

# Vision Chapter

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### *Atkinson Vision Statement*

*Atkinson enjoys a high quality of life represented by distinct community character, and outstanding natural and recreational resources. This has been achieved through careful planning, **stewardship of natural resources**, infrastructure investment, dependable municipal services and volunteerism.*

*Atkinson's vision is to **preserve our rural character, and our natural, historical and cultural resources**, while providing municipal and commercial services, recreational facilities and housing options which support the needs of the community in a fiscally, socially and **environmentally responsible** manner.*

*Atkinson is primarily a residential community that would like to encourage land uses such as **agriculture, single-family homes, local businesses, and the conservation and protection of natural resources**. The Town seeks to **preserve our rural character, our natural, historical and cultural resources**, while providing municipal and commercial services, recreational facilities and housing options that support the needs of the community in a fiscally, socially and **environmentally sustainable** manner.*

*Atkinson desires to maintain a well planned community with a rural residential and agricultural character, housing options, diversified but limited commercial and economic development, quality education and municipal services, and **protected natural and historic resources**.*

### A. Introduction

Presented below are the goals, objectives and policies prepared by the Planning Board to assist the town in implementing an overall vision for the Master Plan. **It is important that these goals, objectives and policies be supported by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen**, so that subsequent planning recommendations can be set forth affording the voters the opportunity to guide the development of the Town of Atkinson. The goals, objectives and policies are part of the

Master Plan and serve as an overall umbrella for the Town's development plan. The following definitions apply to the terms goals, objectives and policies as presented in this chapter.

**Goals:** A Goal is defined as a fundamental purpose that requires the application of long-term effort and energies of the Town. It is designed to give direction, guidance and coordination to the Town's changes and future development.

**Objectives:** As part of the attainment of goals, specific objectives are designed to make recommendations that contribute to the fulfillment of the established goals for Atkinson.

**Policies:** The Planning Board may suggest policies to the Selectmen and the Voters. The legislative body should make decisions that implement policy recommendations. In order to realize goals and objectives, policies must be consistent with the Master Plan.

It should be recognized that the articulation of goals and the establishment of objectives along with the policies necessary to carry out these goals are an ongoing process. Goals and objectives along with the appropriate policies for implementation may be added to, amended and changed as necessary and should be addressed as a basic element in the ongoing Master Planning process.

## B. Goals, Objectives And Policies

### **Goal 1. Retain a high quality of life for Atkinson residents.**

This basic and broad goal is one upon which subsequent goals must rest. It is stated here, though broad, for true value and planning purposes. This goal assures the **continued focus on the quality of life** in Atkinson.

Objective: In order to attain such a vast goal, the Town must accept the responsibility of creating conditions for all citizens that may best meet basic human needs and are **commensurate with the common good**. To attain this, it is important that both the individual and the community follow through with a plan that has as its aim a balanced program for change and development.

Policy: The Master Plan must provide the framework for the continuation and improvement of policies aimed at providing for the well-being of the citizens of Atkinson and for **providing for growth and change without undue hardship** in retaining the quality of life established to this date.

### **Goal 2. Maintain Atkinson's role in the regional development and economic setting.**

The Town should not be expected to provide employment opportunities and services, and thereby accepts a continued dependence on outlying communities to provide employment and services. The majority of land in Atkinson is zoned residential with limited commercial and

industrial zoning districts not located or established for retail and service oriented development.

**Objective:** The Town seeks to maintain a primarily desirable residential development pattern and environment through zoning and land uses standards (e.g. lot size, cluster subdivisions) that **preserve open space** and minimize demand on municipal services.

**Policy:** The policy must be one that continues an attractive residential community.

**Goal 3. Retain and protect property values and control property taxes.**

The Town must recognize the importance of the protection of existing property values within Atkinson, the **maintenance of open spaces, fostering of community pride and protection of natural resources.**

**Objective:** The objective is to provide for balanced growth and change while maintaining the existing rural character of the community. The objective must reflect the densities and specific uses permitted within certain areas of the community. The careful identification of land uses and their interrelationship and coordination with soil and subsoil is imperative.

