

A Vision for Gray

1

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of an on-going public involvement process initiated for the purpose of developing a vision for Gray's future. Creating this vision has been an important part of the community's planning efforts and provides a framework for subsequent policies and implementation recommendations contained in this comprehensive plan.

The first part of this chapter describes the process that was used by the town to prepare the comprehensive plan and various efforts employed to involve the public to the fullest extent possible in that process. This is followed by a section that summarizes the vision statement for the community and outlines a series of policies that will be used to guide actions towards achieving that vision. The last section of the chapter presents a Future Land Use Plan that illustrates a variety of concepts that can support implementation of the community's vision from a land use perspective.

2. The Comprehensive Plan and Vision Process

The Town of Gray prepared a long-term plan that will be used to manage growth in the community over the next 10 to 15 years. This plan, which is referred to as a comprehensive plan, will be used by the Planning Board, Town Council, and other town boards and staff, to guide their actions regarding issues and opportunities that will confront Gray in the future. The plan was prepared by the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), a 22 member panel of town residents.

The comprehensive plan is comprised of four essential parts which include:

- A Vision (or Mission) Statement
- An Inventory of Existing Conditions

- Principles/Policies
- An Implementation Strategy

Developing a solid comprehensive plan provides the basis for the town to manage its future versus just allowing changing circumstances to choose a course for the community. The public discussion and interaction that occurred during the preparation of the plan also offered an opportunity to identify a shared community vision about future development initiatives. Finally, the plan fosters the creation of important policy goals by delineating specific and measurable results.

In order for the comprehensive plan to be a useful document that can be successfully implemented, it must, to the extent possible, represent the desires and aspirations of the community as a whole. In an effort to develop a shared vision for the community, town officials and residents initiated a multi-year public planning process that took over two years to complete. Beginning in 2001, public discussions were facilitated during the course of five workshops at which over 250 participants provided input. These meetings included a cross-section of residents, business owners, public officials, and town staff. As a result of this public input process a draft Vision Statement was created that contained over 70 specific elements reflecting how the participants felt about traffic and roads, the environment, economic development, housing, municipal facilities and programs, land use regulations, and community character and values. These values and principles form the cornerstones of the community's vision since they provide the fabric that binds people together in their daily lives. The common ideals identified throughout the vision sessions included: diversity; respect; friendliness; rights; pride in our town; civility; stability; and, vision.

Following this initial vision process, the Comprehensive Plan Committee prepared an inventory and analysis (I&A) of existing conditions within the town. This I&A phase included an examination of population and housing, land use, natural and historic resources, transportation, open space and recreation, economic conditions and municipal finances, and municipal facilities. This information is presented in subsequent chapters of this comprehensive plan. The I & A phase introduced new information into the planning process that was not available during the preliminary stages of the visioning forums mentioned above. As the CPC began to review and discuss the findings and conclusions of the I & A phase it led to refinements of, and additions to, the original components of the Vision Statement. These revised vision concepts were developed by CPC members as part of public discussions as well as through a series of meetings held with town board members and other community civic groups. Information gathered from these additional discussions and meetings were used by the CPC to prepare a series of policy guidelines and important planning priorities for the town. These guidelines and priorities are outlined in the following section.

3. A Community Vision for Gray

These overarching principles, values and beliefs that were identified at the beginning of Gray's vision process were shaped into the following statements which present these concepts in a comprehensive and tangible manner that can be used to guide community planning efforts.

Our Community is a diverse group of people who interact with each other in a way that respects the individual while working towards a common good. It carefully balances its choices as it respects the constitutional rights of individuals, bringing together and directing its resources to create a stable and friendly atmosphere that tolerates differences through civility and is very proud of its accomplishments. The citizens see the future as an opportunity if properly planned for.¹

This statement of values was merged with input received during the workshops regarding how residents would like to see the town grow in the future. Based on that process the following vision statement was prepared for the community.

Gray continues to be a community at the crossroads of its future. It achieves its goals in a manner that brings the community closer to each other even though its growth may portend becoming larger. With carefully planned and implemented strategies, the community achieves its success assuring that the environmental assets are not sacrificed for short term economic gains; that its roads, facilities, regulatory processes and programs are provided in a manner that meets the needs of all its citizens; that the Town of Gray becomes the community where people desire to live, learn, work and play.²

The community vision presented above is a broad statement of standards that define the character and integrity that the town seeks to bring to its civic arena. This generalized concept has been expanded upon through a series of policy principles that relate to specific planning issues that were identified during the comprehensive planning process. These policies, which will be used by the town to guide its growth over the next decade, have been grouped into seven categories that include: Land Use and Housing; Natural and Historic Resources; Transportation; Recreation and Open Space; Municipal Services and Utilities; Economic Development; and Administration and Regional Coordination. These policies, along with some of their underlying issues and implications, are presented below.

A. Policies Related to Land Use and Housing

Policy A.1: The town's zoning ordinance and land use regulations should be designed to promote varying densities of housing development in specific areas that are sensitive to natural resources and existing environmental conditions.

