

## **CHAPTER III**

### **GOALS**

This chapter presents the goals and tactics of the Master Plan Committee and Planning Board for future growth and development in Brookline. For each topic a goal statement is given, followed by one or more tactics. For each tactic there is a brief rationale and the sources from which it is derived. Specific recommendations for meeting these tactics and striving to attain the goals are located at the end of each chapter of the Master Plan and also in the Executive Summary.

#### **PUBLIC INPUT**

A public forum called the Brookline Community Profile was held in late January of 1997 to solicit public input for the update of the town's Master Plan. Those residents who attended provided their view of where Brookline stands now and their preferred vision for the town's future. These opinions are incorporated into this document where appropriate, and a copy of the Profile summary report is available at Town Hall for public review. Based on the input received at that meeting, the following statements were developed to describe resident's opinion of where Brookline is today and how it should develop in the future.

#### **What is Brookline Like Today?**

- Small, quiet, rural bedroom community
- Strong history
- Pristine natural environment
- Traditional values
- Prudent town leaders providing an excellent educational system and core public services
- Rapid growth placing a strain on public services, natural resources and common identity
- Slow commercial growth, resulting in the Town becoming increasingly expensive to reside

#### **Vision Statement: What We Want Brookline To Be Like in the Future**

- Rural character with small town atmosphere
- Residential, agricultural, home and small businesses, light commercial
- Grow in a balanced fashion, including residential, commercial, and open space
- Public facilities compatible with a small, growing town
- Town center as a focal point for community activities
- Balance this with protecting the natural environment

## GENERAL

1) **GOAL:** To foster a greater sense of community identity.

a. **Tactic:** Develop a true town center.

**Rationale:** An common theme which was expressed by participants at the Brookline Community Profile was the lack of a unified town identity. One of the top priority projects identified at the meeting to address that issue was the creation of a town center, which most residents feel currently does not exist. A town center would serve as a focal point for community activity, both economic and social, and would provide a central gathering place for all age groups. A town center may also serve to stimulate commercial activity, which would complement the economic development goals later in this chapter.

b. **Tactic:** Strengthen town neighborhoods.

**Rationale:** Another strategy to build community identity is the creation of identifiable community neighborhoods. The planning and design of future residential developments could incorporate physical elements such as common greens which would provide opportunities for citizen interaction. Neighborhood groups may be formed which could work with town officials to plan and implement improvements which are based on the unique needs of each neighborhood. A strategy to foster a sense of neighborhood identity represents the first step in developing a sense of community pride and attachment to the town.

c. **Tactic:** Increase volunteerism and citizen involvement in town affairs.

**Rationale:** One of the strongest sentiments expressed at the Profile was that many residents do not feel informed about or involved in their community. A need was identified to increase opportunities for community gatherings as well as to improve the lines of communication about those opportunities. These actions will engender a greater sense of community identity by making residents more knowledgeable about their community, fostering a sense of ownership in the town's future, and ensuring a vital pool of local leadership.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

1) **GOAL:** To preserve the sensitive natural resources of Brookline and protect such resources from the adverse impacts of development for their future enjoyment and use by the public.

a. **Tactic:** Preserve and protect the quality of Brookline's water resources, whether occurring as surface water or groundwater, from contamination.

**Rationale:** While the threats to water contamination are numerous, cautious review of development proposals and a rational land use plan can prevent many of the problems other communities have suffered. Because Brookline does not have a community water supply system, the availability of a potable water supply is

critical. Since water quality is an issue which transcends municipal boundaries, an effort should be made to develop a coordinated water quality protection program with neighboring communities.

- b. Tactic: More closely relate land uses to the land's capability to support development, and prevent intensive land uses from locating on soils and slopes unsuitable for such uses.

Rationale: Brookline does not have an abundance of the soil types which are most well-suited for development. In fact, most of Brookline's soils are rated by the Soil Conservation Service as having "severe" limitations for the safe operation of septic systems, as described in the Natural Resources Chapter. Additionally, substantial areas are wetland, floodplain, excessively sloped, and have shallow soil layers over bedrock. Some of these areas are unsuitable for development of almost any type and should be preserved, not only for their aesthetic or environmental qualities, but also because their development may ultimately impose a burden on the Town and may often cause problems for the occupants of such developments.

- c. Tactic: Preserve and protect natural resource areas of open space and conservation lands within the Town for both people and wildlife including wetlands, forest lands, recreation lands, scenic areas, and other unique and/or sensitive resources.

