

PLAN SUMMARY

2.1 STEWARDSHIP

In this Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Foster has accepted the role of *stewardship* for the wealth of resources, which lies within the boundaries of the Town and the town's rural character, which provides a quality of life different from what is experienced in the city or suburbs. *Stewardship* means providing management for the continued enjoyment and appreciation of the town's resources for today's residents and *future generations*.

2.2 VISION

The *vision* of the Comprehensive Plan is that the Town of Foster can continue to be a rural community with a unique identity and sense of place, retaining its historic hamlets and village centers, small farmsteads, scenic roads, wooded ridges and river valley pastures while simultaneously absorbing new growth and development in the planning horizon (2010). This will not be an easy job. To hold on to the values, quality of life and visual identity of a rural community, Foster is prepared to manage growth and accommodate change pro-actively, actively pursuing economic development opportunities that will enhance the natural and built environmental assets of the town, building upon the rural resources that set Foster apart and to actually use Foster's ruralness to advantage. This approach meets the challenge head on and faces the reality that without management, the very community character and way of life based upon self-reliance and independence which Foster residents overwhelmingly seek to preserve will be lost to suburbanization and a costly service-oriented value system.

2.3 GROWTH

Studies undertaken for this Comprehensive Plan demonstrate that growth in Foster, under current regulations and without a cohesive management approach, is adversely affecting the character of the community, not only visually, but socially and physically.

Residents of the town are aware that change is inevitable but not always good. When change is not anticipated, and not managed, it may not be as beneficial to the community as first thought or suggested. It is possible to not only anticipate change in the community, but program positive change, which is beneficial to the community and actually enhances the character of the community. Planning for change is a fundamental activity of government. For this reason Foster undertook a growth management study in 2003 to aid in developing management techniques.

To achieve the *vision* of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Foster will use growth management as a major tool to guide the timing and location of change in the community.

One aspect of Growth Management the Town may utilize is the possible implementation of a "rolling" growth rate management system, which will determine the phasing of new subdivisions and building to keep pace with the ability of the Town to provide essential services and absorb change.

These options will be considered following recommendations from the 2003 Growth Management Study.

The second strategy is the Plan itself. By following the guidance and implementation schedule in this document, the community will be able to accommodate growth during the next decade while preserving much of the town's rural character.

2.4 PLAN ORGANIZATION

Foster's Comprehensive Plan is intended to be the primary guide to growth and development in town. Encompassing ten functional areas, the Plan is a blueprint for the future for:

- Growth
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Housing
- Community Facilities
- Natural Resources
- Historic and Scenic Resources
- Circulation
- Open Space and Recreation
- Implementation

As such it has been designed for use by Town officials, boards and commission, developers, investors, community groups and concerned residents as a manual to construct the *vision* of Foster tomorrow.

It shows the interconnection between issues and problems facing the town as well as the Town's activities and purpose to address these issues and concerns.

How will the Plan be used?

The Comprehensive Plan is a *management guidebook*, where residents, new home buyers, developers and Town officials can find direction on the goals and policies of the community concerning future land use, environmental conservation, economic development, housing and community services. The Table of Contents is the Plan's primary guide to finding information for each area of interest. A simple Index at the end of the document provides additional assistance in locating key subjects.

The Plan is divided into the following sections:

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|---------|----|--------------------------|
| Section | 1. | Introduction |
| | 2. | Plan Summary |
| | 3. | Plan Development Process |

4. Growth, population and development
5. Plan Elements
 - 5.1 Goals and Policies
 - 5.2 Economic Development
 - 5.3 Land Use
 - 5.4 Housing
 - 5.5 Community Facilities
 - 5.6 Natural Resources
 - 5.7 Historic and Scenic Resources
 - 5.8 Circulation
 - 5.9 Open Space and Recreation
6. Implementation Program
7. Consistency

This organization allows users to focus on particular areas of interest or concern while at the same time providing an integrated document in which planning policies are consistent from one functional area to the other.

