

# Acknowledgements

The Comprehensive Plan Steering
Committee was created in 2019 to update
the town's Comprehensive Plan from 2003.
This major effort involved a sustained
focus on reaching out to the public to
update the Town's vision for what Gray
could be in the future, to identify the
priorities, challenges and opportunities
Gray could be facing over the next 10-15
years, and to articulate the closely held
values of the people who live and work
in Gray.

Thank you to all who participated in this process, through attendance at meetings, emailing comments, completing surveys, or watching a video or liking a post on Facebook.



# Gray Comprehensive Plan Summary 2020

## A Special Thanks Goes to...

# The members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

These residents were appointed by the Town Council to guide the public participation and plan drafting for this major community undertaking.

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**Greater Portland Council of Governments** for Inventory Plan drafting

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## Introduction

#### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is a planning document intended to be a guide for communities when making policy and land use decisions over a 10 to 15 year period. The comprehensive planning process is an opportunity for communities to come together, take inventory of current trends and data at that moment in time, and look ahead at the challenges and opportunities facing the community. It is a chance to unite over a common vision of the future, while prioritizing common values determined by public input. After taking inventory of current trends and data, a public process is conducted to create a vision statement and values that will ultimately guide the recommendations of the Plan. The public process will also help to guide the development of a Future Land Use Plan which will determine where the town directs or discourages future growth and development.

The process of comprehensive planning is often the start of further conversations in the community around issues related to preservation of open spaces and rural character, economic development, housing options, how to serve the community's youngest and oldest residents, and other big topics. The Comprehensive Plan can help inform of those discussions and very often the Comprehensive Plan will include recommendations for further planning and policy work.

#### Why is it important?

The Comprehensive Plan is an important planning document because it guides policy decisions, zoning decisions, and municipal investments. The Comprehensive Plan consists of inventory chapters covering topics such as the economy, transportation, recreation, housing, and population. The inventory chapters provide a detailed overview of each topic which is important for long range planning decisions. Each chapter includes associated goals, strategies, and policies that will dictate how the Plan is implemented. The inventory process is a critical foundation that sets the stage for a public process that will ultimately craft the community's vision for the future and identify important shared values, as well as form the future land use section of this Plan. Taking inventory of our Town, as it stands today, allows for our community to be realistic about planning for the future. Being able to reflect on how and where Gray has developed in the past will help determine the course to take in the future.

Lastly, a Comprehensive Plan, approved as consistent by the State makes municipalities eligible for State grants and loans, and allows municipalities to legally impose a zoning and shoreland zoning ordinance.



#### Prior planning efforts

#### **Comprehensive Plan (2003)**

The plan was prepared by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, a 22 member panel of town residents. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan vision statement reads;

"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."

#### Village Master Plan (2006)

Gray's Village is located at the intersection of six major roadways and has seen increasing traffic volumes over the years. The Village Master Plan was developed by Greater Portland Council of Governments and guided by a Village Master Plan Advisory Committee, appointed by the Town Council. After conducting a public process that included public forums and stakeholder outreach, the Committee developed an action plan aligned with the Main Street America principles of downtown revitalization; organization, promotion, design, and economic.

**Organization:** Sustain leadership and momentum focused on public and private investment.

**Promotion:** Position the Village as an essential gateway to Western Maine and the Sebago Lakes Region.

**Design:** Reclaim the Village as a lively hub for residents, visitors, workers, and shoppers who can safely get around by foot, bicycle, and vehicle.

**Economic:** Re-establish the Village as the marketplace in the region for commerce and creativity.

The Village Master Plan discussed the impact that the Gray Connector (Route 26A), constructed in 2007, would have on the future of the downtown.

#### **Project Canopy Plan for Gray Village (2009)**

This technical report contains recommendations related to the start of a street tree program. This effort included an inventory of trees in and near the public right of way for five of the roads radiating out of the Village, including Shaker Road, Lewiston Road, Yarmouth Road and Portland Road. Recommendations included diversifying the species of trees in the Village, maintenance recommendations for a number of specific trees, and strategies to build a program with administrative and financial considerations.

# Monument Square Master Plan & Progress Report (2011, 2013)

The Monument Square Master Plan Report purpose was to develop a future vision for Monument Square in the Village which would stimulate private investment and redevelopment in keeping with the historic village character. The plan was to build upon prior planning efforts directed at the Village, including the Village Master Plan.

# Sustain Southern Maine Center of Opportunity – Gray Village (2013)

A regional planning effort led by Greater Portland Council of Governments looked at several locations within York and Cumberland Counties "that are—or can be—highly competitive for the next generation of jobs and housing in Southern Maine. They are well positioned to tap into the market's desires for safe, livable, and walkable neighborhoods, with choices of housing and transportation." The efforts in Gray, specifically were meant to build on the planning for Monument Square and Hancock Blocks.