Rationale: Natural resources are a finite entity. Attention needs to be focused on preserving those natural resources that exist today. Areas of wetlands, forest lands, recreation lands and scenic vistas are valuable assets. When managed properly, these areas can offer a wealth of recreation, potential nature education, provide a natural habitat for land and water plants and animals, protect and recharge aquifers, provide scenic vistas from hilltop lookouts, and produce forest resources. As there are considerable acreages of these areas within Brookline, the Town should plan accordingly for their protection, preservation and optimum use based on community need.

- d. Tactic: Preserve and protect Brookline's rural character and open space including areas of existing agricultural use.

Rationale: While Brookline does not have extensive areas of agricultural soils of Statewide importance, it does have areas where agricultural practices presently occur. Though the soils may not be best suited for agricultural use, their size, location, and ownership allow for their viable and economical agricultural use. As these areas contribute to Brookline's cultural, economic and rural character, efforts are needed to protect the more important areas from permanent conversion to another, more intensive land use.

- e. Tactic: Develop a strategy which allows reasonable opportunity for excavations within town while minimizing the impact on the human and natural environment.

Rationale: Every town in the state must by law provide "reasonable opportunity" for commercial earth removal. Brookline originally allowed excavations anywhere in town by special exception, but a petition by residents was approved at Town Meeting to limit excavations to the Industrial-Commercial District. Given the

relatively small area which this zone covers and the limited vacant space within the zone, the guarantee of reasonable opportunity is in question. A sensible strategy will help to comply with legal requirements while ensuring that environmental quality is preserved.

- f. Tactic: Increase the human and financial resources available for conservation planning and public education.

Rationale: Enhancing environmental protection was one of the key issues identified by residents who participated in the Brookline Community Profile. Past conservation efforts were characterized as relatively weak and sporadic, mainly due to limited manpower and financing. As such, a committee was formed to provide support to the Brookline Conservation Commission and to enhance the visibility of environmental issues within Town. This group provides a solid foundation upon which to build a comprehensive, organized and sustainable conservation program.

- g. Tactic: Develop a long-range plan for the conservation of sensitive lands within Town.

Rationale: A long-range plan is necessary to ensure that valuable conservation land is properly identified and prioritized, and that limited conservation resources are expended in a prudent manner.

- h. Tactic: Ensure that local environmental ordinances are effective, enforceable, and current with state laws and regulations.

Rationale: An ordinance which is improperly drafted, unenforceable, and/or outdated is of no benefit to the environment or the Town's residents.

### CULTURAL RESOURCES

- 1) GOAL: To preserve areas and institutions within Brookline having cultural value to the Town as evidence of its unique character.

- a. Tactic: Preserve and protect existing areas of historical significance from incompatible future development.

Rationale: Brookline is fortunate to have both unique cultural resources and strong community desire for their preservation. Much of the Town's present rural character, which is considered a valuable community asset by residents, is the direct result of historical growth patterns and events. However, if not regulated, future growth can permanently and extensively alter this valuable cultural resource. Therefore, there is immediate need for protection and preservation of areas of historical significance.

- b. Tactic: Continue to preserve the rural character and scenic quality of the Town's roads.

Rationale: Many of the roads in Town, particularly those categorized as Class VI, have natural features which enhance the rural nature of Town, which is a characteristic which many residents hope to preserve.

## TRANSPORTATION

1) **GOAL:** To provide safe and efficient transportation facilities within the Town of Brookline.

a. **Tactic:** Provide roads of sufficient design to allow for safe use of traffic generated by existing and future residential growth.

Rationale: The Town has experienced rapid growth, primarily residential, in recent years. This development has resulted in new roads being built and has heightened the demand on road facilities in Town. New roads must be designed, and existing roads must be upgraded, to accommodate the increased traffic demands of a growing community.

b. **Tactic:** Provide for proper maintenance of existing local roads.

Rationale: The rural character of Brookline's road network, including its paved and gravel roads that are often narrow, winding, steep, and/or in deteriorating condition, may lead to safety problems as future growth in Town occurs. To help provide favorable transportation conditions, the Town should continue to examine necessary improvements to the roads which will see significant increases in traffic or where safety hazards need correction.

c. **Tactic:** Provide for commercial and industrial development within existing and future zones designated for such development that will not negatively impact existing traffic conditions along NH Route 13.

Rationale: Strip development along major highways often leads to congested, unsightly, unsafe traffic conditions. For people using the highway for through travel, this leads to unsafe conditions, thereby negating its intended use. Proper siting of commercial and industrial zones along with efforts to regulate unlimited access to fronting lots will help to prevent the conditions which lead to traffic problems along major roads such as NH Route 13.

d. **Tactic:** Identify potential future road corridors within Town and between adjacent communities to serve future travel demand.