2.5 MAJOR GOALS AND POLICIES

The Future Land Use Map presented with this Summary graphically shows the implementation of the following major planning goals, policies and objectives for the town:

2.5.1 *Growth Management*

Current and future growth and development, and the rate at which it occurs, shall not adversely affect or in any way detract from the unique environmental resources, historic and rural physical and social character of Foster. Foster will direct its planning and growth management policies to encourage growth and development that enhance the quality of life for town residents and visitors and protect the town's assets. The Town will:

- Establish an annual growth rate indicator in step with the Town's ability to provide essential services and facilities.
- Consider adopting legally defensible incentives and disincentives to achieve a stabilized rate of growth at acceptable levels, including programmed phasing of new development.
- Retain the position of Town Planner to assist in implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

2.5.2 *Economic Development*

Broaden the sources of Town revenues in order to assure a solid financial future and to assist the achievement of the goals expressed in this Comprehensive Plan while at the same time achieving affordability and self-reliance.

Assure that commercial, service and industrial land use growth is oriented to the rural character and the scale of the existing character-defining features and natural resources of the town and that such

development be designed to enhance these features and resources rather than compete with or detract from them or in any way adversely affect them.

- Use the real marketable assets of the town; its scenic areas, historic districts, small farms, specialized craft and antiques, recreational areas and rural environmental setting to develop a small scale tourism industry which promotes and protects these assets and attracts overnight visitors.
- Encourage the private development of support services for a small-scaled tourism industry such as small inns, bed and breakfasts, additional recreational areas and amenities.
- Continue and further refine zoning and other incentives for a diversity of small scale cottage industry, agricultural, office and craft pursuits throughout the town. Performance standards that protect the environment and rural character of the town will be included.
- Continue the work of the Economic Development Advisory Commission to explore and solicit preferred development opportunities for location in Foster, which would enhance the assets of the town.

2.5.3 *Land Use*

Promote land use policies that reflect and respect the town's natural resources, wildlife habitat, and rural density traditions of small farms, open fields and historic villages.

Promote land use policies that reinforce and enhance overall town identity and provide generous amounts of open space between village centers.

- **Institute a Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District.** This district will encompass areas and features of prime conservation concern in Foster to achieve the Town's planning goals to preserve the rural character and natural environment and retain a land use climate for small scaled tourism economic development strategies. The overlay zoning district will include design standards, which will maintain the identity of historic village centers, small farmsteads, productive use of farmland, and unobstructed views over fields and woodlands.

It will provide protection for:

- Hydric soils and wetlands, streams and water bodies
 - Aquifers, wellheads and groundwater resources
 - Unique natural habitats
 - Prime agricultural soils and farmland
 - Character-defining historic and scenic features
- **Retain existing residential zoning densities** throughout the town,

including areas within the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay District. Encourage Creative Land Development (CLD) design (residential compound and planned unit development) for areas not in the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay District.

- **Reconstruct the Highway Commercial zoning for RTE 6** to nodal type planned commercial development zoning districts. Adopt specific development standards and site plan review criteria to promote small scale, mixed use residential and commercial development which is neighborhood or community oriented rather than large scale retail shopping centers.
- **Develop Special Area Management (SAM) plans** for village areas to protect their unique character. Use the *1982 Comprehensive Plan* recommendations for Village Center planning as a starting place for SAM plan development.
- Define the boundaries of the current Industrial zone as that of the Turnquist Lumber property. Include additional site design standards and use restrictions to protect the environment.

2.5.4 Housing

Promote residential land use patterns that provide a mix of housing opportunities to meet local needs available to a heterogeneous community population in terms of age, sex, race and income.

Promote a realistic choice for the children of today's residents to reside in town as they enter adult life.

- Establish an objective of assuring long-term housing affordability for 20% of Foster's households.
- Retain current zoning regulations allowing accessory apartments throughout town for parents and in-laws, limiting the size of the units to 600 sq ft.
- Allow attached accessory apartments for the elderly, newly married, and individual householders. Limit the size of the units to no more than 600 sq ft provided environmental constraints are met. Review these provisions annually to determine if effective and rescind or modify if not.
- Use the Land Trust or a housing land bank for affordable housing development.
- Consider providing zoning density incentives to allow scattered site two-family dwellings where there are covenants which will maintain one or both units as affordable and provided that environmental and other design standards are met.

- Consider providing in all Planned Commercial and Agricultural-Residential districts provisions for zoning density incentives for subdivisions to provide set aside lots for affordable units provided that environmental and other design standards are met and these units remain affordable in the future under covenant provisions.
- Support the ongoing efforts of the Western Rhode Island Home Repair Program and other State and Federal agencies to provide housing assistance.