#### **Route 26 Corridor Study (2014)**

The Route 26 Corridor Study was a joint effort by MaineDOT and the Town of Gray to ensure future land development in Gray and the regional functionality of Route 26/Shaker Road are compatible. The purpose of the study was to accomplish two primary goals; develop a highway improvement plan that maintains or improves the safety and mobility function of the intersections and road segments within the study area and; coordinate with the Town's land development planning for the study area with the functional needs of State Route 26/Shaker Road to allow for appropriate rezoning. The study looked at Route 26/Shaker Road from the southerly intersection of State Route 26/Shaker Road and Weymouth Road.

#### **Gray Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan (2018)**

The 2018 Gray Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan was updated through discussions of the Bike-Ped Committee, input from town staff and residents, and through a community survey. The purpose of this plan was to help guide priorities related to expanding access to biking and walking in Gray. In addition to recommending funding options, the plan identifies priority policies, signage, and infrastructure improvements.



#### Focus on moving people safely through Gray and getting around town via walking, biking, car, or public transportation

Gray residents value the Town's location in the region and access to major job markets, the coast, and the lakes and mountains. Gray is a major crossroads community in southern Maine, with a lot of traffic originating from other communities. Residents view traffic issues as a threat to the quality of life in Gray, especially at key intersections in the Village, at Dry Mills and at the intersection of Libby Hill Road and Route 26/Shaker Road.

In addition to advocating for improvements with MaineDOT and the Turnpike Authority, Gray should plan transportation projects that accommodate all modes of travel. Building out sidewalk connections between important community destinations will make walking a safer, more attractive option for community residents of all ages. Constructing wider road shoulders on busy roads in the less built up parts of town will encourage walking and bicycle riding for recreation, commuting, and daily activities like shopping or accessing recreation destinations.

#### **Goals:**

- To address current transportation infrastructure needs to manage traffic and ensure safety of residents and visitors.
- To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services, including tranportation networks and public infrastructure, to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

#### **Objectives:**

- To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through-travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).
- To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.
- Address increased traffic congestion on major roadways throughout Town to increase ease of mobility and safety.
- Encourage infrastructure necessary to support renewable energy transportation options.
- Ensure safe mobility for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians traveling through and within the Village.

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Explore opportunities to expand existing public tranportation services from nearby areas to connect seniors and other residents with nearby destinations, such as Windham, Lewiston/Auburn, and Portland.	Ongoing	Town staff
Work collaboratively with MaineDOT to proactively address transportation challenges through their workplan, such as the 2021 project at the intersection of Route 26/Shaker Road with North Raymond Road.	Ongoing	Town staff
Implement the recently adopted Complete Streets Policy that requires all transportation projects to consider the needs of all users, This would require state and local officials and planners to consider the existing and future land use context of each project and take into consideration people who use the system to walk or bike.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff
Rework the two signalized intersections in the Village to create better traffic flow during peak volume times.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Council, Public Works
Complete a traffic study at high-volume intersections including: - Shaker Road/Route 26 and Libby Hill Road - Center Road intersection with Route 202 - All intersections in the Village center	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Work collaboratively with the Maine Turnpike Authority and the Maine Department of Transportation to address toll diversion through Gray Village.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Create or improve existing sidewalk connections for; - Both sides of each main road in the Village - Along Shaker Road between the Village and the school campus on Libby Hill Road	Med-term, 3-5 years	Public Works
Use traffic calming strategies to slow traffic traveling through the Village, allowing for local businesses to capitalize on the people driving through town.	Long-term, 3-6 years	Town Council, Public Works
Create and maintain additional off-street trail networks: - Expand Libby Hill Trail network - Off-street connections - Dry Mills and the Village - Local trails around and through the Village - Explore opportunities for regional trail connections	Long-term, 5+ years	Town Council, Open Space Committee, Planning Department, Private Partnerships

# Protect Gray's rural character and natural resources

Gray residents value the trails at Libby Hill and water bodies such as Little Sebago Lake, Crystal Lake, and Forest Lake for their environmental benefits and community benefits. Critical rural areas and water resources, including surface waters and aquifer recharge areas, should be protected from the impacts of development. While there are numerous tools to achieve levels of protection, Gray can start by reviewing property tax incentives to ensure property owners who would like their land to be maintained as open space or farmland, in perpetuity, can afford to do so. Gray should also consider developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan that will identify key priorities for preservation and needs for recreational facilities so that the town can meet current and future demand.

