



# Town of Exeter Master Plan

Adopted  
February 22, 2018



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Prepared for:  
Town of Exeter, New Hampshire

Prepared by:  
Horsley Witten Group, Inc.

# Contributions

The Exeter Master Plan was developed under the guidance of the Master Plan Steering Committee. The Committee was made up of Town residents and businesses, as well as Town staff and representatives of local boards and committees. The Committee met monthly to review progress and direct next steps.

## Master Plan Steering Committee Members:

Matt Blaisdell <i>Resident</i>	Maura Fay <i>Heritage Commission</i>	Terence Moran <i>Resident</i>
Peter Cameron <i>Planning Board</i>	Peter Francese <i>Resident</i>	Esther Olson-Murphy <i>Resident</i>
William Campbell <i>Conservation Commission</i>	Julie Gillman <i>Board of Selectmen</i>	Hank Ouimet <i>Resident</i>
Kim Canfield <i>Resident</i>	Pam Gjettem <i>Historic District Commission</i>	Langdon Plumer (Chair) <i>Planning Board</i>
Dan Chartrand <i>Board of Selectmen</i>	Mike Hammond <i>Resident</i>	Ginny Raub <i>Conservation Commission</i>
Kathy Corson <i>Board of Selectmen</i>	Loree Hazard <i>Resident</i>	Barry Sandberg <i>Resident</i>
Tom Cronin <i>Resident</i>	Lisa MacFarlane <i>Resident</i>	Gwen English <i>Planning Board</i>
Geoff Dennett <i>Resident</i>	Jennifer Martel <i>Resident</i>	Sean Sullivan <i>Resident</i>
Ian Smith <i>Economic Development Commission</i>	Kim Meyer <i>Exeter Regional Cooperative School Board</i>	

## Town Staff:

Russell Dean <i>Town Manager</i>	Dave Sharples <i>Town Planner</i>	Kristen Murphy <i>Natural Resource Planner</i>
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Public involvement was the driving force for content of the Master Plan. In addition to having public members sit on the Steering Committee, residents were given multiple ways to learn about the development of the Master Plan and give ideas.

## Project Website & Listserv

A dynamic project website hosted a calendar, Steering Committee meeting summaries, and draft materials. Summaries and materials from the public input events were also posted. Visitors to the website could sign up to receive emails about the Master Plan process, which were sent to announce public events and general updates on progress.

## Community Survey

As part of the Master Plan update process, the Town of Exeter administered a community survey. It was available online via the Town's website with paper copies at the Town Offices, Public Library, Recreation Department, and other municipal offices. A total of 251 surveys were received. A summary of the findings can be found as an appendix to the Master Plan.

## Public Events

Two major public events were held at milestone points in the update process. The first public event was held the evening of January 25, 2017. The purpose of the event was to understand what the community feels makes Exeter a great place to live and work, and how they would like to see the town in 10 to 20 years. Over 100 participants worked in small groups to answer questions and discuss their ideas about the town's future. A follow up open house was held a week after for those who could not attend the larger evening event.

Organized as a less-formal event, the second major public event was set up in an open house format, which gave attendees the time they needed to review material and ask questions at their own pace. The open house was organized by "driving actions." Each action had a station with one to two activities to gather input and public opinion. The open house was held the evening of June 14, 2017.

Summaries of both these events are attachments to the Master Plan.

## Interviews and Group Meetings

Interviews were conducted with diverse stakeholders throughout the community. For town departments, commissions, and committees, it was important to understand if and how they use the current Master Plan, future needs, and how the Master Plan could support meeting those needs. Other stakeholders in the community were also asked about their future efforts and how a partnership with the town could not only support their anticipated work but could also benefit the community at large.

The following were interviewed either in person or receive formal correspondence:

Russell Dean  
*Town Manager*

Dave Sharples  
*Town Planner*

Darren Winham  
*Economic Development  
Director*

Michael Morgan  
*School Superintendent*

Todd Deluca  
*Executive Director, Exeter Area  
Chamber of Commerce*

Mark Whitney  
*Exeter Hospital*

Steve Adler  
*Principal, Main Street School*

Beth Dupell  
*Historic Exeter Retail Owner's  
Network*

Justine Vogel  
*CEO, RiverWoods*

Drew Bairstow  
*Principal, Lincoln Street School*

Exeter Public Library  
Board of Trustees

Lisa MacFarlane  
*Principal, Phillips Exeter  
Academy*

*Public Works Department*

Jennifer Perry  
*Director*

*Parks & Recreation  
Department*

*Public Safety*  
William Shupe  
*Police Chief*

Paul Vlasich  
*Town Engineer*

Mike Favreau  
*Director*

Brian Comeau  
*Fire Chief*

*Rockingham Regional  
Planning Commission*

Greg Bisson  
*Assistant Director*

Eric Wilking  
*Assistant Fire Chief*

Cliff Sinnott  
*Executive Director*

Daniel Conrad  
*Recreation Coordinator*

Justin Pizon  
*Crew Chief*

Glenn Greenwood  
*Assistant Director*

Julie LaBranche  
*Senior Planner*

A special All Boards Meeting was held and attended by the following commissions, boards, and committees:

Planning Board

Housing Advisory Committee

Heritage Commission

Coastal Risks and Hazards  
Commission

Historic District Commission

Economic Development Commission

Exeter River Advisory Committee

Conservation Commission

## Planning Board

The Master Plan is the primary tool of the Planning Board and their support and participation in the development of the Master Plan is acknowledged. Several members served on the Master Plan Steering Committee.

Langdon Plumer, Chair

Katherine Woolhouse, Vice Chairwoman

Pete Cameron, Clerk

Gwen English

Kelly Bergeron

Aaron Brown

Kathy Corson, Board of Selectmen Representative

Dan Chartrand, Alternate Board of Selectmen Representative

Nicholas Gray, Alternate

John Grueter, Alternate

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## Attachments

### Baseline Snapshots

*Town & Community Services*  
*Economic Development*  
*Historic & Cultural Resources*  
*Housing*  
*Land Use*  
*Natural Resources*  
*Transportation*  
*Population*

### Public Input

*Master Plan Community Survey*  
*Election Day Table, November 8, 2016*  
*Public Workshop, January 25, 2017*  
*Public Open House, June 14, 2017*  
*Public Comments on Draft, January 2018*





# INTRODUCTION

# Introduction

## What is the Master Plan?

The Master Plan is one of our primary tools for planning proactively for Exeter's future. The plan calls on communities to think about issues like land development, transportation, economic development, housing, environmental conservation, community facilities, and many of the basic services provided by local government. It gives us an opportunity to put down in writing what we care about most as a community, what things might threaten our quality of life, and a vision of what we want to protect and how we want to grow. The State of New Hampshire has given municipalities the guidance and tools they need to create strong, sustainable communities through sound planning practices. While not a legal document itself, state statutes point to the Master Plan as the legal basis for developing zoning ([RSA 671:18](#)) and other land regulations. State statutes also outline the required content of the Master Plan ([RSA 674:2](#)) and procedures for its adoption ([RSA 674:3](#)). Towns should revisit their master plans every five to ten years; however, regular review of the Action Plan should be a report card to assess the Town's progress in meeting the community's vision.



### *What are some things the Master Plan is used for?*

The **Town** uses it to . . .

- Help prioritize decisions
- Support funding and grant requests
- Justify investments in facilities and open space
- Place our decisions in historical context
- Be consistent with State-level plans
- Set a coordinated implementation plan for municipal departments

The **Selectboard** and **Town Boards** and **Commissions** use it to . . .

- Serve as a strategic framework for decision making
- Justify regulatory decisions and investment of public funds

**Residents** and **Community Groups** use it to . . .

- Learn about the most pressing issues facing the Town
- Guide their volunteer activities so that everyone in Town is working to achieve the same goals.

The **State** uses it to . . .

- Learn about Exeter's priorities and respect them in State plans

*Everyone should use it as a reminder that Exeter is a **great place** and as inspiration to work together to **make it even better!***

# How to Read and Use the Master Plan

The Master Plan is divided into five basic sections as follows:

## *Our Home Town*

This section provides a backdrop for the plan and a description of what constitutes the “heart and soul” of Exeter as revealed through our public process in developing this plan. Readers can use this section to gain an understanding of the places and features of Exeter that inform the values of the plan.

## *Our Vision for Exeter*

This section of the plan provides an aspirational vision for the community looking forward, and can be used by the reader to visualize the ultimate goal of this document.

## *Our Call to Action*

This section organizes the main ideas of the plan into six overarching action items: Support, Prepare, Steward, Grow, Connect and Communicate. Within each of these sections, readers can take a more detailed look at individual topics common to community planning (e.g., housing, environmental protection, transportation) and view these through the lens of research and outreach performed specifically for Exeter. The reader can also look at these six elements to understand how they are used to achieve balance across the full arc of the plan.

## *Action Agenda*

As the name suggests, this part of the plan provides a detailed list of the actions designed to achieve the community vision as identified through the Master Plan process. These actions are organized by the six elements within the Call to Action. Readers can review this part of the plan to understand where the Town will be focusing its energy and which initiatives might need support at the local level.

## *Appendices*

A summary of the public participation process and important background information related to Exeter are provided as appendices. Background information includes statistical information and maps that were important to understanding existing and projected conditions in the community. The appendices also contain a Future Land Use Map as required by state law.





**OUR HOME TOWN**

# Our Home Town

This community Master Plan was developed first and foremost through discussions with residents, business owners, and local officials. These discussions took place in local shops, at major institutions, during community events, in public workshops, and in formal committee meetings. Hundreds of residents found ways to weigh in during the process, whether through quick visits to on-line surveys or through lengthy and engaging public work sessions. Through these discussions we heard common references to what makes Exeter a great place to live and work.

## *The River*

Residents speak often of “the River” in an offhand manner as if everyone knows what’s being said. Usually they’re referring to the Squamscott River, more officially referred to as the “Exeter-Squamscott River,” flowing north through the heart of downtown. For generations, the Great Dam in downtown Exeter served as an informal delineation between the tidally influenced Squamscott River and the upgradient Exeter River. In September 2016, a multi-year dam removal project was completed and the delineation between the Exeter and Squamscott Rivers returned to the natural waterfall face. The sound of rushing water is now a permanent backdrop to the downtown area, raising the prominence of the River and inviting residents and visitors to enjoy the view.

During the Master Plan process, residents of all ages and backgrounds spoke of their fondness of the River. The dramatic feature that is so central to the landscape of Downtown is also central to how residents connect with their hometown in their hearts and minds. In many areas of this plan, there are calls to continue efforts that will connect residents and visitors more directly and frequently with the River.

## *The Downtown*

Downtown Exeter is the centerpiece of the community. Walkable streets lined with historic buildings create a vibrant district that serves as the Town’s cultural, civic, and commercial core. The Town Hall, Town Offices,

Congregational Church, and Bandstand sit at the very center of Downtown providing strong physical and institutional anchors for the area. Just outside this core area, the Public Library, Founders Park, Phillips Exeter Academy, the Exeter Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and Swasey Parkway add another layer of amenities and assets that can easily be accessed by automobile, by bicycle, or on foot.

Not only is Downtown important to the residents and business owners who live and work there, but also to its tourists and other visitors. In many ways, Downtown serves as the “ambassador” and “face” of Exeter and will act as the primary draw for new visitors more than any other feature in the community.

## *Local History*

The landscapes of Exeter were shaped at the end of the last ice age approximately 10,000 years ago. The Squamscott River bed, glacial deposits, and topographic relief that emerged from the ice caps have changed little since then. These formations still provide many of Exeter’s beautiful natural resources and the Town’s drinking water supply. Over many centuries, forests covered the area and were home to Native American settlements rich in oral history, music, spirituality, and culture. European settlers transformed the landscape by harvesting most of the forest and creating a patchwork of agricultural lands and regional trade routes. From the mid 1800s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Exeter became a busy commercial center with street layouts and buildings that balance the challenging topography with sound principles of

“One suspects that Exeter citizens of 1887 were somewhat smug about their town. They certainly regarded it as an attractive and healthful place to live, with fine institutions, substantial buildings, and a prosperous future of growth ahead. They were not far wrong; but how would they have regarded the four times larger, bustling, traffic-ridden, and ever-growing town...?”

-From *Early Exeter History 1638-1887*, Edward Chase Jr.

urban design. Exeter’s rich history is on display throughout the community and comes to life around every corner even for the casual observer. Beautiful homes that typify many of the most essential New England architectural forms—Colonial, Victorian, Gothic, and more—line streets that were laid centuries ago. This is the living legacy of Exeter’s natural and cultural resources, which requires protection if the community is to maintain its strong sense of identity and well being.

### *Rural Landscapes*

Exeter is one of those rare, treasured New England communities that has maintained an historic urban village core amidst a backdrop of some beautiful rural landscapes. Roads like Newfields Road, Kingston Road, Drinkwater Road, Brentwood Road, Old Town Farm Road, and Court Street emanate from the busier parts of town like spokes and travel out into large undeveloped forested areas. In these areas of Exeter, the upper reaches of “the River” meander in a more complex network of small streams and wetlands. Large areas of conservation land provide year-round opportunities to visit wild places. Tracts of farmland provide a link to Exeter’s past, but also opportunities to be part of a renewed focus in local agriculture across the nation. These landscapes are just as important to the identity of Exeter as Downtown or the River.

“I think Exeter is very special - I’ve lived all over the country and in Exeter I finally found a place that is ‘as it should be’: it’s an authentic New England town. Most of the homes are original, the downtown is alive without being over commercialized. It’s a town where people can (and do!) walk everywhere, children can safely play in the streets. Being so close to recreational opportunities is unexpected for “in-town” living. Everybody is courteous, it’s safe... it’s REAL. It feels like Exeter is the ‘way life’s supposed to be.’”

-Resident, January 2017 Public Workshop

### *Everyday Community and Quality of Life*

There is tremendous pride amongst Exeter residents about the community that one experiences day-to-day. Everyday interactions Downtown, in the schools, along the Swasey Parkway, and in other public areas are something residents really enjoy. Participants in the meetings used to develop this plan found it easy to speak at length about the different parts of Exeter they love. The Town is welcoming and there is a wide variety of local events year round that bring residents together to celebrate community. Generally speaking, residents feel that the Town is run well and that leadership works to do what’s best for the residents and local businesses. When residents spoke about aspects of the community they did not like, or things that were missing, it was always with an overtone of confidence that the issue could be addressed. When residents spoke of opportunities for improvement, they did so with an air of excitement—as if a little hard work is all it would take to make something wonderful happen. The optimism and pride on display during the Master Plan process are the foundation of this document.



