



BLUEPRINT BEDFORD

PRESERVE THE PAST, ENVISION THE FUTURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Bedford Today

Located adjacent to the state’s largest city, among rolling hills and the western banks of the Merrimack River, Bedford is one of the largest suburban communities in Southern New Hampshire. Home to approximately 23,000 residents, Bedford is perhaps best known as a community with an excellent school system, owing to the Town’s many well established residential neighborhoods and its location at the crossroads of several major corridors within easy commuting distance of employment centers. However, Bedford hosts a thriving and growing business community of its own, with a variety of places to work, shop, dine, and pursue creative and entrepreneurial ambitions.

The majority of development in Bedford has occurred over the last 50 years, during which time the population has nearly quadrupled, and most of the Town’s developable land has been built out. At present, only 5 percent of Bedford’s remaining land is suitable for development. For many reasons Bedford is a popular residential destination, and these factors have stimulated discussion regarding the direction and impact of future growth.

The Master Plan, updated in Bedford approximately every 10 years, provides a unique opportunity to evaluate existing conditions and to engage with all members of the community to plan for the next 10 years of Bedford’s future.



What we heard

Bedford has successfully evolved in the last 20 years to stay relevant and desirable today.

Source: US Census Annual Estimates

22,628
Bedford’s
population
in 2019

Source: Envisionics

77%
detached
single-family
units

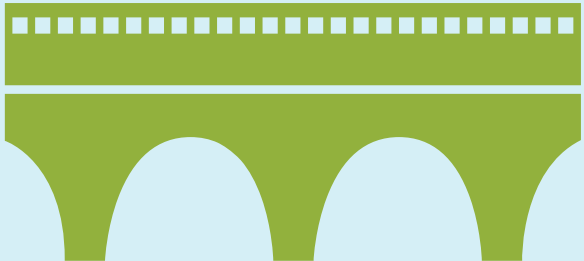
What we heard

“I really wish there were more sidewalks.”

“Would like to be able to age in place.”

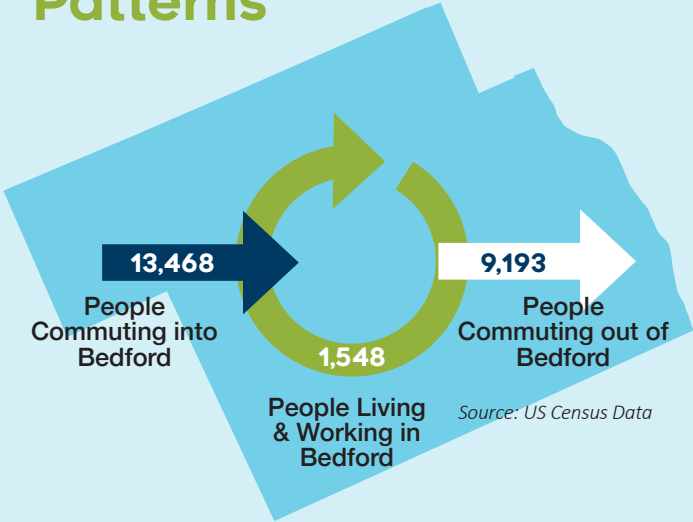
“A growing and vibrant community”

88,000
vehicles cross the interstate
293/NH Route 101 bridge every day.



Source: 2019 Traffic Count

Bedford Commuting Patterns



4,259
Bedford
School District
enrollment
2020-2021

Source: NH Department
of Education

1.9
million
square feet
of total office
space

Source: CBRE New Hampshire
Office Market Outlook 2018

56%
of participants
support the
need to build a
community center

Source: Bedford Age Friendly Survey

\$137,525
Median
Household
Income

Source: US Census Bureau

Opportunities & Challenges

Bedford’s growth has generated a variety of positive outcomes, including better access to amenities and services, additional jobs available for residents, a large selection of attractive and desirable residential neighborhoods, and a more diversified tax base to support the school district and other town services. People continue to move to Bedford to take advantage of all the community has to offer.

Bedford’s growth has also presented some challenges for the community, including pressure on the Town’s transportation infrastructure, an increased demand for housing and declining affordability; heightened concern about preserving the Town’s character; loss of agricultural lands and open space; and an increasing cost of municipal services and infrastructure maintenance.

