

# Danbury Master Plan

2011



Prepared by the  
Danbury Planning Board  
2010 – 2011

## **Danbury, New Hampshire**

Town Office – 23 High Street, Danbury, NH 03230

### MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

2011

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The Planning Board would like to acknowledge the skill and hard work of Ed Sowa in the drafting and revision of the updated plan, and also the efforts of Peter Parady to get the project started by putting forth the framework of the public opinion survey. Without these efforts the town would likely still be without an updated Master Plan.

## **Danbury Master Plan**

### **Introduction**

Since its settlement in the late 1700's, Danbury, New Hampshire has been a rural community. It is the same today, as a pleasant country atmosphere remains a major strength of the town. Danbury's residents recognized and reaffirmed the value of preserving this natural asset as evidenced by those responding to the 2010 Danbury Master Plan Update Survey. Respondents overwhelmingly stated that the best thing about living in Danbury is "the small town country atmosphere within a rustic setting with natural beauty." Utilizing the 2010 survey, residents also were able to express their opinions regarding a vast array of topics, which will provide valuable input regarding the Town's goals, objectives and needs to meet community living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To a large degree, this can be accomplished through the Danbury Master Plan.

The basic purpose of the Danbury Master Plan is to provide a comprehensive planning program for the community to use in order to achieve its most rational development in harmony with its existing conditions, geography, and citizens' desires. Although the Master Plan has no authority in itself, it does provide the rationale for land use management methods in accordance with New Hampshire and Danbury Planning and Land Use Regulations. The Master Plan also provides guidance regarding specific environmental protection measures as well as historic preservation requirements.

As Danbury grows and conditions within the Town change, additional detailed studies of municipal needs become necessary. The Master Plan needs to be updated and expanded with additional components containing new information, proposing solutions to newly perceived problems and expanding new alternatives to improve the Town's land use management system. The most obvious example of such a new component would be the long range development plan regarding the Ragged Mountain Resort complex. While providing benefits for additional tax revenues and employment opportunities for local residents, the impact of such an enterprise also places additional demands on the Town's safety and public health capabilities, as well as, on the Town's environmental treasures of forests, open spaces and bogs.

In summary: the Town's Master Plan must reflect the desires of its populace consistent with the Town's ability and willingness to provide the physical and financial resources to meet those objectives, in accordance with current RSA. The Master Plan can provide the Planning Board, Selectmen, Budget Committee, and interested citizens with a sound basis for decision making relative to Danbury's future land use to maintain its rustic natural environment.

# **Danbury Master Plan**

## **VISION STATEMENT**

Danbury, NH is one of thirty communities located in the south western portion of what is commonly referred to as the “Lakes Region of New Hampshire.” The Citizens of Danbury cherish their Community history and, as such, have voiced their desire that Danbury continues to retain its “small town country atmosphere within a rustic setting well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

To fulfill this vision, Danbury’s Citizenry, through its own volunteerism combined with the prudent actions and dedicated efforts of its elected and appointed Town officials, strives to protect and preserve Danbury’s natural resources while ensuring controlled residential, commercial and industrial growth; Danbury also encourages entrepreneurship and preservation of its agricultural farming and livestock breeding. To support its citizens’ needs, Danbury provides a sound educational program, both within the community (as practicable) and in conjunction with surrounding communities. Continued development of both public and private recreational facilities is encouraged. To ensure a secure living environment for its citizens, Danbury supports safety programs that provide police and fire protection and emergency management and planning services. This vision is and will continue to be accomplished through long and short term planning, sound fiscal management, and dedicated citizen volunteers

## **2011 Update**

In 1985, the Danbury Planning Board commissioned the preparation of the first Danbury Master Plan. The subject plan was prepared by the Lakes Region Planning Commission, utilizing then available data, maps, and citizenry inputs in its formulation. Since that time, the majority of data, then only available in print, is now available on the internet and updated consistently. Accordingly, rather than duplicating in print that which is always available on a real-time basis, this 2011 update will provide only such data that may not be available on the internet or which has especial interest or relevance to the original 1985 publication.

The 1985 Master Plan was divided into three sections with two appendices. Section I discussed Land Usage; Section II discussed Population; Section III provided detailed data regarding seventeen historic Danbury locations. Appendix A reflected the Danbury Community Survey Results, and Appendix B was a Guide to Architectural Styles (as a supplement to the historical buildings listed in Section III). The 2011 update will conform to the 1985 structure, as practicable.