**Policy:** The adoption of subdivision regulations and zoning ordinances that are designed to be commensurate with the community's capacity to assume growth and change must be kept in mind.

**Goal 4. Provide adequate recreational facilities and programs.**

Atkinson should continue to expand recreational opportunities for the town. This goal is to provide for the continued opportunity for residents to enjoy physical activities.

**Objective:** The objective is the establishment of a long range open space and recreational improvement program that provides for strategic locations of **publicly accessed land.** Any recreational program must recognize the need for balanced year round recreational opportunities.

**Policy:** The policy necessary for the continued progress towards **acquiring open space** and developing recreational opportunities in the town is to adopt a long term plan, and to **seek all possible sources of funds** to make appropriate purchases and improvements. Sources of funding are the Capital Improvement Plan, Land Use Change Tax, and General Fund.

**Goal 5. Maintain a safe and efficient network of roads and highways.**

The goal should be to provide for a street and highway network that will discourage major through traffic and be one that is primarily designed to serve the residents of the community. In addition, Atkinson must actively cooperate with area towns to assure that regional highways

meet the needs of all communities. Traffic congestion on regional arterials is an increasing source of frustration to the residents. The Town should collaborate with the NH Department of Transportation and Rockingham Planning Commission to address traffic concerns.

Objective: The objective of this goal is the maintenance of a residential community environment. This means that access should be provided, but that fast and high volumes of traffic should be limited to certain areas of town. The creation of road and highway networks should primarily serve the residents of Atkinson.

Supported by the Transportation Chapter of the Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan, the Highway Department should maintain a comprehensive roads strategy. Since roads represent the most significant part of Atkinson's budget, it is recommended that a professionally prepared maintenance, reconstruction, construction plan be developed and updated periodically.

Policy: The policy is to adopt road and highway standards that retain the scenic roads, encourage the continuing maintenance of the road network, and adopt standards and specifications that are designed to meet the needs for the assigned functions.

Although road maintenance is not strictly under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board, except for its responsibility to prepare a Capital Improvements Plan, the Master plan and Capital Improvements Plan should serve as a catalyst for all involved parties (Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Road Agent) to agree on a long-term road maintenance/reconstruction/construction strategy.

#### **Goal 6. Ensure adequate sewage disposal and water supplies for developed lands.**

The goal is to maintain a sufficiently low development density that will allow for individual sewage disposal facilities and individual water supplies. Such a goal is to be established under the existing water quality laws of the State of New Hampshire and those health regulations in the Town of Atkinson.

Objective: The objective is to avoid the large capital expenditure required to provide public sewer and water services. To assure the avoidance of town water and sewer, an objective is to provide for continued measures that allow such densities and such regulations addressing subsoil conditions that will keep individual water supplies and sewage disposal systems efficient without ground water or surface water pollution.

Policy: The policy to attain such a goal and accomplish the objective is to provide for a detailed project review that will address soil and subsoil conditions. This will also require sufficiently low densities throughout the community so that water pollution will not occur, ensuring safe and sufficient water for the foreseeable future.

**Goal 7. Maintain and update the Master Plan, as recommended in RSA 676.**

A master plan is not a static document. Information and conditions change, and the citizens of Atkinson need to provide continued input to the planning process. RSA 676 requires that local master plans maintain and update every 5 to 7 years a Vision Chapter and a Land Use Chapter (existing and future conditions). The Atkinson Master Plan also includes the following chapters: Community Profile, Transportation, Community Facilities, Natural Resources (Inventory), Housing, Economic Considerations and Planning Issues.

Objective: The Master Plan and associated capital improvement program will be kept up to date on an ongoing basis.

Policy: The Master Plan and CIP will be reviewed annually by the Planning Board to determine if significant changes have occurred in its underlying assumptions. Any changes of these underlying assumptions will be cause for an update.

