

# **Webster Master Plan 2018**



**Adopted January 17, 2019**

## Table of Contents

List of Maps	4
Acknowledgements	5
Preface	6
Vision Statement	7
<b>Chapter 1 – Current Land Use</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction	8
Existing Land Use Types	8
Development Patterns, 2004-2017	10
Current Zoning Regulations	13
Conclusion	14
<b>Chapter 2 – Population and Economics</b>	<b>16</b>
Population	17
Demographic Details	18
Webster and Surrounding Communities	19
An Aging Population	20
School Enrollment	22
Education, Income & Poverty Level	22
Median Household Income	22
Housing	23
Employment	24
Wage Comparisons	25
Commuting Patterns	26
Town Tax Rates	27
<b>Chapter 3 – Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<b>28</b>
Introduction	28
Community Survey Results	28
History of Webster	29
Currier and Ives Scenic Byway	32
Historical Resources in Webster	33
Cultural Resources in Webster	40
Resources Available for Meeting Historical & Cultural Needs	42
Issues, Goals and Recommendations	44
Summary	45
<b>Chapter 4 – Community Facilities and Services</b>	<b>47</b>
Town Roads	47
Fire Department and Rescue Squad	50
Police Department	51
Schools	53
Town Hall Facilities and Services	54

The Webster Free Public Library	57
Water Supply	57
Transfer Station/Recycling Center	57
Cemeteries	57
Webster Youth Soccer	58
Major Electric Utilities	58
Solar Panel Installation	59
Telephone, Television and Internet Services	59
Hazard Mitigation Plan	60

**Chapter 5 – Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation, Open Space and Water Quality**

<b>Chapter 5 – Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation, Open Space and Water Quality</b>	<b>62</b>
Introduction and Purpose	63
Preserving our Soils	63
Sand, Gravel and Glacial Erratics	63
Steep Slopes and Danger from Erosion	64
Surface Waters	64
Shoreland Buffers	66
Wetlands	67
Drinking Water and Aquifer Protection	68
Farmland	69
Wildlife Habitat Management	69
Protecting Species of Greatest Conservation Need and Biodiversity	71
Scenic Views	72
Conservation and Open Space	72
Forests	74
Conclusion	74

**Chapter 6 – Housing**

<b>Chapter 6 – Housing</b>	<b>80</b>
Introduction	80
Community Survey Results	80
Housing Data	84
Webster Building Permits	85
Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Information	85
Issues, Goals and Recommendations	86
Accessory Dwelling Units	87
Cluster/Open Space Housing	87
Zoning and Building Code Enforcement	89
Pillsbury Lake Village District	89
History of Pillsbury Lake Community	89
Water District	90
Current Development and Management	91
Issues, Goals and Recommendations for Pillsbury Lake	91

<b>Chapter 7 – Transportation</b>	93
Community Survey Results	94
Highway Classification	95
Federal Functional Classification System	97
Bridge Network	98
Traffic Volumes	99
Roadway Conditions	100
Motor Vehicle Crashes	101
Public Transportation	101
Non-Motorized Transportation	102
Commuting Patterns	102
Recommendations for Managing the Transportation System	103
Issues, Objectives and Recommendations	106
<b>Chapter 8 – Future Land Use</b>	113
Introduction	113
Community Survey Results	113
Zoning Changes to Revise Special Exception Process	116
Lot Sizing	118
Village Zoning	118
Agricultural Uses	118
Open Space/Cluster Development	119
Natural Resources Protection	120
Conceptual Future Land Use Plan	121
Issues, Objectives and Recommendations	122

#### **List of Maps**

Land Use 2018	15
Water Resources	76
Wildlife Habitat/Forest Cover	77
Soils (Forest and Farm Resources)	78
Natural Services Network	79
Roads by Legislative Class	108
Roads by Federal Functional Class	109
Bridges	110
Pavement Condition	111
Vehicle Crashes	112

## Acknowledgements

The Webster Planning Board gratefully acknowledges the following citizens for their participation in the Master Plan work sessions, vision sessions and the research, writing and editing of the 2018 Master Plan:

Chief Steve Adams, Police	Sally Embley, WCC
Roger Becker	Sandy Estep
Sally Becker, Rescue	Kim Fortune
Marty Bender, ZBA & Library Trustee	Nancy Picthall-French, Library Trustee
Dee Blake	Betsy Janeway, WCC
Isabel Brintnall, WCC	Bruce Johnson
Jere Buckley	Therese Larson, Land Use Coordinator
Jennifer Carlton	Mary Jo MacGowan, WCC
Linda Clark, WCC	Leslie Palmer, Administrative Assistant
Dave Collins	Bob Quinn, WCC
Dora Collins	Susan Roman, WCC
Leslie Collins, Library Trustee	Pete Swislosky
Cathryn Clark-Dawe, Librarian	M.J. Turcotte
Michele Derby, Town Clerk	

### Webster Planning Board members:

Kathy Bacon  
Craig Fournier  
Paul King  
LynMarie Lehmann  
Susan Rauth, Chair

### Webster Select Board:

Mike Borek  
Nanci Schofield  
Christine Schadler

We would like to thank Mike Tardiff, Director, Matt Monahan, Senior Planner, and the staff at Central NH Regional Planning Commission for their assistance with the report, maps and the Vision Sessions.

Special thanks to Michele Derby and Leslie Palmer for assistance with the document.

## Preface

A Town's master plan sets down a vision for how land is to be used in the future. The Webster Master Plan aids the Town boards in designing and enforcing ordinances that preserve and enhance the quality of life deemed desirable by the town's residents. The master plan establishes the goals and objectives for the town boards and citizens to work towards in the areas of historic preservation; town and community services; natural resources conservation, preservation; housing; and transportation. Future land use impacts aspects of town life, town services, commercial and residential growth.

The vision and recommendations in the 2018 Master Plan are based in part upon the results of a community survey conducted in May 2017. The responses and comments from 200+ surveys are available on the town website and are referenced throughout the plan. The project was designed to encourage interest, understanding and participation in the update process. A committee of over 35 residents participated in six work sessions from May to November 2018. Participants representing all town departments, boards, commissions, the library, Pillsbury Lake and others were responsible for updating the Community Facilities and Services chapters. The committee reviewed the community survey results and analyzed the land use and demographics data to understand the changing needs of the population. A vision session was held in December, in conjunction with staff from the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC). The Planning Board held a public hearing in January 2019 to review and approve the updated Webster Master Plan.

The issues, objectives and recommendations from these studies are presented in the master plan. The changes to land use regulations and other recommendations in the 2018 Webster Master Plan are proactive, comprehensive, and long-range in scope and should not be considered a "quick fix." Rather, the recommendations should be looked at as a starting point for a continued discussion on how Webster wants to grow and develop in the next 10 years.

# **2018 Webster Master Plan**

## **Vision Statement**

It is envisioned that Webster will remain a predominantly rural and residential community, where traditional settlement patterns are balanced successfully with residential and economic development. Webster will update its land use regulations to support a variety of housing that addresses the needs of the population. Regulations will encourage sound management of growth that protects agriculture, open space, environmentally sensitive areas, water quality, natural resources and historic sites.

Webster will place high priority on the protection and preservation of its land and water resources in order to sustain its way of life for future generations. The Town will strengthen opportunities for its residents to gather and interact to support a sense of community. Webster will encourage development that provides low impact commercial activities that are a good fit for the town.

December 12, 2018

## **Chapter 1 – Current Land Use**

### **Introduction**

This Chapter describes how land is currently being used in Webster, along with some of the development history and trends that have brought us to that current status. The Future Land Use Chapter tackles the tough questions of “What will the Town look like if current land development trends continue? Do we aspire to some different outcome?” If so, “what changes should we make to achieve that different outcome?” Both Chapters are necessary in the Master Plan, one to tell people where the Town is and one to say where it could and should be going.

Decreasing population growth, aging population, evolving housing needs, and changing social and economic trends discussed throughout the Master Plan have had a direct impact on the landscape of the community. Land is a finite resource and thoughtful use of land is a critical issue for all communities. How a community uses its land base has a direct impact on aesthetics, community character, housing affordability and the tax base.

Webster's development history began long before there were any land use regulations in the State or Town. Development occurred in those areas with good drainage, access to a water supply, transportation, and waterpower. The institution of zoning ordinances and other land use tools reflects a relatively recent effort to ensure that development proceeds in a planned and controlled manner rather than being allowed to “just happen.” This Chapter reviews the land development patterns in Webster and the abutting communities since 1993 and describes the provisions of the Town’s Zoning Ordinance that impact land development.

One of the major objectives of the Master Plan is to preserve and protect our natural resources and traditional rural character through effective land management and conservation. As the landscape changes over time to accommodate development, balancing natural resource protection with other land uses becomes increasingly important.

The quality of natural resources and access to recreation opportunities and open space, as well as agriculture, is one of the most valued aspects of Central New Hampshire. Merrimack County is the top county in New Hampshire for agriculture sales. The average farm size continues to decrease but there is an increase in the number of farms.

The zoning ordinance was adopted in Webster in 1974 and has been amended over 20 times in the past 43 years, to reflect changes in State laws, growth pressure and environmental concerns. Zoning regulations are necessary to promote the health, safety and welfare of the Town and to retain and protect the rural atmosphere of the Town, property values and to facilitate the appropriate use of the land.

### **Existing Land Use Types**

The existing land use pattern in Webster is typical of many communities in New Hampshire. Commercial land uses are located along more extensively traveled regional roadways while the majority of residential development is located in the back lands of the community. Please see the *Land Use 2018 Map* for more detailed information, at the end of the chapter.

### Residential Land

Residential land uses are scattered throughout the community. Residential land represents 7.2% of the land uses and residential land that could be developed represents 19.2%. The total residential land uses occupy nearly 26.4% of the community's land area.

### Mixed Use Land

Mixed land uses are those where commercial uses are co-located with residential uses. In total, residential/commercial land uses occupy nearly 0.06% of the community's land area.

### Public / Institutional Land

In total, public and institutional land uses occupy approximately 6.2% of the community's land area. Examples of such uses include the school, Town Offices, the Public Safety Building, Federally-owned land, Town-owned recreation land, Library, and local churches and cemeteries.

### Commercial Land

This land use occupies less than 0.98% of Webster's total land area. Commercial uses involve the sale or trade of goods and services.

### Excavation Land

This use occupies slightly less than 0.3% of the community's total land area. The excavation of land encompasses any land use where raw materials are removed from the earth and processed.

### Utility Land

Utility lands include electric, and telephone rights-of-way, which occupy 1.7% of the community's total land area.

### Conservation Land

Conservation lands include land that has been permanently set aside, with development thereby prohibited. Such land includes Town forests, lands owned by private conservation organizations, and properties subject to conservation easements. Such land constitutes approximately 17% of the community's total land area.

### Undeveloped Land

Undeveloped lands, which are lands that are neither currently developed nor protected from development, comprise 41.3% of the Town's entire land area. Some of these areas are located on land with steeper slopes, limited road access, or other development constraints that make them much more difficult to develop. Land classified as undeveloped includes forested areas, fields and agricultural lands.

The following table is a summary of the current composition of land uses in Webster.

**Table 1.1 Summary of Acreage Developed by Land Use Category**

Category	Area (Acres)*	Percent of Total Land
Residential Land	1,333.3	7.2%
Residential Land that could be further subdivided**	3,564.1	19.2%
Mixed-Use Land	11.3	0.06%
Public / Institutional Land	1,138.9	6.15%
Commercial Land	181.7	0.98%
Excavation Land	52.7	0.28%
Utility Land	318.5	1.72%
Conservation Land	3,161.5	17.1%
Undeveloped Land	7,640	41.3%

Source: CNHRPC Geographic Information System (GIS), 2018

\*Based on GIS mapping

\*\*A residential parcel was coded this way if it was larger than 5 acres and had more than 250' of road frontage

Development Patterns, 2004-2017

Research and analysis of development patterns are important to help Webster better plan for future development. Knowledge of development patterns helps people to be aware of and understand the changes taking place within a Town, as well as in abutting communities. By looking at how many subdivisions and site plans were approved, building permits issued, and land placed in and taken out of Current Use during the past ten years, the Town is able to accurately report trends.

Subdivision Activity

Since the last Master Plan in 2004, a total of 49 new lots were created through subdivision. Of those, 41 lots (84%) were created in the period prior to the recession of 2008. There have been only 8 new lots created in the past ten years. See the table below.

**Table 1.2 Number of New Lots Created, 2004-2017**

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
10	5	18	8	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	49

Source: Annual Town Reports and Town Staff, 2018

Current Lot Sizes

Webster's Zoning Ordinance currently requires a minimum five-acre lot size for all newly created lots. Lots that are 4-10 acres in size are permitted to be subdivided once into a total of two lots each of a minimum size of two acres. However, there are many lots less than five acres in size that were created before Zoning and the five-acres minimum lot size was adopted.

Currently, there are 1,067 lots sized five acres or less, with the majority of them located in the Pillsbury Lake District.

This is not to say that there are not some large sized lots in Webster, quite the contrary. There are 435 (41%) lots over five acres in size, including 26 lots over 100 acres. The breakdown of lot sizes can be seen in the table below. The existence of so many larger land holdings is a significant “target opportunity” for future development. See the table below.

**Table 1.3 Webster Lot Sizes, 2003 and 2017**

<b>Lot Size</b>	<b>Number of Lots 2003</b>	<b>Number of Lots 2017</b>
0.0-0.5 acres	409	495
0.5-1.0 acres	204	188
1.0-2.0 acres	140	141
2.0-5.0 acres	199	243
5.0-10.0 acres	144	173
10.0-20.0 acres	120	129
20.0-50.0 acres	96	41
50.0-100.0 acres	63	66
100.0-200.0 acres	22	20
200.0-500.0 acres	4	4
500.0-1,000.0 acres	1	1
Over 1,000.0 acres	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,403</b>	<b>1,502</b>

Source: Assessors Database, 2003 and 2018

Site Plan Activity

From 2004-2017, there were 17 Site Plans approved by the Town of Webster. These approved Site Plans included a change of use from a commercial or industrial use to another, as well as approvals for new commercial or industrial operations. Site plans are for the development or change or expansion of use of tracts for non-residential uses. See the table below.

**Table 1.4 Number of Site Plans Approved, 2004-2017**

<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Total</b>
2	0	2	0	1	2	0	3	2	1	2	0	1	1	17

Source: Annual Town Reports and Town Staff, 2004 and 2018

Webster currently has approximately 20 commercial and home businesses that employ approximately 75 people or contribute to the local economy. These businesses include logging, blacksmith, basketmaking, wine making, construction, guns, agricultural supplies and feed, general contractor, beauty and medical supply enterprises. Economic assets also include agricultural operations, including but not limited to approximately 15 farms providing goats, dairy, honey, trees, beef, pork, maple syrup and blueberries.

Residential Building Permits

During the period of 2004-2017, Webster issued 97 building permits for new residential construction. This number does not include the tear-down and rebuilding of existing residential structures. The rate of building permits issued was significantly reduced following the recession of 2008. The number of building permits issued in a year for new residential dwelling units in the Pillsbury Lake Community is limited to no more than 2% of the number of existing dwelling units in the Pillsbury Lake Community in the prior year. The Growth Management ordinance for the rest of Town, adopted in 1974 and amended in 1978, expired in 2010. The anticipated growth was not realized and the ordinance is no longer necessary. See the table below.

**Table 1.5 Number of New Residential Building Permits Issued, 2004-2017**

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
16	20	15	14	8	2	6	1	3	1	2	3	2	4	97

Source: Annual Town Reports and Town Staff, 2018

Current Use

Current Use is one of the easiest and most popular methods of enabling landowners to retain undeveloped land, forests, and agricultural fields. The Current Use program can be used to reduce the amount of property tax landowners pay on open space within their property limits, as well as an incentive to keep the land in its traditional use. Current Use value is the assessed valuation per acre of open space land based upon the income-producing capability of the land in its current use – not its real estate market value. When land is removed from Current Use through subdivision, development or other reasons, 10% of the full and true value of the land -- not the Current Use assessed value -- must be paid as a Land Use Change Tax. In Webster, a portion of the Land Use Change Tax collected annually (up to \$3,000) goes to a fund for preserving land use with high value in wildlife habitat; scenic; wetlands; surface water; and areas containing endangered or rare species.

Webster residents have continually participated in this program, as can be seen in the table below. As the table shows, the number of acres in current use and the percentage of total land in current use has remained fairly stable over the past seven years.

**Table 1.6 Current Use Acreage for the Town**

Year	Acres in Current Use	# of Owners in Current Use	% Total Land in Current Use	Land Use Change Tax Collected \$
2010	11,146.70	200	61.62	17,360
2011	11,251.66	206	62.20	18,280
2012	12,008.46	210	66.34	7,200
2013	13,176.51	213	72.84	9,124
2014	12,080.42	211	66.78	7,798
2015	12,127.48	213	67.04	4,000
2016	12,134.15	211	67.08	13,700

Source: NH DRA, 2016

**Current Zoning Regulations**

The power to regulate private property is one of the most important powers granted to local governments. Webster adopted a Zoning Ordinance in 1974 and has updated it periodically over the last 40 years. Used properly, zoning can be a powerful tool to improve the aesthetics of a community, protect the natural environment, and enhance the quality of life. Used improperly, zoning can serve special interests, diminish the natural environment, inhibit individual rights, and have unintended consequences.

**Zoning District**

The Town of Webster has two zoning districts: the Pillsbury Lake District and the Agricultural/Residential Zoning District that applies to all of the land in Town not contained within the Pillsbury Lake District.

In addition to residential and agricultural uses, the following uses are allowed by Special Exception: commercial exceptions, including business, commercial or industrial uses; mining or excavation of materials; Personal Wireless Service Facilities (cell towers). A home business may be permitted by Special Exception. Accessory Dwelling Units may be permitted by special exception for new construction or existing dwellings. A seasonal dwelling less than 800 square feet and stored recreational vehicles may be permitted by special exception. Setbacks are specified for non-commercial buildings or new additions and accessory structures.

All new lots shall be at least five acres in size, with 250’ of road frontage on a Class V or better road. The minimum distance between a building and any road or highway shall be 100 feet for lots that are five or more acres in size and 50 feet for all other lots. The minimum distance between a building and a lot side line or rear lot line is 50 feet. The setback from rivers, brooks, lakes or ponds is 50 feet for accessory and primary structures. In the Pillsbury Lake District, lots shall have 20’ front and rear setbacks and 12’ side setbacks.

**Overlay Zoning Districts**

Overlay Districts are superimposed upon the Base Zoning District, described above, so that any regulations pertaining to the Overlay Districts shall be *in addition* to the regulations of the Base

District. The land within the town may be used if and to the extent that such use is permitted in both the applicable Base and any relevant Overlay District(s).

The Town adopted an Area of Special Flood Hazard Overlay District, the area of which can be seen on the Current Zoning Map and consist of all lands designated as special flood hazard areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The purpose of the District is to protect future development from flood damage by discouraging and/or modifying the type of land development in the Floodplain area.

As per the 2017 Webster Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, 24 single family homes were considered to be situated in a special flood hazard area.

The Town adopted a Groundwater Protection Ordinance with an overlay district that includes the Wellhead Protection Areas for public water supply and the Stratified Drift Aquifers shown on the Town of Webster Drinking Water and Aquifer Location map.

The Town has adopted regulations to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) up to 750 square feet permitted by special exception for new construction or existing construction. Standards for the ADUs are established in the zoning regulations.

#### Other Zoning Ordinance Provisions

At a 2001 Town Meeting, a Personal Wireless Service Facilities (PWSF) Ordinance was adopted. The provisions of the Ordinance apply to the entire town and specify the requirements that all applicants looking to construct a cell tower in Webster must follow.

#### Conclusion

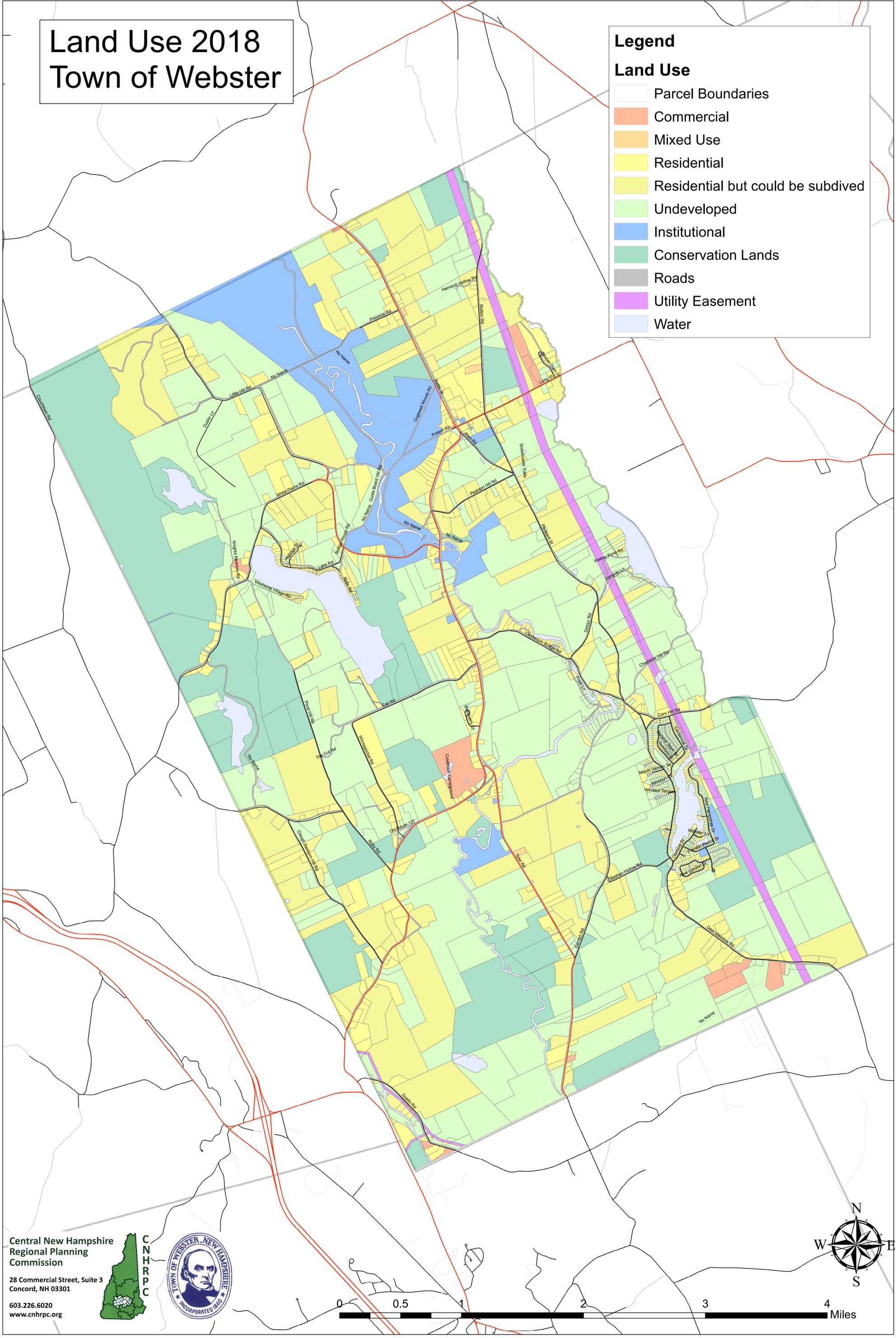
This Chapter describes how the land in Webster is currently being used and the historic development patterns that brought the town to this point. Potential new developments may impact the town visually, environmentally, historically, or fiscally, all of which merit the attention of the Planning and Zoning Boards. How land is to be used will impact all aspects of town life, town services, schools, conservation, commercial growth, and residential growth. The Town is currently in a position to make decisions on future land use that will impact the development, feel, and character of the Town. The following Chapters in the Master Plan contain suggestions that seek to guide future growth and development in a manner that builds on the foundations established by Webster's history, and reflects the interests and desires of its current citizens.

# Land Use 2018 Town of Webster

## Legend

### Land Use

-  Parcel Boundaries
-  Commercial
-  Mixed Use
-  Residential
-  Residential but could be subdivided
-  Undeveloped
-  Institutional
-  Conservation Lands
-  Roads
-  Utility Easement
-  Water



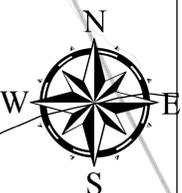
Central New Hampshire  
Regional Planning  
Commission

28 Commercial Street, Suite 3  
Concord, NH 03301

603.226.6020  
www.cnhrpc.org



C  
N  
H  
R  
P  
C



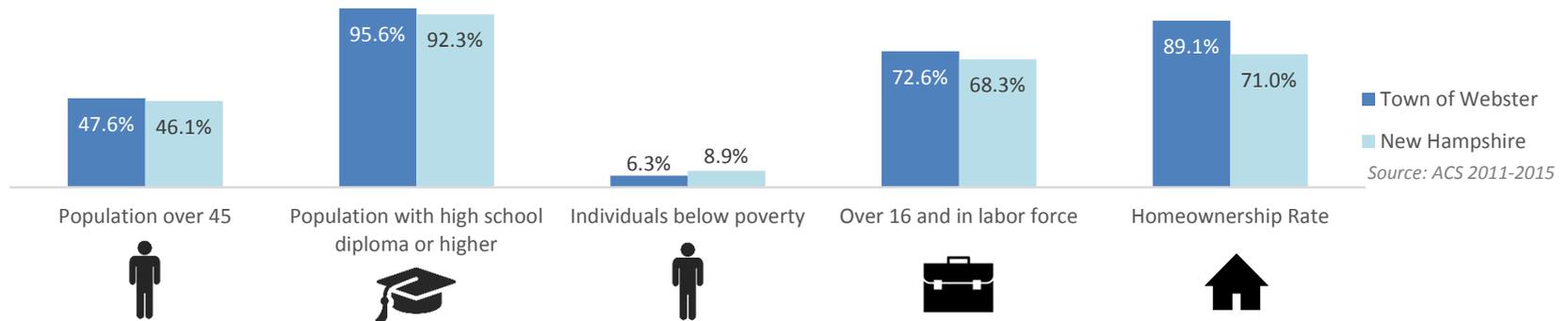
## Chapter 2 Population & Economics

Understanding how your community has developed requires a step back to assess what is happening – what the demographic trends and patterns of development are and what residents perceive as positive influences or challenges going forward. By analyzing data and conducting public outreach efforts such as a survey and visioning session, the story of Webster today emerges and sets the framework for identifying what needs to be addressed now and in the future. Once we have an understanding of the present, including data and trend analysis and what we heard from the public outreach efforts, we can look to the future with an understanding of our vision and what we want to accomplish.

Building the profile for Webster required the use of data from a variety of sources. Census 2010 and American Community Survey (ACS) are the main sources of data for much of the demographic information. Census data are collected every ten years by the US Census Bureau, gathering official counts of population at a variety of

geographic levels, such as census tracts, blocks, and designated places. The Census now only asks ten questions and a new data source, ACS, supplements Census data by asking questions used to measure social and economic characteristics of the population. The ACS is an ongoing survey that gathers trends from a smaller population sample on an annual basis, producing estimates for data originally available only in the decennial census. Data for smaller geographical areas are collected in three- or five-year samples, with ACS 2011-2015 being the most recent data available. Statewide data from the Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI), formerly the Office of Energy and Planning, were used for the estimated 2015 and 2016 population, population projections, and building permit information. Data collected through Webster’s Community Survey are also shown throughout the Master Plan, representing the views of residents. Survey results tallied 200 responses, focusing on a wide range of topics from local infrastructure to rural character.

### COMPARISON OF WEBSTER TO NEW HAMPSHIRE



## Population

### RECENT TRENDS

#### *New Hampshire*

New Hampshire experienced consistent, steady growth from the 1960s through the 1990s, increasing the number of residents statewide by 50% by 2000. At the beginning of the 1980s, New Hampshire was still growing, but increasingly at a slower rate. Population estimates for 2016 (1,334,591) show NH only increasing 18,335 residents since 2010, a small percentage compared to the 80,000 residents gained between 2000 and 2010. Populations are projected to continue a slower rate of growth, with only an additional 98,139 residents expected between the 2016 estimates and the 2040 projected population.

#### *Merrimack County*

Merrimack County's population trends are similar to the state's growth. The County began experiencing smaller increases in growth during the 1990s, and gained only 1,540 residents between 2010 and the 2016 estimate of 147,985. Projected populations also show a slower rate of growth into 2040, with only 18,786 additional residents between the 2016 estimate and the 2040 projected population.

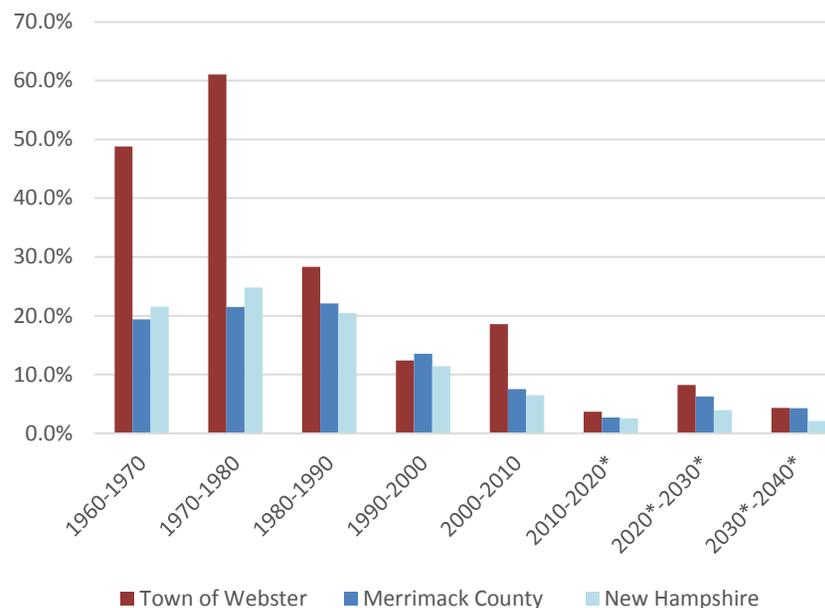
#### *Town of Webster*

Webster showed dramatic population gains from 1960 to 1980. From the 1980s on, Webster's rate of growth slowed which continued through 2010. Over the three decades of 1980-2010, Webster grew by 41.5%, modest compared to the 58.2% increase in population experienced in the previous two decades (1960-1980). According to the Office of Strategic Initiatives' estimates, a population increase was experienced in 2016 with 1,877, though population projections show a slowed rate of growth over the next two decades. Webster is projected to gain 315 residents between 2016 and 2040, a total growth of 14.3%.

**Table 2.1: Historic and Projected Population Trends**

	Town of Webster		Merrimack County		New Hampshire	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1960	457	-	67,785	-	606,921	-
1970	680	48.8%	80,925	19.4%	737,681	21.5%
1980	1,095	61.0%	98,302	21.5%	920,610	24.8%
1990	1,405	28.3%	120,005	22.1%	1,109,252	20.5%
2000	1,579	12.4%	136,225	13.5%	1,235,786	11.4%
2010	1,872	18.6%	146,445	7.5%	1,316,256	6.5%
2020*	1,941	3.7%	150,434	2.7%	1,349,908	2.6%
2030*	2,101	8.2%	159,899	6.3%	1,402,878	3.9%
2040*	2,192	4.3%	166,771	4.3%	1,432,730	2.1%

**Figure 2.1: Percent Change in Population, 1960-2040\***



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

\*Population Projections, September 2016, NH Office of Strategic Initiatives

## Demographic Details

### NATURAL INCREASE

Natural Increase, the difference between births and deaths per year, naturally fluctuates over time. Statewide, natural increase has been declining due to a steady rise in the number of deaths. Webster has experienced a mix of positive and negative natural increase over the past ten years, shown in Table 2.2. Most recently, Webster saw a negative natural increase in 2015 and 2016 with (-1) and (-9), however, positive natural increases were experienced in the two years prior.

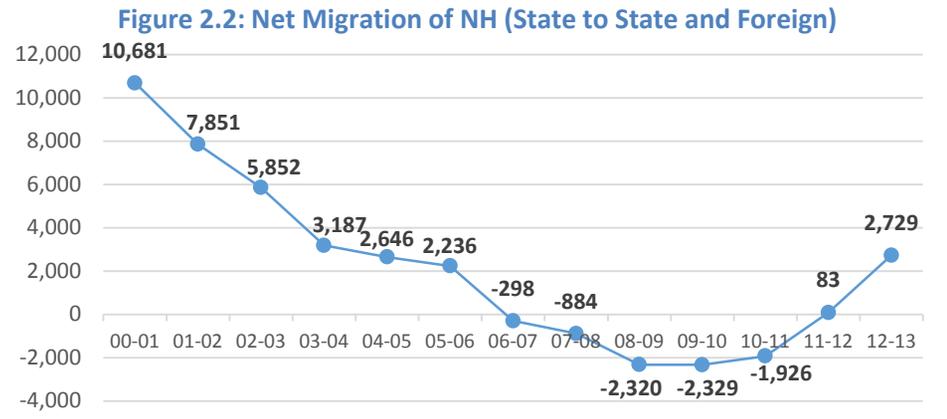
**Table 2.2: Births and Deaths in Webster, 2007-2016**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Births	20	17	16	9	18	12	13	15	8	8
Deaths	14	9	7	12	6	15	8	13	9	17
Natural Increase	6	8	9	-3	12	-3	5	2	-1	-9

Source: Webster Annual Reports

### MIGRATION

Net migration, the difference of people moving in and out of an area, has historically accounted for the large increase in statewide population during the 1970s and 1980s. Many moved from Massachusetts, which increased the attainment level of education in the workforce, stimulated the economy, and provided employment opportunities. As shown in Figure 2.2, after a period of decline in the state's net migration starting in 2001, NH has experienced net migration gains from 2011 on. It should be noted that this migration data is reported by the Internal Revenue Service and follows individual tax returns for a given tax return year.

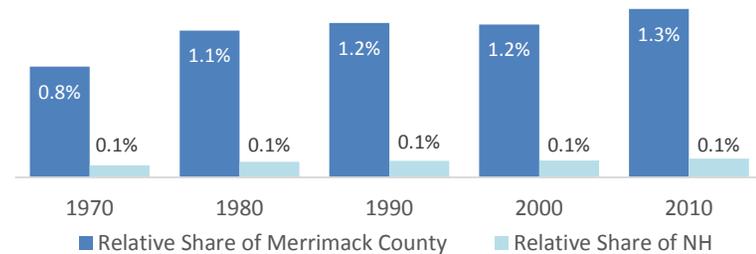


Source: What is New Hampshire? An Overview of issues shaping the Granite State's Future. Published by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, September 2015.