Rationale: A long-range plan should be developed to assess potential future travel demand and to propose new road facilities which will facilitate efficient travel for destinations inside and outside of town. This proactive measure will ensure that a coordinated system will be achieved by requiring developments to provide road access where those corridors are designated.

e. **Tactic:** Seek to provide a variety of transportation alternatives for town residents.

Rationale: Driving an automobile is currently the only mode of transportation available to most residents. However, not everyone has the ability or inclination to drive. An effort should be made to identify and implement improvements which will facilitate pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and other travel options for those residents who are interested in using alternative modes. These improvements will especially benefit school-age children, the disabled, disadvantaged residents and the elderly.

- f Tactic: Encourage land use patterns which make transportation alternatives viable.

Rationale: Since Brookline is a newly developing community, an opportunity exists to shape the future development of the town in a way that reduces the need for driving and increases the opportunity for, and attractiveness of, alternative modes of travel. Strategies such as cluster housing, neo-traditional design, and mixed land use may result in less demand on public road facilities and an improved quality of life for town residents.

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- 1) GOAL: Provide adequate levels of community facilities and services to present and future residents and businesses in an effective manner that adequately promotes public health and safety, safeguards environmental quality and achieves accepted standards.

- a. Tactic: Maintain a well-trained and equipped Town Fire Department to protect the Brookline community from avoidable loss of life and property due to fire.

Rationale: Like any rural community, Brookline requires fire protection, but must provide it with a limited budget. With Town purchased equipment and call-paid staffing, the Town attempts to provide a professional fire protection service. The Department must grow in its ability to adequately provide fire protection in step with Brookline's future growth.

- b. Tactic: Maintain a well-trained and equipped Town Police Department, ready to provide police protection in time of Community need or emergency.

Rationale: Brookline's need for police protection is often greater than existing budgets and levels of staffing are able to provide. Future growth will increase demand. The Department must grow in ability to adequately provide police protection in step with Brookline's future growth.

- c. Tactic: Maintain a well-trained and equipped Town Ambulance Service to provide medical response to the Brookline Community in times of emergency or need.

Rationale: Medical emergencies in any community demand immediate and experienced attention in order to prevent loss of life or serious injury. Rural communities often have a further disadvantage over more populated towns or cities in that they do not have the funds or trained personnel to be able to provide the service. For communities without local ambulance service, the responding

medical help comes from larger neighboring communities but over greater distances that use up critical time.

- d. Tactic: Furnish adequate resources to provide for resident needs in the case of major emergencies.

Rationale: The Town recently implemented an Emergency Management program which coordinates emergency departments and provides a central location for emergency management efforts. As the town grows, the adequacy of current resources should be reevaluated to ensure that adequate facilities and manpower is available to serve the needs of all residents.

- e. Tactic: Provide for adequate space and staffing in order to allow proper functioning of Town Departments and Boards.

Rationale: In order for Towns to function in an organized, effective manner, they need both adequate personnel and facilities to conduct business. Small-town offices are often staffed with part-time workers and have marginally adequate available Town Hall facilities. To insure continued efficient handling of all Town operations in response to future demands, review and evaluation of existing facilities and staffing is necessary.

- f. Tactic: Provide educational facilities and programs to provide educational opportunities for all school-age Brookline residents. The use of school buildings for community-based activities should be encouraged.

Rationale: Municipal school systems are an integral element in the life of any community. As it is a Town's responsibility to provide the necessary facilities, staff, and materials to educate the Town's school-age children, each Town is faced with substantial expenditures of public funds to do so. Currently the Brookline School District is planning for the construction of a second school building. However, a review of Brookline's educational resources versus future growth demands is necessary so that suggestions can be developed to allow educational facilities to meet the future needs of Brookline students. A study of present and future educational facilities for use by the Town's citizens and organizations is encouraged to maximize the benefits of the public expenditures for those facilities.

- g. Tactic: Provide for an adequate public library facility offering the Brookline community a variety of children and adult reading materials and programs.

Rationale: The local library is important, whether it provides pre-school learning materials, supplements existing school educational programs, or provides popular materials for pleasure reading. The Brookline Public Library currently offers an excellent variety of services to the community, as reflected by the strong support expressed at the Community Profile, and has continued to expand its offerings since its inception. As the Town grows, steps should be taken to identify resident needs and available resources, and to program new services to meet those demands within resource constraints.

- h. Tactic: Provide a variety of accessible recreational resources for individual, family, and group enjoyment within the community.