¹From a memorandum dated November 6, 2001, from Donnie Carroll and Mitch Berkowitz to the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

²Ibid

Policy A.2: Use the town's land use regulations to promote the efficient development of the remaining undeveloped land resources that supports the cost-effective provision of municipal services.

Policy A.3: Alternatives for the creation of more senior housing near the Village center should be promoted more vigorously.

Policy A.4: The town should use its authority to regulate housing development to further the open space goals identified in the comprehensive plan.

Policy A.5: It is important for the town to provide suitable areas in the community for the development of commercial and industrial land uses in order to expand the non-residential property tax base and offer services and employment opportunities for residents. Therefore, the town should ensure that an adequate supply of land is made available for these types of uses, as an integrated part of its future land use plan.

Issues and Implications

- Residential development is becoming increasingly scattered throughout the community establishing a land use pattern that could be referred to as rural sprawl.
- There is only a small amount of undeveloped land available for higher density residential development, in the Medium District zone, near the Village center. The limited amount of land available for higher density housing reduces opportunities for the construction of affordable and senior housing
- A large percentage of the town is zoned to permit gravel extraction operations.
- Existing commercial zoning districts along the Lewiston and Portland Roads will promote increased strip development, especially retail and service uses.
- Land in the Commercial district is being inefficiently used by existing businesses which limits the possibility for maximizing the district's development potential in the future.
- There are a number of uses permitted in various zoning districts that are incompatible with the primary intent of the district.
- Changes in the rural landscape will affect the traditional use of the land as a shared community resource for land based recreation (such as fishing, hunting, hiking, snowmobiling) and from a quality of life perspective.
- New subdivision roads may result in the creation of a haphazard road network that does not efficiently serve the needs of the town.
- The amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial development is probably insufficient to provide adequate options for expansion of the town's non-residential tax base.

B. Policies Related to Natural and Historic Resources

Policy B.1: The town should take a unified approach to protecting its natural resources and preserving important habitat areas. This effort should involve a variety of methods and techniques

for land conservation.

Policy B.2: Gray must take steps to conserve land not only to protect important wildlife habitat and natural resources, but also to preserve the town's resource based economy related to forestry and agriculture, which are key elements of the community's sense of rural character.

Policy B.3: Gray should work with adjoining towns, possibly through the regional planning agency, to ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken to protect water quality so that the cumulative impacts of future land development in the region do not adversely affect this resource.

Policy B.4: The town's historic buildings and cultural sites are essential to maintaining the character of the community and a shared identity amongst its residents. The protection and preservation of these resources should be addressed in an administrative manner by town government.

Issues and Implications

- Failure to identify and protect important open space and other natural resources in a comprehensive manner will require the town to take a re-active posture regarding development proposals that encroach on these areas.
- Gray's surface waters, which include streams, rivers, and great ponds, cross municipal boundaries, as do the watersheds associated with these water bodies.
- The protection and preservation of Gray's natural resources will become more difficult and complex as the town continues to grow.
- The town's remaining historic and cultural resources are not currently protected from alteration or demolition.
- The loss and deterioration of both the natural and historic resources in Gray is occurring in an incremental fashion which results in the impacts being less perceptible on a day-to-day basis.
- The continued loss of historic resources will adversely affect the sense of community character and shared past that many residents associate with their town.

C. Policies Related to Transportation

Policy C.1: Reinforce the town's rural character by reducing traffic congestion. This should be accomplished by promoting higher density development in specific locations, such as in and around the Village area, which would reduce the need for cross-town, local traffic. This policy should be further supported by creating alternate traffic routes around these higher density locations.

Policy C.2: Public safety should be a major focus of the town's transportation improvement program. This goal should be advanced by making appropriate improvements to the town's vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle network in order to reduce accidents and injuries.

Policy C.3: Continue to work cooperatively with state and federal agencies, as well as neighboring communities, on making improvements to the local and regional transportation system. The town

should place a high priority on financing and managing necessary improvements through state and federal sources. However, local funding and management should also be considered an option when support from state and federal sources cannot be obtained.

Policy C.4: Input from local residents should play a greater role in shaping decisions regarding transportation issues in Gray. This policy should be achieved by increasing community awareness related to transportation issues through various public forums, as well as through increased oversight by residents in appropriate town and regional committees.

Issues and Implications

- Increased development is causing an over utilization of public roadways and is resulting in increased demand for improved roadways.
- The current condition of many urban roads are hazardous to vehicular and pedestrian travel.
- Many rural roads are physically unable to handle increasing traffic and pedestrian volume.
- Many of the minor collector/arterial roads have congested segments.
- Due to increased traffic levels some local roads now function as collectors/arterials.
- There is a frequent occurrence of disconnected sidewalks resulting in a disjointed pedestrian network throughout the town
- Gray has very limited public transit service.
- The existing roadway network was not designed to accommodate increases in traffic volumes.
- Increases in the number of curb cuts for driveways onto major roadways will interrupt the flow of traffic and create additional congestion.
- Lack of dedicated bike lanes create safety issues for cyclists and vehicles.