### RELATIVE SHARE OF POPULATION

Webster's relative share of Merrimack County increased from 1970 through 2010 from 0.8% to 1.3% (Figure 1.3). The largest increase occurred between 1970 and 1980, when the Town's population increased dramatically in size during the ten year period. Webster's relative share of New Hampshire's population has remained steady since 1970 at 0.1% (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3: Webster's Relative Share of Population**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and CNHRPC calculations

## Webster and Surrounding Communities

### PAST AND PROJECTED POPULATIONS

From 2000 to 2015, Webster’s overall increase (see Table 2.3) in population – 293 new residents, an 18.6% increase - was higher than most (with the exception of Salisbury) when compared to its neighboring communities. As demonstrated in Figure 2.4.

Boscawen had a similar increase in population during this time period with 278 new residents, with a much smaller percentage increase at 7.6%. Salisbury was the only community to experience a larger percent increase of 22.6% between 2000 and 2015, with 257 new residents, respectively.

Examining the population projections shown in Table 2.3, Webster is expected to gain 229 new residents in fifteen years (2015-2030), which is in the middle of the range of the neighboring communities. Concord, Hopkinton, Warner, and Boscawen are expected to experience the smallest percent growth of the abutting communities between 2015 and 2030, with 5.0%, 5.3%, 6.0%, and 7.0% respectively. Salisbury is projected to see the highest percent increase in population with 14.3%. Webster’s projected increase in population between 2015 and 2030 is 12.2%.

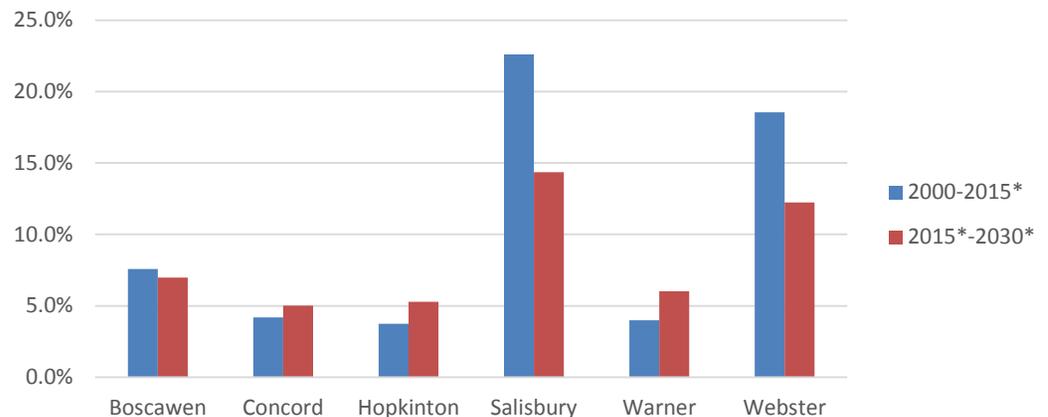
**Table 2.3: Past and Projected Populations for Webster and Abutting Communities**

	2000	2005	2010	2015*	2020*	2025*	2030*
Boscawen	3,672	3,848	3,965	3,950	3,998	4,082	4,226
Concord	40,687	42,221	42,695	42,390	42,512	43,005	44,520
Hopkinton	5,399	5,630	5,589	5,601	5,624	5,697	5,897
Salisbury	1,137	1,257	1,382	1,394	1,459	1,540	1,594
Warner	2,760	2,953	2,833	2,870	2,891	2,939	3,043
<b>Webster</b>	<b>1,579</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>1,941</b>	<b>2,030</b>	<b>2,101</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and NH Office of Strategic Initiatives

\*NH Office of Strategic Initiatives, September 2016: 2005 estimates, 2015 estimate and 2020-2030 projections

**Figure 2.4: Percent Change in Population, 2000-2030\***



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and NH Office of Strategic Initiatives

\*NH Office of Strategic Initiatives, September 2016: 2015 estimate and 2020-2030 projections

## WHAT THE COMMUNITY SURVEY SAID...

*“In your opinion, which statement best describes Webster’s residential rate of growth?”*

**10.1%**  
Growing too fast

**10.6%**  
Growing too slowly

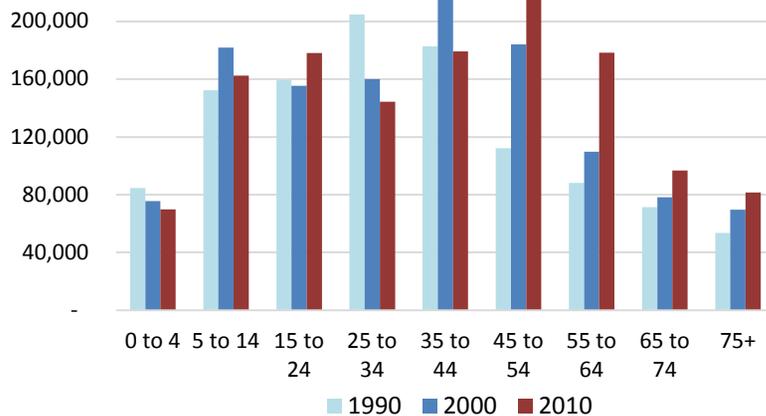
**62.2%**  
Growth is acceptable

**17.0%**  
No opinion

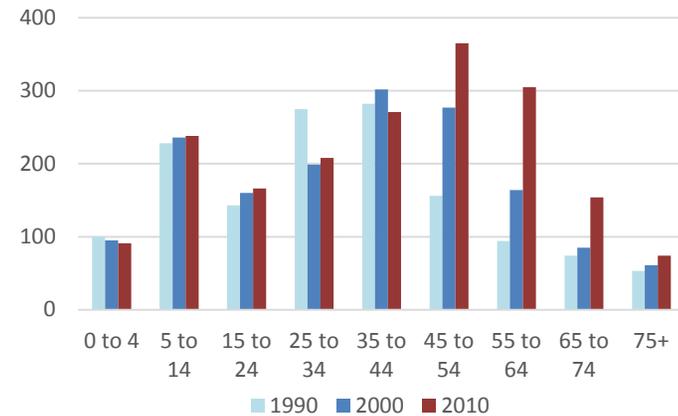
## **An Aging Population**

New Hampshire's population is growing older, and Webster is no exception. In the past decade, the number of residents 45 and over has seen a steady increase, compared to the modest changes in the younger population. New Hampshire, along with much of the U.S., experienced a large increase in births due to the baby boom post-World War II. That baby boom now contributes to a larger adult population as baby boomers start to reach their 50's and 60's. This large age group is also expected to continue to increase as the over 65 population of aging baby boomers grows in the next two decades.

**2.5: New Hampshire's Population by Age Figure**



**Figure 2.6: Webster's Population by Age**



### **CHALLENGES DUE TO CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS**

Day-to-day living for an aging population is becoming more of a concern as many retirees are remaining in rural areas to be close to family or to enjoy the scenic and recreation amenities available in the Central New Hampshire Region. Recreational, housing and transportation needs change as the population ages. Providing accessible year-round outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities for older residents as they age in place is important, especially as the pattern of retiring to the South fades.<sup>1</sup> The demand for smaller houses for downsizing families will likely continue to increase as the average household size continues to decrease statewide. Transportation, and the need for public transportation as the population ages could be especially problematic for those who must utilize different sources of transportation for everyday needs.

### **THE WORKFORCE**

One of the advantages of having a strong middle-aged population is a strong working population, with many in the peak of their careers and earning potential. This also means a large portion of New Hampshire's workforce will be retiring soon, potentially causing a shortfall of qualified workers available to fill their positions.

<sup>1</sup> *New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the Twenty-First Century*, written by Kenneth M. Johnson. Published by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, 2012.

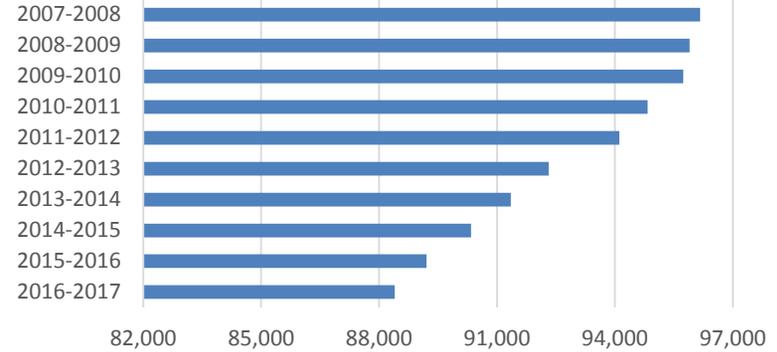
## School Enrollment

### ENROLLMENT TRENDS

In addition to a growing senior population, the trends also show a decrease in elementary school aged children. Statewide, elementary school enrollments have decreased nearly nine percent since the 2007-2008 school year timeframe, with an enrollment decrease of nearly 7,771 students. This trend is expected to continue, especially as the increase in population growth slows and the percent of population above 65 rises.

This statewide decrease can be seen in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7: State Elementary School Enrollments

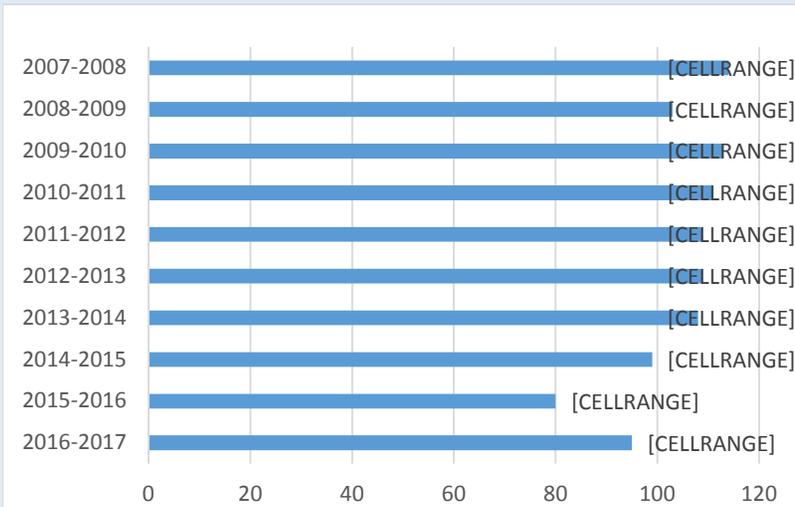


Source: NH Department of Education

### WEBSTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Webster Elementary School has experienced a decrease in school enrollment shown in Figure 2.8. Overall, enrollment experienced a decrease of 16.7% between the fall of 2007 and 2016.

Figure 2.8: Webster Elementary School Enrollment and Percent Increase from Previous Year

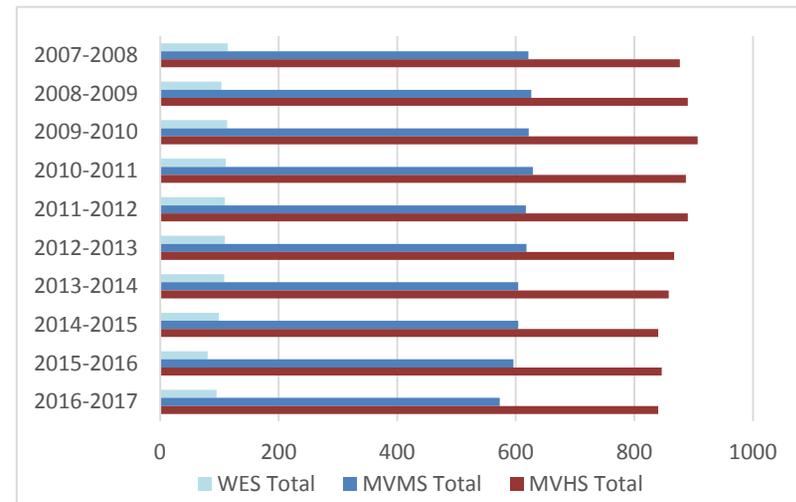


Source: NH Department of Education

### MERRIMACK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

Merrimack Valley School District enrolls students from the communities of Boscawen, Loudon, Penacook, Salisbury and Webster. Merrimack Valley Middle and High School also experienced decreases in enrollment over the past ten years, shown in Figure 2.9.

Figure 2.9: Merrimack Valley District Past Enrollment



Source: NH Department of Education

## Education, Income & Poverty Level

### EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

According to ACS 2011-2015 data, 95.6% of residents in Webster have a high school diploma or higher post-secondary education.

Nationally, New Hampshire is well known for having a high percentage of educated residents. Though many New Hampshire natives choose to stay in state, a large percent of the state's education attainment is gained through migrants moving to New Hampshire. In 2010, 36% of state residents with a college degree were migrants from out of state while only 24% were born in New Hampshire<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 2.4: Education Attainment for Webster and Surrounding Communities (ACS 11-15)**

	Population Aged 25+	Less than 9th Grade	9th to 12th (no diploma)	HS Diploma or GED	Some College (no degree)	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree
Boscawen	2,901	1.9%	8.0%	44.1%	20.7%	9.4%	11.8%	4.2%
Concord	30,276	2.2%	5.3%	25.4%	20.6%	10.7%	21.5%	14.4%
Hopkinton	3,705	0.0%	1.0%	18.7%	11.5%	10.0%	35.4%	23.5%
Salisbury	1,015	0.4%	2.3%	39.6%	21.7%	10.1%	16.7%	9.3%
Warner	2,037	1.5%	4.5%	23.9%	20.4%	12.0%	26.1%	11.7%
<b>Webster</b>	<b>1,294</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>19.9%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>

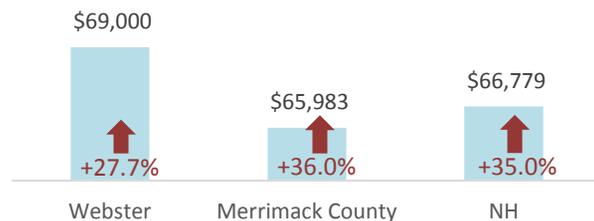
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015

### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Nationally, New Hampshire ranks among one of the highest in the nation for a state's median income<sup>3</sup>. According to ACS 2011-2015 data, the United States had an estimated median household income of \$53,889, 23.9% less than New Hampshire's median household income of \$66,779. Within the state, trends point towards higher median household income in the southern portion of the state, similar to trends of education attainment and poverty. Webster

had a median household income of \$69,000, which was a 27.7% increase from the median household income reported in 2000. Webster's median household income is comparable to the median household income of Merrimack County. It should be noted that this County had the third highest median household income in the state.

**Figure 2.10: ACS 11-15 Median Household Income and Percent Change Since 2000**

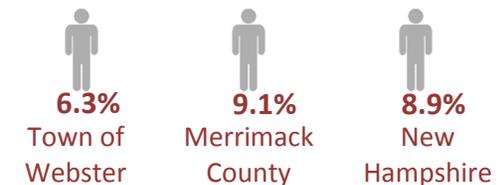


Source: ACS 2011-2015

### POVERTY

Statewide, poverty levels are highest for children, predominantly in the North Country and along the border with Maine. This is most likely caused by lower education and income levels in these areas.

**Percent below poverty (ACS 11-15)**



Source: ACS 2011-2015

<sup>2</sup> New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the Twenty-First Century, written by Kenneth M. Johnson. Published by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Granite State Future The Statewide Snapshot, Nashua Regional Planning Commission, June 2015.

## Housing

### A PLACE TO CALL HOME

**Table 2.5: Webster's Average Household Size**

Average Persons per Household	
2000	2.71
2010	2.53

Source: US Census Bureau

**Table 2.6: Persons Per Square Mile**

Area Sq. Mi.	1980	1990	2000	2010
Boscawen	24.9	138	144	147
Concord	64.0	475	563	636
Hopkinton	43.3	89	111	125
Salisbury	39.6	20	27	29
Warner	55.2	36	41	50
<b>Webster</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>

Source: NH Employment Security area calculations, US Census Bureau, CNHRPC calculations

**Table 2.7: Residential Building Permits**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Boscawen	0	2	6	-1	
Concord	-3	-9	71	169	
Hopkinton	3	13	4	11	
Salisbury	2	2	3	4	
Warner	8	2	4	5	
<b>Webster</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: NH Office of Strategic Initiatives

### AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Housing data statewide and throughout Central New Hampshire reflects a modest population growth with an aging population, and a decreasing household size. Webster's average household size has decreased, dropping to 2.53 in 2010.

### POPULATION DENSITY

Webster's persons per square mile increased 18.6% between 2000 and 2010, which was the highest of the surrounding communities with the exception of Salisbury. Boscawen, which has the closest land area to Webster, experienced an 8.0% increase in population density between 2000 and 2010; nearly 10% less than Webster.

### BUILDING PERMITS

Even though the average household size has been dropping in Webster, current building trends point towards more construction statewide. Webster saw nearly 4 residential building permits between 2012 and 2015, less than abutting communities, shown in Table 2.7.

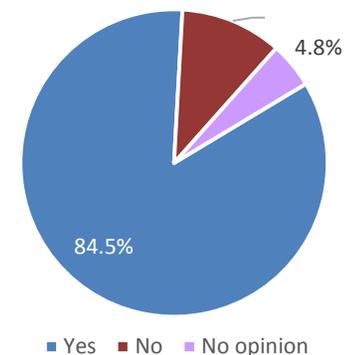
It should be noted that values represent the net change of dwelling units and includes any demolitions that year. Thus, any negative values represent a net loss of dwelling units.

### HOUSING NEEDS OF THE AGING POPULATION

Much of the aging population is choosing to age in place, instead of retiring South.<sup>4</sup> This growing trend is creating a demand for smaller housing units as families downsize and choose to remain in rural and suburban areas. As the number of older adults is predicted to increase over the next two decades, concern of accessibility for the older demographic increases as access to day to day needs becomes a challenge. These challenges include mobility issues for needs such as transportation to grocery stores, doctors' offices and recreational resources. Additionally, growing concern for the high cost of living, including housing and taxes in rural and suburban areas, can be challenging for the older population living on a fixed income.

### WHAT THE COMMUNITY SURVEY SAID...

Do you think that maintaining Webster's rural character should be a goal of the current Master Plan, as it was in the previous Plan?



<sup>4</sup> New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the Twenty-First Century, written by Kenneth M. Johnson. Published by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, 2012.

## Employment

### LABOR FORCE

According to New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMI), the percent of civilians in the New Hampshire labor force has grown by 0.4% between 2010 and 2016, with an overall increase in the labor force of nearly 10,306. However, the number of civilians in the labor force has not increased consistently every year; a decrease of 1,300 residents occurred between 2013 and 2014. Unlike state trends, Webster experienced a decrease in the number of civilians in the labor force between 2010 and 2016 due to a dramatic decrease occurring in 2014. Since then, Webster has gained back its labor force to that experienced in 2013. Despite the decrease, the Town's number of employed civilians in the labor force increased between 2010 and 2016, rising 2.6% to 1,110 in 2016.

### OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYERS

Within Webster, 2011-2015 ACS data indicate that 69.6% of the 16 and over population are employed, which is higher than the state's employment rate of 64.3%. Of these residents, the majority (35.5%) work within the management, business, science and arts fields. Other common occupations include sales and office employment and natural resources, construction and maintenance with 24.0% and 16.2%, as shown in Table 2.8. It should be noted that the numbers below do not necessarily represent the types of occupations available in the Town of Webster, but those occupations of Webster residents.

**Table 2.8: Occupations of Employed Webster Residents**

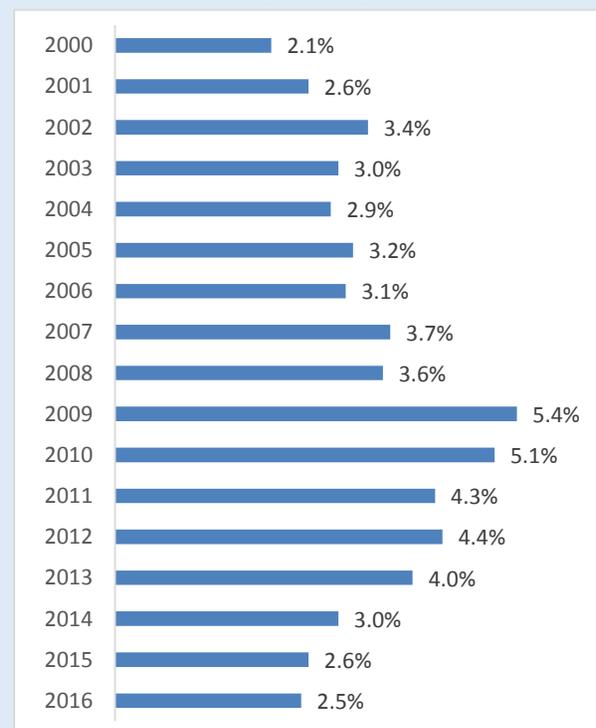
	Number Employed (ACS 11-15)	Percent Employed (ACS 11-15)
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	357	35.5%
Sales and office occupations	242	24.0%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	163	16.2%
Service occupations	123	12.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	122	12.1%
Total employed persons over 16 years of age	1,007	100.0%

Source: ACS 2011-2015

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Webster's unemployment rate between 2000 and 2016 is presented in Figure 1.11. Over this time period Webster's unemployment rate peaked in 2009 at 5.4% but has since decreased to the most recent rate of 2.5% in 2016.

**Figure 2.11: Webster's Unemployment Rate, 2000-2016**



Source: NH Office of Strategic Initiatives, sourced via NH Housing

## Wage Comparisons

To gain a better understanding of the types and quality of the jobs located in Webster, wages paid by employers in Webster can be compared to those in the surrounding communities. Although the figures show average annual weekly wages for people who work within the Town of Webster, they do not represent the average weekly wage of a Webster resident (Webster resident income levels can be seen previously in this Chapter). As can be seen in Table 2.9, Webster is 77 highest for Private Industry but lower for Government weekly wages when compared to abutting communities.

**Table 2.9: Average Annual Weekly Wage Private Industries and Government, 2016**

	Private Industries			Government		
	Employers	Annual Average Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage	Employers	Annual Average Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage
Boscawen	53	720	\$956.36	8	754	\$762.79
Concord	1,746	29,381	\$957.51	346	11,015	\$1,075.52
Hopkinton	111	1,381	\$891.01	8	283	\$943.93
Salisbury	18	66	\$661.82	4	36	\$539.37
Warner	64	772	\$682.67	6	91	\$771.26
<b>Webster</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>\$992.57</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>\$513.38</b>

*Source: Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security*

### **WHAT DO RESIDENTS THINK?**

Results of the Town's Community Survey demonstrate the high appreciation for Webster's rural character, vast natural resources, and the community spirit of its residents. The majority of participants (84.5%) were in favor of maintaining Webster's rural character as a goal of the current Master Plan as the previous plan did. More than half of survey responders (54.5%) were supportive of the Town taking measures to control growth, while 26.0% were not in favor and 18.5% had no opinion. When asked which enterprises and services residents would like to see in Webster, support was shown for agricultural-related businesses (55.7%), a grocery store (35.9%), restaurants (34.9) and bed and breakfasts (34.4%). The least amount of support was shown for hotels/motels, industrial parks, mini-storage facilities, and spa/health clubs. Finally, the majority of survey participants were not in favor of establishing an industrial or commercial zone, as only 20.6% were in favor of establishing an industrial zone and 34.1% were in favor of establishing a commercial zone in Webster.

***"It would be nice to have a place to go and meet up with people- a little café and country store.."***

***"Encourage rural living and agriculture. Energy conservation."***

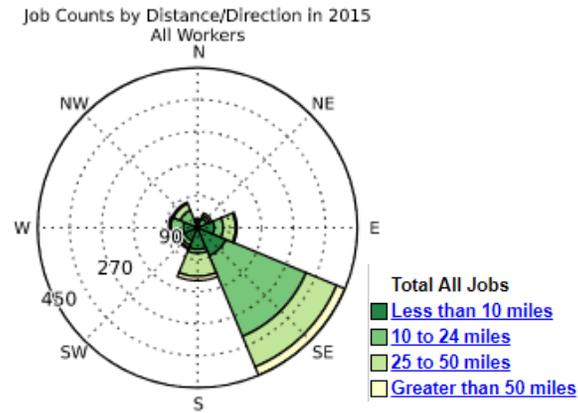
***"A little café would be nice as would a small store for groceries."***

***"Webster should remain a mostly residential town."***

***"Continue the great community feeling in Webster."***

## Commuting Patterns

Figure 2.12: Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2015

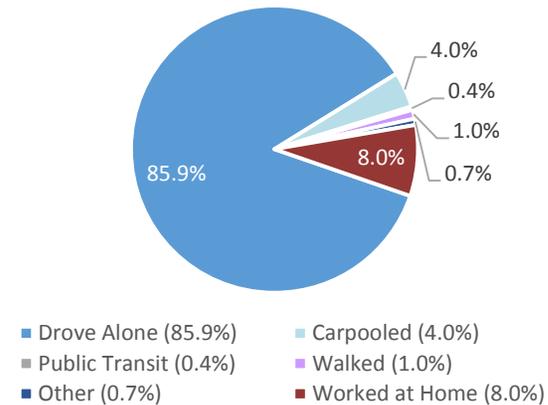


Source: US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, OnTheMap Application

### PLACE OF WORK

As shown in Figure 2.12 above, residents of Webster work in various locations across the state. Most residents work in Concord and Manchester. Residents of Webster had a mean travel time to work of 31.0 minutes according to the American Community Survey 2011-2015, which is higher than New Hampshire's mean travel time of 26.9 minutes.

Figure 2.13: Means of Transportation to Work



Source: ACS 2011-2015

### MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

With a mean travel time to work of 31.0 minutes, the majority (85.9%) of residents drove alone to work. While some carpoled, worked at home, walked, or used other means, less than 1% used public transportation, likely due to its unavailability. Please refer to the Transportation Chapter for additional information.

### COMMUTING PATTERNS

According to the US Census Bureau Center for Economic Studies, in 2015, the majority of residents were employed in a community outside of Webster, with 979 residents commuting to another community and only 24 residents employed in Webster. Additionally, the American Community Survey for 2011-2015 reports only 2.0% of residents worked outside of New Hampshire. As presented in the US Census Bureau's OnTheMap application, residents commute to Concord (26.7%), Manchester (7.5%), and Nashua (3.7%). Additionally, an estimated 160 non-residents commute into Webster for work from other communities. Please refer to the Transportation Chapter for additional information.

## Town Tax Rates

**Table 2.10: Webster's Tax Rates, 2010-2017**

Year	Municipal Rate per \$1000	County Rate per \$1000	Local Education Rate per \$1000	State Education Rate per \$1000	Total Rate per \$1000
2010	\$3.98	\$2.38	\$8.45	\$2.18	\$16.99
2011	\$4.11	\$2.36	\$9.00	\$2.17	\$17.64
2012	\$4.24	\$2.31	\$9.70	\$2.12	\$18.37
2013	\$5.07	\$2.67	\$11.63	\$2.36	\$21.73
2014	\$5.61	\$2.88	\$11.69	\$2.51	\$22.69
2015	\$6.34	\$2.58	\$12.67	\$2.49	\$24.08
2016	\$5.87	\$2.69	\$12.17	\$2.24	\$22.97
2017	\$6.41	\$2.76	\$11.47	\$2.33	\$22.97

Source: NH Department of Revenue Administration

**Table 2.11: Equalized Tax Rates of Webster and Abutting Communities, 2016**

Community	Net Valuation w/ Utilities	Tax Rate per \$1000	Full Value Tax Rate per \$1000	2016 EQ Ratio
Boscawen	\$256,230,157	\$28.61	\$26.27	92.6
Concord	\$4,061,020,935	\$27.67	\$25.34	98.6
Hopkinton	\$662,217,698	\$33.55	\$31.00	92.7
Salisbury	\$136,036,493	\$24.56	\$22.90	92.6
Warner	\$270,498,815	\$27.34	\$28.52	104.0
<b>Webster</b>	<b>\$203,826,014</b>	<b>\$22.97</b>	<b>\$23.31</b>	<b>95.7</b>

Source: NH Department of Revenue Administration

A review of Webster's total tax rates between 2010 and 2017 show that the total rate increased from \$16.99 in 2010 to \$22.97 in 2017. That said, the total tax rate which had increased to \$24.08 in 2015, decreased to \$22.97 in 2016. The municipal, county, and education rates also saw various fluctuations in their values over the time period shown in Table 2.10. Compared to tax rates reported for years previous to 2010, the total tax rate between 2010 and 2017 has been higher than what was seen in the previous decade, as Webster's tax rate dropped after a revaluation occurred in 2003.

Equalized valuation, or equalization, is an adjustment of the town's local assessed values, either upward or downward, in order to approximate the full value of the Town's property. The full value tax rate can then be used to make a limited comparison of what a property in one municipality would pay for taxes to a property of equal value in another municipality. This process is due to an imbalance caused by varying local assessment levels. That being said, the full value tax rate is the equalized tax rate for a town.

Compared to its surrounding communities, Webster had the lowest net valuation with the exception of Salisbury, with a net valuation of \$203,826,014 in 2016 (Table 2.11). Webster's 2016 equalized tax rate was also lower than the 2016 average of the abutting communities, with a rate of \$23.31 compared to an average of \$26.22. Webster's total tax rate of \$22.97 in 2016 was also lower than the 2016 average of the abutting communities, \$27.45. Currently, 2017 data is not available for net valuation and full value tax rate.

## Chapter 3 – Historic and Cultural Resources

### Introduction

Webster is the product of a long and varied history, starting with the arrival of the first settlers in 1733. That rich history has fostered a culture... a way of life... that constitutes much of what makes Webster such a special place.

We are reminded of our history and its influence by the presence of older buildings and other historically significant resources. There are many reasons for preserving those resources and their surroundings. Among the most compelling are the intangible ones: those are associated with the continuity and quality of life. Older buildings provide us with links to the past. They give us a sense of the continuity of time and place. Just as important, they become a part of our own lives.

Gradual and pervasive erosion of historical character can result from the accumulation of incremental changes to buildings and places. It is our challenge to minimize the extent to which this happens in Webster.

If we fail to know, understand, and respect from whence we have come, we are at significant risk of losing our way in our attempts to plan for the future.

This chapter seeks to highlight local historic and cultural resources, to indicate why they are important, to suggest how they should be preserved, and to identify tools and resources appropriate for that task.

The intent of this chapter is to provide to the Town and its residents information and recommendations relevant to:

The teaching of present and future residents about the history that has shaped our town, and the cultivation of an appreciation for that history.

The preservation and protection of historic buildings and other important physical evidence of the Town's history.

The preservation and supplementation of existing historical documentation.

The recognition, promotion, and support of the service organizations and the spirit of volunteerism that shape Webster culture.

### Community Survey Results

The Community Survey conducted in 2017 conveyed a clear message that Webster residents and property owners value the historic aspects of the community, appreciate the style of life that Webster currently provides, and wish that style of life to be maintained to the extent possible as the Town grows. Specific relevant survey responses include the following:

71.5% of respondents rated the protection of historic sites and buildings as either "very important" or "important".

71% of respondents ranked the historic character of the Town as either "very important" or "important".

65% of respondents ranked the Town's education system as either "very important" or "important".

Of some interest and possible concern: All of the three foregoing percentages are lower than those obtained in 2003... 83%, 71%, and 98%, respectively

67% of respondents ranked energy efficiency as either "very important" or "important".

When asked if the Town should strive to maintain our rural atmosphere, 85% of the respondents said "Yes".

### History of Webster

A complete record of Webster history might begin 4.6 billion years ago when the "Big Bang" created a vast cloud of gas and dust from which our solar system eventually coalesced. It might instead begin 650 million years ago when the first of the rocks that now shape the New Hampshire landscape were being formed. Or it might begin just 290 million years ago when the region eventually to become New England and England were adjacent south-of-the-equator parts of Pangea, a continuous land mass then incorporating all of the earth's land area. Pangea was then roamed by giant crocodile-like amphibians, and eventually split and drifted apart as the continents we know today. Perhaps our history should begin 200 million years ago with the appearance of the dinosaurs... or 60 million years ago with the appearance of the first mammals. Or 2 million years ago at the start of the Pleistocene epoch that saw New England covered by glaciers four different times, with much of coastal New Hampshire under ocean water between glacial periods. Or a mere 10,000-12,000 years ago when the first Native Americans arrived and began their own rich local history. But no... that's too broad a scope for this document. We'll leave all but the last 271 years of that 4.6-billion-year span to others and begin with the arrival of the first European settlers.

In 1733, King George II of England granted the seven-mile-square "Plantation at Contoocook" (unrelated to the later town of Contoocook) to John Coffin and 80 others, all from Newbury, Massachusetts. The area of this grant was eventually to become the towns of Boscawren and Webster.

The grant was made contingent on the establishment of 81 homesteads, the building of a meeting house, and the installation of a minister, all within 4 years. At the time, the grant and in fact all of the area west of the Merrimack River was claimed by Massachusetts and was to remain so until a dispute between New Hampshire and Massachusetts was resolved in 1740.

The first settlers arrived in the spring of 1734, and set about building log cabins, clearing fields, and putting in crops. Most were joined by their families during the summer and, by the fall, a total of 33 homesteads were in place. It had to have been a daunting undertaking. The settlement was "the outpost of civilization", with unbroken wilderness northwards to Canada. In fact, it would be another 28 years before Warner was settled and 30 years before there would be any settlements north of Salisbury.

Although it had been 37 years since Hannah Dustin, held captive by Indians in the area, had managed her brave and bloody escape, it was still 'Indian country'. Particularly from 1743 until the close of the French and Indian War in 1759, the settlement was under constant threat and

periodic attack. Garrisons were built in which the settlers sought protection when threatened. Many surrounding settlements were abandoned in the face of the Indian attacks, but the Contoocook Plantation settlers refused to be intimidated and stayed put.

The first log cabin in what is now Webster is believed to be "Cook's Cabin", built in 1745 by Thomas Cook just west of the north end of Mutton Drive. Mr. Cook got his name on the map... Cook's Hill (See Map3)... but did not have long to enjoy his new home. He was killed by Indians the following year. Little evidence of Cook's Cabin remains.

In 1760, a town charter was granted and the plantation became the Town of Boscawen, named for Lord Boscawen, a hero of the English navy. At that time, framed houses had begun to replace log cabins. There were still few settlements westward of Water Street. The first school in the town was opened in 1761. By 1767, the population of the town had grown to 285... compared to 752 for Concord. By 1783, the population had increased to 756 persons in 98 dwellings. 1475 acres were devoted to tillage, pasturage, mowing, and orchards... still a tiny fraction of the 25,820 total land acres in the town.

In the years prior to the Revolutionary War, local militia mustered on Fowler's Plain (See Map). The revolution against English rule brought a period of turbulence and chaos, with Boscawen residents called upon to support the cause with both manpower and material. This period of uncertainty lasted until the adoption of the federal constitution in 1790.

By 1791, there was enough settlement in the western part of the town (the area eventually to become Webster) to prompt the construction of a new meeting house to serve that part of town. Five years later, again prompted by the growing population of the area, the new meeting house became home to "The Second Congregational Church of Boscawen", a role it served until construction of the present church building in 1823.

