

Shutesbury Town Plan Goals & Objectives

The Goals and Objectives within this document are initial findings based on Shutesbury's 2001 Town Plan survey. The Goals and Objectives have been further revised based on input from town boards and committees, and public input from four listening sessions. They provide the basis for the subsequent development of a Town Plan.

Prepared for the Town of Shutesbury

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Goals and Objectives with the designation of "High" were considered by the Town Plan Committee to be of higher importance and priority than others listed.

Natural Resources and Open Space

Results of the recent survey demonstrate that Shutesbury residents understand the relationship between the quality of the environment and their own lives, and the need to actively protect air and water quality, farm and forestlands, wetlands and vernal pools.

Goals:

A. To maintain and protect natural resources including clean drinking water supplies, clean air, lake and stream water quality, large forested areas, open fields, wildlife and their habitat areas, and wetlands including vernal pools. *High*

B. To preserve the rural character by protecting large blocks of contiguous forestland, fields, and other open space from development and by promoting sustainable forestry, agricultural, and other resource-based activities. *High*

Objectives:

1. Identify and protect potential aquifers and recharge areas for public drinking water supplies and protect private well water quality. ***High***
2. Monitor water quality in the rivers, streams, lakes and ponds and develop methods for their protection and improvement where appropriate. ***High***
3. Develop strategies to increase funding and awareness (and establish a separate, interest bearing account for such funds) for open space protection, management, and acquisition, such as, but not limited to: ***High***
 - Land bank
 - Earmark a percentage of current town revenue from Ch. 61 stumpage monies
 - Management of town-owned lands for income
 - Payments in Lieu of Taxes from Department of Environmental Management, Metropolitan District Commission, and Town of Amherst.
 - Raffles, auctions, sponsored mountain bike/ski/walkathon on trails, and /or fund drives.
4. Apply identified criteria/priorities of open space acquisition/protection (i.e., below from current Open Space and Recreation Plan) to opportunities that may arise, especially via Chapter 61 right-of-first-refusal, so as to provide the town a rating of the parcel's relative desirability of protection. ***High***
 - Open fields and non-forested lands
 - Important water features including falls, springs, and distinctive or unique wetlands

- Rare species habitat (state-listed rare, threatened and endangered) and vernal pools
 - Areas of high visual or aesthetic value
 - Recreational access and lake, stream and trail node access
 - Unique or distinctive historic, archaeological or geological features
 - Threat of development
 - Areas that connect or enlarge protected areas and or create conservation corridors
5. As an added safeguard, establish a protocol for the potential transfer of the Town's right-of-first refusal to a local conservation land trust so that high priority Chapter 61 open space, under threat of development, may be protected. **High**
 6. Identify the most important scenic and recreational areas in town and seek to purchase or otherwise acquire scenic easements (legal documents that represent the transference of ownership rights between parties) from willing landowners to help protect these views from development and/or change. **High**
 7. Designate Local Scenic Roads to help protect roadside trees, which contribute greatly to Shutesbury's rural character. **High**
 8. Develop and adopt an enhanced local wetlands protection by-law. **High**
 9. Support and promote private initiatives to protect open space, natural resources, and forestland including the use of Conservation Restrictions. **High**
 10. Actively pursue gifts and bequests of open space lands and Conservation Restrictions. **High**
 11. Consider establishing a rural conservation overlay district, which would have conservation development design as the preferred development option. **High**
 12. Adopt zoning and subdivision control measures, which will ensure that new residential development occurs at a density appropriate for a rural town. **High**
 13. Coordinate the activities of the Shutesbury Conservation Commission and the Recreation Committee to plan, develop, and maintain trail linkages over land and water to enhance the recreational experiences of residents participating in the most popular outdoor activities: walking, hiking, bird watching, bicycling, X-country skiing, canoeing/kayaking/rowing, mountain biking, snow shoeing,