2.5.5 *Community Facilities*

Assure that current and future growth is served with economically planned - well maintained - services and facilities including circulation systems, recreational facilities, schools and town administration which reflect a rural economy of scale and a lifestyle based upon self-reliance.

Promote education of the town's youth through daycare opportunities, excellence in elementary and high school education, and full opportunities in sports and recreation which make use of the unique opportunities afforded in a rural community.

- Provide a Town-owned emergency wellhead.
- Continue the 5-year Road Improvement Program, which schedules phased upgrading of town roads in keeping with the town's character.
- Provide animal control through enforcement of current laws.
- Develop a maintenance schedule for town buildings.
- Encourage the Foster School Administration to monitor growth in enrollment and new home construction. Encourage the School Board to continue a school facility master planning process.
- Retain the Foster elementary school configuration within town jurisdiction.
- Continue the 5-year Capital Improvement Budgeting Process to implement facility improvement policies.
- Continue collaboration with communities within the region for the purchase of bulk supplies such as fuel oil, paper, and technical support services.

2.5.6 *Natural Resources*

Assure that the unique recreational, environmental and cultural resources of the town, including historic resources, landscape and scenic features, wetlands, rivers, lakes, ponds, groundwater resources, agricultural

soils, farms, forests, unique habitats, community recreational facilities and open space are protected from the potential adverse affects of future growth and development.

Promote the efficient use and reuse of the town's energy and environmental resources including groundwater and surface water supplies, fossil fuels and electricity, forestry products, sand and gravel deposits, use of solar and renewable energy resources and the recycling of waste materials.

- **Continue the minimum residential lot size (200,000 square feet or 4.59 acres)** established in the AR zoning district and the Farmland-Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District to protect the overwhelming abundance of sensitive environmental features and the Scituate Reservoir Watershed.
- Develop and institute land use controls based upon the environmental limitations or carrying capacity of each area of town identified in the environmental inventory and overlay analysis.
- Institute alternative site design standards related to the land for environmental protection in the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, which must be adhered to by all new land divisions, and subdivisions within the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District.
- Provide a level of protection for sensitive environmental resources to assist that provided by State and Federal agencies; including protection for the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, steep slopes, bedrock outcrops, flood plains, wet soils, prime agricultural lands and farmland, wetlands, surface water resources, groundwater resources and endangered species habitats through the AR zone and Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District.
- Improve the environmental protection regulations in the AR zoning district by including performance standards for guiding development away from high water table areas and steep slopes.
- Include environmental protection standards in the Farmland -Rural Conservation Overlay District for rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, wetlands and hydric soils, surface and groundwater resources, agricultural soils and farmland, unique habitats and historic and scenic resources. These standards will enhance the level of protection afforded these resources by the underlying zoning districts including the AR district.
- Study methods to protect forestlands, encouraging their management and use for forestry products as well as wildlife habitat open space, vegetated buffers and drainage control.
- Target key areas of conservation concern for protection through voluntary dedication, donation or purchase of conservation easements purchase of development rights or fee simple acquisition (a last

resort). Designate the Land Trust as the primary Town agency charged with this responsibility.

- Promote the North - South Hiking and Recreational Trail and east-west links to trails in Scituate which are planned in the Scituate Comprehensive Plan.
 - Coordinate planning with the neighboring Connecticut towns of Killingly and Sterling to incorporate western linkages of the North - South Hiking and Recreational Trail to these communities.
- Promote the North - South Hiking and Recreational Trail and the rest of Foster as a major segment of the proposed *Greenway* traversing the western portion of Rhode Island (north-south).

2.5.7 *Historic and Scenic Resources*

The cultural heritage of Foster, *embodied in historic resources and scenic areas* is the basic building block of the quality of life and *town character*, and is awarded high value by the community. It is also important for its economic development potential. The historic resources and scenic areas will be preserved because they are vitally important to the town's well being and sense of place.

- Support the Foster Preservation Society and other local groups in their efforts to promote preservation and stewardship of cultural resources through:
 - Research, identification, marking
 - Educational programs
 - Heritage events
- The Town will take a stewardship role with Town-owned historic and scenic property.
- Encourage continued nomination and listing of important historic resources to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
- Continually evaluate the impact of new development on heritage resources. Historic and scenic area preservation will be incorporated into overall planning and development review activities.
- Town agencies, boards and commissions will recognize the contribution of historic and scenic resources to the landscape and character of the town.
- Include historic resources, farms and scenic areas and the protection of their settings in the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District.