Photo courtesy of visitexeternh.com



**OUR VISION FOR  
EXETER**

# Our Vision for Exeter

This plan is a living document that will help our community achieve the following vision:

*Our community will continue to see our natural landscapes, historic setting, and rich culture as the foundation for shaping our future.*

*Our local government, residents, and business owners will act as stewards of our precious resources and we will work to connect these special places in a way that fosters enjoyment and healthy living.*

*Our community will continue to grow so that we can maintain its vibrancy for future generations, and development will occur in a way that bolsters the local economy, provides options for good homes, and respects the natural and cultural setting that is central to our identity.*

*Our local government will protect the welfare of our residents and continue to provide support that helps those in need, prepares us for a changing climate, and continually improves the condition of our natural resources.*

*Our future will be shaped by public voices, and our respect for community discussion will be reflected by state-of-the art and inclusive techniques that will cultivate an informed citizenry and a transparent local government.*





# OUR CALL TO ACTION

# Our Call to Action

From the very beginning of the Master Plan process, residents stressed the importance of this document being a “call to action.” Through hundreds of testimonials and dozens of interviews, themes emerged that broadly reflect a set of values for the plan. Instead of using the typical master planning silos to organize the document, these themes were used as a way to better reflect the process and the voice of the community.

**Support.** Standing behind and helping the people who live, work, and visit Exeter is essential to maintaining our quality of life. People of all ages and backgrounds should have access to basic goods and services, sound infrastructure, a safe place to live, and chances to gather with friends and family.

**Steward.** So much of Exeter’s character is defined by the wealth of natural and cultural resources within its borders. Stewardship of these resources is critical to maintaining the Town’s sense of history, health, and identity.

**Grow.** In order to foster vitality on both the local and regional scales, Exeter will need to grow. Identifying the appropriate types of growth and the areas where growth should occur in this plan can lay the foundation for decades of sustainable economic success.

**Connect.** A big part of unlocking Exeter’s potential is strengthening the connections between residents, business owners, institutions, and special places. The ability of residents and visitors to access important areas of Exeter and participate in different aspects of community life, including in public affairs, will play an important role in local quality of life and regional economic presence.

**Prepare.** Municipalities across the country are beginning to focus on the concept of ‘resiliency,’ which speaks to a community’s ability to recover from disasters or adapt to new stressors. Rising temperatures, cybersecurity, emergency response, and flooding are examples of increased challenges for which Exeter must prepare.

**Communicate.** Maintaining a high quality of life in Exeter will continue to become more complex as time goes on. Effectively sharing information among municipal departments, boards, and committees; different local government agencies; the business community; and the general public, will require continued commitment, innovative procedures, and investments in technology.

The issues and opportunities associated with each of these elements within the **Call to Action** is described in greater detail in the remainder of this section, and provides the platform for the **Action Agenda**.



## Support

Residents and business owners from all walks of life require some level of support, and some of this support will come from local government. Exeter provides a wide array of support services for its residents, business owners, and visitors. The role of this section of the plan is to view these services through the lens of our Call to Action. Are we providing enough support where it's most needed? Are basic services running efficiently? Looking forward, what sort of outside forces or trends will change the way we support each other, and what will those changes look like?

### Social Services

Exeter provides a variety of social services including those enabled through state law for the provision of aid to individuals and families that cannot make ends meet. In addition to helping those in hard financial times, Exeter provides services to residents who may have trouble physically getting around, such as seniors or people with disabilities. The Exeter Senior Center is critical to the quality of life of so many residents, providing opportunities for seniors to socialize, learn, remain active, and share experiences. 'Meals on Wheels' provides a weekly lunch service through the Senior Center as well. Exeter's Parks and Recreation Department has created a partnership through Academy Taxi to provide subsidized vouchers for seniors who benefit from local taxi travel.

Looking forward, demand for social services in Exeter will likely rise, especially those services targeted to seniors. Demographic trends across the nation show the steady aging of our population as "baby boomers" continue into their senior years. This is of particular importance when considering the use of tax exemption programs like the Unified Elderly Tax Exemption Program, which provides important benefits to seniors as their income may steadily decrease. The Town will need to continually assess the impacts and benefits of these programs to ensure that the needs of seniors are met in a manner that is fiscally sustainable. Providing effective services into the future will also

### *Community Based Organizations*

The Town of Exeter is certainly not alone in providing social services to town residents. Other organizations include, but are not limited to:

The **Society of St. Vincent de Paul** is an international humanitarian organization that has a presence in Exeter, NH with their community center. Services offered include, access to health care (including dental), a food pantry, financial assistance, housing and homelessness assistance, training, substance abuse counseling, and tax preparation.

The **Exeter Area YMCA** offers a variety of programs and classes for all ages, abilities, and skill levels. Programs include: fitness and group exercise classes, sports leagues, youth sports camps, family and social activities, summer camp, and programming for school-age children and older adults.

**Seacoast Family Promise** helps families who are experiencing homelessness to find stable housing and return to self-sufficiency. Exeter has a variety of organizations that serve as hosts and partners including: Exeter First United Methodist Church, Exeter Congregational Church, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Exeter, and the Exeter Women's Club.

**Faith-based organizations** offer a variety of local assistance programs. In addition to participating in the Seacoast Family Promise, the churches also provide holiday gifts to families with incarcerated parents, convene advocacy and educational groups around racial equality, and provide food assistance to low-income families.

require coordination among agencies within Town government, and also with community based organizations that have social services at the core of their mission.



## *Exeter understands the value of our social services:*

- Our community is committed to providing services for people in our community who have periodic or recurring challenges to meeting basic needs.
- Coordinating municipal programs with non-profit agencies can help strengthen our services.
- Demands for social services, particularly those for seniors, are likely to increase and we must be prepared.

## **Parks and Recreation**

Exeter supports numerous parks and recreation programs for its residents. The Parks and Recreation Department maintains all Exeter town parks, including: Recreation Park, Brickyard Park, Gale Park, Gilman Park, Kids Park, and Park Street Common, among others. The Department is also responsible for the John C. Littlefield Memorial Skate Park. Numerous town programs and activities are offered throughout the year for all ages including concerts, youth team athletics, summer camps, and activities for seniors. Summer camps are very popular and typical enrollment reaches 250 participants, plus a waiting list. The Department coordinates the “adopt a garden” program where a growing number of small parks and green spaces are being maintained by volunteers.

Department staff operate out of 32 Court Street, which was built in 1848 as a high school then converted in 1921 to an elementary school. The Parks and Recreation Department has been in the building since the 1970s. The building itself is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and lacks many amenities to meet administration and programming needs. There are no elevators in the building, and stairs are the only way to access the second floor, where many of the programming rooms are located.

The *2014-15 Recreation Needs Assessment and Planning Report* prepared by the University of New Hampshire (UNH) provided an assessment of the Department and its current activities and compared this to input from stakeholder meetings, an input session with the public, and a community needs survey. Its findings showed that the Department could benefit from a new indoor facility that would not only accommodate indoor sports and activities, but could also meet ADA requirements and support administrative offices for staff, storage, and other needs. The redesign of the Recreation Park, an existing multi-use complex, could accommodate a new facility as well as upgrade outdoor facilities including the playground and fields. The *Final Town Wide Facilities Plan: Space Needs and Building Assessments* (December 2015)<sup>1</sup> also references the UNH study and supports its findings. Preliminary designs are complete, and the project was approved by the Planning Board, and subsequently included in the 2017-2022 Capital Improvement Program.

Cultural trends surrounding organized recreation have changed dramatically over the past several decades, with higher demand for organized activities and high quality facilities across several demographic groups.

### **Youth**

In communities like Exeter, families often look to town facilities, privately run leagues, and school sports to provide a significant portion of young people’s recreational needs. The reasons



*Planet Playground*

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by The H.L. Turner Group

for this demand range from simple convenience to more complex social expectations. Regardless, the Town of Exeter is unlikely to see any decline in the demand for programs and facilities related to youth recreation even though a slight decrease is anticipated for the number of households with school age children.

### **Adults**

Population estimates for adults in Exeter do not show a dramatic increase in the coming decade, however discussions in the community suggest a pent up demand for recreational opportunities. Demand among the adults in Exeter included active recreation fields and facilities, with several participants calling for more opportunities for adults to swim, play volleyball, and generally take advantage of athletic facilities. Adults engaged in the Master Plan process also focused on “place-based” outdoor opportunities. Park improvements, trails, river access, dog parks, and bike path connections were recurring focal points in the community discussion.

### **Seniors**

A recurring theme related to seniors in this document will be the power of this growing demographic group. With regard to recreation, the growing senior population will continue to create demand for active and passive facilities. Exeter will need to examine its existing facilities to find opportunities for expanding access to sites already in place.

### **People with Disabilities**

Along with seniors who may have issues getting around or who have other physical limitations, residents of all ages who have disabilities should be a focus of the Town’s recreational programming and facility improvements. Advances in “universal design” techniques in recent years have greatly increased access for people with disabilities. Future planning efforts by the Town’s Parks and Recreation staff could include the development of a Transition Plan that shows how various facilities in the community will come into compliance with ADA.

## ***Exeter understands the value of our parks and recreation opportunities:***

- High quality parks and recreation facilities are important to the health of our residents.
- Understanding the needs of residents will require continued investment in outreach.
- Increased access to existing and future facilities for our seniors and people with disabilities is a high priority.
- Exeter has many youth and adult sport organizations that the Town collaborates with to ensure diverse opportunities and programming for residents.

## **“Nut & Bolts” Infrastructure**

At the core of Exeter’s public services are the hard infrastructure systems that meet some of the most important everyday needs for residents and business owners.

### **Public Works**

The Department of Public Works houses the divisions that maintain the Town’s infrastructure. The office is located on 13 Newfields Road. Since the building was constructed in 2003, the department’s functions have evolved and grown. The *Final Town Wide Facilities Plan: Space Needs and Building Assessments* (December 2015) recommends additional space for equipment storage, maintenance, and employee areas such as locker rooms and meeting space.

### **Water Supply and Wastewater**

The primary water supply source for Exeter is the Exeter River. The Town also uses the Exeter Reservoir, which is fed by Dearborn Brook, and groundwater

sources including the Skinner Springs and Lary Lane wells. In 2015, the Town received a notice of violation because Total Trihalomethane (TTHM) levels exceeded federal drinking water standards. To address the violation, the groundwater treatment plant on Lary Lane came online in 2016 and provides water that meets drinking water standards. Additional process modifications are planned for 2017 and 2018 to ensure safe drinking water, and a warrant article passed in March 2017 authorizing \$1,500,000 for the design and construction of drinking water improvements to decrease the formation of TTHMs.

Exeter's wastewater system consists of a wastewater treatment plant, approximately 49 miles of sewer pipe, 1,500 manholes, nine pumping stations, and three combined sewer overflow diversion structures. The Town is currently under an US Environmental Protection Agency Administrative Order of Consent (AOC) to meet the new total nitrogen limits under its National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge permit for the plant. Current discharges from the treatment plant into the Squamscott River exceed the nitrogen limits. In the fall of 2016, funds to construct a new wastewater treatment plant and upgrade the associated pump station were approved to bring the Town into compliance, and construction is underway. At the time this plan was adopted, over \$50 million had been invested in these essential improvements.

### *Stormwater Management*

Stormwater runoff is created when rainfall runs off of rooftops, driveways, streets and other impervious areas. The Town supplies a system of catch basins and pipes to manage stormwater and keep streets and private properties from flooding. As with so many New England communities, these systems are old and generally do not meet the standards for treating stormwater under the Clean Water Act. In 2003, Exeter received a permit from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to discharge treated stormwater through its stormwater system, called a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4). In order to meet the requirements of the permit, Exeter developed a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan that outlined how it would reduce

pollutants in stormwater discharges to the "maximum extent practicable." In January 2017, EPA issued an update to the MS4 permit, which goes into effect on July 1, 2018. The new permit has expanded the requirements of the 2003 permit to include enhanced mapping, record keeping, pollutant tracking, and reporting requirements.<sup>2</sup>

### *Roads and Bridges*

Exeter is served by state-maintained roadways and highways, including NH 101, Portsmouth Avenue (NH 108), Epping Road (NH 27), Newfields Road (NH 85), Brentwood Road (NH 111A), and Kingston Road (NH 111). Route 101 provides connections to Interstates 95 and 93. The Department of Public Works Highway Team consists of 12 full-time staff members and one part-time staff member, and is responsible for the maintenance of town streets and sidewalks, including patching potholes and installing granite curbing. Routine maintenance includes sealing, painting, cleaning, and spot repairs as required. The Team also repairs guardrails, plants trees, builds sidewalks, repairs bridge decks, paints parking spaces, plows snow, sands streets/sidewalks, and cleans up fallen trees after a storm. The Town owns and maintains eight bridges and large culverts.



*Department of Public Works Garage*

<sup>2</sup> <http://exeternh.gov/publicworks/stormwater>

## *Maintenance and Upgrades*

With regard to roadways, maintenance is a never-ending effort especially as it relates to the seasonal fluctuations of snow removal, patching, and larger repairs. Maintenance of water-based systems requires regular and sometimes significant investment from the Town, and considerable coordination with state and federal agencies. Regulatory requirements and standards for each of these systems continue to evolve and sometimes create unfunded mandates for communities like Exeter. When thinking about the future through this Master Plan, the extent to which water supply and sewer service are provided should help to shape growth policies for the Town and could play a vital role in goals related to housing diversity and economic development. Upgrades to stormwater systems, while required, can have considerable environmental benefits and can also be used as part of streetscape beautification projects.

### *Exeter understands the value of our infrastructure:*

- Long-term viability of infrastructure requires intensive and continuous planning.
- The development of infrastructure should be consistent with plans for growth and economic development in the future.
- Public works projects should be coordinated to the extent possible so that multiple projects can be completed simultaneously.
- Long term plans for infrastructure should address anticipated impacts from climate change and regulatory requirements at the state and federal levels.