Understanding these challenges and opportunities, and hearing about them directly from the people who live and work in Bedford, was the first step in the Blueprint Bedford process. This Plan has three primary goals: protecting the characteristics of the community that are most important to residents; identifying specific areas where growth and redevelopment can occur; and providing strategies and recommendations to address some of the challenges at hand.



We Heard You!

Through a collaborative community engagement process that included public meetings and workshops, an interactive website and open studios, residents shared what they value most about Bedford and their hopes and concerns for its future. Although opinions differ about the best path forward for Bedford, residents overwhelmingly indicated that they love the community and care deeply about its future. From the first day of the process, it was clear that residents find immense value in the existing residential neighborhoods and rural charm of Bedford. The community recognizes that growth will occur, but believes that future development should be limited to specific areas and in a manner that does not alter the fundamental character of the community. The 2021 Master Plan update is rooted in these core values, while taking into account historic and forecast data collected throughout the process to help better understand demographics, trends, and fiscal conditions present in Bedford. The result is **Blueprint Bedford**, a toolkit to help the town preserve the past while embracing the future.

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PLANAPALOOZA™

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

OPEN STUDIO

Join us during open studio hours to talk with the team and provide your feedback.

Friday - 1:00PM - 8:00PM
Saturday - 9:00AM - 8:00PM
Sunday - 9:00AM - 5:00PM
Monday - 9:00AM - 12:00PM

WHAT'S A PLANAPALOOZA?

UrbanLab-Pub-100-2481-6

A Planapalooza™ is an interactive, participatory design, and public input process where you are invited to work directly with your neighbors, fellow business owners, and a multidisciplinary consulting team. The entire process is open to the public. So please join us as we work together to prepare a Master Plan Update that will protect and enhance Bedford and set a clear vision for the future.

Visit the project website at BLUEPRINTBEDFORD.COM

Schedule for Planapalooza™

Thursday, November 1, 2018
6:30PM-8:30PM - Opening Presentation & Workshop
Join us for a brief presentation followed by a hands-on workshop where you'll get to plan YOUR Community!

Location for Opening Presentation:
Bedford Village Inn - Great Hall
2 Old Bedford Way Bedford, NH 03110

Friday, November 2, 2018
8:00AM-9:00AM - Bedford means Business!
A Forum on Economic Development
9:00AM-4:00PM - Moving Around Bedford
A Discussion on how to Move Everyone Around.
4:30PM-5:30PM - Designing Bedford
A Forum on Community Design and Character.

Saturday, November 3, 2018
9:00AM-10:00AM - All Things Great!
Accomplishing the Best Balance.
10:30AM-11:30AM - Night Sting Bedford!
What Just Big Enough Miscal?
12:00PM-1:00PM - Home Sweet, Bedford!
A Roundtable on Housing.

Location for Meetings:
Old Town Hall
70 Bedford Center Road Bedford, NH 03110

Monday, November 5, 2018
8:30PM-9:30PM - Work-In-Progress Presentation
Join us for a work-in-progress presentation.

Location for Work-In-Progress Presentation:
Wally's Event Venue
579 South River Rd

Event will be broadcasted on **FACEBOOK LIVE!**
@BEDFORDNH2018



Bedford Today & Tomorrow

Blueprint Bedford includes a comprehensive assessment of current conditions in Bedford related to housing, demographics, the local economy, public services, transportation, land uses, and infrastructure.

Incorporated throughout the document are comments expressed by Bedford residents during the public outreach process, including strengths and weaknesses of the community and recommendations for the future.



What we heard

“A town, not a city.”

“Protect our water, wetlands and open spaces.”

“A thriving community for people of all ages.”

“Balanced growth! Avoid extremes.”

Guiding Principles & Next Steps

The Plan is organized under a set of six Guiding Principles. The Principles embody the core philosophy and Town vision expressed by the community through the planning process. The Next Steps for Tomorrow’s Bedford include recommendations for Bedford’s future that are all structured under the six Guiding Principles. Please see the main document for a detailed list of the Next Steps.

Implementation of the Plan will be a long-term and ongoing process requiring collaboration between and partnerships with regional and state governments, non-profit organizations, and the business community.



Guiding Principle #1: Maintain Bedford as an outstanding community

Thanks to dedicated citizens, careful governance, and thoughtful planning, Bedford is already a wonderful community. The community will work to preserve and enhance those features that make Bedford, well Bedford, including its high quality services, educational and cultural resources, manageable tax rate, and valued neighborhoods and natural areas.