- Use Foster's historic and scenic assets as marketing tools for economic development and tax base stabilization. Assign tourism and commercial recreation as *potential* economic development activities for the proposed Economic Development Commission to explore and promote.
- After study and local property owner approval institute Historic District Zoning for the town's National Register listed and eligible properties including the villages of Clayville, Hopkins Mills, Foster Center and Moosup Valley. Such studies may be undertaken in coordination with the Special Area Management (SAM) plans proposed for Clayville, Moosup Valley, Hopkins Mills, and Foster Center.

2.5.8 Circulation

Retain the rural character of the town's roads while ensuring that the roads that are well traveled are safe to travel.

Plan for the future of the town's unpaved roads. Adequate and safe circulation means more than vehicular use of the roads. The Town will explore alternative and recreational circulation systems for pedestrian and sportsman use such as hiking trails, riding trails, canoeing and cross country skiing facilities.

- Continue the 5-year Road Improvement Plan, which allows for the paving of certain important connector roads while allowing other less traveled roads to remain as rural and scenic roads.
- Continue policy and procedures for upgrading unopened old Town roads as a part of the Five Year Road Plan.
- Coordinate bridge maintenance and reconstruction schedule with RIDOT.
- Designate scenic roads itemized in the Historic and Scenic inventory. Nominate the most important of these roads for State Scenic Road designation using RIDOT criteria for such nominations. Scenic roads, those nominated for State listing and those locally designated, will be protected through improvement standards implemented at the local level and through bordering land use standards provided in the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay District.
- Coordinate with RIDOT staff on present and future State road projects affecting Foster. Provide a means by which State project initiation and approval is a publicly debated process.
- Establish a *publicly and privately* developed trail system on public roads, R-O-Ws and appropriate private lands through Foster connecting the North - South Hiking and Recreational Trail, scenic areas, hamlets and neighboring communities.

2.5.9 Open Space and Recreation

Assure that the unique recreational, environmental and cultural resources of the town, including historic resources, landscape and scenic features, rivers, lakes, ponds, ground water resources, agricultural soils, community facilities and open spaces are protected from the potential adverse affects of future growth and development and that these resources continue to enhance the quality of life in Foster for residents and visitors alike. Recreational facilities, both active and passive, will be developed in character with a rural, self-sufficient life-style and the wealth of natural resources available in Foster for *private* and *public* recreational use.

- Locate all unique areas of conservation concern, including unique habitats and formations, and scenic areas in the proposed Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay District to provide for their protection.
- Develop a list of priority areas critical for preservation with direct assistance from the Conservation Commission and the recently established Land Trust. Areas designated or listed in the Comprehensive Plan should form the base for this inventory.
- Protect lands or portions of properties through acquisition of scenic easements, access easements, conservation easements, assessment and tax incentives, Creative Land Development, voluntary contributions, purchase of development rights and as a last resort outright purchase of fee simple interest.
- Establish a progressive policy toward open space conservation as a positive element in Foster's economic development and growth.
- Establish a Capital Improvement Budgeting Program to efficiently allocate funds for the orderly and well-planned acquisition of open space resources and the development of passive and active recreation facilities, in a manner to take advantage of Federal and State matching funds and other programs. Develop an updated Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan to comply with State funding programs. Passive recreational uses will be given priority.
- Cooperate with neighboring communities and the State of Connecticut for the identification and joint investigation of open space preservation and recreational facility development.
 - Promote individual and joint efforts with the neighboring Connecticut towns of Killingly and Sterling.
- Maintain coordination between the School and Recreation Departments in the maintenance and expansion of existing recreational facilities. These Town-owned facilities will be centrally located.
- Determine the actual local need for more centrally located new playfields - basketball, football, baseball, softball, Little League, soccer, and tennis - by recruiting input and financial support for

development from users. Develop a working relationship with users to assist in funding improvements and, if possible and needed, acquisition of property. Town-owned facilities at the Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School and in Foster Center will serve as primary locations for new facilities, which will be developed in harmony with these areas.