## Section I – Land Usage

### Background

The wise use and conservation of natural resources have been identified as high priorities by Danbury residents. Natural resources include soil, forest area and indigenous vegetation, ponds and streams, and wetlands bordering streams and in areas of high water table and groundwater supplies. Additional resources include areas where agriculture may be practiced and the rolling hilltops and mountains (most prominently Ragged Mountain) which dominate large areas of Danbury.

Danbury contains 37.8 square miles of land area and 0.3 square miles of inland water area. About 34% of Danbury's land is considered to have good or excellent development capacity in terms of soil conditions, degree of sloping, and drainage areas. Additionally, there are areas of special consideration (where development is not advised). These areas of special consideration include wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes (greater than 25%), seasonally wet soils, and prime agricultural land (which should be dedicated exclusively to farming). An additional 9.5% of land considered to have "fair" development potential brings the total land area capable of being developed to 43.5% of the total (24,128 acres) or 10,494 acres. Approximately 29% of Danbury's land is considered to have "poor" development potential, primarily due to slopes between 15 to 25%.

### Existing Land Use

On March 12, 2002, Danbury's *Land Use and Zoning Ordinance (LUZO)* was adopted by official ballot at the Danbury Town Meeting. This ordinance has been expanded to include Floodplain Development and Telecommunication Ordinances (previously adopted on September 26, 2000) and Cluster Residential Development Amendments (adopted on March 11, 2003).

The Danbury Master Plan goals give priority to a "well-balanced land use pattern" and a philosophy "to maintain the Town's uncrowded rural village character." The LUZO exists to implement the Danbury Master Plan by identifying and enumerating the uses of land and property permitted in Danbury *as a matter right or as a special exception*. The LUZO specifies the conditions under which such uses are permitted and the regulations applicable thereto. The intent of the LUZO is to facilitate appropriate uses of land and to assure that land which is developed is suitable for development; in other words, the LUZO establishes the minimum requirements necessary for the development and use of property in the Town. This ordinance is also "intended to affirm and to facilitate the use of conservation and historic preservation easements to protect and sustain the values, uses, productivity, and enjoyment of farm and forest properties and natural, built, and archaeological resources within the Town."

Danbury's LUZO is based on and conforms to New Hampshire's RSA 672-677. In its current form, the LUZO is divided into twenty (20) Articles which define and detail all intentions, procedures, petitions, and appeals governing land development and usage. As

deemed appropriate and necessary, the LUZO may be expanded and revised; any change to the current LUZO is subject to adoption by majority vote by Danbury residents at Town Meeting.

Subsequent to the adoption of the LUZO, at several public hearings beginning on April 22, 2003 and concluding on July 22, 2003, Danbury residents adopted the Danbury Subdivision Regulations. The purpose of these regulations is to provide for the orderly present and future development of the Town of Danbury according to reasonable standards, and to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Master Plan and the LUZO.

### **Projected Future Land Use/Needs**

#### **Residential Growth**

The primary land usage in Danbury, NH is driven by its residents' desire to maintain a rural or village lifestyle. To this end, land usage is primarily residential and agricultural. Based on the projected population growth for Danbury, the normal demand for residential growth is projected to be small to moderate over the next two decades. However, the amount of land required to accommodate future residential demands will vary greatly depending on the type and density of the new residential units.

#### **Economic Development**

Danbury land usage ordinances do not provide for commercial zoning; however, home occupations, home-based enterprises and cottage industries are allowed and encouraged, subject to provisions as defined in the LUZO. The LUZO also contains provisions for "Special Exception Permits" for industries that fall outside the normal definition of home-based industries.

The largest land usage project currently being considered in Danbury involves RMR Pacific, LLC ("RMR"). This proposal includes selective development/expansion and renovation of the Ragged Mountain ski resort and golf course, as well as, several infrastructure projects associated with each enterprise. In addition to these commercial enterprises, RMR envisions several residential projects in the vicinity of the Ragged Mountain resorts.

The following documents reflect details regarding RMR's Master Plan:

1. Ragged Mountain Cluster Residential Development Master Plan & Submitted Appendices, dated September 19, 2008 (Revised through April 7, 2009);
2. Development Agreement by & between RMR Pacific, LLC and Town of Danbury (April 7, 2009);
3. Standard Dredge and Fill Application for RMR Pacific, LLC Ragged Mountain, dated October 6, 2008.

These detailed plans and site maps are available for review at the Danbury Town Hall. RMR also submits quarterly reports to the Danbury Planning Board regarding the status of its Phase One subdivision plans.

As of this date, no formal proposals for any other major commercial/industrial projects have been submitted for formal review/approval.

