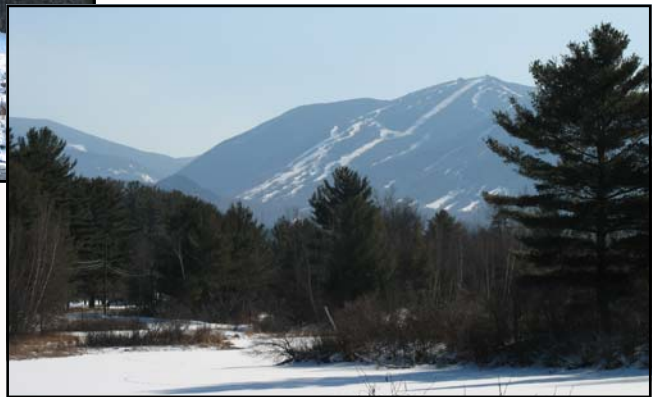


Town of Franconia Master Plan



Updated in 2008
by the Town of Franconia Planning Board
with assistance from North Country Council

Town of Franconia Master Plan

Executive Summary

Master Planning in New Hampshire

New Hampshire RSA 674:2, *Master Plan; Purpose and Description*, states: "The purpose of the master plan is to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection."

The statute affirms that, "The master plan shall be a public record subject to the provisions of RSA 91-A, Access To Public Records and Meetings. The master plan shall include, at a minimum, the following required sections:

- A ***vision section*** that serves to direct the other sections of the plan. This section shall contain a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but also for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.
- A ***land use section*** upon which all the following sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent and intensity of future land use."

Vision Statement

Franconia is envisioned as a town that:

- Preserves the village atmosphere of the town's center and the rural forested character outside of town.
- Values its water, parks, natural forest resources, and its non-motorized trail system.
- Maintains an economically viable infrastructure that supports living-wage employment and commercial non-industrial enterprise.
- Accepts its responsibility for the development of youth into responsible citizens.
- Encourages a broad range of housing for a socioeconomically diverse population.
- Creates and maintains a broad range of recreational opportunities.
- Develops safe, pedestrian friendly, garden-like walkable communities.

Goals and Objectives

1. Future Land Use Sections

Note: Future Land Use sections and map are **not** to be confused with the town's zoning map. The Future Land Use map is **not** a regulatory map.

- When planning for future residential development, allow for a variety of housing options.
- Support open space development and the protection of natural resources.
- Support the protection of scenic views and ridgeline.
- Evaluate lands to be protected from development as well as areas where development could meet the needs of affordability and/or protection of town character.
- Investigate state statutes that address water levels and water contamination (septic systems).
- Look into adopting a Groundwater Protection Ordinance.
- Consider referencing the Shoreland Protection Act; address any additional shoreland/river protection issues.
- Look into regulations for swimming pools and hot tubs.
- New business should fit with the rural, village character.
- Consensus is to not allow for large retailers and chain stores; regulations on size, landscaping, architectural features and other design standards could be developed to make any large business comply with the character of any existing commercial district.
- Consider public purchase of land for conservation purposes and to protect mountain views.
- Continue to develop and protect the town's recreational assets.
- Consider burying utility lines and examining other beautification projects.
- Examine land parcels in Franconia to be put into a land trust.

2. Housing

- Ensure the availability of a variety of housing types to support an economically diverse residential population.
- Amend zoning standards to require cluster/open space developments in designated areas.
- Designate areas of town where a developer must provide a certain amount of affordable housing per subdivision.
- Encourage Planned Unit Developments throughout town and specify this as a permitted use in certain zones.
- Continue researching ways to provide affordable housing for year-round residents.
- Promote housing opportunities that sustain Franconia's rural character and residential population.

3. Recreation

- Develop safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Routes 116 and 18.
- Develop recreation programs for children and young adults.
- Enhance the walkability of Franconia's downtown and surrounding areas.
- Continue to enhance recreational opportunities at Dow Field.

- Develop a Trail Study for the town, a detailed map of existing trails, a maintenance plan, and a plan for future trails and connections.
- Work with Sugar Hill Conservation Commission on coordination of trail systems.
- Monitor the progress of the Route 3 proposed bike path.
- Encourage involvement of the town in discussions regarding the future of Cannon Mountain.
- Consider developing regulations to protect the rivers.
- Protect/enhance recreational programs and facilities for Franconia's visitors.

4. Transportation

- Develop bicycles lanes along state bicycle-designated roadways.
- Consider constructing a pedestrian footbridge over Gale River to Dow Field.
- Work with State on examining safety possibilities at intersection of Routes 18 and 116.
- Research ways to construct granite curbing and sidewalks on Main Street and elsewhere.
- Research solutions for access management and parking issues along the Main Street business district.
- Town should work to balance the aesthetics of unpaved, private roads with the economics of maintaining those roads.

5. Community Design

- Encourage new small business to locate in the village center of town.
- Develop regulations to discourage large commercial retailers from locating in town.
- Research Big Box Ordinances and their appropriateness for the town.
- Examine and encourage the development of green space areas along Main Street.
- Improve the appearance of Main Street through clean-up programs and keep the small town architecture by examining sign, architecture and design ordinances.
- Consider forming a Community Design Committee for any improvements or alterations to the village area.

6. Community Facilities

- Study ways to coordinate hours of operation for library, transfer station, post office and other town services.
- Work with the water department to improve the town's water infrastructure.
- Consider developing and adopting an impact fee ordinance to help minimize the impact of capital expenditures on the tax map.
- Improve the town's infrastructure through capital reserve funds or mitigation grants.

Note: The Town Infrastructure Study Group is completing their report which identifies existing conditions on community facilities which the town owns and maintains. Their report will outline recommendations on how to address the community facilities needs.

7. Natural Resources

Note: The town hired Watershed to Wildlife to conduct a Natural Resource Inventory which examines existing conditions in many natural resource categories. The full report is available for examination at Town Hall and the Abbie Greenleaf Library. Copies will also be available for purchase at the Franconia Business Connection.

- Identification and Protection of Wetland Complexes:
 - a. Complete an in-depth inventory of vernal pools and use information to deter new development from building in these sensitive areas.
 - b. Compile previously delineated wetlands, documented wetland locations and other areas containing wetlands and conduct future expanded wetland delineations.
- Protect Groundwater, Brooks, Rivers, Shorelines and Aquifers:
 - a. Implement best management practices.
 - b. Monitor septic system plumes.
 - c. Monitor placement of future septic systems.
 - d. Utilize the Shoreland Protection Act.
- Research and develop ridgeline protection ordinances to conserve mountainous topography and steep slopes.
- Protect existing stands of softwood trees and investigate potential to extend stands by connecting patches of existing softwood stand.
- Connect adjacent conserved lands, permanent openings, softwood stands, and wildlife habitats. There is potential for purchasing some of these lands outright or placing conservation easements on these lands.
- Encourage scenic easements in town.
- Continue to work towards updating data available for mapping important natural features in town.
- Work with other organizations in town and share data collected from the Natural Resource Inventory to make comprehensive land use decisions.
- Determine least impacted sites for future development.
- Refine Master Plan based on Natural Resource Inventory.
- Promote protection plan for large aquifers in town.
- Identify lands for purchase or conservation easements.
- Get plans in digital format so that Natural Resource Inventory data can be overlaid on sites for decision making.

Protecting and preserving our land and maintaining community character are difficult to balance with personal property rights. The Town's responsibility to pass on to the next generation an affordable and vibrant community with appropriate land use, preservation of community character and freedom from environmental degradation will require continued adjustment and review in order to maintain balance.

The Master Plan is a tool for the future and a support document for land use planning and regulation which all residents should become familiar with. Through an understanding of the goals, objectives and data supporting the Master Plan and with citizen input, Franconia residents can produce a workable vision for our future.

Town of Franconia Master Plan

Thanks to the following past and present Planning Board members and Selectmen for all their hard work in pulling together this Master Plan update, and thanks to the citizens of Franconia for completing your surveys and providing input during this planning process.

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Town of Franconia Master Plan

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i-iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: Vision Statement	6
Chapter 3: Goals and Methods of Implementation	7
Chapter 4: Land Use	10
I. History and Early Development of Franconia	10
II. Population Effect on Existing Land Use	11
III. Community Survey Results Regarding Land Use	12
IV. Existing Land Use Categories and Map	16
V. Future Land Use	21
Chapter 5: Housing	25
Chapter 6: Recreation	41
Chapter 7: Transportation	47
Chapter 8: Community Design	57
Chapter 9: Community Facilities	63
Chapter 10: Natural Resources	67

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Master Plan, enabled under New Hampshire State Statutes 674:1-4, is the non-regulatory guiding document that serves the community concerning the development of regulations, capital expenditures, and long-range planning decisions. The purpose of the Master Plan is to “set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area” and to “aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture in New Hampshire.” The Master Plan also guides the planning board in the development of smart-growth initiatives in order to provide the most sound planning for the future of their community.

A recent revision of state statutes requires that a Master Plan include a Vision Section and a Land Use Section. It further recommends that this document to be updated every 5 to 10 years. The Town of Franconia’s Master Plan includes the required elements, as well as other chapters on housing, recreation, transportation, community design, community facilities, and natural resources.

The Vision Section gives direction for the other sections of the Master Plan, including transportation, economic development, natural resources, and housing. The RSAs describe the Vision Section as a “set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the Master Plan” with “guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision.” The Vision Statement in Chapter 2, along with general goals and more specific obtainable methods of implementation in Chapter 3, make up the overall vision of Franconia’s Master Plan. The Land Use Section of a Master Plan (see Chapter 4) gives direction to the other sections of the Master Plan in a physical sense. The placement of roads, land use, business, and the location of downtowns, natural areas, and cultural resources are integrated into the Land Use Section, which should show existing land use conditions in a community and how the recommended goals relate to a future land use vision for the Town.

It is the intention of the Franconia Planning Board to continue working on the Master Plan and studying and reviewing existing conditions.

Chapter 2: Vision Statement

There are several characteristics that make the Town of Franconia unique, and the Town values its many assets and wants to protect them. The overall vision for the Town of Franconia is as follows:

- ◆ To preserve the village atmosphere of the Town's center and the rural forested character of the Town outside the village center;
- ◆ To value its water, parks, natural forest resources, and its non-motorized trail system;
- ◆ To maintain an economically viable infrastructure that supports living-wage employment and commercial non-industrial enterprise;
- ◆ To accept its responsibility for the development of youth into responsible citizens;
- ◆ To encourage a broad range of housing for a socio-economically diverse population;
- ◆ To create and maintain a broad range of recreational opportunities; and
- ◆ To develop safe, pedestrian friendly, garden-like walkable communities.

The specific goals for achieving this vision are set forth in Chapter 3 of this Master Plan.

Chapter 3: Goals and Methods of Implementation

Below is a list of some specific goals and some corresponding means for obtaining these goals for the Town of Franconia. These goals and methods of implementation will help guide the Town in its decision-making process concerning its annual budget, updating zoning, and other regulations and in preparing future planning documents.

Small-Town Character

Goal: Maintain the small-village commercial atmosphere:

- Encourage new small businesses to locate in the village center of the Town;
- Develop regulations to discourage large commercial retailers from locating in Town;
- Research Big Box Ordinances and their appropriateness for the Town.

Goal: Protect the scenic beauty and small-town character of Franconia:

- Consider purchasing land for conservation purposes and protection of mountain views and explore putting the land into conservation easements or a land trust;
- Continue to develop and protect the Town's recreational assets;
- Consider burying utility lines and examining other beautification projects.

Goal: Protect the physical integrity of Main Street and the Village:

- Examine and encourage the development of green space areas along Main Street;
- Improve the appearance of Main Street through clean-up programs and keep the small-town architecture by examining sign, architecture, and design ordinances;
- Place welcome signs at the entrances to Town and along Main Street.

Recreation Resources

Goal: Protect and enhance recreational opportunities throughout the Town:

- Develop safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Routes 116 and 18;
- Continue developing recreation programs for children and young adults.

Goal: Encourage a wider scope of recreational opportunities for all age groups:

- Enhance the walkability of Franconia's downtown and surrounding areas;
- Continue to improve recreational opportunities at Dow Field;
- Encourage the protection and development of multi-use walking and hiking trails.

Goal: Protect/improve recreational programs and facilities for Franconia's visitors.

Natural Resources

Goal: Balance new development with the protection and preservation of the Town's natural resources:

- Encourage habitat sensitive development;
- Protect slope degradation from ridgeline construction.

Goal: Protect Franconia's natural resources as an economic benefit to the Town.

Goal: Preserve Franconia's rural character by protecting Franconia's natural resources:

- Develop a Natural Resource Inventory for the Town;
- Identify prime areas of Town for protection and conservation;
- Develop a conservation plan for purchase of land and conservation easements.

Goal: Protect Gale River Basin from overdevelopment:

- Consider buffer zones along waterway;
- Monitor water quality on an annual basis.

Goal: Protect Franconia's groundwater:

- Develop storm water retention areas on sites affecting groundwater recharge;
- Repair leaking water lines to better preserve Town's water resources.

Transportation

Goal: Maintain and/or upgrade the existing transportation infrastructures in Town to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities:

- Develop bicycle lanes along state bicycle-designated roadways;
- Examine options for pathways for bicycle and pedestrian use;
- Consider constructing a pedestrian footbridge over the river to access Dow Field.

Goal: Modernize Franconia's infrastructure by making it more vehicular friendly and safe:

- Work with state on examining safety possibilities at the Intersection of Route 18 and Route 116;
- Research ways to construct granite curbing along Main Street to provide a safer buffer between vehicular traffic and pedestrians.

Goal: Promote infrastructure that enhances Franconia's commerce but protects its visitors, residents, and natural resources:

- Research and derive solutions for access management and parking issues along Main Street business district.

Housing

Goal: Provide a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of all citizens in the Town of Franconia:

- Develop zoning standards that allow for large residential lots in designated areas of Town;
- Amend zoning standards to require cluster/open space developments in designated areas close to the village center;

- Encourage Cluster Developments (CD) throughout Town and specify CDs as a permitted use in certain zones;
- Designate areas of Town where a developer must provide a certain amount of affordable housing per subdivision and locate these areas close to the village center;
- Research ways to provide affordable housing for year-round residents.

Goal: Ensure the availability of a variety of housing types to support an economically diverse residential population.

Goal: Promote housing opportunities that sustain Franconia's rural character and residential population.

Public and Community Facilities

Goal: Enhance Franconia's community facilities/utilities for community residents and visitors:

- Study ways to coordinate hours of operation for library, transfer station, post office and other town services;
- Work with the water department to improve the Town's water infrastructure through a capital improvement fund or impact fee ordinance;
- Consider developing and adopting an impact fee ordinance to help minimize the effect of capital expenditures on the tax base.

Goal: Develop a coordinated approach to addressing the needs of the community's services' infrastructure:

- Develop a plan of construction, renovation, and support of the infrastructure for the future;
- Improve the Town's infrastructure through capital reserve funds or mitigation grants.

Economic development

Goal: Support economic development that corresponds with the rural character of Franconia and protects the Town's quality of life.

Goal: Create business opportunities that balance economic development with village appeal on Main Street.

Goal: Encourage professional businesses that harmonize with Franconia's rural setting.

Goal: Enhance the Main Street to attract commerce and recreational activity while preserving its village charm.

Chapter 4: Land Use

I. History and Early Development of Franconia

Franconia is in the heart of the western White Mountain region of New Hampshire, approximately 75 miles north of Concord. It was first granted as Indian Head in 1764, but the settlers were unable to meet the terms of their charter. It was then incorporated in 1772, regranted as Morristown and later named Franconia due to its resemblance to the Franconian Alps in Germany.

The discovery of iron ore in the neighboring Town of Sugar Hill led to a development surge in Franconia. In 1805, the New Hampshire Iron Factory Company was formed, followed three years later by the Franconia Iron Works. This business flourished for 50 years.

When the first census was taken in 1790, there were 72 residents. In 2003 the estimated population was 978 year-round residents.

The biggest and most enduring industry in Franconia is tourism. The area of Franconia Notch is well known for its natural features, including the once-standing Old Man of the Mountain, Profile and Echo Lakes, The Flume, The Basin, and Mounts Lafayette, Lincoln, Garfield and Cannon. The Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway was the first passenger tramway built in North America. Franconia has proved to be an attraction for many people, the most notable being Robert Frost who lived and wrote in a house on Ridge Road from 1915-1920. The house has been preserved as The Frost Place Museum. Owned by the Town of Franconia, it is a center for poetry and the arts.

The Town of Franconia also flourishes from its proximity to recreational and outdoor activities. Besides the numerous natural features within Franconia Notch, Cannon Mountain ski area and other ski resorts and cross-country ski opportunities exist in nearby towns. Once looked at as a great place to own a second home, the Town of Franconia has recently seen its fair share of year-round housing. The demands on the Town which once served workers at the iron companies have increased tremendously over the decades.

(Information gathered from the Franconia Public Library and Chamber of Commerce)



II. Population Effect on Existing Land Use

Statistical Summary

To understand the dynamics of the land use and development trends in the Town of Franconia, it is important to view some demographic information. The number of people moving into Town, the number of households, and the number of people per square mile significantly influence land use and development patterns in a community.

- ◆ The population in the Town of Franconia has been increasing over the last 30 years with the exception of a slight decrease between 1990 and 2000 when the population in all of Grafton County decreased.