D. Policies Related to Recreation and Open Space

Policy D.1: Gray should establish a goal of preserving at least one acre of land for each resident of the town and should rely on information and criteria presented in the comprehensive plan to aid in determining land preservation priorities for the community.

Policy D.2: Taxpayers need to understand the cost impacts associated with developing land, versus maintaining land in an undeveloped state, and the need to be provide residents with adequate information so that they can make informed decisions regarding open space preservation.

Policy D.3: Portions of Gray are better suited for preservation, versus development, based on existing natural and cultural resources located in certain areas of the community. These areas should be recognized in the town’s ordinances as being of highest priority for protection and preservation.

Policy D.4: A variety of techniques should be used to preserve open space and manage growth in order to both preserve the character of the community and reduce the impacts of development on the cost of providing municipal services.

Policy D.5: The shared use of recreation facilities by the town’s Recreation Department, School District, and private associations is a very practical approach to meeting the community’s facility needs. This approach should be continued through a more coordinated process in order to better manage increased usage of existing recreation facilities.

Policy D.6: As the town continues to grow it will need to consider expanding recreation opportunities available to residents. Therefore, residents should be offered more regular opportunities to provide input regarding the types of recreation facilities and activities they desire. In addition, the town should also expand available recreation facilities through the use of existing facilities not owned by the town and by creating new facilities through appropriate regulatory mechanisms.

Issues and Implications

- The amount of land permanently protected as open space in Gray is inadequate if the town is to retain its community character and offer recreation activities that residents have come to expect from living there.
- Presently, there is no entity within Gray that has as its primary responsibility advocating for the preservation of open space and protection of natural resources. If the town does not establish a municipal board or other private ad hoc group dedicated to conservation and land preservation, it is unlikely that a significant amount of land will ever be set aside as permanently dedicated open space.
- The shared use of school recreation facilities by the school district, town recreation program, and private groups results in a higher than normal impact on the condition of these facilities.
- The playing fields and gymnasiums at the school district complex are not being used to their fullest potential due to current funding levels for staffing and maintenance.
- Public access to the town’s lakes and rivers is very limited.
- As the town continues to grow it may have insufficient recreation facilities in outlying areas to service new neighborhoods.
- The continued concentration of recreation activities at the schools and Pennell facilities will require increased staffing and maintenance in order to maximize their use without adversely affecting the quality of the facilities over the long-term.

E. Policies Related to Municipal Services and Utilities

Policy E.1: Gray should attempt to moderate the cost of providing municipal services through the continued and expanded use of community volunteers.

Policy E.2: The cost of providing municipal services should be regulated through the careful advance planning of expenditures. The town should schedule predictable long-term costs, such as maintenance and capital expansions, through a continuous multi-year investment plan.

Policy E.3: The town should attempt to ameliorate municipal services costs through collaboration

and alliances with neighboring communities. This goal should be supported by regularly reviewing and updating existing and potential inter-municipal collaborations before committing to additional major expenditures.

Policy E.4: Providing for public safety is a paramount responsibility of local government. The town should continue to maintain public safety services that are adequate to respond to modern hazards as well as evolving community expectations.

Policy E.5: The cost of providing municipal facilities and services should be supported, where appropriate, through fees for services as well as development impact fees.

Policy E.6: Local government should be responsive to residents' needs and should continually update the citizenry regarding its effectiveness through a variety of public forums and other methods of effective communication.

Policy E.7: Gray should promote the efficient and effective use of town committees and town staff by adopting cost-effective procedures to promote the productivity of both.

Policy E.8: The town and the Gray Water District should continue to work cooperatively to ensure that future land use recommendations presented in this plan are supported by the expansion policies of the Water District.

Issues and Implications

- Gray is presently confronted with the need to upgrade, expand or reconstruct many of its municipal and school buildings.
- Some of the issues related to municipal facilities are due to growth in the community which results in the need to provide existing services to more people, households, vehicles, etc. However, some of the deficiencies in the town's infrastructure are also attributable to the lack of sustained capital investment over a continuous time period.
- A number of the potential facility improvements being considered involve decisions that will affect multiple town and school buildings.
- Some of the municipal service issues the town is now considering are related to the level of service residents and businesses would like to maintain in areas such as police and fire protection, library, recreation, and school facilities.
- The town should pursue a logical and comprehensive approach to capital facilities planning that evaluates the needs across departments to allow for improvements to be integrated where appropriate and phased in over a period of time.
- Capital improvements should be based not only on which alternative will serve the immediate needs of the community, but also provide the town with the opportunity to upgrade those facilities, if appropriate, to a service level beyond the foreseeable planning horizon of this comprehensive plan.

F. Policies Related to Economic Development

Policy F.1: Enhance the capacity of the Gray community to play an active role in promoting sound, sustainable economic development.

Policy F.2: Increase the awareness and consideration of Gray as a business location.

Policy F.3: Improve the image of Gray as a desirable community in which to locate a business.

Policy F.4: Retain and expand the range of goods and services available in Gray.

Policy F.5: Increase the supply of well located and serviced land to accommodate office, manufacturing, distribution, and similar types of land uses in Gray.