- Utilize recreational clubs and other organized users as a resource to pay for improvements to Town-owned recreational facilities provided that standards are in place for the development of these resources and the need for such facilities has been adequately determined.
- Encourage private commercial recreational facilities to be built in coordination with an economic development strategy aimed at small-scaled environmental tourism.
- Continue the association with the North - South Hiking and Recreational Trail organization, and continue planning for the Greenway to ensure that the Town's goals for this passive recreational use and open space network are realized.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

3.1.1 The Project Team

To develop the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Foster hired a team of professional planning consultants lead by The Newport Collaborative, Inc. as facilitators for public participation, providing technical evaluations of key functional elements for public discussion, goal and policy formation. The process evolved the written plan document and maps, which are presented here.

Project Team Members included staff of five specialized consulting firms; The Newport Collaborative, Inc.; Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.; PARE Engineering Corporation; Burk Ketcham Associates and Mount Vernon Associates. The Newport Collaborative coordinated and managed all appropriate planning studies and facilitated the public participation program.

The 2003 Comprehensive Plan Update process put the plan development focus on the planning board members. Monthly public meetings were held as each chapter of the plan was reviewed and revised. Town departments were notified of the review schedule and input was sought from Town departments and committees and persons in charge of both types of entities.

3.1.2 Public Participation

The 1990 Comprehensive Plan:

Citizen participation, organized into a yearlong series of monthly meetings, has been the driving force behind development of the Comprehensive Plan. In the approach to citizen involvement in the comprehensive planning process, in addition to review by the Planning Board, Town Council, Town agencies and staff, community residents were asked to participate and contribute through a specific and organized process. This process emphasizes citizen involvement in positing needs, issues, and goals first, and then developing policy as they become educated on planning concerns and the functional areas of the Plan through staff prepared technical reports. All of the technical material was distributed to the Citizens Advisory Committee, Planning Board, Town Council and other Town agencies in advance of discussion meetings. A fundamental component of the process was the formation of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC was established as an ad hoc advisory group to the Town's Planning Board. Individual members of the CAC were not hand selected by the Town Council, Town Clerk, Town Planner, Planning Board or any other agency of the Town, but rather grew out of an organizational meeting, which was extensively advertised and promoted to bring in a cross section of community residents representing a broad spectrum of interests.

The CAC met on a regular monthly basis throughout the planning process first discussing issues and needs, then broad goals and, following the

presentation of technical reports, refined goals and policies. Technical material and CAC discussion was simultaneously reviewed by the Planning Board, Town Council and Town staff and appropriate Town agencies in a loop of involvement and feedback.

Twenty-Five individuals served on the Citizen's Advisory Committee, giving up many hours of their time to review technical reports, ask questions, discuss issues and develop planning recommendations. A complete list of the members of the CAC is set forth on page 3 of this document.

In addition to CAC participation, the Project Team consultants met with Town staff, boards and commissions, the Planning Board and the Town Council at strategic intervals during the project. These meetings were designed for review of technical material, both data and analyses, as well as to review citizen generated goals and policies. Feedback from Town staff, agencies and the Town Council provided a reality check on the citizen generated goals and policies.

Once the Plan was complete in draft form, public workshops and hearings were organized to involve the community in the Plan adoption process. Workshop/hearings were held prior to adoption of the Plan by the Town Council.

The 2003 Plan Update:

A Citizen's Advisory Committee was not formed to complete the Plan Update. The update activities were driven directly by the Planning Board. The key components to the plan updates were the Town Survey and the public hearings held by the Planning Board and Town Council.

The community survey developed by the Newport Collaborative, Inc. was reissued to the 1725 households in Foster. 706 households (over 40 percent), replied to the survey. The survey results have been incorporated throughout the plan update.

3.1.3 Data Collection and Analyses

Data Collection focused on defining critical issues, needs and problems within the town. Technical information gathered included:

- Population and demographics
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources
- Cultural/ Historic Resources
- Infrastructure and Community Services
- Land Use
- Open Space and Recreation
- Circulation
- Rural and Scenic Character

Existing studies and surveys were used for this task with primary data collection to fill data voids only. A community mail survey was undertaken to gain insight into population and demographic characteristics as well as community opinion on key issues facing the town. (See Section 3.1.4 Foster Community Survey)

The 1982 Comprehensive Plan, the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, together with a 1987 Study on Route 6 Commercial zoning and the recently completed *Planner's Database* (1990) provided basic and critical information for planning. Key State publications included the *State Guide Plan 2000* (1989) and the *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan* (1989).