In 1803, Boscawen and other towns competed unsuccessfully against Concord to become the state capital.

In 1826, a flood took out all of the bridges across the Blackwater River with the exception of one at Sweatt's Mills. This flood was a precursor of bigger disasters yet to come.

On July 4th, 1860, the Town of Webster was incorporated and thereby separated from Boscawen. The town was named in honor of Daniel Webster, the famed lawyer/statesmen/legislator/orator who had been born in Salisbury and began his legal practice in Boscawen. The reasons for the separation of Webster and Boscawen seem not to have been well documented, but may have involved issues of local control and taxation. (Sound familiar?) The first Webster Town Meeting was held on August 11th of that year, with the maximum number of votes cast being 204.

At the time of its incorporation and subsequently, Webster was a rural and predominantly agricultural town. There was nevertheless a considerable amount of supporting commercial enterprise, much of it located on and often deriving power from the Blackwater River. The 1933-1983 Webster History lists no less than 22 shops and mills in the town. There were several sawmills, a shingle mill, grist and grain mills, blacksmith shops, a nail shop, a cobbler's shop, a dry goods store, and others. Altogether a much more self-sufficient community than is now the case!

The agricultural character of the community was influenced in 1890s by the interest of Civil War naval hero Commodore George Hamilton Perkins who, during a leave of absence from his naval duties, purchased a small farm on the shore of Lake Winnepocket. This modest beginning eventually grew into a network of sixteen farms comprising about 1800 acres. Especially after his retirement in 1891, Commodore Perkins devoted substantial energy to improving his farms. He took particular pride in his horses, of which there were about 60 at the time of his death in 1899, and several of which were champion trotters. He maintained a large workforce, contributed significantly to the Webster tax base, and was immensely popular with everyone in the region. That reputation was enhanced in 1897 when the Commodore and his wife hosted a lakeside celebration of the wedding of his daughter Isabel to Larz Anderson, an ambassador to Belgium and Tokyo under the William Howard Taft administration. Everyone within travel distance, regardless of station, was invited. 1500 guests were treated to a reception, a banquet, band music, and a firework display over the lake. Boston papers described the occasion as one “never to be forgotten by the New Hampshire countryside”.

A notable event each summer from 1928 to 1937 was the encampment of the 172nd Field Artillery of the National Guard in Sawyers Field (See Map) on Little Hill.

Webster was dramatically reshaped by a major flood in 1936, the great hurricane of 1938, and the consequent construction of the Blackwater Dam flood control project.

The 1936 flood, caused by torrential rains in combination with rapidly melting snow pack, took out five covered bridges crossing the Blackwater River. Only one was left, and mail service, electrical power, and telephone service were severely disrupted. Rowboats were used to cross the river until temporary replacement bridges could be built.

In 1938, an even greater flood was accompanied by hurricane-force winds that wreaked havoc with buildings and with the forest. Trees were down everywhere and roads were impassable. More than a million board feet of pine was down on the Larz Anderson estate alone. Huge quantities of pine logs were cut and floated on Lake Winnepocket until they could be sawed. A mammoth pile of sawdust next to the lake outlet is still a conspicuous reminder of the lumber milling that took place there.

When the Army Corps of Engineers responded to these disasters by building the Blackwater Dam in 1940, many of Webster’s older buildings were demolished and the Town was forever altered. The Federal Government acquired and mandated the removal of structures from approximately 3600 acres of upstream land, most of which would be submerged if water were to rise to the crest of the dam. Such cresting would create a lake almost 13 miles long, with more than 5 miles in Webster and the balance in Salisbury. Water behind the dam has been within two feet of cresting once, in 1987, but generally is far below that level. This situation creates a large undeveloped area straddling the Blackwater River, regarded by the Corps of Engineers as an “historic and culturally rich” area because of its early role in the Town. It also provides recreational opportunities including canoeing and kayaking, hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, hunting, and fishing.

Webster's recent history has been characterized by decreasing agricultural activity, considerable reforestation accompanied by growth of active timber-related enterprises, rapid population growth, the disappearance of most commercial activities in Town, and a corresponding substantial shift to out-of-town employment of its residents.

The Town was alerted to the potential effects of uncontrolled development by creation in the mid-1960s of the Town's largest subdivision in what is now the Pillsbury Lake District. Many hundreds of lots were created, almost all too small to safely accommodate the wells and septic systems upon which most Webster residents depend. The issue was subsequently addressed with a community water system. To a large degree in response to the Pillsbury Lake subdivision, the Town instituted a Zoning Ordinance in 1978 and Subdivision Regulations in 1993.

### Currier and Ives Scenic Byway

The Currier and Ives Scenic Byway was designated in 1976 as one of several picturesque New Hampshire "Yankee Trails." In 1991, the National Scenic Byways Program was established to recognize outstanding roads for their intrinsic archeological, historical, cultural, natural, scenic and recreational qualities. In 1992, NH adopted a Scenic and Cultural Byways System under RSA 238:19, and the Currier & Ives Scenic Byway became a state-designated Scenic and Cultural Byway.

In early 2009, the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) received a federal grant to help develop and adopt a Corridor Management Plan for the Currier & Ives Scenic Byway, and established an advisory council of local, regional and state agencies, committees and organizations. The Currier & Ives Scenic Byway runs from Salisbury to Hillsboro. The Webster portion of Battle Street (NH Route 127), from the Salisbury border on the north to the Warner border on the south, is a significant part of the Currier and Ives Scenic Byway, a route featuring classic New England rural sights and attractions. Webster highlights include early-century farms, open fields, the famous Blackwater River with its kayaking sites, and the floodplain behind the Blackwater Dam.

### Economic Growth and Vitality

The Master Plan goals include preserving Webster's historic features and important cultural and natural resources in a manner that will retain the unique character of the town while allowing economic growth and viability.

Webster has become conscious of the need for energy efficiency, protection of our environment, wise use of resources, and limiting our dependence on fossil fuels. Webster residents use the recycling facilities available at the Transfer Station operated in cooperation with the neighboring town of Hopkinton. Energy-efficient lighting and other conservation measures have been incorporated in Town facilities. In 2011, as permitted by New Hampshire regulations, the Town voted to exclude from property taxation any added value resulting from the installation of solar energy systems. This has incentivized the installation of photovoltaic solar panels on numerous Webster residences. In 2017, the Town approved installation of an 11.4 kilowatt solar panel array designed to generate electricity sufficient to offset almost all of the Town's municipal electric bills. That system became operational in early 2018.

## Historical Resources in Webster

### History Documentation

Webster's history has been well documented in a series of books:

"A Chronological Register of Boscawen" by Rev. Ebenezer Price covering the period from Boscawen's first settlement in 1733 to 1820, printed by Jacob B. Moore in 1823.

"One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of Boscawen and Webster", primarily a compilation of speeches given at the time of that anniversary.

"The History of Boscawen and Webster New Hampshire 1733-1878" by Charles Carleton Coffin, published by The Republican Press Association in 1878.

"The History of Boscawen and Webster, New Hampshire from 1878 to 1933" compiled by Willis G. Buxton and re-published in facsimile form by The Boscawen Historical Society in 1992.

"Webster New Hampshire, 1933-1983, History", compiled and published by the Webster History Committee in 1984.

Walter and Linnea Silver, "From the King's Plantation to Home Town Heritage", Peter E. Randall Publisher, 1997.

"A Visit to the Past... A Walking Tour of Old Webster Behind the Blackwater Dam", a pamphlet created and published in 1998 by The Society for the Preservation of the Old Meeting House.

All of these documents are available for reference at the Webster Free Library. They paint a vivid picture of life in Webster as it evolved over the years and are recommended reading.

Much of the historical information herein is drawn from one or more of these sources.

### New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places

This is a relatively new program, with listings starting in 2001. Properties are listed at the owner's request. There are, as yet, no Webster Properties listed on the Register. Clearly there are some good candidates for such listing.

### National Register of Historic Places

Webster currently has two structures on the National Register of Historic Places. The Webster Congregational Church and the Old Webster Meeting House. Both were placed on the list in March of 1985.

The First Congregational Church of Webster (See Map) was originally established in 1804 as the Second Congregational Church of West Boscawen and assumed its present name in 1860 when Webster was separated from Boscawen. Its present building was erected in 1823 by master carpenter George Pillsbury.

The Old Webster Meeting House (See Map), originally built as the Westerly Meeting House and later known as the Town House, was built in 1791 and was first used as a meeting place for religious worship. The contract for the frame of the building was let to one Samuel Jackman for the sum of \$94.00, but the work was so well done that the Town voted an additional \$16.68. The building stood on its original site, now part of the Blackwater dam flood basin, for 140

years. In 1941, it was among those buildings acquired by the Federal Government prior to construction of the dam, but then was re-purchased at auction by interested citizens (for \$105!) and moved by a windlass powered by a single horse up the hill to its present location on Battle Street. It is owned and maintained by The Society for the Preservation of the Old Meeting House and serves as a site for community functions and as a repository for a wide array of historical Webster artifacts.

### Cemeteries

There are three active cemeteries in Town, all managed and cared for by an elected Cemetery Commission. Their locations are shown on the Sites of Historic and Cultural Importance map.

The Beaver Dam Cemetery was divided equally between Webster and Boscawen when the towns were separated in 1860, even though it lies entirely in Webster. The earliest marker in this cemetery is dated 1818, and many lots are still available.

The land for the Corser Hill Cemetery was purchased in 1910 by the Central New Hampshire power Company of Maine in anticipation of a power generation project on the Blackwater River that would necessitate moving the graves from the yard established in 1813 at the original site of the Old Meeting House. That project never materialized, but the planned move took place in 1941 when the Corps of Engineers undertook construction of the Blackwater flood control project. A total of 774 bodies were moved to the new location. In recent years, an additional portion of the property was cleared to enable future expansion.

The Riverdale Cemetery was deeded to the Town of Boscawen in 1847 and then to the Town of Webster when the two towns separated in 1860. The earliest marker in that cemetery carries the date of 1802, but there are several unnamed and undated markers. This cemetery is at or near capacity.

There is an additional but inactive cemetery on Clough and Sanborn Hill. It was formalized by Town vote in 1871 but, since the earliest marker is dated 1802, the cemetery clearly pre-existed that vote. There are 12 headstones and several field stones marking additional graves in what is essentially a private family cemetery.

A site directly across Pleasant Street from the Corser Hill Cemetery is believed to be an Indian burial ground ... and perhaps even the place where some early settlers were interred.

### Veterans' Memorial

A Veterans' Memorial at the junction of Allen Road and Battle Street honors Webster residents who have served the nation's military in all major conflicts starting with World War I, with special emphasis on those who lost their lives while serving their country. The Memorial, completed in 1991, was the result of an 8-year-long planning, fund raising, and construction effort by a volunteer group of Webster veterans. It was created on donated land and replaces an earlier World War I memorial that had fallen into disrepair. A non-profit volunteer veterans group maintains and updates the Memorial. It serves as a reminder to all Webster residents of the sacrifices made on our behalf by the dedicated members of our nation's military, and especially those from Webster families.

## Historic Structures

- The Town Hall Complex

Tangible evidence of Webster's history is embodied in the current Town Hall facility on Battle Street, the site of many municipal, civic, and social functions. Here until 1990 stood the Anderson Memorial Methodist Church and, next door, the Grange Hall.

The former church, with its striking stain glass windows, had until then been owned by the Women's Union. Their ownership of the church had been enabled by a gift from Isabel Anderson, daughter of Commodore George Hamilton Perkins, a civil war naval hero whose statue is at the capitol building in Concord. Isabel followed her father's example as a prominent early Webster resident and benefactor.

The steeple on the church fell prey to the ravages of time and the elements and had to be removed. It is currently in storage awaiting restoration. Voters last voted not to spend tax money on the project.

The Grange Hall was built and dedicated in 1884 as the home of the Daniel Webster Grange No. 100, which had been organized in town earlier that same year.

In 1990, the church and the Grange Hall were linked by a connecting building and Town offices were created on the lower level. The former church now houses the Webster Free Library. The combined facility is a "community center" for all kinds of functions including use of the Grange Hall as a polling place and the site for Town Meetings.

- One-room schoolhouses

The early records of Webster schools prior to the 1860 incorporation of Webster as a separate town are sketchy at best, but it is evident that, prior to that date, a number of schools were in operation, probably generally located in private residences. Shortly after the separate incorporation, Town records show there were nine school districts in town, each with its own schoolhouse:

A school (Old District #1) at Sweat's Mills, after serving most recently as a Police Station, is awaiting disposition by the Town.

Schools on Pleasant Street (District #2), Corser Hill (#3), White Plain (#7, at the northerly end of Lake Winnepocket), and Putney Hill (#9) were moved to new locations (#9 in Hopkinton) and converted to private residences.

Schools on Battle Street (#4) and Clough and Sanborn Hill (#5) fell into disrepair and no longer exist.

The school on Little Hill (#6) served as a private residence until lost to fire in 2004.

The school at Bashan Hollow remains at its original location and now serves as a private residence.

All of the one-room schools were superceded in 1952 by the opening of the Webster Central School (see Map), the current elementary school across from the Town Hall complex.

- Churches

The First Congregational Church of Webster, on Long Street, is described under the National Register of Historic Places heading. Next to the church is the parish house (See Map), built in 1780, occupied by early settler John Corser, and eventually acquired by the Church.

As noted above, the current library was once a Methodist church and is still notable for its stain glass windows.

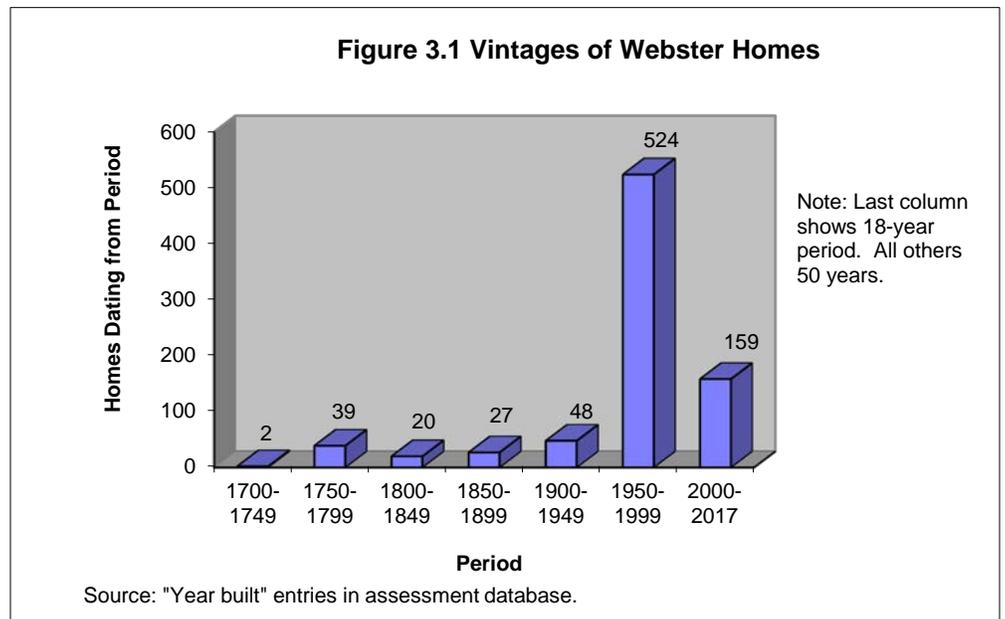
- Barns

There are several old barns in Webster that may be of historical note and worthy of preservation. Examples include those owned by the Van Loans on Gerrish Road and the Taylors on Battle Street. There seemingly has been no systematic effort to inventory old barns in Town and to evaluate their potential historical significance.

- Historic Homes

The following chart shows that, although there has been a continuing surge in home construction in Webster since 1950, there are still significant numbers of older homes in town. 88 of them predate 1900, 41 predate 1800, and 2 predate 1750.

Many of these older homes are listed and described in the Webster, New Hampshire 1933-1983 History book. One of particular note, on Potash Road, is the circa 1800 former home of Rev. Edward Buxton, who served as pastor of the church for 50 years. The building was willed to the Church by his daughter Elizabeth, was used as a parsonage for many years, and is now a private home.



These older homes constitute a significant resource and contribute substantially to the character of the town. Their protection and preservation should be encouraged.

Many of Webster's early structures have fallen victim to fire or the ravages of time. Evidence of some of them still exists in the form of old cellar holes. Buxton's History of Boscawen and Webster cataloged such cellar holes in 1933, and much of the information therein is still valid.

## Old Stone Walls

A striking feature of the landscape in Webster and all of New England is the network of stone walls built, primarily in the years following the Revolutionary War, by industrious farmers. The magnitude of this effort was staggering. It has been estimated that, by the 1870s, more than 240,000 miles of such walls had been built in New England... enough to reach from the earth to the moon. A short walk or drive anywhere in Town shows that Webster contributed at least its share to this total.

The primary motivation for building those walls was the need to remove from fields enough of the stony rubble left behind by the retreating glacier to permit access by plow and scythe. The slight additional effort required to stack the rock in linear piles brought fringe benefits in the form of livestock containment and property line delineation. Those functions could have been achieved far more simply were it not for the need to rid the fields of stone!

Old stone walls continue to flank many of Webster's roads and define longstanding property boundaries. Others wander through the woods in paths the purposes of which are no longer apparent.

These old walls are the most extensive and conspicuous relics of Webster's agricultural origins. They have become a signature feature of our terrain, and a significant contributor to the rural landscape on which Webster residents have placed high value. They deserve protection and preservation.

There are at least two threats to our old stone walls:

Old walls often do not fit well with new boundary lines or new land uses and are bulldozed into oblivion as a matter of insensitive convenience.

Although not yet a major factor in Webster, the growing market for stone has created a thriving industry in which old walls are "mined", either legally or illegally, and the stone trucked away to sometimes distant destinations.

Webster will be well served by efforts to minimize the extent to which these threats are allowed to impact our historic stone walls and thus our valued rural atmosphere.

## Historic and Scenic Roads

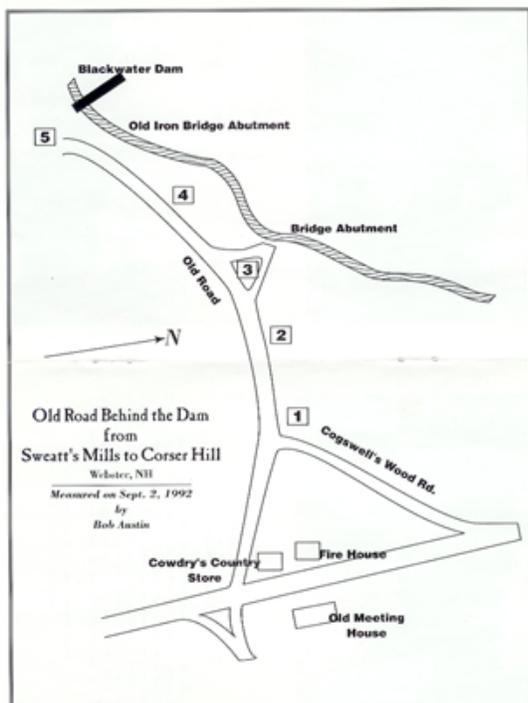
Many of Webster's roadways have significant histories. An example: Dublin Road, a portion of Little Hill Road, and the partially discontinued Province Road were parts of a highway intended to connect Boscawen with Fort No. 4 in Charlestown, called in its entirety "The Province Road" and intended to become the first east-west highway across the State. An act directing the construction of this highway was passed by the State in 1769 after years of wrangling. Webster complied with the State's mandate, but it's not clear how much of the rest of this highway was actually built.

Bashan Hollow, Gerrish and Mutton Roads were designated as Scenic Roads by Town Vote in the 1970's. A state ordinance serves to protect the trees and stone walls on scenic roads and require a public hearing with the utility companies before cutting is permitted.

In the Community Survey results, nearly 75% of the respondents rated “scenic roads” as very important or important. Residents on these roads struggle with the town to retain the scenic aspect of the roads against the demands of increased traffic, maintenance and safety issues.

### Historic Markers

In recognition that the area behind the Blackwater Dam was once alive with homes, farms, and industry, a series of five numbered granite markers records the sites of some of the structures that were lost. A pamphlet published by The Society for the Preservation of the Old Meeting House facilitates a walking tour of these sites and documents their history. The following figure, extracted from that pamphlet, shows the five sites. These markers and the associated documentation are important records of an earlier time.



Marker #1 – Original site of  
Old Meeting House

Marker #2 – Stebbin’s Store

Marker #3 – Burbank’s Bridge

Marker #4 – Burbank’s Sawmill

Marker #5 – Hearse House

### Historic District

Webster does not now have a designated historic district. Such a district could be created to increase awareness of and to facilitate preservation of some of Webster’s more important historical features. Designation of such a district would require creation of a historic district commission, in accordance with RSA 673:1-II.

## Historic Preservation and Information Resources

There are many sources of historical information available about the Town of Webster, both in the Town itself and in outside repositories. The following is a partial list of available organizations and their resources, as they relate to the historical resources of Webster.

- The Society for the Preservation the Old Meeting House

The Society maintains a growing collection of records and objects related to the history of Webster. This collection provides valuable insight into the forces that have shaped the nature and character of our Town.

- Webster Town Hall Records

The Webster Town Hall contains many historical documents and records. These records are quite complete starting in 1977, when the Town Hall function was formally constituted and sometimes partial for the period from the 1860 charter date until 1977. These records include: tax maps, other old maps, deeds and property sales information, Town Reports (complete from 1900, some from 1860-1899), Town Clerk records, meeting minutes from various boards, vital records and statistics, invoice records beginning in the 1800s (these list property owners, number of livestock and the taxes owed), and much more. All of this information is available to the public for research and review.

It should be noted that, while most of these records are normally stored in a vault room, many exist nowhere else and could be lost in the event of a major fire or other disaster.

- Webster Free Public Library

As previously noted, the Webster library contains a number of historical documents that pertain to the Town of Webster and the surrounding area.

- New Hampshire Historical Society

The New Hampshire Historical Society, in Concord, is an independent, nonprofit organization and is accredited by the American Association of Museums. The services and resources the New Hampshire Historical Society provides include the Museum of New Hampshire History, the Tuck Library, a museum store, a newsletter and quarterly calendar, and technical assistance to local libraries, historical organizations, and citizens.

- New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources in Concord was established in 1974 as the "State Historic Preservation Office." The resources and materials available at the NHDHR include National Register of Historic Places criteria; New Hampshire historical marker programs; the offices of the State Architectural Historian, State Curator, State Archeologist; preservation tax incentive programs; historical survey programs; and grant programs.

- New Hampshire State Library

The New Hampshire State Library houses approximately 2,400 titles of published family histories for New Hampshire and New England. This collection is enhanced by the unique name index to early town records on microfilm. The town records, ranging in years for each town, but falling roughly between the years 1640-1830/1840, can provide birth, death, and marriage

dates, as well as a listing of such items as tax inventories. Other major resources available include town and county histories, annual town reports, Federal Census records for New Hampshire (1790-1920), local newspapers on microfilm, the genealogical column of the "Boston Transcript," legislative biographies (1890 +), city and county directories, and military records.

### Cultural Resources in Webster

#### Library

The Webster Free Public Library ("The Library"), managed by an elected Board of Trustees, first opened in 1894 with 102 volumes received from the New Hampshire State Library. Before moving to its present location, it was housed in turn in the Old Meeting House, the Sweatt's Mills Store, and the building across Battle Street occupied until 2003 by the Police Department. At times, parts of the collection were housed in private homes because of space limitations.

There are currently 515 registered patrons of the Webster Free Public Library. In 2017, users made 2,292 visits to the library and checked out 5,401 books, audiobooks, DVDs, museum passes, and magazines. The library belongs to the New Hampshire Downloadable Books consortium, and our users downloaded 1,362 audiobooks and 626 eBooks. The library owns 10,155 books, 731 DVDs, and 452 audiobooks.

The Library maintains a close relationship with the elementary school across the street, serving as a significant resource for the students. The library staff also host a Book Club, Summer Reading Program, free movies and several informative programs throughout the year.

As noted in the Community Facilities chapter, the library Trustees have created a Ten-Year Plan to continue to provide and enhance the library services to meet the needs and interests of the community, without the ability to expand the library space in its present location.

#### The Old Meeting House – as a Museum

The growing and varied collection of historical items housed at the Old Meeting House paints a vivid picture of what Webster life was like in earlier times. It helps us to understand the people and the culture that led to the Town we know today.

The scope of this facility is now being expanded, with the recent acquisition of the old fire station, across the street from the Meeting House. This added space will enable additional exhibition areas and improved meeting facilities.

#### Communication and Local News Dissemination

Webster is served to an extent by coverage in the Concord Monitor and other news media in the region but has come to depend on The Webster Grapevine for detailed coverage of local news and activities. The Grapevine is a privately-owned, monthly newsletter but nonetheless serves an important role in disseminating information regarding Town activities. If it were for any reason to cease publication, there would be a significant gap in residents' ability to stay abreast of Town matters.

The Town has recently established a Town Website. This represents another means for information dissemination, at least for those residents with web access. It should become an increasingly useful tool as the site is expanded.

## School

Webster schoolchildren attend elementary school (Kindergarten through Grade 5) in Town, across the street from Town Hall, and then travel to regional schools for continuing education. The Webster school and the regional schools are part of the Merrimack Valley School District managed by a Board of Education that is independent of the Town government.

## Service and Charitable Organizations

Much of Webster's character is attributable to an active network of service and charitable organizations.

The First Congregational Church of Webster was originally established in 1804 as the Second Congregational Church of Boscawen and assumed its present name in 1860 when Webster was separated from Boscawen. Its present building was erected in 1823 by master carpenter George Pillsbury and, as noted above, is listed in the National Register of Historical Places. The church congregation is a part of the United Church of Christ and plays an important role in the life of its members and the community. A significant portion of church funding comes from operation of a permanent food booth at the Hopkinton Fairgrounds.

Daniel Webster Grange, Number 100, was organized in 1884 and built the Grange Hall in that same year. It was an active participant in the affairs of the Town and maintains a high, state-wide reputation for its charitable and service activities. It was disbanded in 2017.

The Women's Union has operated since 1929 in a variety of charitable and public service roles.

The Church, the Grange and the Women's Union jointly offered a highly popular series of public suppers at the Town Hall for many years, sharing equally in the income so generated.

The Webster chapter of the New Hampshire Circle of Home & Family (NHCHF), a women's group, disbanded in recent years. The National organization, originally a part of the UNH Cooperative Extension service, is still active nationally and internationally through its membership in the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW).

4-H groups, both Webster-based and in the region, provide important educational and developmental opportunities for Webster youths, particularly in the agricultural areas that are such an important part of Webster's past and present.

An Old Home Day Committee organizes an annual celebration of the Town's heritage, continuing a tradition begun in 1899 when former residents were invited to return to Town to re-establish ties and friendships.

## Spirit of Volunteerism

An underlying theme of Webster's culture is a pervasive spirit of volunteerism. Municipal, charitable, social, and recreational functions all rely heavily on volunteer participation. This is the source of considerable citizen pride, as evidenced by the "Home of the Professional Volunteers" sign on the church booth at the fairgrounds and by the "Volunteers – Proud to Serve" sign over the fire truck bays of the new public safety building.

A relevant quote in the 1951 Town Report, commenting on the community support that had made possible the new elementary school: "There is a spirit in Webster that is found in few

towns. I am not sure how to describe it. It is a feeling of closeness to our neighbors, a willingness to lend a hand, and the spirit of working together to get things done. One thing I am sure of, this is a wonderful thing, this spirit you have in Webster. I hope you will never lose it.”

Webster would be a very different place without this spirit. Growth will inevitably make this spirit more difficult to maintain, but it should be fostered and promoted in every possible way.

#### Resources Available for Meeting Historical and Cultural Resource Needs

Webster has a rich historical legacy that is evident in its buildings, landscapes, and patterns of development. This legacy contributes to the quality of life in the community and provides a sense of identity that many residents enjoy and find important. The resources listed below are potential tools for protecting and preserving this legacy for enjoyment by and education of future generations.

Barn Owner Tax Relief: RSA 79-D authorizes municipalities to grant property tax relief to barn owners who can demonstrate the public benefit of preserving their building and who also agree to maintain their structure throughout a minimum 10-year preservation easement. The law encourages barn owners to maintain and repair their buildings by granting them specific tax relief and assuring them that tax assessments will not be increased as a result of new repair work.

Certified Local Governments Program: The "Certified Local Governments" (CLG) program, enacted by the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980, is a partnership between municipal governments and the State historic preservation program, to encourage and expand local involvement in preservation-related activities. To be certified, a town must:

- 1) Enforce appropriate state or local legislation for designation and protection of historic properties (this means that the community must have a legally-adopted Historic District, and adequate regulations for administering the District Ordinance);
- 2) Establish an adequate and qualified Historic Preservation Review Commission (Historic District Commission or Heritage Commission, with Historic District responsibilities) under state law and local ordinance;
- 3) Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties;
- 4) Provide for adequate public participation in the local historic preservation program, including the process of recommending properties for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places; and,
- 5) Satisfactorily perform the responsibilities delegated to it by the State of Historic Preservation Officer under P.L. 96-515.

Local governments that are certified have specific responsibilities for review of National Register of Historic Places nominations for all properties within their community, not just within a historic district; they participate in the development of regional and statewide historic preservation goals; and they are eligible to apply for federal matching grants from a special "pass-through" fund set aside for the exclusive use of CLGs.

Citizens for New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage: A coalition of organizations that are working to protect the special places that define our state. Technical assistance, outreach, and education are available to communities.

Cooperative Ventures with Private Organizations: When the interests of the Town to conserve historic or cultural resources match with the interests of a private organization, the potential for a cooperative partnership exists. This tactic will require some creative thinking and introductory discussions by Town officials with area organizations that have, or could develop, an interest in conserving such resources.

Grants from Foundations: The Town should research available grants and develop proposals to seek funding to conserve particular pieces of property or types of historic resources within Town. Funding could be sought from foundations at the local, state, regional, and national level.

Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP): This State fund is designed to assist communities that want to conserve outstanding natural, historic, and cultural resources.

There is a requirement that the Towns match the State money from this fund with a 50% match from other sources, some of which can be an "in kind" match, as well as funds from other sources.

Land Trust: The Town should support non-profit land trusts that accept and pursue property and easements for land of local historic and cultural concern.

New Hampshire Main Street Center: Dedicated specifically to maintaining, strengthening, and revitalizing the physical, economic, and cultural characteristics of the state's traditional and historic downtown urban and village centers by supporting and working with Main Street programs. The Center provides technical assistance, education, and outreach to interested communities. Funding is also available to eligible communities.

New Hampshire Preservation Alliance: The Alliance was founded in 1985 and works to preserve New Hampshire's historic buildings, landscapes, and communities through leadership, advocacy, and education.

Preservation Easements: Preservation easements are initiated by landowners who wish to protect their land from future development, while still retaining owner's rights. Farms, buildings, and scenic and historic areas all may be protected by easements. Perpetual easements protect the land or structure through subsequent owners, while term easements have a set time period agreed to by the town and current owner. Perpetual easements often reduce the estate tax on large amounts of property, though the decision to award tax relief is officially decided by State Law, local officials, and town assessors.

Revolving Funds: Revolving funds help protect and preserve publicly significant historic properties by using options to purchase, direct acquisition, or deed of gift to acquire threatened or endangered properties. Profits from the sales are rolled back into the fund to help save other endangered properties and perpetuate the fund. The National Preservation Loan provides loans to establish or expand local and statewide preservation revolving funds.

State Historic Markers: The Historical Marker Program is one way that New Hampshire remembers its past. The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources is responsible for approving the subject, location, wording, and accuracy of the state markers. The authorizing official of the historical marker program is the Commissioner of Transportation, who has the power to erect up to ten markers per year. The only way a marker can be placed in a Town is in response to a proposal and petition of twenty signatures from concerned citizens. These markers can be erected on State and local roads. However, the initial costs of the markers and on-going maintenance are local responsibilities.

Tax Rehabilitation Credits and Incentives: Income tax deductions may be granted for two types of historic properties, a historically important area, or a certified historic structure. A twenty percent tax credit is given by the government for rehabilitation of certified historic structures. The Bank of America Historic Tax Credit Fund grants equity investments for the rehabilitation of historic commercial and residential properties eligible for the federal and state historic tax credit, as well as the 10% non-historic federal tax credit.

Transportation Enhancement Funds (TE): Funding for the TE program is slightly more than \$3 million dollars annually. These funds are provided in an 80/20 match, with the State paying for the majority of the project cost. Typical examples of projects eligible for TE funds include:

- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites
- Scenic or historic highway programs
- Historic preservation
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, facilities
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors
- Archaeological planning and research
- Establishment of transportation museums

### Issues, Goals, and Recommendations

The underlying issue relevant to historic and cultural resources is the threat that the Town will lose track of its historical heritage, be overrun by rampant growth, lose its unique character, and become just a faceless part of urban sprawl.

Development pressures, population growth, and the passage of time all serve to diminish individual and collective memories and to foster gradual disappearance or degradation of both tangible and intangible historic resources. Such losses will inevitably alter the character and culture of the Town in ways contrary to the wishes of its residents, as expressed by the Community Survey results.

It should be a goal of the community to preserve insofar as practical the historical foundation on which Webster's character has been built and use that foundation as a basis for guiding the evolution of the Town in the face of the inevitable growth pressures.

The Town's Annual Reports, annually through 2014, included reports from the History Committee, albeit authored in the last couple of years by members of the Historical Society. There were no such reports in 2015 or 2016, reflecting apparent inactivity by either a History

Committee or a Historical Society and raising concerns that appreciation of the Town's history might be waning. However, those concerns have been allayed by a resurrection of The Historical Society as The Society for the Preservation of the Old Meeting House. In 2017, that Society transformed into a non-profit 501(c)(3) and is working on an operational plan and an approach to fundraising for historic preservation of the Old Meeting House. They are also coordinating and promoting events and activities relevant to the Town's history, such as Old Home Day.

The Library trustees are taking an inventory of material in the Library relevant to Webster history and are reviewing the options to develop a plan to preserve the materials and documents.

The Library trustees or the Society for the Preservation of the Old Meeting House are initiating an effort to locate residents, particularly those with direct memories of Webster history, who can contribute documents and/or taped recollections to the Library's collection. A number of recorded interviews with older residents has been identified. These materials should be added to the Library's and/or the Meeting House's collection and, if possible, transcribed.

The Planning Board, in response to this Master Plan, should update the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Regulations as appropriate to protect and honor historic structures, old stone walls, and their environs.

Similarly, the Zoning Board of Adjustment should emphasize the importance of preserving and protecting historic structures and their environs when faced with issues affecting such structures.

Town Hall staff should inventory records of historical interest at Town Hall. Those found to be unique should be copied to microfilm or compact disks and those copies stored in a separate facility

The Selectmen should remain alert for any indication that the Corps of Engineers is contemplating any change in the status of the Blackwater Recreation Area and be prepared to communicate to the Corps the overwhelming opposition of Webster residents to any such change.

