopted architectural guidelines; however, these guidelines are advisory only.
- The town has no requirements for the planting or preservation of street trees within the right of way of existing and proposed roadways, except as part of a landscape plan that must be submitted for parking lots. However, stonewalls are regulated under Bedford's Road Construction Standards.

Recommendations:

Although sparse, the town is in need of a strong village center plan and village district zone to help give it proper form and function. A village center in Bedford would need regulations to guide architecture so that new development fits in with the rest of the town's New England feel, as well as address possibilities for mixed use and infill policies. The town should also evaluate its landscaping requirements and address the need to protect and replace street trees along existing and proposed roadways.

Theme D

Local Economy

The purpose of this theme is to determine if the CTAP community has enacted policies that promote economic viability, foster a prosperous business environment, and support agricultural development. The development of a strong local economy should result in increased local employment opportunities and livable wages.

Theme D generated 15 questions dealing with the development of economic development strategies, commercial and agricultural development, and tax incentives to attract new business development. The Steering Committee identified a number of broad goals that CTAP-designated communities should strive to accomplish. These goals are outlined below:

Goals

- Support sustainable and balanced economic growth that reflects the current tax base.
- Strengthen local agriculture and forestry through the support of related infrastructure and economic systems.
- Support the development of new jobs and livable wages.

Findings:

- While the Town of Bedford currently does not have an Economic Development Plan nor does it participate in the Main Street program, the town recently formed an Economic Development Commission.
- Bedford's Zoning Ordinance does not encourage mixed use; however, some elderly housing exists within the town's commercial, office and industrial zones.
- There are currently no tax incentives for businesses to locate in the community center or other priority areas. Furthermore, the town has not identified anchors (such as a post office or municipal buildings) which can promote the town's Village Center.
- Bedford's Zoning Ordinance does not define agriculture and there are no references to the right to farm law.

- The Town does require HISS (High Intensity Soil Survey) mapping where on-site septic systems are required, however, mapping of prime soil for agricultural is not required in development proposals.
- Bedford has not conducted an Agriculture Inventory nor has it established an Agricultural Commission.

Recommendations:

Although Bedford has experienced strong economic growth in the past, the Town has no Economic Development Plan in place to address existing issues and future concerns. While participating in the Main Street program would be premature at this time, at some point it might prove helpful as the Town's Village Center develops and a Village plan and Village zoning are put into place. Bedford may also want to consider evaluating the feasibility of allowing mixed use in the town's zoning districts where appropriate and establishing an Agricultural Commission to help support and promote local agricultural business development. In addition, the Town should include a basic definition of agriculture in its zoning ordinance and include right to farm laws.

Summary

Overall Findings:

While the Town of Bedford has achieved and performed extensive planning to manage growth and to prepare for the future, it is clear based upon the responses to this community planning assessment that the Town of Bedford would greatly benefit from the following key recommendations:

- 1) Update the Town's Master Plan, which is currently in progress;
- 2) Develop and adopt a Town Open Space Plan, which is currently in progress;
- 3) Develop and adopt Groundwater/Aquifer Protection Ordinance;
- 4) Update Natural Resources Inventory and Maps;
- 5) Draft and implement Low Impact Development Practices (LID) and Regulations;
- 6) Establish and/or update Riparian Buffer requirements for 1st, 2nd and 3rd order streams despite being voted down at Town Meeting in 2007;
- 7) Develop and adopt an Economic Development Plan; this will be accomplished through the Town's new Economic Development Commission;
- 8) Draft and adopt an Infill Policy;
- 9) Establish Housing and Agricultural Commissions; and
- 10) Participate in Cities for Climate Protection, Clean Air and Cool Planet and other energy conservation programs. The town is currently participating in the US EPA Energy Star program.