*The following content from the 2012 Master Plan Vision Session and Community Survey.*

## C. Summary of Public Input and Comment

### 2012 Atkinson Community Survey Results

The following tables summarize participant survey responses grouped as High Priority and Low Priority action items based on their ranking. Each of the action items are assigned to one or more of four categories:

- 1 = Environmental or Natural Resources**
- 2 = Municipal Services or Facilities**
- 3 = Land Use and Zoning (growth and population)**
- 4 = Regulatory**

The categories generally describe the type of action stated.

## Summary of HIGH Priority Action Items from the 2012 Atkinson Community Survey

1 = Environmental or Natural Resources 2 = Municipal Services or Facilities 3 = Land Use and Zoning (growth and population) 4 = Regulatory

Type	Action Item	#	#	Low	#	Neutral	#	#	High	Total #
3	a) Preserve open spaces -- fields, forests, and farms	12	25	7%	107	20%	159	226	72%	532
2 or 3	g) Preserve historical sites/ buildings	30	74	19%	150	28%	164	114	52%	534
2 or 3	j) Control property taxes	2	15	3%	42	8%	129	339	88%	532
3 or 4	k) Maintain Atkinson's rural character	10	7	3%	45	8%	131	338	88%	535
1, 4	l) Protect lakes, rivers, wetlands	8	14	4%	80	15%	152	279	80%	536
1, 4	m) Establish streamside buffers to preserve water quality and wildlife habitat	17	33	9%	105	20%	137	232	69%	534
3	n) Minimize pollution	7	15	4%	74	14%	128	302	81%	532
4	o) Strengthen enforcement of environmental regulations	26	47	14%	116	22%	141	193	63%	531
1 or 4	p) Protect groundwater/drinking water supplies	9	14	4%	35	7%	95	371	88%	529
2	u) Increase participation in recycling, composting, yard waste disposal.	33	51	16%	165	31%	136	143	52%	537
3	a. Single Family Homes	33	34	13%	146	28%	137	174	59%	526
3, 4	b) New zoning incentives to encourage conservation	23	35	11%	159	30%	179	128	58%	526
3, 4	c) Zoning that encourages wind, solar and water as energy sources	52	35	16%	123	23%	176	136	59%	530
1 or 4	g) Wetlands setback should stay at 100 feet	34	35	13%	135	26%	115	166	54%	521
1 or 2	b) Acquire properties for additional conservation land	62	56	22%	122	23%	170	115	54%	532
2	d) Support use of more ecologically friendly treatments for icy roads	14	25	7%	161	30%	200	126	61%	532
2	e) Create and support programs that will allow elderly citizens to remain independently in their homes	17	25	8%	61	11%	146	278	80%	531
2	j) Provide senior transport services	32	27	11%	80	15%	158	224	72%	530
2	b) Handling winter road conditions	29	67	18%	60	11%	197	170	69%	532
2	e) Recycling programs	13	32	8%	68	13%	205	209	78%	531
2	f) Volunteer fire department	15	18	6%	44	8%	111	326	82%	530
2	g) Police department	29	26	10%	49	9%	107	317	79%	535
2	i) Town website	20	32	10%	148	28%	141	144	54%	531
2	j) Recreation facilities	17	30	9%	167	32%	146	129	52%	529

**Summary of LOW Priority Action Items from the 2012 Atkinson Community Survey**

**1 = Environmental or Natural Resources 2 = Municipal Services or Facilities 3 = Land Use and Zoning (growth and population) 4 = Regulatory**