Issues and Implications

- The town has a limited commitment and modest capacity to promote economic growth. Competing for economic growth in the future will require that the community become more committed and prepared to attract the type of business and industry it desires.
- Gray’s location along the Maine Turnpike, between the Greater Portland and Lewiston-Auburn areas, can be a strength but it also, due to strong competition, results in the town being overlooked in the business site search process. This situation may be exacerbated by the development of Pineland office facility in New Gloucester.
- Traffic congestion in the Village is perceived as a major obstacle to economic growth in the community.
- The ability to attract new businesses is partially dependent upon the image and appearance of the physical environment of the town
- The availability of an adequate water supply is essential for supporting economic development.
- The customers who patronize businesses in Gray also do a significant share of their spending on goods and services outside Gray.
- There is a limited number of businesses located in Gray that offer comparison or specialty goods.
- The rezoning of land and the ability to develop residential uses in commercial zones has reduced the supply of vacant land available for economic development.

G. Administration and Regional Coordination

Policy G.1: Continue to promote a “user friendly” model of public participation in Gray that increases opportunities for residents to be involved in directing the operation of town government.

Policy G.2: Keep residents well informed regarding issues and activities related to the operation of town services in order to promote an informed dialogue and consensus within the community.

Policy G.3: Promote regionalism as a means to address issues confronting the community in a cost-effective manner, while also reducing the use of resources and the duplication of services and facilities.

Issues and Implications

- As Gray continues to grow the administration of town government and the provision of services will become increasing complex.
- As the number of people living and working in Gray increases it will become more difficult for all members of the community to make their opinions known to the governing body and town administrators. Therefore, methods of soliciting public input and distributing information will need to be expanded.
- Growth will continue to place additional strain on the town's municipal and school services in the future. The town will need to consider expanding the use of alternatives such as the regional delivery of municipal services and the use of private sector companies to address these needs.

4. Future Land Use for Gray's Vision

Transforming the community's vision from concept to reality involves developing a representation of key vision concepts on a map of the town. Not all elements of the vision can be represented geographically, such as those that are strictly regulatory or program related. However, other vision concepts and policies can be illustrated graphically in terms of their integration with the future land use plan of the town. Many of the vision concepts have elements that relate to specific locations within the town such as the Village, the lake areas, or the industrial park, while others affect all, or multiple portions of the community. This portion of the chapter outlines and discusses the proposed uses of land for various areas of the town. These areas are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Map 1-1) which presents a conceptualized vision for Gray's future land uses. The map divides the town into seven (7) areas which reflect the vision/future land use concepts that have evolved from the planning process. These areas have been delineated based on a number of factors which include the vision components, existing land use patterns, the transportation network, economic factors, and the existence of important natural resources and natural constraints.

What follows is a summary of the proposed role that each of these areas will play in fulfilling Gray's vision for the future. This overview presents the potential land uses, zoning densities, facilities upgrades, and other characteristics that might be appropriate for these areas. Terminology such as *growth areas*, *rural areas*, and *transitional areas* is used to describe various sections of the town in this land use plan. These terms are taken from state statutes that govern the preparation of comprehensive plans. Growth areas denote locations that are considered more suitable for receiving a greater portion of the town's future residential and commercial growth. For Gray, growth areas are primarily designated as 1 and 3 on Map 1-1. Transitional areas are also considered well-suited to received a portion of the town's future growth albeit at a lesser amount and lower density than in the growth areas. Transitional areas for Gray are areas 2 and 7 on the map. Rural areas are those that are deserving of some level of regulatory protection from unrestricted development in order to

Front Page Map 1-1 - Future Land Use Map

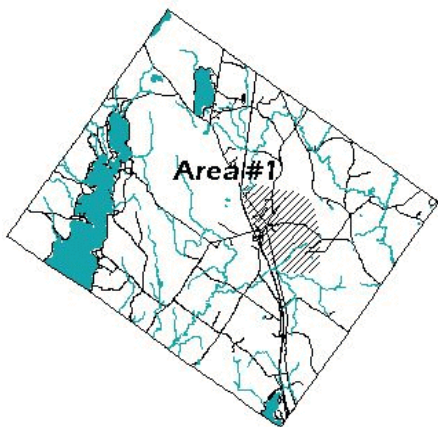
INSERT FUTURE LAND USE MAP (MAP 1)

BACK OF FUTURE LAND USE MAP 1-1

support agriculture and forestry, and preserve wildlife habitat, scenic areas, and open space. These are areas, according to state statutes, that growth should be directed away from, over the next 10 years. Rural areas in the Gray vision include area 4, 5 and 6 on the Future Land Use Map.

Also noted on Map 1-1 are dashed lines which denote the need to “Improve Traffic Circulation” in various locations of the town. One of these lines represents the bypass that the state is planning to construct between Route 202 (Windham Road) and Route 26 (Shaker Road). However, the other map notations denote only the need to improve transportation “links” in certain areas, but do not necessarily reflect the exact locations of a specific roadway.