The technical reports completed for each functional area of the Plan were:

- Technical Report #1 Socio-Economic Profile
- Technical Report #2 Land Use
- Technical Report #3 Housing Profile
- Technical Report #4 Natural Resources Inventory and Analyses
- Technical Report #5 Community Services and Facilities
- Technical Report #6 Historic/Scenic Resources, Preservation Activities, Future Policies
- Technical Report #7 Circulation
- Technical Report #8 Open Space and Recreation

These reports were utilized by the Planning Board and shared with pertinent individuals to facilitate policy development, goal and policy refinement, and they have been compiled into a **Technical Appendix**, obtainable at the Town Hall. A description of appropriate information from each report is included in each of the Plan Elements.

3.1.4 Foster Community Survey

For the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, Mount Vernon Associates, Inc. (MVA, a professional public opinion polling firm) drafted the first version of a town wide public opinion poll to be distributed to every Foster household. Additional input on the draft survey was received from the Planning Board, Town Council, Town staff and other Town agencies. The final survey based upon this input was mailed to 1400 households in Foster - all known addresses within the town.

Approximately 500 surveys were returned by mail to MVA's offices in New Haven, Connecticut.

MVA performed the computer analysis on 400 surveys (28%) returned prior to the deadline. Statistically 400 surveys represent an accuracy level within acceptable limits representative of the community as a whole.

In the Spring of 2003 the 1990 survey was reissued to the 1725 households in Foster, 706 completed surveys (40.9 percent), were returned to the Town Hall. The results of this survey have been incorporated into the

2003 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Foster Community Survey Highlights 1990 results and **2003 results - shown in bold, italicized and underlined**

- A large number of respondents (66.8%), moving to Foster over the years, selected Foster as a place to live because it was rural and private. Other popular reasons include: good minimum zoning requirements (17.3%) quiet (14.3%), affordable at the time (11.5%), and schools (7.1%). Others mentioned wildlife, friendliness, neighborliness, good house selection, quality of life, small town, farm community, open space, and low crime.
- A large number of respondents (72.1% in 1990) **76% in 2003** expect to live in Foster for 15 or more years. However, one third (33.6.0%) **in 1990 and the 2003 (Same)** would move from Foster if it became too suburban. Only 2.6% mentioned they would move because Foster is too rural.
- 27.4% of those responding in 1990 said Foster is a worse place to live than five years ago while **25% responded this way in 2003; In 1990 51.3% of respondents said that Foster had remained the same and in 2003 this number rose to 55%; In 1990 11.5% of respondents stated that Foster was a better place to live compared to 8% in 2003.**
- In 1990 survey taxes were clearly the largest single issue concerning respondents. 39.4% (**See question 8.**) mentioned taxes and excessive Town spending as their largest concern. In comparison in 2003 15% of respondents stated they would move from Foster if the taxes become too high. Of interest is the fact that 58% of respondents rated the value of taxes for services received as good or very good in 2003.
- In 2003 as in 1990 the majority of respondents agreed that Foster leaders should maintain the town's rural character. In the 1990 survey the number of respondents who stated this was 93.1% compared to 95.4% in 2003. In 1990 93.1% of respondents rated the quality of life in Foster as good or very good. In comparison in the 2003 survey this number increased to 97.3%.
- In 1990 a majority of respondents (55.7%) favored Town acquisition of open space. And 46.7% of those favoring the idea would agree to increased taxes to purchase open space. In comparison, the 2003 survey demonstrated that these numbers had remained virtually unchanged at 60.4% and 40.3% respectively.
- While the 1990 survey clearly indicated that strict and minimum zoning was the most important characteristic of a rural town, this number was reduced to 27% in the 2003 survey. The 2003 survey indicates that woods and farmland are the main characteristics of a rural town with 40% of respondents citing

this aspect. This is followed in importance by open space which was cited by 27% of respondents. In 1990 respondents cited other characteristics such as dirt and country roads, quiet/peaceful atmosphere, sparse population, and wild animals and livestock less frequently. In the 2003 survey it is evident that these characteristics have gained in importance. 24% of respondents cited dirt and country roads in 2003 as compared to 12% in 1990, another 24% cite the quiet and peaceful as an important characteristic changed drastically from 1990 (8.6%) to 2003 (20%).