- running, and snowmobiling. In addition, resolve any use conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. **High**
14. Proactively seek private owners of significant parcels (i.e., those who own 50 or more acres) and offer such information (previous objective); also, annually thank them for their personal contribution to rural character and outdoor recreation. **High**
 15. Maintain a current open space map of protected parcels and unprotected parcels, to facilitate decision-making about acquisition or other protection actions. **High**
 16. Ensure that open space lands are not taxed as developable if they do not have developable lots based on zoning. **High**
 17. Promote through the use of incentives protection, enhancement, management, and maintenance of open fields for scenic and wildlife habitat purposes. **High**
 18. Research the need for establishing a policy, which would regulate the number of automobiles that may be legally stored on one's property.
 19. Work with other local boards (e.g., planning, conservation commission, zoning board of appeals, recreation commission, assessor, health) and regional, non-profit, and state agencies regarding open space and protection issues and environmental quality concerns including public drinking water.
 20. Provide information and educational opportunities to landowners about: Chapter 61, Conservation Restrictions, and estate planning that incorporates land protection. Facilitate land protection with local land trusts and state agencies.
 21. Support homeowners to maintain open fields and pasture.
 22. Help protect wetlands by adopting an upland requirement of seventy-five percent (75%) for all building lots.
 23. Research the feasibility of creating and maintaining, where appropriate, historic long-range views.
 24. Identify and protect important ridgelines and view sheds. Implement measures to direct telecommunications towers away from highly visible ridges in town.
 25. Develop and implement an active open space program so that residents and landowners may donate land for the community's enjoyment and long-term stewardship.

26. Pursue grants and other forms of technical assistance for forest landowners and agricultural businesses to improve the financial viability of their operations.

Housing

The types and densities of residential development were topics addressed in the recent survey. Housing for single-family and two-family homebuyers as well as the elderly, appears to be supported but with restrictions. Survey respondents support single-family homes on lots 2 acres in size or larger and two-family homes on 3 acres or larger. Elderly housing that provides property tax revenues appears also to be supported. Finally, the community survey respondents appear to support conservation development and restricting growth in already densely developed areas.

Goals:

A. To encourage a mix of housing densities, ownership patterns, prices, and building types to serve diverse households consistent with the rural character of the community. *High*

B. To provide fair, decent, safe, affordable elderly housing that meets the needs of Shutesbury's seniors and which also contributes to the tax base. *High*

C. To provide financial assistance to homeowners for state regulations and encourage compliance with Board of Health Code with respect to Title 5, removal of lead paint etc.

Objectives:

1. Determine the most appropriate mix and location of development densities in Town for single, two-family, and elderly housing. ***High***
2. Identify zoning and subdivision measures that have succeeded in encouraging developers to choose cluster developments, which promote the retention of open space, over conventional subdivisions. ***High***
3. Support state-sponsored programs that provide financial assistance for homeowners to comply with Title 5 septic system and lead paint removal regulations.
4. Work with the Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and non-profit agencies to help homeowners obtain access to financial assistance for septic upgrades and home improvement financing.

5. Pursue public grants with the assistance of the Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCHRA) and other sources of funding to enhance the financial feasibility of affordable elderly housing development, both rental and owner occupied, whether the units are owned by the Town, the FCHRA, or by a private entity.

Community Services

The Town of Shutesbury provides its residents with a host of services including elementary school education, police and fire protection, ambulance service, the public library, highway maintenance, solid and hazardous waste management, and recreational facilities. Community survey respondents appear to support increased spending backed by a willingness to pay through property taxes for the following services: ambulance, open space acquisition, care of conservation land, a new or expanded library, an expanded school curricula, and increased road maintenance. It will be important to determine which services have the necessary political support to receive funding for expansion.

Goal:

A. To continue to provide excellent police, fire, and ambulance service; solid and hazardous waste management; highway maintenance; library and recreational facilities; and elementary school education services. *High*

B. To plan and coordinate the provision of community facilities and services in an appropriate and cost efficient manner, which may include the development of a capital improvement plan. *High*

Objectives:

1. Explore the short and long-term programming and funding needs of the Shutesbury Police and Fire Departments to support their continued level of service. ***High***
2. Develop new, and expand existing, multiple-user recreational trails connecting Shutesbury's open space, natural, and historic resources. ***High***
3. Encourage the adoption of best management practices in all Town departments, especially for the use of road sand and salt by the highway department. ***High***
4. Determine the most cost efficient ways to upgrade the ambulance service to Shutesbury. ***High***

