

A Vision for Sunapee

Sunapee is a small, but growing community. From 1400 people in 1970, it added nearly 1000 people for a total of 2300 year-round residents in 1980. In more recent decades it has added 300 to 400 people every ten years. It is currently at 3300 people, and expected by the State of New Hampshire to grow to 4400 people by the year 2030. The summer population, plus short-term visitors produce, perhaps, a seasonal doubling of those numbers along with an associated demand for housing.

As residents and property owners began an update of the master plan in 2007, they took stock of the many assets the community possesses, things that are essential to the quality of daily life in Sunapee. Chief among these are the quality of Lake Sunapee itself, and the nature of life in this small, rural community in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. People value the peace and quiet, the lack of street and traffic lights, and the fact that you can still see the stars at night. They value the large, undeveloped tracts of land in town and the scenic backdrop that the hills and vistas provide. They value the school system as well, with its small class size. They treasure the various seasonal recreational opportunities that abound here, from skiing to boating to cycling to walking, and many other pursuits in between. They are willing to work to see these preserved.

People are also willing to consider some additional regulations to control development, but want those regulations to be easily understood and fairly administered for all. They are concerned about maintaining the water quality in the Lake and improving the quality of Perkins Pond. They are willing to undertake both regulatory and educational programs to control development that might harm these assets, and to consider additional design standards and development regulations, especially for new commercial development.

As they look to the future, residents are committed not only to preserving the things they like, but also to working to change some things they are concerned about. The availability of affordable housing for young and old residents is one such issue. Route 11 is another such issue. Although this is an important regional highway, it passes directly through, and cuts in half, the center of Sunapee Village. Efforts need to be undertaken with the NH Department of Transportation to give this roadway more of a village-feel as it passes by Main Street, slowing through traffic in this area and starting, at least visually, to once again rejoin the two halves of the Village that were physically separated when this new roadway was built. Efforts such as these, in combination with others, might strengthen the Village, and allow more businesses to operate on a year-round basis.

There is also an interest in working to build a stronger sense of community here, of creating events and venues where people of all ages might get to know each other just a bit better. As a starting point, it is felt that more community events, such as town picnics, parades, and ice cream socials would all be ways of building this stronger sense of community. Further down the road there are visions for a community center, a facility that might be built in phases, where people may connect with one another so as to build a stronger sense of community in Sunapee. The community center would provide a wide variety of recreational and social gathering opportunities for residents of all ages. Other desirable facilities include a new elementary school and a new town library.

Sunapee is a fine community. Through this planning effort, it will be made an even better place to live, work, and recreate for people of a variety of interests and income levels.