### **Community Facilities**

Danbury's governmental infrastructure currently includes its Town Hall that houses offices for the Town Selectmen and the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, as well as providing a separate portion of the building for the Police department offices.

The Danbury Town Hall serves as the town's only voting facility and also accommodates all public town meetings and hearings, including all meetings of the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Budget Committee and various other town committees.

Danbury utilizes an all-volunteer fire and rescue force that is housed in one aging building located in the center of the village district.

Danbury's fire chief has expressed his concerns regarding the fire department's aging infrastructure and its inability to accommodate modern equipment. Likewise, Danbury's police chief has detailed the inadequacy of his department's current spaces. Both chiefs have suggested a combined safety center as a solution to the departments' shortcomings.

Currently, Danbury's Emergency Management Director does not have an office; when required, the Town's fire station serves as the Emergency Operations Center. Accordingly, a combined Safety Center would house the fire and police departments as well as the Town's emergency planning office and emergency operation center. (*Refer to Recommendations and Implementation Section.*)

The Town has one transfer station that provides facilities for the collection of all types of trash and recyclable materials. Adjacent to the transfer station is one of three helicopter landing areas that are used for emergency med-evac.

Danbury has one public library that is supported by the Town's operating budget. Additionally, the library receives support from several trust funds. Although physically small, the library does offer a variety of books and publications to Danbury residents.

Danbury is one of seven area towns that comprise the Newfound Area School District. Children in grades K-4 attend Danbury's local elementary school. Danbury's middle school children (grades 5-8) and high school students (grades 9-12) attend separate middle and high schools in Bristol. While the current educational needs are met by this arrangement, future requirements will depend on the changing demographics, specifically the declining number of younger students. (*Refer to web site: <http://www.sau4.org> for additional regional education data.*)



The Danbury Community Center (DCC) is supported, in part, by the Town's operating budget. DCC also relies in large measure on outside financial contributions and fund raisers, as well as having a strong dependence on volunteer manpower, to meet its financial obligations and to provide its services. DCC provides programs for all of Danbury's residents, such as free internet access, but its primary focus is on youth and senior programs. Additionally, its building can accommodate various community functions and can be rented for personal usage. (Refer to web site: <http://www.dccnh.com> and/or Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/danburycommunitycenter?sk=info>) for additional information.)

A three-member Board of Trustees oversees the care and maintenance of Danbury's cemeteries that are funded primarily by the Town's operating budget. Administratively, the Trustees of the Trust Fund report to the NH Attorney General regarding the recording of perpetual care plots. (Refer to *Recommendations and Implementation Section*.)

As of this date, no detailed proposals for any major government/public projects have been submitted for formal review/approval or funding. However, the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) does include preliminary funding in 2012 for a future combined safety center. (Refer to Appendix B.)

### **Utility and Public Service**

Direct TV and Dish Network provide town-wide satellite television service in Danbury, while Comcast provides cable television service but only to selected sections of Danbury. Broadband internet access within Danbury is generally provided via one of four mediums: DSL from Fairpoint Communications, cable modem from Comcast, digital satellite from Direct TV, and wireless broadband service from carriers such as Verizon and AT&T.

In Danbury, landline telephone service is provided by Fairpoint Communications; Comcast provides digital telephone service but only where cable is available. Cell phone service is available from various carriers, primarily Verizon and AT&T.

According to Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH), the current electrical service and infrastructure in Danbury is satisfactory and capable of meeting the existing service demands. However, PSNH has agreed that when/if the anticipated RMR development begins, they will work closely with RMR and the Town to ensure continuous, reliable, and stable service.

### **Recreation**

The Danbury Recreation Committee, consisting of five elected members, tasks itself with maintenance and preservation of various town recreation sites, such as Independence Park, School Pond and Elmwood Park. Projects are accomplished via joint volunteer efforts combined with town highway department resources (as available).

## **Section II – Population**

### **Population Trends**

Population change for Danbury totaled 577 over 50 years, from 496 in 1950 to 1,073 in 2000. The largest decennial percent change was a 39% increase between 1970 and 1980, followed by a 30% increase over the next decade. The 2008 Census estimate of Danbury was 1,142 residents, which ranked 173<sup>rd</sup> among New Hampshire's incorporated cities and towns.