## **Education**

Educational opportunities in Exeter are strong and diverse. The regional public school system is a source of pride in the community and is one of the many reasons why residents move to Exeter. Exeter is part of School Administrative Unit (SAU 16),<sup>3</sup> which is made up of seven independent school districts: Brentwood, East Kingston, Exeter, Exeter Region Cooperative, Kensington, Stratham, and Newfields. Each town/district elects its own school board and that board is responsible for its elementary school district. The Exeter Elementary School District is made up of two schools: Main Street School (kindergarten to grade 2) and Lincoln Street School (grades 3 through 5). The Exeter Region Cooperative is responsible for the Cooperative Middle School located in Stratham (grades 6 to 8), Exeter High School (grades 9 to 12), the Seacoast School of Technology (SST), and Tuck Learning Campus, all located in Exeter.

Planning within the public school system is very complex and includes regional cooperation, facilities planning, curriculum development, transportation,



<sup>3</sup> Summary of the SAU 16 (August 23, 2016) [http://www.sau16.org/content/SAU\\_16\\_Introduction.pdf](http://www.sau16.org/content/SAU_16_Introduction.pdf)

recreation, food service, and many other multi-layered moving parts. Because of this, plans for public schools tend to be completed more independently of conventional municipal department planning. While this is very typical from one town to another, it can be beneficial to pursue coordination wherever possible to help plan for shared facilities, involve schools in community events, and generally share information through the channels in place at the Town Offices. This is the experience in Exeter. The Town is engaged with the schools and departments work with staff and teachers on a regular basis over shared issues.

For planning purposes, both the Exeter School District and Exeter Region Cooperative see stable school enrollment in the next 10 years. While there may be annual fluctuations, a significant growth or decline is not anticipated and existing facilities should meet the physical needs of students and staff. Full-day kindergarten will be offered for the first time during the 2017-18 school year at Main Street School. A new addition is being added to accommodate the classrooms.

### *Exeter believes in education:*

- Our public schools are one of the community's most important assets and will help to attract and keep the next generation of residents.
- Coordination between municipal department and public school planning will strengthen local and regional initiatives.
- Schools are where students become aware of community service and afforded opportunities to contribute to those in need.
- Opportunities for lifelong learning contribute to the well-being of our residents.
- Exeter's natural and historic resources represent an important educational opportunity for all residents.

Equally, the schools also work with other entities and organizations in the community. The role the school plays in the lives of its students and their families is ever expanding. Community service and social responsibility are values instilled in Exeter students. Exeter Hospital, Exeter Historical Society, Phillips Exeter Academy, and many other groups all take advantage of reaching out to students to build community and awareness.

Beyond the public school system, Phillips Exeter Academy is a prominent institution in Exeter providing one of the most highly regarded private school opportunities in the region. Another important learning institution in Exeter is the Public Library, which provides a wide variety of outreach programs, including book discussion groups, a Summer Music Series, Story Hours and Open Art, book talks, and book drop-offs at various locations in town. The library also offers free one-on-one computer training. Finally, several non-profit groups in Exeter provide learning opportunities.



## Prepare

The concept of “resiliency” is a recent addition to community planning. Being resilient against natural hazards, emergency events, or climate change means a community has identified risks and threats to the local quality of life and developed initiatives to meet those challenges. Preparedness is reflective of long-term planning that allows Exeter to evaluate where it is most vulnerable and develop strategies to either mitigate or adapt to anticipated changes. A town becomes more sustainable when it is able to meet challenges and respond.

## Emergency Response

Exeter’s Police and Fire Departments provide a variety of services to help ensure the safety of town residents and businesses. These services include police and fire protection, emergency response, Code Red Community Notification, and assistance with carbon monoxide detector installation, among others. During the Master Plan process, residents expressed happiness with the services provided by the Fire and Police Departments.

The Exeter Fire Department has one station located on Court Street near the Downtown and currently employs 28 staff members. The Department faces a couple of challenges. The first is an increase in emergency service calls. The volume of calls can lead to time delay in responding to subsequent calls. If it is anticipated that a delay is too great, mutual aid is required from Kingston, Hampton, or North Hampton, with a fee to those communities. To meet the demand of this increase and maintain a consistent level of service, safety, and costs for residents, the Fire Department has presented to the Selectboard the need for additional staff. Continued study of this issue was proposed for the FY-2018 budget.

A 32% increase in the number of emergency calls from 2006 to 2016 is not necessarily attributed to a corresponding increase in the number of residents. From 2000 to 2015, Exeter’s population increased by only 3%. However, the average age of residents increased by 6 years (37.1 years in 2000 and

an estimated 42.2 years in 2015; See Baseline Snapshot: Population). The Department attributes some of the emergency calls to an increase in older residents, who have a higher need for ambulance services. New development also increases the demands for emergency services as the service population grows, both with residential and commercial uses.

The second challenge the Fire Department faces is improving response times to emergency calls. Response times to the western part of town are slowed when emergency vehicles are trying to get through traffic Downtown, particularly when responding to calls at the high school. Additionally, when traveling down Front Street, emergency vehicles can be delayed for up to five minutes if a train is at the station. This can happen once or twice a week. There have not been any tragic impacts caused by such delays to date, but the Department is concerned that it is only a matter of time, particularly if there is an increase in trains.

The Police Department has seen a similar increase in emergency calls and delays in response times. The Police Department shares space with the Fire Department on Court Street. It is staffed with four detectives and a Patrol Division that includes 17 full-time officers and one part-time officer. The Patrol Division is on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond to calls and patrol the Town. In terms of emergency communications, both police and fire are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with six full-time employees and two part-time dispatchers.

The Fire Department continues to request a new sub-station in the western part of town as part of the Capital Improvements Plan. The proposed sub-station would be located on property purchased by the Department on

From 2006 to 2016, the Fire Department reported a 32% increase in calls for either the Fire Department or emergency management service/ ambulance (EMS). The number of calls per day tends to be concentrated with over three quarters (77%) occurring between 6 am and 6 pm. Further, many of the calls during this peak timeframe are received back-to-back, that is, while managing one emergency call, another was being reported.

Continental Drive and conceptual designs have been prepared. A new sub-station would also give the Department a more modern facility for trainings, equipment storage, and conducting maintenance of vehicles and equipment. However, discussions within the community suggest that, despite recent study, questions remain regarding the true benefit of having a fire substation. A more comprehensive analysis of all public safety services in a systemic manner could also show opportunities for efficiencies not yet considered or fully understood.

### *Exeter recognizes the growing challenges of the Town's emergency response teams:*

- The growing number of older residents increases the number of calls for ambulance and emergency services.
- New development will increase the demand for emergency response services.
- Responding to emergency calls in the western parts of town is slowed by Downtown traffic and the railroad tracks crossing Front Street.
- A systemic analysis of Exeter's public safety services could provide a more integrated set of solutions than what has already been considered.

### *Exeter understands the importance of addressing our natural hazards:*

- The Hazard Mitigation Plan should be reviewed and updated to reflect the progress of mitigation strategies.
- Areas identified as most vulnerable to natural hazards can help the Town make land use decisions that can mitigate future property loss and damage.

## **Natural Hazards**

Exeter's *Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan* is the Town's primary tool to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major storm events and other natural hazards. Events with high probability of impacting Exeter are flooding, hurricane/high wind events, and severe winter weather. The plan discusses where the Town is most vulnerable to natural hazards and how it can reduce and mitigate future losses of life and property from these types of events. Actions are prioritized and an implementation schedule is set.

The *Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan* also identifies what are deemed *critical facilities*: facilities that if lost, would have an impact on how the community prepares for, responds to, and recovers from severe events. Critical facilities include:

- Municipal facilities (examples: town offices, public works, wastewater treatment system, drinking water supply system)
- Communication facilities (example: cell towers)
- Fire stations and law enforcement facilities
- Schools
- Shelters
- Evacuation routes

Vulnerable populations that need to be protected during emergency events are also highlighted, including churches, recreational facilities, private day care facilities, and health care facilities, among others. Identifying these critical facilities can help the Town understand their vulnerability and determine if improvements are needed to make them more resilient to natural hazards, or if they need to be relocated.

The *Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan* is considered a dynamic document and will be revised frequently to reflect changing conditions in the environment or the success of its mitigation strategies.

## Sea Level Rise and Climate Change

Exeter is part of New Hampshire's coastal watershed, which makes it vulnerable to coastal hazards such as severe coastal storms, like hurricanes and Nor'easters, and associated storm surges.<sup>4</sup> It is part of the Great Bay estuary, where the Piscataqua River meets the Atlantic Ocean creating a unique environment where freshwater and saltwater systems meet. The Squamscott River feeds into this system and is influenced by the tidal changes. Being within this tidal system makes portions of Exeter vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surge, riverbank flooding, and erosion. Loss of the riverbank can impact existing buildings and structures, roadways, and water and sewer systems. Loss of critical wetlands that store water is projected to exacerbate these problems into the future.

Several resources are available to the Town to help plan for the impacts of sea level rise and climate change. One is the federally-funded Climate Adaptation Project for Exeter (CAPE), which was a two-year collaboration starting in 2013 with UNH and the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to create a plan for adaptation based on public input.<sup>5</sup> Other initiatives include the Climate Risk in the Seacoast project and Sea Level Affecting Marshes model.

### C-RiSe

With assistance from the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission (RPC), the Climate Risk in the Seacoast (C-RiSe)<sup>6</sup> project conducted vulnerability assessments and developed mapping of flood impacts to Great Bay communities. Sea level rise scenarios used in the assessment included increases of 1.7 feet, 4 feet, and 6.3 feet to the mean higher high water (the highest tidal extent). Impacts from storm surge were also included in these assessments.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/coastal/resilient-coast.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nerra.org/projects/community-based-adaptation-planning-for-new-hampshire/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rpc-nh.org/regional-community-planning/climate-change/resources>

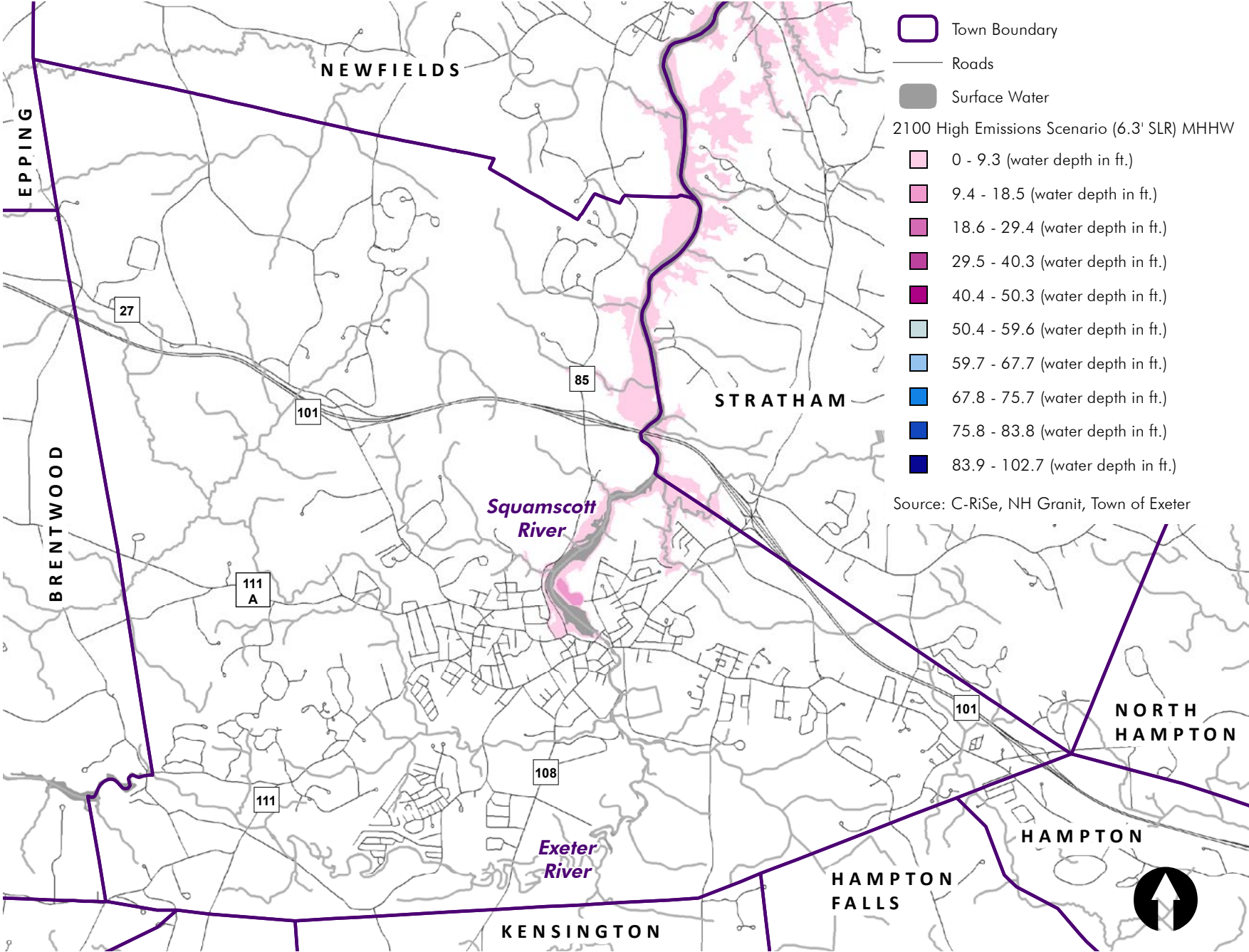
The Town can use these assessments and maps for future infrastructure planning and prioritization of adaptation strategies to reduce the impact of rising sea levels. It can also use mapping as a tool to identify properties that may be priorities for acquisition, such as wetlands and low-lying undeveloped lands most vulnerable to inundation.

The following is an overview of the project's findings for Exeter.