5. Identify the level of road maintenance sought by Shutesbury residents and ensure that any roadway upgrades balance safety considerations with neighboring rural character and town-wide network needs. **High**
6. Determine the feasibility of acquiring more Town-owned land for the purposes of expanding existing community facilities like the school, library, Town Hall and police and fire buildings and for the development of potential future needs such as sports fields, wastewater treatment and drinking water filtration plants. **High**
7. Identify and address the long-term needs of the Highway Department including facilities and space. **High**
8. Improve communication between all Town boards and between the Town and residents. Consider development of a new and improved web site, a communications committee, and a decision-making protocol that involves board and commission interaction for efficient management of information, time, and money. Explore the feasibility of an extended capital improvement planning process as a means for increasing inter-board communication. **High**
9. Pursue state financial assistance to identify potential future ground water supplies and Zone II recharge areas (the land surrounding a groundwater supply, which represents the biggest area that contributes water during an extended dry period without precipitation), as well as technical assistance to develop resource protection strategies. **High**
10. Increase participation among Shutesbury residents in recycling, home composting, and hazardous material drop-off programs.
11. Expand the library services in such a way as to ensure the enjoyment of all.
12. Determine the short and long-term space, programming, and funding needs of the Shutesbury Elementary School to support their continued level of service.
13. Explore ways of expanding the Elementary School curricula in a cost efficient manner.
14. Encourage the Recreation Committee or another organization to coordinate the production of community events that are family-oriented including concerts, holiday events, community fairs, nature outings, summer recreation programs for youth, and arts festivals. Create ways for utilizing the following as sites for these activities: Town Common, Elementary School, Town Hall, Old Town Hall, and Library. Consider alternatives to these sites as well including Temenos, the Shutesbury Athletic Club, Morse Hill and Sirius.
15. Assess recreational programming and facilities needs for families, teens, children, and elders and develop a plan for their implementation.

16. Develop recreational and other programs that will reduce the necessity for Shutesbury residents to leave town to obtain these services
17. Explore the feasibility of developing a community center in Town as a means of providing recreational, educational, and social services for all aged residents but especially the very young, adolescents, and seniors.
18. Publicize family-oriented programs and facilities in place for use by residents.
19. Address safety, maintenance, and operations issues for all recreational sites.
20. Notify the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of all new public water suppliers to monitor water quality for public safety.
21. Establish leak detection and repair programs as needed and remove underground storage tanks over 20 years old.
22. Identify and map locations of private wells to prevent contamination from road salt, herbicides and other contaminants by limiting applications near those areas.
23. Boards of Health may encourage the use of alternative septic systems in situations where enhanced wastewater treatment is needed to protect ground water supplies.

Historic and Scenic Resources

Survey respondents felt that it was important to preserve Shutesbury's rural character, historic buildings, and landscapes. Based on the survey results, respondents consider the contributing factors to the Town's rural character to include: open fields, scenic views, historic stone walls and foundation holes, large road-side trees, historic structures, farm houses, narrow winding roads, and dirt roads. Often the region's most scenic and traditional working landscape patterns are maintained by ongoing agricultural activities (including forest management). These landscapes are often viewed and appreciated from our main roadways. Historical landscapes can encompass historical structures associated with agriculture, vegetation molded by farming and forest management, protected open space, scenic view sheds, and locally designated scenic roads.

Goal:

A. To identify and protect historic and scenic resources including buildings, sites, and landscapes. *High*

Objectives:

1. Review the existing Massachusetts Historical Commission forms and the updated Shutesbury Historic Commission inventory to determine if any actions are still needed to create a complete and accurate inventory of all historic buildings, sites, foundation holes, important stonewalls, and landscapes. **High**
2. Consider adopting steps such as implementing a demolition delay bylaw to support the protection of significant historic structures in Town. **High**
3. Identify and pursue federal and state grants in support of historic resource protection especially for the old Town Hall. **High**
4. Identify, document, and protect significant historic and scenic landscapes, especially remaining agricultural and community development landscapes. **High**
5. Develop a policy for use of the Town Common, Spear Memorial Library, and the old Town Hall, which respects the traditional uses of these buildings while at the same time, provides access to all town residents to this popular community resource. **High**
6. Adopt local scenic road designation for Shutesbury's most scenic roads. **High**
7. Explore the feasibility of National Historic District designation for the Shutesbury Town Common.