The population projection for Danbury in 2015 is 1,290. The most current census data from the 2010 national census was published in December 2010. Those findings and other census information are available on the following web sites: <http://www.nh.gov/nhes/elmi/htmlprofiles/danbury.html> and [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

*The Development Activity in the Lakes Region Annual Report* is a valuable resource that identifies and summarizes population and building permits. This report, which once focused exclusively on the Lakes Region, has been expanded to place the Lakes Region's growth patterns in the context of both New Hampshire and New England. This report is available at: [www.lakesrpc.org/documents/pdfs/Development\\_Trends\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.lakesrpc.org/documents/pdfs/Development_Trends_Report_2010.pdf) and [www.lakesrpc.org](http://www.lakesrpc.org).

## **Section III – Historical Resources**

There have been no significant changes to the list of historical resources as detailed in the 1985 Master Plan.

The Danbury New Hampshire Historical Society's purpose is to collect, preserve, interpret, write, and publish whatever may be of value to the history of Danbury, NH. One of the main projects of the DNHHS has been the restoration and preservation of the North Road Schoolhouse (aka School District #4) that operated from 1853 through 1943. This red, one-room schoolhouse has been restored and rehabilitated into a museum that now displays historical artifacts such as photographs, old books and furniture. The museum also serves as the meeting site of the DNHHS and hosts free events for the community.

The DNHHS relies primarily on fundraisers and volunteers to assist with its preservation and restoration projects, along with the maintenance and operational expenses of the North Road Schoolhouse museum.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The success of the Danbury Master Plan in shaping future growth patterns and in influencing public policy decisions is dependent on the degree to which the plan is actually carried out by those responsible for its implementation.

The following recommendations are consistent with the Community goals and objectives as set forth in the Master Plan and/or voiced in the Town-wide survey conducted in June 2010.

- (1) The Selectmen establish a formal Study Committee comprised of representation from the volunteer fire department, the police department, the emergency management office, the selectman's office, the planning board and citizens at large to evaluate the town's long-term needs for improved police and fire facilities.
- (2) The Town's Recreation Committee compile a list of projects that would be beneficial and attractive to both residents and visitors. To this end, a list of volunteers and supporters also should be developed. The Committee should research all sources of funding which may be available from State and Federal Programs as well as private donations and philanthropic institutions.
- (3) Each town committee, board and the offices of the Selectmen and Town Clerk should designate a member/employee who will provide periodic input to the Town's website <http://www.townofdanburynh.com> coordinator regarding each organization's activities, notices, announcements, and/or items of interest.

## Appendix A

### **Danbury Master Plan Survey Results Summary**

In Spring 2010, the residents of Danbury, NH were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their opinions, concerns and proposals for inputs to the Danbury Master Plan update for 2010. The following constitutes a summary of residents' responses relative to that request, focusing primarily on the majority answers to each question.

#### **What are the three best things about living in Danbury?**

1. Small town country atmosphere within a rustic setting with natural beauty.
2. Danbury residents are friendly and trustworthy.
3. Danbury personifies the "Live Free or Die" attitude of New Hampshire.

#### **What three changes would most improve the quality of life in Danbury?**

1. Reduce property taxes and improve the Town's tax base.
2. Upgrade public safety (police and fire protection).
3. Encourage and support small business development/expansion.

#### **What are the three most important things about Danbury for us to preserve?**

1. Danbury's natural environmental resources: land, forests, bog, and mountain.
2. Small town atmosphere with no major industrial/residential development.
3. Historical heritage, including Grange, volunteer fire department, clear and dark night skies, and minimal government.

#### **Land Use:**

Should Danbury consider adopting building codes?

1. Yes – 33%
2. No – 45%
3. Unsure – 22%

Do you support expanding the scope of the current land-use ordinances?

1. Yes – 28%
2. No – 22%
3. Unsure – 39%
4. No Opinion – 11%

#### **Municipal/Community**

Which municipal or community facilities or programs need to be enhanced or improved?

1. Community Center – 27%
2. Recreational Parks – 23%
3. School – 14%
4. Fire station (Safety Center) – 12%
5. Library – 9%
6. Roads – 7%
7. Town offices/Police station – 4%
8. Other – 4%

Additional programs/items noted included: senior transportation, expanded youth & teen programs, improve access to Waukeena Lake & School Pond, and improved electrical service. Most respondents suggested ways to improve programs and facilities through volunteer efforts and greater community involvement, especially in school and Community Center activities.

Do you support the elementary school as a key feature of the community?

1. Yes – 59%
2. No – 24%
3. Unsure – 17%

The majority of respondents favored keeping the younger students in town, rather than long commuting time to other schools. Respondents noted that having a local school fosters a greater sense of community. Some respondents suggested using Bristol elementary schools, home schooling and church schools as an alternative to the Town's school.