- **Transportation** – The Exeter roadways that would be the most greatly impacted by sea level rise are the Swasey Parkway and Water Street. C-RiSe projects that 10 different roads will experience different levels of inundation based on the scenario with the greatest increase in sea level rise (6.3 feet).
- **Areas of High Safety Concern** – Also in the scenario with the greatest sea level rise (6.3 feet), the Downtown area is projected to be quite vulnerable, and flood areas abutting the Squamscott River and Wheelwright Creek would be inundated. Several of the Town's evacuation routes would also be compromised.
- **Infrastructure and Assets** – Sewer and water pipes and transmission lines will be inundated during all three sea level rise scenarios. The water treatment plant, sewer pump stations, residential housing (including elderly), and historic registry sites will also be affected to varying degrees.
- **Water Resources** – Water resources, including wellhead protection areas and wetlands, are projected to be inundated under all three sea level rise scenarios. This includes loss of saltwater and freshwater wetlands.



Inundated areas under a 6.3-foot increase in sea level by 2100





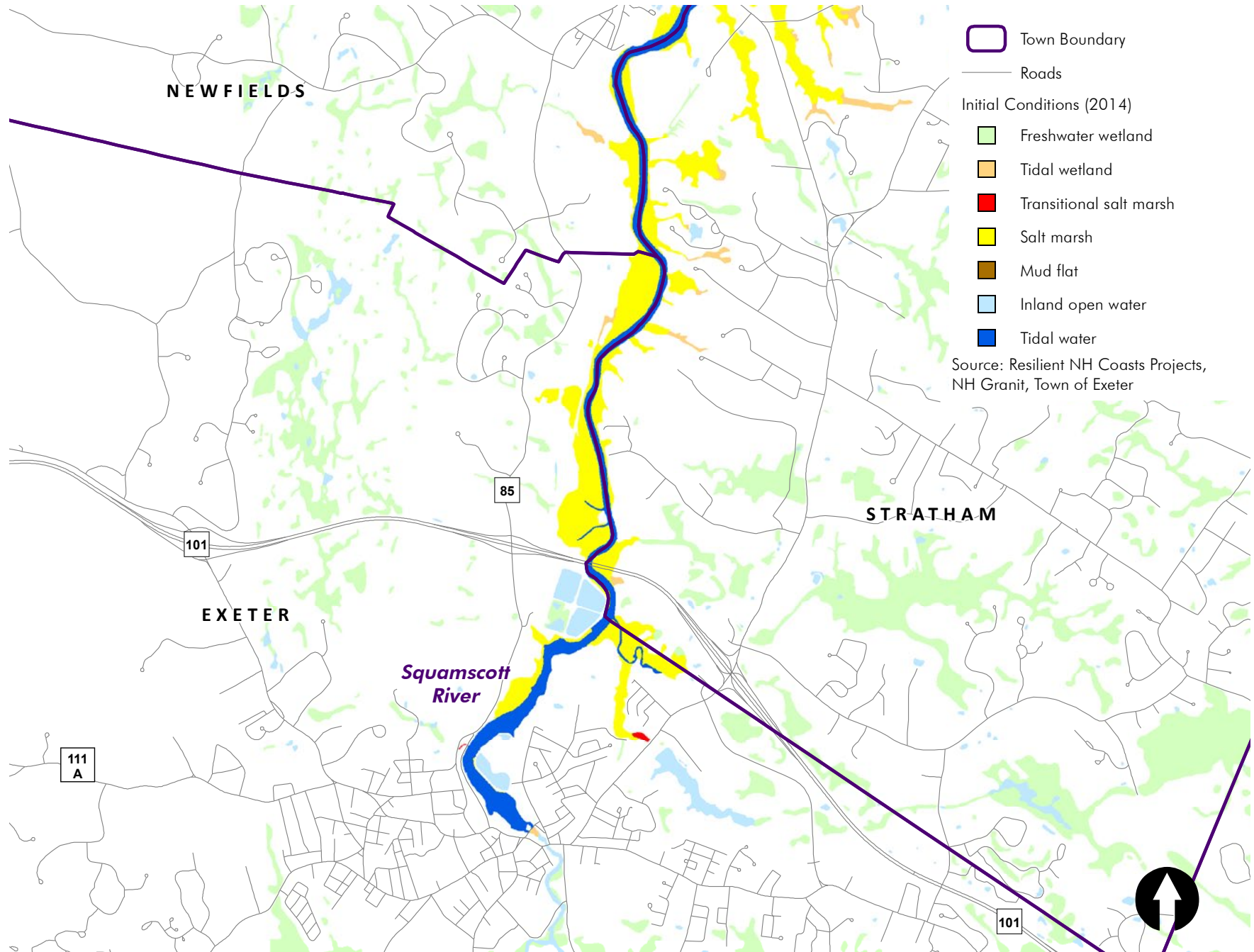
## **SLAMM**

The Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model, or SLAMM, has been used in several states, including New Hampshire, to simulate potential impacts of long-term sea level rise on wetlands and shorelines. Output mapping from SLAMM can be used by communities to understand the movement of wetlands inward because of sea level rise, and guide conservation strategies that will protect coastal wetland areas that provide high quality wildlife habitat and persist for the longest duration. The model uses sea level rise scenarios consistent with C-RiSe and looks at the years 2025, 2050, 2075, and 2100. Data are available through NH GRANIT, allowing Exeter to evaluate changing conditions where marsh migration is predicted to occur.

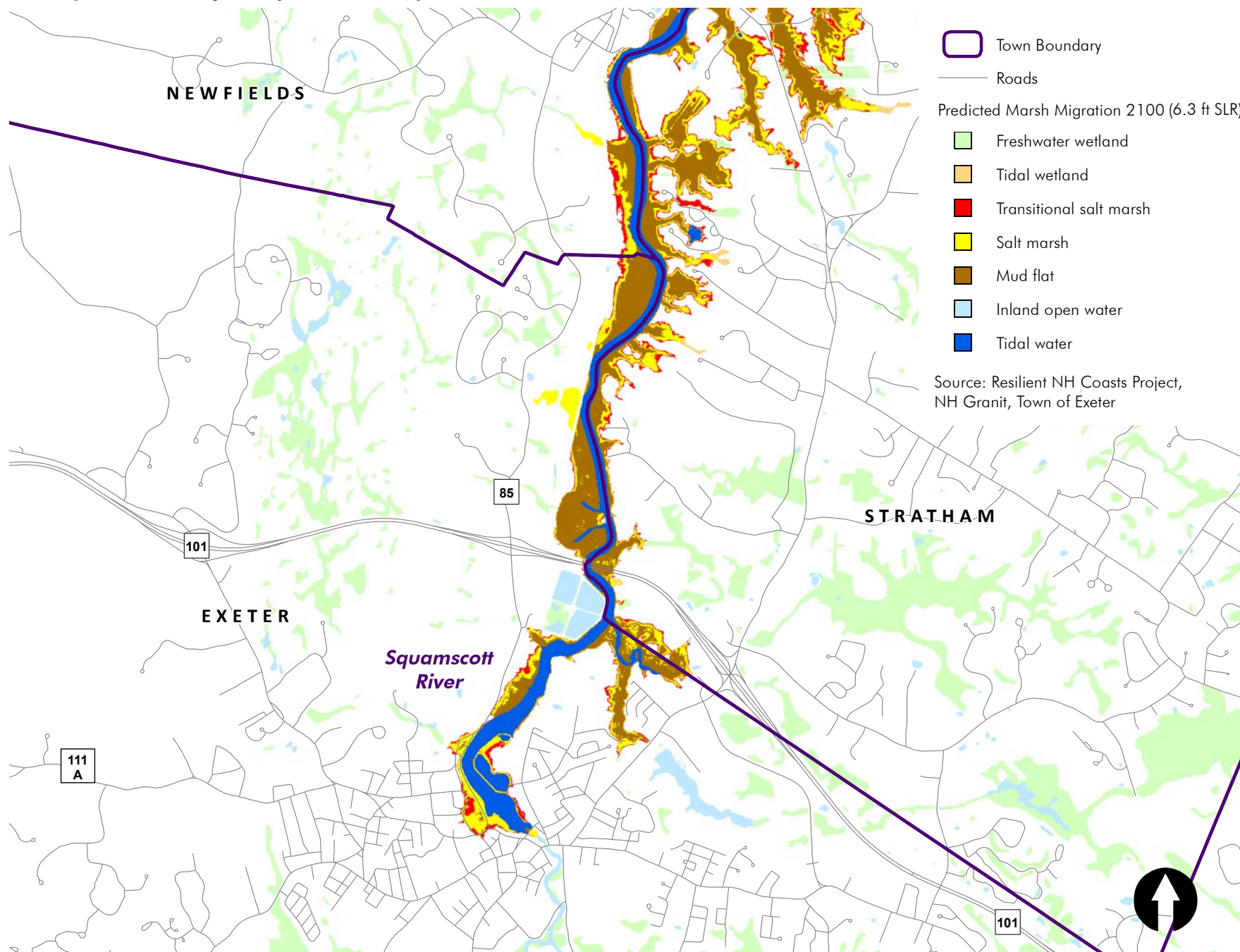
## ***Exeter recognizes the impacts of climate change and sea level rise:***

- Data available on the impacts of climate change should be used to assess future land use development.
- Adaptation strategies to address municipal infrastructure and properties that could be impacted by sea level rise should be included in future Capital Improvement Projects lists.
- The Town should continue to monitor data associated with climate change and its impacts, including sea level rise and marsh migration, and participate in opportunities to meet these challenges at a regional level.

Base conditions for SLAMM analysis



SLAMM-predicted marsh migration by 2100 based on 6.3-foot sea level rise



# Steward

There are elements of everyday life in Exeter that touch people in a way that is hard to define. Landmarks, landscapes, education, and art are all a part of a rich community experience that, during the Master Plan process, people described with anecdotes and real experience. Residents talked of what it was like to learn about local history, walk forested trails, and send their kids to school within the community. The places, activities, and resources that make up this collective local culture call for stewardship to ensure long-term viability.

In March 2012, Exeter conducted a town-wide Mapping Project, to produce a series of maps that show the spatial development of Exeter over time, by documenting when different areas of the Town were developed. This is Exeter’s first step toward developing an historic architectural inventory for the Town.

## Historic Resources

### Historic Districts and Buildings

There are three historic districts in Exeter, two are recognized by the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). These include the Downtown Historic District, Front Street Historic District, and High Street Historic District. There are eight properties in Exeter that are listed on the NRHP: Dudley House, First Church, Gilman Garrison House, Major John Gilman House, Ladd-Gilman House, Moses-Kent House, Sewall-Edward-Garrison, and Samuel Tenney House. The Exeter Heritage Commission was granted funds in 2014 from the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources to survey the Franklin-South-River Streets area and determine its eligibility as an additional historic district. The survey found that of the 51 parcels in the potential historic district, there are 46 contributing primary buildings and six contributing outbuildings. This study concluded that the area has historic integrity in its built environment, ethnic migration patterns, and industrial growth patterns. The survey concluded that the area is eligible to be a National Register Historic District.

### Historic Resource Agencies

Exeter’s commitment to historic preservation is facilitated primarily through the work of two town-led groups, the Historic District Commission (HDC) and the Heritage Commission, and the non-profit Exeter Historical Society.

*Primary duties and missions of local historic resource agencies*

Organization	Status	Summary of Primary Duties/Mission
Historic District Commission	Municipal	Reviewing and determining the appropriateness on applications for building development activity within the established Historic Districts.
Heritage Commission	Municipal	Advising and assisting other local boards and commissions, conducting inventories, educating the public on matters relating to historic preservation, providing information on historical resources, and serving as a resource for revitalization efforts.
Historical Society	Non-Profit	Collecting/curating stories and objects of historical significance. Documenting historic events and educating the public on important sites and stories.

Exeter’s historic setting is fundamental to the identity of the community and can also play a role in future economic success. The history of the Town is on display everyday in places like Downtown through the institutions, architecture, and streetscapes that frame everyday life. Protecting this part of Exeter’s identity requires careful planning, detailed inventories, and support for government agencies and non-governmental groups ready to dedicate their resources to these tasks. Importantly, the Town also needs to understand the role of Exeter’s historic resources in the long-term viability of the local economy.

## *Exeter recognizes the importance of our local history:*

- Maintaining a detailed inventory of the buildings, monuments, and other resources in the community is of paramount importance. These inventories should be maintained in high quality database formats and integrated into GIS where possible.
- Maintaining and providing easy access to the rich library of historical accounts and summaries will keep these stories alive and relevant in our community. Educating residents and visitors about our past instills appreciation and support for resource protection.
- Supporting the integrity of local historic and cultural structures and places requires technical and financial resources.
- Coordinating the goals and responsibilities of different historically focused agencies will strengthen the ability of Exeter to steward these resources.

## **The Arts**

Exeter has a growing and vibrant arts scene with connections into the local and regional artist community, local government, and academia. In local government, Exeter maintains an Arts Committee, which is an all-volunteer committee appointed by the Selectboard to help promote the arts and artists in the region. The committee is responsible for organizing and mounting numerous shows in the historic Town Hall and its gallery and in the Town Offices building.

Another local resource is the Exeter Fine Crafts gallery, which opened for business in October, 1966. This gallery focuses on craft work unique to the region and includes furniture, glass work, jewelry, pottery, and more. The gallery also offers work space and classes in studios within the same building. At the regional level, the Seacoast Artist Association is a community of artists



and people interested in art, based in the Seacoast area of New Hampshire. Working to promote art appreciation and services, the Association encourages artists of all ages and media. A primary concern of the Association is a Scholarship Fund for the benefit of Seacoast area high school seniors interested in the further pursuit of art. Students present their portfolios for judging in April of each year.

Phillips Exeter Academy is not only an important educational institution, but it also brings a strong emphasis on arts opportunities for its student body. "Arts at Exeter" provides

"The mission of the Exeter Arts Committee is to promote art in public life and to work with local artists to develop an environment that supports their work. This includes visual art, music, dance, and poetry, among others."

-Committee Website

access to programs and training in visual and performing arts, and music. The Lamont Gallery on campus has a small permanent collection that includes paintings, prints, outdoor sculpture, and ethnographic objects. The collection is housed at the gallery and in buildings across campus. Select pieces are on loan to other institutions. The collection includes several paintings by Diego Rivera, four large-scale metal sculptures by Gerald Laing, John James Audubon prints, a painting by George Inness, work by Maud Morgan, and photographs by Yousuf Karsh.