Area 1. Village Center (Growth Area)



The Village area is presently the town’s center of commerce and governmental services. Its location at the crossroads of several major roadways has contributed to high traffic usage which also makes it attractive to businesses. The Village’s New England character, which results from its compact development, historic buildings, narrow streets, and mixture of land uses, is something that residents have indicated is important to maintain. Enhancing the vitality of the Village will depend on preserving these characteristics and providing opportunities to add new businesses as well as residences to support these types of activities.

ISSUES

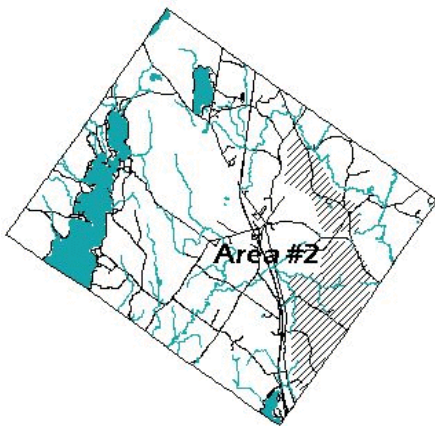
- Existing “Village area” has limited land for expansion.
- Existing roadway network is serving the needs of both regional and local traffic.
- Turnpike exit “funnels” large traffic volumes through center of Village.
- Traffic circulation is congested at peak hour periods.
- Gravel pit expansion and related truck traffic is incompatible with continued growth of the Village area.
- Traffic volumes and limited amount of sidewalks does not create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Parking availability is limited.
- Lack of mandatory building design guidelines has resulted in the creation of buildings that do not mesh with the Village’s historic character.
- Location of aquifer for municipal well must be addressed.
- Commercial strip development on roads leading to the Village will compete with potential expansion of this area as a commercial hub.
- Historic buildings are being altered or removed.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Area has existing cluster of government/civic buildings
- Still has a significant amount of historic buildings with possibility of establishing a historic district.
- Access is available to inter-urban railroad right-of-way for possible pedestrian use.
- Gray Meadow wetland complex offers possibilities for recreation and education.
- The area is serviced by the municipal water system.
- Existing base of commercial establishments on which to build.
- High traffic volumes offer potential customer base for future business development.
- Undeveloped land is available adjacent to existing Village for future expansion.
- Higher density of development offers opportunities for the creation of senior and affordable housing.
- Construction of the planned bypass should help to enhance the Village environment for business and pedestrians uses.
- Create a “boulevard” on Shaker/Lewiston/Portland Roads with tree planting/landscaping, sidewalks, signage to announce entrance into village area.

Area 1. Land Use Concepts

- Expand the area of the Village “environment”
- High density, mixed residential and commercial uses (possibly $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 acre minimum lot size with special conditions required within aquifer overlay areas)
 - broaden mix of commercial goods and services
 - develop in the style of a New England Village
- Senior/multi-family housing options
- Building/site design standards
- Enhanced pedestrian environment/make less auto-dependent
 - extend sidewalks
 - incorporate inter-urban railroad right-of-way
- Improved traffic circulation and parking
- Preserve historic properties/potential historic district
- Boulevard treatment on Shaker/Lewiston/Portland Roads
 - roadway width at suitable proportions for a Village area
 - could include tree planting/landscaping, sidewalks, signage
 - create “gateways” to announce entrance into Village area
- Government functions/community gathering places
- Preserve/Buffer Gray Meadow wetland
 - use for recreation/education
 - tie-in with inter-urban railroad ROW trail
- Restrict gravel pit expansion

Area 2. Residential Transitional Neighborhoods (Growth Area)

Within the Vision for Gray these neighborhood areas represent a transition between the high density, mixed use development of the Village area and the more rural outlying portions of the community. Existing development is generally characterized by a modest amount of residential housing as well as a number of sand and gravel operations. Soils in these areas have good potential to support development and there are relatively few natural constraints, such as wetlands and steep slopes.

ISSUES

- Portions of this area are currently regulated by Aquifer Overlay Zoning District.
- Gray Meadow wetland complex is a sensitive natural area that would have to be buffered from future development.
- Expansion of existing sand and gravel operations would be in conflict with proposed future residential development.
- Expansion of the roadway network would have to be well planned in order to avoid future traffic circulation issues.

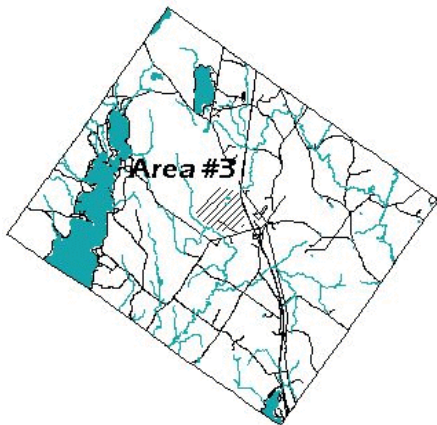
OPPORTUNITIES

- This area has soils that typically are ranked as having *good to high* potential for development on septic systems.
- Municipal water lines are in close proximity which would allow for future extension into these areas.
- Due to the limited natural constraints and availability of municipal water these areas could potentially support a higher density of residential development.
- Higher density housing would allow for the potential of more affordable housing.
- Residential development in these areas would support future commercial development in the Village.
- Compact development will allow for the more efficient and cost-effective provision of municipal services.