Transportation

Survey respondents felt that transportation issues including pedestrian access, road maintenance, safety, and public transportation were very important. These are reflected in the goals and objectives below.

Goals:

- A. To maintain the condition of the road system in a manner that is compatible with Shutesbury's rural character. High**
- B. To maintain the pedestrian infrastructure.**
- C. To maintain traffic patterns at key locations.**
- D. To expand transportation choices for Shutesbury residents.**

Objectives:

1. Consider developing rural road design guidelines, where possible, to maintain the rural appearance of Shutesbury's road network. **High**
2. Improve access to existing walking/bike/running paths in Shutesbury. **High**
3. Address parking and circulation issues around the Town Common. **High**
4. Explore the development of local bus service to Amherst, Northampton, and Greenfield. Consider the need for parking, which would be associated with a park and ride facility.
5. Make ride-share information more accessible to Shutesbury residents.
6. Design and implement pedestrian safety improvements around the Town Common.

Economic Development

In the community survey, respondents identified the most popular forms of economic development. They included home businesses, arts and crafts, bed & breakfasts, dentists/doctors/veterinarian, restaurant/coffee shop, crop/truck farming, gas station/convenience store, very small manufacturing (≤ 5 employees), and software development (≤ 25 employees). Understanding the potential direct and indirect impacts different types of economic development can have on traffic, environmental quality, residential development, and the tax base is one of the first steps in determining the most appropriate strategies for economic development in Shutesbury.

Goal:

A. To explore and potentially promote small home business and commercial uses including arts and crafts, bed & breakfasts, professional offices and services, retail, forest/farm-based operations and light industrial development compatible with Shutesbury's environment and rural character that will provide new employment opportunities and contribute tax revenues. **High**

Objectives

1. Encourage, through zoning, the development of local businesses which can be integrated into the community without adverse environmental impacts including forestry, specialty food products, aquaculture, nurseries, home based businesses, a coffee shop/eatery, artisans, and professional offices. **High**

2. Explore the feasibility of locating light industrial development and associated infrastructure including wastewater treatment in a suitable location and determine if the current zoning is compatible with the protection of environmental and scenic resources. **High**
3. Participate with regional efforts like Franklin-Hampshire Connect to help ensure Shutesbury residents and small business owners can have access to high-speed Internet connections. **High**
4. Explore the feasibility and desirability of working with a developer of retirement communities to establish a privately owned facility in Shutesbury as a means of generating real estate tax revenues. **High**
5. Determine if alternative power sources could be established on Town land and provide energy to the grid and revenues to the Town.
6. Explore the feasibility of developing a Town- or privately-owned spring water bottling facility in Shutesbury for tax relief.

Land Use and Zoning

Survey respondents have issued a dual mandate to protect rural character, open space, and the environment and at the same time expand community facilities and services and explore economic development. Improving the Town in these ways may make the community more attractive to prospective homebuyers and result in increased demand for housing sites in Shutesbury. Finding appropriate solutions to these land use issues will be one of the main results of the Town Planning process.

It is premature to identify objectives at this stage in the planning process. The Town Planning Committee will most likely generate recommendations for each Chapter of the Plan after reaching consensus on the completeness of the inventory, analysis, and issues descriptions. Each Chapter's recommendations may include both zoning and non-zoning techniques and strategies. The Land Use & Zoning Chapter's objectives should reflect and incorporate the Chapters' recommendations. Finally, the Land Use & Zoning recommendations may reflect one of the most important ways for implementing the Town Plan: direct zoning revisions.

Goals

A. To protect the rural character and working landscapes of Shutesbury, while allowing landowners to develop suitable portions of their land. *High*

B. To protect the Town's natural resources and open space through appropriate zoning and subdivision measures. *High*

C. To encourage small business development in a manner that does not reduce residents' quality of life. *High*

D. To develop a system of land-use controls, which will best manage the acceptance of new development in the community. *High*

E. To design potential future development so that traffic patterns remain light near residential areas and that public safety related concerns remain a priority.

Objectives: To be determined.