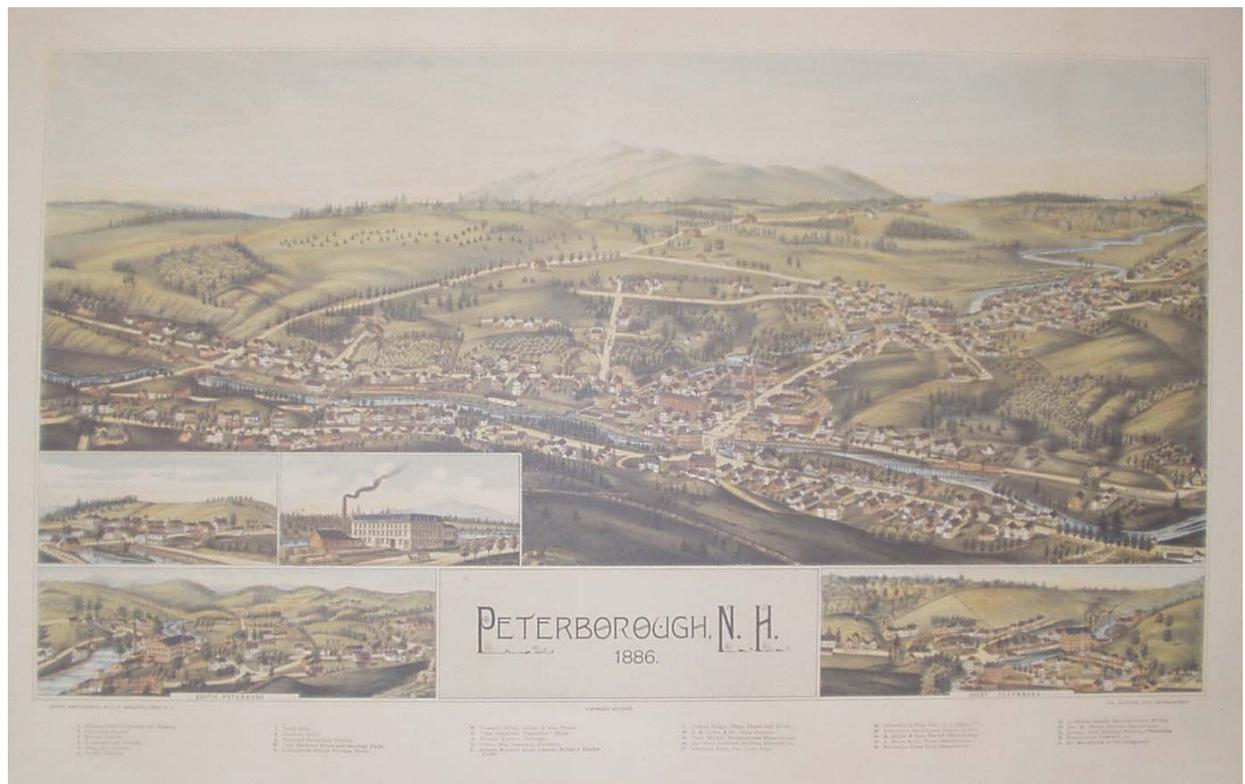


# INTRODUCTION

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**Bird's Eye View of Peterborough, 1886**  
*Courtesy of the Peterborough Historical Society*

