



Londonderry Best Towns Process

Best towns are built on common ground.

Londonderry, New Hampshire
June 12, 2003

Agenda

Goal of Visioning Session: The visioning session will provide valuable input for the development of Londonderry's Master Plan. This vision will be the cornerstone of all future planning efforts.

6:00 Barbeque Dinner

6:45 Welcome

6:50 Keynote Speaker:

7:10 Master Plan Background

7:30 Visioning Exercise: This will be a large-group session whereby the participants will be asked two questions (scribes will write down the responses on easels):

- What is Londonderry like today (responses should be kept short so that scribes can record them accurately)?
- What would you like Londonderry to be like in the future?

8:00 Breakout Groups: Each of the forum participants will be assigned to one of the following 6 Master Plan component areas. Groups will be assigned by colored nametags.

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities
4. Natural resources, Historic Preservation, Conservation, and Environment
5. Business and Industry
6. Recreation

9:00 Group Reports: Each group gives 2-3 minute presentation on key issues and ways to address these issues

9:20 Closing Remarks (Charlie): Reiterate importance of diverse participation in Profile, purpose of visioning session, and briefly outline up-coming Best Town Process.

9:30 Adjourn

Breakout Group Format

8:05 Introductions & Sign-in Sheet

- Facilitators introduce themselves and explain their role – role is to facilitate a session aimed at collecting public input for Master Plan around a particular topic.
- Outline topic-area for breakout group discussions (see following section)
- Have each person give their name and tell something about them.
- Pass around the sign-in sheet for names and phone numbers. Be sure that your breakout group's component area is written on the top of the sign-in sheet.
- Go over ground rules (from poster).

8:10 Background:

- One of the important functions of the Master plan is to identify the community's needs and issues. Your input will help to frame the content of Londonderry's Master plan and address a range of important issues.
- The following questions were designed with the above needs in mind:

8:20 What are some of the issues that Londonderry is currently facing (related to the component that your group is addressing)?

8:35 How might Londonderry address these issues related to the topic that your group is addressing (bullet out possible ways to the address issues)?

8:50 What are the barriers that Londonderry faces with regard to addressing key issues?

Breakout Group Topics

- 1. Housing:** Shelter is the primary need of every community. When a community loses sight of this fact, a slow process of decay can eventually result in inadequate living units and conditions in the community*. Therefore, the following are some of the aspects of housing that should be considered in this group's discussion:

 - a. Condition of existing housing stock.
 - b. Affordability of housing stock.
 - c. A rising senior population.
 - d. Residential growth.
- 2. Transportation:** "Transportation networks tie a community together and link it to the outside world." It is vital that communities provide safe, reliable access to work, schools, shopping, residences, and other key community functions*. The following are some of the aspects of transportation that should be considered in this group's discussion:

 - a. Roads
 - b. Railroads
 - c. Other modes of motorized transportation
 - d. Non-motorized transportation facilities (walking/bike paths, etc.)
- 3. Community services, facilities, and utilities:** This category consists of any buildings, lands, or services that serve the public. Together, these items make up the 'infrastructure' of the community*. The following are some of the aspects of services, facilities, and utilities that you might consider in this group's discussion.

 - a. Community maintained and operated buildings (i.e. recreation center, town hall, etc.)
 - b. Hospitals
 - c. Schools
 - d. Water and sewer infrastructure
 - e. Parks
 - f. Police/fire/ambulance service
- 4. Recreation:** Recreation is key component of a community's well being. Most importantly, recreational activity helps to improve individual levels of mental and physical health. Moreover, recreational opportunities make the community more attractive to residents. This group will talk about Londonderry's existing and potential recreation opportunities. The following are some aspects of recreation that might be considered in the group's discussion.