### *Exeter recognizes the importance of arts in our community:*

- Exeter will continue to maintain a committee in our local government for the support and proliferation of arts within the community.
- Exeter will actively seek opportunities to support arts activities in the community through special events and land use policies that foster artistic production and display.

## Natural Resources

### *Forests and Open Space*

The subject of forests and open space lands was a constant topic of discussion during the Master Plan process. Whether participants were most interested in wildlife habitat, wetlands, drinking water protection, watershed management, or recreation opportunities—these areas were viewed as treasures in the community.

The Natural Resources Inventory that was completed in 2012 identified sensitive resource areas in Exeter, evaluated the existing level of protection afforded to these areas through land conservation, and, based on a



“The objective of the Exeter Trail Management Plan is to provide a framework for the management of Exeter’s multi-use trails where Exeter residents and visitors can participate in recreation activities. This has included a review of the town Master Plan, parcel-specific deeds and natural resource data...Non-motorized uses will generally include hiking, running, biking, skiing and snowshoeing. With the exception of trail maintenance equipment, motorized uses are limited to snowmobiles only, on select trails as described in this plan.”

-Exeter Trail Management Plan

development-risk potential, highlighted those areas that should be prioritized. Many forested or open space areas in the community are under some form of protection. In total, Exeter has close to 3,900 acres of protected open space within its borders, approximately 30% of the community. The Town

Conservation Commission, the State of New Hampshire, Trustees organizations, land trust, and various private owners have holdings of different sizes and with different uses on those lands. Two of the more notable open space holdings of the Town include the Henderson-Swasey Town Forest and the adjacent Oaklands Town Forest, which together provide over 420 acres of contiguous forestland. Importantly, many of these open space resources contain valuable wetland complexes that provide “ecosystem services” to the community in the form of natural water quality treatment, centers of biodiversity, and flood control.

Forests and open space areas in Exeter contain a vast network of trails and provide tremendous opportunity for residents and visitors to experience wild places, walk beside rivers and streams, and momentarily leave behind the world of constant distraction. The 2009 Trail Management Plan identifies 12 trail networks in the community and tackles the complex issue of how to manage the incredible diversity of uses in these areas and maintain these resources.

### *Water Resources*

Like so many New England towns, Exeter developed around a major water resource: The Exeter/Squamscott River. This body of water and its tributaries provided energy, transit, food, commerce, and scenic beauty for Native Americans and then later European settlers. The water resource network in Exeter is quite complex when examined closely. Myriad tributaries wind inland from the larger main stem of the river, which are also fed by a patchwork of wetland complexes scattered throughout the Town. Groundwater reserves help to maintain the viability of wetlands and small streams, while also providing drinking water in the Town.

Over time, the water resource network in Exeter has undergone many changes, most notably the damming of the river downtown and subsequent removal of that dam. Development has also changed the landscape of this natural system with the filling of wetlands many years ago, the creation of numerous stream crossings for roads, the development of a reservoir, the installation of the

## *Tools for Water Resource Protection*

**Regulatory** – Municipalities can use local regulation to augment controls already required through federal and State programs. For example, Exeter uses a suite of tools within its Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to help protect wetlands, streams and groundwater reserves. It is important for the Town to maintain these controls and update them as necessary.

**Acquisition** – Purchasing land (or development rights) is an effective strategy for protecting water resources. These preserved areas help to safeguard clean water, mitigate flooding, and filter pollutants. Exeter will continue with its very successful efforts to acquire land through careful, strategic planning.

**Incentives** – Municipalities can consider the use of incentives to achieve higher quality development that is more protective of water resources. Efficiency in appliances, re-use of gray water, low impact stormwater management, and protecting open space are examples of practices other communities have offered as development incentives. Using these tools, for example, may provide developers with an opportunity to build more densely than would otherwise be allowed.

**Education** – Many significant impacts to water resources come from everyday human activity that falls outside the sphere of what is appropriate or possible to regulate. Management of pet waste, household hazardous waste disposal, and lawn care practices are examples of everyday activities that can make a big difference for water quality. Exeter’s Healthy Lawns – Clean Water Initiative is an example of how municipal resources and volunteer efforts can be organized into an effective public education campaign.



storm drain network, the addition of a wastewater treatment plant, and many other private and public investments.

Today, threats to water resources often come in the form of “paying for history’s mistakes.” Upgrades to municipal infrastructure are a big part of this issue, and these are discussed in this plan’s section on *Support*. Future development may also pose a threat to water resources depending on the extent to which it encroaches on wetlands or land that serves as valuable “buffer zones” to water resources. Furthermore, as storm frequency and severity is expected to increase, the flood zones adjacent to even small streams will play a major role in protecting private property and public infrastructure.

### *Exeter treasures its natural resources:*

- The Town’s forests and open spaces are some of our most important economic, environmental, and social assets and should undergo continuous planning and management to ensure long-term viability.
- Standards for development that may remove forested land or impact water resources should be subjected to clear performance standards and appropriate levels of review.
- Maintaining and improving the quality of our water resources will include a combination of public investment in infrastructure and private investment in high quality development.

## Grow

Economic growth is a necessity for towns like Exeter that need to maintain a high level of municipal services for a population that is expected to grow (albeit moderately) in the coming decades. In a world where the global economy, entrepreneurship, and Internet retail are dramatically changing the face of

industry and commerce, traditional New England economies need to adapt. The question of how and where a town like Exeter can grow while maintaining its quality of community is a cornerstone of this Master Plan.

## Residential Growth

Across the country, the economy that has emerged from the Great Recession is dramatically shaped by housing demand. Demand for new housing and renovation in Exeter is likely to remain steady in the coming years, as indicated by the extremely low vacancy rates in both the ownership and rental market. However, Exeter’s housing stock is more diverse than in surrounding communities. This will alleviate some of the incredible pent up demand for multi-family and/or rental homes experienced by other communities that have almost exclusively single-family homes. Looking forward, Exeter will have the opportunity to build more housing consistent with regional and national trends. Demand for single family homes will continue, likely at a modest pace, but demand for smaller unit housing such as mixed use apartments, cottages, or townhouses probably represents a larger growth opportunity.

Another important consideration for Exeter is the need to provide Workforce Housing as it is defined by the State through RSA 674:58-61 (see inset). The requirements set forth by the State are designed to address a pressing issue



*Residential Development in Exeter*

The basic requirements of RSA 674:58-61 essentially come down to:

- Provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for the development of workforce housing.
  - Provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for multi-family housing (5+ dwelling units), including rental and ownership.
  - Lot sizes and density requirements for workforce housing “shall be reasonable”
  - Allow workforce housing on >50% of residentially zoned land area.
- A Citizen’s Guide to Workforce Housing In Londonderry, NH

### *Exeter recognizes the importance of housing opportunity:*

- Housing development represents an important economic opportunity for the Town and the region and requires collaboration with regional partners to ensure equitable sharing of affordable housing throughout the region.
- Exeter should continue to add to the diversity of what is already one of the more diverse municipal housing stocks in the region.
- While it is clear that Exeter meets the requirements for Workforce Housing under law, the Town recognizes that providing Workforce Housing is important to the long-term social and economic viability of the Town and will continue to be a leader in the region.

nationwide. When left unchecked, local housing markets often produce higher end single family units based on local and regional demands. Over time, towns become saturated with this type of housing and find themselves in a position where working class residents and low-income families have been priced out of the community. The long-range effects of these unintentionally “exclusionary” patterns of development include degradation of the local workforce, loss of young talent (e.g., recent graduates), an overall aging of the population, drops in citizen participation, loss of cultural diversity, and a generally less equitable housing market. Exeter continues to be a leader in the region for providing Workforce Housing in large part to Town leadership recognizing the long-term benefits of policies and regulations that facilitate equitable housing development.

Along with issues of housing equity, the need for a diverse housing stock is directly connected to the more intangible “everyday community and quality of life” discussed at the beginning of this plan. A big part of this appeal in Exeter comes from the presence of an active, engaged, multi-generational residential population that serves as the lifeblood of the community. Young families, in particular, are a big part of the local economy as they spend more money locally than any other cohort. These residents also more actively support local events and organizations, and represent the next generation of people who may sink deep roots into the community. In order to foster this type of involvement over the long term, young people must have an “entry point” into the housing market, both for rental and ownership opportunities.

The Exeter Housing Advisory Committee was established in 2015 to advise the Selectboard on the availability of housing in Exeter and potential future needs. It released a report in May 2017 that examined housing trends and issues in Exeter with a list of recommendations for moving forward to meet projected needs. This report provides a basis for future initiatives.

## **Commercial and Mixed Use**

In a parallel effort to the Master Plan, the Town hosted a series of place-based listening sessions to discuss potential economic development opportunities.

During the Master Plan discussions that followed, many residents echoed the focus areas and added specific ideas for maintaining, strengthening, or even transforming particular areas of the community. One of the most important outcomes from these discussions is the affirmation that Exeter’s commercial and mixed use districts are very different from one another. While each one plays an important economic role in the community, the types of business and the needs of those operations vary greatly. *How Exeter decides to grow in each of these areas is critical to the success of this Master Plan.*

### *Epping Road*

Epping Road has two distinct segments. North of Route 101 has a more rural feel, with agricultural lands and a few small businesses. South of Route 101, the Epping Road corridor is more developed and includes more densely developed commercial uses near the roadway, as well as a handful of access roads extending out to additional commercial and industrial sites. Site development along this stretch does not have a cohesive look to it and is often dominated by large parking areas. Importantly, the Town established part of Epping Road as an official Economic Revitalization Zone (see inset), providing access to tax incentives that could spur future growth. Epping Road was also approved for Tax Increment Financing in 2015, providing an innovative financing mechanism for improvements to roadways, water supply, and wastewater infrastructure. **Local economic development planning and implementation has already started for this commercial center in Exeter.**

### *Holland Way*

Holland Way is a two lane road that links Portsmouth Avenue (NH 108) to NH Route 111/27, and is bordered by forested areas on both sides. The road is a remnant from the old Route 101 corridor that was abandoned when the current Route 101 was built. It was converted with the intention of commercial and corporate business park development. To the northeast of Holland Road is Route 101, and to the southwest is the Exeter Reservoir and treatment plant, which contributes to the Town’s drinking water supply, as well as the Exeter Hospital campus and a small residential neighborhood within walking distance

The New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development has approved more than 40 zones around the state for the Economic Revitalization Zone program. Businesses located in ER zones may apply for tax credits against the Business Profit and Business Enterprise taxes. To qualify for the program, existing businesses must expand and/or create jobs. In Exeter, the recently approved Economic Revitalization Zone, or “ER Zone,” occupies a 1.5 mile stretch along the Epping Road corridor and includes 720 acres.

-Town of Exeter website

to downtown. Holland Way itself is very sparsely developed, with a handful of corporate office buildings in a wooded setting accessed via Tyco Way at the southern end of Holland Way. Lower levels of development may be the result, in part, of limited access to sewer service. There are several undeveloped commercial sites on the market along Holland Way, some of which are challenged by significant areas of wetland. While the existing commercial operations are an asset to the community, it is uncertain whether Holland Way will draw significant investment in the future. **The Town should continue to support existing commercial operations, but also be watchful for other opportunities that might present themselves such as conservation land or expansion of housing choice.**

### *Portsmouth Avenue*

Portsmouth Avenue is the section of NH Route 108 between High Street in the town center and NH Route 101. It is the primary route between Exeter and points north, including Stratham, Newmarket, and Durham. This road serves as a regional transportation arterial and commercial corridor, experiencing congestion during regular commuting hours. Sidewalks are in poor condition in several areas, few street trees or landscaped areas line the roadway, and commercial buildings sit far off the road behind large parking lots. Farther from downtown, the corridor has several strip mall developments that include a large Hannaford’s Supermarket and several restaurants, all interspersed with

older commercial buildings, some small office spaces, several gas stations and several pharmacies. Development along Portsmouth Avenue closer to the town center is older, including some residences that have been converted for commercial uses and some that remain residential homes, and which form the connection with abutting residential neighborhoods. **Portsmouth Avenue would benefit from more detailed planning and study to determine the market demand along the corridor, the types and scales of uses that should be located in different segments, the proper zoning tools for these segments, and a phased plan for roadway improvements.**

### *Lincoln Street*

The Lincoln Street area is often considered Exeter's second "in-town" commercial area. Lincoln Street connects Main Street to Front Street, and the Lincoln Street commercial area is bounded by several residential neighborhoods. The section of Lincoln Street near Main Street contains a small commercial center, the Lincoln Street School serving grades 3 through 5, and the Train Station. Just behind the Lincoln Street School, closer to the center of town, is the Main Street School, which serves grades Kindergarten through 2. Together, these two schools provide the public elementary education for Exeter. The Train Station is an attractive, traditional-style small-town roofed platform providing a covered waiting area, and is served by the AMTRAK Downeaster, which travels south to Boston and north to Portland, Freeport, and Brunswick, ME. Parking is provided by a small parking lot at the station, and also spills over into on-street parking in the adjacent neighborhood. The collection of commercial uses along Lincoln Street provides essential goods and entertainment for residents, but lacks a cohesive identity. Perhaps more than any other commercial area in Town, Lincoln Street has the potential to become a new "great place," a different type of downtown that is more geared toward serving the residents of Exeter with additional housing, safe routes to schools, access to mass transit, and neighborhood scale commercial. **The Town should consider the development of a physical Master Plan for Lincoln Street that illustrates a village-scale transit-oriented development (TOD) concept.**



Exeter Train Station

**Transit-oriented development**, or TOD, is a type of community development that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail and/or other amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood and located within a half-mile of quality public transportation.

-Reconnecting America

### *Kingston Road*

Traveling west, Front Street (Route 111) becomes Kingston Road and continues on into Kingston. The area highlighted for growth is just beyond Little River and is sandwiched between two residential neighborhoods, with Brickyard Pond Park to the west. It is a clear transition between the denser neighborhoods that abut Downtown and the more suburban/rural landscape of the western part

of town. Here, the roadway shoulder is narrow and once Kingston Road crosses Little River westward sidewalks end. To the north, the area is zoned Residential 1 and to the south, it is zone Neighborhood Professional. Consistent with zoning, existing development along the roadway is multi-family to the north and single-story offices to the south. The depth of these parcels is greater than the frontage along the roadway; therefore new development potential is primarily behind these developed areas.