Population by Year for the Town of Franconia				
<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2004</u>
655	743	926	823	990
* Information obtained from the Office of Energy and Planning, State Data Center				

- ◆ The Town of Franconia comprises 65.7 square miles of land area equaling approximately 15 persons per square mile. However, occupied land, subtracting out the White Mountain National Forest, equals approximately 53 people per square mile.
- ◆ In the 2000 Census, there were 702 residential units in the Town of Franconia: 384 were housing units occupied year-round, and 318 were vacant housing units, of which 291 were seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

<u>Year-Round Housing</u>	<u>Seasonal Housing</u>	<u>Trips For Year-Round Residents</u>	<u>Trips For Seasonal Residents</u>	<u>Total # Of Trips At Peak Season</u>	<u>Average Year-Round Household Size</u>
384	291	3,674	920	4,594	2.23

Source: Information gathered from the 2000 US Census Data

- ◆ Using the Institute of Transportation Engineers traffic generation estimates for the number of vehicle trips for year-round homes (9.57) and recreational homes (3.16), the number of locally-generated residential trips can be estimated as 4,594 per day. This assumes, of course, that all seasonal homes are occupied at the same time.
- ◆ At 64.07% (27,049* acres), the White Mountain National Forest (federal lands) is the greatest single land use in the Town of Franconia. Franconia Notch State Park accounts for 7.48% (3,157.63* acres).
- ◆ Developed, built upon, and approved residential lots account for 13.08% (5,522.6* acres) of town land, 8.93% (3,770.36 * acres) of which are parcels of 10 acres or more which could be further subdivided. An additional 11.06% (4,670.42* acres) are vacant parcels, designated residential which are five acres or more and could be developed as residential lots.

*Numbers reflect minor rounding error.

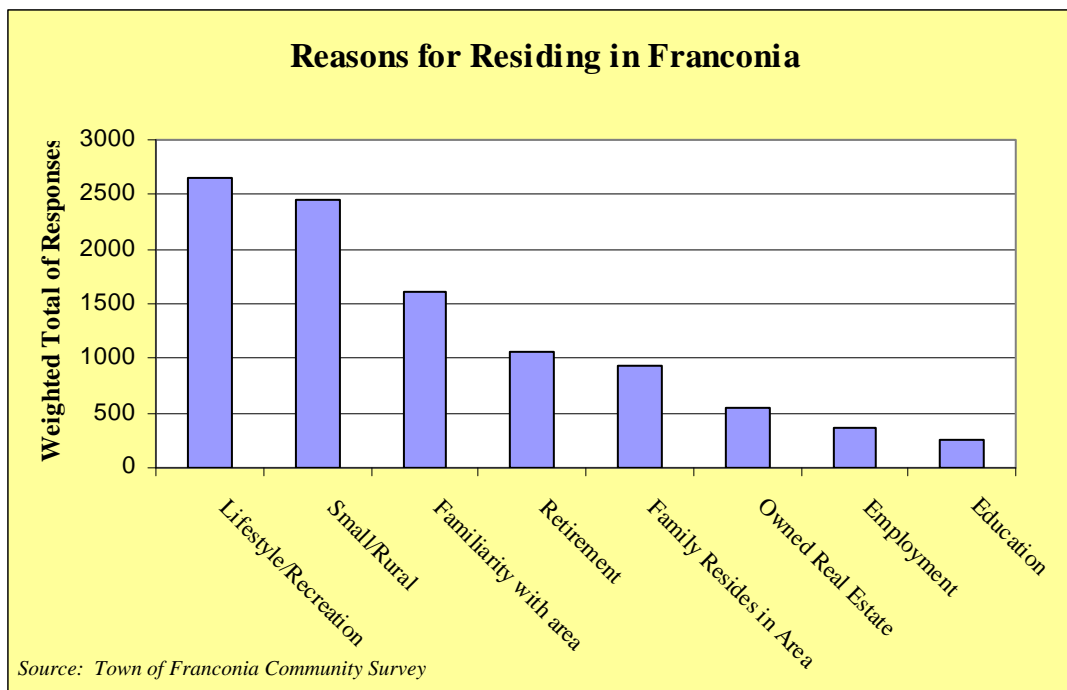
III. Community Survey Results Regarding Land Use

The Town of Franconia Planning Board developed and sent a survey in the spring of 2005 to all property owners asking questions about their views of the Town, housing and land use preferences, and opinions on the future of Franconia. The Planning Board received six hundred and twenty-seven (627) responses, a significant return rate for a survey, proving the citizens' commitment to the Town and its future planning. Information from the survey responses assisted the Planning Board in the creation of the Town's Goals and Methods of Implementation, outlined in the third chapter of this Master Plan. In addition, the responses provide essential information in examining existing land use, patterns and trends.

Residential Development/Housing

Three hundred and sixty-three (363) of the respondents are full-time residents of Franconia, while others have vacant land or seasonal housing and reside in Franconia only a few months of the year. There have been fifty-nine (59) homes over the last ten years that have changed residency status from seasonal home to permanent home, and fifty-one (51) current seasonal homeowners responded that they were likely to change their residency status in the next ten years from seasonal to permanent. However, a large majority of seasonal homeowners plan on keeping their homes in seasonal status, residing in Franconia during peak seasons. It is a common trend in the North Country region, where there is large growth of seasonal homes, that those homes become full-time residences over time.

An important factor to note is why people choose to reside in Franconia; what makes the Town unique and attractive to home buyers, whether seasonal or year-round. The following chart shows a breakdown of the reasons citizens choose to live in Franconia.

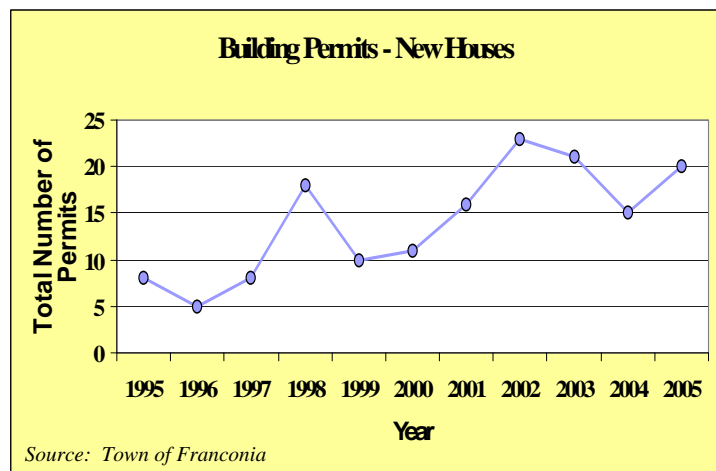


An overwhelming number of respondents identified Lifestyle/Recreation and Small/Rural perspective as the most important reasons why they reside in the community. A fair number of respondents live in Franconia because they are familiar with the area and/or have family connections in the area, or they have chosen Franconia with its rural, small-town feel as a great place to retire.

For these reasons and others, building permits have increased over the past number of years. Although the Town saw a slight decrease in new house building permits from 2003 to 2004 (a decline from twenty-one permits to fifteen), overall the number of building permits issued each year in the Town has been increasing slowly.

Another important consideration in planning for future residential development is building lot size. Here, the 516 responses ranged from 1/2 acre to 100 acre lots, while 25% favored 5 acre lots, 21% favored 2 acre lots and 17% favored 3 acre lots. Thus 63% of respondents thought lots ranging from 2-5 acre were the most preferable for new housing development. When asked which types of housing development should be encouraged or discouraged in Franconia, the respondents strongly preferred single family houses and assisted living housing units. They also sought

to strongly discourage the building of mobile home parks and subsidized housing. Approximately equal numbers of respondents sought to encourage as discourage the building of apartments, townhouses & clusters. There has been a trend of large lot development throughout Franconia mainly along Route 116 and Route 18; some residents favor this type of residential development, while others are concerned about affordability and flexibility in lot design and building construction. The Town must balance these needs by allowing several types of residential development and perhaps designating areas for certain types, such as open space, cluster development and large rural residential lots.



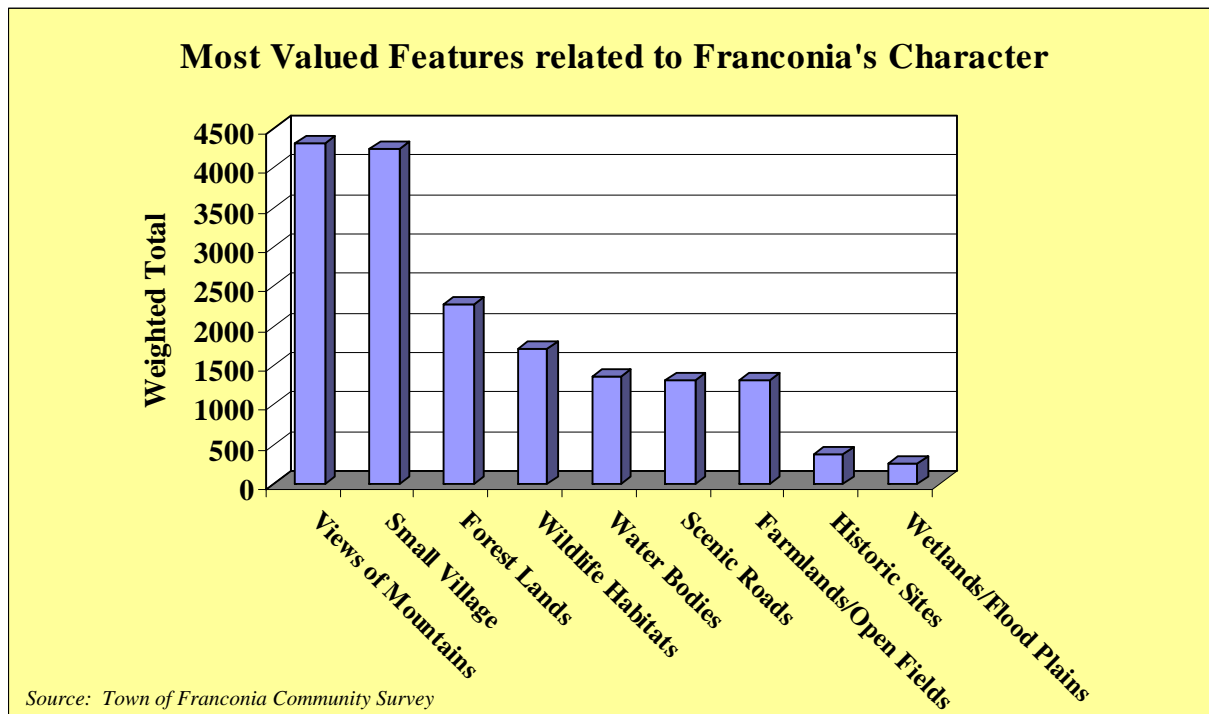
Commercial Development

Most commercial development in Town is focused downtown in the village in the form of small, locally owned businesses. There are some larger commercial properties along Route 116 and Route 18, but most of these consist of bed and breakfasts, inns, and hotels which fit in with the rural, small-town character of Franconia. In the survey, respondents stated they preferred small shops; arts and crafts; agriculture; home-based services like internet businesses; child care; small industry; and new restaurants as businesses in Franconia. Most respondents are opposed to fast food restaurants, mini-malls, large industry, auto service stations and factory outlets. In sum, they enjoy the types of business that currently reside in the community and would support slow growth of the commercial industry if new businesses were kept in character with other businesses in the village district. Most respondents would rather not see the business districts expand in Town; and those who would prefer some expansion would support growth along Lafayette Drive but not along Forest Hill Road, Butterhill Road, Dow Avenue or Route 116.

Natural Resources and the Environment

One clear and universal vision for the Town is for the protection of natural resources and conservation of land. The citizens of Franconia are aware of the natural beauty that surrounds them and support finding ways to protect these features.

The chart below specifies the features valued most by the respondents as they relate to the character of the Town. Weighted totals were used to combine the number of responses as well as the priority level per response.



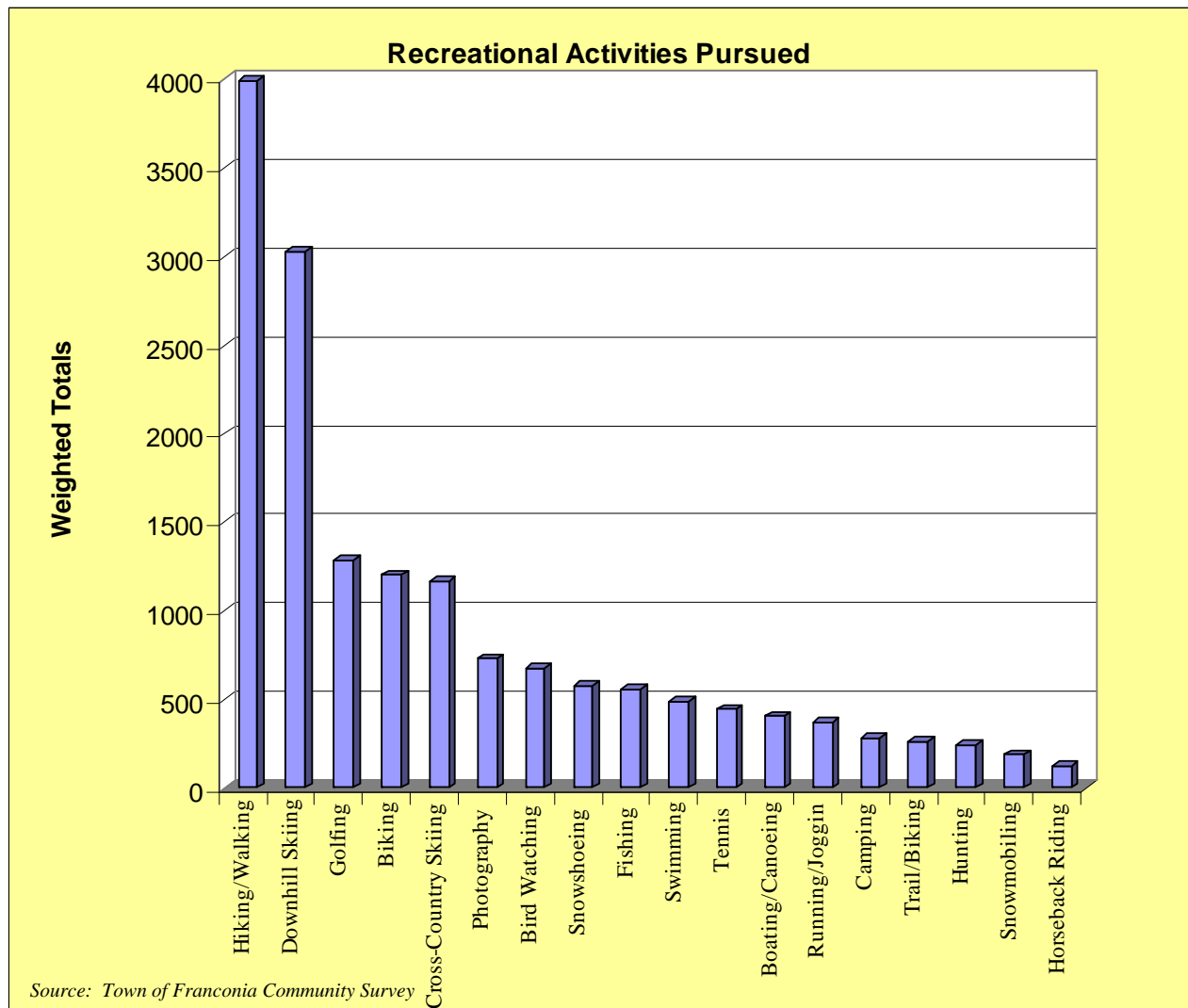
Other indicators throughout the survey showed support for protecting land and natural features throughout town. For instance, four hundred and sixty-three (463) of the six hundred and twenty-seven (627) respondents were in favor of using tax revenues for land conservation expenditures. Additionally, thirty-one of responding residents currently have conservation easements on their property, and another one hundred and eighteen (118) are considering placing conservation easements on their property.

There are some environmental concerns that the respondents raised. When planning for protection of natural resources and conservation of lands, these concerns should be taken into consideration. They include the alteration of the landscape, rural overcrowding, wildlife habitat depletion, the quality of groundwater, the quality of surface water, and noise pollution and automobile traffic. Some of these concerns can be addressed with the use of cluster developments, where houses are clustered and a wildlife habitat remains intact as open space area.

Recreation

Another mainstay of Franconia's character and lifestyle is recreation. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the land in Town is in the White Mountain National Forest, and around seven percent (7.48%) of the land is in the Franconia Notch State Park. These areas provide several hiking trails in and around Franconia Notch; the Franconia Notch Bike Path running from Lincoln to Artist's Bluff and Cannon Mountain; and several rock and ice climbing opportunities. The citizens of Franconia value and enjoy their recreational lifestyles. Connecting some of the existing recreation trails, as well as developing further opportunities for all ages to enjoy recreational pursuits, are an important part of the vision for Franconia's future.

Franconia's recreation pursuits are varied. The chart below reflects the types of recreational activities pursued. Acknowledging the preferences in these recreational pursuits helps town officials plan for preferred expansion of recreational facilities in the future.



IV. Existing Land Use Categories & Map

Using base data collected from the tax assessor files for the Town of Franconia, the Planning Board worked to define the existing land use categories in the Town and examined the characteristics of those land uses. The percentages and acreage for each use discussed on the following pages are derived from the Existing Land Use Map on page 20.

Residential

The Town of Franconia is comprised of 42,219.83 acres of land, of which 10,279.88 acres, nearly 25%, is in residential zoning. There are several types of residential lands identified on the Existing Land Use map, as follows:

- ◆ Residential - used to identify those lands under five acres that currently have buildings on them and are inhabited.
- ◆ Residential Land Approved - identifies land that has been either approved for residential growth under a recently approved subdivision plan or granted a building permit.
- ◆ Residential Land Over Ten (10) Acres - identifies any land that currently has a residential building on it but is over ten acres, therefore could be subdivided into more residential lots.
- ◆ Residential Land Vacant & Five (5) Acres or More - used to identify vacant land that for tax purposes is categorized as a residential land use, which is five acres or more and can not be further subdivided under current regulations.
- ◆ Residential Land in Current Use - describes any other vacant residential parcels that are in current use that are over ten acres and unlikely to be further subdivided.

The amount of land in each of these types of residential uses is shown in this chart. The current zoning in Town allows 3-or 5-acre lots for residential construction. The residential land over 10 acres and the vacant residential land over five acres, currently 19.99% of the land, approximately 8,400

<u>Type of Residential Land Use</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Total Land</u>
Residential	1,209.94	2.87%
Residential Land Approved	542.3	1.28%
Residential Land Over 10 Acres	3,770.36	8.93%
Residential Land Vacant & 5 Acres or More	4,670.42	11.06%
Residential Land in Current Use	86.86	0.21%

Source: Cartographic Associates of Littleton and Town of Franconia

acres, can be further subdivided into residential lots. Taking out fifteen percent of the land for roads and utilities and not taking into consideration wetlands and current residential building locations on that land, approximately 1,400 are possible in this current existing residential land. Identifying areas for protection within this residential land is key in determining location and density of future residential development.