 - a. Youth recreation opportunities (school and non-school)
 - b. Recreational Opportunities for Adults and Seniors
 - c. Outdoor recreation opportunities
- 5. Natural resources, historic preservation, conservation, and environment:** Open space and natural landscapes create the character of New Hampshire towns. Rapidly growing towns lose open space and there are predictable negative environmental impacts as residential growth takes place*. It is important that communities come to

balance the need for new residential and commercial/industrial development environmental protection and resource conservation and/or preservation measures. The following are some of the aspects of natural resources, conservation, and environment that might be considered in this group's discussion:

- a. Open Space
- b. Agricultural Land
- c. Key natural resource lands/features
- d. Appropriate balance between growth/development and onservation/preservation

6. Business and Industry: Londonderry's businesses and industries are vital to Londonderry's economic growth. Not only are they critical to the community's employment base, but they help to generate and re-circulate wealth in the community. Therefore, it is important that the town create policies and programs which lead to steady economic growth over time. The following are some of the aspects of business and industrial growth and development that might be considered in this group's discussion:

- a. Business/Industry as Employment basis
- b. Income per sector/industry
- c. Appropriate mix of business and industry
- d. Appropriate economic growth strategy

*Daniels, Keller, and Lapping. 1995. Small Town Planning Handbook. Second Edition, APA Press.

Visioning Exercise (Large-Group Warm-up Activity)

1. What is Londonderry Like Today?

- Relatively Safe
- Nice people
- Very expensive to live in
- Interest in history
- Congested
- Under-involved
- Very diverse
- Industry poor
- Noisy at times
- A quarter of the population is in school
- Great place to bring up kids
- Apples
- Well thought of
- Currently well managed
- Full of lot of non-active people
- Growing too fast
- It's not Massachusetts
- Could use better public transportation
- Too expensive for municipal and education workers
- The airport drives the town
- Caters to people with kids – doesn't equally address needs of others
- Lack of public transportation
- Increase in large scale stores
- Best band in the country
- No crosswalk across Rt.102
- A lot of conflicting views
- A lack of diversity in community
- Conflicted about growth

- Most houses are on 2 acres – very few apartments
- Heavy trucks on roads to airport
- Lacks activities for teens
- Excellent teen summer library program
- Lack of sidewalks and trails
- Shifting from bedroom community to a suburb
- Lack of support services for needy families
- Just opening this kind of discussion
- Home of track dynasty
- Widening of roads
- Airport heavy burden
- Excellent education system
- Still pretty green
- Child centered
- Busy town – always something going on
- Volunteer spirit
- High commuter population
- Growing residentially and commercially
- Conveniently located
- Great place to call home – pride
- Wildlife trying to exist
- Somewhat parochial
- Lot of athletic programs
- Lots of volunteers
- Lots of youth groups
- Beautiful library
- Home for library workers with good self opinions
- Kids couldn't afford to live here
- Evolving senior and recreation needs
- Getting expensive for seniors – taxes

2. What would you like Londonderry to be like in the future?

- 102 not like S. Willow or 28 in Salem
- Creative growth opportunity
- Enforced speed limits
- Opportunities for adult education
- Create town center "focal point"
- Ice skating or other winter recreation
- Indoor track
- Not a cookie cutter community
- No more homes
- Plan for orchard lands
- Better restaurants
- A place to walk, sit and enjoy town
- Attract demographic diversity
- Retain historic integrity, past, present and future
- Teen center
- Encourage vocational students at high school
- Public H₂O and sewer
- Library web catalogue
- Recognized for best education system in state
- No more portable schools
- Remain as a town
- Minimum airport noise
- Access to public transportation within town
- More for the arts
- Paths, sidewalks, trails connecting neighborhoods
- Stronger sense of community
- It never becomes Massachusetts
- More appropriate commercial/industry services to pay for these ideas
- Community/town auditorium
- Dramatic lower property taxes

- Increased use of public education to keep it community cohesive
- More open space
- Diverse housing for young and old
- Town in which the residents live and work in
- More programs and services for seniors

Breakout Group Discussions

Group 1 – Community Services, Facilities, and Utilities

Facilitator: T. Thompson

Scribe: not noted

Participants: Marilyn Ham, Dennis Winings, Pat Slozak, Sally Nelson, Don Morkovitz, Chris Dorin, Karen Hutchinson, Mike Speltz, Herbert Darling, Russ Lagueux, Ed David, Dottie Grover

What are some of the current issues facing public services?

