

## **Chapter I Introduction**

A Master Plan is a living document that articulates the vision, desires, and concerns of a community. The Plan provides recommendations on ways to maintain or improve the features of a community. This Plan is intended to serve as a blueprint for all future activities of Henniker. This includes future economic development efforts; amendment to land use regulations; environmental and historic preservation efforts; the development of affordable housing stock; the expansion of community facilities and services for the next five to ten years.

This Master Plan is Henniker's road map for the first quarter of the twenty-first century and beyond. It outlines what we are all about and where we want to go, as a community in central New Hampshire. The Plan describes us today, and forecasts where we are heading. Most importantly, it defines what we will need to do over the next several years as we work together to shape the future of the Town of Henniker. What you now have in your hands is the result of the collective efforts of those who made generous contributions of time, energy, and ideas. The new "Master Plan of the Town of Henniker" is now a reality!

A Master Plan is intended to be the device that influences the making, interpretation, and implementation of laws and procedures that give shape and direction to the community. A Master Plan is required by law in the State of New Hampshire (RSA 674:2); but unlike other "master devices," it has no force of law and no way to generate the resources that may be required for implementation. The Master Plan can be a powerful tool to shape a community by giving direction to appointed and elected officials. However, the true power of the document is derived from the citizenry, as they will ultimately be the voice that approves the staffing, funding, regulatory alternatives and strategies identified by this Plan.

As this Master Plan was being written, it became evident that Henniker is at a crossroads. As incremental growth creeps from southern portions of the State and the City of Concord continues to evolve and expand as a regional source of employment, Henniker will continue to grow and face new challenges and issues. Those who contributed to this plan did their best to plan for such changes and to provide appropriate strategies that will accommodate reasonable growth while maintaining the rural atmosphere. It is the resolve of the Planning Board to faithfully and actively pursue the recommendations included in this document.

### **Goals and Objectives**

What follows is the collective catalogue of our hopes and dreams for our town--what we want to achieve in our growing and vital town. These ideas have been laid out for all to see and work towards. Just as those who have gone before us, we can seize this opportunity to move and shape our little bit of the world and to make it a better place for us, our children and grandchildren. Herein lies a living document, one which will help us focus on the important issues of our times.

Establishing a set of goals and objectives is an important task that requires considerable public input and debate. The goals and objectives listed below are discussed in each Chapter of the Master Plan. Goals and objectives in any plan are intended to provide a policy framework and direction to the plan. Goals are general statements of ideal conditions. Objectives describe desirable projects and programs that will help to achieve the goals. Strategies are steps that need to be taken in order to reach an objective. These findings were created by analyzing the results of the Community Survey results and reviewing input from the various Chapter Subcommittee participants.

### **Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter**

**Goal:** To protect and preserve the historical and cultural resources located in Henniker so that future generations may enjoy and learn from them.

**Objective:** To ensure cooperation among the various committees and organizations involved with historic preservation and cultural resources in Henniker.

**Strategies:**

1. Review the various organizations and committees within the community and see where their roles overlap and where there are gaps. Try to diminish the overlap and fill the areas where there are gaps.
2. Create specific roles, guidelines, budgets, and rules of procedure for all Town committees and organizations that deal with historic preservation and cultural resources.

**Objective:** To ensure that adequate resources are made available for historic preservation and education.

**Strategies:**

1. Set aside money for maintenance, educational purposes, and research for local historic sites currently or potentially on the National Register. Provide financial support to organizations and committees that are maintaining historic resources and properties and that are providing education on behalf of the Town.

**Objective:** To ensure that the Town's zoning, site plan, and subdivision regulations do not negatively impact historical resources located in Henniker.

**Strategies:**

1. Review all zoning, site plan, and subdivision regulations periodically for potential points of conflict between the regulations and historic preservation. Once these points of conflict are identified, work to make them compatible.
2. Include the Historic District in the Zoning Ordinance as an Overlay District.

### **Population and Economics Chapter**

**Goal:** Have a healthy and diverse economic base that is appropriate in scale, service, and impact that will provide the most benefit to the Town of Henniker.

Objective: Be proactive in the recruitment and retention of economic development opportunities in Henniker.

Strategies:

1. Research the possibility of Henniker's applying for the New Hampshire Main Street Program in 2004.
2. Encourage the Henniker Business Association, Rotary Club, and other interested business/economic development organizations to continue discussions with residents and Town Officials on the economic well-being of Henniker.
3. The Town should actively recruit desirable businesses to locate/expand with the community.

Objective: Support Henniker businesses.