Currently, there is a mixed use of residential housing from a few multi-family and rental housing properties to large secondary seasonal homes. There has been some construction on ridgelines, and the Town should monitor and/or prevent future development in these locations given that the citizens feel mountain views are a valuable feature of Franconia's character. The Town should also examine the slope on new construction along ridgelines to protect against excessive runoff from site clearing and driveways. Natural

resources and environmental protection are important to the citizens of Franconia.



Although a lot of residential homes historically have been located close to the village, recent residential construction has been occurring along Route 116/Easton Road for its magnificent views of Kinsman Ridge, and along the southern end of Route 18 which also provides excellent views and proximity to Cannon Mountain ski area. Other areas where new residential construction has concentrated is along Scrag Hill, Franconia Mountain Road, and Butterhill Road. The Town must seek to balance the residential needs and preferences of the community with those of the landowners by providing creative opportunities for a mixed variety of houses in the future.

Commercial

There is not a lot of existing commercial land use in the Town, only 1.45% (610.78 acres). Most of the commercial development is located in the village and is a mixed variety of small-town services and businesses. There has been one new recent commercial development located on Route 116. The Town has no industrial uses; and the only light industrial/heavy commercial use is an auto salvage yard which is identified as commercial. One reason commercial development is not currently expanding is because the land zoned for commercial use is almost completely built out. Another is the impact the interstate highway has had on the Town. Once a destination location, Franconia now serves some tourism and recreation uses but is often passed through by many who are heading north into Canada or south towards Boston.

As noted throughout the survey, the respondents do favor some slight expansion of commercial facilities, but only ones that fit with the small-town feel of the village, and the preference would be to keep these new businesses near the village. The one existing condition that must be examined by local officials is access to the various businesses in the village. As with many typical small New England villages, driveway cuts and parking were never truly established. Over the years, people have accessed these businesses by entering and exiting at several points along the property, causing unsafe driving conditions and poor sight distances throughout the village. As Franconia implements sections of the Master Plan and prepares for the potential of new small businesses in the village area, the access management issues should be addressed.

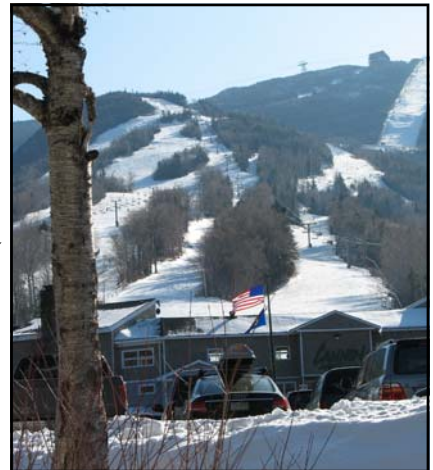


Recreation

Franconia prides itself in the abundant recreational opportunities that are present; but for land use planning purposes, it is important to examine the different types of recreation within the Town, because the approach to future land use planning can be different for each. The types of recreational land use can be broken into three categories: Commercial Recreation, such as Cannon Mountain and potentially Mittersill; State Park and Federal Lands; and Town Recreation.

Commercial Recreation

Cannon Mountain is owned by the state; the concessionaire has changed hands several times, and there have been discussions in the past with other ski resorts who have expressed an interest in leasing the property. There currently are no condos or multi-family seasonal properties around the Cannon ski area, and the people of Franconia are pleased with the untouched land around the mountain. Close to Cannon Mountain is Mittersill, a once-active recreation/housing development, complete with a Swiss lodge, that also has inactive ski slopes that traverse the same mountains as does Cannon. The Taft Ski Trail, which is a historic racing trail from Cannon, once passed through the area which became Mittersill. Fleeing from World War II, skiers from Austria developed the Mittersill Resort and incorporated part of this trail into their area. They built the resort, complete with a full service hotel, and added a T-bar lift



in the mid 1940s. In the 1960s they developed more trails and added another T-bar to access the trails. Then in the late 1960s a double chair lift was added and that was the last major capital improvement to Mittersill. The area closed sometime in the late 1970s to early 1980s. Mittersill today is a combination of year-round, seasonal, and time-share housing, and the lodge is still available for visitors. There is one piece of land between the two properties that is federal land, and therefore the two ski areas have never been merged into one. However, there have been recent

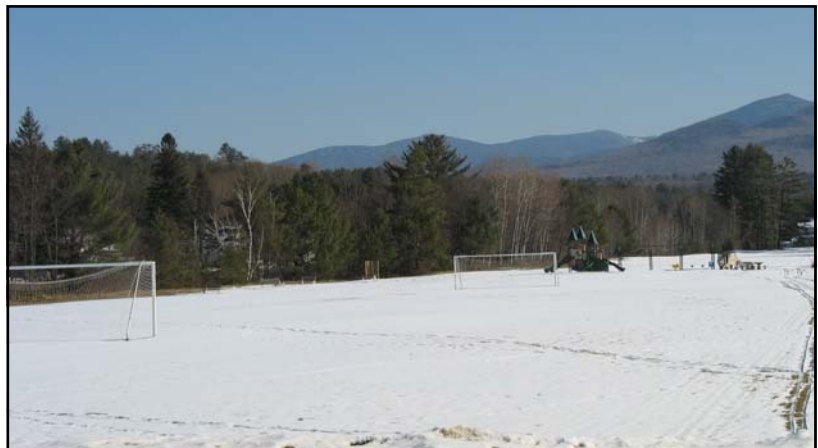
discussions regarding the expansion and merging of Mittersill and Cannon as the result of a land swap. The Town is concerned about the possible increase of activity in the area which could result in traffic, parking issues and the like, but more importantly it is concerned about the land immediately adjacent to this area. It is clear in the Town survey that respondents are not favorable to condos found in some of the larger ski area developments. Currently Cannon Mountain, which experiences large snowfall and provides magnificent views, is a small local mountain area that does not generate the sorts of development trends and congestion one might find at a large, private ski area. Additionally, there is a water supply problem at Mittersill which may prohibit expansion. The Town will be examining the land close to Cannon and Mittersill and should take part in any discussions about these two areas since its future land use could be affected by any changes.

State and Federal Lands

As mentioned in the previous section, 71.55% of the land in Franconia is state or federal land, approximately 64% in the White Mountain National Forest and 7% in Franconia Notch State Park. Both areas offer many recreational opportunities. Cannon Mountain, discussed above, is located within Franconia Notch State Park. Although these lands belong to the state and federal government, it is essential that decisions made and discussions about these lands include town officials so that the Town can plan for future land uses and growth. Currently a lot of tourism traffic from these areas filters into the Town, whether for service-related reasons such as lodging at one of the various hotels and bed and breakfasts in Town, for dining and entertainment, or to view the historical and cultural resources of the Town such as the Iron Furnace and the Robert Frost House. Also, some of the seasonal housing in Franconia has come from the many outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers who have visited the state and federal lands over the years and have decided to purchase a second home in Franconia. Hence the state and federal government should work closely with the Town, and vice versa, on decisions about the area.

Town Recreation

In addition to the many recreational opportunities within the state and federal lands, Franconia has several town recreation facilities and has worked hard over the years to maintain these facilities and to expand them when needed. The Dow Field is an area that has expanded with more soccer fields. There has been much discussion on an overall recreation plan for this area possibly to include pedestrian bridges to the sidewalks on Route 18 and a more comprehensive approach to future expansion and recreation opportunities at the site.



The Town also owns 99 acres of land, within Fox Hill Park and the Hockey/Ice Skating Rink next to the Town Hall and Library, that is heavily utilized. In addition to the parks and field in Franconia, there are also several trails and easements for trails throughout town. One trail, the Riverstone Beach Trail, connects the Village Store and village businesses to the Iron Furnace Historic Site. Several new subdivisions throughout Town have ski and other non-motorized recreation trail easements through them. A problem is that these trails are not mapped and there is no comprehensive, long-range plan for trails and connections in the Town. It is the responsibility of the property owners and/or homeowner's association to maintain these easements; however, if they are not mapped or identified in a plan, it is difficult for the Town to keep track of the maintenance of the trails and possible future connections to the trails.



V. Future Land Use

Future land use plans begin by examining the existing land uses and their locations and comparing them to the goals set forth in this Master Plan. The idea is to get a visual image of what the Town would look like if the goals were obtained. The Future Land Use Section and map are not to be confused with the Town's zoning map. The Future Land Use Section, as well as the entire Master Plan, serve as a vision for the Town, a guiding document that will assist in making future planning decisions. Regulations and long-range plans should be reviewed and edited to be compatible with the Master Plan, and the Future Land Use Map should be used to examine existing zoning districts and permitted uses. However, the Future Land Use Map is not a regulatory map.

Residential

When planning for future residential development in Franconia, it is important to allow for a variety of housing options. The more recent residential development trend in Franconia has been large, single-family houses on large parcels. Where this may be desirable housing for some, not everyone can afford nor wants a large home on a large lot. Current zoning requires five acres for most residential development. This standard encourages large single-family development and is not conducive to affordable housing. In addition, property taxes have gone up in town and people who have spent their entire life in Franconia are now finding it hard financially to remain here.



The Town should allow for and promote various housing types throughout the Town. The Town should identify appropriate locations for large, single-family residences and areas where more dense residential development is desirable. The Town supports open space development and the protection of natural resources. The Natural Resource Inventory identifies key areas in town to protect. These areas could be protected through purchase or conservation easement. The Town could also consider allowing open space developments in these environmentally sensitive areas by promoting the clustering of houses in one area to protect a prime natural resource in another area. The Town could also pursue incentive zoning, where incentives are allotted to a developer who provides a certain number of affordable housing units within their new residential development proposal. Although you can not require a developer to build affordable housing, you can encourage them to provide it.

The scenic views in Franconia are an asset the community wants to protect. The Planning Board has identified ridgeline areas and higher elevations as places to protect from future development, most likely residential. These areas are desirable residential building lots, because they can be sold at a higher price since they provide excellent views. However, in Franconia, the community wants to protect these areas so that the current scenic view is not blocked by the silhouette of many houses.

Commercial

The Town currently does not have any large commercial development. Most commercial businesses are located in the village district or along Route 116, but they are small service-type industries. The citizens support their village and frequent the stores and services within it. Some would like to see a slight expansion of the district with new businesses that would fit in with the rural village character. However, the clear consensus is not to allow large retailers and chain stores in Franconia. Whereas a town can not prevent a certain



business from locating in its jurisdiction, regulations on size, landscaping, architectural features and other design standards could be developed to make any large commercial business or chain store comply with the character of the existing commercial district. The Town may also look into access management techniques throughout the village district. Currently, driveways and access points are not clearly marked nor planned in relation to neighboring parcels. The result is traffic merging, turning and stopping in various locations throughout the village, thus creating a potential safety hazard. The Town should study the current traffic

flow between these businesses and make plans for improvements to access and driveway points. Then, any new development proposing to move to the village would need to comply to the access management plan for the village.



Recreation

Recreational opportunities are very important to the people of Franconia. The Town has invested time and support into providing municipal recreation opportunities, as well as working with developers to provide trail easements to connect to a larger trail system throughout town. However, the trail system has not been mapped and the Town does not want to lose sight of the trails that exist or of the important connections that need to be made. The Natural Resource Inventory may help the Town decide what areas in town to protect through conservation easements and low-impact recreation—such as trails, bird watching viewing areas, etc.—that may be appropriate land uses for those areas. In addition, the Town should use the information from the inventory to map a trail plan identifying key connections/trail segments that should be constructed and to map existing corridors with maintenance and right-of-way issues to be addressed.

The Town is also concerned with Cannon Mountain's potential lease of the surrounding area which lies within the Town's boundaries, and its development into additional service-oriented businesses and second homes. The Town will use the information in the Natural Resource Inventory to identify key areas around the ski area that need to be protected. Also, the Town will review scenic view regulations and ridgeline development ordinances to examine possible regulatory techniques for the protection of this area as well.

Natural Resources

The Town of Franconia is rich with natural resources, and the respondents have expressed the need to develop strategies to protect these resources. The Town recently completed a Natural Resource Inventory giving it more insight into the various resources throughout town. The Natural Resource Chapter of this Master Plan summarizes the results of that Inventory.

The need to protect ridgelines in town is mentioned in the Residential Section of this Future Land Use chapter. This was also a recommendation from the Natural Resource Inventory. Because the view of the mountains and scenic vistas are an important factor in determining why people reside in Franconia, they should be protected. Additionally, water resources are important to the Town. The Future Land Use Map identifies the aquifer and wetland areas following the Gale River and the Ham Branch. These areas were also mentioned in the inventory as important features to protect. Additionally, the aquifers are an important resource to the future water needs in the Town of Franconia. As the Water Commission outlines a plan for future water sources, it would be optimal to restrict development upon a majority of the aquifers. More information on the water department and resources can be found in the Community Facilities Chapter of this Master Plan. Perhaps the Town should research aquifer protection ordinances and reevaluate any wetland regulations to make them more restrictive. Allowing developers the option to use open space regulations in these areas, where the houses are concentrated in one section to protect the wetlands and aquifers in another section, such as in cluster developments, may be an appropriate planning technique. The Town should also encourage developers to retain as much of the natural setting on site as possible, including stands of trees, open fields, or other important natural features.



There are additional natural features for which the Town should consider adopting protection plans or developing regulations to eliminate overdevelopment, such as softwood stands and open fields. Again, the Town is characterized by these natural areas and the plants and wildlife they provide for. Placing future residential development around these areas by allowing flexibility in lot size and other incentives could allow the Town more options for protecting these important natural resources.

Chapter 5 Housing

I. Demographics & Existing Housing Trends

The Town of Franconia has seen an increase in housing development over the past few years and anticipates continued increases in the upcoming years. The intent of this section is to look at the most recent housing trends as calculated through the Town documentation, the U.S. Census Bureau, the New Hampshire Finance Authority, the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning, and North Country Council's Housing Needs Assessment. This information will give us a better understanding of the types of housing, the size and age of population, and the rate of increase of both in the Town of Franconia. Examining our past and current trends will help us plan better for our future.

A. Summary and Findings of Fact

Listed below are some of the highlights of housing and population information that will be further examined in this chapter.

- In comparison to all towns in Grafton County, Franconia consistently shows a high percent of population growth.
- Over the past ten years, Franconia has seen a 34% net migration to Town.
- Although owner-occupied housing is increasing at a more steady rate, Franconia has seen increase over the past ten years in both owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing.
- Seasonal and recreational homes have also increased over the past few years.
- Most households are either 1 or 2 person households, comprising 70.5% of all households in the Town.
- Majority of all houses, owner-occupied and renter-occupied, were constructed in 1939 or earlier, yet the median years built range between the 50s and 70s.
- Franconia's annual household income averages are consistent with the state and the county, yet over 27% of the population is spending over 30% of their household income on housing costs.
- Franconia has seen more new construction housing permit requests than any other type of residential building permit requests over the past few years.
- The Littleton Labor Market Area (LMA), which is comprised of several towns including Franconia, needs approximately 1,300 more housing units from 2000 to 2010, according to LMA's housing needs assessment.

B. Population Trends

One of the first variables that should be measured when planning for housing is population growth. In the table below, we can examine annual population from 1990 to 2004 and the population growth between census data years by all towns which comprise the North Country Planning Region in Grafton County*. We can analyze the information to see where growth is occurring throughout the area and how Franconia ranks in terms of population growth.

**The 23 towns in the chart below comprise the North Country Planning Region in Grafton County.*

Population of all towns in Grafton County and Ranking of Greatest Growth							
Town	U.S. Census 1990	U.S. Census 2000	* OEP Estimate 2004	% Growth Rate 1990 - 2000	Greatest % Growth Ranking 1990 - 2000	% Growth Rate 2000 - 2004	Greatest % Growth Ranking 2000 - 2004
Bath	784	893	935	13.9%	11	4.7%	18
Benton	330	314	328	-4.8%	23	4.5%	20
Bethlehem	2,033	2,199	2,375	8.2%	12	8.0%	7
Campton	2,377	2,719	2,919	14.4%	9	7.4%	10
Easton	223	256	286	14.8%	8	11.7%	2
Ellsworth	74	87	86	17.6%	7	-1.1%	23
Franconia	811	924	997	13.9%	10	7.9%	8
Groton	318	456	486	43.4%	2	6.6%	13
Haverhill	4,164	4,416	4,624	6.1%	15	4.7%	17
Landaff	350	378	394	8.0%	13	4.2%	21
Lincoln	1,229	1,271	1,304	3.4%	16	2.6%	22
Lisbon	1,664	1,587	1,681	-4.6%	22	5.9%	16
Littleton	5,827	5,845	6,250	0.3%	20	6.9%	11
Lyman	388	487	532	25.5%	4	9.2%	3
Monroe	746	759	811	1.7%	18	6.9%	12
Plymouth	5,811	5,892	6,328	1.4%	19	7.4%	9
Rumney	1,446	1,480	1,571	2.4%	17	6.1%	15
Sugar Hill	464	563	633	21.3%	6	12.4%	1
Thornton	1,505	1,843	2,006	22.5%	5	8.8%	4
Warren	820	873	929	6.5%	14	6.4%	14
Waterville Valley	151	257	278	70.2%	1	8.2%	6
Wentworth	630	798	867	26.7%	3	8.6%	5
Woodstock	1,167	1,139	1,191	-2.4%	21	4.6%	19
Grafton Co.	74,929	81,740	86,415	9.1%		5.7%	
* Source: NH Office of Energy and Planning							

Out of the twenty-three towns (in the North Country planning region in Grafton County), Franconia has been in the upper 50 percentile for population growth. At 13.9%, Franconia ranked higher in percentage of growth from 1990 to 2000 than 13 other towns in the area, including large growth centers such as Plymouth and Littleton. From the year 2000 to 2004, Franconia was ranked eighth in the percentage of growth increase. In both cases, Franconia's percentage growth increase was higher than the growth increase of the county as a whole. Other towns surrounding Franconia, such as Sugar Hill and Easton, have also seen high percentage increases in population growth indicating that the area just north of Franconia Notch is a desirable place to live.