There are some environmental considerations. The southernmost parcel abuts the rail line and has a wetland system, including prime wetlands, along the rail corridor. Additionally, Little River makes up the eastern border of this potential growth area. **New development on Kingston Road in this area should provide the transition needed from the two residential areas. Extending the sidewalk can connect these two areas as well as link to Brickyard Pond Park.**

### *Downtown*

Planning for growth in areas like Downtown Exeter is not like considering opportunities for Portsmouth Avenue or even Lincoln Street. From the perspective of “form” and “density” (i.e., what it looks like), Downtown is a success. From an economic perspective, the Town needs to continually examine ways to remove barriers to the occupation of empty spaces and any other conditions that would make the area somehow less attractive for investment. One notable example discussed at length in the Master Plan process is the IOKA Theater building, which closed in 2008 and has been unable to reopen since then.

As discussed further in the *Connect* section of this Master Plan, circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists should be one of the Town’s highest priorities for Downtown. Prioritizing pedestrians over automobiles is a difficult policy stance for any community to adopt, as it turns a 70-year American paradigm “on its head.” Nonetheless, from an economic development perspective, the success of Downtown relies first and foremost on retaining its identity as a “great place.” Outside of the larger policy changes and investments around circulation and parking, Exeter should also consider the importance of small, everyday details. Continuing with the maintenance of historic buildings, maintaining a good wayfinding system, and encouraging amenities on the sidewalks like potted flowers, trash receptacles, public benches, and outdoor seating—these details not only make a great first impression on visitors, but help to attract new business, and make for an excellent everyday experience. **Exeter should establish formal lines of communication with downtown business owners to identify emerging challenges, aspirations for expansion, upcoming vacancies, or unexpected challenges for local businesses.**



### *Exeter recognizes the importance of commercial and mixed use development:*

- Walking and biking should be promoted not only as recreational • The economy of today looks very different than it did only a short time ago. Trends in retail, industry, and workforce patterns require innovative thinking for towns like Exeter.
- Exeter’s commercial areas are very different from one another and should be planned for individually, potentially applying different tools and approaches tailored to each one.

## **Crafting a Strategy for Growth**

Growth is important for Exeter, but it requires careful planning and transparency. This Master Plan is the first step in that process and identifies places and markets that have the potential to increase the economic health of the Town. The Master Plan also sets this *Grow* section alongside other sections like *Steward*. From a long-term economic development perspective, it is just as important for Exeter to know where and why it wants to grow as it is for Exeter to know where and why it will not grow.

Moving forward, it is clear that many opportunities for growth exist, but these opportunities are often very distinct from one another and will require different tools. In general, using the position of its Economic Development Director, the Town should gather information and generate analyses that clearly show the market opportunities available to the Town. While market conditions do not necessarily dictate local policy, they provide an important “reality check” for a community vision, and can also help to strategically guide infrastructure investment and regulatory reform.

## **Connect**

A quote from a resident at the first public workshop of the Master Plan update rings true on so many levels (see inset). This resident recognizes that new development and growth is happening, and to accommodate it, we need to think about how we move from place to place differently. Connections are critical to meet social, economic, and environmental needs for a high quality of life, both from the perspective of the Town and of individual residents. Residents should be encouraged to support local businesses, and get to them in an environmentally friendly way that is safe and promotes a healthy, active lifestyle. There are so many positives that come out of building these connections in a thoughtful and forward-thinking way.

### **Local Connections**

#### *Walking and Biking*

The desire to walk and bike beyond recreational enjoyment continues to grow. People are recognizing the health benefits of being more active, and taking cars off the road improves our air quality, decreases traffic congestion on roadways, and reduces stress of drivers.

“I’d like the Master Plan to retain or strengthen the current language promoting bicycle and pedestrian friendly corridors throughout town, especially on Epping Rd, Portsmouth Ave, Lincoln St and High St. The current town economic plan calls for, and we have seen an increase and interest from developers, in creating multi use developments on Epping Rd and Portsmouth Ave that include a residential component. We need to ensure safe non-vehicular connectivity between these new residential developments and the town center. This is important to promote the health and welfare of residents and promote our downtown businesses. If the only option for shopping is to go by car, most of these residents will drive elsewhere and spend their dollars outside of town.”

- Exeter Resident, Public Workshop

Walking opportunities exist in Exeter, but they are limited. The Town has considerable walking and hiking paths within its open space and recreational properties, but these have been used primarily for recreational purposes and not to get from one place to another. Exeter’s compact Downtown is walkable, but the farther out from its center one travels, the more difficult it becomes to walk due to a lack of sidewalk connections. Filling in the gaps between existing destinations such as the Downtown, Train Station, recreational areas, neighborhoods, and new development, including that which is occurring along Epping Road, can help strengthen corridors and encourage more people to walk rather than drive.

Biking throughout town is also a challenge. Winding roads with limited shoulders pose dangers to cyclists and motorists. There are also no dedicated off-road bike paths; however, the Town has painted “sharrow” lanes on local roadways to help bring to the attention of drivers that they are to share the road with cyclists. These efforts will continue town-wide as resources allow. A bike path master plan study can also review key areas of the Town, including state roads, where bike lanes can be prioritized. Adding amenities, such as bike racks close to businesses, or dedicated areas in parking lots just for bikes, can also encourage more people to get out of their cars and bike to where they need to be.

A Complete Streets policy can give the Town guidance around planning and implementing walking and biking infrastructure. “Complete streets” is a



concept of designing (or redesigning) roadways to accommodate all users: cars, walkers, and cyclists. By thinking holistically about mobility, roadways become safer. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is another program that can support the development of safe walking and biking opportunities in and around schools. Encouraging children to walk and bike to school can engender life-long healthy habits.

The Rockingham Planning Commission and New Hampshire Department of Transportation are primary resources for Complete Streets and TAP policy and program development. Technical and financial assistance can help move Exeter forward in developing strategic plans in targeted areas of town with resident and business input. Having these plans in place positions Exeter to receive funds from federal, state, and other sources, showing their commitment to improving walking and biking and documenting support from the neighborhoods where ideas are proposed.

### *Exeter understands the value of increasing walking and biking opportunities:*

- Walking and biking should be promoted not only as recreational activities, but ways to commute throughout town.
- Building and enhancing walking and biking infrastructure between destinations, such as the Downtown, Lincoln Street, and Epping Road, can help reduce traffic congestion.
- The feasibility of sidewalks, bike lanes, and other amenities should be considered for new streets and the redesign and improvements to existing streets and intersections.
- Prioritizing high-traffic areas for improved and enhanced walking and biking infrastructure will help the Town target areas most in need as well as wisely spend limited funds.

## Transit

Outside of regional transportation services discussed below, there are no transit options for Exeter residents. Some assistance is available to seniors, including taxi vouchers and the Transportation Assistance for Senior Citizens program, which matches elderly residents with volunteer drivers. The Rockingham County Meals on Wheels program also provides transport for seniors at a more regional scale. There may be opportunities to build local shuttle loops to bring people and visitors into the Downtown. A study could review potential stops, routes, and timeframes (seasonality) for operation to determine a shuttle's feasibility.

### *Exeter understands the value of diverse transportation options:*

- There are residents with limited mobility who could benefit from more localized transit options.
- Studying the market and feasibility of other transit choices in Exeter can reveal realistic opportunities for the community.

## Parking

The most recent formal inventory of parking spaces in the Downtown was reported in the 2010 Master Plan Update. This plan showed, at that time, there were approximately 185 off-street parking spots with one lot managed by the Town (135 spots). An additional 250 on-street parking spots are available with a two-hour limit. All parking Downtown is free. Despite the free access to over 400 parking spaces, there is a common perception that finding parking Downtown is a challenge.

Amtrak's Downeaster Exeter Train Station on Lincoln Street has a parking lot, which is owned by the Town, with 76 spots available for riders, also free. In

### *Parking Management Strategies... Some Examples*

**Shared parking:** a parking facility serves multiple users or destinations, usually peak-hour driven

**Parking regulations and enforcement:** who, when, and how long vehicles can park at a particular location with consistent enforcement of these regulations

**Flexible parking standards:** parking requirements at a particular location are adjusted to account for factors such as development density, transit accessibility, etc.

**Walking and biking improvements:** improvements to walkability to increase "park once" trips, increased amenities for cyclists such as bike racks and safety improvements for both walking and biking to allow these modes to substitute for car use

**Increase capacity at existing parking facilities:** reorganize lot layout, use of valet parking, replace surface parking with structural garage, provide smaller spots for motorcycles or scooters only, etc.

addition, there are 44 two-hour parking spots on west side of Lincoln Street between COAST bus stop and Main Street and 34 on-street spots with no time limit on east side.

Today, "parking problems" tends to mean more than just not enough parking, but also inefficiently managed parking supply, inadequate information to users, and other problems associated with parking facilities and activities (Litman 2006). Past proposals to address parking needs in the Downtown, including building a parking garage, have had little public support to move them forward. The Town is set to conduct a traffic analysis and parking study that looks at the Downtown area. It will get into the details of where the problems lie and make recommendations. The results of the analysis should lead to a comprehensive



### *Exeter recognizes the importance and complexity of parking Downtown:*

- Evaluating parking needs and opportunities should consider walking and biking, and how increasing amenities for these modes can potentially relieve the need for more parking spaces.
- Existing parking can be reorganized to create new parking opportunities without the need to increase the number of parking spaces.

parking management strategy and include a variety of approaches that make the best and most efficient use of existing parking infrastructure, new innovative options that supplement existing parking, and accommodate modes of getting to Downtown other than by car. Providing more amenities that make biking and walking, easier and safer will encourage more people not to drive, thereby reducing the need for more parking spaces. There is support in the community for continuing to move in this direction. Many residents are happy with the sidewalk improvements made in Downtown and would like to see more of such improvements.

### *Roadways and Traffic*

While Exeter intends to aggressively support initiatives to increase walking and biking within the community, automobiles will remain a part of everyday life for the foreseeable future. Public transportation options simply do not operate at a scale where Exeter can expect a dramatic decrease in traffic, and some residents simply need a car to get around and conduct their daily lives (e.g., seniors). Traffic congestion from automobile travel impacts connections within the community and how they function. As noted, addressing Downtown traffic is a priority and will be part of an upcoming analysis with a parking study; however, Routes 111, 111A, and 27 all funnel into Downtown, which, with the exception of Route 101, is one of the only ways to go east-west through Exeter.

One of the outcomes of the study may be that much of the traffic congestion is due to through-traffic. If this is the case, focusing on local residents and encouraging them to use other modes to get Downtown may be the first step. It would be somewhat easier to reach out to local residents, and such outreach would build on support for a more walkable and bikeable community.

Outside of downtown are other notable intersections where congestion or alignment are consider problematic. These include:

- Guinea Road and Hampton Road
- Brentwood Road, Epping Road, and Columbus Avenue
- Holland Way at Hampton Road
- Front Street/Pine Street/Linden Street (could be included in Downtown traffic study)
- Epping Road at Park Street
- Brentwood Road at Dogtown Road

Maintaining a list of problem intersections can help the Town plan for future infrastructure improvements. Intersections can be prioritized in anticipation of future funds that may become available. Additionally, when utility work is being planned, there may be an opportunity to incorporate improvements to the overall function of the intersection. Developing conceptual plans early on to address primary issues, including safety, will keep the Town poised when funding opportunities present themselves.

### *Exeter recognizes the need to address traffic concerns town-wide:*

- The Town needs to actively design and develop solutions that correct unsafe and problem intersections and improve the overall overall experience and convenience of pedestrians.

## Regional Connections

### *Amtrak Downeaster*

The Amtrak Downeaster provides connectivity across New England. It operates along the northeast New England Corridor from Brunswick, Maine to Boston, Massachusetts with multiple stops along the way, including Exeter. The Downeaster provides a car-free way for people to visit Exeter. As noted earlier, the station has an outdoor platform and a parking lot (owned by the Town) with 76 spots. Around the station on Lincoln Street are several small restaurants and stores. On-street parking is available for local businesses.

As discussed under Grow, the Lincoln Street area and the Downeaster present many opportunities for Exeter. It's one of the many positive aspects residents see about living here. The train brings visitors to Exeter without cars. The Lincoln Street area around the station can become a second hub for the Town, but some issues will need to be addressed. These include limited parking for commuters, no indoor waiting area for the train, and lack of walking connectivity to the Downtown. Exeter's Train Committee provides advocacy and support to efforts aimed at increasing and publicizing train service within the Town. The group works closely with the Selectboard on developing plans for enhancing Exeter's train station, and assisting in its upkeep and operation.

### *COAST*

COAST provides Exeter residents with bus service to Newmarket, Dover, and Portsmouth. Primary stops in Exeter are Lincoln Street/Train Station, Linden Street/Deep Meadow Variety, Front Street/Bandstand, and Portsmouth Avenue/Exeter Commons. The COAST route through Exeter offers multi-modal connections and opportunities, but challenges lay in scheduling and funding. While buses run slightly off from typical commuting times (later in the morning and earlier in the evening), service meets the needs of many residents to get to medical appointments, school, and second or third shift employment. According to a recent article, from 2000 to 2015, COAST annual ridership increased 144 percent, from 199,967 to 487,594. Funding for COAST comes from fares, federal support (approximately 60%), and local contributions. Requests are made to each community annually, and decisions are made locally on what is allocated. Exeter needs to consider local residents who rely on COAST and the Town's support of the service COAST provides.