Area 2. Land Use Concepts

- Medium housing density (possibly 1 to 1½ acre minimum lot size)
- Residential development to support commercial expansion in Village area
- Provide municipal water service extension
- Location of future municipal facilities (parks, recreation, etc.)
- Minimize gravel pit expansion
- Remove aquifer overlay zone restrictions

Area 3. Business Development (Growth Area)



The expansion of business development has been a focus of Gray in recent years in order to broaden the town’s non-residential tax base. The current amount of land zoned for businesses town-wide is relatively limited and not all readily developable due to natural constraints and the condition of existing structures. The designation of a business development growth area would expand the amount of land available for office and industrial development. The area has excellent highway access and availability of municipal water. The planned bypass connector from the Turnpike, which will traverse this area, would contribute to these types of uses.

ISSUES

- Traffic issues will need to be addressed at the access point to this area from the Village center to the Turnpike interchange and onto Route 202/115.
- Development of this area will likely result in the conversion of some farmland to non-agricultural uses.
- The area is adjacent to the town’s closed landfill which is presently going through post-closure monitoring phase.
- A portion of this area would coincide with the town’s Wellhead Protection District, which restricts development around the municipal water supply’s well.
- The appearance of the access to this area on Route 202/115 should create a suitable “gateway” for the desired attractive business park.

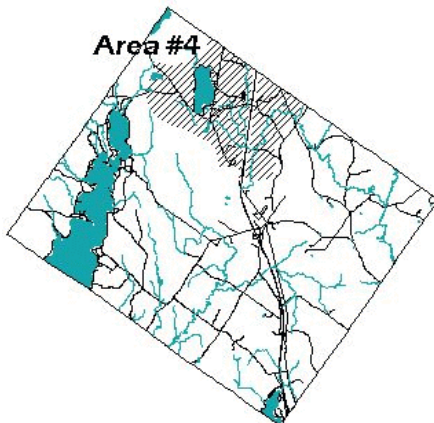
OPPORTUNITIES

- There is an existing business park at the entrance to this area which would be a positive marketing feature.
- The area is relatively undeveloped which would minimize the impact on existing residential neighborhoods.
- The topography and soils in the area should present relatively few constraints for development.
- Expanded non-residential development, such as office, hospitality and industrial uses, will help reduce future impacts on residential property taxes.
- Integrate transportation/traffic improvements for this area with planned bypass construction.
- Construction of the Turnpike bypass would allow for a future roadway connection between Route 202/115 and Route 100 (Portland Road).

Area 3. Land Use Concepts

- Concentrated commercial/office/industrial development
- Expand municipal water system service
- Manage traffic impacts/control curb cut access points
- Revise/incorporate bypass design into area’s future development

Area 4. Rural Residential (Aquifer Protection)



This portion of town is one of the more intensively developed areas of Gray. Existing land use is characterized by a mixture of medium to high density housing, farmland, gravel pits, recreation uses, and municipal and school services. Crystal Lake is located in this portion of the community, as well as several streams and wetlands that are part of the Royal River watershed. This area is also located over one of the town’s most productive groundwater aquifers which supplies the municipal drinking water system.

ISSUES

- Continued development in this area will have to be balanced with the need to protect groundwater quality and quantity.
- Consideration will also need to be given to area streams and wetlands in order to protect water quality.
- High density residential development around Crystal Lake will require continued monitoring to ensure no degradation of water quality from septic systems and runoff.
- Residential growth in this area, combined with increasing regional traffic, is creating safety issues on local roadways.

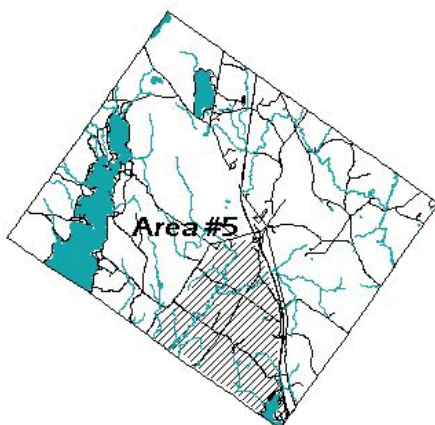
OPPORTUNITIES

- New mapping prepared by the state has reduced the area defined as important for protecting the aquifer. This could reduce the amount of land restricted by the town’s existing aquifer zoning regulations.
- Maintaining the numerous parcels currently used for agriculture and forest management in their current state will help to protect water quality and provide open space.
- A long-term strategy to preserve the state’s Game Farm as conservation land would also help to protect water quality and maintain open space.
- Recognition of the “Dry Mills” historic settlement area could help to preserve some of the town’s historic resources.