Rationale: Helping residents better identify with and appreciate their community, public recreation provides opportunities for all residents to enjoy themselves and the natural resources around them. Those attending the Community Profile expressed an interest in greater availability of and access to recreation land. Since recreational opportunities often transcend municipal boundaries and since public resources are often limited, an effort should be made to coordinate recreational facility programming with neighboring communities. Recreational needs and programs vary from one community to another, but common interests such as greenways may be found.

- i. Tactic: Provide for disposal of Brookline's solid waste, septage and sludge in an environmentally and economically sound manner.

Rationale: Local communities are now beginning to face the reality of limited means of safe and economical disposal of their wastes. Due to problems such as increasing costs, limited sites and groundwater contamination, communities are having to cooperatively address the problem as a regional issue.

- j. Tactic: Encourage new development to pay its proportional share of public facility and road improvements.

Rationale: The Selectmen should continue to ensure through the off-site improvement negotiation process that developments pay their proportional share of public improvement costs and that all developments are treated equally with respect to their impact on public services.

- k. Tactic: Ensure the availability of adequate land for future community facility expansions.

Rationale: The rapid growth of the town has resulted in an increased demand for public services. All of the aforementioned departments have experienced significant growth in their activity, and as this trend continues, physical expansions will inevitably be necessary. An evaluation of current community facilities, their utilization, and future needs and a long-range plan for future expansion will ensure that they are provided in an orderly, fiscally prudent manner.

- l. Tactic: Develop and maintain a realistic, current Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Rationale: The CIP is the key document which describes in detail each Town department's personnel, facility and equipment needs for a six-year period. This document is based on the goals and future plans identified in the Master Plan, and is required by state law since the Town has a growth management ordinance in place. The CIP, in conjunction with the Master Plan, is used in analyzing existing and future availability of public facilities to service new growth; it contributes to stability in tax rates through advance financial planning; and it is a management

tool for Town officials. The Selectmen and department heads must provide realistic information to ensure the accuracy of the document, and must rely on the document in conducting Town business.

## HOUSING

1) **GOAL:** Ensure adequate and affordable housing for all Brookline residents.

- a. **Tactic:** Identify and amend current land use regulations which may impede the development of alternative housing types, or unnecessarily add to the cost of housing without adding comparable value.

**Rationale:** The Town, through its current policies, regulations and zoning, can influence the cost of housing. Ensuring affordable housing is important to encourage a diversity of population and to allow residents who work in the service sectors to afford to live in Brookline. Employees who cannot afford adequate housing often live in substandard housing or may relocate to other areas. Strategies should be explored which address the lack and high cost of rental units within Town.

2) **GOAL:** Encourage a diversity of housing opportunities and appropriate housing types including housing for the elderly and lower income residents of Brookline and the region.

- a. **Tactic:** Encourage and facilitate the conversion of the Town's existing housing stock whenever feasible.

**Rationale:** By encouraging a diversity of housing which may include smaller units, multi-family units, and/or rental units, the Town can encourage population diversity which will make the town a more vibrant place to live.

- b. **Tactic:** Develop zoning regulations and districts to provide adequate opportunities for the siting of elderly housing, manufactured housing, accessory units, and multi-family units in Brookline.

**Rationale:** Ordinances which allow and encourage affordable housing will increase housing diversity in Town. Elderly housing has been determined to be the top-priority affordable housing goal. Inclusionary housing strategies which provide incentives to affordable housing developers should be explored. The effectiveness of the existing manufactured housing district should be assessed in relation to the goal of providing a greater diversity of housing options and revised if necessary.

- c. **Tactic:** Utilize the expertise and assistance of external organizations in addressing current and future housing needs within Brookline

**Rationale:** Various organizations, such as local citizen groups, town staff, non-profit housing groups, state agencies and the Nashua Regional Planning Commission possess valuable expertise and resources to assist the Town in addressing affordable housing needs.

## LAND USE

1) **GOAL:** To accommodate a reasonable rate of residential growth in suitable areas of town in accordance with the capability of land and the capacities of town services and facilities.

- a. **Tactic:** Maintain Brookline's rural character and protect critical natural resources through residential zoning which accounts for the land's capability to support development, and the suitability of certain areas for residential uses.

**Rationale:** Brookline is one of the few truly rural communities remaining in the Nashua region, and this rural character is what has attracted new residents to it. The dilemma the town faces is how to preserve this character, which is what makes it so attractive, and yet accommodate its "fair share" of the region's growth without losing this character. Brookline recognizes its obligation to accept a share of this growth and realizes that it is inevitable, yet the common perception of residents is that the rate of residential growth has been too fast. For this reason, Brookline will continue to accept reasonable rates of growth which do not strain community facilities and services, which do not threaten environmentally sensitive features, such as wetlands and water sources, and which are located in suitable areas of the community.