#### **Goals:**

- To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas in Town while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and infrastructure, and preventing development sprawl.
- To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas.
- To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

- To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.
- To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

#### **Objectives:**

- To Protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.
- To protect current and potential drinking water sources.
- Preserve open spaces, forests, and agricultural lands important to the residents of Gray.
- To conserve critical natural resources in the community.
- To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
- To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.
- To create achieveable development regulations for aquifer rechage areas and well-head protection areas
- To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.	Ongoing	Town staff
Educate property owners around water resources in Town on shoreland zoning regulations and water quality protection.	Ongoing	Town staff
Using the descriptions in the Future Land Use Plan narrative, maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to: - Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development - Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas - Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Create development restrictions through zoning amendments to enhance existing protections of well-head and aquifer recharge areas, including the limitation of commercial development in those areas with a potential for soil and water contamination or water depletion.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Review property tax incentives and other fiscal tools to ensure that property owners who would like their land to be maintained as open space or farmland in perpetuity can afford to do so.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Staff
Update zoning for critical natural resources as Critical Natural Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's Landowner Liability Law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Staff

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Develop an Open Space and Recreation plan that will identify priorities for preservation and needs to recreational facilities to meet current and future demand.	Med-term, 3-5 years	Open Space Committee
Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.	Med-term, 3-5 years	Open Space Committee



# Invest in the Village and community programs

When asked why people love living in Gray, residents mentioned various reasons ranging from the Town's location, specific municipal services like the transfer station and the library, and also mentioned the community and events such as the Blueberry Festival. The community character of the town has been highlighted as one of the top reasons people love living in Gray and as one of the main attractions to new residents moving into town. The community is strengthened through events and programs such as those offered by the Parks and Recreation Department, the American Legion Memorial Day Parade, and local clubs that organize 5K races. MSAD 15 schools create community as well, not only through academics, but music, sports, and other events that bring people together. The Town should continue investing in and supporting events and programs that build community connections.

While the overall sense of community is one reason people love living in Gray, the Village itself has been highlighted as a major asset in town, which is sometimes overlooked and under-utilized. The Village has much of the historic street network and several historic buildings that would make it possible to recreate pedestrian-scale streetscapes. By investing in public infrastructure, which includes utilities, streetscapes and public spaces, creating design standards that enhance and reinforce Village character, and creating

local incentives, the town can promote a business friendly environment that will attract unique, local business. Local businesses in the Village could capitalize on slower moving traffic and more foot traffic. Improvements to the Village will create a sense of place in the center of town where community members can gather for coffee or lunch, or larger town-wide events.

#### **Goals:**

- To Strengthen community connections through Town-wide events and Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.
- Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

#### **Objectives:**

- To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.
- To create programs and provide services for seniors who would like to stay in the community while aging.
- Promote a business friendly environment that will encourage local, unique business to be attracted to Gray.
- To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Explore grants and other innovative funding streams to fund economic development, including facilities, infrastructure, and small business development.	Ongoing	Town staff
Prioritize municipal investment in the Village.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Encourage town-wide events and festivals, like Gingerbread House Making, Trunk or Treat, and the Blueberry Festival, year-round.	Ongoing	Town staff & Committees
Share resources and create local incentives to encourage economic development in the Village.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Prepare for investment opportunities that arise with regional agencies working in Gray such as, the upcoming Department of Transportation stormwater project.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extension with the Future Land Use Plan.	Ongoing	Public Works
Create a designated funding stream to promote programs identified as key priorities of the community and enhance physical facilities.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Create a Village downtown plan, the scope of which could include a market analysis, streetscape and design guideline recommendations, and traffic analysis with suggested roadway improvements.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Ensure the recreation department has adequate resources to service the expanding demand of the community, specifically for child-care programs.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Council
Work with the Gray Lifelong Living Committee to determine the current needs of seniors in Town and prioritize the most critical.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Council

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Create Design Standards for new construction and rehabs within the Village Growth District.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Board
Adopt zoning amendments that allow for higher density growth in the growth areas of Town, as shown in the Future Land Use Plan and narrative.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Conduct a needs assessment and capital plan for both the acquisition and development of new high priority facilities and to maintain and maximize existing facilities to better serve the community.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town staff & Council
Create and enhance walking and bicycle connections from the Village to other destinations in Gray, like the schools, local trails, and the library.	Med-term 3-5 years	Public Works
Develop a new traffic pattern that allows easier and safe mobility through the village.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town Council
To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in Growth Areas.	Med-term 3-5 years	Planning Department
Encourage business development in the Village and Business Park growth areas to diversify tax base.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town Council
Establish a space near the Village for a farmers market to support local farmers and producers.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town Council
Consider the construction of a Community Center that would be home to programs for youth and seniors. Work to preserve social networks for sentior as they stay in the community.	Long-term, 5+ years	Town Council
Develop the public infrastructure within the Village including a small Village-scaled wastewater treatment system and high-speed internet, to create a viable environment for new businesses.	Long-term, 5+ years	Town Staff , Town Council, & Public Works



# People value Gray's proximity and access to the Portland and Lewiston/Auburn job markets, the coast, and the lakes and mountains.

