

What follows are recent planning initiatives and action/projects that the Board of Selectmen is involved with. If you would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Recent Planning Initiatives:

Community Development Plan (CDP): The Northfield Community Development Committee, with assistance from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), completed a comprehensive Community Development Plan in May 2003. This plan, developed under Executive Order 418, addresses four principal areas: open space and natural resources, housing, economic development, and transportation. The plan emphasizes community development that is balanced with the preservation of natural, historic, and scenic resources and Northfield's character and reflects a vision for Northfield's future, which is to:

- Preserve the town's rural character, special qualities, and natural resources;
- Address current development pressures through land use planning and zoning; and
- Support a more diverse mix of businesses and housing for residents, which will stabilize the tax base.

Funded by a Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant, the Town is currently working to implement a recommendation from the CDP to create village center zoning districts. Within the districts, certain businesses would be allowed by right as long as they meet performance standards designed to help minimize potentially negative impacts on nearby properties and help preserve the Town's historic and scenic character.

The Town recently submitted a project profile to be included in the 2005 Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan. The *Northfield Large Commercial/Light Industrial Site Feasibility Study*, is a combined engineering, feasibility and market analysis study to determine if it is feasible to locate light industrial or large commercial land uses such as an office park, a retail business over 5,000 square feet or a facility conducting materials testing, scientific research or assembly work on two parcels of land deemed potentially suitable for those uses by the Community Development Committee.

Open Space and Recreation Plan: The Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, with the assistance of the FRCOG, recently completed an Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Town. The Plan outlines conservation and recreation goals and includes an analysis of the Town's natural resources, identifies open space and recreation needs and outlines a five-year action program with specific recommendations. In November 2005, Town Meeting approved the formation of an Open Space Committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Sustainable Development: The Town recently completed a Commonwealth Capital Application. Representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Conservation Commission met to discuss the Town's existing eligible criteria and to determine which criteria the Town should commit to completing in the coming year. The Town is dedicated to the Sustainable Development principles and wherever possible will incorporate the Sustainable Development principles into plans and action steps.

ADA Transition Plan: In 1999, with the help of *AccessPlus*, a program of the Stavros Center for Independent Living, Northfield adopted a plan to achieve compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Town's ADA Coordinator with involvement from residents and municipal officials updates the plan regularly.

Capital Planning: Each year the Finance Committee coordinates citizen, board and committee input into the Town's capital plan. The Building Utilization & Planning Committee identifies planning, space and capital needs for the coming 10-15 years for each Town building. The Streets and Roads Capital Planning Committee identifies maintenance priorities for the Town's roadways.

Local Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan: With the assistance of the FRCOG, in September 2004 the Northfield Natural Hazards Mitigation Planning Committee completed a Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. The Plan emphasizes actions that can be taken before natural disasters such as flooding, storms, high winds, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, etc. occur. The Plan includes a mitigation program that addresses Northfield's unique geography, demography, economy, and land uses within the context of each specific potential natural hazard that may threaten the community.

Recent Actions/Projects:

Brush Mountain: In early 2005, the Northfield Board of Selectmen received a 'notice of intent to sell' for a 46-acre parcel that had been in the state's Chapter 61B program. The parcel is located on Brush Mountain, fronting on Gulf Road, and had a sales price of \$110,000. The property includes important wildlife habitat, the Metacomet-Monadnock (M&M) Trail, the cellar hole of a home owned by Calvin Swan, a freeborn African American carpenter, and contiguous forestland areas. The Town of Northfield assigned the right of first refusal to purchase the property to the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. In June 2005, the Land Trust purchased the property to help conserve it. The Town of Northfield intends to purchase the property back from the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and to maintain the parcel as open space in perpetuity. The Town was recently awarded a Self-Help Grant of \$70,400 for the project. Town Meeting (followed by a Special Municipal Election) authorized funding for the project.

The Northfield Main Street Revitalization Project: The Northfield Main Street Revitalization Project is a comprehensive community development project aimed at increasing economic development activities in downtown Northfield, enhancing the historic and cultural resources of the town, improving livability of downtown and providing accessible and pedestrian safe sidewalks and crossings. The project involves restoring approximately three miles of sidewalks in what has historically been the commercial, residential and public heart of Northfield. The project is currently under design by Dufresne-Henry, funded by a grant from the Federal Highway Administration National Scenic Byways Program.

Assessment of the Four Mile Brook Watershed: The Town was recently awarded a Water Quality Management Planning Grant from the 604(b) Program. The grant will fund a comprehensive assessment of the Four Mile Brook watershed to inventory potential sources of nonpoint pollution and develop a Watershed Management and Restoration Plan, which includes specific recommendations for prioritized restoration and/or mitigation projects. The project will also include a macro invertebrate sampling program and a public education and outreach effort.

Transition Planning for the Northfield Mount Hermon School's Downtown Campus: Northfield Mount Hermon School is in the process of consolidating its operations to its Gill campus and closing the Northfield campus. As of September 2005, no students will be housed or attend school on the Northfield campus; however, buildings will continue to be used for administration and other purposes. The Board of Selectmen has formed a committee to consider the implications of the consolidation to the town. The committee is currently studying the implications to town government, including taxation and public safety; historic preservation of campus buildings and tourism; recreation, and land conservation and environmental protection.

Dickinson Memorial Library Barrier Removal Project: Providing handicapped access to Town buildings

is a high priority in the Town's Community Action Statement and ADA Transition plans. The Dickinson Memorial Library Trustees conducted a Planning for Results Process that included Neighborhood meetings in five sections of Town to determine the strengths and needs of the library. Safety, convenience and access are major concerns. The findings have been incorporated into a Long Range Plan for the Library. The Town intends to apply for a Community Development Block Grant to fund the project. In November 2005, Town Meeting (followed by a Special Municipal Election) authorized funding for the portions of the project that are not eligible for grant funds.

Franklin County Bikeway - Northfield Connector: The Northfield Connector portion of the Franklin County Bikeway provides a non-motorized link to the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Recreation and Environment Center, downtown Northfield and the downtown campus of the Northfield Mount Hermon School. The Connector is located on existing roads. Signage was installed in 2004 and bike racks will be installed in 2006.

Scenic Byway: The state-designated Connecticut River Scenic Byway runs on Route 63 and 63/10 through Northfield and contains a number of historically significant agricultural, community development and forest landscapes. One of the recommendations of the Community Development Plan is to consider establishing an overlay district for the Byway, which includes design guidelines, and/or use restrictions to protect the Byway's scenic nature.