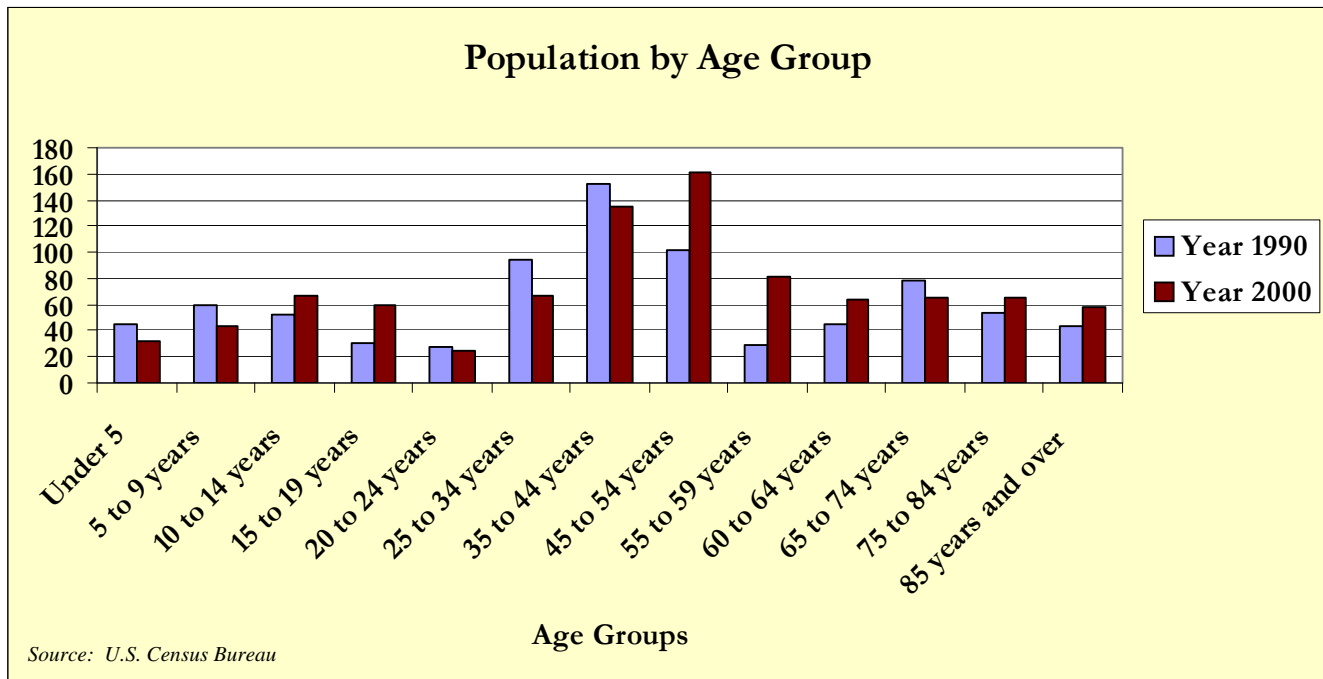
Examining the age of the population that has moved into the Town is also important to determine what number and type of housing, such as senior housing, will be needed, and if the population growth would be suited with larger homes if there is an increase in family size, or more homes if there is an increase in young

Population by Age Group and Year				
Age Group	Year 1990	% of Total Pop. (1990)	Year 2000	% of Total Pop. (2000)
Under 5	45	5.5%	32	3.5%
5 to 9 years	59	7.3%	44	4.8%
10 to 14 years	52	6.4%	67	7.3%
15 to 19 years	31	3.8%	59	6.4%
20 to 24 years	28	3.5%	25	2.7%
25 to 34 years	94	11.6%	67	7.3%
35 to 44 years	152	18.7%	135	14.6%
45 to 54 years	101	12.5%	161	17.4%
55 to 59 years	29	3.6%	81	8.8%
60 to 64 years	45	5.5%	64	6.9%
65 to 74 years	78	9.6%	66	7.1%
75 to 84 years	54	6.7%	65	7.0%
85 years and over	43	5.3%	58	6.3%
Total Population	811	100.0%	924	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

single adults and families. For example, if the population growth consists of an increase in the number of minors, then perhaps a lower number of larger homes will be required to meet their needs. If, on the other hand, the increase consists of young adults (singles) and seniors, then more smaller houses may be needed, thereby resulting in a greater number of housing units for the same numerical increase in population. During these years, the largest age population group in the Town was from 35 to 54 years old. Most people in this age group are homeowners or renters, stressing the importance of providing a variety of housing to meet this population's needs. Also, there was a decrease in the 25 to 34 years age group; and these are typically the years when young adults buy their first homes. A possible reason for the decrease in population in this age group could be linked to the lack of affordable housing, and/or to students moving for employment

elsewhere after college. Another age group which increased in population is those people over 54. Statistically, the United States is growing older. In order for the Town of Franconia to meet the future need to provide housing for this increased aging population, plans to provide housing for seniors will become an



increasingly important task. The chart above, a bar graph of the population by age chart on the previous page, clearly illustrates the trend of increasing population by age.

Starting with the 45 to 54 year age group, the data depict a shift of numerical prominence to the older age groups, with just one exception.

Over the decade, the youth population growth has remained slow and steady in the Town. The table below shows the natural increase (births in town) from 1990 in comparison to net migration.

Population Increase in Franconia from Year 1990 - 2000			
<u>Population Increase</u>	<u>Natural Increase</u>	<u>Net Migration</u>	<u>% of Net Migration over 10 years</u>
113 people	74 births	39 people	34%

Source: NH Department of Health & Human Services

This chart indicates that only 34% of the population increase from 1990 to 2000 was contributed by people moving into the Town. The other 66% was due to births in the Town.

C. Household Characteristics

Along with population demographics, it is important to examine common household characteristics such as size and median income. Below is a chart depicting the number of owner- and renter-occupied units and the average household size for households in Franconia from 1990 and 2000.

<u>Housing Tenure</u>	<u>Year 1990</u>	<u>Year 2000</u>
Total number of Occupied Housing Units	323	384
Owner - Occupied	214	273
Renter - Occupied	109	111
<u>Average Household Size</u>		
Owner - Occupied	2.41	2.31
Renter - Occupied	2.08	2.03
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau		

The category of occupied units represents those residential units that are occupied year-round; this does not include seasonal housing or second homes. Almost all of the increase in the number of occupied housing units are within owner-occupied units; there was only an increase of two year-round rental units from 1990 to 2000. The average household size for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied decreased slightly from 1990 to 2000. These figures may also help to explain the decrease in youth from the newborn years to age nine that are depicted in the population demographics charts. A reduction in births from 1990 to 2000 would explain the reduction in household size.

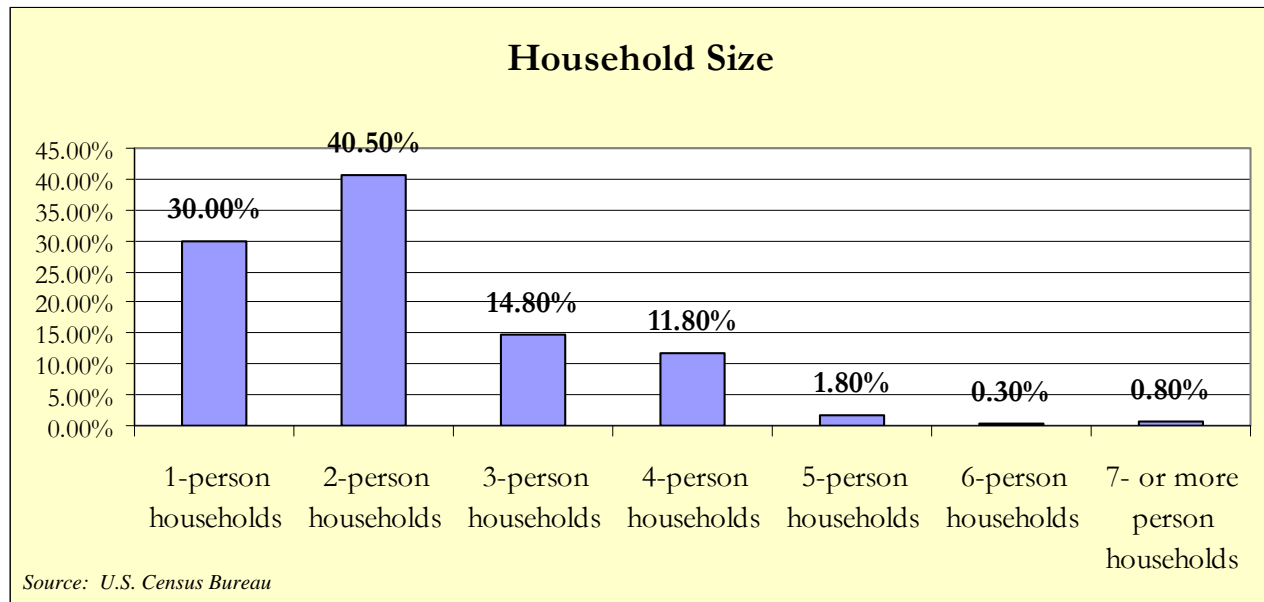
Franconia is located in an area rich with recreational opportunities and tourism attractions making it an ideal town for second homes and vacation houses. The chart below depicts the number of seasonal and recreational homes in relation to occupied year-round homes.

<u>Housing Occupancy</u>	<u>Year 1990</u>	<u>Year 2000</u>
Total Housing Unit	646	702
Occupied Housing Units	323	384
For Seasonal, recreation or occasional use	244	291

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In the year 1990, out of the 646 housing units, 244 were seasonal, recreation or occasional use housing, nearly 38% of the housing units. In 2000, the percentage of total housing classified as seasonal, recreation or occasional use increased to 41%. Occupied housing units also increased from 1990 to 2000 from 323 units to 384 units, a 19% increase.

The number of people occupying a housing unit is important in determining the size and type of houses needed for Franconia's housing market. Consistent with the population by age chart, the chart below shows a larger number of two-person households and fewer large-family households.



The most numerous household size is the two-person household, followed by the one-person household. In fact, there are slightly more one-person households in the Town than there are 3 or more persons combined. This would indicate that there are not a lot of large families living in the Town but rather mostly couples and single individuals. This is an interesting point to make since the most recent trend in housing in the Town has been large, single family homes which would accommodate large families. The large homes are more of an indication of large second homes/vacation homes, as opposed to large families seeking to move to the area for employment and education.

The final housing characteristic to be examined is the age of housing stock in the Town. The chart on the next page shows the age of houses in Town for owner-occupied housing and rental housing. The age of seasonal, recreation and occasional-use housing was not available and therefore is not represented in this chart. The unrepresented units total 336.

<u>Year Built</u>	<u>All Housing Units</u>	<u>Owner Occupied Units</u>	<u>Renter Occupied Units</u>
Total Units:	728	276	116
1999 to March 2000	17	9	0
1995 to 1998	49	30	0
1990 to 1994	39	21	4
1980 to 1989	81	46	6
1970 to 1979	111	36	18
1960 to 1969	148	16	28
1950 to 1959	65	19	3
1940 to 1949	25	12	2
1939 or Earlier	193	87	55
Median Year Built	1965	1971	1953

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

As a tribute to the Town's heritage, it is evident that older homes, usually of historic significance, are important housing structures in the Town. The largest number of owner-occupied and renter-occupied units were built in 1939 or earlier. The renter-occupied units have a median year built which is much earlier than that of the owner-occupied units. In fact, there were no new rental units built from 1995 to 2000 and only ten built since the 1980s. The owner-occupied housing has grown at a consistent rate since the 1980s.

D. Household Income & Housing Costs

Other important characteristics to consider when examining the Town's existing housing trends are those that involve money. In particular, it is important to consider the household income of the Town and how it compares to the region and the state. It is also important to examine the amount of that household income which is being used to pay for household expenses. These characteristics are particularly important when considering affordable housing. Do people pay more than 30% of their household income in housing expenses? Are annual household incomes consistent with the price of houses in the Town? Can people who have lived in the Town their whole lives afford to stay in the Town as the Town grows over the next ten years? We will discuss tools a town can use to provide affordable housing in the next section, but first we will evaluate the cost of existing housing in relation to household income levels.

Income Ranges By Household											
Area Name	# of Households	Less than \$10,000	\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$74,999	\$75,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 or more
New Hampshire	474,750	28,808	22,635	51,226	55,301	81,875	109,447	60,009	43,093	12,118	10,238
Grafton County	31,608	2,486	1,738	4,278	4,246	6,123	6,587	2,947	1,905	708	590
Franconia	400	34	27	50	63	74	92	31	25	4	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

To show a comparison of how Franconia relates to the area, the first chart depicts adjusted gross household incomes for all households, owned and rented, in the Town, county and state.

The Town of Franconia, Grafton County and the state all have the largest number of people with an average annual household income of \$50,000 to \$74,999. Both the Town and the state have 23% of the population in that household income range. However, the percentages do vary when comparing the lower income and higher income households. For instance, twenty-one percent of the population in the State of New Hampshire makes less than \$25,000/household, while twenty-seven percent of Franconia households make less than \$25,000.

2000 Median Household Income		
New Hampshire \$49,467	Grafton County \$41,962	Town of Franconia \$40,114

In the second chart on the previous page, the Median Household Incomes for the State of New Hampshire, Grafton County and the Town of Franconia reflect the differences in the low-range income levels and the high-range income levels, as shown. The Town of Franconia is not much lower than the median average household income of the state and very close to the median average income of the county.

Another important characteristic to examine related to housing costs and income is the average monthly housing cost. A house is considered “affordable” if less than 30% of the household income is dedicated to housing costs. In other words, a family or household member spending more than 30% of their total annual earnings on housing costs is living in a home which is considered unaffordable to them. The State of New Hampshire requires that all communities allow for affordable housing by not limiting houses to a certain size and lot size throughout the community. The regulations of the town can not be so restrictive that affordability for families with incomes in the median range is impossible to obtain. For instance, a community requiring all lots to be five acres or more and not allowing for flexibility in the lot size or other provisions, such as the disallowance of apartments and/or duplexes in their ordinances, is not meeting the affordability standards set forth by the State of New Hampshire. The town must allow for affordable housing by some measure in their regulations.

The chart to the right is a sample of owner-occupied housing statistics for the Town of Franconia. It depicts the monthly housing costs spent in relation to the household income. The percentages represent the amount of the household income used for housing costs.

<u>Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 1999</u>	
<u>Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units</u>	
<u>Percentage of HH Income</u>	<u>Total</u>
Specified Units	210
Under 10.0%	42
10.0% - 14.9%	30
15.0% - 19.9%	34
20.0% - 24.9%	25
25.0% - 29.9%	22
30.0% - 34.9%	15
35.0% - 39.9%	3
40.0% - 49.9%	11
50.0% or more	28
Median Percentage of 1999 Household Income Spent on Home Ownership	19.90%

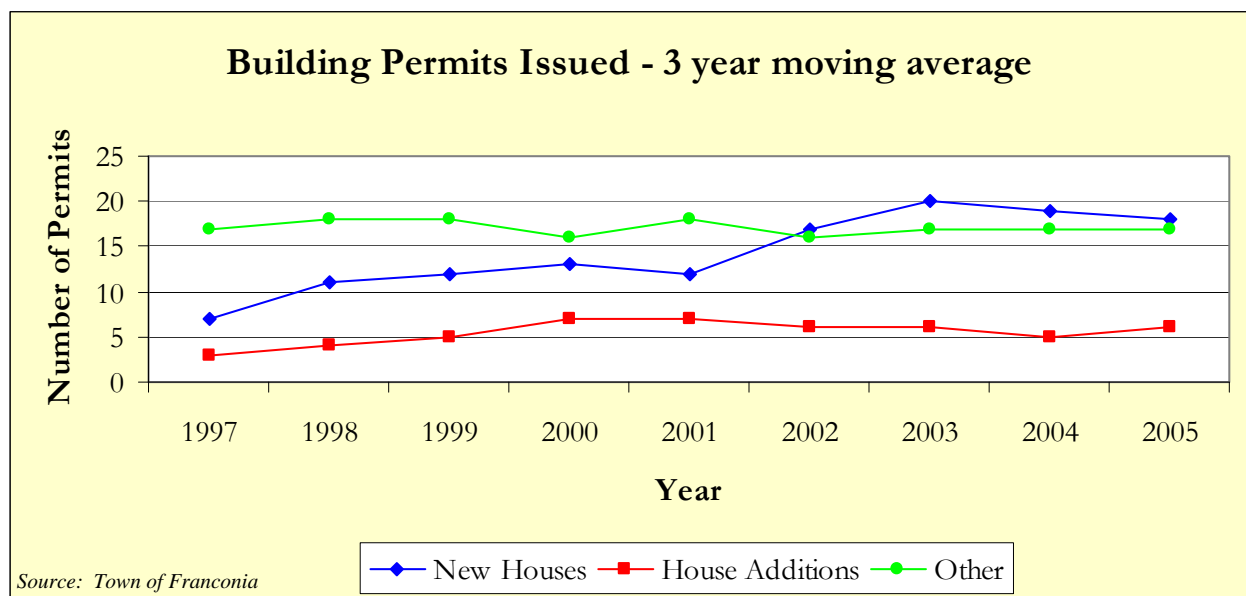
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

The median percentage of 1999 household incomes spent on home ownership was 19.9% which is below the 30% affordability standard. However, 57 of the 210 households, being over 27% of households, were spending 30% or more of their annual household income on home ownership and 28 households were spending 50% or more on home ownership.

E. Housing Development Trends

The last variables to consider when planning for housing are the current housing development trends which include an evaluation of the number of building permits issued over the past few years and an examination of where housing development is most likely to be located and where it has occurred in the past.

The chart below shows the building permits issued by the Town from 1997 to 2005. The residential building permits shown are broken down by new houses, housing additions, and others.