People rely on the major roadways and the Turnpike to get from homes in Gray to regional jobs and recreational opportunities. The physical proximity to these regional assets is enhanced by the accessibility of good transportation connections. Throughout the public process, Gray's location was highlighted as a major reason community members love Gray and is a top reason young families are attracted to Gray.

#### Gray has a great small town feel.

One aspect of small town feel is the social connections and sense of community provided by town-wide events like the Blueberry Festival, living in great neighborhoods, or through membership in active groups associated with schools, sports, places of worship, or recreation department programming. Gray's small town feel has attracted many new residents and has continued to be a valuable asset to long-time residents.

# Protection of Gray's open space and natural resources, including water quality, is important to residents.

Another aspect of small town feel is represented by the open spaces, working lands, and large areas of undeveloped land. These characteristics contribute to the rural character that people enjoy in large sections of town when walking or driving along rural roads, accessing the water, or using publicly accessible trails.

#### Gray's public asset with the most upside is the Village.

Gray's village is an asset that is sometimes overlooked. The fact that Gray has an intact downtown area that is both the commercial and municipal center of the community is a tremendous asset. Future investments should be made in the Village including infrastructure upgrades and streetscape improvements to encourage economic activity and revitalize the Village. Residents cited many specific local businesses, restaurants, and services available in the Village area as valuable parts of community life.

# People value the cost effective delivery of municipal services.

No one enjoys paying taxes, but Gray residents value the services received for their tax dollar. The Library and the Transfer Station in particular have high levels of citizen satisfaction, and are considered community hubs where you can regularly run into your neighbors and friends. Residents recognize the great work of the Recreation Department, snow removal services by Public Works, and the quality of Gray's schools. Residents are aware of the value of these services and continue to appreciate all that is provided at an affordable tax rate.

#### Vision Statement for Gray

Gray is a proud and positive community. Gray capitalizes on its small town feel as it preserves its important undeveloped spaces and focuses on improvements in the Village that create a place people enjoy and want to spend time. Gray is a great place to do business, as it attracts visitors from far and wide each year to the Maine Wildlife Park and those passing through to get to the mountains and lakes region. Gray continues to support and encourage small, local businesses.

Village improvements include design requirements for new and redeveloped buildings, enhanced streetscapes and public space upgrades including a playground, and improvements to infrastructure that support commerce and job growth. New homes and residential development within walking distance of the Village support new

businesses and dining options enjoyed by the whole community. These new options also serve to attract regional customers.

Growth outside built up parts of town is slower and smaller scale. New development in quieter, rural parts of Gray is managed to minimize impacts on natural resources and to preserve the existing character of these places.

The ability to move around and through town is enhanced by a sustained program of improvements designed to ease traffic at key intersections in the community. Investments in sidewalks and other road improvements, especially in the in the Village and school areas, make walking and biking safe and attractive options for fun, exercise, and day-to-day activities.

# A Tour through Gray in 2035

Although it is impossible to predict the future with complete accuracy, there are several key trends that we have used to make some key assumptions.

- According to State projections, it is likely that Gray will
  continue to grow and see increase residential and
  commercial development in the coming years. More
  and more families and young professionals have and
  will continue to identify Gray as a great place to live
  based on the convenient location, sense of community,
  and small-town rural character. Depending on the level
  of new growth, there could be impacts on current town
  services and facilities.
- This growth will also require the development of new homes and housing options within areas of Gray capable of supporting residential growth.
- Growth within the town, in surrounding towns, and towns further away that are connected to the transportation network and Maine Turnpike in Gray will lead to increasing traffic volumes on Gray's main roads.

Gray will change in the future based on these trends. Some parts of town will see substantial levels of change in the coming decades and others will change more slowly. With good planning, and with continued focus on implementing and updating plans, Gray can shape this growth and change to help make sure that parts of town that could benefit from increased investment, energy and activity see the change they need, and the quiet rural and scenic places residents value remain relatively unchanged in the future.

Imagine that you have a friend, who has to move away from Gray this year, but after a long absence, they are able to return in 2035, and they ask you to take them on a tour of town to see what they have missed and what they still remember. Think about where you would take them and what you would show them.

The Village is a destination rather than a place to hustle through. There is still plenty of traffic passing through, but the pace is slower and it feels safe. The Village is quaint, with street trees and flowers and has attracted unique small businesses offering a variety of novel shopping experiences and sit-down eateries. The town has made significant investments in the Village including sidewalk and intersection improvements and in other infrastructure like a small public sewer system and broadband internet infrastructure. There are convenient places to park in the Village for quick errands or to stop and grab a coffee. A significant number of new homes and residential developments within the Village and a short distance away allow residents walkable access to enjoy the best of the Village without contributing to traffic issues.