2) **GOAL:** To expand opportunities for commercial development in a manner which accounts for land capability and the suitability of proposed locations, so as to broaden the tax base without causing excessive service demands, traffic hazards, overly intensive uses, or aesthetic incompatibilities with Brookline's land uses and character.

- a. **Tactic:** Allow for selected types of commercial activity in locations meeting criteria for land capability, locational suitability, traffic and access considerations, intensity of use, demand for public services, and site design and architectural considerations.

**Rationale:** The community's desire for expanding the tax base through additional commercial land uses was strongly recommended by residents at the Brookline Community Profile as well as in the 1985 Master Plan public survey. Certain types of commercial uses were more favorably viewed than others, and the general sentiment was that the rate of residential growth has far outpaced commercial growth, creating an imbalance which has produced a significant rise in the local tax burden. Residents expressed a desire for a cautious expansion of commercial opportunities of a very narrow range of types. Activities such as home businesses and office developments are examples of desirable commercial development, while more intensive uses such as heavy industry and general strip development were opposed.

However, it should be noted that Brookline's slow rate of business growth is a function of the Town's remote location relative to the regional market, lack of a strong local market to support any exclusively local commercial uses, and availability of more attractive commercial land and locations elsewhere in the region. As such, the town should focus first on the retention and expansion of

existing businesses, and then seek to attract a variety of less intensive commercial enterprises which will serve the daily needs of residents, retain more local spending, and provide employment opportunities for young adults.

- b. Tactic: Cooperate with neighboring communities to stimulate economic development.

Rationale: Brookline alone may encounter difficulty in attracting commercial growth, owing to its small population base and limited marketing resources. However, by joining with neighboring communities in the region, an effective campaign may be waged which would produce benefits for all municipal participants.

- c. Tactic: Provide reasonable opportunity for the siting of telecommunication facilities.

Rationale: The Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires that all municipalities comply with this mandate. However, the Town may still establish siting and design standards to ensure compatibility with the Town's rural character.

- 3) **GOAL:** Provide opportunities for limited industrial development, of a scale that is compatible with Brookline's rural character and in a manner which considers the capability of land to support such uses, the suitability of proposed locations for industry and the possible environmental and fiscal impacts of industry.

- a. Tactic: Establish locations, siting criteria and review standards to allow for a cautious expansion of Brookline's limited industrial base in a manner which prevents environmental harm and land use incompatibilities.

Rationale: Community Profile participants expressed some interest in industrial development, such as small industrial parks. Both the 1985 and 1989 Brookline Master Plan Opinion Surveys asked several questions regarding industrial development. Responses to the 1985 questions generally point to the conclusions that (1) previous five years industrial growth has been "about right" to "too slow"; (2) light industry (assembly) should be "allowed" if not "encouraged"; (3) only 20 percent of households said new industry should not be allowed, while 52 percent called for a cautious review of such proposals, and 28 percent said the Town should encourage industrial development; (4) over 70 percent of households express a preferred location for new industrial development.

The 1989 survey results were similar, with over half the respondents stating that commercial growth from 1985 to 1989 was "about right". Many of the respondents wanted to keep the current commercial-industrial zoning (along Route 13), and nearly one-third wanted areas added to encourage industry to locate within Town.

With these responses in mind, the Town will probably not see a great demand on the part of industry to locate here. This conclusion is based primarily on

Brookline's lack of public sewer and water systems and the relative high cost of housing and land in this Region and in the Town.

For these reasons, Brookline will not likely be the site of new facilities for major manufacturers. However, Brookline could attract smaller scale, less labor and service intensive type uses such as warehousing, small assembly operations, and small, non-labor intensive manufacturers. Individually, such uses do not broaden the tax base significantly, but several such uses, in a well-designed industrial park setting, would have the desired effect on the tax base and could be sited without environmental harm or excessive demands for Town services such as police, fire or schools.

4) **GOAL:** Ensure that all existing land use regulations are effective, enforceable, and current with state standards.

a. **Tactic:** Review the Zoning Ordinance and subdivision and non-residential site plan regulations annually.

**Rationale:** An ordinance which is improperly drafted, unenforceable, and/or outdated is of no benefit to the Town's residents, adds unnecessarily to administrative burden, and fuels a negative public perception of the regulatory process.