The “other” residential building permit category is the most consistent of all the building requested and received in the Town. In this case “other” refers to decks, sheds, and other accessory structures. Building permits for new houses has been on a steady increase and there have been fewer housing additions on existing structures. With seven new home building permits in 1997 and nineteen new home building permits in 2005, there has been a 171% increase. The trend of housing in Franconia is for new, large, and usually moderate to expensive homes.

There are a few areas in Town where new homes are being built more frequently. For example, new residential development is occurring along Route 116/Easton Road. This area abuts many recreational opportunities and magnificent views of the Kinsman Ridge area. New homes are also being developed along Route 18 which also provides excellent views and proximity to Cannon Mountain ski area. Other areas where new residential construction has concentrated are along Wallace/Scrag Hill (in Franconia as well as the neighboring Town of Bethlehem), Franconia Mountains Road, and Butterhill Road.

II. Housing Needs Assessment

In December 2004, North Country Council, the Regional Planning Commission whose jurisdiction includes the Town of Franconia, completed the North Country Housing Needs Assessment. It is required under RSA 36:47 II that the Regional Planning Commission compile and update every five years a housing needs assessment which provides the basic information needed by Planning Boards for assessing their local housing supply and demand. Because housing is affected by and affects more than one town, the housing needs assessment data is compiled by Labor Market Area (LMA) in order to show the need in a particular subregion as opposed to assuming that one particular town may need more housing than another. Statistics show that employment and services attract people and housing. Examining housing demographics and predicting housing needs will be more accurate for the LMA than they would per town, since most people who live within the LMA are willing to commute for employment and services.

The housing needs assessment examines a lot of the same housing demographic information that previously has been provided in this chapter such as population, housing size, housing costs and income levels, and age of housing stock. These factors are then used to determine the housing need in each LMA from the year 2000 to 2010. Using the methodology created through a state committee of planners, researchers, and housing representatives, three different models have been created to predict housing need:

Littleton LMA Housing Needs			
	<u>Housing Need 1</u>	<u>Housing Need 2</u>	<u>Housing Need 3</u>
<u>Total Needed Housing in 2010</u>			
Owner	7,970	7,780	7,607
Renter	3,214	3,137	3,068
Total	11,184	10,917	10,675
<u>New Housing Needed from 2000 to 2010</u>			
Owner	1,213	1,023	850
Renter	438	361	292
Total	1,651	1,384	1,142

Source: NCC Housing Needs Assessment

Franconia, Haverhill, Landaff, Lisbon, Littleton, Lyman, Monroe, Sugar Hill and Whitefield. The Littleton LMA has more towns than the other LMAs in the region. Listed above is the housing needs assessments for the Littleton LMA based on the three housing models.

	Population		
	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
Bath	761	784	893
Benton	333	330	314
Bethlehem	1,784	2,033	2,199
Carroll	647	528	663
Dalton	672	827	927
Easton	124	223	256
Franconia	743	811	924
Haverhill	3,445	4,164	4,416
Landaff	266	350	378
Lisbon	1,517	1,664	1,587
Littleton	5,558	5,827	5,845
Lyman	281	388	487
Monroe	619	746	759
Sugar Hill	397	464	563
Whitefield	1,681	1,909	2,038
Subregion D Total	18,828	21,048	22,249

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000

- Housing Need Model 1 - Based on holding constant the region's share of employment to state employment from 2000 to 2010.
- Housing Need Model 2 - Based on change of the region's share of employment to state employment from 2000 to 2010.
- Housing Need Model 3 - Based on predicted population using several population forecasts.

The Town of Franconia is located within the Littleton LMA. The towns located within the Littleton LMA include: Bath, Benton, Bethlehem, Carroll, Dalton, Easton,

All three models show a need for an increase in the total housing stock. The most conservative estimate shows a need for 1,142 new housing units (850 owner-occupied and 292 renter-occupied) in the LMA. The highest estimate predicts a need for 1,651 units (1,213 owner-occupied and 438 renter-occupied). The average of the three models is an estimate of 1,392 housing units needed to be constructed by 2010. The Littleton LMA represents the second highest housing production need in the North Country, with the Plymouth LMA requiring the greatest production need.

III. Housing Recommendations

There are three major areas to address with regards to the housing future in the Town of Franconia. These areas include (i) existing procedures, processes and regulations, (ii) affordable housing solutions, and (iii) new regulations and plans. Each of these sections include suggestions and action items and were compiled using information from the Community Attitude Survey, the planning board, and outside assistance from the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority and the State Office of Energy and Planning.

A. Existing Procedures, Processes and Regulations

One of the first questions a town must consider when updating their master plan and possibly their regulations is how the current rules of procedure, processes and regulations relate to the goals and objectives of the updated master plan. Are the regulations set forth in current ordinances prohibiting the town from growing in the way envisioned? Is the procedural process for reviewing new development hindering the town's ability to be flexible in design standards? There are many issues the town must explore in order to develop corresponding suggestions for better meeting the needs of the community.

Below are some of the processes and procedures the Town currently practices and suggestions on ways to improve them.

- To date, the Town has not issued a lot of fines for non-compliance of town regulations, partly because the Town does not have a person to inspect the Town for regulation violations. The Town should adopt language supporting RSA 676:17, granting towns the authority to issue fines for non-compliance and to set standards. In order to better enforce those standards that support the goals of the Master Plan, the Town needs to establish a fine structure, a process for issuing fines, and template forms/letters for notifying of non-compliance, and possibly consider hiring a code enforcement officer for part-time work or to work with the current Town employees. The Town should be consistent from one person to another regarding the notification and the timing of fines for non-compliance.
- The Town should ensure that building permits are consistent in form with all designs, conditions and layouts on the approved plat for the subdivision.

- There are currently no building codes in Town; thus, the Town does not have an inspection officer whose responsibility it would be to review building construction on-site for electrical, plumbing and building standards. The Town may want to look into adopting state building codes and hiring a part-time inspector to go on-site to ensure compliance during construction.
- The Town currently issues no occupancy permit except on multi-family units. Once again, to have consistent rules and procedures, the Town may want to consider issuing an occupancy permit for all residential structures in town.

There are also a few current regulatory standards that the Town may want to review in order to better meet the goals set forth in this Master Plan. The Town does allow for Accessory Apartments in their current regulations, but only if the occupant is a family member. One of the goals that will be discussed in more detail in the second section of this chapter is the allowance and promotion of affordable housing. If the Town were to amend this regulation to permit accessory apartments for people other than relatives, it would allow flexibility for affordable housing and/or rental structures for residents in the Town. The Town may review this regulation and allow for exceptions for affordable housing and rental units.

The Town does have regulations that allow for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs); however, they have not been used often. Thus, the regulations themselves may need to be examined and adjusted. The Town may also look at providing incentives for developers to use the PUD/Cluster regulations. This is a good technique for integrating affordable housing into a larger residential development.

There has been a lot of new construction in Franconia over the past few years, all of it single-family homes. Even though a lot of these homes are large in size, zoning regulations in Franconia restrict all new single-dwelling units to four bedrooms. This regulation was set for septic purposes and the protection of groundwater quality. With newly constructed homes including dens, libraries, great rooms, finished basements and offices, however, the size of the homes have increased, not decreased. The Town may want to review this regulation and consider whether it is actually meeting the purpose that was intended.

B. Affordable Housing

One issue about housing that emerged from the Community Attitude survey was the recognition of the lack of availability of affordable housing. The Town of Franconia is a desirable place to live with its proximity to recreational opportunities, scenic views, and proximity to the highway and has thus drawn several people to build within the Town. In particular, the Town has seen quite a few large secondary vacation homes. The Town wants to allow for all types of housing infrastructure but has struggled to keep real affordable structures available for people to reside in. In addition, some of those residents requesting affordable structures have resided in the Town most of their lives and are feeling the pressure of tax increases due to the new home construction prices and its impact on local and town services. The Town not only should consider ways to allow for affordable housing by allowing flexibility in current standards but also should provide incentives to developers to provide affordable housing units.

Some planning and regulatory techniques the Town could pursue to include inclusionary zoning are housing trust funds, participation in a regional workforce housing coalition, and a streamlined permitting process. In particular, the Town should consider the adoption of an inclusionary zoning ordinance that has provisions ensuring that the units stay affordable over the long-run and that the affordable units are limited to use by people of low and moderate incomes relative to the area's median income. Although the Town must review with all town boards and the citizens which affordable housing technique is most appropriate for the community, the Town should begin implementing some of these tools in the near future.

The Town should also research ways to encourage the development of independent living housing for the elderly. This is a form of affordable housing geared towards the senior population of the Town. Independent living housing would include smaller, affordable single-housing dwellings clustered in a particular area with shared common space, parks, and gardens where a population of elderly citizens can live in a communal setting while keeping their independence.

C. New Regulations and Plans

We know from the Housing Needs Assessment that the Littleton Labor Market Area will need to provide approximately 1,300 more housing units by the year 2010. Even though it is hard to determine where exactly those housing units will be constructed, the towns in that LMA should prepare themselves to see an influx of housing units in the next few years. In preparing for such housing construction, the Town of Franconia should evaluate lands to be protected from development as well as areas where development could meet the needs of affordability and/or protection of town character.

The Town currently has provisions for open space developments but they have not been commonly used. In addition, the open space development standards have no real correlation to natural and recreational areas in town which should be protected. The Town now has a Natural Resource Inventory which can help identify key areas in town to protect. The Town should also amend its open space regulations allowing for incentives to developers who choose to use the ordinance, as well as recommendations on where this ordinance should be used to protect natural features. The Town should review sample ordinances and plan review procedures adopted by other towns that have had success in implementing open space development standards.

The Town should also look into ridgeline protection regulations. The Town has identified on the future land use map a few areas that are considered to be high elevation points in town. One of the main reasons people in Franconia reside in town, based on survey responses, is for the scenic views. However, new development is sometimes located on ridgelines, offering those homeowners magnificent views of the area but obstructing the view for others to enjoy. In addition, houses built on ridgelines sometimes adversely affect groundwater, another important protection factor to the Town. The Town should review sample ridgeline protection ordinances and consider adopting standards for protecting their views and ridgelines.

There are state statutes that address water levels and water contamination, but the Town should consider adopting regulations of its own. Also, there are cases where homeowners will not empty their septic

system until it no longer works. In these cases, contamination of the groundwater has already likely occurred. The Town should look into adopting a Groundwater Protection Ordinance in its current regulations. This will be discussed in more detail in the Natural Resources Section of this Master Plan.

The Town should also consider referencing the Shoreland Protection Act and addressing any additional shoreland/river protection as necessary. Protection along the Gale River and Ham Branch is important, and it should be considered when developing new homes. These areas and their protection will be discussed further in the Natural Resource Chapter of this Master Plan, as evaluated under the Natural Resource Inventory.

The Town should also look into regulations regarding private swimming pools. There are no regulations; yet several permits already have been requested, and the location of these facilities is of concern. When developing these regulations, the Town should look at setbacks, runoff, maintenance, and disposal of pool water. In addition, these regulations should cover hot tubs.

Chapter 6 Recreation

I. Existing Recreation Facilities

One of the most important attributes of the Town of Franconia is recreation. The Town not only has several community recreation facilities and events, but also is home to Franconia Notch State Park and portions of the White Mountain National Forest. In the Community Survey developed for this Master Plan, a majority of the people responding listed recreational opportunities as the main reason for residing in town. This chapter will examine existing facilities, any needed improvements to these facilities, and recreation planning and future development.

A. Recreation Department

The recreation department consists of one Recreation Director and a seven-person support staff. The staff is paid in the summer months, whereas during the rest of the year, the Department is supported by volunteers in the community. In addition to the paid summer staff, there are paid referees for summer sports. The Recreation Committee that oversees the recreational facilities and events in the area is made up of representatives from the Towns of Franconia, Sugar Hill and Easton.

The three recreation events hosted annually are the Top of the Notch Tri-Athalon, the Frostbite Follies, and the Lupine Festival, which can also be considered a cultural event. The Top of the Notch Tri-Athalon is hosted the first weekend in August; it includes a 6.5-mile bike ride up Butter Hill Road and through the woods to Franconia Notch, a 1/2-mile swim across Echo Lake, and a 2-mile hike/run up Cannon Mountain to the finish line. The Frostbite Follies includes ice skating, sleigh rides, a snow sculpture contest and many other recreational activities during winter break. Although the event originated in Franconia, many other towns are now hosting events during Frostbite Follies time to celebrate the winter recreation season. The Lupine Festival, a celebration recognizing the beauty of the fields of lupine, includes activities such as walking, hiking, and photography.

Recently the recreation staff was successful in obtaining funding through the State of New Hampshire's Land and Water Conservation Fund program. The money was spent to level the field at the far end of the Dow Academy Strip, the improvement of landscaping and the replacement of the playground equipment, which was completed in conjunction with an Eagle Scout Project. Many volunteers assisted in completing the area improvements before the summer recreation season began.



B. Community Survey Results

Recreation is an important part of life for most Franconia residents. Maintaining and improving existing facilities as well as developing new ones is important to the quality of life of the residents and visitors. Below is a list of comments from the Community Survey that relate to recreation in Franconia:

- A lot of people disapprove of the use of ATVs and snowmobiles on multi-use trails.
- There is a need for more recreation for young people.
- Need more bike paths and lanes - make biking safe on Routes 116 and 18.
- People support purchasing town land for recreational opportunities.
- Need more recreational fields.
- Update the recreational plan for Dow Field.

In general, the citizens of Franconia support recreation growth through proper planning. Hiking, walking, biking and skiing seem to be the most popular leisure recreation activities while soccer, baseball and softball are most popular with the youth.

C. Recreation Facilities

This section includes an inventory of existing recreation facilities and a corresponding recreation facility location map. The existing recreation facilities in the community include:

1. Dow Recreation Area - The grounds adjacent to the Dow Academy were donated to the Town by a family to be used for recreational purposes. The fields at Dow Academy are used for many recreational activities including cross-country skiing, soccer, tae kwan do, and Frisbee. There are picnic tables and the newly constructed playground there. The area is also used for special community events like the Halloween bonfire and Old Home Day events. Because this area is so heavily used, a lot of maintenance is needed to keep the recreational fields safe and clean. There is an old Master Plan for the Dow Recreation Area that includes amenities such as a pedestrian bridge for access across Route 18. This plan has not been updated or reviewed for some time.
2. Fox Hill Park - This area is primarily used for mountain biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, river swimming, snowshoeing, wildlife and flora viewing and geo-caching, a type of orienteering using GPS systems. There are a lot of trail connections to Fox Hill Park that travel from the village and residential neighborhoods throughout the community.
3. New Trails w/New Development - The large tract of land located behind the air strip has received subdivision approval by the Town. The developer will preserve several trails that will cross through the development and link to existing trails in town. There were 19 acres of recreation land on this parcel prior to subdivision design. When completed, the new development will have 42 acres of recreation and easements for trails.
4. Recreation Easements - The area located along Route 116 and abutting the Ham Branch has recreation easements. It is known as the First Track Circle trails and is used primarily for cross-country skiing as part of the Franconia Inn ski trail system.
5. Franconia Notch State Park - The park spans from the Town of Lincoln to the Town of Franconia and although it offers many amenities, only some of those amenities are within the Town's borders of Franconia. One of these facilities is Cannon Mountain. Cannon Mountain has 165 skiable acres, 55 ski trails on approximately 22 miles of trails, and nine ski lifts. Cannon gets an average of 150 inches of

snow a year and is usually open from November through April for downhill skiing. Cannon Mountain is perceived as being both challenging and family-friendly. In the summer, visitors can ride the Cannon Aerial Tram which takes one to the 4100 foot summit in less than eight minutes. At the summit there are walking paths, an observation deck, cafeteria, and restrooms. At the base of Cannon Mountain is Echo Lake and Beach where people enjoy sunbathing, swimming, and other lakeside recreational activities.



Echo Lake also includes an RV campground and bathroom facilities. Both Echo Lake, and neighboring Profile Lake, provide excellent fishing, kayaking and canoeing. Across the street from Echo Beach are Artist's Bluff and Bald Mountain. There are hiking trails that lead to the summits of both peaks. This area is also used for rock climbing, as is the Echo Crag located on the opposite side of I-93 and the Cannon Cliffs on the back side of Cannon Mountain ski area. The Franconia Notch Recreation Trail also begins in the Town of Franconia. This trail is used frequently by bicyclists and travels the length of the Notch to the Flume Gorge area in Lincoln. Although most of Lafayette Campground is in the Town of Lincoln, a handful of sites at the northern end are located in the Town of Franconia. The area of the park located within Franconia's town borders also contains several hiking trails, most notable, the Appalachian Trail which travels from the State of Georgia to Maine, cutting through the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

6. Mittersill - This area once contained an operational ski area and is now a residential area, consisting of mostly second homes, and the remnants of the old recreational facilities. However, the old ski trails are still being used for riding sleds in the winter and some people skiing Cannon Mountain traverse the ridgeline and ski the old trails through Mittersill when there is sufficient snow coverage. There has been possible interest in reviving the Mittersill ski area and recent discussions on leasing out Cannon Mountain could include future connections to Mittersill and the revival of the old ski trails. The Mittersill area has the problem of inadequate water supply which will need to be addressed before the area can be developed.
7. The Rink - The Town has a rink located next to Town Hall off of Main Street. The rink is used for ice skating and hockey in the winter months and for skateboarding and basketball in the summer months. The recreation committee is considering bringing back "Family Night" at the rink in the winter in hopes of getting more families to come out and enjoy ice skating, music, hot chocolate and hot food.
8. River Rock Walk - This town trail begins at the Iron Furnace Historic site, follows the Gale River behind local businesses on Main Street, connects to the Dow Recreation Area and then continues on to connect to the Fox Hill Park. The trail is primarily used for walking, wildlife viewing, and snowshoeing. The Town's Conservation Commission has recently purchased six acres of land abutting this trail.
9. Notchway Trail System - The trail system land is owned by the White Mountain National Forest but lies within the Town of Franconia's boundaries. The trails are used for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing,

hiking and mountain biking. This trail system also connects with the Recreational Path in Franconia Notch State Park. The Notchway trail is used during the Top of the Notch Tri-Athalon for the bike portion of the race.

