

Section 1

Goals and Policies

INTRODUCTION

A Master Plan, also referred to as a comprehensive plan, is designed to provide the basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of a municipality. It is a physical plan; it is long-range; it is comprehensive; and, it is a policy statement. Hanover's first Master Plan was prepared in 1963, and was updated in 1969.

Changes in legislation and planning measures, including new land-use management techniques, and the need to address challenges that have arisen since the last master plan, necessitate an updated plan to maximize the benefits of tax dollars, to mitigate potential adverse land use conditions, and for the Town to remain qualified for funding under certain state and federal aid programs. Additionally, the master planning process provides an opportunity for citizens to express their desires and needs for the community, and the resulting document presents valuable information to Town officials, as well as for citizens at large. Although the 1963 plan has guided the Town well, the need to measure Hanover's achievements of previously set goals, and to set new ones, is the first step in preparing a Master Plan.

The overall goal of the 1963 Hanover Master Plan was to provide a guide for orderly community growth. Objectives of the plan included: anticipating growth, unifying the community by concentrating civic activities in the center, maintaining a low density community, locating non-residential uses to serve Hanover and its neighbors, maintaining the non-urban character of the community, ascertaining how the residents' needs and desires can be obtained with the maximum effectiveness and the minimum effect on the tax rate, and integrating the various areas of Town. The goal and objectives for the plan were largely met, except in the areas of unbridled commercial growth along Route 53, and the implementation of recreation/open space recommendations, e.g., proposed recreation center facility in Town center, neighborhood parks, and the North River Park.

Almost thirty-five (35) years later, many changes have been experienced by the Town, including a substantial increase in population and density both in Hanover and the surrounding communities, and a substantial increase and concentration of commercial establishments along Route 53 in Town. The table below compares certain factors affecting planning during each of the master planning endeavors.

Table 1-1: Comparisons of the 1963/1997 Master Plan Factors			
Factor	1963 Master Plan	1997 Master Plan	Percent Change
Population	5,923 persons	12,858 persons	+ 118%
Residential Density (per square mile)	383.1 persons	815 persons	+ 118%
Single-Family Households	1,779 homes	4,170 homes	+ 134%
Number of Businesses	82 businesses	625 businesses	+ 661%
Roadways in miles	57 miles	89 miles	+ 56%

Sources: 1963 Master Plan, Town of Hanover, and the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

Given the above factors, the need for a new set of goals and policies to guide the master planning process, which in turn will formulate municipal planning policy decisions, was determined. The Hanover Planning Board undertook a series of steps to solicit information from Town residents, departments, and businesses in Town, including meetings with many Town Boards, Organizations and Departments to determine their present and future needs, the preparation and implementation of a Community Survey on issues to be addressed in the Master Plan, public meetings on Goals and Policies, Land Use, Housing, Natural Resources, Open Space, Services, Circulation, and the preparation and implementation of a (insert business survey title) to determine present and future needs, all in an effort to obtain information which would assist the Town in developing long-range planning actions.

COMMUNITY SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

In December of 1995, a four-page community survey was prepared and administered to five hundred (500) residents at random, representing one in eight households in Town. Approximately twenty percent (20%) of those who received the survey or one hundred (100) Hanover households responded. The survey respondents represented a balanced distribution of gender, age, and number of years in residency in Hanover.

The survey questions related to each of the Master Plan elements defined by the Massachusetts General Laws, and included a wide range of subjects within each element.

Master Plan Elements

1. *Goals and Policies:* An interactive public process to determine community values, goals and to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with the goals.
2. *Land Use:* Identifies present land use and designates the proposed distribution, location and inter-relationship of public and private land uses.
3. *Housing:* Identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing.
4. *Economic Development:* Identifies policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities
5. *Natural and Cultural Resources:* Provides an inventory of the significant natural, cultural and historic resource areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the protection and management of such areas.
6. *Open Space:* Provides an inventory of recreational and resources and open space areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the management and protection of such resources and areas.
7. *Services:* Identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted needs for facilities and services used by the public.
8. *Circulation:* Provides an inventory of existing and proposed circulation and transportation systems.
9. *Implementation:* Defines and schedules the specific municipal action necessary to achieve the objectives of each element of the master or study plan.

The characteristics of the respondents are summarized on the following table. Detailed results of the survey, including questions and response percentages for each, are presented in the Appendix. [See "Hanover Master Plan Survey Results".]

Survey Respondents Statistics

Average length of residency	20 years	
Homeownership	93% Own	7% Rent
Sex	55% Male	45% Female
Retired	21% Yes	79% No
Employed	71% Yes	29% No
Children in Public Schools	38% Yes	62% No

Source: 1996 Hanover Planning Board Community Survey

Respondents to the survey believed that the three (3) most serious issues facing Hanover are:

1. Schools, including overcrowding, quality, and budget
2. Commercial and residential growth
3. Traffic

The small-town atmosphere, schools, and recreational facilities and/or community sports all topped the list of those characteristics or services which residents believed should be maintained or developed in Town. Conversely, strip malls (Route 53), additional commercial (big business) and residential growth, and speeding/traffic topped the list of those characteristics which the respondents felt should be eliminated in Hanover.

Most residents expressed dissatisfaction with current municipal recreational facilities, both in size and in their care. Additional businesses in Hanover were overwhelmingly discouraged, especially along Route 53, where many respondents perceive commercial growth along this highway to have intruded on the traffic and overall character of Town. Sidewalks, especially along Main Street, were strongly supported, as were the allowance of in-home occupations, and for additional open space and recreational facilities. Issues which respondents were evenly split included providing the Town with sewers, and increasing public transportation, including providing rail service along the line in West Hanover.