Chapter  
1

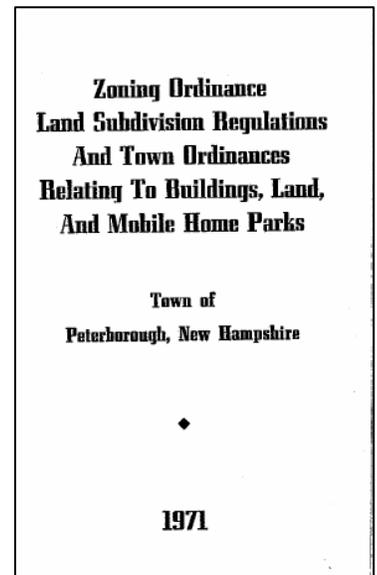
**D**eveloping and maintaining an up-to-date Master Plan is a statutory requirement for any town that wants to have a zoning ordinance. An important distinction between a Master Plan and a zoning ordinance is that zoning is law and Master Plans are advisory. But, while the Master Plan has no legal standing, without it a zoning ordinance or provision can be challenged. The primary purpose of the Master Plan is to guide the development in a town, and it is the zoning ordinance that is the primary implementation tool to do that. Therefore, it is essential that the vision of the Master Plan is consistent with the zoning provisions, and vice versa. It is not uncommon for zoning ordinances to be amended annually and for Master Plans to be amended much less frequently. At some point, however, the two documents will be far enough out of step with one another that revisions to one or both documents are necessary.

The Town of Peterborough adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1971, its first Master Plan in 1974, and has been participating in Master Plan efforts ever since: the 1974 Plan was updated in 1986; and that Plan was updated in 1992.

A predominant theme for all three Master Plans was the protection of the Town’s natural resources and the preservation of open space. By 1992 concerns over the municipal water supply and system were added to the earlier-identified issues. Many of the recommendations from these three plans are still valid today, and have been taken into consideration in the development of this Master Plan. These earlier Master Plans remain important resources, not only for the statistics but also an historic overview of conditions at the time.

The impetus for the first Master Plan was, as noted above, the adoption of the first zoning ordinance. In addition, the gradual transition of Peterborough from an agricultural/ industrial community to a residential country town brought awareness of the need to develop a sound policy on which future development would be based.

The 1986 Plan, however, was a response to considerable subdivision activity in 1985 that resulted in a moratorium on major subdivisions. The purpose of the moratorium was to provide the time to review and revise land use regulations. The Master Plan update was part



of that, as was the development of a Capital Improvement Plan and the revision and development of ordinances and regulations.

By 1992, maintaining a Master Plan as part of an overall town planning program was well established. Aside from the formal Master Plans, two Long Range Land Use Planning Guides were developed (1991 & 1993), and in the mid-1990's, residents participated in a year-long Development Planning Project. (This project was less about enunciating a vision than it was about how to accomplish it.)

By 2002, the Town was again feeling the pressures of encroaching development from the more heavily-populated eastern side of the county. Following a petition submitted by residents, a one-year moratorium on subdivisions in the Rural District was enacted in September of 2002.

This Master Plan effort began in June of 2002, when a Steering Committee was established to oversee the process. In the autumn of 2002, five steering committees were established, their topics representative of issues that were considered pertinent to the Town at the time. They are: Economic Vitality, Open Space, Population & Housing, Traffic & Transportation, and Water Resources<sup>1</sup>. The Future Land Use Plan was the result of the data collection and analysis of the subcommittees (whose work is represented in separate chapters), four visioning sessions (described in Chapter 2), and five public hearings. The final draft was adopted by the Planning Board on November 10, 2003.

Subsequent to this effort, a subcommittee was appointed to develop the Historic Resources Chapter, which was adopted by the Planning Board July 10, 2006.

This Plan carries forward the same recognition of the value of Peterborough's special natural environment expressed since the first Master Plan was written. In addition, there is a renewed appreciation of the historic village pattern of development. In keeping with that, much emphasis in the Plan is placed on enhancing these villages that already exist, and identifying possible emerging villages. By creating opportunities for infill in these areas, the expectation is to relieve some pressure for development in the rural areas, thereby achieving balance in the overall future plan of the Town.

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<sup>1</sup> There are a number of other topic areas that can be considered for inclusion in the Master Plan; the state statutes list 13 in addition to the two that are required to support a zoning ordinance. In recognition of that, the Master Plan Steering Committee has been re-instated as a Long Range Planning Committee to oversee the maintenance of this Plan as well as the development of appropriate new chapters.