- As in 1990 Foster continues to be serviced by three volunteer Fire Departments. The quality of Fire Services was rated as good or very good by 90% of respondents. **Only 26.4% of those responding state that Foster should have a full-time paid Fire Department as compared with 23.6% in 1990.**
- Recreational Facilities were rated as good or very good by 415 of respondents. Of note is that 28% of respondents state they are unaware of the quality of Foster's recreational facilities. Recreational Programs were rated as good or very good by 39% of the respondents in 2003 with 33% responding that they did not know the quality of the Programs held in Foster.
- Respondents gave high marks to the fire, police, and rescue services. These departments were rated as good or very good by 89.6% (87.6% in 1990), 90.6% (90.9% in 1990) and 83.6% respectively.
- In 1990 62% of the respondents recommended areas for increased town spending. These areas included road and bridge repairs (43.6%), recreational services (9.3%), education (8.9%), police (5.6%), and open space (5.6%). **In 2003 these areas were either rated good or very good as follows:**
 - ***Conditions of Roads and Bridges 60.5%***
 - ***Conditions of Dirt Roads 49.5%***
 - ***Quality of Recreational Facilities 40.8%***
 - ***Quality of Recreational Programs 39.1%***
 - ***Quality of Education 82% (only 4% rated the quality as poor or very poor with the remainder stating that they did not know the quality of education in Foster)***
 - ***Quality of Police Department 90.9%***
- 2003 survey respondents gave the following ratings for their willingness for a tax increase for the following services: Open Space **40.3%**, Senior Housing **32.4%**, Teen Center **29.7%**, ***Senior Center 26.1%***, and ***Animal Shelter 22.9%***. No other services rated above 20 percent.

- The mean age of respondents was 52 years old with a range of 24 years-old to 89 years old. A large number of the 2003 respondents 20.6% are retired compared to 16.7% in 1990.
- The demographics of the family in Foster is also changing from 1990. In 2003 60.6% of the respondents stated that they had no children under the age of eighteen living at home. 84.6% of all respondents stated that they did not plan on having additional children. 7% stated that they would like to have more children and 8.4% were unsure.
- Responding to economic development questions included in the 2003 survey a majority of respondents (61%) favor more commerce within the town. Business is favored by 48.4% of the respondents and only 20% of respondents would be in favor of adding industry. The Town's commercial zoning is located along Route 6 in Foster. Only 25.2% of respondents felt that this commercial area should not be controlled by the Town. 32.3% of respondents felt that additional commercial zoning was required in Foster.
- In the 2003 survey additional questions were added regarding the educational structure within the Town of Foster. 80% of those responding to this question favored either maintaining the current structure or having more local control at the post-elementary level. Of respondents with children under the age of 18 living at home only 10% said they would like to see the system completely regionalized. Respondents with children also rated the quality of the education highly with 90.5% stating that the education was good or very good. A majority of respondents agreed that recreation should be part of the school system (56.2%), followed by library (50.4%). Only 31.6% of those responding stated that they favored daycare as part of the education system.

3.1.5 Mapping

The Project Team coordinated with the Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning, and Geographic Information Service (RIGIS) to produce a series of inventory and analyses maps for use in the planning process, for publication in the Comprehensive Plan and for use by the Town staff, boards and commissions and Town Council. The following maps were produced by the Foster Planning Department using data provided by RIGIS and additional data developed by the Planning Department and outside consultants:

- Land Use
- Hydrographically Sensitive Areas
- Open Space and Other Sensitive Areas
- Soils Analysis
- Future Land Use Plan
- Current Zoning
- Environmental Constraints Composite

- Groundwater Resources
- Prime Agricultural Soils
- Fields and Farmland
- Historic and Scenic Resources
- Recreational Facilities and Open Space
- Unique Natural Habitats
- Circulation (a series)

3.1.6 2003 Revisions

In the 2003 Revision of the Comprehensive Plan, the members of the Planning Board worked with the Conservation Commission, Foster Preservation Society, Land Trust and other interested citizens. The Planning Board invited input and participation from boards, commissions, and Town departments. The Planning Board reviewed the elements twice, beginning in September 2001 and running through July 2003. The 2003 Community Study followed the format of the 1991 Community Survey with the addition of sections on Economic Development and the Schools. A Public Hearing was scheduled in July 2003 for the Comprehensive Plan revisions. The revised Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Town Council at a Public Hearing in October 2003.