Heading north from the Village, Route 26/Shaker Road has filled in with diverse commercial development, bringing manufacturing and professional jobs to the community, while maintaining the Village-type streetscapes. Pedestrian networks connect the commercial and shopping opportunities to well-planned senior housing



development and recreation spaces. The area from Libby Hill through Dry Mills has seen some new development but less than just south of the Libby Hill Road intersection and much less than Gray Village. The Libby Hill trail system behind the schools has been expanded to adjacent permanently protected properties. As you enter Dry Mills there has been some commercial development around the intersection but once north of the intersection, residential development has mostly remained the same. The town has focused on preserving water quality of Crystal Lake and many people continue to enjoy Wilkies Beach.

Aside from the Village center, residential growth has been focused in the adjoining lands around Route 115/Yarmouth Road and Route 100/Portland Road. Attractive developments in these places are within easy walking distance of the Village and provide commuters easy access to the Turnpike.

The number of homes in rural areas has only grown slightly. Areas a short distance from major byways have a preserved rural feel, with open space, preserved natural resources, and thriving agricultural endeavors providing unique shopping and experiential opportunities for the community. Rural areas are further preserved through maintaining low residential densities and design standards for subdivisions, duplex and multi-unit development and incentivized farmland utilization.

Large parcels of land between Little Sebago Lake and Shaker Road have been preserved along with land in East Gray along the Royal River and Collyer Brook. These areas are remarkable for how little they have changed over the years. Hiking and skiing trail networks have been developed within these large blocks of unfragmented wildlife habitat.



## Future Land Use Plan

#### What is a Future Land Use Plan?

The Future Land Use Plan shows where the community wants to encourage future growth and change and places that should be protected from growth and change. The Future Land Use Plan is the culmination of numerous conversations, workshops, and additional input from community members and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

Throughout this process there have been conversations centered on how Gray has grown and changed since the last update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2003. Some parts of town have changed faster than others and some parts of Gray look just like they did 20 or more years ago. As noted above, Gray will likely continue to see steady residential growth over the next 10 years.

#### Why is it important?

The Future Land Use Plan is a graphical extension of the Town's Vision Statement and the more specific section by section descriptions of Gray's future described in the Tour through Gray in 2035 section above. The Future Land Use Plan is a tool policy makers and town staff can use to create and update rules for future development and guide future public investments to help make that Vision a reality.

# What does the Future Land Use Map show?

By state statute, the Future Land Use Maps shows three basic types of places. Within the three types, defined by the State, there is flexibility for detail and differentiation to make unique areas that fit the needs of Gray.

#### **Growth Areas**

These places in Gray that are "suitable for orderly residential, commercial or industrial development" and where "most development projected over 10 years is directed." These are the places where new development is incentivized or encouraged. These are the places where change will happen more rapidly and be more obvious to residents and visitors in the future.

#### **Rural Areas**

These places are "deserving of some level of regulatory protection from unrestricted development" and are the places "away from which most development projects over 10 years is diverted." Growth should be limited or discouraged in these parts of Gray in order to protect rural character, landscape functions, and rural economy. These are the places in town where change is anticipated to take place more slowly, and the places which will look very similar to the way they look today 10 years from now.

#### **Critical Rural Areas**

These places are "specifically identifies and designated by a municipality's comprehensive plan as deserving the maximum protection from development to preserve natural resources and related economic activities that may include, but are not limited to, significant farmland, forest land or mineral resources; high-value wildlife or fisheries habitat; scenic areas; public water supplies; scarce or especially vulnerable natural resources; and open lands functionally necessary to support a vibrant rural economy" These places must "receive priority consideration for proactive strategies designed to enhance rural industries, manage wildlife and fisheries habitat and preserve sensitive natural areas.

#### **Transition Areas**

These places are "suitable for a share of projected residential, commercial, or industrial development but that is neither intended to accept the amount or density of development appropriate for a growth area nor intended to provide the level of protection for rural resources afforded in a rural area or critical rural area." These are the places in Gray that will see some amount of new growth and change but not as significant as a growth area. Farms in transition areas should continue to be valued in these areas.