Strategy:

1. The Town should adopt a policy of purchasing supplies, equipment, and materials from local businesses, where possible and feasible.

Objective: Ensure that commercial and retail development has a positive impact on the environment, historic character, social character, and existing development patterns within the Town.

Strategies:

1. Adopt specific landscaping, lighting, and environmental performance standards into the Site Plan Regulations.
2. Review the boundaries of the current Zoning Districts to ensure that they appropriately reflect future planning goals.

### **Current and Future Land Use Chapter**

Goal – Henniker's regulations need to ensure quality development, protect sensitive environmental features, provide opportunities for a variety of development types, and preserve its rural and historic nature.

Objective: – Enhance the village center as the cultural, social, and commercial center of town.

Strategies:

1. Apply for the New Hampshire Main Street Program in 2004.
2. Develop a comprehensive pedestrian infrastructure that includes bicycle lanes, bicycle racks, and sidewalks to promote a walkable downtown.
3. Encourage the use of shared parking lots between retail uses and housing, where appropriate.
4. Allow for the development of new housing units above commercial and retail stores in the downtown.

Objective – Preserve and protect the open space and environmentally and/or culturally sensitive areas in town.

Strategies:

1. 100% of the land use change tax should be dedicated to a conservation fund, which can be used for education, land or easement purchase, or to leverage additional funding for conservation and preservation efforts in Henniker.
2. Using the data collected in the Henniker Natural Resources Inventory, develop a Conservation and Open Space Plan for the Town.
3. Adopt a Historic District Overlay into the Zoning Ordinance.

Objective - To foster sound business development in appropriate areas within Town.

Strategies:

1. Adopt façade, architectural, landscaping, and signage regulations into the Site Plan regulations.
2. Ensure that the areas zoned for commercial development are the most appropriate in terms of community infrastructure, natural resources, and community character.

Objective: – To foster sound residential development.

Strategies:

1. Adopt roadway and sidewalk design details into the Site Plan regulations.
2. Ensure the areas zoned for residential development are the most appropriate in terms of community services, land use, and environmental constraints.
3. Use developer incentives in the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations to maximize the best use of the land.
4. Adopt ordinances ensuring work is done in a timely, safe, and environmentally proper manner.
5. Encourage the development of neighborhoods through the Subdivision and Zoning regulations.

Objective: – Revamp the town’s planning function to better serve the community.

Strategies:

1. The Town should purchase Geographic Information Software (GIS) in order to utilize the maps and information available from the State, Regional Planning Commission, and this Master Plan in future planning efforts.
2. Have the Henniker tax maps digitized into a GIS layer, which could then be linked to the Assessor’s database, for more accurate and accessible information
3. Organize the Zoning, Subdivision, and Site Plan Regulations into one document with a comprehensive Table of Uses and Index, all necessary forms, and accompanying information.

## **Housing Chapter**

Goal: To encourage sound housing development that meets the needs of current and future residents, while protecting the natural resources and rural character of the Town.

Objective: Ensure that current town regulations support sound housing development.

Strategies:

1. Consider adopting an Affordable Housing Ordinance, an Elderly Housing Ordinance, and an Inclusionary Zoning provision into the Henniker Zoning Ordinance.
2. Review and update the Manufactured Housing Ordinance, multi-family housing regulations, and the Open Space Residential Development Ordinance to ensure that they are meeting the stated goals of the regulations.
3. Adopt an impact fee ordinance in order to help pay for the cost of increased municipal services required by new development.
4. Prepare to enforce the statewide build code at the municipal level through the hiring of a professional building inspector and adoption of a fee schedule.

### **Transportation Chapter**

Goal: - To promote the improvement of public roads in Town; encourage a system of transportation that will meet the mobility needs of all local residents by providing for the efficient movement of people, goods, and services within Henniker and throughout the region; maintain a commitment to the rural and historic character of the community; and provide a well-maintained and safe transportation system that meets the functional and aesthetic needs of the community, in a cost-effective manner.

Objective: - Provide a highway and street system that will allow the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout Henniker.

Strategies:

1. Establish a standard speed limit of 25 mph-or-less for densely developed residential neighborhoods in Town with a history of traffic accidents.
2. Minimize adverse traffic impacts of "through traffic" on residential streets wherever viable alternatives can be provided.
3. Identify and prioritize intersections that need improvement.
4. Use traffic-calming measures to reduce speed and to direct traffic around neighborhoods.

Objective - Improve the commuter habits and traffic patterns within the Henniker community.