Type	Action Item	#	#	Low	#	Neutral	#	#	High	Total #
3 or 4	e) Encourage residential development	214	168	73%	100	19%	31	8	7%	525
3 or 4	f) Encourage limited commercial development	166	109	52%	126	24%	81	45	24%	530
2	q) Construct public sewer system	182	116	56%	95	18%	65	56	23%	529
2	r) Consider a Town owned and operated water utility	169	113	53%	101	19%	60	63	23%	530
3	c. Low and Moderate Income Housing	189	117	58%	122	23%	69	28	18%	527
3	d. Apartments	240	140	72%	101	19%	36	10	9%	529
3	f. Retail Stores	192	125	60%	118	22%	65	28	18%	531
3	h. Heavy Manufacturing	362	87	85%	49	9%	20	12	6%	530
3	j. Chain Stores	350	96	84%	53	10%	20	9	5%	528
3	k. Corporate Chain Stores / Shopping Centers	372	84	86%	42	8%	27	8	7%	533
3	n. Cluster residential development	181	114	56%	156	29%	56	11	13%	530
3	a) Allow more commercial zones	265	124	74%	74	14%	54	9	12%	529
3 or 4	d) Zoning that would allow rental apartments in single-family dwellings.	213	115	61%	103	19%	72	28	19%	534
1 or 4	f) Wetlands setback should be less than 100 feet	237	79	62%	88	17%	40	32	14%	510
1 or 2	c) Allow motorized vehicles on some conservation lands	239	110	66%	101	19%	52	20	14%	525
2	a) Construct a skateboard park	251	82	62%	115	22%	67	15	15%	533
2	c) Build a public swimming pool	268	68	64%	80	15%	60	47	20%	525
3 or 4	d) Allow cell towers in residential districts	207	93	56%	97	18%	81	49	24%	531
2	e) Build a new community center	178	102	53%	126	24%	80	35	22%	526

## 2012 Master Plan Vision Session with the Atkinson Planning Board

Following is a summary of open general discussion by participants at the Planning Board Master Plan Vision Session held on Wednesday June 6, 2012.

### Quality of Life

- Sense of community
- Involvement in town affairs and community activities
- Volunteerism, people working together, opportunity to serve and be served
- Independent living
- Home values and personal investment
- Friendliness
- Rural atmosphere and environment, low density development, low traffic congestion
- Nearby amenities, advantageous location relative to services
- Excellent safety, security and service provided by police and fire departments
- Accessible town hall, participation in governance
- Excellent town services including programs for elderly and disabled residents
- Quiet atmosphere, privacy
- Limit street lighting
- Clean air, healthy family environment, low pollution
- Open space, trails, recreation and nature areas
- Low tax rate, affordability
- Family friendly neighborhoods
- Access to indoor and outdoor recreation, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools
- Good schools
- Preservation and restoration efforts
- Minimal commercial/industrial presence

### Zoning for Home Businesses

- Encourage but with strict limitations on scale and activities
- Avoid external impacts to residents and change to community character
- Concerns over traffic impacts
- Adequate regulation exists through ZBA approval process
- Don't over-regulate unnecessarily
- Low visibility
- Benefit of income for residents who need it

### Dislikes/Needs

- No train layover station
- Less street lighting
- Improve cell phone coverage
- Opportunity for home businesses to expand/move to office space (condominium or rental units)



- Home business – ZBA may consider notification of abutter for renewal of 2-year permit
- Increased traffic on Route 125

Following is a summary of small group discussions focuses on transportation and roads, energy, utilities, recreation and trails, Conservation and open space, and housing.

### **Transportation/Roads**

- ✓ Signs to identify cul-de-sacs as “no exit” roads
- ✓ Consider bike lanes on connector roads
- ✓ Need to for greater street network connectivity (through-roads)
- ✓ Complete a core sample study for all roads
- ✓ Post more speed limit signs
- ✓ Post scenic by-way signs
- ✓ Need to more speed control devices (speed bumps, etc)
- ✓ Evaluate need for alternative forms of transit
- ✓ Evaluate potential for creation of more bike paths/trails
- ✓ Increase access to public transportation in town and in the region

