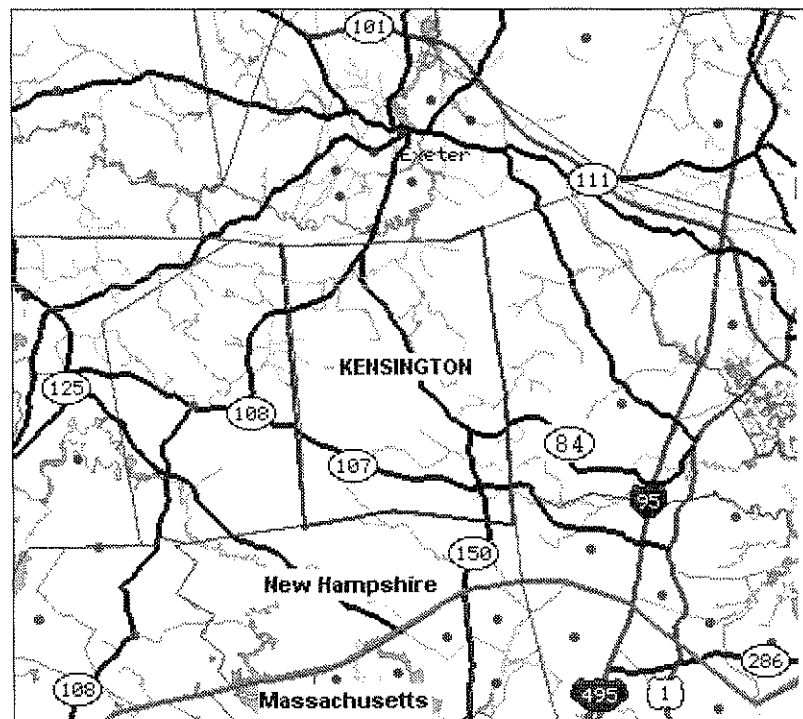


## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Kensington's Setting

The Town of Kensington is located in Rockingham County, New Hampshire, in the southeast corner of the State. Kensington is comprised of 11.98 square miles. The Town is bordered by Exeter to the north, East Kingston to the west, South Hampton to the south, and Hampton Falls/Seabrook to the east.

Kensington is bisected from north to south by NH Route 150, while NH Route 108 cuts through the northwest corner of the town. Kensington is also served by two State east-west roads: a short section of NH Route 84, which connects Route 150 to US Route 1 in Hampton Falls, and NH Route 107, which runs along the southern border of the town and is the most heavily traveled road in Town.



Kensington, NH

Location: 42.93070 N, 70.94589W

(source: US Census Bureau)

Rockingham County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of New Hampshire. Kensington's location in the region affords reasonable access to the NH Turnpike (Interstate 95) in Seabrook, as well as to NH 101, connecting the seacoast to the central and western part of the State. New Hampshire's three largest cities, Nashua, Manchester, and Portsmouth are within a one-hour drive of Kensington. Boston, Massachusetts is located 56 miles to the south of Town.

## **1.2 The Purpose of the Master Plan**

The Planning Board is authorized under the provisions of NHRSA §674 et seq. to develop a strategy, in the form of a Master Plan, to guide the future growth of the community. This document is that plan. It replaces the existing Plan and brings it up to date with respect to the changing needs of the community. Kensington's first Master Plan was prepared in 1981 and certified in 1983. The Master Plan was last updated in 1986 by members of the Kensington Planning Board.

A Master Plan is the fundamental development plan and land use policy for a community. Although "the sole purpose and effect of [the master plan] shall be to aid the planning board in the performance of its duties" (NHRSA §674:2), it can and should be much more. In addition to encouraging wise land use, it forms the necessary basis for explaining and supporting the community's land use regulations and the decisions of local land use boards.

A Master Plan is required by New Hampshire Statutes for any town which has zoning and other land use regulations. Under NHRSA §674:18, the Town may adopt zoning after "the Planning Board has adopted the general statement of objectives and the land use section of the Master Plan..." The Master Plan establishes the goals and policies on which land use regulations are to be based. The existence and quality of the Master Plan determines, to a large extent, the legal foundation and ability to successfully enforce local zoning ordinances.

The Plan brings together analyses of the social, economic, and physical characteristics of the community, such as the distribution of population, income, and employment; the capacity of public facilities; and the amounts of open space, forest, farmland and public lands. The Master Plan provides a means to coordinate land development with Town facilities, including schools, recreation, police, fire, and other Town services.

The Master Plan serves as the base upon which to build more detailed land use regulations and town operating procedures. It provides the basic data, rationale, and principles that serve as guidelines to the Planning Board, Selectmen, and other Town bodies as they conduct daily business and plan for the future. Communities are sometimes inclined, under pressure, to ignore the effect of proposed actions on the achievement of commonly held long-term goals. It is hoped that each Town official will use this Master Plan as a tool for deciding whether such proposals and their long-range consequences are desirable in light of the Town's stated objectives.