Strategy:

1. Investigate sites for potential park-and-ride facilities to help reduce congestion on major roads through Town. Ensure that the character of the areas considered for such facilities can be protected through proper design.
2. Identify roads in Town that are used as "cut-through" routes through residential neighborhoods and discourage this practice by lowering the speed limit, increasing enforcement of traffic regulations, and/or installing traffic-calming measures in areas of concern.
3. Develop a local bicycle network that would connect significant areas of Town and important places (i.e. schools, Town Hall, fire station) to the regional and state bicycle networks.

Objective - It is important to sustain and promote a safe walking core and bicycle system for Henniker and provide high-quality walking places beyond the core of the Town. These would be part of a larger interactive network of safe and aesthetic walking paths and bike lanes as part of Henniker's transportation infrastructure.

Strategy:

1. Promote a pedestrian route system and "share the road" campaign to maximize healthful recreational and transportation opportunities in and around Henniker.
2. Support the creation of the state and regional bicycle networks that pass through Town.

Objective - Protect the rural character of Henniker's roads that are gravel and have scenic attributes.

Strategies:

1. Develop road and entrance standards for Henniker's more rural and scenic roads. These standards should be consistent with the character of these roadways, balancing scenic characteristics, safety, and sight lines.
2. Make new roads in rural areas consistent in design with the rural collector roads off of which they are being built.
3. Consider roads in Henniker that may qualify as locally Scenic Roads, as defined by New Hampshire State statute, and pursue Scenic Road designation.

Objective - The Town should develop and fund a long-term road-repair and replacement program.

Strategies:

1. Explore revenue-generating options for transportation projects that can be used for local transportation projects or for local match funding for State and Federal projects.
2. Establish a road-resurfacing and improvement schedule that is recommended to and endorsed by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen.

Objective - The Town should address safety, maintenance, and development concerns on Class V and Class VI roads, on a priority basis.

Strategies:

1. Encourage shared drives, under the Subdivision Regulations, for new subdivisions along Class V roads in Henniker, not only to improve safety, but to keep the rural character of the area.
2. Maintain Class VI roads as important recreational assets; they provide excellent walking opportunities, and should not be upgraded to Class V roads.
3. The Town should investigate the designation of Class VI roads, that meet certain criteria, to Class A trails.

Objective - The Town should evaluate the transportation impact of any proposed development that requires *subdivision or site plan review and to recommend action in a timely manner*.

Strategy:

1. Require developers working in Town to provide parking for bicycles (e.g., bike racks), just as there are parking requirements for automobiles, through Site Plan Regulations.
2. Require developers working in Town to provide bicycle paths and bicycle lanes along the property to connect with existing or proposed lanes and/or trails, where appropriate, as part of the Site Plan Regulations.
3. Require developers working in Town to provide for shared driveways and parking areas with neighboring buildings, as part of the Site Plan Regulations.
4. Require new developments to create and/or extend the existing sidewalk network, in appropriate areas, to create an incremental expansion of the Town's sidewalk network.
5. Implement a policy to permit cross-access easements for commercial lots abutting one another so a driver does not need to exit onto the road in order to get to the neighboring property.

**Community Facilities Chapter**

Goal: – To have all community facilities in Henniker meet the current and future needs of the community in an efficient, safe, and effective manner.

Objective: – Increase public education, involvement, and participation in the various community facilities and Departments in Town.

Strategies:

1. Regularly schedule and publicly notice meetings to encourage public involvement, participation, and input on the various Town Departments.
2. Continue to coordinate with New England College for Town services.
3. Increase public awareness about fire, police, and highway safety by working with local schools, civic organizations, and businesses.
4. Do outreach into the community, with a special emphasis on New England College and the business community, for volunteers to participate in the various Town programs and Departments.
5. Do public education about the services and programs offered by each Town Department.
6. Ensure that all Committees and Boards comply with the New Hampshire Right to Know Law.
7. Regularly have Town-wide Department meetings to increase communication and coordination among the various Town Departments.

Objective – Proactively plan and budget to ensure that Town Departments are well staffed and have adequate facilities for the future.

Strategies:

1. Create capital reserve funds for various Departments to help offset the anticipated cost of equipment and facility expansion to ensure that there is funding available.
2. Maintain adequate staffing levels to effectively manage Town services. Analysis should be done every year to ensure that the Town Departments have enough staff to preserve and improve the quality of services.

3. Work with New England College to ensure that existing Town facilities and services will adequately service their planned expansion.
4. Research alternative financing options, besides taxes, to help pay for Town Department staff, facilities, equipment, and programs.