### **Economic Development**

Which type of businesses would most improve the quality of life in the community?

1. Family Restaurant/Fast Food/Coffee Shop/Take-out - 36%
2. Light Industry – 19%
3. Bank – 19%
4. Supermarket – 14%
5. Other – 12%

There were additional proposals for a drug store, laundromat, medical and dental offices, a Bingo parlor, a town swimming pool, and more small businesses including any green technologies. There were several suggestions to encourage more agricultural development, such as small farms and farm product co-op stands. There were also suggestions to encourage more horse farms and riding stables. Some respondents stated that the existing two general stores were sufficient to meet current demands (although upgrades to product quality and pricing would be greatly appreciated). Additionally, there was some opposition to fast food chains and banks.

### **Natural Resources**

Which are the most important resources that should be preserved in Danbury?

1. Forest land – 29%
2. Waterways – 27%
3. Open Space – 20%
4. Bog – 19%
5. Dark night sky – 3%
6. Trails – 1%
7. Wild Animals – 1%

There were additional comments relative to preserving natural terrain such as proscriptions on clear cutting of forest land, protection of ridge lines when developing hillsides, and general cognizance of all natural resources when constructing new buildings (residential and commercial).

### **Utilities & Public Services**

What type of services should be added or improved in Danbury?

1. Internet – 37%
2. Cable – 33%
3. Electrical Power – 14%
4. Cell Phone Service – 8%
5. Land line Phone – 5%
6. Other – 3%

There were additional comments regarding road improvements, providing video cameras for the police department, and establishing a program to provide bus/small van services for commuters & elderly/disabled persons to Concord.

### **Energy**

What types of energy development should be encouraged in Danbury?

1. Wind – 51%
2. Solar – 41%
3. Hydro – 5%
4. Wood – 2%
5. Other – 1%

There were comments/recommendations regarding the overall feasibility and environmental impact of wind/solar infrastructure (location/visual and sound impact).

### **Additional Comments.**

Generally, survey comments and recommendations were positive. Virtually every respondent stated (in one way or another) that Danbury is a wonderful place to live, a true piece of Americana that town officials and residents alike must work to maintain and preserve. Although many enhancements were recommended (more town services, more community activities, more youth and recreational programs, improved Town infrastructure, etc.), most respondents also noted that such programs and improvements are expensive and would require higher taxes. While not in favor of tax increases, many respondents recommended that more volunteerism could assist in providing some of these community enhancements, as well as more prudent use of tax revenues for truly worthy and needed projects, rather than simply “big city desires” and “nice to have” items.

The Ragged Mountain Resort received several positive comments regarding its provision of tax revenues and employment opportunities to Danbury and its residents. Several responses did, however, caution against overdevelopment, and the need to remain respectful of the environment and to remain cognizant of the “small town” atmosphere of Danbury. **Note:** Ragged Mountain submits a quarterly update of its Development Plan to the Danbury Planning Board; these updates are reviewed at the appropriate Planning Board Open Sessions. Given the current economic conditions, the majority of Ragged Mountain’s future development projects have been placed “on hold”.

## Appendix B

### THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

The Capital Improvement Program, known by the acronym CIP, links local infrastructure investments with master plan goals, land ordinances, and economic development. A capital improvement program bridges the gap between planning and spending, between the visions of the Master Plan and the fiscal realities of improving and expanding community facilities.

A CIP is an outline of anticipated expenditures for future capital projects. Capital projects are those that relate to infrastructure and purchase of land and, in some cases, engineering studies. *Capital projects do not include regular maintenance and operations.*

The Danbury CIP is updated annually via a joint effort (Public Hearing) of the Planning Board, Selectmen, Department Heads and interested parties. The Public Hearing, normally held in early February following the Budget Deliberative Session serves only to provide for a preliminary update of the six-year projection. The CIP is finalized at the first regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting in March, following the Town-wide election which has decided the operating budget level for the current fiscal year and warrant articles which have been approved for funding in the current fiscal year, and as applicable, in subsequent years if additional funding is required. The most current CIP, including approved warrant articles and approved contributions to the Capital Reserve fund is filed with the Town Clerk and will also be available on the Town of Danbury Web site, [www.townofdanburynh.com](http://www.townofdanburynh.com).

*June 28, 2011*

*MOVED by Ed Sowa*

*To APPROVE the proposed Master Plan during the public hearing*

*To be the final form of the Master Plan*

*SECONDED by Peter Parady*

*Four votes in the affirmative:*

*Bernie Golden, Charlotte McIver, Peter Parady, Ed Sowa*