Additionally, the citizens vision³ for Hanover, and their interests in specific municipal programs, e.g., support and favored for municipal-financed purchasing of open space, discouraged municipal-financed affordable housing, were addressed.

Interviews with Town Departments and Public Meeting

Meetings were held with members from the Advisory Board, Affordable Housing Partnership, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Building Inspector, Chamber of Commerce, Conservation Commission, Economic Development, Finance Department, Historical Commission, Library Board, Department of Public Works, Superintendent of Schools, and Water Department, and members from the business community. Most departments shared the views later expressed in the community survey, as did citizens who attended a public meeting to discuss the findings of the survey and the selected goals and policies.

VISION STATEMENT

Based on the consensus gathered from the public forum, the community survey results, and meetings with Town Boards, Organizations and Departments, Hanover's vision to guide the Town for the next twenty years was determined to be:

"A Town that retains and improves the pleasing character of its civic, historic, economic, and residential areas in a manner that is sensitive to its natural and built environments."

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals provide a sense of direction in obtaining the Vision. Goals serve as a publicly-accepted long-range policy statement for the community and they propose long-range conditions that the Town seeks to attain through its policies and actions. Goals and policies for each element of the Hanover Master Plan were derived from the planning process. Based on these goals and policies, specific actions are recommended for each element in the Master Plan.

As in the case of the vision statement, the Hanover Planning Board, based on opinions gathered from the community survey, from the public meeting on goals and policies, and from discussions with various boards and committees, has articulated goals and various policies, as follows:

LAND USE

- Goal: To direct growth and development which is consistent with the carrying capacity of the natural environment and is consistent with the character of the Town.
- Policy: Locate development in a manner which will preserve Hanover's environment and cultural heritage, minimize adverse impacts and enhance the quality of life.

HOUSING

- Goal: To promote the provision of fair, decent, safe, affordable housing which meets the needs of present and future Hanover residents.
- Policy: Encourage the development of innovative strategies designed to address the housing needs of Hanover's residents.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals: To provide commercial services which meet the demands of Hanover's residents and relieve the residential tax burden.

To continue to support revitalization of Hanover's industrial areas so as to promote job creation, improve aesthetics and broaden the tax base.

Policies: Encourage future industrial development which is environmentally safe.

Encourage alternative land uses along Route 53.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES (Including Open Space and Recreation)

Goals: To protect, enhance and preserve the integrity of wetlands, watersheds, existing and potential aquifers, groundwater recharge areas, ponds, streams, and floodplains.

To acquire, protect and preserve open space and conservation lands, and recreational facilities and programs, which serve the needs of Hanover's residents.

Policies: Protect and preserve the important historic and cultural features that are critical components of Hanover's heritage.

Ensure that future development and redevelopment respects the traditions and character of the historic village centers, residential areas, and the visual character of Hanover.

Plan for the integration of open space uses with developed areas for the benefit of Hanover's residents.

Link public, private and semi-public open spaces together to form corridors for wetlands, wildlife, and recreational uses.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Goal: To provide adequate community facilities and services which meet the varying demands of Hanover's residents.

Policies: Provide adequate space for Town facilities and services in a cost effective manner.

Promote cooperation among Town Boards and Departments in preparation for future growth demands.

Prepare for continued growth of the community in a planned systematic fashion that can accommodate the needs of the citizens and maintain the resources that attractive to residents.

CIRCULATION

Goal: To foster a transportation system, which is safe, convenient, accessible, economical and consistent with Hanover's historic, scenic and natural resources, for present and future needs.

Policies: Roadway construction and upgrading shall include provision for sidewalks and bikeways, as appropriate.

The ability of the Master Plan to propose goals, policies and actions which ensure that the vision is actually realized, will be its ultimate test of time.

PUBLIC FORUM ON MASTER PLAN GOALS

Agenda January 29, 1996

- 1. Introduction by Maryann Brugnoli, Chairperson**
 - a. Reasons for Master Plan efforts (to define a plan for the next twenty years)
 - b. Process of Master Plan (9 Elements):
 - ⇒ Vision and Goals
 - ⇒ Land Use
 - ⇒ Housing
 - ⇒ Economic Development
 - ⇒ Natural and Cultural Resources
 - ⇒ Open Space and Recreation
 - ⇒ Public Facilities and Services
 - ⇒ Circulation, Traffic and Transit
 - ⇒ Implementation
 - c. Reasons for tonight's meeting is on overall Town Vision and Goals
 - d. Introduce TPS and BTI (who will discuss the Master Plan process to date)

- 2. Report on information gathering by Phil Chester**
 - a. Purpose of information gathering (to gain as much information available concerning various plan elements)
 1. Researching previous Town Reports (Reviewing 1963 M.P., O.S., Town Facilities, zoning, and other regulations)
 2. Joint workshop meeting with Town officials and organizations was held on 12/21.
 3. Ongoing field reconnaissance, telephone calls, regional considerations
 4. Survey
 - a. The survey included at least one questions relating to each plan element.
 - b. It was mailed to approximately 1 out of every 8 households in Town (500).
 - c. Just under twenty percent (20%) of those who received surveys responded.
 - d. Conclusions of survey (some of which are in the handout).

- 3. A discussion of vision, goals, objectives and policies led by Carol Thomas**
 - a. Purpose of goals (establishes framework and objectives for the Master Plan).
 - b. Process of Plan
 - c. Discussion on draft goals (example policies are shown on the Board, others will evolve as part of the process). Audience members are invited to add suggested policies at conclusion.

- 4. Next step (Carol Thomas)**
 - a. All elements are being done concurrently by BTI and TPS. Any Board or Committee which wishes to contact us directly may do so.
 - b. Volunteer sign-up sheet to work on elements is available at desk.