### *Exeter recognizes the value of regional connections:*

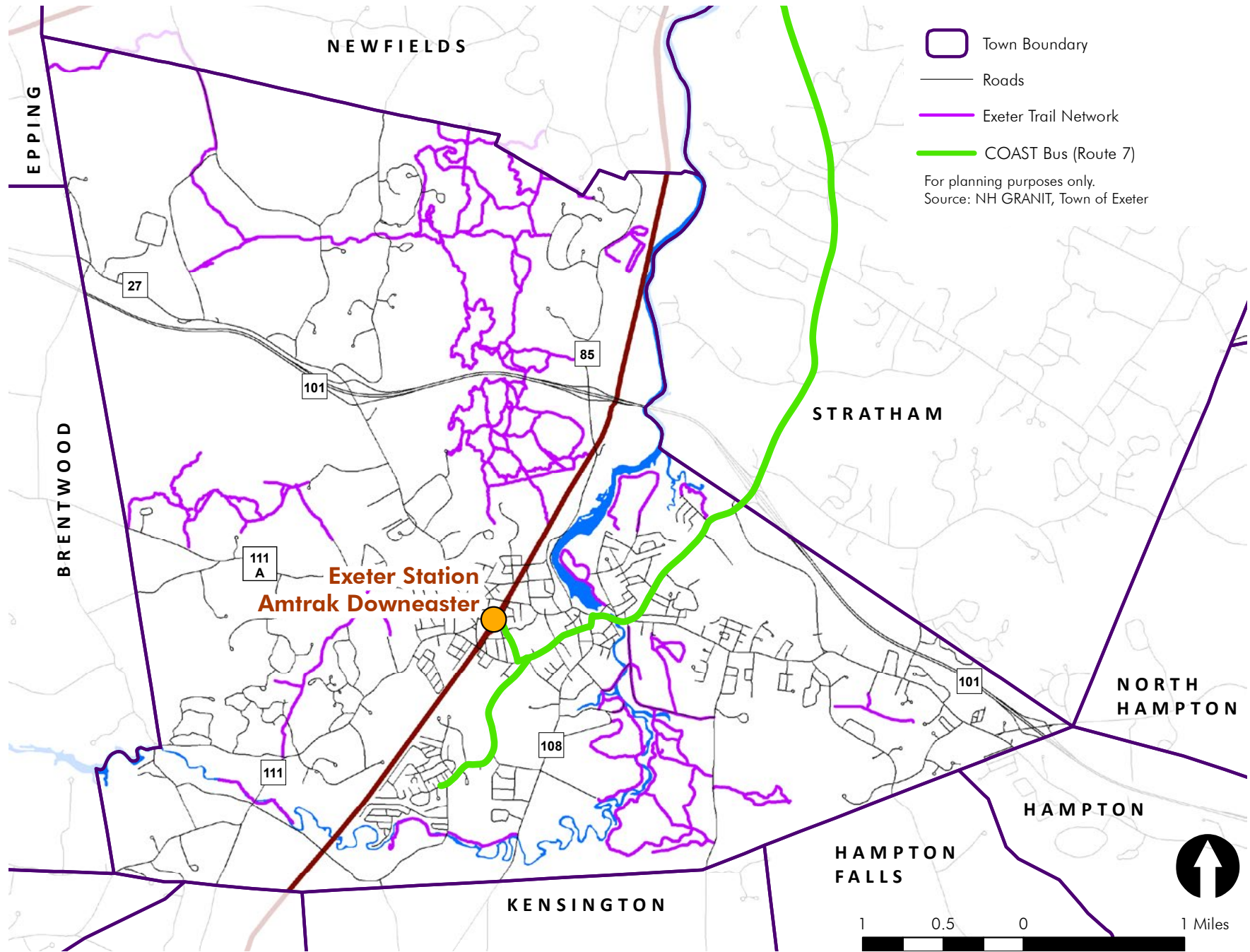
- Enhancing the experience at the Downeaster train station and along Lincoln Street into the Downtown has economic benefits for the town.
- Many residents rely on COAST service and the Town should continue to support it.
- Making multi-modal connections with these regional services can increase their use.



Photo courtesy of dtclawyers.com



Exeter's regional transportation network



# Communicate

Communication is arguably the most influential force shaping every aspect of American and global culture today. The power of communication technology provides instant access to information in almost every corner of the globe, and it is evolving at a staggering pace. Local governments often find it difficult to keep up with the technological upgrades demanded by increasingly tech-dependent communities. The call to action for municipalities amidst this revolution is to create a sustainable system of communication technology that provides an excellent level of service. Communication in Exeter’s local government takes many forms:

## Coordinating Local Government

The duties, obligations, and powers of local government are complex and trends in community planning and administration strongly suggest these complexities will continue to increase. Some of the issues that will continue to shape the responsibilities of local government include:

- Changes in climate and sea level rise
- Development pressure on marginal land
- Continuous changes in state-level regulations
- Shifting trends in population demographics
- Technological advances in commerce and industry
- Innovations in transportation and energy production

This list is a sample of significant changes that will place demands on local governments to develop programs, regulations, budgets, and policies in ways that are not part of standard practice. These changes will demand adaptation and innovation.

One of the core improvements needed in communities like Exeter are systemic and technological improvements that will facilitate intra-governmental

coordination. Important functions shared across departments and boards include permit review, data development, regulatory reform, and physical improvements to public lands. In all cases, the ability to share information in a manner that is fast, accessible, and user-friendly is critical to coordinating efforts and generally broadening the awareness between departments and boards regarding the activities of different groups.

## Sharing Information with the Public

The work of local government, discussed above, is performed in large part to serve the interests of the residents, businesses, and institutions in the community. Accordingly, decision making at the government level must be well-documented, participatory, accessible, and transparent. Further, the increasing complexity of issues faced by communities like Exeter, and the speed at which information is produced, increase the complexity of effective communication between town government and the public.

## Providing Town Services

The ability to effectively offer and provide municipal services often hinges on communication with the residents and business owners of the Town. In

The Selectboard serves as the governing body of the Town. Members are elected annually in March to staggered 3-year terms.

The Selectboard is the appointing authority for several boards and committees in Exeter including the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Economic Development Commission, Heritage Commission, and Historic District Commission. The Board also is responsible for appointing several advisory committees of the Town and for appointing the Town Manager.

The Board reorganizes each March after the Annual Town Election and elects a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and a Clerk of the Board.

Exeter, at the time of the drafting of this plan, the community was served by 18 separate departments, 12 boards/commissions, and nine committees. The makeup of many of these boards, commissions, and committees is determined by the Selectboard (see inset). Municipal departments provide services through professionally trained staff, while boards and commissions are generally run by volunteers. The work of these bodies is extremely valuable, providing services to the community that are essential to the health, safety, and quality of life of our residents. Each of these bodies should examine how to most effectively make residents aware of the services that are available and how these services can be accessed.

### ***Social Media and E-Communication***

At the Exeter Master Plan Public workshop, residents indicated that they rely on websites, email, and social media as their primary source for information about the Town. Similar to the issue of communications inside local government, improved communications out to the public will have a significant technological component. In the US, the vast majority of people age 64 and below own smart phones, and almost half of Americans over the age of 64 own smart phones. In addition to the tools built into cell phones (e.g., calendars, automatic notifications), social media outlets and news streaming have changed the way people expect to receive news with small “bite size” notices designed to grab a reader’s attention and pull him or her into a closer investigation. The Town will need to continue consideration of how important initiatives, meetings, and other information can be packaged and pushed into the public realm in a manner that can compete for the attention of Exeter’s residents and business owners.

### ***Public Outreach for Capital Improvement Projects***

The need for constructing and maintaining public infrastructure and facilities is discussed in the plan section called *Support*. Roads, sidewalks, bridges, parks, municipal buildings, and many other elements of public infrastructure are a critical part of Exeter’s everyday quality of life. Importantly, these facilities require maintenance, repair, and sometimes large-scale replacement.

Regardless of what causes the need for such capital improvements, communication around these activities is an important part of the process.

On a very practical level, construction in the public realm can be disruptive. Streets may need to be closed or temporarily narrowed, causing problems with local traffic and temporary access problems for local business. Communication to residents and business owners must continue to be a high priority in these instances, providing specific information so people can plan accordingly. On a more aspirational level, many capital improvements impact parts of Exeter that people consider important to their everyday enjoyment. Upgrades to parks, streetscape improvements, and other public improvements touch places that are important sources of everyday enjoyment. Public engagement around improvements to these spaces can lead to higher quality outcomes for everyone.

### ***Consultants, Outside Vendors, and Outreach***

From time to time, the Town needs to hire outside experts to help with a variety of projects. These can include experts in community planning, zoning, economic study, infrastructure design, parking management, and many other areas. The hiring process usually includes an announcement from the Town called a “Request for Proposals” (RFPs), a review of proposal submissions, and competitive interviews. It will be important for the Town to set expectations with consultants regarding public outreach associated with their work during this process. Language in the RFP and questions within the interview should address the need for outside consultants to provide information about their work during the course of a project, and a description of how the public will be engaged in a manner that provides meaningful input. RFPs should provide examples of approaches that have worked well, emphasize that large public meetings are not the only way to engage the public, and stress the importance of using social media as a component of public engagement. Recognizing the considerable resources required for this type of work, the Town must also budget for these projects accordingly.

## Community Forums

Prior to and during the Master Plan process, dozens of community discussions took place between individuals, in small groups, and in large public events. These meetings provided people with opportunities to discuss important community issues in spaces that were designed to feel welcoming and encourage productivity. For local officials and board members, these conversations were an opportunity to put aside the day-to-day tasks and the rigid procedures of more official meetings to share their ideas with a more thoughtful and “big picture” perspective. For residents, these conversations were an opportunity to vet their own ideas and hear other perspectives on issues important in everyday life. For everyone involved, these meetings were opportunities to connect face to face, at a slower, more thoughtful, and deliberate pace. While the Town certainly needs to be able to communicate at the speed of technology (see previous section), well designed and facilitated group discussions will be needed to grow local involvement and a sense of community between individuals.



*Exeter recognizes the need to build communication networks within government and between government officials and the public:*

- Providing effective communication requires both public investment in technology and commitment of town staff and resources.
- The public should have access to information about projects, programs, and decisions being made at the local level and be encouraged to provide input.
- Local boards, commissions, and committees should collaborate on common objectives and meet regularly as a group to facilitate coordination.



# **ACTION AGENDA**

# ACTION AGENDA

This Action Agenda provides a path for the Town of Exeter to meet its goals and objectives. Many actions were directly taken from public events and interviews conducted during the update process. Each action has lead municipal staff that will initiate the action and guide it through implementation. Local boards and commissions that can support staff have also been identified. Partners in the community and around the region are highlighted in the action description.

This Master Plan is a 10-year plan and the Action Agenda is structured within that timeframe. Target completion dates are short term (completed by the end of 2020), mid term (completed between 2021 and end of 2024), and long term (completed by 2025 or further out).

Some actions are dependent on the completion of others. These sequential actions are grouped together in the Action Agenda.

## Support

	SUPPORT Action	Town Lead	Town Support	Timeframe
1	<p>Evaluate the needs of seniors today and in the future. Determine if existing programs and services in the community and around the region (public, private, and non-profit) are meeting/will meet those needs. Consider needs around housing, lifelong learning, recreation, social interaction and stimulation, and health and wellness, among other issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use public engagement techniques (workshops, surveys, etc.) to understand senior needs and preferences.</li> <li>• Coordinate and survey St. Vincent DePaul and others that provide senior services to Exeter residents.</li> <li>• Based on outcomes, develop recommendations to address unmet needs.</li> </ul>	Human Services Dept, Parks & Rec Dept, Town Manager	Town Planner	Short Term
2	<p>Based on public input, prioritize existing recreational facilities in need of improvements that address safety, access, and general maintenance. Estimate costs and develop a six-year schedule that can be incorporated into the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Build off of the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Needs Assessment and Planning Report (2014-2015).</p>	Parks & Rec Dept, Town Manager	Selectboard	Short Term
3	<p>Identify new facilities or programming, using the findings of the UNH Needs Assessment and Planning Report (2014-2015) as a starting point. Estimate costs and feasibility of providing these new facilities/activities.</p>	Parks & Rec Dept, Town Manager, Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission, Selectboard	Mid Term



	<b>SUPPORT Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
4	Prioritize public facilities and spaces (including recreational sites) where ADA improvements are needed or could be improved. Estimate costs and develop a 6-year schedule that can be incorporated into the CIP.	Dept of Public Works, Municipal Departments, Library, Town Planner, Town Manager	Selectboard	Short Term
5	Continue to evaluate water supply alternatives that can supplement the existing public water system. Determine the feasibility of implementing the preferred alternative(s).	Dept of Public Works	Selectboard, Water/ Sewer Advisory Committee	Ongoing/Long Term
6	Evaluate local stormwater management regulatory requirements for private development and determine if requirements of federal mandates are being met. Identify revisions and new policies/standards. Prioritize green infrastructure where feasible.	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	Selectboard,	Ongoing/Short Term
7	Develop a public awareness campaign to educate residents and businesses about water quality and state and federal mandates that require the Town to improve and monitor it. Include such topics as: what the mandates require the Town to do (new programs, infrastructure projects, etc.), the impact of lower water quality on the quality of life in Exeter, and how residents and businesses can contribute to improving water quality.	Dept of Public Works, Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission, River Advisory Committee	Short Term
8	Sponsor and support events that bring residents and businesses together and celebrate the local community.	Town Manager	All Departments	Ongoing
9	Continue to support quality public education opportunities through the endorsement of the SAU16 Joint Board Strategic Plan. Identify specific strategies in the Strategic Plan where other municipal departments can provide support and incorporate these in department work plans.	Town Manager	All Departments	Ongoing
10	Continue to provide “wrap around” support for critical public meetings like on-site child care, refreshments, recordings, and/or printed summaries.	Town Manager	All Departments	Ongoing

## Prepare

	PREPARE Action	Town Lead	Town Support	Timeframe
1a	Resolve outstanding issues with public safety department facilities through a comprehensive public safety services evaluation that includes recommendations.	Fire Dept, Police Dept, Town Manager	Selectboard	Short Term
1b	Based on findings of services evaluation, move with top priority recommendations. Identify grants to support final design and construction as well as staffing.	Fire Dept, Police Dept, Town Manager	Selectboard	Mid Term
2a	Based on most recent data available, inventory properties most vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surge, and other natural hazards. Where possible, estimate the time horizon for impacts. Develop outreach methods to education private property owners about the risks and ways they can minimize impacts to their properties.	Town Planner, Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission, Planning Board, River Advisory Committee	Short Term
2b	For areas identified most vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surge, and other natural hazards, evaluate town land use policies for these areas and consider alternatives to minimize risk in each area. These might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquiring property to minimize the impact of sea level rise, chronic flooding, marsh migration, etc. to public and private property.</li> <li>Limit redevelopment after flood or storm damage.</li> <li>Decisions where to extend (or not extend) infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc.)</li> </ul>	Town Planner, Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission, Planning Board, River Advisory Committee	Mid Term
2c	Based on findings of the land use policies evaluation, implement new land use policies and regulations to reduce risks from sea level rise, storm surge, and other natural hazards.	Town Planner, Natural Resource Planner	Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission	Mid Term
3a	Conduct a Drainage Asset Management and Condition Assessment to identify where infrastructure is undersized and unable to accommodate new development, increases in storm events, or rising sea levels. Use the development of this plan as an opportunity to educate residents about vulnerabilities and the need for funding to support upgrades and meet permitting requirements.	Dept of Public Works	Town Planner	Short Term