- Lack of public transportation
- Deficient fire stations in north and south
- Teen center (lack of)
- Strain on public services due to sprawl
- Lack of skating facilities (ice and roller)
- No organized activities outside of sports
- Loss of recreational sites, i.e. roller skating, skiing, bowling
- Lack of public control in past of facilities struggle between public goals and private property
- Lack of “central” town/focus
- Schools infrastructure
- Library card catalog not on web
- Info tech inadequate
- Cell phones don’t work in town
- “Peg Access” not used to full potential
- Pedestrian walks not adequate
- Enhance “911” service
- “Transfer Center/drop off center” more user friendly
- Potential for “Secondary” education facility
- Not sufficiently utilized grants for historic preservation
- Public utilities not adequate to address growth
- Lack of underground wires
- Cable monopoly
- Centralize a senior center and the programs they offer
- Transportation within Londonderry for non drivers
- Better utilization of town-owned properties
- Lack of medical facilities in Londonderry
- Lack of neighborhood recreational facilities/playgrounds
- Use of school facilities during summer months

How might Londonderry address these issues related to facilities?

- Develop source of revenue (tax base)
- Utilize capital improvement program to address facilities/infrastructure
- Expand volunteer base
- Seek “outside” funding sources
- Formation of nonprofit groups
- Increase commercial fundraising

- Increase commercial base
- Adjust attitude towards development
- Diversify the zoning
- Identify resident needs for facilities
- Alert to facilities not paying taxes
- Community services need to be proactive (care programs for elderly)
- Each facility revenue generating/pay own way with a business plan
- Recreation boards not citizen friendly, increase staff/citizen patrol
- Expand mission statement of committees or boards 2-way communication with town leader
- Balance cost and benefits of services with each other
- Change charter so greater citizen input on use of and construction of facilities
- Each citizen can beautify their area
- Encourage non-revenue generating entities to provide more services
- Make citizens aware of “Master Plan” and services available
- Continue to implement “Master Plan”
- Entice and explore private corporate sponsorships for facilities and services

What are some barriers to Londonderry regarding facilities?

- Money – finding more
- Community involvement
- Lack of control of private lands
- Fact that we are a bedroom community relates to community involvement
- Not enticing citizens to become involved
- Squeezed by surrounding communities and the state
- The relationship with AES (businesses in general)
- Zoning rules – sign ordinances

Group 2 – Natural Resources, Historic Preservation, Conservation, and Environment

Facilitator: Monica Carson

Recorder: Laurie Riedel

Participants: Giovania Verani, Karen Manning, Peter Cerro, Gladys Woodein, Steve Lee, Dan Scanlon, Jo Oswald, Marilyn Hoffman, Marty Bove, Dale Yancy, Bill Mahan, Sherman Packard, Katie Ryan

What are some of the current issues facing Natural Resources/Land Conservation?

- Lack of creative land use
- Need for more open land
- High property values putting financial pressure on farmers to sell vs. farm
- Shallow drinking water
- Need for recreational land (set aside)
- Balancing private property rights with community interests
- Lack of developmental residential options due to 1 acre home building
- Losing rural character that allows for fishing, etc.
- Sound pollution from airport > planes and cars
- Need to preserve apple orchard rural character how do we?
- Airplanes themselves have impact on natural resources. How can we monitor and control?
- More commercial development – mistake to block big stores to come in
- Have not targeted large contiguous land for outdoor recreation, to date it has been too parceled and too small
- Lack of community facilities to support youth outside of recreation
- Lack of family parks built for sports or family activities, passive recreation kites, picnics, etc
- No neighborhood parks
- Loss of town's character as historical structures removed (barns, etc.)
- Movement to educate on historical background of community – should continue
- Lack of town center is a challenge for sustaining historical character
- More neighborhood parks and better linkages (i.e. sidewalks/trails)
- Loss of New England character – stonewalls, trees, set backs vs. anywhere U.S. suburbs
- Where to put the new things without destroying the “old” feel. Contradictions striking a balance and reasonableness
- No activity centers for youth
- Lack of promoting town history, no central place for historical information (or lack of understanding as where to find it)
- Deciding what the town wants to be and how big? Conflicting views
- We are small > should we look to larger cities (Manchester) for these resources

How should we address these issues?