All Town functions should seek every opportunity to encourage, promote, recognize, and reward the spirit of volunteerism that is so important to the character and culture of the Town.

### Summary

The purpose of historic preservation is to enrich contemporary life and culture by retaining historical assets and safeguarding them for the future. Often when people think of historic resources, they think of one handsome old house, a cemetery, or site of a famous event. The historic resources of Webster are much broader than individual buildings or sites. "Historic" encompasses space as well as buildings. The term includes farms and barns, churches, town centers, streetscapes, bridges, streets, stonewalls - in short, the architectural, cultural, and aesthetic heritage of the community.

Historic resources are among a community's most significant and fragile assets. They give character and memory to a place. They are easily violated, blighted, or destroyed by any development that is insensitive to their importance. Webster should actively ensure that its historic and cultural resources are protected, enhanced, maintained, and preserved.

This Chapter seeks to promote that concept and to provide corresponding guidance to the selectmen, the land use boards, Town employees, citizens, and volunteers. Historic and cultural preservation is part of an overall plan to promote a sense of community and general welfare in Webster.

## Chapter 4 – Community Facilities and Services

### Town Roads

The diversity of roads in Webster contributes to the Town’s unique and historic atmosphere. Descriptions of Webster’s roads by classification are provided at the end of the Transportation Chapter on the Roads by Legislative Class Map.

The table below shows a total of 66.827 miles of roadway within Webster, as calculated by NHDOT. Several roads or sections are owned and maintained by the state: Battle (Rt. 127), Tyler Roads, Long Street, and parts of both White Plains and Little Hill Roads.

**Table 4.1 NHDOT Road Mileage for Webster**

Road Class	Calculated Length in Feet	System Miles
Class I (State Primary)	0.000	0.000
Class II (State Secondary)	70,076.160	13.272
Class V (Town Maintained)	169,963.200	32.190
Class VI (Town Unmaintained)	27,894.240	5.283
Private	84,912.960	16.082
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>352,846.560</b>	<b>66.827</b>

Source: NH DOT <[ftp://nhftp.admin.state.nh.us/Quarterly\\_Data\\_Snapshots/](ftp://nhftp.admin.state.nh.us/Quarterly_Data_Snapshots/)>

The Road Agent calculates approximately 31 miles of roads for Town maintenance: 19.15 miles of paved roads and 11.96 miles of gravel roads. In the Community Survey, Highway Services were ranked very important and somewhat important by 83% of the respondents.

Asphalt road maintenance involves Pavement Preservation (road sealing, grader shim, overlay) and also requires ditching, cutting and removing trees/brush and mowing. Some Webster roads will require reconstruction in the upcoming years. In 2018, the Town voted \$200,000 for a Road Preservation Expendable Trust Fund to identify the annual Pavement Preservation projects.

Gravel road preservation involves spreading of gravel as well as ditching, cutting and removing trees/brush and mowing. Several of Webster’s gravel roads are identified as Scenic Roads: Mutton Road, Gerrish Road and Bashan Hollow Road. These are protected under state statute. Protecting scenic roads was rated very important or somewhat important by 73% of the survey respondents. Maintaining the gravel roads and those with scenic attributes will further enhance the character of the community.

The table on the next page compares the Highways and Streets operating budget and the special funds for road and bridge work between 2012 and 2018. The Highway operating budget pays for road maintenance, equipment, supplies, contractors and specialized equipment rental. It has increased from \$186,438 in 2012 to \$223,938 in 2018, an overall increase of 20% in six years. It averaged \$209,402 annually in this seven-year period. Variations are due to fluctuations in materials costs and general inflation.

The Highways and Streets operating budget also includes the State Highway Block Grant for town road maintenance. This grant is calculated on miles of Class V roads within the town. On average, Webster received \$67,691 in each of the seven years between 2012 and 2018. In 2017, the state legislature announced an additional Highways Block Grant to NH towns. Webster's portion (approximately \$61,000) was used on gravel roads (not reflected in the chart below). The operating budget for roads represents about 21% average of the total operating budget and has remained level.

**Table 4.2 Highways and Streets Budget Trends, 2012-2018**

<b>Budgets and % of Budgets</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018 Proposed</b>	<b>Average between 2012-2018</b>
Highways and Streets	\$186,438	\$187,117	\$196,995	\$234,445	\$207,072	\$229,812	\$223,938	<b>\$209,402</b>
State Highway Block Grant Aid	63,048	62,735	70,308	64,205	70,393	71,550	71,600	<b>\$67,691</b>
Subtotal Highway Operating Budget	249,486	249,952	267,323	298,650	277,465	301,362	296,538	<b>\$277,254</b>
Total Operating Budget	1,189,857	1,199,886	1,381,278	1,346,253	1,350,328	1,379,863	1,458,784	<b>\$1,329,464</b>
Highway % of Operating Budget	21%	21%	19%	22%	20%	22%	20%	<b>21% Average</b>
Capital Outlay	140,000	165,606	128,736	175,000	276,145	183,633	10,000	
Capital Reserve Fund	22,500	22,500	42,500	47,500	82,500	327,000	207,500	
Expendable Trust Fund	5,000	5,000	29,500	5,000	0	0	205,000	
Subtotal Highway Special Funds	167,500	193,106	200,736	227,500	358,645	510,633	\$422,500	
Total Highway Budget (Operating Plus Special Funds)	416,986	443,058	468,059	526,150	636,110	811,995	\$719,038	
Total Overall Budget	1,525,357	1,626,912	1,832,628	1,797,603	1,878,832	2,040,257	2,074,784	
Highway % of Total Budget	27%	27%	25%	29%	34%	40%	35%	<b>31% Average</b>

*Town of Webster Annual Reports*

The second half of the chart identifies the special funding sources approved in the Town Warrant for large road projects. The Capital Outlay (COs), Capital Reserve Fund (CRFs) and Expendable Trust Funds (ETFs) are used for Road Preservation, Bridge/Culvert Improvement and Highway Equipment.

For example, \$422,500 was appropriated for the Town Roads budget in 2018. These funds included \$200,000 for a new ETF for Road Preservation for work on 13 roads; a new CRF for Road Projects of \$125,000 (Deer Meadow Road); \$75,000 for the Clothespin Bridge/culvert improvement project; \$7,500 for highway equipment and an ETF for Highway of \$5,000. It also established a new CO fund of \$295,000 for White Plains Road Culvert Replacement which is not included in the chart above because we are expecting grant funding. These special funds fluctuate each year, based upon the Town's needs. The seven-year trend shows significant increases in COs and CRFs, reflecting the deteriorating conditions of the Town roads, bridges and culverts. The costs to maintain Webster's roads and bridges continues to increase and to represent a significant part of the total Town budget (31% average of total budget over the past seven years).

Webster's bridge network is detailed in the Bridges map at the end of the Transportation Chapter. Several town bridges are "red listed" by the State. Webster is responsible for funding and repairing/replacing bridges at White Plains Road and Clothespin Bridge.

The 2016 Pavement Condition data from the State is shown on a map at the end of the Transportation Chapter. Except for a portion of Route 127 maintained by the State which is rated in good condition, the map depicts the majority of minor collector and local roads in fair, poor or very poor condition.

The critical issue of road maintenance is demonstrated in the increased road maintenance budget. Many Community Survey comments reflected support for road and bridge maintenance. Future needs for facilities and equipment may compel the Town to expand to a Highway Department and purchase town-owned equipment. A reserve fund is established in the Town budget for a Highway Department building. Major equipment purchases would presumably be accomplished via capital reserve funds established for this purpose.

#### Issues, goals and recommendations

##### 1. Establish a Webster Roads Advisory Committee

The WRAC's role would be to analyze and recommend projects for the Town's highway maintenance and operations for long term planning. The committee would comment on the management and operation of road maintenance, repair and improvement, and to evaluate project costs and contracts to ensure adequate financial resources are available. The committee would be established by the Select Board and comprised of members from the Select Board, the Road Agent, the Police Chief and other qualified individuals with technical expertise, knowledge and skills in road management.

##### 2. Adopt a Road Surface Management System.

A crucial element in road management is to develop a system for data collection and evaluation, to categorize and document road work as it is budgeted for and completed. The Road Agent has been working with data from the previous UNH study and other experts. The new RSMS program is now being coordinated by the CNHRPC and will give Towns the ability to manage their own data base. This effort should be continued and coordinated by the Select Board in conjunction with the Road Agent, the UNH Technology Transfer Center and staff from CNHRPC.

3. Several others suggestions were recommended in the Community Survey comments, and discussed by the Master Plan participants, which could be addressed by a Webster Roads Advisory Committee. In lieu of the Committee, the Select Board should:

- Study the pros and cons of a contracted Road Agent versus a Town Highway Department.
- Consider the feasibility of a combined services with other nearby Towns, as appropriate, to share resources and equipment.
- Study the need to purchase land for a new Highway Department building and/or for relocating the salt and sand storage site.

**Fire Department and Rescue Squad**

The Fire Department and Rescue Squad share with the Police Department a public safety building that was built in 2003. The Fire Department includes a 6-bay garage, office space, bathrooms with showers and storage areas. The shared part of the facility includes a kitchen, a conference room and additional storage space. There are five trucks owned by the Town and one forestry truck owned by the State. The rescue truck/ambulance is equipped with a new defibrillator and miscellaneous/mandated medical supplies and is licensed by the NH Bureau of EMS as an ambulance, if necessary, for transport.

The Fire Department and Rescue Squad response to calls over the past ten years is shown below:

**Table 4.3 Number of Incidence Response Calls**

Year	Incidence Totals Number of Response Calls	Medical Calls (incl in Incident Totals)
2005	243	
2006	207	
2007	154	
2008	170	
2009	129	
2010	174	
2011	167	
2012	148	
2013	154	
2014	176	
2015	158	99
2016	185	134
2017	200	126

*Source: Webster Fire Department*

The Webster Fire Department and Rescue Squad may be slightly understaffed in comparison to similar-sized communities. There is one fire chief, one assistant chief, two captains, three

lieutenants, eight Medical members (1 EMR, 4 EMTs, 1 AEMT/EMT Lt. and 2 Firefighter/Paramedics) 11 other members (including the Chaplin and Forestry) on the roster. These are all volunteer positions.

The Public Safety Building was designed to accommodate the Town's needs for the last ten years. It will need some replacements; which are listed on the Police Department Master Plan. A recent purchase was Engine 2 in 2015 (Engine 3 is 2007). The Tanker will need to be replaced in 2019. The 1997 Forestry truck was recently refurbished along with the ambulance in 2017.

A Capital Reserve Fund should be established to plan on purchasing a new ambulance (when needed) for the future. Current pricing is in the range of \$190,000. If we continue to work with Hopkinton Fire/Ambulance and Penacook Rescue Squad, we may consider a Rescue Truck rather than an ambulance. Warner and Bradford have purchased such vehicles at a greatly reduced price.

Air packs were recently purchased, as well as, 15 radios. Fifteen more will need to be purchased in 2019 through money allocated annually in a Capital Reserve Fund. The Department will be replacing portable radios as needed, again through the Capital Reserve Fund.

There is the ongoing need to increase the capital reserve funds. There is also the ongoing need to keep staff trained and to update equipment and medical supplies.

#### Issues, goals and recommendations

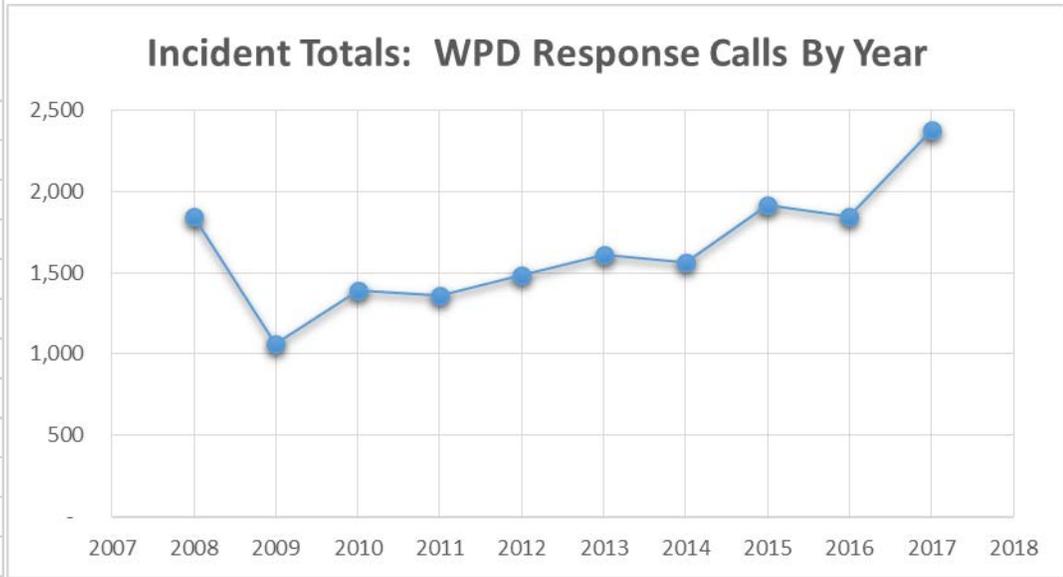
The primary issue with the present volunteer service is that there are fewer and fewer people willing and able to give the time needed to become properly trained as volunteers. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that fewer people work in town and are available for quick response in an emergency.

We continue to work with Hopkinton and Penacook Rescue to provide transport for our patients. We average two Webster Ambulance transports a year. While we have looked at moving toward a full time Fire/Medical Squad in the past, we are not at that point, nor do we anticipate the need in the near future.

#### **Police Department**

The total number of incident calls received from 2008 to 2017 is 16,453. The data shows an overall increase of about 30% over the past ten years. Calls for service are still on the rise; most of these are due from the increased traffic commuting to a place of work, school, study or residence. This increase is mainly early mornings or late afternoons during week days. An increase in criminal activity is also on the rise each and every year.

Year	Incident Totals: WPD Response Calls By Year
2008	1,843
2009	1,064
2010	1,390
2011	1,357
2012	1,483
2013	1,612
2014	1,566
2015	1,919
2016	1,843
2017	2,376
Total	16,453



Source: Webster Police Department, 2018

At present, the Police Department is patrolling most days an average of 14 to 16 hours per day. New Hampshire State Police covers the hours when an officer is not on duty, but with the shortage of officers, even the State Police cannot always cover these hours in a timely fashion. There have been times when response was delayed up to two hours or they could not respond; which is unacceptable.

Within the next five years, it may be necessary to hire an additional full-time patrol officer, as well as, added part time officers. By the ten-year mark, it is envisioned that the calls for service will be at a point where a 24-hour service will be needed.

Future equipment needs include replacement of one police cruiser no less than every other year, this being 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024. Over the last three years the Webster Police have averaged 35,838 patrol miles per year within the Town. What is not taken into consideration is hours logged on a patrol vehicle. For example, the 2014 Webster police cruiser has 74,389 miles on it, and the vehicle's hours meter shows 3,201 hours. Ford Motor Company states those hours logged is equal to 33 miles per hour; with this the vehicle has 105,633 miles on the drive train. Portable radios are outdated at this time, regular software updates to the IMC system is now a yearly item, and department weapons are now over ten years old and should be replaced soon. In today's age, the Town should consider procuring cameras for all patrol vehicles. This not only protects the officer from false claims but protects the citizens should the officer make a bad judgment call.

The Webster Public Safety complex has needed repairs this year. At this time, the concrete pad in front of the Fire Department should be replaced ASAP. We need to expect the heating and cooling systems being replaced over the next five years.

### Issues, goals and recommendations

It is recommended that the Webster Select Board work in close partnership with the Police Department to monitor calls for service, hours of response and workload in order to evaluate Police Department personnel needs on an annual basis.

It is recommended the Police Department seek grants and submit funding requests for future equipment needs, including but not limited to police cruisers, portable radios, software updates, department weapons and cameras, as part of the CIP budget process.

It is recommended the Police Chief submits funding requests for the repairs and improvements to the Public Safety Building annually.

### Schools

Webster is a member of the Merrimack Valley School District, which includes the towns of Webster, Boscawen, Loudon, Penacook and Salisbury. Eleven School Board members, two from each town in the District and one member-at-large, decide the policies and direct the Superintendent of Schools to act on those policies. The Webster Elementary School offers programs for children in grades Kindergarten to 5. The Merrimack Valley Middle School, in Penacook, offers programs for students in grades 6 to 8. The Merrimack Valley High School, in Penacook, offers programs for students in grades 9 to 12.

The Webster Elementary School is a 9 classroom and half gymnasium building which sits on a 3.04 acre lot. This lot only meets State guidelines of 5 acres when the abutting soccer field and baseball field are added in. The Webster Elementary School employs 6 full-time classroom teachers, a school nurse, an administrative assistant and a custodian. The School shares a principal, reading specialist, special education teacher, and other support staff with other Merrimack Valley School District schools.

The School District's mission statement reads: *ensuring that all students are provided with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to prepare them for college, career, and citizenship.* The Merrimack Valley School District Long Range Plan for 2018 to 2023 includes two focus areas. Focus Area #1 relates to communication. Focus Area #2 relates to curriculum. More information is available [www.mvsdpride.org](http://www.mvsdpride.org).

Merrimack Valley School District Capital Improvement Plans show two Webster Elementary School projects. One is security improvements scheduled for 2019 to 2020. The other is grounds and landscaping work also scheduled for 2019 to 2020.

The Webster Elementary School is presently being prepared to be a Town emergency shelter. The School District is planning on purchasing an all-school generator during school year 2019 to 2020.

Over the last five years, Merrimack Valley School District enrollment has decreased by about 1.5% per year. Projected enrollments, according to data provided by the Superintendent of Schools, are expected to stay consistent for all grades.

### Issues, goals and recommendations

Webster's needs are being met at present by the Merrimack Valley School District. Continuing to be a member of the District is advantageous to the Town for many reasons. This connection to regional services allows for the sharing of administrative costs, sharing of part-time staff with other schools, improved staff development for teachers, less costly special education placements, and the purchasing of materials and supplies in bulk.

While the present elementary school facility is adequate for the time being, it is recommended that the Select Board, Planning Board, and School Board Representatives continue to closely monitor population trends and projections and prepare for any future expansion requirements. It is also recommended that if abutting Town property becomes available, that the property should be offered to the School District first.

### **Town Hall Facilities**

The Webster Town Hall is housed in a historic building comprised of a former church and the Grange Hall, built in 1884. The two buildings were linked together in 1990 with the Town administrative offices on the lower level. The facility contains 10,500 square feet of space, providing office space for the Administrative Assistant to the Select Board, the Land Use Coordinator, the Financial Administrator, the Tax Collector, the Supervisors of the Checklist, the Treasurer and the Town Clerk. There is also a conference room, a fire proof "vault" room to maintain vital records and a utility/computer room. Additionally, the building contains a kitchen and a dining room on the lower level and a public library and Grange Hall auditorium with seating capacity for 360 people on the upper level.

### Issues, goals and recommendations

The Town Hall Facilities may not be adequate to meet the needs of town growth. There may need for additional office space, a larger Grange Hall, and an expanded library.

The Select Board may consider designating a Committee to study the need for additional space to be comprised of staff, elected officials and residents. In addition to serving as a secondary shelter in the event of an emergency, the Grange Hall may also serve as a location for recreational programs for the elderly. Relative to office space, the staff has identified a more efficient way to store supplies to be implemented in 2018. This will also allow for the organization of records retained in the vault room. Also planned for 2018 is the replacement of old file cabinets with new fire proof file cabinets in each office. Time should be allocated annually for staff to work on improving the physical space of the office building to allow for the best utilization of space to meet the needs of the Town.

### **Town Hall Services**

The Town of Webster employs six (6) staff members and three (3) elected officials to provide Town services. These positions include Administrative Assistant (AA) to the Select Board, Financial Administrator, Land Use Coordinator, Human Services Director (currently filled by the AA), Town Hall Custodian, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Deputy Tax Collector (currently filled by the Town Clerk), Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer and Planning and Zoning Board Secretary (currently filled by the Land Use Coordinator).

The staff provides support to the Select Board, the Planning Board and the Zoning Board, which guide and manage Town policies and operations. The Town office staff and volunteer boards utilize the available manpower and resources to their fullest to handle the administration of Town business. In recent years, the increase in growth, the extra work generated by state mandates from the Department of Revenue Administration, and the increasing complexity of regulatory and enforcement issues make it a challenge for staff and volunteer officers to accomplish necessary long-range planning in addition to the day-to-day operations of the Town.

#### Issues, goals, and recommendations

The Select Board, employees and elected officials need to review staffing levels and the roles and responsibilities of those working for the Town on an annual basis to identify best practices and training opportunities to remain current. Additionally, advances in automation should be recognized, planned for and implemented as needed. In recent years, the duties of office staff have been realigned to meet the needs of the Town and to take advantage of the strengths each employee brings. Automation has also been upgraded; the Town installed a new digital phone system and developed a new Town website in 2017. A new accounting software package will be implemented in 2018. Both the Capital Improvement Plan and the annual budget process facilitate this continued review and discussion.

The Town may consider the option of studying the pros and cons of alternative forms of town government, including the Town Manager form of government, in the future. A Committee designated by the Select Board to include various stakeholders may facilitate this discussion.

#### **The Webster Free Public Library**

There are currently 515 registered patrons of the Webster Free Public Library. In 2017, users made 2,292 visits to the library and checked out 5,401 books, audiobooks, DVDs, museum passes, and magazines. The library belongs to the New Hampshire Downloadable Books consortium, and our users downloaded 1,362 audiobooks and 626 eBooks. The library owns 10,155 books, 731 DVDs, and 452 audiobooks.

The library hosts a monthly book discussion group for adults, a six-week Summer Reading Program for preschoolers through elementary school aged children, and the Webster Elementary School students visit the library each year just before summer vacation. The library shows free movies in the meeting hall next door and hosts several programs each year. It offers a book delivery service to the home bound and provides small gift bags for new babies.

There are five computers at the library. One is a dedicated library catalog computer, two are for public use, one is at the checkout desk, and the fifth is in the Director's office.

Library funding comes from Town funds authorized at Town Meeting, income from a bequest, and donations. Over the years the library has also received grants for computerization, books, and programming from a variety of sources including the Federal Library Services and Technology Act, Children's Literacy Foundation, the Brownstone Book Foundation, and several Kids, Books, and the Arts grants distributed by the New Hampshire State Library.

The library is open 22 hours each week. It is overseen by three elected trustees. One paid employee works most of the hours. A rotating group of volunteers staff the library on Wednesday evenings. Other volunteers include the occasional high school student seeking community service hours, parents and other residents who provide the entertainment and refreshments at the Summer Reading Program story times, and “Adopt-a-Shelf” participants who help keep the bookshelves in order.

The library is housed in one room, with an approximate size of 1,435 square feet. A space needs assessment gives a conservative estimate that 2,208 square feet is needed, but a recent library consultant was unable to provide suggestions as to how this extra space could be found at the present location.

### Issues, goals and recommendations

*To continue to be a community hub for the town of Webster by providing social and cultural interactions*

- Foster community partnerships to enhance the offerings that the library; including working with the Webster Conservation Commission and other town entities.
- Present at least two community events each year.
- Continue the summer reading program.
- Seek grants to fund speakers and other programs.
- Continue outreach efforts for homebound patrons

*To enhance programming to reflect the needs and interests of the community*

- Host a variety of events for all ages that expand on the interests of the community
- Investigate options for a meeting room.
- Develop opportunities for ongoing library events such a coffee hours and volunteer work.

*To communicate and publicize library resources, programs, and services in a consistent manner.*

- Develop a Facebook page and update it in a timely manner.
- Create a welcome packet with an overview of the library collections and services
- Develop a marketing plan for the library.
- Update the library website with timely information.
- Post the monthly trustee minutes in the library and on the website.
- Post the Library Director’s monthly report on the library website, Facebook, and in the *Grapevine*.
- Expand the library email list.

*To strengthen the collections in a variety of media to meet the continuously evolving needs of the diverse users.*

- Identify and fill gaps in the collection using the results of a recently completed user survey.
- Continue the Museum Pass program.
- Monitor the statistics and allocate budget monies accordingly.
- Organize collections to encourage exploration of the library’s offerings.

*To anticipate and support the changes in both technology and types of media in the future.*

- Seek grants or other funding for new technology
- Identify emerging trends in technology that further the library's mission
- Update technology as needed.

### **Water Supply**

Most Webster residents obtain their water from individual, on-site private wells and relevant issues related to groundwater protection and water management are addressed in the Natural Resources chapter of this plan.

The Pillsbury Lake development has a public water system managed by the Pillsbury Lake Water District. See the Pillsbury Lake section in the Housing Chapter of the Master Plan.

### **Transfer Station/Recycling Center**

The Hopkinton/Webster Municipal Solid Waste Facilities have served both towns for over 40 years at their current location while adapting to community needs. The 150-acre site now includes a capped, monitored, & maintained closed landfill, a Community Water System, which serves the local neighborhood, a Transfer Station for household trash collection, a Recycling Center, and the infrastructure for an array of proper disposal programs. The Transfer Station and Landfill Closure Bonds are all paid off. Webster contributes its share for the operation and improvement of the Transfer Station equipment and facility.

A crash in the global market for recyclables is forcing communities to make decisions about whether they can afford to keep recycling. The problem stems from a policy shift by China, that revised its standards for recycled materials. Many towns across NH have adopted single-stream recycling, but this method of collection is becoming less sustainable and less profitable. In New Hampshire, some towns now send all their trash and recyclable materials to an incinerator in Concord because the cost of recycling grew too high. Several cities and towns are no longer accepting glass products.

### **Issues, goals and recommendations**

Continue to work through the Hopkinton/Webster Refuse Disposal Committee to identify alternative strategies to manage the recycling crisis

Develop a contingency plan in the event there are changes in the administration of the Hopkinton/Webster transfer station.

### **Cemeteries**

The Cemetery Trustees manage three active cemeteries: Beaver Dam, Courser Hill, and Riverdale. There is one inactive cemetery on Clough and Sanborn Hill Road. Webster residents and others are offered lots with a cost for a deed and a cost for burial. Costs vary due to type of burial. Cemetery Trustees encourage people to pay for a lot in advance through a trust fund.

The cemeteries are managed by three trustees who are elected to a three-year term. Maintenance work, such as mowing, is handled by an independent contractor.

The Cemetery Trustees create and present annual budgets to the Select Board, and funds are voted upon and approved at Town Meeting.

#### Issues, goals, and recommendations

The Cemetery Trustees will continue to manage the cemeteries in future years in a manner similar to the present. The Trustees plan to implement an automated data base to document the burial plots and catalog the identity and location of the individuals buried there.

It is recommended the Trustees research and consider the requirements to allow for “green burials” in Webster.

#### **Webster Youth Soccer**

The mission of Webster Youth Soccer (WYS) is to provide a quality soccer program for all youth participants; to teach soccer skills, encourage active, healthful participation and to instill good sportsmanship. The WYS program’s goal is to develop, promote and administer the games of outdoor soccer for youth from grades Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade living in the Town of Webster.

Once part of a town-sponsored recreation program, WYS has been run as a separate organization since 2008. In 2015, WYS formally registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax exempt organization. This change was made to expand annual sponsorship and funding options for the program. WYS is now served by an independent board of directors and is guided by WYS By Laws registered with the NH Charitable Trust Division.

WYS and the town of Webster have maintained their agreement of use of the town soccer field that is adjacent to the Webster Elementary School. The town of Webster, in conjunction with their agreement with MVSD, continues to provide general maintenance for the town-owned field and lighting structures. WYS oversees maintenance of soccer-related field structures including goals, nets and storage shed. WYS itself organizes and coordinates the season, including recruitment and training of volunteers, registration of players, purchase of uniforms and field equipment such as balls, netting and field paint.

The Town of Webster continues to support Webster Youth Soccer with annual sponsorship donations to the organization, and during project-specific initiatives.

#### Issues, goals and recommendations

- Complete necessary renovations and upgrades to the town soccer field including but not limited to field repairs, installation of irrigation system, etc.
- Install a permanent fence structure at the south end of the field behind the soccer goal to eliminate loss of balls over embankment.

#### **Major Electric Utilities**

Electric service in Webster is provided by Unitil and by Eversource (formerly Public Service of NH). Both companies offer both delivery and supply services. Deregulation has allowed Webster residents to opt for other competitive supply sources.

A major, high power A/C transmission line and a separate D/C transmission line traverse the Town from north to south near the Boscawen line.

### Recommendations

The Select Board should monitor the evolution of relevant regulations and, take whatever actions are deemed appropriate to ensure that the best interests of Webster residents are well served.

### Solar Panel Installation

As reported in Chapter 3, Webster now generates electrical power with a municipal photovoltaic panel array, located in a fenced enclosure just east of the soccer field. It is a 'grid-connected' system, meaning that the power generated is fed into the Unitil electrical grid, not directly to Town facilities. Those Town facilities then draw power from the grid as needed.

There are four panel racks, each carrying 36 panels for a total of 144. The rated output of the system is 53.3 kilowatts. The system is sized to generate an amount of electrical power annually that approximates the annual needs of all Town facilities.

The installation was partially funded by a bank loan with a 7-year payment schedule. Annual loan payments will be roughly comparable to what the Town would otherwise pay for electric bills. Once the loan is paid off, the Town will benefit from nearly free electrical power, reaping substantial annual cost savings.

System performance is tracked continuously via the internet. Interested persons can monitor that performance on the town's website.

The solar panels have a manufacturer's warranty of 25 years. Little maintenance is anticipated other than occasional vegetation control.

### Recommendations

The Select Board and the Energy Committee should jointly monitor the performance of the system and arrange for any needed maintenance.

The panel array's proximity to the elementary school and the opportunity for on-line performance monitoring should be seen as a teaching opportunity.

### Telephone, Television, and Internet Services

Webster is served by TDS Telecom. That company has recently upgraded their system to make fiber optic service available to almost all Webster residents. This new technology provides enhanced land-line telephone service, access to a wide range of standard-resolution and HD television channels, and high-speed internet access.

Two cell towers are located in the town: a U.S. Cellular tower accessed from Dustin Road and an AT&T tower on Pearson Hill. Cell phone service is available via these towers and others in nearby towns.

### Issues, goals, and recommendations

The technology in these areas changes rapidly and dramatically. High speed internet, in particular, can be crucial to the in-home businesses that Webster is eager to encourage.

Cell phone service in at least some parts of Webster is spotty and unreliable.

For telephone, television and internet services, the Select Board, by means of their franchising authority or otherwise, should look for opportunities to add additional cell towers to the Town. Locations identified include Town Hall and the Safety complex.

### **Hazard Mitigation Plan**

The Town of Webster's Hazard Mitigation Plan is updated every five years. The Town's Hazard Mitigation Committee reformed in 2017 to rewrite the Plan into a more concise format and to incorporate the newest material required by FEMA in addition to updating the Town's newest information since 2012.

The Town of Webster has historically experienced severe damage from natural hazards and it continues to be vulnerable to the effects of hazards profiled in the 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, including but not limited to, flooding, high wind events, severe winter weather and fire, resulting in loss of property and life, economic hardship and threats to public health and safety. The updated Plan specifically addresses hazard mitigation strategies and Plan maintenance procedures. It recommends several hazard mitigation actions (projects) that will provide mitigation for specific natural hazards that impact the Town of Webster with the effect of protecting people and property from loss associated with those hazards. The adoption of this Plan in 2018 will make the Town of Webster eligible for funding to alleviate the effects of future hazards.

The Hazard Mitigation Committee, in its update, identified three Hazard Mitigation Plan Goals:

1. To reduce the risk of injury and the loss of life in the Town from natural disasters and impacts from secondary hazards.
2. To reduce the risk of potential damages in Town to public and private property, critical facilities, infrastructure, historic resources and the natural environment from natural hazards and disasters.
3. To promote public awareness of hazard mitigation planning and activities to the Town's residents, visitors and businesses.

In each of these three areas, the Hazard Mitigation Committee recommended several Mitigation Actions, including, but not limited to:

- Upgrade Clothespin Bridge over the Blackwater River to protect from floods and erosion.
- Install lightning rods and grounding equipment at the Town Office and Public Safety Building to redirect lightning strikes.
- Install a dry hydrant on Deer Meadow Road at Little Pond Brook to provide fire suppression.
- Upgrade the Pillsbury Lake Village District water lines to protect from breakage during earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters.
- Purchase land and construct a new Town salt/sand shed to protect the quality of the Blackwater River.

- Develop a policy between the Town and Pillsbury Lake Community to communicate about Pillsbury Lake problems and environmental issues.
- Develop a public education program for Blackwater River shoreland landowners of the flotation risks of unsecured tanks, objects and agricultural supplies and provide resources for anchoring contents to protect against floods and dam releases.
- Develop a public education program informing residents about available emergency notification systems.

As noted in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, these mitigation projects represent the best-case scenarios for completion. There are many barriers to successful coordination and implementation of a project of this scope, including a lack of funding, uncertainty of political and local support for specific projects, limited staff time and dwindling volunteer support to help work on the action plan. These issues all reduce the Town's ability to complete successful hazard mitigation projects within the Plan's 5-year life span. However, the Hazard Mitigation Committee meets on a quarterly basis each year to identify and complete those actions deemed feasible. According to the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, Webster leads the way in its successful implementation of actions identified in the Plan as compared to our neighboring communities. Much like the Master Plan and the Capital Improvement Plan, the Hazard Mitigation Plan is a "living" document, to be reviewed and updated annually.

## Chapter 5 – Natural Resources: Conservation, Preservation, Open Space and Water Quality

### Introduction and Purpose

Conservation Commissions are local conservation groups that study and protect natural resources. We volunteer our time to develop long-term plans and strategies to protect important places in Webster. We work to:

- Protect drinking water sources such as wells, aquifers, recharge areas and wetlands
- Educate the public about natural resources
- Manage town lands for timber production, recreation and wildlife
- Advise other boards on issues pertaining to the town’s natural resources in order to guide their decision-making.
- Preserve wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors, as well as, open space
- Provide educational programs and hikes
- Work with the Department of Environmental Services to provide local comment on wetland permits. (NHACC, 2018) The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

*It is the goal of the Webster Conservation Commission (WCC) to ensure that Webster grow and develop within its ecological limits and use our natural resources in ways that sustain these resources for future generations.*

“Most land in Webster is undeveloped and wooded. Much of the undeveloped land is devoted to agricultural or forestry uses. The development that does exist is almost entirely residential,” (Community Survey, 1992). Although this still holds true today, our population has grown from 1,403 residents and 586 homes in 1992 to 1,872 residents and 924 homes in 2018. With the proposed widening of I-93, development pressure is likely to intensify.