Preserve and Enhance Bedford’s Unique Character

By evaluating zoning and land use regulations to ensure conservation of the qualities that make Bedford distinctive, like its agricultural heritage, peaceful neighborhoods, and attractive gateways and corridors.

Implement Best Practices in Community Design & Architecture

Through guidelines that carefully direct the design, architecture, and placement of buildings and parking areas; and that help improve connectivity and walkability.

Ensure Balanced Growth to Realize a “Right-Sized” Bedford

By encouraging growth in the Performance Zone and limiting it in established residential neighborhoods; and by monitoring the impacts of development on municipal services and quality of life.



Guiding Principle #3: Preserve open spaces, rural and historic character, and existing neighborhoods

Bedford will work to preserve its rural landscapes, open spaces, and historic resources. The community will maintain its existing residential neighborhoods while providing opportunities for development in appropriate areas.

Steward Conserved Land, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation Amenities

By investing in trails, conserving land and other natural resources; and by developing and implementing stewardship plans for public lands.

Preserve Bedford’s Rural and Historic Character

By maintaining the existing Historic District Commission, preserving the character of Bedford’s Town Center and residential neighborhoods, and increasing awareness and protection of historic resources.



Guiding Principle #2: Foster a healthy and active, multi-generational, and socially connected community

Bedford is a healthy, welcoming, and inclusive community both for longtime residents and newcomers. The Town promotes a spirit of voluntarism and public service to help advance community goals and Bedford provides opportunities for all residents, regardless of socioeconomic status, to participate fully in community discussions and decision-making. Cultural and recreation opportunities are high quality and abundant. Housing opportunities are available for residents of all generations and household sizes.

Provide Opportunities for Housing Choice

By evaluating opportunities to provide additional housing types that are compatible with Bedford’s existing single-family housing.

Promote Expanded Social and Civic Engagement

By supporting community organizations, providing meeting spaces, encouraging participation in governance and elections, and expanding recreational, social and educational programming.

Provide High Quality Municipal Facilities & Services

By implementing related Town plans; by evaluating opportunities to expand public infrastructure; and by ensuring that public services are accessible to all.



Guiding Principle #4: Conserve the natural environment and manage change

A pristine natural environment and a growing economy are not mutually exclusive goals in Bedford. Local government, residents, and businesses are careful stewards of the environment. Bedford supports growth in areas where it is appropriate, including areas where infrastructure is available, and in a manner that is minimally impactful to the environment. The Town works with residents and the private sector to realize environmental goals, including clean air and water and energy conservation. The community is prepared for a changing and dynamic environment, including extreme weather events.

Protect Water Resources

By continuing to monitor Bedford’s water supply and water quality and working to reduce stormwater pollution.

Promote Energy Efficiency and Sustainability

By developing a Sustainability Plan and encouraging energy-efficient building construction, solid waste and transportation solutions.

Plan for Changing Climate, Demographic and Technological Conditions

By updating Town plans and regulations and promoting a spirit of preparedness across the community.



Guiding Principle #5: Support innovation, entrepreneurship, and a vibrant and dynamic local and regional economy

Bedford provides opportunities for entrepreneurs to enter the marketplace and thrive. The community supports both a thriving small business community and a strong base of national and international employers. Bedford is a trusted partner to support regional initiatives, including education and workforce training programs. and works cooperatively with peer communities to advance the region’s economy. Bedford leads by example by embracing technological and economic change to deliver higher quality, streamlined and more cost-effective services.

Tell Bedford’s Story & Advocate for its Business Community

Through branding and marketing efforts, promote Bedford as a great place to do business, with continued support of the town’s businesses, employers, and entrepreneurs.

Focus Development in the Performance Zone

By promoting and marketing the district as a vibrant and attractive destination for commercial and mixed-use development; and by implementing design standards to ensure high-quality building projects.

Identify Tools to Assist Development

By making information understandable and accessible to all business owners; and by ensuring clarity of ordinances and regulations while continuing to allow flexibility in the development review process.



Guiding Principle #6: Advance transportation and infrastructure connections

Bedford is an accessible and connected community. The Town supports a safe, innovative, and efficient transportation network and leverages opportunities to enhance connectivity for all travel users, including drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. Where appropriate, the community pursues opportunities, at both the local and regional level, to expand technology and infrastructure connections to support the community’s quality of life.