- We need to decide where we want to be
- Additional open meetings but more focused on larger issues (not everything)
- Increase the size of minimal size housing lots
- Create conservation subdivisions or clustering as an option
- Youth do not have a vote in use of natural resources. They need to be more informed.

- What kind of town do we want? We need to decide the kind of town we want. Do we want to look like Lowell? Lawrence? Andover? Manchester, etc.
- Need to be educated on the cost and long term impact to the town of the changes we are proposing
- Move to Londonderry for what is it today? Why do we want to change it?
- Need for zoning and planning which deals with look of the town
- Planning and zoning board needs to do a better job on development and design review – more aggressive on following the character of the town
- Need to preserve municipal space for whatever uses in the future
- Permitting commercial or other establishments that are designed to fit in with character of community (ex. Robie House)
- Planning and review board not consistent in approval of “look” may be legal challenges with businesses
- Challenge to advancing regulations that protect rural character at the expense of losing businesses
- Larger acre minimum drives costs and add additional issue
- Take a more regional approach view. Derry/Londonderry/Manchester etc. The resources are all around us. We should not just look at our town boundaries
- Continue to hold groups to reach consensus on issues
- Slow the growth of town. Most people came to the town because it was small
- Creative land use breaking down conventional barriers and giving developers incentives to meet

What are some barriers to Londonderry?

- Over regulation by local, state and federal government
- Special interest groups and individual agendas
- Nimby's
- Highway department needs vs. rural look of town common sense should prevail vs. engineering utilities
- Information to the tax payers to be informed
- Soliciting taxpayers on priorities
- Public apathy
- Balancing private property owners rights with town desires
- Town government structure

Group 3 – Business and Industry

Facilitator: André Garron

Recorder: Barbara Camm

Participants: Mary Testreav, Kathy Wagner, Ron Chandler, Mark Oswald, Bob Smith, Sr., Larry Martin, Andy Mack, Jr., Arthur Rugg, Nancy LaRue, Jane Fillmore, Troy Brown, Susan Johnson, Michael Brown

What are some of the issues facing Londonderry?

- Maximize 1000 acres at airport
- Industry tax revenue more important than residential
- Compact business and industry into specific area
- Maintain design standards
- Enhance design and landscaping standards
- Increase tax positive industry/commercial development
- Stricter design standards for commercial development, lessen standards for industry
- Define business base you want
- Zone and define areas for business and industry
- Nice high end industrial park near airport
- Main Street destination pedestrian friendly
- Village concept
- Work with existing businesses toward expansion
- Business friendly environment

How might Londonderry address these issues?

- Educating tax payers and community leaders on current tax structure
- Basic list of expectations for businesses
- More hi-tech jobs for residents
- Actively market town to businesses we want and actively find these businesses
- Facilitator to assist businesses through “red tape”
- Find similar hi-tech businesses such as website. Com
- Less retail and more business (professional)
- Keep integrity of small local business without being consumed by “Big Boxes”
- Small business association
- Partnerships/incentives with financial institution to start up a business incubator
- Incentives to businesses to create loyalty to Londonderry
- Restrict the size of parking lots
- Something to help unemployment
- Attract professional businesses to decrease the amount of the labor force leaving the community
- Calculate amount of remaining land available to business and industry to determine amount of tax revenue that can be generated
- Good corporate citizens
- Marketing campaign to live and work in NH
- Hire professional consultant to evaluate airport related businesses
- Find easiest way to attract businesses that feed of airport

- Gather information on aviation related businesses
- Take advantage of the airport

What are the barriers that Londonderry faces regarding addressing key issues?