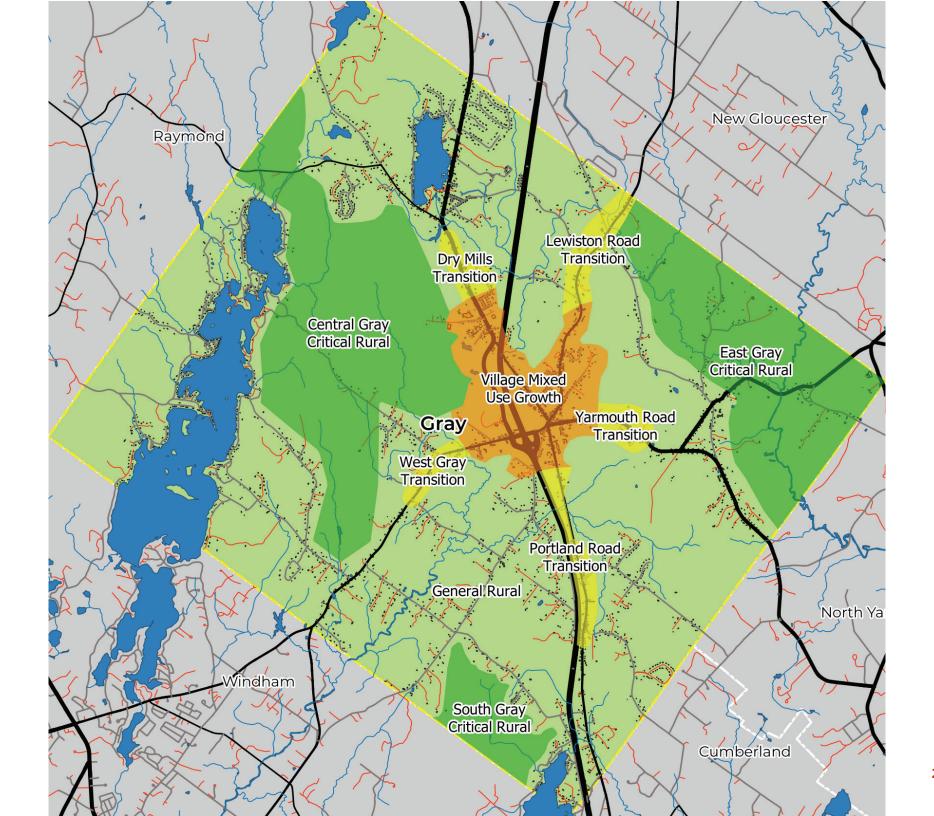
#### **Village Core Growth Area**

The Village Core Growth Area encompasses the Village and the surrounding area. The Village Core is centered on the intersection of Route 26/Shaker Road, Route 202/Lewiston Road, Route 115/Yarmouth Road, and Route 100/Portland Road. Note also that this growth area extends north on Route 202/Lewiston Road to just before the intersection

of Legrow Road and north on Route 26/Shaker Road just past the intersection at Libby Hill Road. It extends west on Route 202/Lewiston Road past the intersection of Liberty Avenue and north to include the Northbrook Business Park and McConkey Road. The zone extends south on Center Road just past the Maine Turnpike and to Turnpike Acres on Route 100/Portland Road. This area extends from the Village out Route 115/Yarmouth Road to around Hillcrest Drive.

Members of the community have expressed a desire for unique businesses in the Village and walkable, human-scale spaces. The focus should be on accommodating and providing places for a diversity of small, local businesses and services. Most of the growth within the traditional area of the Village would be infill development, increasing the number of homes and businesses located within the Village area. This type of growth would both expand the options and activities for residents and other consumers as well as increase the number of customers in close proximity to businesses and services. New mixed-use and commercial developments should be permitted to include restaurants, service businesses, and higher density residential developments.

Development west of the Turnpike will look different from that in the Village Core. The Northbrook Business Park is included in the growth area and this is a key location for establishment larger commercial and manufacturing development to continue in Gray.



The portions of this growth area north and east of the traditional Village area along Yarmouth Road, Route 202/ Lewiston Road, and Route 26/Shaker Road might also include mixed-use development but would be characterized by more emphasis on residential development, somewhat lower densities, and smaller buildings than Gray Village.

Infrastructure to safely walk and bike will be installed and improved throughout the Village Core Growth Area. This includes sidewalks, adequate road shoulders and potentially off-street multi-use paths or trails. It also includes adequate lighting, benches, and enhanced streetscaping to make walking and biking more accessible and inviting.

#### **Dry Mills Transition Area**

This is the area along Route 26/Shaker Road from the intersection of North Raymond Road south to the area just north of the intersection at Libby Hill Road. This section of roadway has a mix of residential and commercial uses. This section of Route 26/Shaker Road is the busiest section of roadway in town, outside of the Maine Turnpike.

New development in this area should minimize its impact on traffic, so that any larger development projects minimize new entrances on Route 26/Shaker Road or be coordinated with existing streets or utilize signalized intersections at Libby Hill Road or North Raymond Road.