The 2017 Community Survey conducted by the Planning Board demonstrates the concern Webster residents have for the protection of our wildlands, wetlands and wildlife. Of the 203 people who responded to the Community survey, more than 80% rated the following as either important or very important:

- 88% our small town, rural character.
- 87% our natural resources
- 81% our scenic areas
- 80% preservation of open space (undeveloped land)
- 84% increase in open space/conserved land

We interpret this as a mandate to protect and conserve our natural resources and rural character. Our mosaic of forests, from early successional to mature stands, our farms, fields and wetlands support a thriving diversity of plants and wildlife. Equally as important, Webster is blessed with a high quality of drinking water and endless recreation opportunities and natural beauty.

## Preserving our Soils

Soils are key because their composition determines forest and ecosystem health, productivity of farmland and the success of agriculture in Webster. Soils are possibly the most neglected and least understood component of the environment. The Natural Resource Conservation Service classifies soils as either Forest or Farmland though all Farmland soils are also considered important forest soils. Farmland soils have a range of characteristics that make them important for the production of food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. Forest soils range in their capacity to support shade-tolerant species with the most fertile soils supporting shade-tolerant hardwood such as beech and sugar maple and the least fertile soils supporting shade-tolerant softwood such as white pine, red pine, and hemlock. The connection of soil types to the general health and well-being of people has been mapped in America, with overlays showing poor soils coinciding with poor health.

Soils control the velocity and quantity of runoff from snow and rain. Soils differ in their ability to allow infiltration and bind pollutants. Highly permeable sandy soils, common in Webster, allow water to percolate rapidly through the ground. This means pollutants may enter aquifers easily. Soils with abundant organic materials, such as forest topsoil, help retain and cleanse water that flows through it. Soils with high clay content have poor infiltration that may cause runoff directly into wetlands or surface water. Soils also determine the health of our forests and fields, and the time it takes to grow good, marketable lumber. Some Webster soils severely limit septic tank absorption fields. This is due to steep slopes, shallow depth to bedrock or shallow depth to water table. (See Map 3, Soils: Forest and Farm Resources, at end of Chapter.)

## Sand, Gravel, Glacial Erratics

There are many geological resources of particular importance in Webster. The two most prevalent are: **Sand** and **Gravel Ridges** which are evidence of glaciers. The economic value of sand and gravel as construction materials must be balanced with wildlife values such as protecting preferred nesting habitat for turtles and bird species such as bank swallows and kingfishers. There are several inactive sand and gravel pits in Webster. These highly permeable, sandy soils are commonly found over aquifers, close to and often within a few feet of the water table. Unused gravel pits can be reclaimed by allowing natural vegetation to grow, by planting red pines, and/or certain warm season grasses that have been proven to grow well on abandoned gravel pits needing to be reclaimed.

**Glacial Erratics** are huge boulders left by glaciers. They are part of Webster's land history and are scenic attributes on the landscape.

Continuing development threatens to impact natural resources. There is increased pressure to build on land previously regarded as unsuitable for building. Thus, the capability of our soils to absorb and filter run-off from septic systems, rain and snow must be considered when housing and road development occurs.

### **Steep Slopes and Danger from Erosion**

Slope is the ratio of change in vertical elevation in relation to the change in horizontal distance, multiplied by 100 percent. Slope is a very critical consideration in land use planning because it affects the capability and suitability of land to support development. Environmental impacts include runoff, erosion, sedimentation, and pollution. Of the individuals who answered the community survey, 88% felt erosion control is important or very important. Stormwater management was very important or important to 79% of the survey respondents. The majority (62%) felt that steep slopes and ridges are important or very important.

Steep slopes provide den habitat for certain wildlife species. Enriched habitats with unusual or rare and threatened plants are often found growing below steep slopes and can be destroyed.

It is important to control development on steep slopes during and after construction in order to assure emergency vehicle access.

The following is an informal inventory, estimated from a study of the U.S.G.S., 7.5 minute series, topographical map.

- West slope of Sweatts Hill down to Lake Winnepocket
- West side of the Blackwater River, a mile+ down-river from Riverdale Natural Area
- Ox Pond Hill
- Rattlesnake Hill, between Tyler Rd. and Gerrish Rd.
- East sides of Chase Hill and Putney Hill
- West sides of Round Hill and Rattlesnake Hill, just north of Blackwater Dam
- East side of Pillsbury Lake on the hunting preserve.

### **Recommendations:**

- Develop a map that highlights all areas with slopes greater than 15%, and greater than 25%.
- Amend section 4.3 in the Webster Subdivision regulations to prohibit building on slopes greater than 25%.

### **Surface Waters**

The results of the community survey show that 98% and 97% of the survey respondents value streams/streams and lakes/ponds as very important or important, respectively.

Webster has two large rivers, two major stream systems, and nine lakes/ponds, as well as numerous small brooks. (See Map 1: Water Resources, at end of Chapter).

**Warner River** is undammed and natural; it flows through the southwestern corner of town. This year (2018) the Warner River became a Designated River under RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Program, for its outstanding natural and cultural resources.

**Blackwater River** flows from the Salisbury border south through the center of town into Hopkinton and to the Contoocook River. The Blackwater River is a Class A (NH's cleanest water designation) river with two major whitewater areas that attract canoe and kayak races every year. One whitewater area is at Sweatt's Mill where the New England Division Canoe and Kayak Championships are held; the other is at Snyder's Mill. The latter rapids have been used in U.S.

Olympic kayak slalom trials as they are one of the most challenging natural rapids in the country. The rest of the Blackwater River is mostly flat water, popular with canoeists, fishermen and swimmers. The WCC hopes to enter the Blackwater River in the Rivers and Management Protection Program.

Along the town's eastern border with Boscawen, Beaverdam Brook becomes Pond Brook which flows through Pillsbury Lake and then becomes Deer Meadow Brook. These brooks create some of Webster's most valuable wildlife habitat. Four ponds within the Beaverdam Brook watershed, with unusual bog plants growing in floating peat mats, are:

- Couch Pond off Long Street, along Beaverdam Brook,
- Huntoon Bog Pond east of Dingit's Corner,
- Isaac Walton Pond south of Dingit's Corner
- Mud Pond on the Warner boundary and on conserved land.

Knight's Meadow Brook flows through Knight's Meadow Marsh and pond, and joins Schoodac Brook, which begins at the outlet of Lake Winnepocket and flows westward to the Warner River. Schoodac Brook provides crucial habitat for endangered turtle species (as shown in over fifty years of research by David Carroll of Warner).

**Lake Winnepocket** (229 acres) is noted for the clarity and quality of its water, nesting common loons, ice fishing, boating, fishing, and swimming.

**Walker Pond** (190 acres) adjacent to marshes where loons and ducks nest; high water quality.

**Trumbull Pond** (83 acres) – undeveloped, with views of Mt. Kearsarge; turtle habitat.

**Pillsbury Lake** (67 acres) – highly developed, attractive, popular fishing/boating lake.

**Ox Pond** (8 acres) – undeveloped, Webster's only hilltop pond; beaver and other wildlife; popular with ice fisherman, by landowner permission.

#### Public Access

Public access to the **Blackwater River** was guaranteed by the acquisition in 1991 of the 52-acre Riverdale Natural Area located on Tyler Road. Other public access to the Blackwater exists at William Pearson Memorial Park and at road crossings within the Blackwater Reservoir managed by the Army Corps of Engineers

**Riverdale Natural Area**, which preserves approximately a mile of river frontage and provides access from Tyler Road for hand-carried canoes and kayaks.

Public access to the **Warner River** is possible near a power line crossing on Dustin Road.

The Boscawen Water Precinct Lands provide access to **Walker Pond** which can be reached off of Water Street on Chadwick Hill Road. Pond Hill Road off of White Plains Road provides access to **Lake Winnepocket** boat launch. **Pillsbury Lake** access site on Deer Meadow Road provides a boat launch. **Trumbull Pond** can be accessed through the Ausbon Sargent Land Trust on White Plains Road.

### Serious Concerns

Development of currently undeveloped land along surface water bodies is a concern. The results of the survey show that 79% of the respondents value shoreline protection. A study of Webster tax maps shows that much land on the Blackwater River is at present time undeveloped and unprotected by conservation easements. Much of this land is over aquifers. With many potentially buildable lots on Webster's lakes, ponds, rivers and streams, development on Webster shorelands could rise sharply at any time. Water quality is affected by runoff from the impervious surfaces of roofs and pavement.

### Shoreland Buffers

Naturally vegetated buffers reduce the adverse effects of human activities on surface water by protecting water quality and reducing direct human disturbance from dumped debris, noise, pets, lawn fertilizers and many other possible effects. Buffers protect and provide wildlife habitat and maintain aesthetic diversity and recreational value. Buffers prevent or reduce algae blooms in water, filter pathogens and reduce acid rain. (Refer to the following link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/content/bountiful-benefits-wetland-buffers> for a more complete description of the many benefits of shoreland buffers.)

### Recommendations

- Pass Zoning Ordinance that requires buffer of at least 125', a naturally vegetated upland adjacent to a wetland or surface water, with setbacks between buildings and the mean high water mark. These buffers could be established for specified Surface Water Resources.
- Enforce compliance with NH's Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (RSA 483-b) a required part of a building permit application for land within the Act's protection zone.
- Ask the Select Board to include the Conservation Commission in an advisory capacity on all building permit application reviews.
- Ensure that relevant DES Fact Sheets be given to all applicants for building permits.
- Purchase land/easements/access along public water bodies to provide shoreland buffers ensuring protection of wildlife habitat, water quality and natural beauty.
- Implement a plan to prevent invasive plant species such as milfoil from entering ponds, using, where boat traffic is heavy enough to warrant action, available state programs. Post milfoil warning signs.
- Support conservation subdivision zoning requiring a percentage of total site area for common open space not to include wetlands or water bodies.
- Nominate the Blackwater River into the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program to protect this exceptional natural resource; the river is a unique feature of Webster's rural character and flows over an aquifer providing clean drinking water to many residents.

## Wetlands

Wetlands are also recognized as very important or important by 81% of the survey respondents. A wetland has three components: hydrology, wetland vegetation, and wetland soils. The common definition of a wetland is: "...an area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal conditions does support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands include but are not limited to swamps, marshes, bogs, fens and similar areas." Vernal pools are omitted from this definition but are of value as crucial wildlife habitat.

### **Layperson's Quick and Easy Guide to Wetlands and Vernal Pools**

- *Swamp*: a shaded wetland with trees or shrubs (woody plants)
- *Marsh*: an open, sunny wetland with cattails, grasses, and wildflowers (herbaceous plants)
- *Bog/Fen*: contains a floating mat of peat, on which grows certain uncommon plants and shrubs. A fen has an inlet and outlet stream; a bog does not.
- *Vernal Pool*: usually a shallow woodland pool that may become dry in summer. Vernal pools are ecologically significant because they provide critical habitat for salamanders and other amphibians.

The Webster Roadside Wetlands Inventory (conducted in the dry summer and fall of 1999) gives data and photographic evidence on 113 wetlands: 63 wooded swamps, 17 marshes, 16 swamps (of which 11 were clearly vernal pool habitats), 7 wetlands with both swamp and marsh vegetation, 8 wet soil areas (not identified as wetland types as they lacked vegetation), and 4 small ponds. The Inventory shows 35 stream crossings by roads, and 5 bridges. More than 88 culverts connect and permit water to flow between wetlands crossed by roads. Many more wetlands, identified as such by hydrology, wetland vegetation and soils, exist in Webster.

There are many significant wetlands in Webster which are shown on Map 1: Water Resources.

### Significant wetlands in Webster

- Knight's Meadow Marsh
- Wetlands within the Leonard Wildlife Management Area
- Marshes between Couch and Walker Ponds
- Ponds that contain floating bog mats (Couch, Trumbull and Ox Pond, for example)
- Swamps and marshes over 10 acres in size
- Vernal Pools, critical habitat for amphibians and other wildlife.

### Recommendations

- Amend subdivision regulations to require that at least one acre of contiguous land be dry and not wetland and that all wetland soils be delineated on the subdivision plan.
- Reexamine current regulations regarding septic systems and surface/storm water run-off due to development to see if they need to be updated.
- Identify ecologically significant wetlands and educate landowners about their value

- Identify ecologically significant vernal pools and educate landowners on their value
- Require buffers appropriate for the size and significance of the waterbody.

### **Drinking Water and Aquifer Protection**

Protection of volume and quality of surface and subsurface water is a top priority for our town. Survey results show that 93% of the respondents rate aquifers/groundwater as very important or important.

Webster has several stratified drift aquifers. Stratified Drift Aquifers consists of sorted, unconsolidated layers of sand and gravel that are saturated with a usable quantity of water.

Two are located beneath the Blackwater River. One runs from the north end of town southward to Dingit’s Corner, the other begins in the Cold Brook watershed and runs south between Tyler Road and the west side of the Blackwater River to the Hopkinton Town Line. Other aquifers are shown on Map 1: Water Resources.

Most residents have private wells. However, a number of public wells exist at Sweatt’s Mill, Cozy Pond Campground, The Austin Home, Westwind Village and Pillsbury Lake District.

### **Potential Water Pollution Sources**

The two main sources of drinking water and aquifer pollution are failing septic systems and commercial/industrial sites that store or use chemicals.

Throughout Webster, wastewater is disposed of in individual subsurface systems. The proper maintenance of septic systems is crucial to the health of our water bodies and drinking water supplies/groundwater.

The use of sewage sludge or “biosolids” to reclaim gravel pits is a high-risk practice, as sewage sludge contains hundreds of mostly unregulated toxic substances that can seep into aquifers and be costly or impossible to remove.

### **Pillsbury Lake**

The Pillsbury Lake District has its own regulations for development and its own water commission. A community water system serves district residents and appears to be adequate for the current population. However, homes that were on seasonal are now year-round, increasing impact on septic systems, soils and drinking water. The same holds true for Lake Winnepocket.

### **Recommendations**

- Review the Aquifer Protection District regulations to determine whether additional protections should be enacted, including whether additional potentially polluting uses should be prohibited within the District.
- Adopt a local ordinance to protect drinking water and prevent or limit commercial groundwater withdrawals.
- Educate the public about and enforce the New Hampshire Shoreland Protection Act.
- Use the Groundwater Protection Ordinance and Drinking Water and Aquifer Map to guide development decisions.

- Educate the public on the Groundwater Protection Ordinance (Art. XII of the Zoning Ordinance)
- Study ways of reducing the density of development within the Groundwater Protection District.
- Adopt regulations to control commercial groundwater withdrawals.
- Consider ways to preserve and buy land that the state has identified as a potential site for a public well, such as the area downstream from Snyder’s Mill.
- Prevent the use of Sewage sludge used to “reclaim” a gravel pit in Webster.
- Provide information to those working in gravel pits to avoid destruction of known nests of wildlife dependent upon these sandy habitats for breeding and nesting success.

### **Farmland**

According to our 2017 Community Survey, 90% of the respondents indicated protection of fields and agriculture as important or very important to Webster. In responses to another question, 56% of respondents listed preservation of agricultural land a priority, recognizing that our agricultural heritage is intrinsically linked to the character of our town and the values inherent in open space and good soil. (See Map 3, Soils, at the end of the Chapter).

Farming includes a wide variety of activities these days, such as growing plants in greenhouses and trees on farms, beekeeping, producing maple syrup, as well as livestock, dairy and horse farms. Farmland is important to Webster because it sustains the Town’s highly-valued rural atmosphere and provides local employment.

### **Recommendations**

Continue to encourage the preservation of farmland through the State’s Current Use tax program, Current Use Discretionary Easements on lots under ten acres, and through conservation/agricultural easements.

### **Wildlife Habitat Management**

Wildlife is important to the people in Webster and essential to Webster’s historical and present rural character. Nearly 90% of the survey respondents felt that wildlife habitat management is very important or important. Ninety-two percent of the respondents felt that fish and wildlife management is very important or important.

Hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing are popular in Webster. Wildlife requires space, food, and specific habitats. Critical to healthy wildlife populations are habitat diversity, wetland protection, wildlife corridors, forested and contiguous open (undeveloped) space. Along Beaverdam Brook are some of Webster’s most ecologically rich wetlands. Many wildlife species have been seen and/or heard in these marshes including coyotes, beaver, bobcat, otter, fisher, weasel, moose, owls, hawks, and ospreys. Schoodac Brook and Knight’s Meadow Marsh are ecological resources named by the CNHRPC Open Space Plan (2002) as being particularly important to the town, along with Walker Pond, Dingit’s Corner’s two nearby bog ponds, and Wildlife Management areas. (See Map 2: Wildlife Habitat/Forest Cover).

**Wildlife Corridors** are defined as contiguous areas of undeveloped land used by wildlife traveling between habitats. Such corridors are critical for the biological success of animals, particularly large mammals. (See Map 2: Wildlife Habitat/Forest Cover.)

Because Webster is defined, in large part, by its rural character, wildlife moves freely through town and relies on our diversity of habitats for denning and nesting needs. A “corridor” in our case may encompass the entire town, underscoring the importance of maintaining open space.

The following wildlife corridors have been observed in Webster:

- The Class A Blackwater River – A unique town feature, this major riparian corridor is presently (but not permanently) protected in the north of town as government flood control land, and areas that are permanently protected by two (2) town parks and several conservation easements below the Blackwater Dam. From the Blackwater Dam downstream to Clothspin Bridge, the river’s western shore is developed. The corridor is forested on the river’s eastern shore from the Paul P. Mock Memorial Forest to Clothspin Bridge, where the river corridor is interrupted by development along Frost Lane on the west side and the paved road on the east side. The corridor resumes below Dingit’s Corner and continues, almost entirely undeveloped on both sides except at Snyder’s Mill, down to the Hopkinton Town line. Farmland, forest, large wetlands and “oxbow” swamps are found here. The Riverdale Natural Area and four (4) significant conservation easements on private land now permanently protect part of this watershed and shoreline. These four-five (4-5) miles of river corridor are highly valuable for drinking water, aquifer protection, recreation, and wildlife.
- An important power line corridor runs along the eastern side of town, parallel to the Webster-
- Boscawen town lines. Many animal species inhabit and move along this corridor which is rich in bird life as it passes by ponds and crosses wetlands.
- Deer yards and bear trails have been noted on Little Hill. A wildlife corridor runs from Leonard Wildlife Management Area east through Knight’s Meadow Marsh and over Little Hill to the Blackwater flood control lands.

#### Recommendations

- Work with neighboring towns to create contiguous open space to ensure wildlife movement.
- Wildlife corridors could be considered in town planning and protected through donation and/or the purchase of conservation easements as essential to the highly-valued rural atmosphere of Webster.
- Nominate the Blackwater River Corridor into the State Rivers Management and Protection Program could receive special consideration in all conservation planning given that the river is a unique feature of Webster’s rural character and heavily used by many wildlife species.
- Consider adopting shoreland buffers as described under Surface Water Resources.
- Consider adopting a Wetland Overlay District into the Zoning Ordinance.

- Recognize value of maintaining a healthy diversity of habitats throughout town, and considering wildlife needs as well as human needs.

### **Protecting Species of Greatest Conservation Need and Biodiversity in Webster**

The U.S. Government and the State of New Hampshire lists and protects, by law, rare, threatened and endangered species. Therefore, Webster's Master Plan must take into consideration the actual, and/or potential, existence of these species.

In 2005 New Hampshire Fish and Game released the first version of the Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) that was approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. In 2015 it was completely revised in partnership with dozens of organizations, agencies, universities, municipalities, scientists, professionals and volunteers in every part of the state. The WAP identifies Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and serves as a blueprint for conserving these species and their habitats. The WAP is an important tool for towns to use in their planning.

Locate and report to the Wildlife Action Plan (managed by New Hampshire Fish and Game) any rare, threatened or endangered wildlife species in Webster.

- Locate and report to the NH Natural Heritage Inventory (in the Division of Forests and Lands at DRED) any rare, threatened or endangered species of plants in Webster.
- Educate landowners and Planning and Zoning Board members about Species of Greatest Conservation need by directing them to all of the resources that are available through the State of New Hampshire.
- Locate and study the habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species and Species of Special Concern, with landowners' knowledge and consent.
- Consider adopting regulations that prevent the potential destruction of fragile habitats known by the NH Natural Heritage Inventory to be critical to the survival of rare, threatened, or endangered species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. This recommendation is intended to prevent the eradication of rare and fragile habitats identified in the Wildlife Action Plan.
- Develop a process whereby the Conservation Commission is notified by the town early in the logging or development permitting process so that the Conservation Commission can proactively notify landowners of the presence of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, when these species are present on property proposed for development.
- The Conservation Commission should actively seek information from land owners about the presence of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, interesting plants or trees or interesting natural features on their property so that we can continually improve our Natural Resources Inventory and the NH Wildlife Action Plan with local knowledge.

Biodiversity is short for biological diversity, of ecosystems such as lakes, swamps, and forests; of species; and of genetic variety within species (Wilson, Edward O., *The Future of Life*, 2002. P. 10-11). Biodiversity is an important element of our natural systems. Within the delicate balance of natural systems there exist many species of plants and animals, some of which may be seldom noticed by humans. This fact does not lessen the importance of these wildlife species.

## **Scenic Views**

Scenic views are difficult to prioritize and protect. Yet some New Hampshire towns have done that with surveys that identify views of value to townspeople, followed by land purchase or the procurement of conservation easements to protect such views. In Webster, 89% of the survey respondents indicated scenic views are very important or important. It may be a view of a field, a beautiful marsh such as on Corn Hill Road, a view of the river from a bridge, or the view of the town's center. It could be views of Mt. Kearsarge from Corser Hill and the Old Meeting House or from Little Hill from which on clear days the Presidential Range is visible. Other spectacular vistas can be seen from Lake Winnepocket and Knight's Meadow Marsh. Webster is a very rugged town. Our hills add interest, variety and beauty to roadside views.

Scenic views may be available not only from hilltops but also from valleys or lower elevations. In such cases, scenic quality depends upon the elevated area being preserved in its natural state, without deforestation or development.

Thus, municipal ordinances may contain provisions for hillside and ridgeline protection. Such provisions serve not only to preserve scenic and recreational values (i.e., ridgeline trails) but also:

- to protect against degradation of natural habitat
- to avoid downslope erosion and pollution from water run-off
- to reduce susceptibility to wildfire
- to avoid the increased costs of maintaining hillside development infrastructure.

## **Recommendations**

Evaluate the needs and opportunities to protect ridgelines and hillsides in Webster and promulgate appropriate protective ordinances and regulations.

Require that all major subdivisions that require the building of a new road have an undeveloped, naturally vegetated buffer along the existing road, of a width adequate to screen the development from the road. The purpose is to preserve Webster's rural atmosphere.

## **Conservation and Open Space**

The value of conserving undeveloped land for watershed protection, recreation, forestry, wildlife, hunting, fishing, hiking, nature study, and many other uses, not the least of which is the mental and physical health of human beings, is impossible to calculate. Humans need green space.

Conserving open space makes sense for everyone and is a valuable goal to be shared by all residents and/or landowners. As stated earlier in this Chapter, 80% of the survey respondents felt preserving open space in Webster is very important or important and 59% would like to see an increase in open space/conservation lands in Webster.

Open space/undeveloped lands require no services from the Town as would a new road or subdivision that would require road maintenance as well as fire and police protection. Open land is therefore an inexpensive resource. Moreover, open space protects the quality and quantity of our drinking water, provides necessary habitat for the abundant and varied wildlife

that lives in Webster and is an infinite source of recreational and educational activities for all who live and visit in Webster.

In Webster, the first land protection took place in 1941 with the building of the Blackwater Flood Control Dam, and the taking of 1,117 acres by the Federal Government's Army Corps of Engineers to form the Blackwater River Reservoir. It is important to realize that these acres are not managed for conservation, but for flood control. The Army Corps of Engineers is not a conservation organization. Recently the Corps mentioned opening the land for increased recreational use which could result in greater numbers of ATV riders legally accessing these lands.

The New Hampshire Fish & Game Department owns and manages four parcels totaling 997 acres, mostly wetlands, a bog pond and forested uplands.

In November, 1988, a program on land conservation was held in the Grange Hall, and in January of 1989, a "Task Force" of fifteen Webster residents formed with the goal of preserving land under a program called The Land Conservation Investment Program of the Trust for New Hampshire Land, a public/private partnership. This program allowed the appraised value of donated conservation easements to be used instead of cash to match the purchase price of two large parcels of land on the Blackwater. The LCIP Task Force ended its work in 1991 having permanently protected, through Town ownership, 111 acres of conservation land (the Paul P. Mock Memorial Forest at Sweatt's Mill and the Riverdale Natural Area on Tyler Road), and permanently through conservation easements 349 acres of private land, mostly on the Blackwater River.

Nine other conservation parcels that total 595 acres further enhance the rural qualities Webster residents and landowners value so highly. These are privately owned. Some are owned and managed by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests. The Webster Conservation Commission manages town conservation lands, monitors conservation easements and marks boundaries to assure compliance. All of these lands are open to hikers, and most of them to hunting and fishing as well. Collectively they comprise a major benefit to all townspeople.

Conservation Land is designated on all the maps at the end of the Chapter.

The Land Use Change Tax provides up to \$3,000 a year to the Webster Land Trust Fund to help land owners with legal and other expenses when protecting land and water bodies with conservation easements

### Recommendations

- Develop strategies to increase the number of privately-held conservation easements and add to town-owned conservation lands for present and future residents of Webster by means of donations, and/or funds from Land Use Change Tax.
- Keep abreast of Army Corps of Engineer plans that may affect that 1,117 acres behind the Dam.

- Dedicate a greater percentage of the Land Use Change Tax to the Webster Land Trust Fund to further protect conservation and open space land through land or easement purchase.

### **Forests**

Forests are important because they provide watershed protection, clean air, soil erosion prevention, recreation, hunting, wildlife habitat and general enjoyment for Webster residents. Forests contribute to Webster's economy, providing employment for many residents, as well as, firewood and building products. Most of Webster is forested.

The Paul P. Mock Memorial Forest at Sweatt's Mill is the town's only town forest. Having been harvested for timber in the last forty years, the forest is (at present) being left to grow; future timber harvests have not yet been planned.

The Army Corps of Engineers harvests timber on the Blackwater flood control land. Other private timber harvests take place every year throughout town. Webster forest are highlighted on Maps 2 and 3 at the end of the Chapter.

### **Recommendation**

Develop a Forest Management Plan for the town-owned lands.

### **Conclusion**

The Webster Community Survey of 2017 shows that most residents want to preserve natural resources and are willing to accept regulations and zoning that preserve Webster's rural character. Map 4: Natural Services Network, shows how the conservation land, water supply lands, flood storage areas, productive soils and important wildlife habitat all interrelate.

Webster's aquifers, open space, healthy forests, wetlands and lakes, ponds, rivers and streams are its most valuable elements. They provide residents with clean drinking water and space for recreation and enjoyment and abundant wildlife habitat. Webster's diverse mixture of wildlife habitats supports a wide range of species.

Webster's valuable farmland, forests, and sand/gravel deposits contribute to the town's economic base.

The land and its wildlife provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, swimming, bicycling, snowmobiling, and many other ways for humans to enjoy life and maintain their health.

Planning for sustainable, sensible growth requires close consideration of:

- Drinking water supplies
- Surface and groundwater
- Open space and wildlife corridors
- Wildlife and diverse wildlife habitat
- Wildlife species of special concern
- Scenic views and scenic roads
- Soils and steepness of slopes

- Farmlands and forests

Intelligent, wise use of our remaining undeveloped land will largely determine the future character of Webster.

# Town of Webster

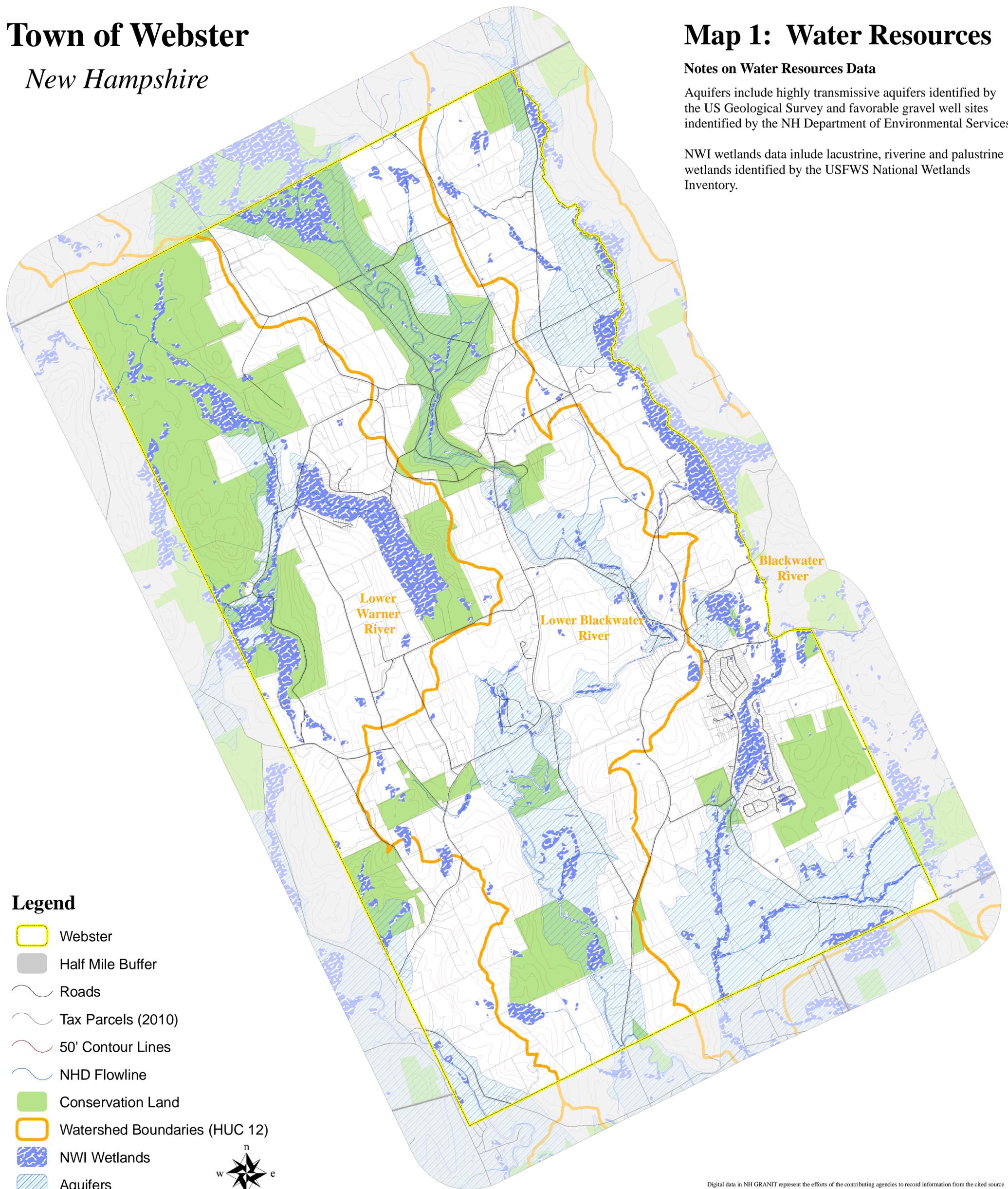
*New Hampshire*

## Map 1: Water Resources

### Notes on Water Resources Data

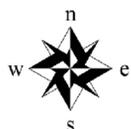
Aquifers include highly transmissive aquifers identified by the US Geological Survey and favorable gravel well sites identified by the NH Department of Environmental Services.

NWI wetlands data include lacustrine, riverine and palustrine wetlands identified by the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory.



### Legend

-  Webster
-  Half Mile Buffer
-  Roads
-  Tax Parcels (2010)
-  50' Contour Lines
-  NHD Flowline
-  Conservation Land
-  Watershed Boundaries (HUC 12)
-  NWI Wetlands
-  Aquifers



Prepared by:  
NH Audubon GIS Specialist, V. Jones  
603-224-9909, vjones@nhaudubon.org  
December, 2011

Digital data in NH GRANIT represent the efforts of the contributing agencies to record information from the cited source materials. Complex Systems Research Center (CSRC), under contract to the Office of Energy and Planning (OEP), and in consultation with cooperating agencies, maintains a continuing program to identify and correct errors in these data. OEP, CSRC, and the cooperating agencies make no claim as to the validity or reliability or to any implied uses of these data.



# Town of Webster

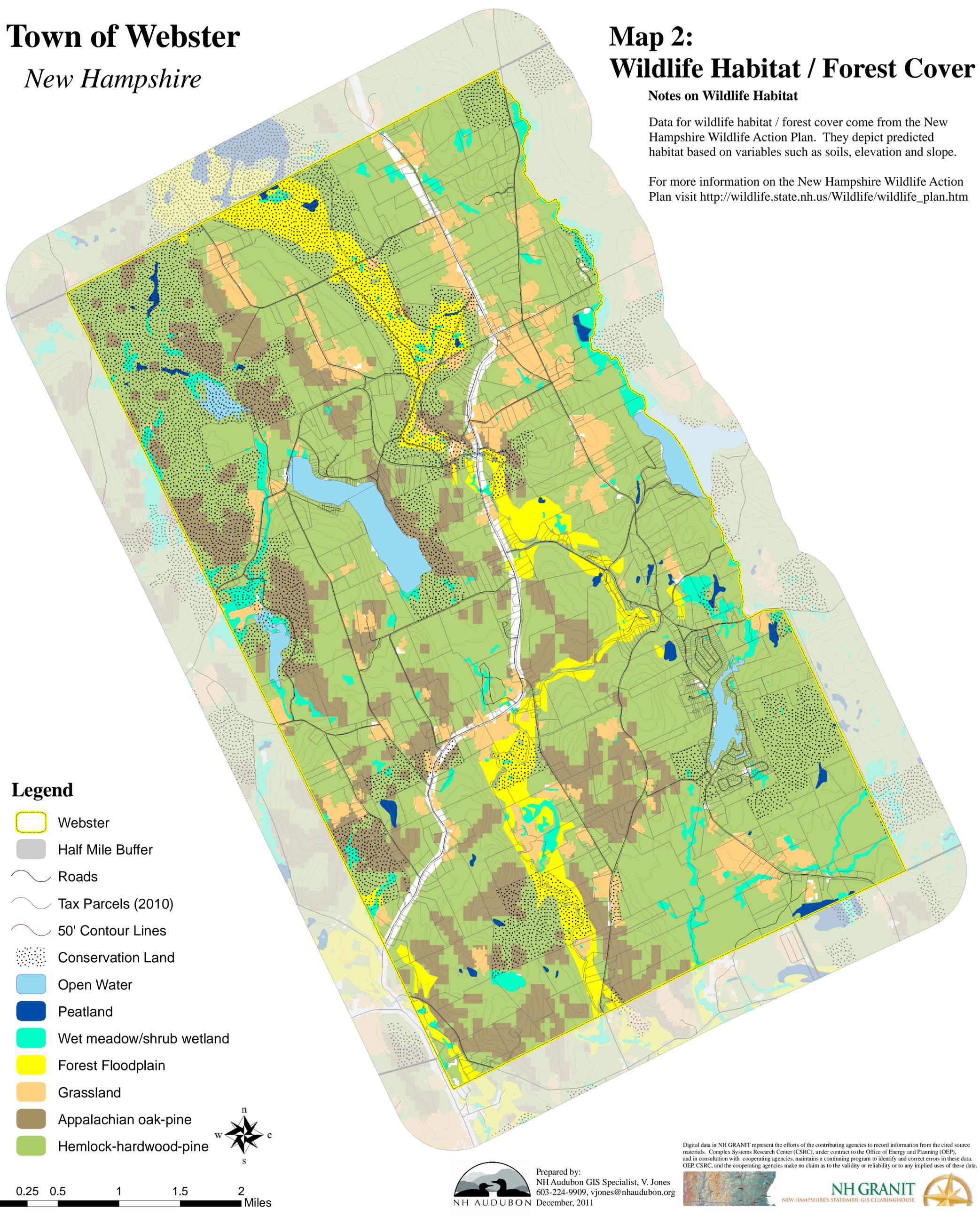
*New Hampshire*

## Map 2: Wildlife Habitat / Forest Cover

### Notes on Wildlife Habitat

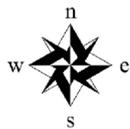
Data for wildlife habitat / forest cover come from the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan. They depict predicted habitat based on variables such as soils, elevation and slope.