- Preserving our quality of life
- Funding initiatives
- NH's tax structure
- Limited time
- Educate and involve the public
- Lack of interest and time
- Too busy commuting
- Compliance of the town
- Commuting out of town
- Rate of growth
- More re-active than pro-active
- Location – plus and minus
- Not sure what we want therefore, don't know what type of businesses to attract
- Lack of a 5-year plan
- No walls with gates or moats
- Difficult to start business in town
- Rules are not clear cut and have to apply to everyone the same way
- No more waivers
- No control over the expansion of the airport

* This group listed three top priorities:

1. Take advantage of the airport
2. Increase tax positive industry and business
3. Define business base we want

Group also listed three top ways of addressing the above issue

1. Educate public on tax structure
2. Partnership with financial institutions
3. Hire professional consultant to evaluate airport related businesses

Group 4 – Housing

Facilitator: M. Buser

Recorder: not noted

Participants: Frances Woodin, Mark Ballard, Steve Pauwels, Dennis Balke, Cindy Hatem, John Mistovich, Debra Paul, Jim Elefante, Tom Moran, Don Tongue, Bill Hart, Bill Stewart, Bill Manning

What are some of the housing issues facing Londonderry?

- No low income housing (state regulations, those who work in town can't live here)
- Concern about NIMBY
- Real estate taxes high
- Control and balance low income housing
- Very little senior housing
- Zoning regulations – limited amount of land left for low-income housing
- More connected – village atmosphere
- Better pedestrian and recreation facilities
- Meeting needs of new residents
- Unplanned residential growth

How to address housing issues in Londonderry?

- Recognize limits of what town can do
- Limited solutions based on current regulations – needs to be addressed on a state level
- Define what Londonderry wants to be
- Infrastructure needs to meet existing demand
- Increase impact fees on residential development
- Better industry base – better balance of jobs and housing
- Layer priorities of goals and objectives
- Lower taxes
- Comprehensive Master Plan needed
- No to new spending once in a while – controlled spending
- Cluster housing – conserves more open space
- Higher impact fee
- Fewer houses with larger lots
- Balance taxes between residential and commercial
- Slow growth down

What are some of the barriers that Londonderry faces?

- Impossible to retrofit infrastructure into old neighborhoods
- Maintenance of existing paths lacking
- Funding issues for maintenance
- State regulations regarding septic systems
- Cost of sewage disposal – not having town sewage system
- Encourage volunteer upkeep and development of facilities/p
- Master Plan not up to date or effective
- Conservation land barrier to affordability
- Wanting to be everything to everyone

- Balance differing visions – must establish vision
- Limits to zoning
- Limiting commercial development
- State development and regulations
- Widening of I-93

Group 5 – Recreation

Facilitator: Madeline Heath

Recorder: Phil Auger

Participants: John Fillmore, Kate Dolan, Anne Jacoby, Chet Ham, Steve Young, Kathy Morse, Betsy Lincoln, Deb Lievens, Sandy Lagueux, Jim Finch, Bob McDonald

What are the issues facing Londonderry?

- Escalating participants with overtaxing facilities
- No swimming hole
- Not much passive recreation opportunities (non-team, non-competitive, high demand – low response)
- Parking access not available for open space/passive recreation
- Pocket parks – one only
- No sidewalks (paved)
- 16-19 year old activities lacking not school related team or individual
- Inadequate recreation funding
- Vandalism
- No network of pathways –define trails
- Intergenerational recreation facility
- Church/recreation scheduling conflicts – Sunday a.m.
- General scheduling conflicts
- Skating rink
- Teen center
- Summer theatre
- Concerts on the Common > yeah!
- Public playgrounds desperately needed 0-6 year olds
- Lack of parent representation
- No x-country ski management
- Lack of walking trails in developed communities (hard to retrofit, planning needed)
- Need for adequate athletic fields
- Adult education

How to address recreation issues in Londonderry?

- Exercise/walk area
- Form committees
- Community engagement
- Corporate funding for private recreation opportunities
- Encourage private firms for recreation development – private ice skating arena or pool or batting cage
- Public/private funding partnerships

- Voluntary user fees
- Cross/committee and board coordination for planning and conservation – balance competing interests through careful planning
- Encourage volunteer help
- Harvest community implementers
- Research grant opportunities
- Recreation director – full time
- Block parties
- Space and money
- Leadership
- Lack of voters – apathy
- Many sign up –few show up
- Lack of implementers
- Large commuter population – how to tap into it?
- Worthy but competing interests for limited funds and no prioritization
- Most vocal get addressed first and repeatedly
- Nimby syndrome
- Premature decision making
- Issues without solutions
- Liability issues
- Safety issues – supervision etc.