10. Gale River - The Gale River meanders through the Town of Franconia. Many residents and visitors use the river for fishing, swimming and kayaking. The river is listed in whitewater kayaking guides.
11. Ham Branch - The Ham Branch, which follows Route 116 south through Easton, also provides recreational opportunities such as fishing, swimming and kayaking. It too is listed in whitewater kayaking guides.
12. Franconia Airport - The Franconia Airport is located on Route 116 across the street from the Franconia Inn. It contains a 2100 foot turf runway and is used by local and visiting pilots. The airport is used for taking visitors on glider rides above Franconia Notch State Park and the surrounding area. Glider clubs also use the Franconia Airport.
13. Profile Golf Course - This private golf course is located off Interstate 93 near Butter Hill Road. The golf course has a nine-hole regulation course and a 15-tee driving range.
14. Fransted Family Campground - This campground is located on Route 18 and has approved capacity for 89 campsites. The campground also includes a playground, picnic tables, miniature golf and a volleyball area, as well as opportunities for fishing, swimming, and hiking.



II. Recommendations & Future Needs

Here are a few recommendations for improving the existing recreational facilities in town in order to continue to provide a high quality recreational experience and lifestyle for the citizens of Franconia and for the visitors to the area.

The first recommendation is to develop a Trail Study for the Town. The Town of Franconia has many multi-use trails embedded in residential developments, along river corridors and across vacant lands. However, there is no detailed map of the existing trail locations, maintenance plan for these trails, nor plan for future trails and connections. The Conservation Commission, in conjunction with the Planning Board, should consider hiring an organization to locate by GPS the existing trails within the Town so that they can match the trails up with tax maps. It should develop a plan for maintaining trails over time as well as designing approximate future trail locations and materials to be used when constructing trails. The study should include information on signage, parking, and other design features that need to be taken into consideration. The plan should also include ideas for marketing the trail system through brochures, maps, and websites for visitors to the area. The Town can begin this process by looking at other greenway and trail plans created for towns to get an idea of what the plan for Franconia's trails should contain.

The Infrastructure Committee is working on a recommendation through its Town Infrastructure Plan for the Dow Recreation Area. One recommendation is to move the rink, which is currently located behind the Town Hall parking lot, to the Dow Recreation Area, and to build a warming hut for those using the rink. Another suggestion is to build a small structure for storage of equipment and space for the Recreation Director and possible Recreation Committee meetings. If the water lines are redone, it will accommodate these improvements to the Dow Recreation Area. Another possible improvement to this area would be the addition of a track-style walkway where people can time their laps.

The Town is also working with the Sugar Hill Conservation Commission (CC) on coordination of trail systems. The Sugar Hill CC is working on developing its trail system. When a plan is in place, the Town of Franconia plans on working with them to connect the trail system between the towns. This would require building a new trail that follows along Bowen Brook at the town boundaries.

The Town of Carroll is currently working on a proposal to build a new bike path along Route 3 from the Franconia Notch Parkway north into Twin Mountain. Although the Town of Franconia does not own a lot of land that abuts this new proposed corridor, it is important for the Town to stay involved with the planning process because it has the potential of bringing more people into the area.

The Town should be involved in discussions regarding the leasing of Cannon Mountain. Currently the topic has been tabled and there is no pending development. However, a lease of this recreational facility to a large business could result in expansion to Mittersill, causing traffic congestion, additional water resource issues at Mittersill, and additional residential development along Route 18, all of which is not desired by the Town. The Town should work closely with the Regional Planning Commission and the state to resolve these issues.

The Town should also consider developing regulations to protect our rivers. These rivers are not only an important natural resource for the Town but are used for recreational purposes such as fishing, swimming, and kayaking. The Town should review the Shoreland Protection Act and consider additional local regulations such as buffering to protect the rivers.

Chapter 7 Transportation

I. General Transportation Information

Generally, transportation facilities play a very important role in the development of communities and the transformation of land uses. The movement of people, goods and services can sometimes adversely change the nature of an area if not planned properly and developed in context with the area. Transportation facilities are more than just roads but also include public transportation, airports, sidewalks, and bike lanes. A good combination of transportation facilities usually results in a more context-sensitive transportation network in a community.

Below is a chart of the Town of Franconia's general transportation network as compiled by the Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau.

<u>General Transportation Information</u>	
Road Access, Federal Routes:	Route 3
State Route:	Routes 18, 116, 142, 141, 117
Nearest Interstate, Exit:	I-93, Exit 38
Distance to Exit:	Local Access
Railroad?	No
Public Transportation?	No
Nearest Airport:	Franconia (Visual Flight Rules); Seasonal Airport
Runway:	Grass Strip
Nearest Commercial Airport:	Whitefield
Driving Distance to select cities:	
Manchester, NH:	96 miles
Portland, ME:	113 miles
Boston, MA:	146 miles
New York City, NY:	333 miles
Montreal, Quebec:	175 miles
* Source: Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, 2005.	

As seen above, the Town is served by one interstate, Interstate 93, one federal route, Route 3, and five state routes, Route 18, Route 116, Route 142, Route 141, and Route 117. For a rural town where more than half of the land acreage is in a National Forest, Franconia has a lot of major roadway mileage. Additionally, the Town has several local roads of importance that are part of the town's road network which sustain constant flows of traffic.

An important element to examine when planning for transportation needs within a community is the commuting patterns and behaviors of residents. The 2000 U.S. Census contains information on commuting habits which is displayed below.

<u>Commuting to Work</u>	
Workers 16 years and over	
Drove Alone, Car/Truck/Van:	79.4%
Carpooled, Car/Truck/Van:	8.9%
Public Transportation:	0.0%
Walked:	5.2%
Other Means:	2.2%
Worked at Home:	4.3%
Mean Travel Time to Work	16.9 minutes
Percent of Working Residents	
Working in Franconia:	40.0%
Commuting to another NH Community:	55.0%
Commuting Out-of-State:	5.0%
* Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.	

As with all towns throughout northern New Hampshire, a majority of people commute to work via car, truck or van, and most of them commute alone. Only a few persons, 8.9%, carpool to their places of employment. Over 5% commute to work by walking, most likely those living close to the village who work in the village. No one in town commutes via public transportation because it does not exist in town. Although 55% of residents commute to other New Hampshire towns for employment, they are only commuting an average of 16.9 minutes which is a fairly short commute in comparison to other towns in the region. Additionally, 40% are working in town which also lowers the average commute time to work.

II. Franconia's Road Network

It is important to more closely examine the road network in town because it is the largest transportation facility that exists. In this section, road classification, the major roadway network, and the local roadway network will be examined.

A. Road Classification

The Department of Transportation's Bureau of Municipal Highways classifies roadways throughout the state and uses these classifications to determine where municipal aid can be used. RSA 229:5 lists the types of classifications that exist and describes the differences among classes. The RSA outline classifies roads as follows:

Class I, Trunk Line Highways. Consist of all existing or proposed highways on the primary state highway system, excepting all portions of such highways within the compact sections of cities and towns. The State assumes full control and pays costs of construction, reconstruction and maintenance of its sections; the portions in compact areas are controlled by the cities and towns under Class IV highways.

Class II, State Aid Highways. Consist of all existing or proposed highways on the secondary state highway system, excepting portions of such highways within the compact sections of cities and towns, which are classified as Class IV highways.

All sections improved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation are maintained and reconstructed by the State. All unimproved sections, where no state and local funds have been expended, must be maintained by the city or town in which they are located until improved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner.

All bridges improved to state standards on Class II highways are maintained by the State. All other bridges on the Class II system shall be maintained by the city or town until such improvement is made. Bridge Aid funds may be utilized to effect such improvements.

Class III, Recreational Roads. Consist of all such roads leading to, and within, state reservations designated by the Legislature. The State Highway Department assumes full control of reconstruction and maintenance of such roads.

Class III-a, Boating Access Highway. Shall consist of new boating access highways from any existing highway to any public water in this state. All Class III-a highways shall be limited access facilities as defined in RSA 230:44. Class III-a highways shall be subject to the layout, design, construction, and maintenance provisions of RSA 230:45-47 and all other provisions relative to limited access facilities, except that the Executive Director of the Fish and Game Department shall have the same authority for Class III-a highways that is delegated to the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation for limited access facilities. No access shall be granted to an abutter for any Class III-a highway. A Class III-a highway may be laid out subject to gates and bars or restricted to the accommodation of persons on foot, or certain vehicles, or both, if Federal funds are not used. The Executive Director of Fish and Game may petition the Governor and Council to discontinue any Class III-a highway.

Class IV, Town and City Streets. Consist of all highways within the compact sections of cities and towns. Extensions of Class I (excluding turnpikes and interstate portions) and Class II highways through these areas are included in this classification. Municipalities with compacts are listed in RSA 229:5.

Class V, Rural Highways. Consist of all other traveled highways which the city or town has the duty to maintain regularly.

Class VI, Unmaintained Highways. Consist of all other existing public ways, including highways discontinued as open highways, and made subject to gates and bars, and highways not maintained and repaired in suitable condition for travel thereon for five (5) successive years or more. However, if a city or town accepts from the state a Class V highway established to provide a property owner or property owners with highway access to such property because of a taking under RSA 230:14, then notwithstanding RSA 229:5, VII, such a highway shall not lapse to Class VI status due to failure of the city or town to maintain and repair it for five (5) successive years, and the municipality's duty of maintenance shall not terminate, except with the written consent of the property owner or property owners.

Scenic Roads. Special town designations of Class IV, V and VI highways on which cutting or removal of a tree, or disturbance of a stone wall, must go through the hearing process and written approval of local officials. (See RSA 231:157).

Year Designated	Franconia Scenic Roads
1974	Wallace Hill Road, Ridge Road
1975	Town Edge Lane, Lafayette Road to Sugar Hill line, Bickford Hill Road to Sugar Hill line
1976	Coal Hill Road (now Magowan Hill Road), Wells Road, Wells Road extension (now Tucker Brook Road), Toad Hill Road (formerly Fobes Road)

The chart below represents the number of miles per classification of road in the Town of Franconia. There are more miles of Class V roads in Franconia than any other classification, but the Town also has a significant amount of Interstate, Class II, and private roads. No road is classified as Class III or Class IV.

Franconia Road Mileage by Classification									
<u>Trunk Line</u>	<u>Interstate</u>	<u>Class II</u>	<u>Class III</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class V</u>	<u>Class VI</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
9.238	12.58	8.921	0	0	25.93	1.2	10.07	0.305	68.244

Source: New Hampshire DOT

B. Major Roadway Network

The Town of Franconia includes seven federal and state roadways which make up the major roadway network. These roads include Interstate 93, Route 3, Route 18, Route 116, Route 142, Route 141, and Route 117. As with many towns, some of the state roadways are also local connectors and local main streets that accommodate multiple transportation uses and multiple land uses. Keeping that in mind, it is important to

strike a balance with the through traffic that is using these roadways to connect from one town to another and the local traffic serving the village businesses and residential areas.

Interstate 93

Although the Interstate travels north of Lincoln into Franconia Notch, technically, Route 3, known as the Franconia Notch Parkway, is the roadway in the Notch itself. Interstate 93 reconnects where Route 3 splits north towards Twin Mountain at Exit 35. The Interstate in Franconia runs from this intersection northwest towards Littleton. Exits 35, 36, 37, and 38 are within the Town of Franconia providing access to different parts of the Town. Although traffic counts for the Interstate decline north of the Notch and the intersection of Route 3, the Interstate continues northwest to Interstate 91 bringing truck traffic and tourism traffic into Vermont and Canada. The roadway remains fairly busy throughout the year with winter, summer, and fall foliage tourism activities.

Route 3

Route 3 is also known as the Franconia Notch Parkway in the southern portion of town where the roadway travels through Franconia Notch State Park. This section of roadway experiences heavy traffic due to the many recreational facilities in the Notch. Some of the most visited facilities, such as Cannon Mountain, the former Old Man Viewing, Echo Lake, Bald Mountain and Artist's Bluff are all located in Franconia along Route 3 or by access from Route 3. Just north of the Notch, Route 3 splits from Interstate 93 and heads northeast towards Twin Mountain. This section of Route 3 is also heavily used because it is the main route for all traffic heading into northern New Hampshire.

Route 18

This is an important roadway in Franconia's roadway network because of its multiple functions. Traveling north, Route 18 intersects Route 3, the Franconia Notch Parkway, at Echo Lake, Cannon Mountain and Artist's Bluff exit, Exit 34C. From this recreational area, the roadway travels northwest and connects to several residences and local residential neighborhoods. It also intersects Route 141, also known as Butter Hill Road. As it enters the village, Route 18 becomes the Town's Main Street, providing access to local businesses, town recreation areas, and additional residences. It is intersected by Route 142 and Route 116; and before it continues out of town, it is also intersected by Route 117, which is the main roadway into the Town of Sugar Hill.

Route 116

Route 116 travels from the intersection of Route 18 in the village south through Easton and intersects with Route 112, also known as the western portion of the Kancamagus Highway. Route 116 primarily serves residential neighborhoods and lots but also provides access to hiking trails, hotels and inns, and the Franconia airport. It is intersected by many important local roadways such as Wells Road, Old County Road, and Lafayette Road. It is also a designated bicycle route which is used frequently by bicyclists from the area as well as visitors.

Route 142

Route 142 begins at the intersection of Route 18 just south of the village and heads north into the Town of Bethlehem. There are several residential developments along this roadway in the Town of Franconia, and there is also development on this roadway in Bethlehem. This is important because people from Bethlehem can easily access Franconia, Sugar Hill, and Interstate 93 by traveling on this roadway.

Route 141

This short state route is also known as Butter Hill Road. It begins at its intersection with Route 18 and ends at its intersection with Interstate 93. Route 141 bears west into Franconia from the Interstate just after Route 3 bears north.

Route 117

Only a very short portion of this state route travels through Franconia from its intersection with Route 18. However, Route 117 is the main street into Sugar Hill, and many residents of Sugar Hill access the Town at this intersection.

C. Local Roadway Network

There are a few local roadways, maintained by the Town, that are an important part of the overall transportation network in town. Most of these roadways are connectors to other major roadways or to other towns, and some are important because of the volume of residential development along them. Below is a list of the significant local roads:

- Wells Road - Roadway connects Route 18 and Route 116 without having to travel into the village; it gets people from one side of town to the other and into other towns in the southern part of town.
- Coal Hill Road - Roadway is access to several summer cottages and experiences more traffic during peak seasons.
- Lafayette Road - At its intersection with Route 116, connects the southern part of Franconia to Sugar Hill, connecting to Sugar Hill's Main Street.
- Wallace Hill Road - Traffic is picking up due to residential development. The upper portion of the roadway is Class VI.
- Toad Hill Road - A connector roadway that intersects Lafayette Road (see above) and travels south providing access to southern Sugar Hill and roadways into Landaff.
- Old County Road - Although a short roadway, traffic will increase on the roadway with new development; roadway is paved to the first intersection.

Town of Franconia Master Plan

Chapter 7 Transportation

Traffic Counts for Franconia

ID #	Location	<u>Year</u> 1997	<u>Year</u> 1998	<u>Year</u> 1999	<u>Year</u> 2000	<u>Year</u> 2001	<u>Year</u> 2002	<u>Year</u> 2003	<u>Year</u> 2004
161051	I-93 NB - SB of NH 141, Exit 35-36	4500	4400	4900	5700	4800	6100	*	*
161052	I-93 NB - SB at Sugar Hill TL, Exit 38-39	5400	5100	5700	6100	5500	6400	*	*
161053	NH 116 (Easton Valley Rd.) at Easton TL	690	*	1300	*	860	*	*	980
161054	Mittersill Rd. Ski Area West of NH 18	*	*	380	*	*	*	*	*
161055	Tramway Ski Area West of I-93 Ramps	*	*	1200	*	*	*	*	*
161056	US 3 (Daniel Webster Hwy) South of NH 141	3200	*	*	2900	*	*	*	3700
161058	NH 18 & NH 116 (Main St.) West of Jct. NH 116	3700	*	*	3300	*	*	3900	*
161061	I-93 NB - SB North of NH 141, Exit 36-37	4800	4500	5000	6000	5100	6300	*	*
161063	I-93 NB - SB North of NH 142, Exit 37-38	4500	4200	4700	5500	4600	5800	*	*
161067	NH 18 North of Mittersill Road	550	590	*	550	350	*	*	*
161068	NH 141 (Butter Hill) West of I-93	*	150	*	*	120	*	*	160
161069	NH 142 North of I-93	760	800	*	800	1200	*	*	*
161072	NH 116 (Easton Rd.) over Gale River	*	*	3100	*	*	2800	*	*
161073	Lafayette Rd. over Ham Branch	460	*	*	130	*	*	520	*
161074	Dow Ave. over Gale River	260	*	*	160	*	*	150	*
161075	NH 18 over Black Brook	740	*	*	700	*	*	680	*
161076	NH 18 over Lafayette Brook	610	*	*	560	*	*	570	*
161077	I-93 - Parkway SB-NB between Exit 34C & Exit 35	*	7200	8200	8700	9000	8700	*	8800
161090	I-93 North of Tramway SB-NB, Exit 34B - 34C	7600	8000	9200	9100	9200	9500	*	9100

* Source: NHDOT, 2006.

III. Traffic Counts and Circulation

The chart on the previous page depicts the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for roadways within the Town of Franconia. The locations were chosen by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the counts are updated on a revolving schedule by North Country Council. The following symbols are used in the chart:

- * - Data was not gathered that year
- NB - northbound
- SB - southbound

Traffic along Interstate 93 increased from 1997 to 2001. Then, traffic volume decreased or leveled off. This trend is especially apparent on the Franconia Notch Parkway between Exit 34B and Exit 35 where Route 3 splits from the Interstate. On the Interstate north of the Route 3 intersection, traffic counts have climbed steadily through 2004, except in the year 2001, when volumes dropped in both recorded locations. Roughly over 2000 vehicles were leaving the Interstate to access Route 3 daily.