### **Energy**

- ✓ One-stop energy education and information portal for residents
- ✓ Incentives, local tax rebates or property tax exemption
- ✓ Support goal of town certified as an energy efficient or “green” community
- ✓ Adopt/support town-wide goal for energy use reduction (i.e. target and/or benchmark)
- ✓ Publicize more widely ongoing and new efficiency and conservation efforts
- ✓ Record testimonials by residents who have achieved efficiency and conservation goals
- ✓ Develop short “public service announcements” about efficiency and conservation tips
- ✓ Develop energy programming for children and schools to motivate participation by parents
- ✓ Adopt “fee per bag” program to reduce trash removal costs and promote recycling
- ✓ Encourage and/or make space for town composting/yard waste disposal facility
- ✓ Develop recycling program for CFL’s

### **Utilities**

- ✓ Cell Towers – amend zoning to enable placement to improve local service
- ✓ Cable Services – improve choices in providers; evaluate wireless solutions for private, business and municipal use
- ✓ Satellite Service– ensure that dish structures are concealed
- ✓ Natural Gas – evaluate potential for expansion of service and funding mechanisms
- ✓ Power Line Infrastructure – upgrades needed to avoid frequent, lengthy service interruptions; evaluate options for substations and underground lines
- ✓ Water Service – potential for expansion of privately owned water supply to residents and/or businesses

### Recreation and Trails

- ✓ Need bike trails, improvements to popular areas
- ✓ Complete a needs assessment for 2030
- ✓ Better communication to public about resources and access
- ✓ Coordinate with educators to encourage use by students
- ✓ Evaluate location to create a dog park, rifle/shooting range, skateboard park, indoor swimming pool and indoor skating rink
- ✓ Improve planning, frequency and methods for trail maintenance
- ✓ Work to extend existing trails
- ✓ Acquire better maintenance equipment
- ✓ Improve access and parking to trail system (need land/easements)
- ✓ Establish a trust to fund maintenance activities; seek additional funds/financing options
- ✓ Post requirements and rules for use of trails, parks and other recreation areas
- ✓ Expand opportunities for horseback riding, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing
- ✓ Evaluate need for separate trails for motorized recreation
- ✓ Town Beach – currently used mostly for fishing; with some improvements, space available to create parking and beach recreation area

### Conservation and Open Space

- ✓ Publicize availability of conservation lands, access and uses
- ✓ Evaluate availability, cost and potential uses of the Brown property (community garden, museum, active farming)
- ✓ Use of existing Open Space Cluster Development zoning improves scenic roads, provides trail easements and linkages between open space areas; does zoning conserve enough land?
- ✓ Need for bathroom facilities and parking at open space conservation areas
- ✓ Town relies heavily on the land use change tax to support conservation
- ✓ Need to establish a dedicated account to save for future land purchases
- ✓ Village District zone – conserved through restricted use and development requirements
- ✓ Establish committee to execute land purchases, advise capital reserve funds
- ✓ Establish garden/farming/agriculture program with schools
- ✓ Need to integrate conservation in planning and regulation to enhance existing zoning provisions
- ✓ Develop a concept plan for a town-wide trail system
- ✓ Develop a 50-year concept plan to link conservation lands and plan for future conservation/open space
- ✓ Support purpose of conserving land – wetland protection, green space and habitat preservation, recreation, education/study, water quality

### Housing

- ✓ Need for housing and care options for 55+ residents that want to remain in the community

- ✓ Improve regulation of in-law apartments to provide housing choices for seniors, students and younger residents
- ✓ Need for affordable housing choices (smaller homes, smaller lots) for all, including affordable “transition” housing for seniors
- ✓ Evaluate zoning options to permit “multi-generational” housing for families and extended families
- ✓ Golf course/recreation zone 5-story buildings out of keeping with rural character
- ✓ Provide examples of “quality traditional development” in the region to guide future planning
- ✓ Limited retail in cluster developments would be beneficial

Other topics that came up in the small group discussions include the following.

- Municipal property acquisition (for municipal facilities and community services)
- Parking at Peter Williams and Wood properties
- Cooperative Farm/Community Gardens at Brown, Hightop Farm and Wood Farm
- Finance options include bonds, trust fund, capital improvement fund
- **Need inventory of available and beneficial lands**
- Community Center needs improved accommodations and programming for seniors and disabled