### **Conservation, Preservation, and Open Space Chapter**

Goal: - To preserve the character of the community, the Town of Henniker desires to conserve, protect, and preserve its natural resources, including but not limited to, ground and surface waters, agricultural and forest land, and wildlife habitat

Objective: - When engaging in development, the Town of Henniker should encourage open space land preservation that is in keeping with the natural conditions of the site.

Strategies:

1. The Planning Board, as part of the subdivision review process, shall encourage developments to dedicate land for open space.
2. The Conservation Commission should encourage and solicit the donations of parcels or easements in areas that fit within an open space/land conservation plan.
3. Appropriate open space, agriculture, and forestry uses should be allowed in all areas of Town.

Objective - The Town of Henniker should control development in environmentally valuable and sensitive areas.

Strategies:

1. The Planning Board should review all relevant data, including soil, slope, wetlands, etc., as part of the development review process when site plan and subdivision proposals are made. Determine if the proposals are in environmentally sensitive areas.
2. If a development proposal appears to be in an environmentally sensitive area, the Planning Board should request site specific scientific data be prepared by qualified, licensed professionals, regarding the current environmental conditions, potential impacts, and proposed solutions.

Objective - The Town of Henniker shall encourage through regulatory powers, incentives, and purchase, the preservation of existing and potentially productive agricultural lands, forest lands, and parcels of open space.

Strategies:

1. Recommend the preservation and conservation of existing and potentially prime agricultural lands, forest lands, and parcels of open space lands.
2. Send information on current use assessment to all property owners who could qualify for the program. Engage in a public education campaign to highlight the benefits and value of the current use program.
3. Henniker should actively pursue funding for the purchase of available agriculture lands, forest lands, and open space parcels. Prior to the acquisition of such land, an evaluation process should be developed that includes an evaluation of needs, cost, and benefits.

4. A management plan should be created for all parcels of land that the Town owns to ensure that best management practices are being followed.
5. Henniker should work with the surrounding communities to coordinate an open space protection plan for parcels that abut and/or cross Town lines.

Objective - The Town of Henniker should continue to work to protect the shoreline of its lakes, streams, ponds, and rivers.

Strategies:

1. Henniker should work to establish a collaborative shoreline policy with its neighboring communities.
2. Henniker should seek acquisition, easements, and/or development rights for parcels of land abutting public water bodies.

Objective - The Town of Henniker should continue to take steps to protect its aquifers and groundwater resources.

Strategies:

1. Henniker should identify areas where there is a known or potential water-pollution problem and require that neighboring public bodies of water be monitored annually for public health and environmental risks.
2. Create a public education campaign that would encourage residential well-water users to periodically test their water to ensure its safety.
3. Henniker should create and implement an educational campaign for residents as to the proper maintenance procedures for on-site septic systems.
4. Henniker should create and distribute educational materials for the proper disposal of waste oil, household chemicals, and household hazardous waste.

Objective - The Town should take the appropriate steps to ensure that the geologic formations and resources located in the community are managed in a sustainable fashion.

Strategies:

1. Henniker should seek easements and/or development rights for spent/abandoned gravel pits located in the aquifer areas within the Town.
2. Henniker should continually monitor active sand and gravel pits operating within Town to ensure all safety and environmental protections are in place.

Objective - The Town of Henniker should coordinate all local land use planning and regulations, so that local planning efforts are enhanced, intra-community conflicts are minimized, and suburban sprawl is limited.

Strategies:

1. Where appropriate, encourage and emphasize the existing Village by channeling commercial and residential growth toward it.

2. Encourage the use of innovative land use controls to provide growth in areas with suitable-land characteristics and to discourage development in areas with poor soils, steep slopes, flood hazards, or other environmentally sensitive or unique characteristics.

Objective – Increase cooperation among the Town, New England College, local businesses, and the region to preserve and protect our natural environment.

Strategies:

1. Invite representatives of New England College and the Henniker Business Economic Development Committee to the monthly Conservation Commission meetings.
2. The Conservation Commission should continue to be involved in the Regional Resource Conservation Committee.

The Master Plan is basically a road map that outlines the kind of town Henniker is now and the kind of town it would like to be, keeping in mind its importance as a community in central New Hampshire. It describes us today, forecasts where we are heading, and defines what we need to do over the next several years.

Most importantly, we can see what we can achieve and, by committing it to paper for the world to see, what our plan is for the future. It is to be a living document helping us to focus on the important issues of our times. We need each and every community member's efforts to bring life to this document, to make this a reality!