What are some of the barriers that Londonderry is facing?

- Lack of support staff (maintenance, clean-up, etc)
- Expense
- Hard to evaluate teen needs and 0-6 year olds across the age gamete
- Transportation especially for seniors

Group – 6 Transportation

Facilitator: Jim Grotton **Recorder:** Joe Paradis **Spokesperson:** Arlene Hajjar

Participants: Janusz Czyzowski, Robert Speigelmar, Tim Winnings, Hank Peterson, C.C. Mitchell, Jim Grotton, Arlene Hajjar, Pete Bycks, Bob Stevenson, Sarah Landry, Reed Clark

What are some of the issues currently facing Londonderry in transportation?

- I-93 expansion
- Secondary impact on local roads (I-93)
- Airport – trucks I-93 to airport
- Access road I-93 to airport
- Lack of public transportation
- Safety of roads – no lights
- Lack of sidewalks/trails non-motorized
- Walking/running
- Get people out of cars – mass transport
- Supporting existing road planning
- What we need mass transport for? (local/interstate/etc)

- Locating svcs so accessible
- More funding to improve local roads
- Improve traffic dangers
- Bus or van to go around town for those without transportation

How might Londonderry address issues regarding transportation?

- Dialog with other local towns with same issues
- Survey of comments from meetings like this
- Survey with concise questions
- Highlight and support initiatives already in progress (e.g. trailways)
- Central gathering point for information collected
- Londonderry to have strong voice with airport traffic
- Get transportation department in town government
- Central focus point for transportation
- Make & implement ordinances to regulate transportation (e.g. sidewalks in neighborhoods)
- Linking areas in town
- Traffic safety (enforce speed limits)
- Bus routes – handicapped with seniors with other towns
- Light synchronization doesn't work

What are some of the barriers Londonderry faces regarding transportation?

- Traffic passing through
- Financing
- Need broad support (e.g. Mass transportation)
- Need prioritizing (top 3 for example)
- Change drive habits (1 person/1 car)
- Physical barriers (roads only so wide)
- Can't put traffic lights, etc. on state roads
- Cooperate with state

Summary and Conclusion

The main purpose of the Londonderry Best Towns Process was to collect public input around the municipal Master Plan. In essence, the information collected is integral for framing Londonderry's vision as to how the town should grow and develop in the future. This vision, which will be manifest in the Master Plan, will help to determine what the town should be like in the future with regard to:

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities
4. Natural resources, Historic Preservation, Conservation, and Environment
5. Business and Industry
6. Recreation

Although the forum was a useful tool for collecting diverse viewpoints from community residents, the ideas presented by the participants are not necessarily representative of the community-at-large. In fact, the issues and potential solutions were not prioritized during the forum process. Moreover, not all of the potential solutions identified at the forum are in accord with each other. Hence, it is up to the planning board, municipal officials, and planning consultants to utilize this information to frame a process that will identify the community's future vision.

In the Fall of 2003, the City of Londonderry will undergo a Community Profile, which is an action planning process that helps communities take stock of where they are today and develop an action plan for how they want to operate in the future. The two-day process is a self-evaluation tool that draws heavily on the collective wisdom of the participants and helps communities to develop problem-solving abilities. In many regards, the Londonderry Best Towns Process is an excellent precursor to the Londonderry Community Profile. The Community Profile will utilize a similar issue-identification process as the Londonderry Best Towns Process. However, it will take the process three steps further by doing the following:

1. Prioritizing issues
2. Identifying solutions for high-priority issues
3. Forming action committees to implement the solutions.

To conclude, the Londonderry Best Towns Process is simply the start of a long process for identifying the city's future vision, which will be manifest through the Master Plan. The Community Profile will help to put this vision into action.