## Portland Road Transition and Lewiston Road Transition Areas

The Portland Road Transition Area is centered on Route 100/ Portland Road from Turnpike Acres to just south of Whitney Road. The Lewiston Road Transition Area begins just south of Legrow Road and extends up Route 202/Lewiston Road to the Town line. A low level of development consistent with existing uses is appropriate in the next 10 years, including agriculture and low-density residential and commercial development such as automobile repair, garden centers, retail, light industrial, and other similar establishments.

#### **West Gray Transition Area**

This small transition area is located along Route 202/ Lewiston Road between Liberty Avenue and Totten Road. This area will likely see a some small scale commercial uses but will see more smaller scale residential development.

#### **Yarmouth Road Transition Area**

This transition area will be primarily residential transition area between the more Village scale development of the Village Mixed Growth Area and the rural uses in the General Rural area. It is centered around Route 115/Yarmouth Road from about Hillcrest Drive to about Partridge Lane. Future street development and street connections should be encouraged here to promote suburban-style neighborhood development and to keep new development from being one-lot deep along the main road. Duplex development and small multifamily development is appropriate here.

#### **General Rural**

The majority of Gray's land area has been mapped as Rural Area. Low density residential development and well-sited and designed subdivision development is appropriate in these areas. Such development must be regulated to respect the existing rural character of these quieter parts of town and must be regulated to respect infrastructure constraints. Duplex development should only be allowed to the extent new buildings blend with the rural character of these areas. Gray should also think about how to protect and encourage its rural land uses and economy in these places. In addition, permanent protection of larger parcels of land these are the areas to preserve rural character and provide recreational opportunities is appropriate here.

#### **Critical Rural Area**

Three Critical Rural Areas have been designated in East Gray, Central Gray, and South Gray. These areas are characterized by large blocks of unbroken habitat, both within Gray and the abutting towns of Raymond, Windham, New Gloucester and North Yarmouth. They are deserving of the town's strongest protections from new development. New single

family residential development should be very limited within Critical Rural areas, and efforts to permanently protect open space, working forests and farms should be focused on these areas. Rural uses, including agriculture, timber harvesting, sawmills and other resource dependent uses should continue to be permitted.

The Central Gray Critical Rural area is the single largest block of unfragmented habitat in town. Much of this area is at the head of the Pleasant River watershed, which is the largest tributary to the Presumpscot River. A significant portion of that area consists of mapped deer wintering area and wetlands. The East Gray Critical Rural area is characterized by steep topography and wetlands associated with the Royal River and Collyer Brook. There are several large parcels of the permanently protected Pineland Public Reserve Land here with trails and river access. The South Gray Critical Rural area is within the small Forest Lake Watershed and when considered in relation to a large contiguous roadless area in Windham, is an important part of regional wildlife habitat.

## Implementation and Performance Measurement

#### Implementation of this Plan

Successful plans are the ones that lead to positive community action. This Comprehensive Plan is a document the Town Council, other town volunteers, and town staff can lean on when making decisions about public investments, prioritizing work plans, and informing the work of outside agencies and partners, like the MaineDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority, regional land trust organizations, Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District, and many others.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee recommends a municipal committee be given responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan among responsible parties and to coordinate other town planning efforts with the Comprehensive Plan. This could happen through a change in the Planning Board's charge, so that the Board would be responsible for long-range planning activities in addition to development review and ordinance recommendations to the Council. Alternatively, the Town Council may wish to create a new committee focused solely on long-range planning, implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and communicating progress plan implementation to the Council and community.

[the highest priority Goals/Policies/Strategies have been assigned responsible parties and timeframe in the Top Priorities section and the rest will be assigned as an appendix]

#### Performance Metrics

Implementation of this plan will happen incrementally over the coming years. The town has control of many implementation items, but only indirect control over other desired outcomes. Some will only be accomplished in coordination with regional partners, local businesses and organizations, and private landowners.

Performance metrics can help the town understand where progress is being made and what areas need more focused attention over time. Together, the performance metrics should provide a well-rounded picture of progress made for each of the Top Priorities. The best performance measures will be based on information that is readily available and easily understood. They can also be measured consistently over time to provide useful comparisons in the future. The performance metrics listed below should be considered suggestions for the implementation group to choose from and add to. Reporting to the Town Council should be done annually.