Some state and local roads are also experiencing an increase in traffic volumes. Route 116 at the Easton Town line has seen an increase in traffic over the last five years, as well as Route 3 south of the intersection of Route 141. Traffic along Route 18 south of the village has leveled off, but the intersection of Route 18 and 116 has increased in traffic volume. The assumption is that more people are traveling to the Franconia village area but not traveling towards the Notch and recreational facilities in the White Mountain National Forest by using Route 18. Lafayette Road, as mentioned earlier as part of the local roadway network, has had significant traffic increases from 2000 to 2003. As the area continues to develop, traffic volumes, especially along the important local roads, will increase, and the Town should be prepared for necessary maintenance and improvements to those roadways and/or review land use regulations and access regulations to alleviate future traffic problems.

IV. Other Modes of Transportation

The Town of Franconia also supports other modes of transportation. The Town has a local airport, which is usually used for recreational purposes. The airport has a grass runway, and Visual Flight Rules (VFR) apply. There are no plans to expand or commercialize the airport. Pilots needing to use a larger commercial airport can access Whitefield's airport which has recently expanded and is within close proximity to the Town of Franconia.

Franconia also has some sidewalks within the village. These are located along Route 18 and on Route 117 crossing the river and ending at River Street. The sidewalks follow one side of the road from the intersection of Route 142 to the Sugar Hill town line. Although it is convenient to have sidewalks in a village, these particular sidewalks are not adequately built and have caused safety problems in the past. Sidewalk improvements are listed as a task under the Recommendation Section.

Route 116 in Franconia and into the Town of Easton is depicted on the State's Bicycle Route Map. Many visitors as well as locals ride bicycles along the roadway, which is relatively flat and has stunning views of Mount Kinsman and the backside of Cannon Mountain. However, the roadway is not adequately built for bicycle traffic and improvements are listed as a task under the Recommendation Section.

There is no public transportation service currently within the Town of Franconia. Concord Trailways stops at Mac's Food Store enroute to Concord. A new fixed bus route was recently developed between the Towns of Littleton and Lancaster with access points in the Town of Whitefield. This route is part of a larger plan to connect all rural communities throughout the North Country through coordination of existing transportation providers and development of a rural regional public transportation network. Ideally, small towns like Franconia, will have access to a public transportation vehicle that will connect them to neighboring towns and to the hub town, in this case Littleton, where people can access other routes to other areas in the region. This plan is supported by the current transportation providers, the Department of Transportation, and North Country Council.

V. Recommendations

Since the Town of Franconia is intersected by many major highways and routes, keeping a balance between the through traffic, the tourist traffic, and the local traffic is very important. Additionally, some of the state routes that carry through traffic and tourist traffic are located within the Village of Franconia and/or residential neighborhoods where conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists can occur. In order to provide a safer and more efficient transportation network, the Town recognizes a few needed projects and improvements to the current transportation system. These recommendations address issues such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes and traffic, the intersection of Route 116 and Route 18, and parking and access in the village.



As mentioned, there are sidewalks in the village along Main Street (Route 18) from the intersection of Route 142 to the Sugar Hill town line. However, these sidewalks are only located on one side of the road and, more importantly, the grade of the sidewalk is even with the grade of the roadway. Also, there is poor curbing and separation between the sidewalk and the travel way creating unsafe infrastructure. The Town has made small incremental changes along this sidewalk but can not afford to rebuild the entire sidewalk; however, a seven-inch high granite curb and new sidewalk built at the top of the curbing is needed. Since this roadway is a state route, the Department of Transportation should work with the Town to make these needed improvements.

Likewise, Route 116 in town is designated as a bicycle route on State Bicycle maps. However, the roadway does not have adequate space to accommodate bicycles. There is no paved shoulder or designated bike lane along the roadway. The roadway would make a good bicycle route due to its moderate grades, outstanding views, and links to other recreational opportunities such as hiking trails in the White Mountain National Forest. Yet, it should not be suggested or marketed as a bicycle route on a state map if there are no amenities for bicyclists. The route should either be taken off of the State Bicycle Map or improvements should be planned with the State Department of Transportation to accommodate bicycle traffic.

Another area of concern is the intersection of Route 116 and Route 18 in the Village of Franconia. Originally this was a two-way stop intersection. The intersection currently has red blinking lights from Route 116 in both directions and yellow blinking lights from Route 18 in both directions. This has caused several problems. First, many drivers are unfamiliar with the meaning of an amber blinking light (*i.e.*, to yield and proceed with caution), while others simply slow their speed at the red blinking light, not realizing that they need to make a complete stop.



Secondly, the grade on Route 116 traveling north from Easton makes the intersection almost impossible to see until you have reached it. There is a bridge located right before the intersection on Route 116 and the inadequate grade of the bridge contributes to the unsafe conditions of the intersection. Additionally, the blinking lights are not positioned in the middle of the intersection making them hard to see from all directions. The entire intersection should be redesigned taking into consideration approach grades, proper signage and new stopping/yield patterns.

Another transportation facility that should be examined is parking and access in the village area. Currently there are businesses with head-in parking where cars leaving must back into traffic on Main Street. There are also businesses with multiple access points and no clearly defined driveways. As traffic increases in town due to new residences and visitors, safety and walkability could become a problem. The Town should work with local business owners and the Department of Transportation on access management techniques and parking plans to eliminate any potential traffic and safety concerns in the village.

Lastly, the Town should work to balance the aesthetics of unpaved, private roads with the economics of maintaining those roads. The Town may want to consider asphalt pavement on town roads that serve large developments. This should be mentioned in the Town's Strategic Highway Improvement Plan.

Chapter 8 Community Design

I. Introduction

Community Design is an important component of any community's vision where the character and image of the community are valued assets. In Franconia, the citizens most valued features include the small village and the rural character. Community Design includes the scale and appropriateness and aesthetic value of the built and natural environment within the community. It takes into consideration the size of structures, placement of facilities, access to important places, and the overall look and feel of a given area. In Franconia, Community Design ideas and recommendations have been limited to the village area.

II. Corresponding Goals & Objectives

It was determined that Community Design is an important aspect to consider based on the responses from the Town's Community Survey. Responding citizens of Franconia stated that the small village, views, rural character and Main Street were valued resources and that measures should be taken to protect them and enhance them.

The following are goals that were created in the Vision Section of this Master Plan as they relate to aspects of Community Design:

Town Character

Goal: Maintain the small village commercial atmosphere:

- Encourage new small businesses to locate in the village center of the Town;
- Develop regulations to discourage large commercial retailers from locating in Town;
- Research Big Box Ordinances and their appropriateness for the Town.

Goal: Protect the scenic beauty, and small town character of Franconia:

- Town should consider purchasing land for conservation purposes and to protect mountain views and putting the land into conservation easements or a land trust;
- Continue to develop and protect the Town's recreational assets;
- Consider burying utility lines and examining other beautification projects.

Goal: Protect the integrity of Main Street, and the Village:

- Examine and encourage the development of green space areas along Main Street;
- Improve the appearance of Main Street through clean-up programs and keep the small-town architecture by examining sign, architecture, and design ordinances;
- Place welcome signs at the entrances to town and along Main Street.

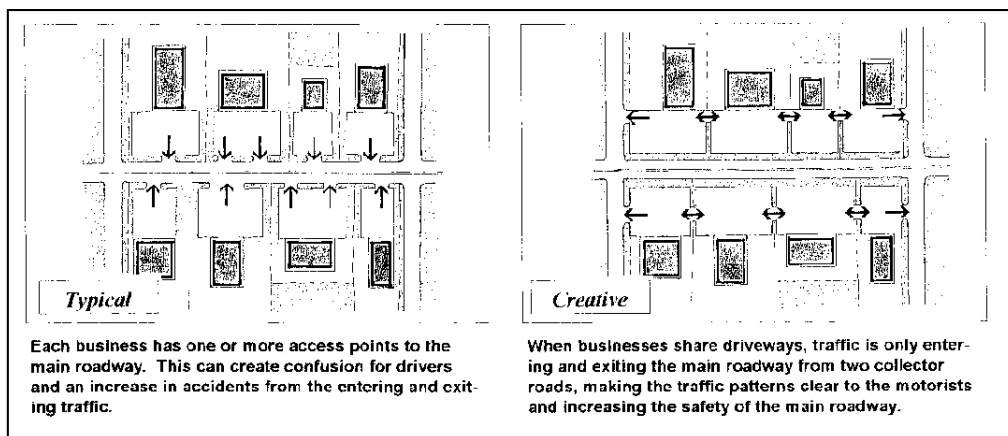
III. Community Design Components & Recommendations

Community Design can include many attributes such as the placement of buildings or the specific locations of infrastructure and green spaces. The Town of Franconia examined the following attributes: transportation including access management, parking, traffic calming, design of roadways and walkability; landscaping; signage; lighting; and bicycle facilities as they relate to the village area of town.

Transportation: Access, Parking, Traffic Calming & Walkability

The goal for traffic in the Village of Franconia is to strike a balance between walkability/pedestrian safety and parking/access to businesses. Currently, parking and access have created a concern for safe walkability. There are parking areas with no defined curb cuts from the street, where the pavement for the parking area blends into the pavement of the street. Without clear definition of where the parking area is versus the street, it conjures an image of wide open space for vehicles, making it appear unsafe for pedestrians. Additionally, without a defined parking area, cars are leaving the parking spots by backing into the street into oncoming traffic. If space allows, small landscaped medians or curbs could be designed to distinguish between the parking area and the street. The Town could also look into the possibility of off-site parking lots for the entire village district encouraging business customers to walk instead of drive through the village.

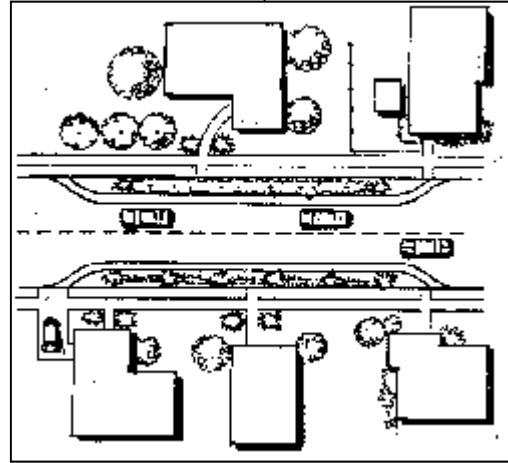
Access to businesses can also create unsafe pedestrian conditions as well as give the village the appearance of a hectic, automobile driven area. Too many driveways and access points for automobiles means additional pavement which could turn a quaint small village into a sea of commercial asphalt. It is important while striking a balance that businesses are accessible. However, too many driveways in a small area may deter business if people feel unsafe to drive or walk there and if it is not appealing aesthetically.



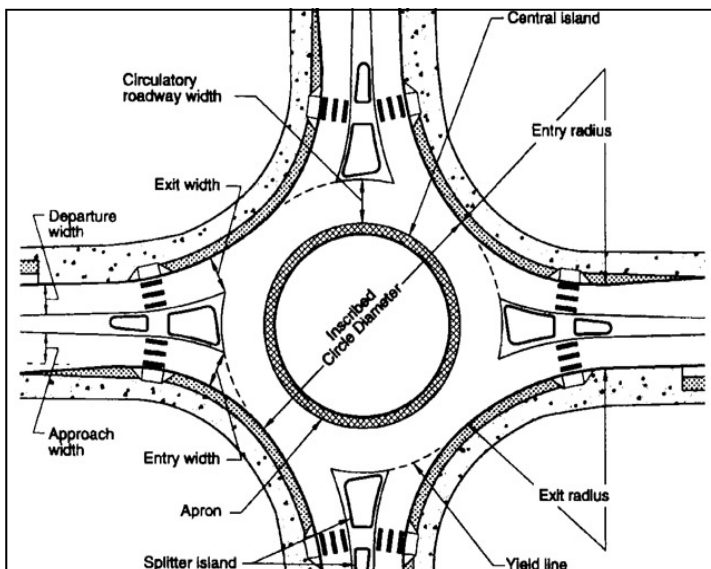
Example 1: Access Management

Shared access points or shared access driveways help alleviate congestion on the roadway and conflict points between automobiles. They also help tie the businesses in a given area together so that they appear to be part of a village or downtown commercial district. This type of design also provides more options to develop safe, pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks, benches, and green spaces. Although the example above may not be practical for the Village of Franconia, some access management principles may help find the balance the Town needs between walkability and access to businesses.

Other transportation features the Town could consider to protect the village character and enhance walkability are traffic calming devices. Traffic calming devices are by nature designed to do exactly what they state, calm the traffic and slow the speed through a given area. These devices are also used to promote walkability and create a sense of place by providing pedestrian facilities, landscaping, and unique design features. In the Village of Franconia, there are no design features that lower the speed as you enter onto Main Street. The Town could consider traffic calming devices that narrow the feel of the roadway, such as bulb outs or chicanes, as you enter the village area. Bulb outs and block ends are design techniques where the edge of pavement is narrowed, creating a visual of a narrow roadway without actually narrowing the travel lane. In many instances the sidewalk and landscape area is extended into the paved shoulder area abutting the paved travel lane. Not only do these techniques provide a visual narrowing of the street but also serve as a safer means for pedestrian crossing by reducing the amount of impervious surface for a person to walk across.



Traffic Calming Device: Choker/Bulb Out



Typical roundabout design.

Source: FHWA, Roundabouts: An Informational Guide.

Another traffic calming device that may be appropriate in the village is a roundabout. A roundabout is a unique intersection design that allows traffic from all directions to slowly move through the intersection, merging with the traffic to the left at all times.

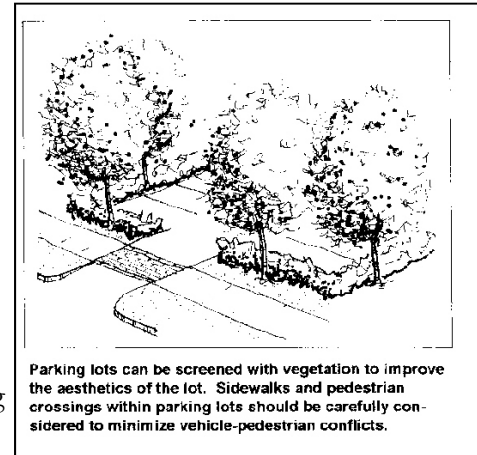
Roundabouts gained their popularity in Europe but in recent years have become increasingly popular in the United States to solve traffic congestion and calming problems. This type of device could be a solution for the Route 18 and Route 116 intersection where the blinking lights are currently positioned. It would not only make it a safer intersection for automobiles than its current design but would also create a unique design feature that enhances the village area.

In order to determine whether a roundabout is appropriate for the intersection, the Town

should invite the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to town to discuss a feasibility study. At the very least, a four-way stop intersection and/or rumble strips from each direction should be installed for safety reasons at this intersection. However, ideally the intersection should be redesigned to be more safe and to fit in with the aesthetics of the village area.

Landscaping & other amenities

In the Community Survey, responding citizens stressed the need for green spaces in the village area of Franconia. There is some landscaping at a few businesses in town but no consistent landscaping throughout the village. As a plan is derived to view parking and access opportunities in the village perhaps landscaping can be placed in areas where parking or access is no longer occurring. Landscaping not only improves the aesthetics of the village but also serves as a buffer between pedestrians and automobiles. In addition to landscaping, site furniture should be incorporated throughout the village. Site furniture includes, but is not limited to, benches, trash receptacles, and planter boxes. Having safe sidewalks and crosswalks makes an area pedestrian friendly, but having appropriate landscaping and other pedestrian amenities actually encourages and invites people to walk through the village and mingle with others.



Signage

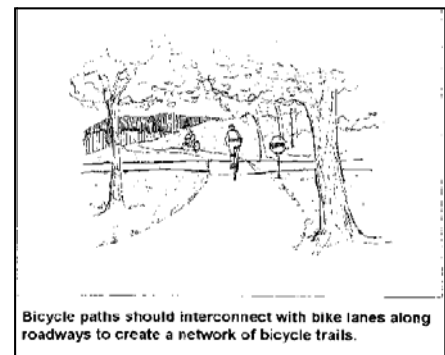
The Town of Franconia currently has a sign ordinance. The ordinance covers the size of signs, temporary signs and the sign permit process. However, it may be of interest to the Town to revisit the ordinance to ensure it meets the intent of the village character. It is important to allow some flexibility in signage because often businesses may develop a very unique way of advertising that blends well with the character of that area. Yet sometimes new businesses or new ownership may devise an advertising scheme that stands out and detracts from the design of the area. It is important that the Town, while allowing flexibility, also looks into details of signing regulations such as banners, color, and number of signs that may detract from the village area. For aesthetic purposes, the Town may also want to consider welcome signs when entering the village area.

Lighting

Although lighting is currently not an issue in town, it is important that the town officials realize the significance lighting plays in community design. A rural town with a quaint village could be negatively affected by large, bright lighting cantilevers. Also, the direction of the lighting could have impact on the rural setting of the community. Lighting should face downwards so as to not cast lights into the night sky and impact the view. The Town should review current lighting requirements for residential and commercial developments to ensure that the standards are meeting the vision of the community.

Bicycle Amenities

Biking is an important recreation, as well as transportation, element of the community. However, the village area could use some improvements in designing for bicycle amenities. Bicyclists should be encouraged to use multi-use trails, and the Town should work on connecting those trails to the businesses in the village. A system of trails would keep children off the roadway through the village where parking and access are already a potential safety hazard. The Town should develop this system as part of the town's trail planning efforts.



First Step towards Implementation

The Town should consider developing a Community Design Committee to study and recommend any improvements or alterations to the village area. This way business owners, town officials and other stakeholders could work out a win-win scenario that takes walkability, village design and accessibility into consideration. The committee could make recommendations concerning traffic calming devices, access management and parking with the help of transportation engineers. They could also consider landscaping and pedestrian amenities and provide assistance with the development of a multi-use trail system that accesses the village businesses.

Chapter 9 Community Facilities

I. Introduction

The Town of Franconia has many community facilities within its jurisdiction and the condition, availability, and use of these facilities are greatly impacted by the rate of growth and development. Community Facilities include the police department, fire department, life squad, buildings and grounds department, highway department, transfer station, town hall, recreation department, library, museum, Frost Place and the Mittersill Fire Station. The town also has a Water Department which is not owned by the town but is considered an important community facility that is impacted by future growth.