For more information on the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan visit [http://wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/wildlife\\_plan.htm](http://wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/wildlife_plan.htm)



### Legend

- Webster
- Half Mile Buffer
- Roads
- Tax Parcels (2010)
- 50' Contour Lines
- Conservation Land
- Open Water
- Peatland
- Wet meadow/shrub wetland
- Forest Floodplain
- Grassland
- Appalachian oak-pine
- Hemlock-hardwood-pine



0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles



Prepared by:  
NH Audubon GIS Specialist, V. Jones  
603-224-9909, vjones@nhaudubon.org  
December, 2011

Digital data in NH GRANIT represent the efforts of the contributing agencies to record information from the cited source materials. Complex Systems Research Center (CSRC), under contract to the Office of Energy and Planning (OEP), and in consultation with cooperating agencies, maintains a continuing program to identify and correct errors in these data. OEP, CSRC, and the cooperating agencies make no claim as to the validity or reliability or to any implied uses of these data.



NH GRANIT  
NEW HAMPSHIRE'S STATEWIDE GIS CLEARINGHOUSE



# Town of Webster

*New Hampshire*

## Map 3: Soils (Forest and Farm Resources)

### Notes on Soil Data

Forest and Farmland soil classifications are defined in the document "New Hampshire Soil Attribute Data Dictionary" prepared by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. All prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance and farmland of local importance are also considered important forest soils (Classes IA, IB or IC). As such, only important forest soils that are not also important farmland soils are shown on this map.

### Farmland Soils

Prime farmland soils are defined by a range of characteristics that make it the best soil for the production of food, feed, fiber and oilseed crops.

Farmland of statewide importance is not prime or unique but is considered important for the production of food, feed, fiber and oilseed crops.

Farmland of local importance has local significance for the production of food, feed, fiber and forage. Criteria for this definition is determined on a county-wide basis.

### Forest Soils

Forest Soil Group IA is defined as shade tolerant hardwood, such as beech and sugar maple.

Forest Soil Group IB is defined as tolerant hardwood such as beech, but slightly less fertile than Group IA.

Forest Soil Group IC is defined as shade tolerant softwood, such as white pine, red spruce and hemlock.



# Town of Webster

*New Hampshire*

## Map 4: Natural Services Network

### Notes on Natural Services Network

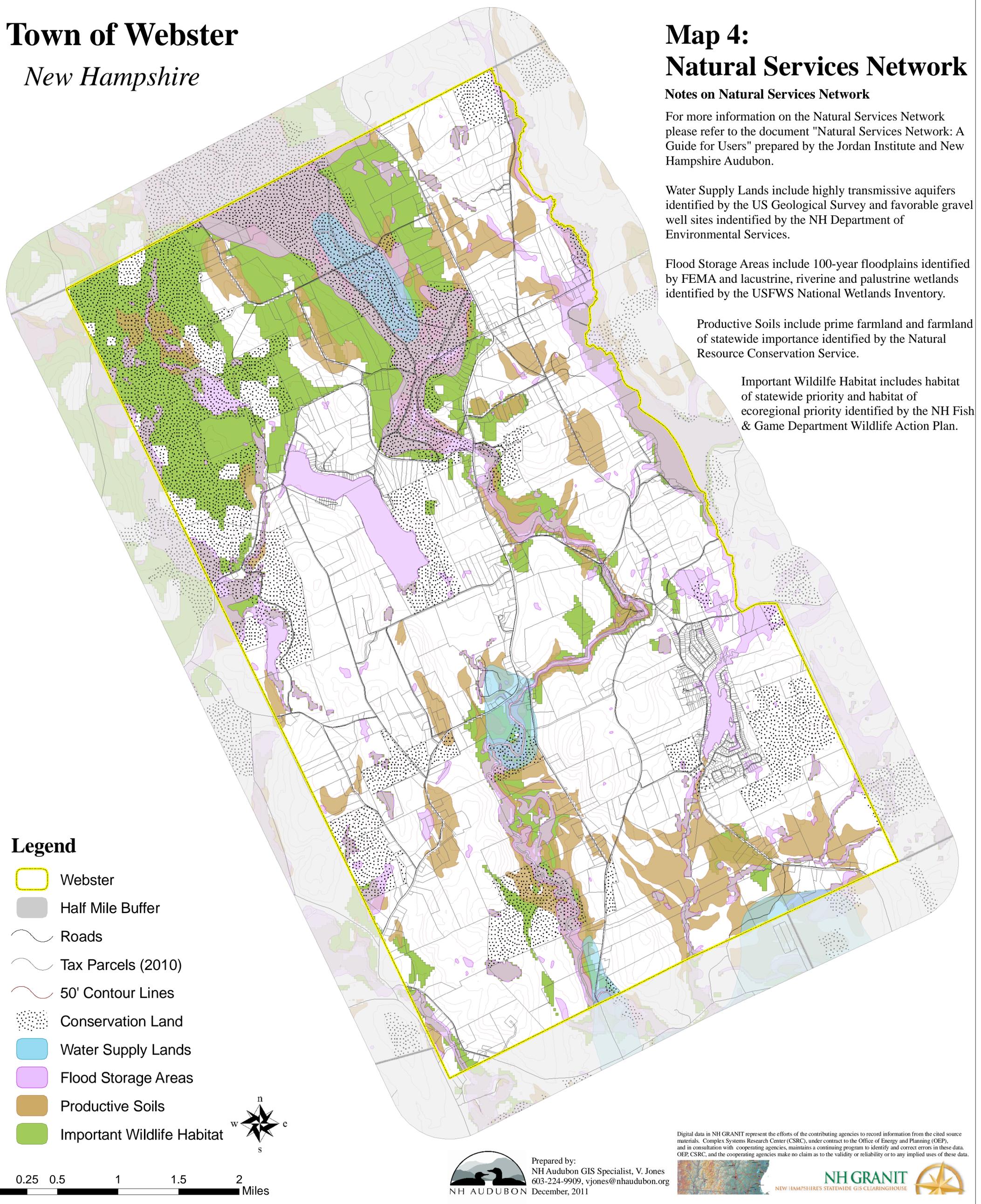
For more information on the Natural Services Network please refer to the document "Natural Services Network: A Guide for Users" prepared by the Jordan Institute and New Hampshire Audubon.

Water Supply Lands include highly transmissive aquifers identified by the US Geological Survey and favorable gravel well sites identified by the NH Department of Environmental Services.

Flood Storage Areas include 100-year floodplains identified by FEMA and lacustrine, riverine and palustrine wetlands identified by the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory.

Productive Soils include prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance identified by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Important Wildlife Habitat includes habitat of statewide priority and habitat of ecoregional priority identified by the NH Fish & Game Department Wildlife Action Plan.



## **Chapter 6 – Housing**

### **Introduction**

The Housing Chapter identifies the current supply and characteristics of housing in Webster and addresses the town's possible future housing development with the goal of retaining its rural character as possible. Central New Hampshire housing and population data show a modest population growth with an aging population and a decreasing household size. The number of older adults is predicted to continue to increase over the next two decades and there is a demand for smaller housing units as families downsize and choose to remain and "age in place." There is a limited supply of affordable apartments and houses in Webster to meet the needs of the elderly as well as young or single individuals.

Webster's ordinances and building regulations may need to be amended to allow for alternative types of housing, such as accessory dwelling units, cluster/open space development, senior housing or other alternative types of housing.

The Housing Chapter's goal is to identify strategies that can maintain and enhance the current quality of Webster's housing and review alternatives to accommodate a variety of housing types consistent with different personal needs, income, and stages of life.

### **Master Plan Community Survey – Summary of 2017 Results**

In 2017, a Master Plan Community Survey was presented online. Over 200 surveys were completed. The majority of survey respondents are year-round residents (88%) who own (98%) their own single-family home. A complete summary of the survey results is provided in the Appendix. The following survey questions relate to this Housing Chapter of the Master Plan.

Types of housing to be encouraged - The majority of Webster's housing is single-family housing (91.5%, Census ACS 2016]. Other housing options which had the highest preference as "highly encouraged or encouraged" included cluster/open space developments, senior housing for 55 and older, accessory dwelling units, and independent/assisted living. Duplex homes, conversion of large homes into apartments, mobile homes, condominiums, and new apartment buildings are largely not encouraged.

*Would you like to see the following types of housing encouraged or not encouraged in Webster?*

	Highly Encouraged (%)	Encouraged (%)	Somewhat Encouraged (%)	Not Encouraged (%)	Total Responses (#s)
Single family	10	21.3	28.4	40.2	169
Conversion into apartments	4.8	10.7	20.2	64.3	168
Mobile homes on individual lots	6.1	13.3	22.4	58.2	165
Mobile home community	1.9	6.8	9.3	82	161
Condominiums	3.7	16.1	24.1	56.2	162
New Apartment buildings	3.1	8.7	9.9	78.3	161
Cluster/open-space developments	10.2	24	17.4	48.5	167
Senior housing (55 and older)	16.5	31.2	28.2	24.1	170
Accessory dwelling units	20.1	24.9	23.7	31.4	169
Independent/assisted living	12.4	29	26.6	32	169

Source: 2017 Survey

*Additional comments from write-ins on the survey:*

- Increase lot size to 10 acres
- Alternative housing, like tiny houses (less expensive housing)
- Smaller lot sizes (2 acres)
- Less restrictive zoning on single family homes
- Preserve country and rural atmosphere
- Positive comments about accessory dwellings

Residential rate of growth - More than half (62.83%) of respondents felt Webster's residential rate of growth was acceptable, while the remaining respondents were split fairly evenly as to growing too slowly (10.47%), too fast (9.95%), or had no opinion (16.75%). Nevertheless, a majority (54.17%) felt the Town should take measures to control growth.

*Which statement describes Webster’s residential rate of growth?*

	#	%
Growing too fast	19	9.95%
Growing too slowly	20	10.47%
Growth is acceptable	120	62.83%
No opinion	32	16.75%
Total	191	100%

Source: 2017 Survey

*Should the town take measures to control growth?*

	#	%
Yes	104	54.17%
No	53	27.60%
No opinion	35	18.23%
Total	192	100%

Source: 2017 Survey

Preservation of Open Space -- A clear majority felt it was very important (61.17%) or important (19.15%) to preserve open space (undeveloped land) in Webster. A majority also would like to see an increase in open space/conservation lands in Webster (59.46%), although a sizable percentage answered no (24.86%) or had no opinion (15.68%).

*Please indicate how important the preservation of open space (undeveloped land) in Webster is to you:*

	#	%
Very important	115	61.17%
Important	36	19.15%
Somewhat important	22	11.70%
Not important	14	7.45%
No opinion	1	0.53%
Total	188	100%

Source: 2017 Survey

Protecting the natural environment - When asked about protecting important elements of the town landscape, the following items each had 60% voting them as “very important”: field/agriculture, streams/rivers, aquifers/groundwater, lakes/ponds, fish/wildlife management, wildlife habitat, and erosion control. All items listed had at least 50% of respondents rating them as “very important” or “important”.

*How important is it to you to protect the following?*

	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Somewhat Important (%)	Not Important (%)	No opinion (%)	Total Responses (#)
Fields/agriculture	60	30	7.9	2.1	0	190
Streams/rivers	81.5	16.9	1.1	0.5	0	189
Recreation	32.1	41.3	17.4	5.4	3.8	184
Aquifers/ground-water	75.4	17.7	5.9	0.5	0.5	187
Lakes/ponds	78.6	18.2	2.7	0.5	0	187
Fish/wildlife management	67.6	23.9	5.3	2.1	1.1	188
Town forests	63.4	24.2	6.5	4.8	1.1	186
Scenic Views	53.2	28.7	12.2	3.2	2.7	188
Wildlife Habitat Management	65.1	23.8	6.9	2.7	1.6	189
Erosion Control	59.1	29	7.5	2.2	2.2	186
Wetlands	55.9	24.7	14	4.3	1.1	186
Shoreline	55.4	23.9	9.8	3.8	7.1	184
Stormwater Management	48.9	29.8	12.8	4.3	4.3	188
Scenic Roads	44.2	28.7	17	8.5	1.6	188
Steep Slopes and Ridges	35.5	26.9	22	7.5	8.1	186

Source: 2017 Survey

*Rural character* -- A majority (84.74%) felt that maintaining Webster's rural character should be a goal of the current Master Plan, as it was in previous Master Plans.

*Do you think that maintaining Webster's rural character should be a goal of the current Master Plan, as it was in the previous Plan?*

	#	%
Yes	161	84.74%
No	20	10.53%
No opinion	9	4.74%
Total	190	100%

Source: 2017 Survey

*Lot sizes* - Respondents largely felt that Webster's lot size requirements should be kept the same (69%), although over a quarter of respondents (26%) felt the size should be *decreased*, and 15% felt the requirement should be *increased*.

*Webster permits two lot sizes of new subdivisions: a minimum lot size of 5-acres; and one division of a lot containing 4-10 acres into two lots, if the original lot pre-existed the 5-acre zoning requirement. Should the existing lot size requirement be:*

	Yes	No	No opinion	Total
Increased	20 (15%)	82 (62%)	31 (23%)	133
Decreased	35 (26%)	69 (51%)	30 (22%)	134
Keep the same	112 (69%)	22 (13%)	29 (18%)	163

Source: 2017 Survey

*Zoning changes* - A majority of respondents felt that existing lot size requirements should be kept the same (69%). However, in responding to whether or not lot size should be increased or decreased, 15% said it should be increased and 26% said it should be decreased.

*Webster currently has two zones: Residential/Agricultural and Pillsbury Lake District. Commercial or industrial uses are permitted throughout Webster only be the issue of a special exception. Should the Town consider establishing additional zones beyond the two current zones?*

	Yes (%)	No (%)	No opinion (%)	Total (#n)
Industrial	39 (21%)	119 (65%)	25 (14%)	183
Commercial	62 (34%)	97 (53%)	24 (13%)	183

Source: 2017 Survey

*Zoning changes* - A majority of respondents felt that industrial zones (65%) should not be established. A slight majority did not support commercial zones (53%).

### **Housing Data**

By understanding past housing trends, Webster can better predict future housing growth and needs. When compared to abutting communities, Webster has the highest percent growth from 2000 to 2010 (24.3%) followed by Concord (12.0%) and Boscawen (10.4%). Webster's housing stock was comprised primarily of single family homes with over 90% owner-occupied.

**Table 6.1 Number of Households 2000 and 2010**

Town	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	% Change 2000-2010
Webster	581	722	24.3%
Boscawen	1260	1391	10.4%
Concord	16,281	18,239	12.0%
Hopkinton	2,084	2,278	9.3%
Salisbury	435	460	5.7%
Warner	1,048	1,076	2.7%

Source: U.S. Census 2010

### Webster Building Permits

The rate of building construction in Webster decreased dramatically in the past 15 years as compared to the prior ten years. For the 10-year period, from 1993 to 2003, a total of 151 building permits for new homes were issued. More than half of those (83) were issued in the four-year period of 2000-2003.

In contrast, for the 10-year period from 2007 to 2017, a total of 46 building permits for new homes were issued. The rate of new permits slowed substantially from the previous decade, with a dramatic drop following the financial recession of 2008.

Although the average household size has been dropping in Webster, the current economy and statewide building trends point toward an increase in construction.

**Table 6.2 Webster Building Permits Issued 2007-2017\***

Year	Total Building Permits Issued
2007	14
2008	8
2009	2
2010	6
2011	1
2012	3
2013	1
2014	2
2015	3
2016	2
2017	4
Total	46

Source: Webster Town Office

\*Note: The number of building permits does not include permits issued for replacement homes or reissued permits.

### Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Information

Knowing what percentage of the occupied housing units in a community are owner-occupied and which ones are renter-occupied helps to create a picture of the types of housing options available.

As can be seen in the following chart, 92% of Webster’s occupied housing units owner-occupied in 2000 and 89% were owner-occupied in 2010. Of the surrounding communities, Webster and Salisbury have the highest percentage of owner-occupied housing units.

**Table 6.3 Occupied Housing Units, 2000 and 2010**

Towns	2000					2010				
	Total Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied #	Owner-Occupied %	Renter-Occupied #	Renter-Occupied %	Total Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied #	Owner-Occupied %	Renter-Occupied #	Renter-Occupied %
<b>Webster</b>	581	535	92	46	8	734	655	89	79	11
<b>Boscawen</b>	1,260	948	75	312	25	1,369	1,000	73	369	27
<b>Concord</b>	16,281	8,383	52	7,898	49	17,592	9,367	53	8,225	47
<b>Hopkinton</b>	2,084	1,798	86	286	14	2,204	1,910	87	294	13
<b>Salisbury</b>	435	410	94	25	6	513	460	90	53	10
<b>Warner</b>	1,048	797	76	251	24	1,116	865	78	251	22

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, CNHRPC

### Household Size

The average household size in a community is an indicator of how the population is arranged. Webster had an owner-occupied and renter-occupied average household size of 2.71 in 2000, which was average for owner-occupied and high for renter-occupied, for the region.

Housing data statewide and throughout Central New Hampshire reflects a modest population growth with an aging population and a decreasing household size. Webster’s average household size has decreased, dropping to 2.53 in 2010 and estimated 2.4 by 2016. Merrimack County household size is approximately 2.5.

### Webster Housing: Issues, Goals and Recommendations

As demographics, commuting patterns, and economics change, so do the needs and desires of residents for housing options. Recent studies demonstrate that millennials and baby boomers alike increasingly are looking for housing that reflects a more compact, cost-efficient setting.

Much of the aging population is choosing to age in place, instead of retiring south. This growing trend is creating a demand for smaller housing units as families downsize and choose to remain in rural and suburban areas. As the number of older adults is predicted to increase over the next two decades, concern of accessibility for the older demographic increases as access to day-to-day needs becomes a challenge.

These challenges include mobility issues for needs such as transportation to grocery stores, doctors’ offices and recreational resources. Additionally, growing concern for the high cost of living, including housing and taxes in rural and suburban areas, can be challenging for the older population living on a fixed income.

The New Hampshire Legislature recognized this trend, as indicated in the preamble to the ADU law:

- There is a growing need for more diverse affordable housing opportunities for the citizens of New Hampshire;
- Demographic trends are producing more households where adult children wish to give care and support to parents in a semi-independent living arrangement;
- Elderly and disabled citizens need independent living space for caregivers.

When planning for Webster's future housing needs, it is important to consider alternative types of housing such as accessory dwelling units, cluster/open space development, senior housing and housing for independent/assisted living. These types of housing were rated as highly encouraged or encouraged by the majority of the Master Plan survey respondents.

### Accessory Dwelling Units

With a limited supply of affordable apartments and houses in New Hampshire to meet the needs of a growing economy and changing demographics, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are an important component of expanding the availability of housing in the state. The New Hampshire Accessory Dwelling Units statute (RSA 674:71 - 73) became law on June 1, 2017. The Town of Webster voted to update the Zoning Ordinance March 2017.

Accessory dwelling units are residential living units attached to a single-family dwelling, providing independent living facilities for one or more persons (e.g., an apartment over a garage attached to the house, in a basement). Under the law, homeowners statewide now have the right to create an ADU for a family member, caregiver, or as a rental unit, in accordance with local ordinances.

As expressed by the Legislature, the intent of the law is to expand the supply of housing in New Hampshire communities without further land development, as well as to encourage efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure and provide an affordable housing option in communities.

ADUs can:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing without the need for more infrastructure or further land development
- Benefit aging homeowners, single parents, recent college graduates (who can be saddled with heavy student loan debt), caregivers, and disabled persons
- Integrate affordable housing into the community with minimal negative impact
- Provide elderly citizens with the opportunity to live in a supportive family environment.

### Cluster/Open Space Housing

Cluster housing – also known as conservation subdivision or open space housing -- refers to a development in which homes are situated in groupings relatively close together, while larger areas of open space within the development form a buffer with adjacent land uses. Often this is accomplished through small, individual lots, with the remainder of the land becoming common ground.

There are three primary benefits of this development pattern:

- (1) The contiguous open spaces are good practice either for conservation and wildlife habitat purposes or for agriculture.
- (2) Grouping homes together reduces the initial investment in roads, streets, and utility lines, as well as the public sector's maintenance and replacement costs.
- (3) Relatively close proximity to neighbors means that one is more likely to get acquainted with neighbors and develop a sense of caring community.

Since one of the interests of Webster residents is to save as much recreational space or conservation land as possible on your undeveloped land, the Town should consider updating its subdivision regulations to allow conservation housing and offer an incentive for cluster housing for a large parcel of land (major subdivision).

From an ecology standpoint, the cluster housing development is preferable to most subdivisions conceived under traditional zoning and subdivision laws. When a zoning ordinance requires a minimum lot size, minimum amount of street frontage, maximum lot coverage limits, and minimum setbacks, this encourages lots of a fairly uniform size, each with its own individual lawn.

The benefits of clustering homes and residential-type lawns into one or two areas within a subdivision include the following:

- The development costs of infrastructure will be much lower for eight clustered homes on quarter-acre lots within a 40-acre development, as compared to eight homes on five-acre lots within that same 40 acres of land. While conservation subdivisions often do not qualify as inexpensive or affordable housing at all, at least the semi-rural lifestyle becomes slightly less expensive.
- Connecting open space provides habitat for larger animals and a greater variety of animal and plant life than would be seen in the same amount of open space parceled out into individual yards. Groundwater recharge of the aquifer is more effective because rain runs off much more slowly in woodlands, prairies, and other natural environments than from rooftops, patios, and barns. Slowing down storm water runoff also is a form of flood prevention.
- Joint community facilities can be developed.

It is recommended the Planning Board writes a separate cluster housing ordinance or a cluster housing zoning district regulation. A separate regulation gives the town more specific criteria related to conservation or recreation. For example, the percentage of a site that should remain undeveloped; minimum lot sizes, frontage on public roads, sharing of driveways, setbacks, regulations for signs, parking minimums, etc.

A review of the zoning and subdivision regulations should be conducted to consider other alternative housing strategies. The Town could also consider identifying a new zone or a zoning district to allow a housing development with more density.

## Zoning and Building Code Enforcement

Webster residents who subdivide their land, build a house and construct or alter a driveway must obey the Town Zoning, Subdivision and Driveway Regulations. They are required to meet all other State and Federal Regulations for the Building Code, Fire Safety Code, Department of Environmental Safety for shoreland protection, wetlands, etc.

The town currently contracts with a Life Safety Code Enforcement Officer on an as-needed basis, who follows the State codes for building and safety. The Life Safety Code officer inspects the buildings prior to issuing occupancy permits but does not review possible zoning code violations. That job is relegated to the Select Board, which is responsible for investigating complaints and enforcing the Town regulations for land use and other regulations.

Fire codes typically are administered and enforced by the fire department. Topics related to residential fire safety are incorporated into relevant housing codes. Similarly, health and safety violations are investigated by the Health Safety Officer with recommendations for enforcement to the Select Board.

During the subdivision process and approval, the Planning Board advises the landowners of the various regulations administered by Webster and other state and federal agencies. After the Planning Board approves a subdivision or the Zoning Board approves a conditional or commercial use, the Land Use Coordinator tracks the various state and federal forms and approvals during the process. However, very little follow up is conducted on site to assure the conditions are being met. The Select Board spends hours discussing complaints and enforcing the regulations.

It is recommended that this deficiency be addressed with creating a new position for a Code or Zoning Enforcement Officer. The qualified individual would also have knowledge and experience in enforcing the DES regulations for wetlands, flood plains and the Shoreland Protection Act and other state and federal regulations.

The Zoning Enforcement Officer would be available to consult with the Select Board and the land use Boards and Commissions. The Zoning Enforcement officer could also offer a program for educating homeowners on their code responsibilities. It would be helpful to improve residents' understanding of the town codes and regulations and how they are applied and enforced.

## **Pillsbury Lake Village District**

### History of Pillsbury Lake Community

Pillsbury Lake Community (PLC) is the largest subdivision in the town of Webster. It was established on Jan. 28, 1965 as a seasonal community, a non-profit corporation under Pillsbury Lake Management, Inc. (PLM), with its own Restrictions & Easements. It consisted of 600 primarily one-quarter acre lots to be serviced by a water system set up for seasonal occupancy. There was very little quality control in the installation of the water system and no records were kept. Deer Meadow Brook was impounded and the 44-acre Pillsbury Lake was formed. The original brochure stated that the Community included a community clubhouse, swimming and sandy beaches, stocked fishing, a private hunting preserve, a 900 ft. ski area with power tow, a regulation-size ballfield, a playground, and a grocery store all located minutes away from Concord.

The deeds for most of the roads were transferred to the Town of Webster in 1968, some remained private ways, and some were later abolished due to disuse. In 1976, under Chapter 52:10 of the NH State statute for supply of water and by vote of Webster Town Meeting, the Pillsbury Lake Village District was established as a village district of the Town of Webster for operation of the community water system and, the District accepted from Pillsbury Lake Management, properties, liabilities, and responsibility for the lake, cabana, dam, and public beaches, except for the clubhouse and main beach, and the 376 acre hunting preserve, which is now in Current Use. The hunting preserve was selectively cut in the mid-1980s and in 2011 to generate funds to repair parts of the water system.

Pillsbury Lake Village District (a.k.a. Pillsbury Lake Community) includes all the land of the original subdivision, and is responsible for the community water supply and the dam. The Town of Webster provides police and fire service and maintains most of the roads. Many of the original lots are now unbuildable due to inaccessibility or the subsequent formation of wetlands. In November 2005, Underwood Engineers, Inc. concluded a study of the water system and estimated that there were 103 potential buildable lots, although some might be wetlands or otherwise unbuildable, remaining in the District and 114 on the water system. Originally, the District was listed as agricultural/residential but is now strictly residential. Only a few of these remaining lots now have single family dwellings due to the housing downturn in the 2000's and a cap on building at Pillsbury Lake.

Today a hunting preserve, great fishing (not stocked), one "beach" area for swimming, a ballfield, a basketball court, a playground, and a very active community clubhouse remain along with 345 tax assessed properties and 75 tax exempt properties belonging to the Town of Webster and the Pillsbury Lake Village District (PLD). The Town of Webster has continued to merge lots and has identified which of its properties will be sold and which are not buildable or should be kept in conservation. Action on these recommendations to the Select Board is forthcoming. PLC is home to an abundant variety of wildlife such as beaver, muskrats, blue herons, eagles, buzzards and a wide assortment of birds, deer, bear, fox, raccoon, wild turkeys, squirrels and chipmunks, and it is a beautiful lake for boating and fishing.

### Water District

There are still only 115 water customers on the system. The previous problems with the four wells, two on the Peninsula and two on Franklin Pierce Drive, not providing the necessary water and frequently not operational due to power outages, has been substantially improved and a generator was added, which automatically operates in a power outage. When the Federal Government changed the amount of acceptable arsenic in water, the Peninsula Wells failed and the residents voted to bond and install a water filtration system that was up and running by 2008. The filtration system is keeping up with new technology and is well maintained. The filters are replaced regularly and the filtration system is expected to have a long-life expectancy. Water meters were installed in 2009, paid for only by the water users.

Unfortunately, at the same time the new well and filtration system were needed, the dam breached in the Mother's Day Flood of 2006. The residents voted to bond and replace the dam. It was completed in 2007 but weaknesses were exposed in the southern spillway. Additional

repairs were completed and the lake filled in October 2008. The wildlife returned and the fishing is back to normal. Currently, water line repairs are done as needed. Leaks are identified and fixed. Underwood Engineers counted 27,000 ft. of water lines to be replaced at the 2005 value of \$125 per foot. (over \$3.5M). There is now a Capital fund and funds to replace a small part of Deer Meadow Rd. There is not a master plan for repair of the system and it will be costly.

Lake water is tested regularly and found to be of good quality. Weeds grow for many varied reasons. Pillsbury Lake is a shallow lake and produces more weeds with a variety of other sources causing the growth of weeds. It is helpful if homeowners clean their waterfront of leaves and debris, keep their septic systems pumped on a regular basis and replace a failing septic system. The Department of Environmental Services provides many guidelines for care of water resources.

### Current Development and Management

There are currently 198 single family homes, and assuming 2.5 individuals per household, there are nearly 500 residents in the Pillsbury Lake Community, approximately one-third of the current population of Webster is living on two percent of the land mass of Webster. Pillsbury Lake Community is currently taxed on assessed value of \$34,847,232 and pays an additional tax, collected by the town and given back to the Community, for the operation of the District (for managing the water system, finding leaks, maintenance of the wells and the roads to them as well as maintenance of the dam, weed control of the lake and water levels of the lake, setting an operating budget, water meter reading, and maintenance of the playground and ball field).

Pillsbury Lake Management (PLM), is a volunteer board that enforces the Restrictions & Easements under civil law, maintains the Clubhouse, and the beach area. It is essentially a homeowner's association with an annual \$100 fee. PLM enforces the By Laws, and the Restrictions & Easements which go with the land, are on the deeds and are enforceable by civil law. PLM is responsible for maintenance of the clubhouse and grounds, sponsoring community events, representing the PLC at meetings of town boards, holding functions to promote the interaction of residents of the PLC and the town of Webster, and offering classes and programs for all ages in the PLC. In addition, PLM maintains two informational internet sites and provides Welcome Packets to new PLC residents. The Town Office maintains packets for individuals and developers who intend to build in the PLC.

### Issues, goals and recommendations

#### **Goal: To maintain the quality of Pillsbury Lake for the enjoyment of the community**

##### Objectives:

- To continue to work with NH DES to monitor the quality of the lake;
- To develop a working relationship with the Webster Conservation Commission to address shoreland protection laws;
- To keep the 2% building cap ordinance to preclude overdevelopment in the Community;
- To see that Pillsbury Lake follows the Best Practices for Fireworks issued by DES.

**Goal: To include Pillsbury Lake Community, aka the Pillsbury Lake Village District, as an integral part of the Town of Webster, and strive to maintain and enhance a beneficial and encompassing relationship with the Town.**

Objectives:

- To facilitate the enforcement of the Restrictions and Easements, the Town ordinances and applicable State and Federal laws and regulations for the benefit and welfare of the Town and the Pillsbury Lake District;
- To ensure that current information is provided to both developers and residents regarding State law and the Restrictions and Easements;
- To continue the social activities provided by Pillsbury Lake Management, Inc., to allow both the residents of the Town and Pillsbury Lake Community to interact through fun and educational forums;
- To look for and present occasions which will encompass both the young and old residents of the Town;
- To take an active part in Town governance.

**Goal: To maintain and enhance the Pillsbury Community Water System**

Objectives:

- To continue to repair and search for leaks as needed;
- To continue to increase the Capital Reserve and to search for new sources of funds, including other, budgeted, state and federal funds.

Sources:

New Hampshire Demographic Trends in the Twenty-First Century, Kenneth M. Johnson., Publisher: Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, 2012.

“Accessory Dwelling Units in New Hampshire: A Guide for Municipalities,” New Hampshire Housing, December 2017.

“In Small Towns and Rural Areas Try Cluster Housing,” from [www.useful-community-development/org](http://www.useful-community-development/org).

## **Chapter 7 -- Transportation**

A safe and efficient transportation network is an essential component for the development of a well-functioning and accessible community. Webster's transportation system and its connections to the regional and state network provide access to the goods and services that residents and commerce require. It played a large role in the development of the Town, and in defining the Town's character. With all future development, balancing the desires of residents to maintain Webster's rural character will be vital to the Town's future.

The existing transportation network has a profound influence on the location and development of land use throughout the Town. Development trends in Webster have traditionally been influenced by NH 127, natural beauty and its proximity to Concord. The Town's low density residential and undeveloped areas which give the Town its distinct character, have been, and will continue to be, important elements in what it means to live in Webster.

Due to the financial commitment required for the improvement and maintenance of an adequate transportation system, especially paved roads, and the direct relationship between land use patterns and traffic circulation, the identification and analysis of current transportation needs is crucial to the orderly accommodation of growth and development. This chapter of the master plan is intended to provide such an analysis, while also enabling the Town of Webster to fully participate in all levels of transportation planning and achieve the overall community transportation goals.

---

### Town of Webster Transportation Vision

---

*Provide a safe, effective, well maintained, and scenic transportation network for Webster.*

## **Community Survey Results**

In preparation for the master plan update, a community survey was available for residents to provide input. Completed in 2017, the survey demonstrated resident's appreciation of Webster's rural setting.

### **Question 1 (15):**

How Important is it to protect Scenic Roads?

Q. 1	Total	Percentage
Very Important	98	43.78%
Important	53	28.65%
Somewhat Important	32	17.30%
Not Important	16	8.65%
No Opinion	3	1.62%
Total	185	100.0%

### **Question 2 (16):**

Do you think that maintaining Webster's rural character should be a goal of the current Master Plan, as it was in the previous Plan?

Q. 2	Total	Percentage
Yes	158	84.49%
No	20	10.70%
No Opinion	9	4.81%
Total	187	100.0%

### **Question 3 (19):**

How important is it to you to provide, protect, expand or improve the Highway Services?

Q. 3	Total	Percentage
Very Important	70	38.46%
Important	80	43.96%
Somewhat Important	25	13.74%
Not Important	6	3.30%
No Opinion	1	0.55%
Total	182	100%

### **Question 4 (19):**

How important is it to you to provide, protect, expand or improve the Bike Paths?

Q. 4	Total	Percentage
Very Important	38	21.47%
Important	61	34.46%
Somewhat Important	45	25.42%
Not Important	26	14.69%
No Opinion	7	3.95%
Total	177	100%

## Survey Question Comments related to Transportation

“Continue taking good care of our roads. They seem to be in pretty good condition, and with consideration for budget concerns. Keep up the good work.”