Promote Safer, Less Congested, and Better Connected Streets

Through traffic control strategies; continued cooperation with NHDOT and other partners; and the implementation of related transportation plans.

Promote Alternative Travel Modes & More Complete Streets

By balancing safe, efficient travel options for all modes of transportation; to expand pedestrian and bicycle facilities; and to plan for future public transit service.

Promote Regional Collaboration and Innovation

By continuing to collaborate with neighboring communities and state and regional agencies to solve problems and further common goals.

Conservation & Development Map

The public input process was an opportunity for residents to prioritize future planning efforts in Bedford. Overall, the community’s feeling was that conservation land and existing residential neighborhoods should be maintained as they currently are, while opportunities for redevelopment were limited to existing activity centers, particularly along the South River Road and Route 101 corridors. This input informed the Conservation & Development Map which organizes the community into Sectors prioritized for varying degrees of land conservation or land development and redevelopment. The five sectors are described below and depicted on the map that follows.

C-1 Conservation Land Sector

The C-1 Conservation Land Sector includes land that is already under conservation. Many of these areas have been set aside to be protected in perpetuity. These areas include surface waterbodies, protected wetlands, floodplains, protected habitat, riparian corridors, purchased open space, conservation easements, wildlife transportation corridors, and open space areas associated with cluster subdivisions, as well as transmission line corridors and cemeteries. Moving forward, efforts should be focused on expanding and connecting conserved areas, including conserved areas in neighboring towns, to improve connectivity for outdoor recreation and natural resource protection.

P-1 Preservation Sector

The Preservation Sector makes up the largest proportion of the Town; and encompasses the areas developed with low-density single-family neighborhoods and agricultural lands (some with water and sewer, but most with on-site systems) that should remain “as is.” A few significant tracts of rural undeveloped land remains in this Sector. These areas should be either preserved or developed as cluster subdivisions with significant areas of protected open space. The use of accessory dwelling units should be continued to provide more housing choice and flexibility in these areas.

P-2 Traditional Neighborhood Sector

The Traditional Neighborhood Sector include areas of medium-density neighborhoods of homes set on smaller lots, many within neighborhoods of a gridded street pattern with strong street connectivity. These neighborhoods offer more compact housing options in neighborhoods and include pockets of small-scale commercial uses. This area would benefit from a neighborhood plan to carefully evaluate existing regulations and opportunities for traffic calming and expanded recreation and pedestrian bicycle facilities. Commercial uses that provide neighborhood amenities, including coffee shops, boutiques and small offices, may be considered in limited areas that do not detract from residential character.

D-1 Local Development Sector

Locally Serving Development Sectors are smaller nodes of activity that are mostly developed but still contain underutilized parcels. Most of these areas were developed in a conventional, auto-oriented suburban pattern located along Routes 101 and 114. Buildings have smaller footprints and target primarily local customers and patrons passing through the area. Zoning in the Route 101 commercial areas is stricter in terms of maximum heights and building footprints. The Locally Serving Development Sector should allow for changes in development patterns while maintaining the scale of buildings and requiring high quality architectural and site design. The area of this Sector encompasses the existing commercial areas; no significant expansions should be planned. Instead, redevelopment and the reuse of existing land and buildings should be encouraged to better meet the local goal of achieving more engaging patterns of development. Even though access to these various nodes will likely continue to be via automobile, a sensitive approach to redevelopment in the future would allow for the creation of a more walkable environment. New development should be carefully designed to complement Bedford’s rural character.