There are two entities that are currently studying the community facilities in town, the Water Supply Study Group and the Infrastructure Study Group. The Water Supply Study Group is responsible for evaluating the existing conditions of the town's water supply, demand and facilities and making recommendations for improvements. The Infrastructure Study Group, established in the spring of 2005 by the Selectmen, is responsible for studying current conditions and outlining recommendations for all other community facilities in town owned by the Town of Franconia. This chapter will reflect the information gathered by these two entities.

II. Goals Related to Community Facilities

The following Goals, from the Goals and Objectives chapter of this Master Plan, are related to the public and community facilities:

Public and Community Facilities

Goal: Enhance Franconia's community facilities/utilities for community residents and visitors:

- Study ways to coordinate hours of operation for library, transfer station, post office and other town services;
- Work with the water department to improve the town's water infrastructure through a capital improvement fund or impact fee ordinance;
- Consider developing and adopting an impact fee ordinance to help minimize the impact of capital expenditures on the tax map.

Goal: Develop a coordinated approach to addressing the needs of the community's services' infrastructure:

- Develop a plan of construction, renovation, and support of the infrastructure for the future;
- Improve the town's infrastructure through capital reserve funds or mitigation grants.

III. Existing Conditions and Recommendations for the Water Department

The Water Supply Study Group in Franconia was established after the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) stated that some improvements are needed to the water system. In December 2005, DES conducted a sanitary survey in the town for the purpose of reviewing the capacity of the system's sources, treatment, distribution, and management in order to continuously provide safe drinking water.

Although the Franconia Village Water System had some improvements made prior to the survey, DES identified issues concerning lack of supply on peak days, low pressure in sections of the distribution system, and discolored water, and it made recommendations on how the town should improve the system. In the short term, the water commission should be considering projects to ensure appropriate pressure and meet immediate distribution needs. In the long term, the Water Supply Study Group should discuss obtaining additional supply, particularly if there is a drastic increase in needed connections due to future development.

A study by the water infrastructure study group has been commissioned by the Selectmen in the Town of Franconia. The study group has outlined the following priorities for the water system:

- Upgrade storage capacity.
- Establish a pipe replacement plan.
- Identify suitable water sources.

In addition, the Water Commissioners recognize the need to address other issues including rate setting, financing, installation of meters/back flow devices, and modifying the distribution system.

IV. Existing Conditions for All Other Community Facilities

The Infrastructure Study Group evaluated all other community facilities in town which the Town of Franconia owns and maintains. This included town buildings, roads, town land, and utilities. For each type of facility, a subcommittee was formed to study the details of the current conditions and to explore ideas to improve upon these areas. This section summarizes the current conditions by facility type.

Police Department

The current facility where the Police Department resides is too small and inadequate for them to properly serve the Town of Franconia. The Committee studied other town police facilities for comparison and to seek advice on how the police departments were accommodated in nearby towns. They also obtained a copy of the Assistant Commissioner of the New Hampshire Public Safety Department's report on "Building a New Police Facility." They obtained the expertise of an architectural firm to assist in the study as well. The Committee, in the report, will develop recommendations for the location of the Police Department based on their research.

Buildings and Grounds Department

The current maintenance building, located in the garage under town hall, is too crowded and the space is inadequate. There are also flooding problems at times. The Committee is studying options for a new

location for the maintenance department. They are suggesting that the new building contain an office and work space, a heated garage, and a covered storage area. Recommendations on the location of the maintenance building will be stated in the Infrastructure Committee report and in the Recommendations Section of this chapter.

Highway Department

The existing highway department garage is too small and crowded, making accessibility to equipment difficult. The building also needs updated wiring, exhaust system, and a second exit that is remote from the first exit. Closing of inside drains and constructing a new sprinkler system are desirable improvements to the existing building, as is the possibility of adding a new septic system. Also, because the water is undrinkable, a new filter is needed. Salt storage is another issue and when considering improvements to the highway department garage, building a new salt shed with concrete flooring near the highway department building would be desirable. It was noted in the report that the town should study the wetlands and floodplains in the current highway department area before beginning any new construction in that particular location.

Transfer Station

The Transfer Station currently accepts the following recyclables: tin cans, aluminum cans, glass, mixed paper, shredded paper, newspaper, cardboard, paints, certain plastics, florescent tubes, returnable deposit bottles, compost materials and metal. Currently, there is insufficient storage space to collect a truck load of materials such as the brown and clear glass. Additionally, the town currently uses a vertical baler which requires loading by hand; a horizontal baler is more desirable for safety and efficiency reasons. As the town continues to grow, additional storage and optimization of labor are important issues to address.

Town Hall

The Committee agrees with the selectmen who have advised that energy saving improvements should be considered for Town Hall. Older buildings can be retrofitted to reduce energy costs, and the town should make recommendations on retrofit projects for Town Hall. The building is also under-utilized. As recommendations are formed for the location of departments, equipment, and storage, Town Hall should be a consideration. It may also require additional retrofitting to the building such as upgrades to an ADA restroom facility and improvements to the stairwell if the building is better utilized.



Fire Department

Currently, there is a \$247,000 trust fund that could be utilized for fire department renovations. This funding can be used to implement any recommendation made from the Infrastructure Committee report and outlined in this chapter under Recommendations. Currently, the building does not have a second egress, thus creating a safety hazard in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the doorway at the bottom of the stairwell lacks a substantial fire door, causing a fire hazard for people who could get trapped upstairs. The heating and electricity throughout the building are also very dated and should be considered for upgrades.

Life Squad

It is anticipated that the Life Squad would see an increase in activity in the next twenty years based on the average age of Franconia residents. Having a space for the Life Squad is important and recommendations of location and possibly office space should be considered.

Recreation Department

The current ice rink is in poor condition; it has a poor base, it heaves in the winter and it is not level. Additionally, there is no current office or adequate storage space for the Recreation Department. Recommendations and plans have been developed in the past with the consideration of improvements to the Dow Field to address these concerns. The town should work with the residential owners along the Dow Strip to discuss potential improvements to the Dow recreational fields to minimize any impacts if this area is identified for improvements.

Library, Museum & Frost Place

There were no immediate structural improvements or repairs needed for the library, museum, or the Frost Place beyond the normal upkeep of these facilities. However, there needs to be storage for the large collectibles of maple syrup production that the museum currently possesses. Additionally, the town should find storage for the Antique Fire Truck.



Mittersill Fire Station

The Committee did not study the use of this building because they stated that the Water Department has plans for its use.

V. Recommendations for Town Facilities

The Town Infrastructure Committee is completing its report which identifies the existing conditions mentioned above. This report will also outline recommendations, discussed and approved at a public hearing, on how to address the community facility needs. Those recommendations will be added to this chapter once reviewed and approved by the citizens of Franconia.

Chapter 10 Natural Resources

I. Introduction

The natural landscape and its many resources are important to the citizens of Franconia. There are various natural resources in Franconia, including wetlands and waterways, steep slopes and ridges, forested mountains, low-lying valleys and open fields. The citizens of the Town feel the natural resources are integral to the community and are a major factor in the decision to reside in Franconia. Identification of the resources and strategies for protecting them are important steps the Town should take.

The Town has engaged in a planning effort to identify these important areas by hiring Watershed to Wildlife to conduct a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI). This inventory examines existing conditions in many natural resource categories and includes a list of recommendations for protecting these resources. This chapter will summarize the NRI and link the recommendations from the study to the Land Use Section of this Master Plan.

II. Related Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were identified in the Vision Section of this Master Plan and are related to the natural resources of the Town of Franconia.

Natural Resources

Goal: Balance new development with the protection and preservation of the Town's natural resources:

- Encourage habitat-sensitive development.

Goal: Protect Franconia's natural resources as an economic benefit to the Town.

Goal: Preserve Franconia's rural character by protecting Franconia's natural resources:

- Develop a Natural Resource Inventory for the Town;
- Identify prime areas of town for protection and conservation;
- Develop a conservation plan for purchase of land and conservation easements.

Goal: Protect Gale River Watershed from overdevelopment:

- Consider buffer zones along waterways;
- Monitor water quality on an annual basis.

Goal: Protect Franconia's groundwater:

- Develop storm water retention areas on sites affecting groundwater recharge.

III. Natural Resource Identification and Existing Conditions

The information contained in this section is a summary of the results collected in the Natural Resource Inventory conducted by Watershed to Wildlife. The full report can be obtained at the town offices and the library. This section includes a summary of rivers and large water bodies, riparian habitat, wetlands, permanent openings, forested lands, bedrock geology, soils, prime, state and local farmland, stratified drift aquifers, slope, rare species and exemplary natural communities, conservation lands, and invasive species.

Rivers and Large Water Bodies

The Town of Franconia contains approximately 0.1 square miles of inland waters including the two largest water bodies, Echo Lake and Profile Lake. Also included in the White Mountain National Forest and identified as large water bodies are Garfield Pond and Eagle Lakes. The largest river in town is the Gale River which flows through the center of Franconia Village. The Gale River Watershed is also the public Drinking Water Supply for the Towns of Littleton and Bethlehem. Other significant rivers and streams include the Ham Branch, Pemigewasset, and Meadow Brook, along with many small tributaries that flow into these resources.



Riparian Habitat

Riparian areas are those adjacent to most rivers and streams and are in the form of floodplain forest, scrub-shrub, grasslands and meadows. In this transitional zone between the water bodies and the open fields and forests, many wildlife and plant species thrive. These areas are rich in bird species and aquatic and terrestrial mammals. These areas are used for feeding, mating, and resting as well as travel corridors for the wildlife. Franconia is full of riparian habitats, especially in the form of forested floodplains, along such rivers and streams as the Gale River, Ham Branch and Meadow Brook.

Wetlands

Wetlands are critical natural resources for several reasons, including:

- Essential plant and wildlife habitats;
- Water resource protection, enabling significant storage of flood/runoff during high-water events;
- Contributors to groundwater recharge, acting as a filter for groundwater.

The Town of Franconia has a low percentage of wetlands. The low percentage is due to the sandy soils and steep slopes that limit the size of the wetlands. Therefore, the wetlands the Town does have are extremely important to protect. There are roughly 544 acres of wetlands that are delineated, not including wetlands in the White Mountain National Forest and Franconia Notch State Park. There are also smaller wetland complexes that have not been delineated that reside on hillsides in Franconia. These areas may be of threat from future residential development and should be identified and protected.

Permanent Openings

Permanent Openings are identified as grasses, forbs, wild flowers, brambles and shrubs in open fields that may have once been active agricultural lands. In the transitional zone between the forests and these open fields reside many wildlife species. There are 104 different openings (543 acres) that were identified during the Natural Resource Inventory that range in size from 1/4 acre to 61 acres. Most of these areas are old active agricultural lands and some are fields of various vegetation. There are also some smaller permanent openings in residential areas in town.

Forested Lands

Excluding the White Mountain National Forest, approximately 90% of Franconia is forested. Common trees include white pine, eastern hemlock, red oak, yellow birch, white birch, red maple, sugar maple, American beech, white ash, black cherry, poplar, red spruce, American basswood, and balsam fir. Dense softwood stands are important for wildlife especially for coverage during long winters and severe weather. Franconia has approximately 1,400 acres of dense softwood stands. Hardwood and mix stands provide mast production which are fruits, seeds and nuts. Many wildlife species' diets rely heavily on mast production of hardwood and mixed stands. Franconia is rich with hardwood and mixed stands. With proper forest management, the Town should be able to maintain its forest wildlife habitat in these areas.

Bedrock Geology

Ledge and rock outcrops are common in Franconia, particularly in the White Mountain National Forest and Franconia Notch State Park, including unique geological bedrock formations of granite and volcanic rock. Throughout the eastern portion of Franconia it is common to find granite bedrock formations which are widely spread throughout the Granite state.

Soils

Franconia contains various soil types (approximately 40) and therefore supports very diverse plant and animal habitats. About 70% of the Town has excessively to well drained sandy soils, the most dominant soil type in Franconia. Most of these soils can be found in forested areas, residential areas, and open fields/inactive agricultural lands. Residential development can be problematic in these areas because the soil shifts frequently creating an unstable surface. In addition, these fine sandy soils have high permeability causing runoff and filtration problems.

Prime, State and Local Farmland

Out of the 11,633 acres in Franconia, excluding the White Mountain National Forest and Franconia Notch State Park, 443 acres of land have been classified as USDA prime farmland, 631 acres of statewide importance, and 4,225 acres of local importance. Together, these three categories of soils, as defined by USDA, represent the land that is best suited for the production of food, feed, fiber, oilseed crop, and forage. Some of these agricultural lands have already been lost to development. The Town should consider conserving some of those that are still available for agricultural use.

Stratified Drift Aquifers

Stratified Drift Aquifers are composed of unconsolidated glacial deposits and are sorted by grain. These

areas are an important source for groundwater and are considered the most productive source of groundwater. Approximately 2,709 acres (23%) of the area in western Franconia has Stratified Drift Aquifers, the majority lying along the Gale River, Ham Branch and Meadow Brook. In Franconia, Stratified Drift Aquifers are mostly made up of sandy material with small amounts of glacial till material. The Town currently has two wells drawing from bedrock aquifers, for Franconia Village with 350 hookups and for Mittersill with 150 hookups.

Slope

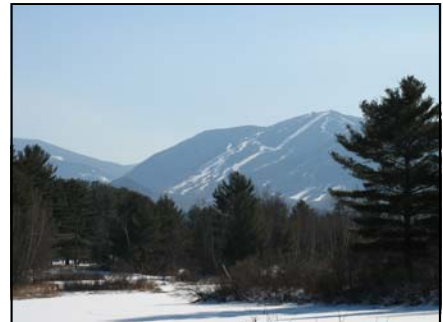
Slope is an important land feature that supports not only unique habitats but also potentially natural features in lower lying areas. On steeper slopes, soils are shallower so the volume and velocity of surface water runoff is higher and erosion downhill is more likely. Typically, slopes between 15 - 25% are too steep, and development should be restricted and/or limited. In areas where the slope is greater than 25%, development should be completely restricted. In Franconia, approximately 4,133 acres (35.5%) of land contains slopes that are over 15% and of that, 1,933 acres (16.6%) are over 25% slope. This is not including the White Mountain National Forest or Franconia Notch State Park.

Rare Species and Exemplary Natural Communities

Most of the rare species that have been documented in Franconia are in the White Mountain National Forest and Franconia Notch State Park. The Natural Resource Inventory focused on the western portions of the Town outside of the state and federal lands. However, it is possible that many of the same rare species features, such as peregrine falcon nesting areas, can be seen in the western portion of Franconia as well. A more detailed study would have to be conducted to determine what other rare species may exist in that area.

Scenic Resources

As mentioned in the Community Survey, there are many scenic resources in the Town that make it a desirable place to live and visit. Scenic Resources include the views of the White Mountains, thick forested lands, lakes, ponds and streams. Scenic vista points observed during the Natural Resource Inventory include Scrag Hill, Gale River, Cole Hill Road, Wells Road wetland, Ridge Road, and the Profile Golf Club. Of course outside of the study area, in the White Mountain National Forest and Franconia Notch State Park, there are several other scenic vistas.



Conservation Land

Approximately 73% of Franconia is protected in the White Mountain National Forest and Franconia Notch State Park. In the remaining land in western Franconia, 34% (398 acres) is also in conservation. Franconia's conservation lands include:

- White Mountain National Forest - 27,131 acres
- Franconia Notch State Park - 3,284 acres
- Fox Hill Park - 94.62 acres
- River Bend Trail - 5.68 acres
- Gale River Easement - 3.8 acres

- Franconia Village Water land - 8.92 acres
- Frost Place - 6.98 acres
- Town Forest - 40.67 acres
- Butterhill Partners - 49.09 acres
- Fobes - 188.29 acres
- Dow Field - 8 acres
- McKenzie property - 34.26 acres

Invasive Plant Species

Invasive species are plant and wildlife species that are not native to an area, but take up residency and can out-compete native species. Four invasive species were observed in Franconia during the Natural Resource Inventory. They included Japanese Barberry, Tartarian honeysuckle, Purple Loosestrife, and Coltsfoot. There are areas of town where significant quantities of invasive species can be observed, such as the groupings of Purple Loosestrife along Interstate 93.

IV. Future Applications and Recommendations from the Natural Resource Inventory

Watershed to Wildlife summarizes the Natural Resource Inventory by suggesting some future applications and making recommendations for better protection of the Town's natural resources. These recommendations are similar to some of the responses on the Community Survey, the goals and objectives that were developed, and the future Land Use Section of this Master Plan. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Identification and Protection of Wetland Complexes - a.) complete an in-depth inventory of vernal pools and use information to deter new development in these sensitive areas, and b.) compile previously delineated wetlands, documented wetland locations, and other areas containing wetlands, and conduct future expanded wetland delineations.
2. Protect Groundwater, Brooks, Rivers, Shorelines and Aquifers - a.) implement best management practices, b.) monitor septic system plumes, c.) monitor placement of future septic systems, and d.) utilize the Shoreland Protection Act.
3. Research and develop ridgeline protection ordinances to conserve mountainous topography and steep slopes.
4. Protect existing stands of softwood trees and investigate potential to extend stands by connecting patches of existing softwood stands.
5. Additional Conservation Lands - connect adjacent conserved lands, permanent openings, softwood stands, and wildlife habitats. There is potential for purchasing some of these lands outright or placing conservation easements on these lands.
6. Encourage scenic easements in town.

7. Continue to work towards updating data available for mapping important natural features in town.
8. Work with other organizations in town and share data collected from the Natural Resource Inventory to make comprehensive land use decisions.

Long Term recommendations were also stated in the Natural Resource Inventory which again support the goals and objectives and Land Use Section of this Master Plan. Those long-term recommendations included:

- Determine least impacted sites for future development.
- Refine Master Plan based on Natural Resource Inventory.
- Promote protection plan for large aquifers in town.
- Identify lands for purchase or conservation easements.
- Get future plans in digital format so that Natural Resource Inventory data can be overlaid on sites for decision making.