	<b>PREPARE Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
3b	<p>Prioritize improvements for public infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate upgrades as well as adaptation and mitigation strategies.</li> <li>Estimate costs and develop a 6-year schedule of improvements to be included in the CIP.</li> <li>Identify grants and other funding sources to augment local funding.</li> </ul>	Dept of Public Works, Town Manager, Town Planner	Selectboard, Planning Board	Mid Term
3c	<p>Implement adaptation strategies for public infrastructure. Examples could include, but would not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flood water diversion improvements for streets that can be flooded in extreme events.</li> <li>Replacement of culverts and stormwater conveyance structures with infrastructure sized for larger storm events.</li> <li>Installation of “green infrastructure” strategies that can help reduce the volume of stormwater flows.</li> <li>Ensuring energy redundancy (e.g., generators) for municipal facilities that are important to emergency response.</li> </ul>	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	Selectboard, Planning Board	Long Term

## Steward

	<b>STEWARD Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1a	Identify properties that are less likely be developed based on regulatory requirements and determine whether this affects their prioritization level for acquisition.	Town Planner, Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission	Short Term
1b	Review criteria for acquiring land for conservation and consider adding criteria related to sea level rise, marsh migration, chronic flooding, storm surge, and other impacts of climate change and natural hazards.	Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission, River Advisory Committee, Selectboard	Mid Term
2	Based on revised criteria and assessment of natural resources already under regulatory protection, prioritize parcels of interest for conservation purposes. Consider available and future funding sources and other tools available to protect land. Develop a 10-year schedule for implementation.	Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission, Selectboard	Mid Term

	<b>STEWARD Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
3	Commit resources for a new staff person to support Historic District Commission and Heritage Commission, and move historic preservation actions forward.	Town Planner, Town Manager	Selectboard	Short Term
4a	Inventory and prioritize historic resources (within and outside of historic districts) that need improvements.	To be determined	Historic District, Heritage Commission	Short Term
4b	Estimate costs and develop a 10-year plan of historic resource improvement projects. Identify potential funding sources and partners to augment town resources.	To be determined	Historic District, Heritage Commission	Mid Term
4c	Update Waterfront Commercial Historic District National Register survey.	To be determined	Historic District, Heritage Commission	Mid Term
5	Work with local arts organizations to promote art installations in public spaces. Prioritize locations that would provide the best opportunities. Identify ways to engage the community in public art.	Town Planner	Exeter Arts Committee	Short Term
6a	Prioritize improvements for the Town Hall. Collaborate with the work being done by the Exeter Chamber of Commerce to make the space more user-friendly. Estimate costs and develop a 10-year schedule of improvements.	Town Manager	Dept of Public Works, Economic Development Commission, Arts Committee, Selectboard	Short Term
6b	Continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce to identify funding mechanisms to augment town resources for Town Hall improvements. Consider fundraising and grants to augment town resources.	Town Manager	Dept of Public Works, Economic Development Commission, Arts Committee, Selectboard	Mid Term
6c	Review and update the Trail Maintenance Plan (2009). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify recommendations that have not been completed.</li> <li>Determine which recommendations are still relevant and which are not. Identify new recommendations as needed.</li> <li>Develop a 10-year schedule for maintenance, improvements, or future assessments.</li> </ul>	Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission	Short Term
7	Establish a "Friends" group of volunteers for individual town conservation properties to support and help with maintenance, including trail infrastructure, debris and litter, installations, etc.	Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission	Short Term

	<b>STEWARD Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
8	Prioritize town conservation properties in need of invasive species management. Estimate costs and develop a 10-year schedule for management strategies.	Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission	Mid Term
9	Review and revise existing forest management plans (Henderson-Swasey (2011) and Oaklands (1993)) as needed to ensure they remain relevant to conservation land management goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify recommendations that have not been completed.</li> <li>Determine which recommendations are still relevant and which are not. Identify new recommendations as needed.</li> <li>Develop a 10-year schedule for maintenance, improvements, or future assessments.</li> </ul>	Natural Resource Planner	Conservation Commission	Short Term

## Grow

	<b>GROW Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1	Continue to work with surrounding communities to address regional needs for workforce housing and provide more diverse housing options.	Town Planner	Housing Advisory Committee	Ongoing
2	Assess future housing growth by conducting a buildout analysis under current zoning conditions. Determine if the outcome of housing types will meet projected future needs, as outlined in the HAC 2017 report.	Town Planner, Town Manager	Housing Advisory Committee, Planning Board	Short Term
3a	Investigate potential expansion of allowed housing types in Exeter (e.g., cottage communities, etc.) and present findings at an All Boards meeting.	Town Planner, Town Manager	Housing Advisory Committee, Planning Board	Short Term
3b	Develop a public education campaign to raise the awareness of housing needs in Exeter and the different housing that can meet those needs. Include the local business community to understand housing needs of their employees.	Town Planner	Housing Advisory Committee	Short Term
3c	Review zoning ordinances to identify recommended changes that will create a balance of housing types to meet projected future needs. This might include review of multi-family structures allowed in R-1 districts, density and other incentives in the Affordable Housing Ordinance, and residential lot size requirements in single family residential districts.	Town Planner	Housing Advisory Committee, Planning Board	Short Term to Mid Term

	<b>GROW Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
4a	Research incentives for infill development in R-1 and R-2 zoning districts to encourage the creation of smaller, more affordable homes. Focus on approaches that ensure infill maintains the look and feel of the existing neighborhoods.	Town Planner	Planning Board, Housing Advisory Committee	Mid Term
4b	Move forward on the most feasible incentive(s) for infill housing by incorporating them into local regulations and/or policies. (this follows prior action)	Town Planner	Planning Board, Affordable Housing Committee, Selectboard	Mid Term
5a	Evaluate the Town's property tax exemption programs (elderly, alternative energy, RSA 79E, etc.) to determine their costs and project future impacts based on demographic changes and other trends.	Town Manager, Tax Assessor, Economic Development Director	Selectboard	Mid Term
5b	Set up a schedule to periodically examine property tax exempt programs to ensure fairness and equitable distribution across residential property types.	Town Manager, Tax Assessor	Selectboard	Mid Term
6	Develop a clearinghouse of low-interest loan and grant opportunities for Exeter residents to make improvements to older homes to address needed upgrades, energy efficiency, or environmental hazard reduction. Resources may be New Hampshire Housing, local non-profits, or use of Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) to establish a municipal program.	To be determined	Housing Advisory Committee	Mid Term
7	Review the Zoning Map against the goals of this plan to determine if commercial district boundaries should be adjusted. Also review boundaries to see if lines should be altered to better coincide with parcel boundaries.	Town Planner, Economic Development Director, Town Manager	Planning Board, Economic Development Commission, Selectboard	Short Term
8	Support the Lincoln Street Improvement Project with the development of a physical master plan for the Lincoln Street area as a village-scale Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Evaluate land uses, building-to-street relationships, and features of the public realm. Assess multi-modal connections (walking, biking, bus/train) with Downtown and other neighborhoods. Be sure to incorporate both elementary schools and PEA. Consider other studies that may be concurrent under CONNECT.	Town Manager, Town Planner	Economic Development Committee, Planning Board, Selectboard	Short Term

	<b>GROW Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
9	<p>Continue efforts to improve circulation and promote high quality development along Portsmouth Avenue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue work on developing a form-based code for the corridor (started in 2012).</li> <li>• Continue support of the CIP project for reconstruction of the roadway to correct drainage, utility, traffic flow, signal, stormwater, sidewalk, and streetscape deficiencies.</li> <li>• Evaluate bus service and how it does or can impact redevelopment.</li> <li>• Incorporate the recommendations of the bike and pedestrian master plan developed under CONNECT.</li> </ul>	Town Planner, Economic Development Director, Dept of Public Works	Economic Development Committee, Planning Board	Mid Term
10	Evaluate the use of tax increment financing (TIF) and other financial incentives in other commercial areas of town.	Economic Development Director	Economic Development Committee	Short Term
11	Continue to identify improvements to public spaces and the public realm in the Downtown to enhance its character. This may include public art, pedestrian amenities, or signage. Maintain consistency with bike and pedestrian linkages under CONNECT.	Town Planner		Ongoing
12	Inventory under-utilized and under-developed properties in commercial areas. Identify potential partners (both public and private) to assess the redevelopment opportunities of priority properties.	Economic Development Director, Town Planner	Economic Development Committee	Mid Term
13	Continue to use economic development strategies already in place (79E, TIF district, etc.) to retain and grow existing businesses and attract new commercial development in all commercial corridors. Regularly evaluate their ability to meet stated goals and objectives.	Economic Development Director	Economic Development Committee	Ongoing

# Connect

	CONNECT Action	Town Lead	Town Support	Timeframe
1a	Conduct traffic and parking studies for the Downtown and prioritize recommendations. Evaluate traffic flow and pedestrian movement to and through Downtown to understand final destinations and impacts on local businesses. Develop a parking management plan with a 6-year schedule for implementation.	Town Planner, Economic Development Director	Dept of Public Works, Economic Development Committee, Planning Board, Selectboard	Short Term
1b	Research funding alternatives to augment the implementation of the parking management plan.	Town Planner, Economic Development Director	Planning Board, Selectboard	Mid Term
2a	<p>Prepare a town-wide Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan that looks at both walking and biking as modes of transportation beyond recreation. Identify improvements to existing amenities and areas where new amenities could be feasibly installed to promote walking and biking. Use the concurrent parking study (or parking management plan if already developed) for Downtown to inform the plan.</p> <p>Destinations/Routes to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All public schools</li> <li>• Epping Road to Downtown</li> <li>• Lincoln Street/Train Station to Downtown</li> <li>• Portsmouth Avenue to Downtown</li> <li>• All surrounding residential areas to Downtown</li> <li>• Open space and recreational resources</li> </ul> <p>Prioritize improvements/new projects and develop a 10-year schedule for implementation.</p>	Town Planner, Dept of Public Works	Planning Board	Short Term
2b	Research funding alternatives to augment the implementation of the bike and pedestrian master plan.	Town Planner, Dept of Public Works	Planning Board, Selectboard	Mid Term
2c	Consider amending Site and Subdivision Regulations to put more emphasis on pedestrian and bike access within new development (as appropriate) and making connections with neighboring residential areas as well as shopping areas and recreation/conservation lands.	Town Planner	Planning Board, Selectboard	Mid Term



	<b>CONNECT Action</b>	<b>Town Lead</b>	<b>Town Support</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
3	Conduct a Complete Streets study. Based on its findings, develop and adopt a Complete Streets policy that requires new roads and reconstruction of existing roads to incorporate transit, walking, and biking amenities where possible. Use the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan and parking management plan to inform the policy.	Town Planner, Dept of Public Works	Economic Development Commission, Selectboard	Short Term
4	Working with private and public land owners, evaluate the feasibility of a pedestrian walkway/access along the Squamscott River from Swasey Parkway to the Library.	Town Planner, DPW, Town Manager	Selectboard, River Advisory Committee	Short Term
5	Prioritize local intersections that can benefit from safety improvements. Establish a 6-year schedule to develop conceptual designs in anticipation of funding.	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner, Town Manager	Planning Board, Selectboard	Short Term
6a	Conduct an access management study for Epping Road to determine if walking and biking recommendations are feasible. It should be consistent with the town-wide Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan. Develop physical planning concepts to guide future improvements.	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner, Economic Development	Planning Board, Selectboard	Short Term
6b	Prioritize public improvements based on the Epping Road Access Management Plan and develop a 6-year schedule to be included in the CIP. Keep apprised of NHDOT funding (TIP) and other sources to augment CIP funding.	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner, Economic Development	Planning Board, Selectboard	Short Term
7	Partner with the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission to study the feasibility of localized transit options (shuttles, trolleys, etc.) that connect destinations. Evaluate year-round and seasonal service. Consider possible routes, costs, and management of services.	Town Planner, Economic Development Director, Town Manager	Planning Board, Selectboard	Long Term
8	Support and advocate for improvements to the Downeaster train station to include a heated/air conditioned waiting area, ticket kiosk, and public restrooms.	Town Planner, Town Manager	Selectboard	Long Term/ Ongoing

## Communicate

	COMMUNICATE Action	Town Lead	Town Support	Timeframe
1	Establish a small committee charged with researching municipal information and management technologies for the Town. If deemed necessary by the committee, approve funding to hire one or more industry professionals that can help the Town select and launch a new information/ management/ permitting platform.	Town Manager, Information Technology	Selectboard	Short Term
2	Develop a more frequent official, regular system of interdepartmental meetings to review current initiatives and workload in each department and potential efficiencies that could occur by combining efforts.	Town Manager	Selectboard	Short to Mid Term
3	Develop materials (paper and/or digital) for the Town to be used to attract businesses, residents, and visitors. Work with the Chamber of Commerce, HERON, Historical Society, PEA, and other community groups and organizations.	Economic Development Director	Economic Development Commission, Historic District, Heritage Commission, Arts Committee	Mid Term
4	Continue to organize community forums to discuss issues important to Exeter. Ensure that events, especially large ones, provide options for food and child care.	TBD	Selectboard, All Boards, Town Departments	Short to Mid Term
5	Evaluate the ways in which the Town communicates with the public and ensure that strategies maximize citizen engagement across multiple platforms. Determine the strategies that could be strengthened and move forward with ways for improvement.	TBD		Short to Mid Term
6	Develop language to be included in municipal RFPs that requires the inclusion of diverse and effective public engagement processes as part of municipal planning, design, and construction processes.	Town Manager	All Departments issuing RFPs	Short Term