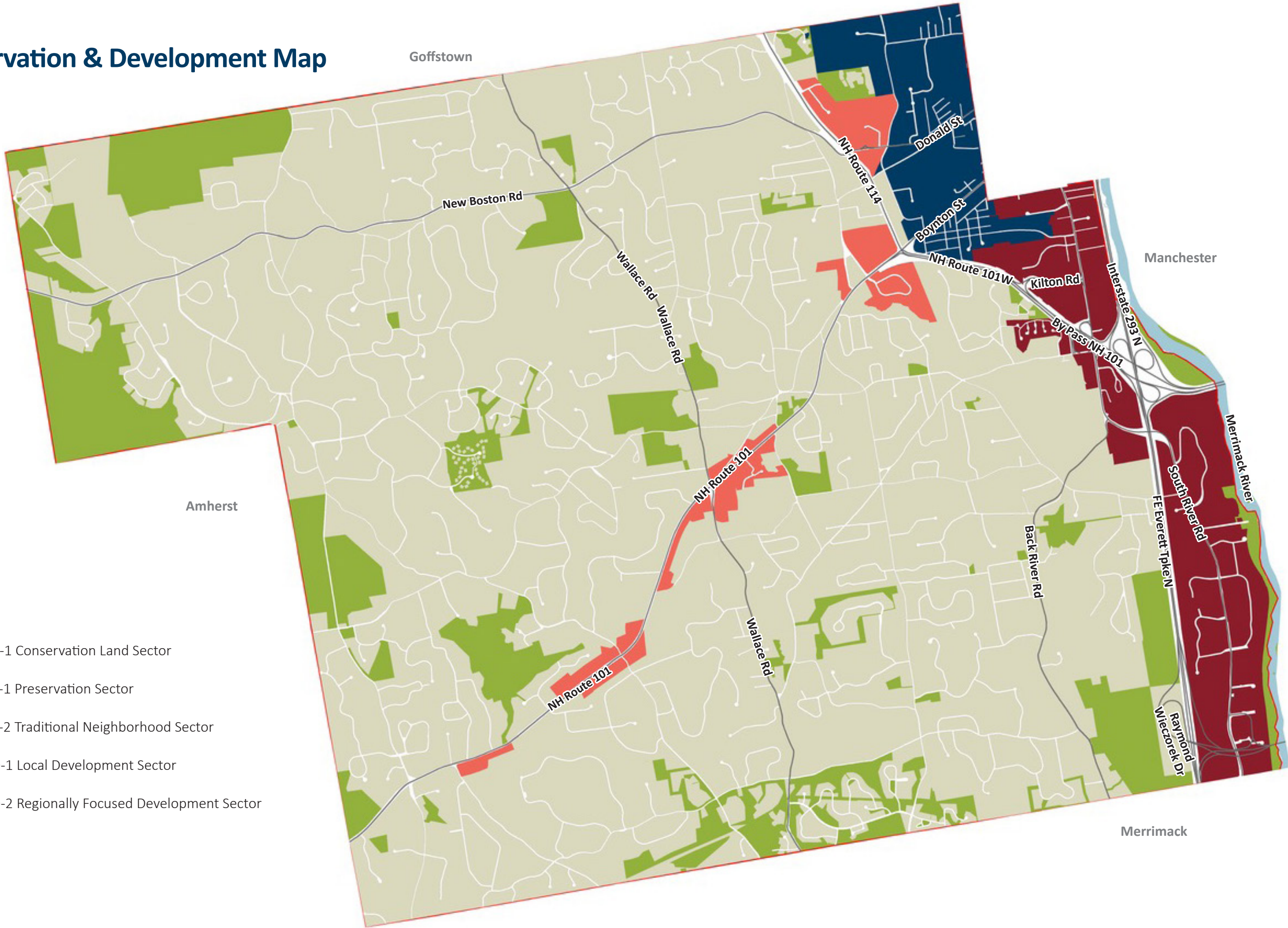
D-2 Regionally Focused Development Sector

The Regionally Focused Development Sector generally encompasses the South River Road corridor and surrounding areas. This area presents the greatest opportunity for regional-scale commercial development and job creation. Existing development in the D-2 sector has occurred in a conventional, auto-oriented suburban pattern, and includes several big-box retailers and office park environments. Some newer development has begun to take a mixed-use approach. Moving forward, the Town should carefully evaluate in what areas of the corridor mixed-use development should be permitted and develop design standards to ensure development reflects the community’s vision. New development, redevelopment, or the reuse of existing land and buildings should be encouraged to help achieve more walkable and bikeable corridors including improvements to the Heritage Trail and greater public access to the Merrimack River. The southern part of this sector may also present opportunities for transit-oriented development, should a passenger rail station come to fruition at the Bedford/ Merrimack border.

Conservation & Development Map

Legend

- C-1 Conservation Land Sector
- P-1 Preservation Sector
- P-2 Traditional Neighborhood Sector
- D-1 Local Development Sector
- D-2 Regionally Focused Development Sector





Acknowledgments

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