Area 4. Land Use Concepts

- Lower density residential development (density is reduced to offset growth in areas 1 & 2 and to reduce potential impacts to drinking water aquifer)
- Potential minimum lot size of three (3) acres
- Minimize future development impacts around Crystal Lake area
- Increase protection of stream corridors and associated wetlands
- Preserve existing agricultural land
- Encourage alternative methods of housing development around natural resources and agricultural land (e.g. cluster)

Area 5. Rural Residential (River/Lake Protection)



This area of Gray is predominantly characterized by lower density single family homes and scattered subdivisions interspersed with some agricultural and forest management properties. The area also contains the main channel of the Pleasant River, which has a large expanse of adjacent wetlands, and a watershed that covers over one-third of the town’s land area. Gray’s portion of Forest Lake is located in the southeast corner of this area and several hills, including Varney Hill and Dutton Hill, contain some steeper terrain.

ISSUES

- The Pleasant River currently receives only minimal protection under existing zoning regulations.
- Continued residential subdivisions have the potential to fragment land along the river corridor which would impact its value as wildlife habitat.
- Roadways are not pedestrian/bike “friendly”.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The river offers a natural corridor for recreation and wildlife.
- Promote/mandate alternative subdivision techniques around the river/wetland corridors.
- Promote conservation/protection of hilltop and steep slope areas.
- This area has a large expanse of important wetlands that would be well suited for land conservation initiatives by the town.
- There is a moderate amount of agricultural and forestry land that contributes to the town’s rural character.

Area 5. Land Use Concepts

- Lower density residential development (density is reduced to offset growth in areas 1, 2 & 3)
- Potential minimum lot size of three (3) acres
- Minimize future development impacts around Forest Lake area
- Increase protection of Presumpscot River corridor and associated wetlands
- Preserve existing agricultural land
- Encourage alternative methods of housing development around natural resources and agricultural land (e.g. cluster)

Area 6. Residential/Resource Protection



These two sections of Gray are characterized by a combination of sensitive natural resources and large tracts of undeveloped land. The eastern side of town contains a portion of the Collyer Brook/Royal River watershed which has very steep slopes bordering the stream corridors. Residential development is relatively limited and is interspersed with agricultural and forestry parcels. The western side of town encompasses the Little Sebago Lake watershed and also has some moderately steep slopes. Residential development around the lake has very high density but the remainder of the area has limited development. There are a number of properties managed for forestry products that form part of the area’s

large, unfragmented tracts of wildlife habitat.

ISSUES

- Continuing the current pattern of low density residential development will result in “sprawling” growth that fragments large tracts of land.
- The loss of large tracts of unfragmented land will limit traditional activities such as hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.
- High density development around the lake creates long-term concerns related to water quality.
- Steep slopes in these areas are not well suited for development, which can lead to soil erosion and runoff of contaminants into surface waters.
- Providing municipal services to these outlying portions of town will result in additional expenditures and more roadway construction.

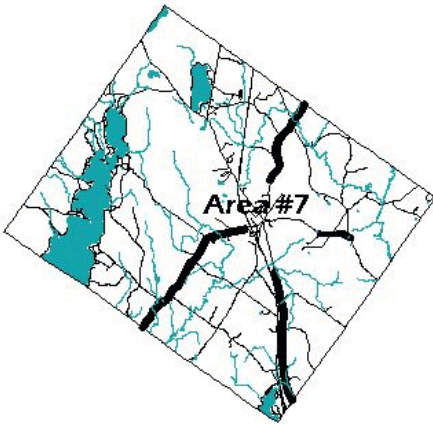
OPPORTUNITIES

- Large tracts of undeveloped land offer possibilities for the expansion of town-wide conservation efforts.
- Open spaces and natural features such as streams and hills offer potential for expanding recreational activities.
- Preserving open space in these areas can help to promote the continuation of forestry-related businesses.
- Large forested tracts offer the possibility for establishing a town forest.
- Protecting “buffer” land areas along the numerous stream corridors could be used to “link” open space areas together for recreation trails and wildlife use.
- There are several large tracts of state-owned conservation land that would augment the town’s land conservation efforts.
- Working with adjoining towns on land preservation activities could support town conservation efforts.

Area 6. Land Use Concepts

- Very low residential density or mandatory alternative subdivision methods, such as cluster housing, at higher density (3 to 4 acre minimum lot size depending on overlay zones and density bonuses)
- Encourage/mandate alternative subdivision methods such as cluster housing
- Reduced density to help minimize demand for municipal services in the future
- Promote outdoor recreation activities
- Maintain large, unfragmented blocks of wildlife habitat
- Expand protection for stream corridors and associated wetlands - use these corridors as “linkages” between future conservation parcels
- Work regionally with adjoining towns, as well as the state, to preserve abutting tracts of unfragmented habitat or conservation land
- Encourage the continuation/expansion of forestry related land management
- Potential location for town forest
- Minimize future development impacts around Little Sebago Lake area
- Minimize development on steeper slopes

Area 7. Highway Transitional



These roadways represent major transportation corridors that move traffic within the community and the adjoining region. Portions of these highways have been zoned for commercial and business use in an effort to expand the community’s non-residential tax base and provide goods and services for residents. Land uses along these corridors are a mixture of commercial, industrial, and residential development. The land that abuts these roadways represent a “transition zone” between the adjoining residential or undeveloped parcels and a “highway environment”. It also represents a transition away from or into the Village center.