## **1.3 The 2001 Update**

During the years 1999-2000, the Planning Board decided to update Kensington's Master Plan. The Rockingham Planning Commission was contracted to assist in the preparation of certain portions of the plan. The Planning Board appointed a committee to oversee the construction of the draft Master Plan, after which it would hold the necessary meetings to obtain public comment. The Master Plan Committee began work in November of 1999, targeting early 2001 for completion of the plan in its entirety.

The most recent update to the Master Plan strives to incorporate the history of prior planning efforts in Kensington, along with current data, philosophy and citizen opinion. A new format has been introduced to help make the Plan a useable, *living document* that is easy to comprehend, utilize, and update. Individually, chapters stand alone for comprehensive treatment of particular issues and for ease of updating; together they form a more complete and in-depth picture of the status of the Town of Kensington and a vision of specific issues and solutions for Kensington's future.

Blank notes pages are provided to allow people using this document to keep notes within the Plan itself, for use when updates are necessary or decisions and interpretations are made. The document itself is presented in a three-ring binder format to allow for easier updating of individual sections. This reinforces the concept that the Master Plan is a compilation of statements on a variety of issues, and that each chapter presents its own unique policy. Each chapter is individually numbered and includes its date of revision. Furthermore, with each revision, a sheet at the front of the Plan will include the latest update for each chapter. Recommendations appear at the end of each individual chapter, as well as in a separate Recommendations section immediately following the Introduction.

In preparation for the writing of this Master Plan, the Planning Board conducted a citizen's survey to ascertain how Kensington's residents felt about their community, what they felt were the Town's strengths and weaknesses, what they felt is special about Kensington, and how they would like to see their community develop in the future. The results of this survey (Appendix A), along with a similar survey conducted in 1980 (Appendix B), have influenced the development of this Plan.

#### **1.4 Shared Challenges**

The challenge of town planning is to balance the demands of competing interests into a community consensus sufficient to enhance local government decisions. In the future, the planners will increasingly be faced with the competing priorities of residents, neighborhoods, interest groups, and both resident and non-resident developers. As the Town continues to grow, the Plan will undergo recurring adjustments. It is the task of planners to minimize the adverse impacts of change upon the Town's residents.

Today more than ever, the Town must become involved with environmental concerns. The conflict between growth and the preservation of natural and cultural resources becomes more apparent as the amount of open land available for development diminishes. The balance between property rights and regulation becomes more the focus as the Town struggles to preserve disappearing resources that are an integral part of community identity, health, and well-being. The Master Plan therefore contains objectives for the protection of natural resources, as well as the important buildings and other landmarks that are a part of the Town's character and environment.

We all serve the people of Kensington; not just the people who vote at today's election, but also our ancestors and most importantly our descendants, who will inherit the results of our decisions and actions. It is they who will benefit from the solid, well-reasoned decisions we make today.

Conversely, they will be forced to suffer the consequences of our mistakes. The Master Plan must reflect these interests and priorities. The programs that are implemented as a result of this Plan must help the community survive and maintain the desired quality of life, which is a crucial aspect of Kensington's identity.

## **1.5 Kensington's Approach to Managing Growth**

Kensington is a small, rural New England town, with a proud heritage of nearly 300 years. For most of that time it was a farming town. Although recent decades have seen a decline in agriculture and a rise in residential development, Kensington is not a suburb, nor does it desire to become one.

The change already experienced by the town over the last 50 years is substantial. The pressure on the town to develop further in the coming years will be even greater, given the rapid rate of growth in southern New Hampshire, the town's location near several major transportation arteries, and the still large availability of open land. The challenge is to plan for that growth so that it does not destroy the very nature of the town that attracts many here in the first place. One need only look at the examples of other formerly rural towns, elsewhere in the State and in Kensington's own back yard, to see the unfortunate effects of poorly planned commercial and suburban-style residential developments. Sprawl is a present reality even in local communities.

The goal of this Plan is to establish a framework for growth at a pace that the town can afford and in a pattern that respects the town's cultural and natural heritage. The town cannot prevent nor prohibit growth, but it can and should actively plan to manage growth well. To achieve this may require an increased level of community participation and planning – at every step, individual property rights must be considered of primary importance and weighed against the good of the community as a whole.

The approach this Master Plan proposed is that all new development – residential, commercial, and agricultural – be carefully planned in light of the expressed wishes of town residents to:

- keep taxes low, and
- maintain the rural character of the town.

A series of recommendations is presented here to manage development in three major areas:

### **1. Fiscal Impact**

(Impact on property values, the cost of community services, and resulting property tax rates)

### **2. Environmental Impact**

(Impact on wetlands, woodlands, agricultural lands, ground waters, and open space)

### **3. Aesthetic Impact**

(Impact on the Town's character – its historical, architectural, and natural heritage)

The intended goal is to encourage and foster development that is low impact, and discourage and avoid development that is high impact. Development that reflects and incorporates those attributes that are in keeping with the wishes of the townspeople is more likely to be welcomed and absorbed by the town than development that does not.

## NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.