# Focus on moving people safely through Gray and getting around town via walking, biking or car

- Linear feet of sidewalks installed or repaired
- Total number of accidents and MaineDOT designated High Crash Locations
- Total number of bike racks installed
- Linear feet of trails or multi-use paths installed

#### **Protect Gray's rural character and natural resources**

- Number of acres of land permanently conserved though acquisition in fee or through conservation easements
- Annual number of new dwelling units constructed in Critical Rural, General Rural, Transition and Growth Areas

#### Invest in the Village and community programs

- Estimated number of attendees at events like Trunk or Treat, the Blueberry Festival and other community events
- Percentage of capital improvement funds designated for projects in the Village Mixed Use Growth Area (70% target)
- Number of small businesses attracted to the Village area as compared to the number of large commercial development outside of the Village area

#### Future Plan Updates

This plan should be updated internally by Town staff or an oversight committee in 3-5 years to keep the information in the inventory chapters current and to update priority actions for each of the Top Priorities as progress is made or new opportunities arise.

Such an update should involve opportunities for public input to revisit priorities, but certain elements within this plan such as the Values and Vision Statements are more constant than the technical information in the Inventory Chapters and likely would not need to be revisited for 10 years or so. Because of this, the scale of an interim update within 10-12 year planning cycle outlined in the state's Growth Management Act could be a much more limited update to check in on the recommendations here, as opposed to the major revision this work represents over the prior Plan.



# Summary of Public Process and Community Visioning

A list and brief description of the public participation methods the CPSC used to engage members of the community are listed below. A more complete overview, including input received, follows in the appendix.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee attended the Town's Blueberry Festival at the onset of the public process with the goal of spreading the word about the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee hosted public visioning workshops, conducted two surveys and hosted an Open House focused on future land use in Gray. Complete summaries of the public process are included in an appendix to this plan.

#### **Blueberry Festival**

At the Blueberry Festival in August 2019, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee members staffed a booth where community members were able to stop by and discuss the upcoming work that would be completed through the Comprehensive Plan update process. The CPSC asked community members three questions that would help frame future visioning work;

- 1. What do you love about Gray?
- 2. What are the opportunities facing Gray?
- 3. What is your big idea for Gray?



A few of the top responses included; community members love the Wildlife Park, the Library and other municipal services (including the Transfer Station, Gray Recreation Department, Public Works and Fire and Rescue); traffic was the top opportunity facing Gray, although additional responses included the Village, infrastructure and pedestrian improvements; and top big ideas for Gray included a playground and additional recreation facilities, traffic and pedestrian improvements.

#### Online Survey #1

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, with assistance from Greater Portland Council of Governments, released a public survey open from August through October 2019. The purpose of this survey was to learn community member's perception of the town, how they see Gray in the future, and what people value the most about the town. The survey has specific questions about policy decisions the town should implement and how investments in infrastructure should be made.

#### **Department Head Interviews**

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, with assistance from North Star Planning, conducted interviews with Town Department Heads in August 2019.

These interviews, in addition to the community workshops, surveys and other outreach assisted the Committee in getting a sense of the major opportunities and challenged facing the town in the future 10 or more years. Department heads were invited to reflect on the following questions:

- 1. What are the opportunities facing Gray in the next 10 or more years?
- 2. What are the challenges facing Gray in the next 10 or more years?
- 3. What are the most unique attributes of Gray or what is Gray's identity?
- 4. What is your big idea for Gray?

Several themes that emerged across interviews included the Village, traffic, economic development, staffing concerns, potential for curb-side pickup, community involvement and engagement, a community center, and the need to enhance Parks and Recreation programs available.

#### **Community Visioning Workshops**

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee held two Community Visioning Workshops in October 2019. The purpose of the workshops was to collect input from community members to assist the Committee in crafting a vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan. The agendas and formats for the two workshops were the same. During the workshops Committee members facilitated discussions around the following questions:

- 1. What are the best things about Gray?
- 2. What are the things about Gray that should be improved or changed?
- 3. What's missing from Gray?
- 4. What are the biggest threats facing Gray?
- 5. What is Gray's role//image locally and regionally and what do you want it to be in the future?

#### Online Survey #2

The second survey was meant to capture the community's vision for future land use in Gray. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee asked community members what type of development they would support, if any, and where. The survey asked opinions on development in 5 identified zones including; Gray Village, North Gray, South Gray, East Gray, and West Gray. This survey was meant to supplement the conversations from the Future Land Use Open House and Community Visioning workshops.

#### **Future Land Use Open House**

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee hosted an Open House in January 2020 to discuss Future Land Use with community members. The purpose of this meeting was to collect community input and engage various stakeholders to aid in crafting a Future Land Use Plan.

The Open House was staffed by members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and North Star Planning. Community members were invited to stop in throughout the day to provide feedback on drafted future land use scenarios. Participants were also able to provide feedback on what type of development they would like to see and where they would like to see it. Additionally, participants had the option to build their own scenario and create density scenarios in town.



#### **Comprehensive Plan Email Box**

In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee provided an email address where community members could submit additional input throughout the process. This inbox was checked regularly and any submissions were reviewed by the Committee at their monthly meetings.