ISSUES

- Increasing traffic volumes on these roadways will make them less desirable for residential uses.
- Retail expansion along these roadways could result in commercial “strip development” which could exacerbate traffic conditions.
- Commercial development along these corridors could potentially compete with commercial expansion of the Village area.
- There is a considerable amount of existing residential development along these corridors that will have to be “redeveloped” in order for new businesses to be established.
- These roadways represent “gateways” into the town and should create a positive image for the community.

OPPORTUNITIES

- These corridors have not yet developed to a point where changes in land use cannot be instituted.
- Gateways (which might include signage, landscaping, or other design elements) could be created at the entrance points into town and the Village area.
- Establish zoning that promotes businesses which are not large traffic generators, such as offices or professional services.
- Create corridor management plans that control important design aspects of these roadways such as intersection signalization, pedestrian/bike access, lane widths, median strip/landscaping, turning movements, etc.

Area 7. Land Use Concepts

- Non-residential development of major highway corridors (due to increasing traffic volumes these roads are not well suited for residential development)
- Minimize sprawling commercial strip development by employing corridor management techniques such as shared driveway accesses and creation of parallel service roads
- Limit retail uses and other “high traffic generating” types of uses
- Create “community gateway” treatments near town line locations
- Work with adjoining communities to deter regional sprawl of commercial development along these roadways

AREA 8. HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL (GROWTH AREA)



The expansion of commercial land has been a topic of discussion in Gray for many years. In response to this, the Town needs to broaden its tax base from a residential base to encourage more commercial business. Proposed Growth Area 8 lends itself well to highway - oriented commercial use. Route 26 is a major arterial funneling a great deal of traffic in and around the town. It also serves as a major connecting link for local residents. Serving this area is the recently opened westerly bypass (Route 26A) which diverts traffic around the Village area.

This neighborhood is presently characterized by mixed, low density development including, on the east side of Route 26, a number of residential properties and a medical office building.

On the west side of Shaker Road (Route 26), there lies a combination of various land uses, including that of the intersection of the new westerly bypass connector (Route 26A), a gravel pit, a municipal complex consisting of a central fire station, the public works garage, and a solid waste facility. Other developments on the west side of Shaker Road include a mobile home park and the Gray/New Gloucester (SAD#15) High School and Middle School.

The land area within Growth Area 8 is illustrated on Gray Tax Map 27 dated April 1, 2005. More specifically it begins at the point where Route 26 and the Maine Turnpike intersect and to the east it follows the westerly boundary of the Maine Turnpike, on the north it is bordered by a single family residential neighborhood known as Evergreen Grove Subdivision, on the west it encompasses lots 15A-1, 20A-1, 2 & 3 and 20-12, thence southeasterly along the centerline of Route 26 to encompass lots 20-7, 20-7A, and 20-7C thence following the centerline of Route 26A and thence along the centerline of Route 26 to the point of beginning.

Soils are basically sand and gravel soils. The suitability of land for septic, basements, and roads is rated medium in the suitability index. Pockets of very low suitability are on the fringe.

Issues

- Route 26 is classified as a principal arterial with a high average daily traffic count. Because of the many municipal facilities in the area, traffic and pedestrian control is of paramount importance.
- This area is currently zoned Rural Residential agricultural, Aquifer Overlay and Wellhead Protection District.
- A National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) plot of land exists to the southeast of the area.
- The Wellhead Protection Zoning District lies south of the area and will likely serve as a boundary line for a newly established highway commercial zone.
- Existing Aquifer Overlay Zone regulations are unnecessarily restrictive for this area and could pose unreasonable hurdles to the type of development the Town wishes to encourage.

Opportunities

- Establish a new highway commercial district.
- The area is served by a public water system.
- The area has not developed to a point where changes in land use cannot be instituted.
- The topography and soils should present few constraints for development, and well-regulated development in this area will not pose unreasonable threats to the water supply aquifer.
- Commercial development in this area will reduce further impacts on residential property taxes and will diversify the economic tax base.
- Area 8 is a growth area where municipal facilities such as fire protection, public water, public works and solid waste, schools, recreation, and arterial highways are nearby.

Area 8 Land Use Concepts

- Access Management (Manage traffic impacts, control curb cuts, access points).
- Respond to completion of new Route 26A Connector with transitional commercial land uses as a transitional gateway to Town. Compliments “Future Land Use Area 3-Growth Area” uses.
- Minimum lot size 40,000 square feet.
- Concentrate commercial and retail uses including offices and banks and shopping centers – establish a new highway commercial district.
- Protect ground water quality by adopting more flexible and reasonable Aquifer Overlay Zone standards to allow for well-designed commercial development, and protect area wetlands.
- Provide buffer zones to residential uses.
- Institute corridor management plans that control important design aspects such as intersection signalization, land widths, turning movements, median strips, pedestrian and bike access and landscaping.
- Promote planned development within a “PUD” environment as opposed to “strip” development. Implement design guidelines to define attractive commercial gateway to community.