“More support for road and bridge maintenance. Keeping the simplicity of small town living. That's why I moved here.”

“With the aging of residents comes the problem of transportation. Without a car, it would be difficult to remain here.”

“We need a Highways and Roads plan that clearly lays out priorities, and then we need to start working on tackling those priorities in order of most needy. We also need to look at that list of priorities and properly plan how to pay for those projects.”

### EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

A key component in planning for future transportation improvements in a community is to carry out a complete inventory of the existing transportation infrastructure serving the Town. Webster's transportation network is dominated by NH 127.

### Highway Classification

The State Aid classification system, which is identified by NH RSA 229:5 and 229:231, establishes responsibility for construction, reconstruction, and maintenance as well as eligibility for use of State Aid funds. This classification system also provides a basic hierarchy of roadways.

Of the seven possible state classifications, Webster's roads fall into three of these: Class II, Class V, Class VI and private roads. As displayed in the ***Roads by Legislative Classification Map*** at the end of the Chapter, Webster's road system is typical of most New Hampshire towns, in that the most mileage is accounted for by Class V roads. Roadway mileage by classification is shown in Table 8.2

#### CLASS II STATE AID HIGHWAYS

Class II highways include all highways on the secondary state highway system, excepting portions of the highways within the compact sections of cities and towns, which are classified as Class IV highways. All sections improved to the state standards are maintained and reconstructed by the state. All other sections must be maintained by the city or town in which they are located until brought up to state standards. The same applies to bridges on Class II highways. In Webster NH Route 127, Long Street, Tyler Road and a portion of White Plains Road are all Class II Highways.

#### CLASS V RURAL HIGHWAYS AND BLOCK GRANT AID

This classification consists of all traveled highways that the town has the duty to maintain regularly. The state provides funding to towns for road maintenance on Class IV and V roads in the form of Highway Block Grant Aid. Table 8.1 shows the Block Grant Aid Webster has received over the last five fiscal years. These funds are distributed by the State of New Hampshire on a

yearly basis with partial disbursements made four times a year. The payments are made as follows: 30% in July, 30% in October, 20% in January and 20% in April with unused balances carrying over to the new year. The funds come from a portion of the total road toll and motor vehicle registration fees collected by the State. The funds can only be used to fund or match funding for constructing, reconstructing or maintaining Class IV and V (town maintained) highways as well as equipment for maintaining local roads.

The funds are allocated from an annual apportionment (State Fiscal Year) of not less than twelve percent (12%) of the total highway revenues collected from the preceding year. As seen in Table 8.1, Webster received more funds in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016 and 2017 because of the states increased revenue in the previous year due to Senate Bill 367 The Road Toll or “Gas Tax”. Half of that total apportionment is distributed based on population and the other half is distributed based on Class IV and V road mileage. This comes out to approximately \$1,200 for each mile of Class IV and V highway and about \$11 for each person.

A second apportionment of funds is allocated from a sum of \$400,000. The formula for disbursement is based on the value of property and roadway miles. The formula is designed to give the greatest benefit to municipalities with low property values (on an equalized basis) and high road mileage.

To ensure Webster receives the proper allotment it is crucial to provide accurate information regarding Class V road mileage to NHDOT which is requested annually. Highway Block Grant Aid distribution formulas do not take into consideration the condition of roads or the traffic on municipal roads.

**Table 7.1: Highway Block Grant Aid payments for Webster**

SFY 2013	SFY 2014	SFY 2015	SFY 2016	SFY 2017
\$ 61,810.52	\$ 61,463.41	\$ 61,803.74	\$ 68,858.47	\$ 70,577.95

*Source: New Hampshire Department of Transportation*

#### CLASS VI UNMAINTAINED HIGHWAYS

Class VI roads are not maintained by the Town, may be subject to gates and bars, and normally consist of a gravel or dirt surface. A Class V road can become a Class VI road if the Town has not maintained it for five years or more. Under RSA 674:41, I(c), for any lot whose street access (frontage) is on a Class VI road, the issue of whether any building can be erected on that lot is left up to the "local governing body" (Town Selectmen) who may, after "review and comment" by the Planning Board, vote to authorize building along that particular Class VI road, or portion thereof. Without such a vote, all building is prohibited.

Even if the Board of Selectmen does vote to authorize building, the law states that the municipality does not become responsible for road maintenance or for any damages resulting from the road's use. The purpose of RSA 674:41, I(c) is to prevent scattered and premature development. It seems that the residents of Town support this law, as a strong view was represented during the community survey and discussions that future development should be limited in remote areas of town and on Class VI roads.

Call Rd, Chadwick Hill Rd, Dump Rd, General Stark Dr, Gerrish Rd, Guide Board Hill Rd, Little Hill Rd, Mount Vernon Ter, Mutton Rd, Old Route 127, Pond Hill Rd, Province Rd, The Cut Rd and Windsor Terrace are Class VI roads in their entirety or partially.

Class VI roads are an important component of a Town’s transportation infrastructure and for potential recreational opportunities.

PRIVATE ROADS

Private Roads are not part of the town network but may be open to travel if the landowner agrees to it.

**Table 7.2: State Legislative Classification**

Class	Mileage	Percent of total
Class II: State Aid Highways	13.3	19.8%
Class V: Rural Highways	32.6	48.4%
Class VI: Unmaintained Highways	5.3	7.9%
Private Roads	16.1	23.9%

**Federal Functional Classification System**

The functional classification system identifies roads by the type of service provided and by the role of each highway within the state system based on standards developed by the US Department of Transportation. While the state aid classification system outlined above is the primary basis for determining jurisdiction, the following system is important for determining eligibility for federal funds.

Recognition of the principal function that a highway, road, or street is intended to serve as a guide for location of development and reduce potential conflicts between land use activities and traffic movements. As shown in the ***Roads by Functional Classification Map*** at the end of the Chapter, NH 127 is the only functionally classified highway in Webster and is classified as a minor collector.

MAJOR COLLECTORS

These roadways differ from arterial roadways due to size and general service area. Collectors serve traffic in a specific area, whereas arterials generally serve traffic moving through an area. Thus, average trip lengths on collectors are shorter than trips on arterials. Furthermore, collectors gather traffic from local roads and streets and distribute them to the arterial. NH 127 is the only Major Collector in Webster

MINOR COLLECTORS

These roads provide access to smaller communities within a geographic area or economic region. They typically link locally important trip generators, such as shopping centers, to surrounding rural areas. They also can serve as links between two or more major collectors.

## LOCAL ROADS

These roads and streets are used primarily to provide access to adjacent properties

**Table 7.3: Federal Functional Classification**

Federal Functional Classification	Mileage	Percent of total
Major Collectors	7.6	11.3%
Minor Collectors	4.7	7.0%
Local Roads	33.5	50.0%
Class VI or Private Roads	21.3	31.7%

### **Bridge Network**

Bridges are a key component of the highway system. Bridges are the most expensive sections of roads, and a lack of adequate bridges can create transportation bottlenecks, which are often difficult to remedy.

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) maintains an inventory of all bridges in New Hampshire using Federal Sufficiency Ratings (FSR), a nationally accepted method for evaluating bridges. An FSR represents the relative overall effectiveness of a bridge as a transportation facility. With an FSR greater than 80 a bridge is generally accepted to be in good condition. A bridge having an FSR between 50 and 80 is eligible for federal bridge rehabilitation funding. As seen in **Table 8.4** three bridges in Webster are eligible for federal funding and should be considered for improvements. A bridge with an FSR less than 50 is eligible for either Federal bridge replacement or rehabilitation funding. These ratings are based on current federal standards, and often historic bridges cannot meet these standards.

**Table 8.4** shows the bridges in Webster as listed on the NHDOT Bridge Summary. The table also includes the Corn Hill bridge at the Boscawen town line. The maintenance responsibility of this bridge should be shared between both towns. The bridges can also be located on the **Bridges by Ownership Map at the end of the Chapter**. The classification of Structurally Deficient or Functionally Obsolete does not mean that the bridge is necessarily unsafe for use. Rather, Functionally Obsolete indicates that the bridge does not meet a particular standard such as an inadequate deck width, under clearance or approach roadway alignment. Structurally Deficient refers to a bridge with one or more deteriorated components whose condition is critical enough to reduce the safe load carrying capacity of the bridge. Culverts and bridges with less than a 20 foot span or newer than ten years are not applicable. It should be noted that bridge inspections are done once every two years except red listed bridges which are inspected every year.

NHDOT manages three bridge aid programs including State Aid Bridge which is state funded, 2014 SB 367 which is also state funded, and Municipal Off-System Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement which is federally funded. Projects begin by the town submitting an application for a preliminary estimate or hiring an approved consultant to do the estimate. NHDOT determines a potential program and year of funds for construction, this process takes several months. The Bridges by Ownership Map shows the location of bridges in Webster by

ownership.

**Table 7.4: Bridges in Webster**

Bridge	Location	FSR	Deficiency	Owner	Built/ Rebuilt
White Plains Road	Over Knights Meadow Brook	54.4	Not Applicable	Municipality	1930/1989
NH Route 127	Over Blackwater River	24.9	Structurally Deficient	NHDOT	1941
Tyler Road	Over Blackwater River	79.1	Not Deficient	NHDOT	1951
Clothespin Bridge Road	Over Blackwater River	21.5	Structurally Deficient	Municipality	1954
Tyler Road	Over Blackwater River	69.3	Not Deficient	NHDOT	1937/1990
Deer Meadow Road	Over Deer Meadow Brook	57.5	Not Deficient	Municipality	1935
Corn Hill Road	Over Pond Brook	48.1	Not Applicable	Municipalities	1936

*Source: NH DOT – 2017 Bridge Summary*

White Plains Road over Meadow Brook, NH 127 of Blackwater River, Clothespin Bridge Road over Blackwater River are all classified as “Red Listed” bridges by the NH DOT. Red Listed bridges are deemed to be either structurally deficient and/or functionally obsolete and require additional monitoring through yearly inspections. Clothespin Bridge is programmed to be replaced in 2023. NH 127 over Blackwater River is scheduled to be addressed in 2026. The bridge over the culvert on Corn Hill Road is located in Webster and in Boscawen.

### **Traffic Volumes**

Collection of traffic volume data is an important tool of transportation planning. The Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) maintains an ongoing traffic count program for monitoring the region’s transportation network. Each year CNHRPC offers to collect traffic data at up to ten (10) locations for each municipality. When choosing count locations, the town should take time to consider any potential or recent developments in the region that could affect traffic in Webster. It’s also important to review the traffic count history completed by both CNHRPC and the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) in the recent past. It is recommended to alternate count locations yearly and consider what locations should be repeated in the long term to create a comprehensive database for Webster.

CNHRPC also collects traffic count data for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) in accordance with federal guidelines under the Federal Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS). Table 8.5 displays the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes for 2006 – 2015, which are published on the NHDOT website at <http://www.nh.gov/dot/org/operations/traffic/documents.htm> . AADT is a basic measure of traffic demand for a roadway and represents the volume of traffic travelling in both directions. As stated above, CNHRPC provides traffic count data to the NHDOT, who then calculates the AADT by applying correction factors to raw data to account for weekday and seasonal variations in traffic volumes.

**Table 7.5: AADT 2007-2016**

Location	2007	2010	2013	2016
White Plains Road at Warner TL	540	420	440	484
Little Hill Road north of White Plains Road	170	140	160	155
NH Route 127 east of Winnepocket Road	1,300	810	1,700	1,612
NH 127 over Blackwater River	1,400	1,200	1,200	1,402
Tyler Road east of NH Route 127	320	260	240	337
Clothespin Bridge over the Blackwater River	560	550	500	490
Deer Meadow Road over Deer Meadow Brook	800	600	620	558
<i>Percent Change</i>		-21.8%	22.1%	3.6%

*Source: NHDOT Bureau of Traffic, Traffic Volume Reports*

**Roadway Conditions**

Pavement condition data for State Roads for 2016 was obtained from the NHDOT’s Pavement Management System. As shown on the ***Pavement Condition Map*** at the end of the Chapter, the condition of NH 127 is generally rated as fair and good condition with some northern segments shown as poor based on the NH DOT Pavement Condition Data. The pavement condition is rated based on International Roughness Index (IRI), which is calculated directly from the average pavement roughness measured in the left and right wheel paths of roadways. Because the NHDOT data is from 2016, some roads may have been repaired and some roads may have fallen into worse disrepair. According to NHDOT’s proposed resurfacing plan NH Route 127 from White Plains Road to the Salisbury town line (3.0 miles) will be resurfaced in 2019. White Plains Road and Little Hill Road will also be paved from NH Route 127 to the end of the State maintenance. Long Street is also scheduled for paving in 2019.

In 2013, the Select Board and other staff participated with University of New Hampshire’s Technology Transfer (T2) Center to complete an Inventory and Assessment of Road Surfaces on town-maintained roads. The inventory was entered into a Road Surface Management System (RSMS) software for analysis, prioritization and generation of repair strategy. A report was prepared containing repair strategies and a 10-year budget plan. The database was not available to the Town to update so the project was abandoned.

In 2017, the Webster CIP Subcommittee recommended implementing an RSMS system to the Select Board. The Planning Board held discussions with CNHRPC about implementing a new RSMS system. RSMS is basically a methodology intended to provide an overview and estimate of a road system's condition and the approximate costs for future improvements. RSMS provides a systematic approach for local officials to answer basic questions about their road system, to gauge current network conditions and to guide future improvement and investment in line with the Town’s Capital Improvement Program. If the Town is willing to devote the time necessary to maintain a RSMS database, it can participate in an upcoming CNHRPC program to implement RSMS in the region. The Towns will have access to their data for maintenance and evaluation, to promote better planning and more accurate budgeting and efficiencies.

## **Motor Vehicle Crashes**

Motor vehicle crash data from 2011 – 2015 was obtained from NHDOT, who receives the data from the Department of Safety for crashes with over \$1,000 in damage. The Department of Safety crash data includes crash data collected by the Webster Police Department and the New Hampshire Highway Patrol. The data represents roughly 80% of all crashes with over \$1,000 in damage that took place during this time period; the remaining 20% of crashes are not locatable based on the information contained in the accident reports. Locatable crashes that occurred in Webster were reviewed and are summarized in tabular form for the most frequent locations in **Table 8.6**. The **Accident Hot Spots 2011-2015** table indicates that many accidents in the Town of Webster are located along NH 127 (3.4 average over the 5-year period). Every other State-maintained road segment averaged 1-2 crashes in the 5- year period. The next highest roadway was Deer Meadow Road. See the **Vehicle Crashes** map at the end of the Chapter.

**Table 7.6: Accident Hot Spots 2011-2015**

<b>State Maintained Highways</b>	<b>Number of Accidents 2011-2015</b>	<b>5 Year Average</b>
NH 127	17	3.4
<b>Town Maintained Roads</b>	<b>Number of Accidents 2011-2015</b>	
Deer Meadow Road	9	1.8
White Plains Road	5	1
Clothespin Bridge Road	4	0.8

*Source: NHDOT/NH Department of Safety*

It is reasonable to assume that a number of smaller accidents may also have occurred during this time period which did not require the intervention of the police department because the estimated value of damage was below \$1,000 and no person was injured.

Where any discrete segment of highway or intersections have three or more accidents per year, or a fatality has occurred, these locations should be studied to determine if any safety improvements can be made to reduce the number and/or severity of accidents.

Fog line striping has been identified as a possible safety improvement to be considered on roads with speed and safety concerns. With the popularity of cycling increasing in New Hampshire, topics such as improving signs and more community education related to safe bicycling should be emphasized.

## **Public Transportation**

The Town of Webster is not directly served by a fixed route public transportation service. The Mid-State Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) for Community Transportation runs a volunteer driver program that serves the region's elderly and disabled populations. The primary purpose of these trips are for essential social services and medical appointments (including long distance medical). Currently, there is no charge for these services although donations are accepted. More information on the Volunteer Driver Program and other Mid-State RCC initiatives can be found at [www.midstatercc.org](http://www.midstatercc.org).

## Non-Motorized Transportation

Residents of Webster value the rural and historic character of the Town. Many rural roads in the town are conducive for walking because of good site distances and low traffic volumes and speeds. There is also a significant trail network within the Blackwater River Flood Zone. Trails should be maintained, made accessible and make connections when possible.

Many communities are also taking the position that smaller, "less built" roads, servicing residential areas help to preserve the residential "community feel" of a neighborhood, rather than a cut-through to other areas of Town. By allowing for smaller, narrower roads, that meet all necessary pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety and transportation standards, Webster can retain the small-town feel that it cherishes.

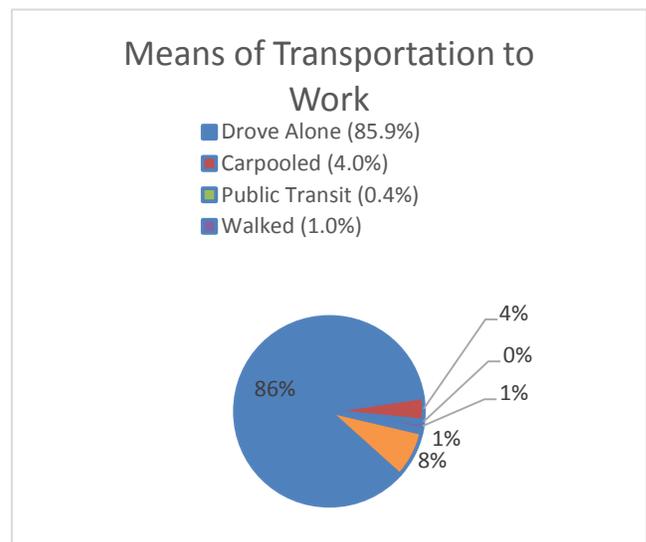
Planning for a bicycle network requires a different approach from that of motorized transportation planning. Bicyclists have different needs from those of motorists, including wider shoulders, better traffic control at intersections, and stricter access management. NH Route 127 is a popular route for cyclists in the region and the town should support efforts to improve safety along the corridor for bicycles.

Good transportation planning should encourage walking and biking. These activities occur, and will continue to do so, whether or not proper consideration and accommodations have been made for them. Ignoring their use of the road may create safety hazards on the roadways for drivers, walkers, and bicyclists.

## Commuting Patterns

The US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) provides data every year in the form of 1-, 3- and 5-year period estimates representing the population and housing characteristics over a specific data collection period. The ACS shows how people live by surveying a sample of the population every year. ACS collects and releases data by the calendar year for geographic areas that meet specific population thresholds; for areas with populations under 20,000, such as Webster, 5-year estimates are generated. The most recent release represents data collected between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015.

Journey to Work Commuting data from the 2010-2014 5-year estimates for Webster were reviewed and is displayed graphically in the charts below. In general, the majority of the working population residing in Webster works outside of the community but within New Hampshire and drives to work alone.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

### **New Development**

New development is often phased over extended periods of time and the ultimate, as well as the immediate, impacts of development on traffic volumes and transportation systems should always be considered. The magnitude of new development obviously determines the traffic impacts that the development will have. Depending on existing roadway traffic volume, distribution patterns, and the physical condition of local roadways, small scale as well as large-scale development can often have significant impacts on the surrounding roadway network.

By requiring transportation/traffic impact studies for new developments of a certain size or for developments located in areas where significant transportation problems are known to exist, the Town of Webster's Planning Board can effectively evaluate the scope of impacts associated with any new development. Through this kind of scrutiny, recommendations for project phasing, and developer participation in necessary improvements can be ascertained and problems of safety, congestion, and the expensive upgrading of existing roads can be mitigated.

As federal and state assistance for local road construction has been variable in recent years, the construction, improvement, and maintenance of local roads has increasingly become the responsibility of municipalities and developers. The developer providing all necessary "on-site" infrastructure improvements is now considered standard practice. However, where developments will have significant impact on the transportation infrastructure in Webster, developers should also be responsible for addressing these issues.

### **Access Management**

Access management is one of the principal tools a local government can utilize to preserve or enhance the capacity of a collector or arterial street while simultaneously enhancing the safety of motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. Access management is the practice of coordinating the location, number, spacing, and design of access points to minimize site access conflicts and maximize the traffic capacity of a roadway. In general, there are many techniques that the Town of Webster can use to take a proactive approach to access management. The Town of Webster currently requires all driveways accessing a lot from a Town road to be built and maintained to a set of standards. A driveway permit needs to be obtained from the Town, through the Road Agent, or the State of NH, through NHDOT if the driveway is accessed from a state route.

### **Connectivity**

The functional roadway classification system provides an organized hierarchy to the Town's roadway system. However, for the roadway system to be effective, efficient, and to serve to maintain a sense of community, the roadway system needs to exhibit a sense of connectivity. Roadway connectivity refers to a street system that provides multiple routes and connections to the same origins and destinations.

One of the difficulties that the Town of Webster, like other municipalities, faces is development

projects that come before the Planning Board exhibiting poor connectivity. This can often be seen with residential subdivisions, where the subdivision is designed with a cul-de-sac at the end. Although the residents who live on these types of streets generally prefer this type of disconnected street system for the privacy it offers, the impact to the community can sometimes be negative. Fire and emergency vehicle and plow trucks might have a harder time moving snow around cul-de-sacs and hammerheads.

While still a long way off in Webster's roadway development future, it's important for the Town to keep in mind that a well-connected street system provides motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists better, more direct and shorter travel routes to schools, shopping and other neighborhoods. A well-connected street system also improves emergency response times for firefighters, police, and ambulance services. Where feasible, new development should connect existing roads rather than isolate communities; cul-de-sacs are an important part of communities throughout the state and where appropriate should be encouraged, however they should be of short distance and connected to more arterial roadways as part of a well-planned and connected street system. Transportation planning and policy should be accurately represented in the decisions of the Planning Board.

### **Traffic Calming**

Traffic calming measures foster safer and quieter streets that are more accommodating to pedestrians and cyclists and enhance neighborhoods and downtown environments. This is particularly true for small, rural communities in New Hampshire where the main roadway through the town serves a dual role. Outside the town, the roadway provides high-speed travel over long distances; within the built-up area, however, the same roadway accommodates local access, pedestrians of all ages, on-street parking, bicycles, and the many other features unique to the character of a community. This convergence of roadway purposes presents both an enforcement challenge for the community and a potential safety problem for the public.

Addressing the issue through enforcement alone often leads to temporary compliance at a significant cost. A more permanent way to reinforce the need to reduce speed is to change the look and feel of the road by installing traffic calming treatments that communicate to drivers that the function of the roadway is changing.

Lowering speed limits is a well-established method of improving pedestrian safety and other non-motorized modes of travel. NH RSA 265 establishes speed limits of 30 miles per hour in a business or residence districts. Based on an engineering or traffic investigation local authorities may adjust maximum speed limits. Limits can be made lower at intersections (RSA 265:63) and in school zones (RSA 265:60). However, traffic calming also suggests road design techniques using active or physical controls (bumps, barriers, curves, rumble strips, etc.) and passive controls, such as signs, landscaping and traffic regulations, to reduce vehicle speeds.

The most effective traffic calming programs combine regulatory and signage actions along with physical modifications to the public right-of-way such as narrowing lane widths.

### **Scenic Roads**

A major component of a town's rural character can be its unpaved and scenic roads. These

roads help to retain a sense of history and rural quality that Webster's residents have indicated a strong desire to maintain. The majority of community survey respondents (73%) felt scenic roads are very important or important to the rural nature of Webster.

RSA 231:157 allows towns by a vote at town meeting to designate any road other than a Class I or II highway as a Scenic Road. A municipality may rescind its designation of a scenic road using the same procedure. The effect of designation as a scenic road is that, except in emergency situations, there shall be no cutting of trees with a circumference of 15 inches at 4 feet from the ground or alteration of stone walls by the town or a public utility within the right-of-way without a hearing, review, and the written approval of the Planning Board. This law does not affect the rights of individual property owners; nor does it affect land uses as permitted by local zoning.

In recognition of the fact that the state law is not very stringent, the statute was amended in 1991 to allow towns to adopt provisions other than what is spelled out in the law. These additional regulations could include additional criteria for the Planning Board to use in deciding whether to grant permission. RSA 231:157 is an important piece of legislation for the preservation of culturally important and scenic roads in Webster. Webster has designated the following scenic roads; Mutton Road (South), Bashan Hollow Road, and Gerrish Road (South). NH Route 127 has also designated by the state as the Currier and Ives Scenic Byway.

In 2017, the Select Board requested the Planning Board organize a subcommittee to review recent complaints and ongoing issues related to scenic road maintenance. The subcommittee reviewed the existing laws and made recommendations for administrative changes such as including the discussion of scenic road maintenance at Select Board meetings, to foster better communication and understanding about the schedule and nature of maintenance on dirt roads. Issues related to the ownership of the roads, the landowners' boundaries and responsibilities, the town's maintenance easement and other technical issues were identified for further research.

### **Regional and State Planning**

#### **Central NH Regional Planning Commission Transportation Advisory Committee**

The regional transportation planning process in the Central NH Region is driven by bottom-up community participation through the Planning Commission's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC is an advisory committee to CNHRPC and is comprised of representatives from all twenty (20) Central NH communities. TAC representatives vary from municipal staff, such as town planners and road agents, to municipal officials, such as Planning Board members and Selectmen. CNHRPC and DOT work collectively to inform all members of the TAC regarding transportation at the local, regional and state level. The members act as liaisons between CNHRPC, municipal and state officials as well as the general public.

TAC Members provide input on transportation related issues and the needs of the local and regional communities in Central New Hampshire. This is done partially by assisting CNHRPC staff with the development of transportation related plans and programs. CNHRPC staff also work with the TAC to solicit and provide guidance on local projects such as Road Surface Management Systems and Road Safety Audits. A well informed, well represented

Transportation Advisory Committee is essential in regional coordination and the success of CNHRPC transportation planning activities.

#### SUMMARY

The Town of Webster road network is a system of gravel and paved roads. Like many other rural towns, the heavily travelled roads get the pavement and the attention. Paving new roads and resurfacing older paved roads usually represent the highest expense item on the Highway Department's budget at Town Meeting. Webster has taken a proactive approach by creating a road paving plan and having intentions to update the plan. Webster also has six locally and regionally important bridges, many of which are outdated. It is important for Webster to be proactive with improving and maintaining the existing infrastructure as well as planning for future needs such as non-motorized transportation networks and transportation options for the aging population.

#### **Issues, Objectives and Recommendations**

##### OBJECTIVE 1

To ensure a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation system that will meet the transportation needs and goals of the Town of Webster.

- Implement a Road Surface Management System to help guide the selection and prioritization of paving and maintenance.
- The Planning Board and Selectmen should annually review the NHDOT bridge inspection reports for state and town owned bridges.
- The Town should continue to contribute to a road and bridge maintenance/capital reserve fund with a specific amount, decided by the Board of Selectmen to be appropriated annually.
- Conduct an annual review of crash locations by the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Town Road Agent and associated staff/committees to determine enhancements that could be made to improve safety.

##### OBJECTIVE 2

Work with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and Central NH Regional Planning Commission to ensure that state maintained roadways and bridges within the Town of Webster are adequately maintained, are safe and reliable, and will achieve a reasonable service life.

- Continue to actively engage with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to ensure that Webster's Transportation needs, are adequately represented in both the Regional and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.
- Designate town representatives and encourage participation in the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission's Transportation Advisory Committee and ensure that transportation projects that are eligible for Federal-Aid funding in Webster are adequately represented.
- Continue to actively pursue grant opportunities such as State Highway Aid and State

Bridge Aid programs.

### OBJECTIVE 3

Establish a set of guidelines and policies to be used by the Planning Board when considering new development that may impact state and local roads.

- The Town of Webster should build upon the requirements of its current Zoning Ordinance, and establish a set of access management guidelines to plan for future development in Webster. These guidelines should be utilized by the Planning Board in considering proposals for new development.
- As part of its Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations, the Planning Board should consider the functional classification of any road on which development is proposed to ensure that the proposed development is appropriate for the existing roadway function.

### OBJECTIVE 4

Continue to encourage land conservation and open space policies to promote all season recreation, preserve history, and maintain Webster's rural character.

- Support the establishment of a Webster Trails Committee to assist in the maintenance of established trails and evaluate and promote new trail proposals.
- Publish town trail maps for public walking trails.
- The Town of Webster should participate in regional efforts to enhance the regional and statewide bicycle networks.
- The Town of Webster should continue to support regulations that protect and promote the integrity of scenic roads. A 2018 Scenic Roads subcommittee recommended changes for the administrative review of maintenance projects on scenic roads in advance of the work being conducted, to allow for greater understanding and communication with the landowners. Issues related to the ownership of the roads, the landowners' boundaries and responsibilities, the town's maintenance easement and other technical issues were identified for further research.

### OBJECTIVE 5

Promote transportation solutions for those individuals without access to an automobile.

- Support and promote Volunteer Driver Programs in the area and participate in regional initiatives.
- Consider providing matching funds for the Mid-State Regional Coordinating Council Volunteer Driver Program.

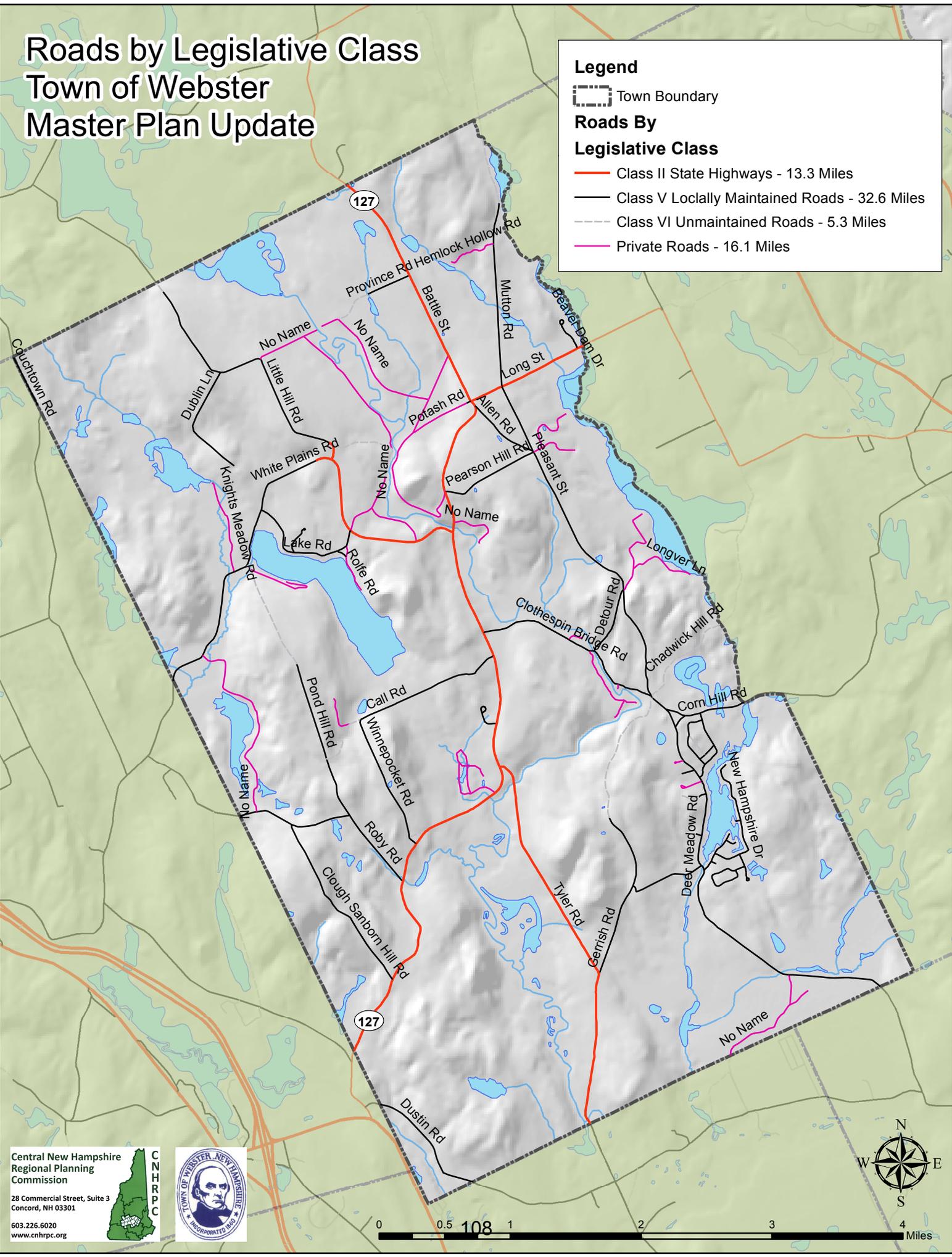
# Roads by Legislative Class Town of Webster Master Plan Update

**Legend**

 Town Boundary

**Roads By Legislative Class**

-  Class II State Highways - 13.3 Miles
-  Class V Locally Maintained Roads - 32.6 Miles
-  Class VI Unmaintained Roads - 5.3 Miles
-  Private Roads - 16.1 Miles



# Roads by Federal Functional Class Town of Webster Master Plan Update

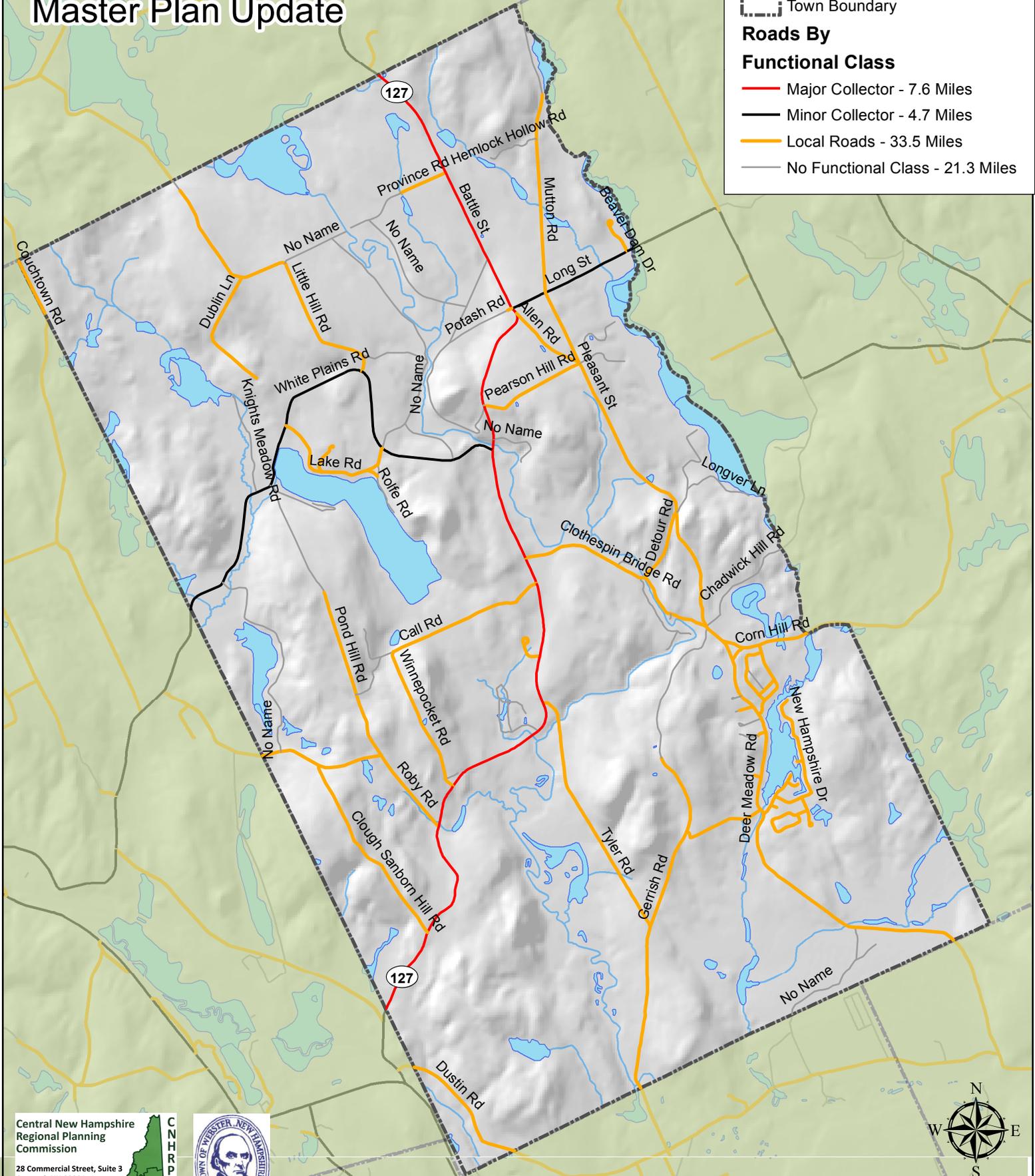
## Legend

 Town Boundary

### Roads By

#### Functional Class

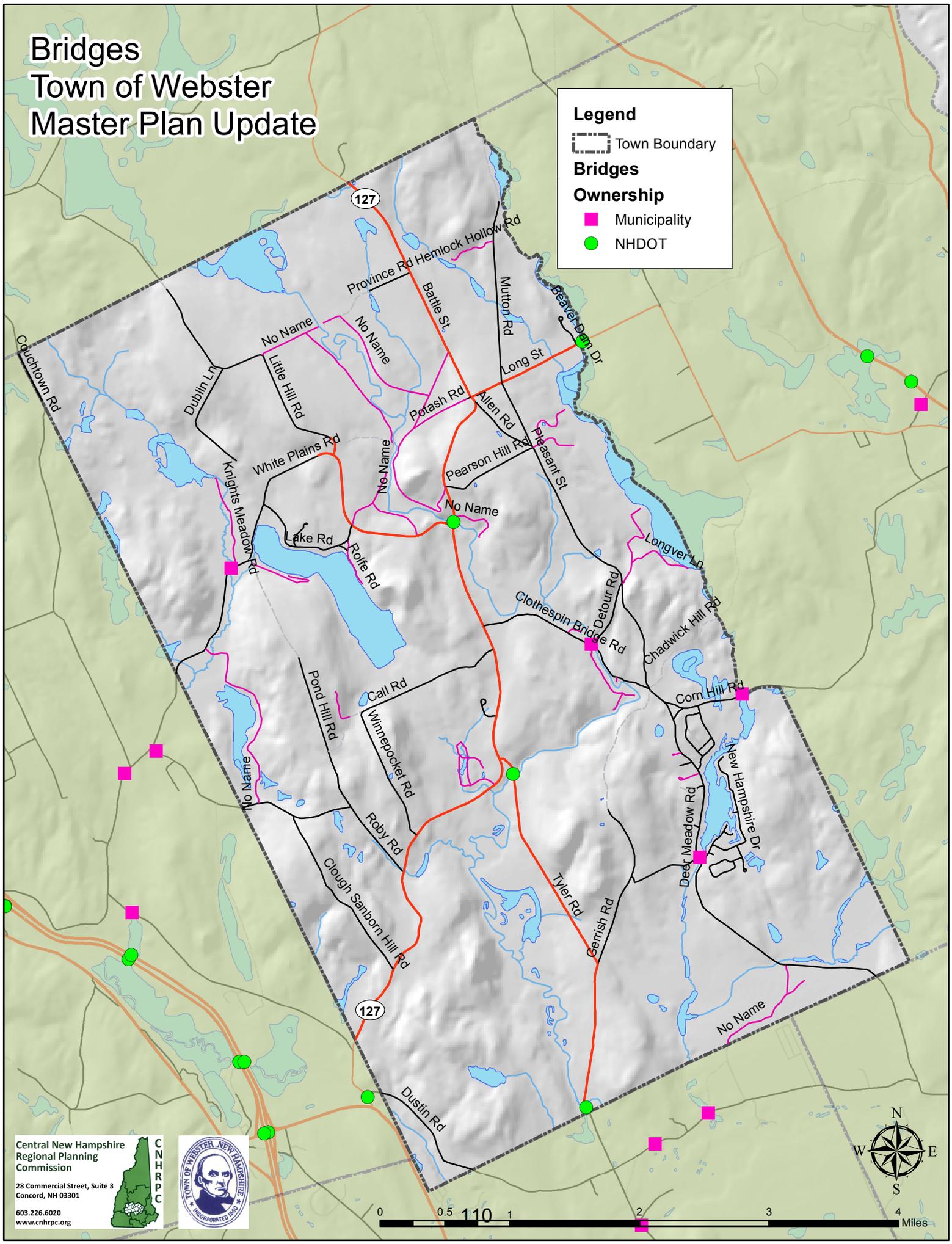
-  Major Collector - 7.6 Miles
-  Minor Collector - 4.7 Miles
-  Local Roads - 33.5 Miles
-  No Functional Class - 21.3 Miles



# Bridges Town of Webster Master Plan Update

**Legend**

-  Town Boundary
- Bridges**
- Ownership**
-  Municipality
-  NHDOT



# Pavement Condition Town of Webster Master Plan Update

## Legend

 Town Boundary

### 2016 Pavement Condition International Roughness Index

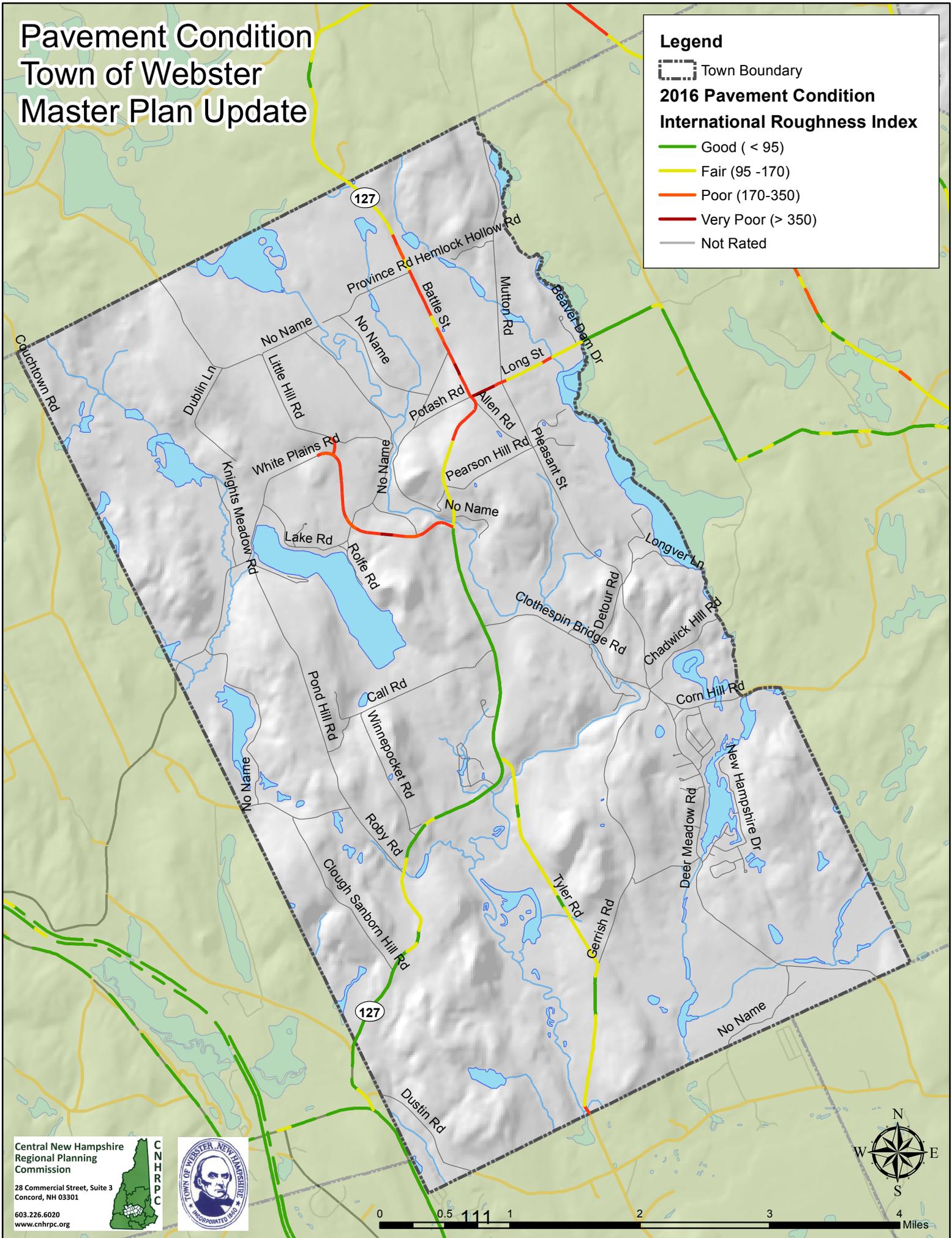
 Good (< 95)

 Fair (95 -170)

 Poor (170-350)

 Very Poor (> 350)

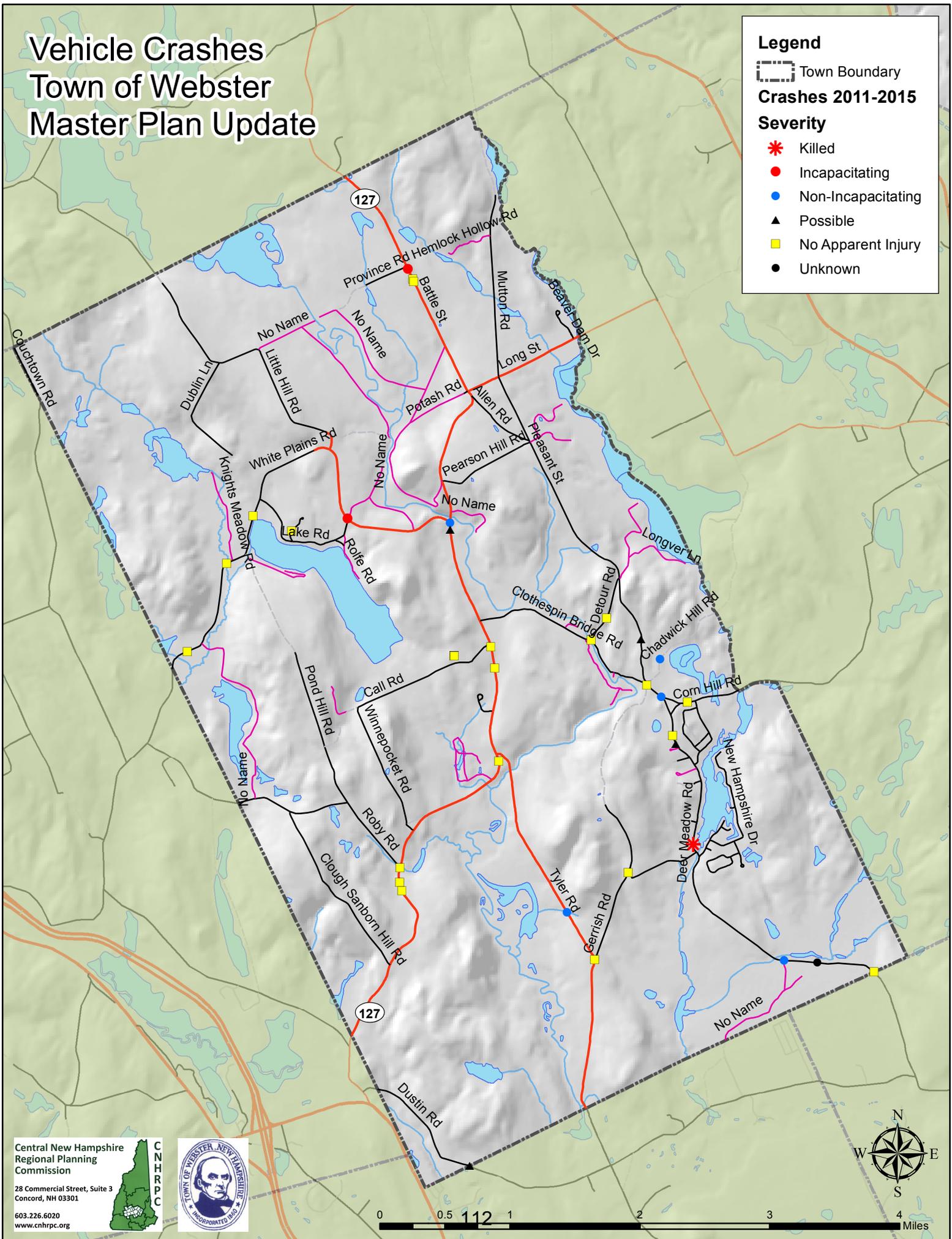
 Not Rated



# Vehicle Crashes Town of Webster Master Plan Update

## Legend

-  Town Boundary
- Crashes 2011-2015**
- Severity**
-  Killed
-  Incapacitating
-  Non-Incapacitating
-  Possible
-  No Apparent Injury
-  Unknown



## Chapter 8 – Future Land Use

### Introduction

Since its incorporation, Webster has evolved from an agricultural community to a primarily rural, residential community. Webster residents place high value on its small town, rural character and want to protect its natural resources, scenic areas and open space. The majority of residents commute daily to surrounding areas for employment. There are a few home-based and small businesses located in Webster, which provides a limited local employment base but does not draw people in from outside the Town for employment opportunities.

The major demographic issues potentially affecting Webster are that New Hampshire's population is an aging population and that the average household size is decreasing. The demand for smaller houses is growing and the need for housing and transportation for seniors is increasing. There is continuing concern for the increasing cost of living and taxes for older and retired population as well as affordable housing for all ages.

Citizens are concerned about property taxes for residents and would like to see some type of development to increase the tax base. The question to be addressed is, if we "keep Webster the way it is," is Webster viable and sustainable in the face of these changing demographics, housing needs and concerns? Do we need different types of housing and economic development to contribute to the tax base?

This chapter reviews the community survey results and input received during the Master Plan update meetings and provides an overview of goals and recommendations to guide Webster land use policies and development in the future.

### Community Survey Results

*Do you think that maintaining Webster's rural character should be a goal of the current Master Plan, as it was in the previous Plan?*

	#	%
Yes	161	84.7
No	20	10.5
No opinion	9	4.7
Total	190	100%

A great majority of the Webster residents who responded to the Community Survey feel the Town should retain its rural atmosphere, nearly 85%.

*Please indicate how important the preservation of open space (undeveloped land) in Webster is to you:*

	#	%
Very important	115	61.2
Important	36	19.1
Somewhat important	22	11.7
Not important	14	7.5
No opinion	1	0.5
Total	188	100%

The majority of respondents (80%) felt preservation of open space is very important or important.

*Would you like to see an increase in open space/conservation lands in Webster?*

	#	%
Yes	110	59.5
No	46	24.7
No opinion	29	15.7
Total	190	100%

The majority of respondents (59.5%) would like to see an increase in open space and conservation lands.

*Which statement describes Webster's residential rate of growth?*

	#	%
Growing too fast	19	9.9
Growing too slowly	20	10.5
Growth is acceptable	120	62.8
No opinion	32	16.7
Total	191	100%

The majority (63%) feel Webster's rate of residential growth is acceptable.

*Webster permits two lot sizes of new subdivisions: a minimum lot size of 5-acres; and one division of a lot containing 4-10 acres into two lots, if the original lot pre-existed the 5-acre zoning requirement. Should the existing lot size:*

	Yes	No	No opinion	Total
Increase	20 (15%)	82 (62%)	31 (23%)	133
Decrease	35 (26%)	69 (51%)	30 (22%)	134
Keep the same	112 (69%)	22 (13%)	29 (18%)	163

The majority of respondents (69%) felt that the 5-acre lot size should remain the same. However, 26% felt it should decrease.

*Webster currently has two zones: Residential/Agricultural and Pillsbury Lake District. Commercial or industrial uses are permitted throughout Webster only by the issue of a special exception. Should the Town consider establishing additional zones beyond the two current zones?*

	Yes (%)	No (%)	No opinion (%)	Total (#n)
Industrial	39 (21%)	119 (65%)	25 (14%)	183
Commercial	62 (34%)	97 (53%)	24 (13%)	183

The majority of survey respondents did not want to establish an industrial zone (65%) and did not want to establish a commercial zone (53%). However, of those who think additional zones should be considered, 34% would consider a commercial zone and 21% would consider an industrial zone.

*Which of the following enterprises/services would you like to see in Webster? Check as many as you wish.*

	%
Agricultural-related business	55.9
Grocery store	35.3
Restaurants	34.4
Bed and breakfasts	33.8
Home based businesses	31.8
Gas station	29.7
Day care/after school	25.1
Recreational businesses	24.6

Tourism-related business	16.9
Retail shops	15.9
Motor vehicle repair or sales	15.4
Health clinic/doctors' office	13.3
Spa/health club	8.7
Mini-storage	6.7
Industrial park	6.7
Hotels/motels/inns	4.6

The majority of Webster survey respondents favor agricultural-related businesses (nearly 60%), followed by grocery stores, restaurants, bed and breakfasts and home-based businesses. In comments from the survey, a small café or gathering place for coffee and groceries were often mentioned.

Webster's rural character, natural resources and open space were valued above all. The majority of survey respondents prefer single family housing and the 5-acre lot sizes. The majority discourages commercial and industrial development. Agricultural related businesses were preferred over other types.

As Webster considers the planning of its future land use, thought must be given to how the land is currently being used and regulated in order to balance the desire to maintain a rural character with open space and farms with the need to provide incentives for growth and increased tax base. This goal can serve as starting points for discussions on zoning changes, land development regulations, and actions taken by the Town on the issues of land use, housing and commercial development.

This section describes the changes to zoning regulations and other recommendations that the Town of Webster can undertake in order to move toward achieving the future land use goals listed above. The recommendations contained within this Chapter are proactive, comprehensive, and long-range in scope and should not be considered a "quick fix." Rather, the recommendations should be looked at as a starting point for further discussions on how Webster wants to grow and develop in the next 10 years.

### **Zoning Changes to Revise Special Exception Process**

As described in Chapter 1, Webster has two zones: Residential/Agricultural and the Pillsbury Lake District. The typical land use pattern of a small New England town "center" with commerce located along more extensively travelled regional roads isn't present in Webster. The original town structures were demolished or relocated when the Blackwater Dam was built in 1940 for flood control by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Since the entire town is zoned residential/agricultural, commercial uses and other businesses are located all over Town rather than along major byways and there is little protection for the homeowners from the impact of the commercial activity.

Webster currently has approximately 20 commercial and home businesses that employ approximately 75 people or contribute to the local economy. These businesses include logging,

blacksmith, basketmaking, wine making, construction, guns, agricultural supplies and feed, general contractor, beauty and medical supply enterprises. Economic assets also include agricultural operations, including but not limited to approximately 15 farms providing goats, dairy, honey, trees, beef, pork, maple syrup and blueberries.

Land uses for commercial, home businesses and other uses are regulated through the Special Exception process. Applicants are required to apply for a special exception to the Select Board, which refers the applicant to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). If the commercial exception is granted by the ZBA, the applicant is required to submit a site plan for review under the Planning Board regulations. Under this process, the site plan and impact of a commercial enterprise is not carefully scrutinized until it reaches the Planning Board. Furthermore, the Select Board does not have statutory authority to review Special Exceptions. Authority to do so falls solely with the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

It is recommended to review and modify the existing zoning process that regulates commercial uses through the Special Exception Process to allow a range of uses more in keeping with the residential/agricultural community. First, review the roles of the Select Board, Planning Board and Board of Adjustment in the current process for granting Special Exceptions and Building Permits and in Zoning Enforcement. Identify the options for streamlining the process and reassigning responsibilities.

For example, Town can consider these options:

- Using a Conditional Use Permit in the process for major subdivisions and open space housing. The application for a subdivision or special housing would go directly to the Planning Board for review and management, rather than to the ZBA. The Planning Board would review the proposal using the subdivision regulations.
- Using a Zoning Compliance Memo to establish the “administrative decision” that triggers the ZBA process. Currently, zoning compliance concerns go directly to the Select Board for review and action. Under this new procedure, the Land Use Coordinator, building inspector or code enforcement officer would review a proposed use or an enforcement problem to determine whether or not it complies with the zoning ordinance. A zoning compliance memo is written for the applicant and the Boards. The benefit is that it establishes the “administrative decision” that triggers the ZBA process rather than the proposal going to the Select Board.
- Creating a position of Zoning Enforcement Officer to fill in the gap of zoning enforcement, which is not currently under the purview of the Planning Board or the ZBA.

The second area that could be used to modify the process would be to establish zones in town where non-residential uses would be permitted. Under the current framework any commercial or industrial use is permitted anywhere within town if an exception is granted. In creating zones, the Town could establish a list of non-residential uses that could be permitted by right or

even special exception based on the zone. This would protect the Town better from undesirable uses or conflict between uses while at the same time guiding non-residential growth to more desirable areas. Lastly, it would encourage the expansion of the non-residential portion of the tax base.

A third approach is to update the Site Plan Regulations in such a way that there is better clarity about the thresholds for site plan review. Part of this approach should look at establishing thresholds for major and minor site plans. The reason for this is that some site plans may require a greater level of scrutiny and analysis than others, and a major or minor designation would provide some clarity for the applicant as to what level of information would be required. For instance, a change that will result in a new building and lots of paving would require a drainage study and would make sense as a major site plan. A change of use site plan that proposes no improvements outside of the building, including paving, may need less scrutiny and would then make sense as a minor site plan.

### **Lot Sizing**

Webster zoning specifies that lots shall be a minimum of five acres for newly created lots. If a lot is between four and ten acres it could be subdivide one time into two lots that are no less than two acres in size. New lots are required to have 250' of frontage on a Class V or better road and setbacks are as follows: 100' for the front setback for five acre lots and 50' for smaller lots; side and rear lot lines are 50' for all lots; in the Pillsbury Lake District, the front and setbacks are 20' and the side setbacks are 12'. The effect of this zoning scenario is very large lots (except for around Pillsbury Lake) with long roads serving them. Additionally, larger lots can impact the cost of development in that a large lot will cost more than a smaller one. Given the changing demographic trends that will drive future housing markets, there may be a need for a range of lot sizes to accommodate different housing needs through strategic increases in density. Another factor to consider could be a buildable area requirement which would require that a smaller portion of the lot must contain "buildable" land (no wetlands, steep slopes, etc.).

### **Village Zoning**

Survey results, in addition to changing demographic trends, have suggested that the zoning ordinance is not addressing some needs. Among them are a desire for a more diverse tax base, housing for seniors, and a way to address commercial growth. A village district could address this issue by providing a new zoning district that includes greater density and a mix of uses.

A possible future "Village District" could include a mix of housing and appropriately scaled commercial uses such as a store, coffee shop or small-scale offices that could serve to meet the desire for a Village area in Town. During the Visioning Session, participants suggested possible locations for a Village District could be along the 127 Corridor from Salisbury to Roby Road.

### **Agricultural Uses**

Merrimack County is one of the highest in agricultural sales in New Hampshire. The average size farm in Merrimack County is 108 acres, decreased from 158 acres in 2002 and 111 in 2007. However, the number of farms has continued to increase in Merrimack County over the past

ten years, from 205 in 2002 to 600 in 2012. The keeping of livestock, poultry, hobby or part time farming without requiring town approval is allowed in Webster.

Farming plays an important role in the preservation of the rural landscape and open space, and continued agricultural use is considered important by the Town residents. However, the regulations do not currently address the potential impact of a large-scale agricultural operation moving into Town, such as the large chicken farm in Boscawen. The scale and intensity of farming can be categorized as agricultural use (1) by right, (2) small scale farms and (3) larger agricultural operations.

It is recommended to review the zoning ordinance to establish regulations for agriculture. The regulations would include definitions and thresholds for the size of farms allowed by right, the density of livestock, the design of accessory buildings, provisions for waste and odor control, and setbacks from abutting properties.

Small scale farms, containing up to 20,000 square feet of impervious surface (buildings, greenhouses, driveways, etc.), could be allowed either by right or by Conditional Use Permit from the Planning Board. Site Plan review by the Planning Board should be required by the requirements for application should be simplified to reflect the low impact nature of small-scale farming.

Larger agricultural operations, or those which attract large numbers of visitors, could be permitted (commercial or otherwise) after obtaining a Special Exception from the ZBA and a Site Plan review by the Planning Board. The development should be appropriately sized and located to maintain the rural residential character of the community.

These revisions to the zoning ordinance would require new definitions for agricultural use and new performance standards for limits on impervious surfaces, building sizes and noise. Controls for density of livestock and poultry, minimum setbacks, screening and buffers, and requirements for the proper storage and disposal of manure and other animal wastes.

### **Open Space/Cluster Development**

The purpose of open space subdivision is to provide flexibility in the design and development of land to conserve open space, retain and protect important natural and cultural features, provide for more efficient use of Town services and promote the development of balanced residential communities with the natural landscape. An open space regulation provides an efficient procedure that can ensure appropriate high-quality design and site planning and a high-level of environmental amenity.

Open space subdivision can also provide a mechanism for allowing a higher density development and smaller lot sizes, thus increasing the availability of more affordable housing for younger people, seniors who want to downsize and others seeking a smaller home in a rural environment.

Open Space Subdivisions are intended to promote the following objectives:

- Permanently preserve natural topography and features and provide open space and recreation opportunities in close proximity to dwelling units;
- Encourage a less sprawling form of development that makes more efficient use of land, requires a shorter network of streets and fosters more economical development and less consumption of rural land;
- Avoid development of portions of sites that contain important natural and/or cultural features, including scenic views, wildlife habitat and water resources;
- Avoid development of portions of sites that are ill-suited for development, including areas with poor soil conditions, a highwater table, that are subject to flooding or that have excessively steep slopes.

Open space and cluster subdivisions should be easy to use. The Town should target the larger tracts of land in order to protect those resources but at the same time, it is important not to overlook some of the mid and smaller size lots that could be clustered as well. During the planning stage, any proposals could be reviewed through a conditional use permit process by the Planning Board. Finally, such an ordinance should consider whether a density incentive for clustering is desirable. With a five-acre zoning set up such an incentive may be needed in order for developers to choose to cluster.

### **Natural Resource Protection**

Webster's goal is to retain its rural character and continue to provide clean water, farmland, open space and forests for residents, wildlife and recreation enthusiasts. The following recommendations for surface water protection and drinking water/aquifer protection are discussed in detail in Chapter 5: Conservation, Preservation and Open Space.

#### **Wetlands**

Wetlands provide numerous functions and values, including flood control, water storage and groundwater recharge, erosion and sediment control, pollution filtration, and wildlife habitat. The amendments to the subdivision regulations suggested in Chapter 5 would further protect and regulate the use of wetlands in the Town of Webster.

#### **Shoreland Buffers**

Webster has many potentially buildable lots on its lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. Water quality is affected by runoff from the impervious surfaces of roofs and pavements. The recommendations to amend the zoning regulations and to enforce compliance with NH's Shoreland Protection Act are described in Chapter 5.

#### **Drinking Water and Aquifer Protection**

Aquifers are important natural resources because they store large amounts of water that can be used for private or municipal wells. Webster established a Groundwater Protection Ordinance to preserve and maintain the existing and potential groundwater supplies, aquifers, and groundwater recharge areas of the Town, and protect them from adverse development or

land-use practices; to preserve and protect sources of drinking water supply for the public health and safety; and to conserve natural resources. The specific recommendations include reviewing the adequacy of the current Groundwater Protection District regulations and adopting a local ordinance to protect drinking water and prevent or limit commercial groundwater withdrawals.

#### Farmland Preservation

Continue to encourage the preservation of farmland through the State's current use tax program, current use discretionary easements on lots under ten acres and through conservation/agricultural easements. Cluster ordinance provisions can even be a tool for the protection of agricultural assets.

#### Open Space Protection and Wildlife Habitat Management

Develop strategies to increase the number of privately-held conservation easements and increase the size of town-owned conservation land by means of donations and/or funds from the Land Use Change Tax. Consider dedicating a greater percentage of the Land Use Change Tax to the Webster Land Trust Fund to further protect conservation and open space land.

Consider wildlife corridors in town planning and protect wildlife corridors through donation and/or the purchase of conservation easements. Work with neighboring towns to create contiguous open space to ensure wildlife movement.

Coordinate land protection efforts with state, federal and private agencies interested in protecting local and regional open space. Nominate the Blackwater River Corridor into the State Rivers Management and Protection Program to receive special consideration in all resource conservation planning

#### Conceptual Future Land Use Plan

A group of about 25 town officials, employees and residents consistently participated in the Master Plan update sessions. While participants in the Visioning Session were hesitant to support a specific area for a commercial zone, they stated they were open to zoning alterations to allow permitted commercial uses in designates areas. They considered the concept of a Village District with mixed use development. They considered the concept of regulating agricultural uses to prevent large scale operations in certain locations. They also supported the concept of varied lot sizing and open space/cluster housing, to provide a variety of housing density.

The common goal of the community sessions and the survey results is to maintain the high quality of the environment and ensure that the rural character is not jeopardized by future growth. Many participants expressed concern regarding the high tax rates and what could be done to grow the tax base responsibly while preserving the Town's rural character and high quality of life. Webster needs to be proactive to manage future development and economic growth. It is recommended that the Town boards, commissions and citizens support the suggested changes to land use practices and regulations in the Master Plan in order to meet our goal.

## **Issues, Objectives and Recommendations**

The following is a summary of the key objectives and recommendations contained in the chapter.

### OBJECTIVE 1:

Consider changes to Webster's Zoning Ordinance and Land Use Regulations to address the location and regulation of non-residential uses and provide for balanced development:

- Clarify where non-residential uses are permitted throughout Webster through the establishment of specific zones. Consider the preparation of a table of uses that outlines which non-commercial uses are allowed as a permitted use or via a special exception or conditional use permit.
- Consider the use of Innovative Land Use planning techniques for Multi-Density Zoning, such as open space subdivision or village plan alternative; Environmental Characteristics Zoning such as stormwater management, ridgeline/steep slope development, wildlife habitat management and water resources protection; and Site Level Design. such as dark skies lighting, energy-efficient development and landscaping regulations. See the NH DES Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques: A Handbook for Sustainable Development at:  
[https://www.des.nh.gov/repp/documents/ilupt\\_complete\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.des.nh.gov/repp/documents/ilupt_complete_handbook.pdf)
- Address the roles of the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Board of Selectmen in the current processes for granting special exceptions and building permits, and in zoning enforcement.
- Consider the conditional use permit and zoning compliance memo as tools for use in subdivision reviews and enforcement.
- Create a new position of Zoning Enforcement Officer.
- Update the Site Plan Review Regulations to modify thresholds for major and minor site plans.
- Address the need to promote and regulate agricultural uses through the definition of thresholds for review and the development of specific agricultural-related definitions.

## OBJECTIVE 2:

Examine the opportunity to provide options for mixed-use development and a variety of lot sizes and housing options in Webster.

- Develop a clear and concise open space/cluster development ordinance that promotes the use of cluster design in appropriate locations and allows for a density bonus if the design protects natural features and encourages a walkable community.
- Consider creating a range of lot sizes in appropriate areas to promote a variety of housing alternatives.
- Consider identifying a Village District along Route 127 to provide the opportunity for greater density of development and mixed use, including light commercial.
- Development proposed under this ordinance could be regulated by the Planning Board via a Conditional Use Permit process as permitted by NH RSA 674:21, Innovative Land Use Controls.

## OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop a long-range plan for natural resource protection and conservation. Integrate the plan into the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to ensure protection of wetlands, shoreland buffers, drinking water, farmland and open space/wildlife habitat management.

## Appendix A: Species of Greatest Conservation Need

The species in the table are all designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need and exist or have existed in Webster

Grouping	Species	Additional Designations
<b>Freshwater Fish</b>	Burbot	SC
	Brook Trout	SC
<b>Amphibians</b>	Blue-spotted/Jefferson	
	Jefferson Salamander	SC
	Northern Leopard Frog	SC
	Fowler's Toad	SC
<b>Birds</b>	Bobolink	
	Black Billed Cuckoo	
	American Black Duck	
	Bald Eagle	SC
	Purple Finch	
	Pied-billed Grebe	ST
	Ruffed Grouse	
	Northern Harrier	SE
	American Kestrel	SC
	Common Loon	ST
	Common Nighthawk	SE
	Field Sparrow	
	Bank Swallow	SC
	Chimney Swift	
	Scarlet Tanager	
	Prairie Warbler	
	Whip-poor-will	SC
	American Woodcock	
	Marsh Wren (localized)	
	<b>Freshwater Mussels</b>	Alewife floater
Brook floater		SE
Creper		
<b>Insects</b>	American Bumble Bee	
	Yellow Bumble Bee	
	Yellow Banded Bumble Bee	
	Frosted Elfin Butterfly	SE
	Karner Blue Butterfly	FE, SE
	Monarch	
	Phyllira Tiger Moth	SC

	Rapid Clubtail	SC
	Skillet Clubtail	SC
<b>Mammals</b>	Big Brown Bat	
	Eastern Red Bat	SC
	Hoary Bat	SC
	Little Brown Bat	SE
	Silver-haired Bat	SC
	Tricolored Bat	SE
	Southern Bog Lemming	
	American Water Shrew (Eastern)	
	Long-tailed Shrew	
<b>Plants</b>	Arethusa Bulbosa	
<b>Reptiles</b>	Black Racer Snake	ST
	Smooth Green Snake	SC (historic 1939 – 1993)
	Blanding's Turtle	SE
	Spotted Turtle	ST (historic 1939 – 1993)

**Legend from New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan (WAP):**

- ST = state-threatened
- SE = state-endangered
- FT = federally-threatened
- FE = federally-endangered
- SC = special concern in NH
- SGCN = Species of Greatest Conservation Need