



Town of Sandwich 2026 Master Plan



Adopted August 20, 2026

CERTIFICATE OF ADOPTION OF THE MASTER PLAN

Pursuant to New Hampshire RSA 675:6 III, this Master Plan was adopted by the Sandwich by unanimous vote on August 20, 2026 following the duly-noticed Public Hearing on August 20, 2026. This Master Plan shall take effect upon the filing of a copy of this certificate with the Sandwich Town Clerk.

Attested by the Sandwich Planning Board

Michael Babcock, Chair

Vice Chair, Brewster Lee

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Date

Sandwich Town Clerk

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Cover photograph by Kathleen Sperry

Introduction

What the Master Plan IS

As Sandwich changes, what kind of town do we want to be?

This Master Plan reflects the community's answer. It captures what residents value, what they hope to preserve, and where thoughtful change may be needed to sustain the Town's long-term vitality. Required by New Hampshire law (RSA 674:1-4) and periodically updated by the Planning Board, the Master Plan provides a framework for considering land use, community priorities, and future planning decisions.

Sandwich is not seeking to become something else. Rather, this Plan recognizes that preserving the qualities residents value often requires thoughtful adaptation over time. It is intended to help guide future conversations and decisions while remaining grounded in the values expressed by the community.

What the Master Plan IS NOT

The Master Plan is an advisory planning document. It is not a zoning ordinance, regulatory document, or mandate for change. It simply "sets the table" for future discussion by identifying issues, opportunities, and ideas raised by the community.

Adoption of this Master Plan does not mean that any particular recommendation will occur. Some recommendations may never be pursued, while others may evolve substantially over time. Future implementation efforts will necessarily involve additional public discussion, review by Town boards and committees, and, where required, voter approval.

No single recommendation should be read in isolation. Decisions regarding housing, land use, natural resources, municipal services, economic vitality, and community character are interconnected and are best considered in the context of the Plan as a whole.

Sandwich Today

Sandwich remains one of New Hampshire's most distinctive rural communities, valued for its natural beauty, historic village centers, strong sense of community, and exceptional quality of life. While much of this Master Plan focuses on future opportunities and challenges, it is equally important to recognize the Town's accomplishments.

Perhaps the most significant achievement since adoption of the 2011 Master Plan has been the expansion of high-speed fiber broadband service throughout the community. Accomplished without the expenditure of local tax dollars, broadband availability has fundamentally changed the opportunities available to residents and businesses alike. Reliable internet service supports remote work, home-based businesses, education, emergency communications, and allows residents of all ages to remain connected in an increasingly digital world. It demonstrates that thoughtful planning, collaboration, and investment can strengthen the community while preserving the qualities that make Sandwich unique.

Balancing Community Priorities

Community planning rarely presents simple choices. Preserving open space may affect where and how housing can occur. Providing opportunities for more diverse housing options may require consideration of lot sizes, infrastructure limitations, and development patterns. Supporting an aging population and attracting younger residents may increase demand for housing, childcare, municipal services, and infrastructure investments.

These are not contradictions. Rather, they reflect the tradeoffs communities must thoughtfully consider over time. This Plan recognizes that many community priorities are interconnected and occasionally in tension with one another. Its purpose is not to resolve those tensions, but to acknowledge them and provide a framework for future decision-making.

How this Plan Was Developed

In 2024, the Sandwich Planning Board appointed a small subcommittee to review the 2011 Master Plan and recommend next steps. This led to the creation of a Master Plan Subcommittee composed of Planning Board members, Town staff, residents, and commission liaisons, ensuring broad local perspective throughout the process.

Community input was central to the planning process. In partnership with the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and the Lakes Region Planning Commission, the Committee conducted nineteen focus group interviews and participated in public outreach events, including at the Sandwich Farmers' Market and Transfer Station. These efforts resulted in a town-wide survey mailed to all and made available online to any willing respondent with an interest in Sandwich's future, that received nearly 700 responses, a strong level of participation.

This wide-ranging community input identified key priorities that form the foundation of the Vision Statement and guide each chapter of this Plan. Draft versions of the Plan were made available both online and in print and were followed by public listening sessions where community feedback was received and incorporated.

This Master Plan will continue to evolve through future implementation efforts and periodic updates as required by New Hampshire law and as community priorities change over time.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported, in whole or in part by, federal award number SLFRP0145 awarded to the State of New Hampshire by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Additional funding of \$15,000 provided by the Town of Sandwich voters.

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Contributing photographers are attributed under photos in the chapters.

In addition, thanks go to the Focus Groups, Members of Town: Agricultural Commission, Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Department Heads, Energy Committee, Historic District Commission, Library Trustees, Planning Board, Town Office Staff, Sewer Commission, Trustees of the Trust Funds, and Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Members of organizations: Doris Benz Center Board of Directors, Sandwich Community Nurse Association Board, In the Round Discussion Group, Sandwich Business Group, Sandwich Democratic Party, Sandwich Fair Association, Sandwich Foothills social groups, Sandwich Historical Society.

And to all who contributed comments at the Farmers' Market and the Transfer Station, the survey respondents and participants in the Listening Sessions.

Vision

The following vision statement reflects the common values, guiding principles, and priorities of the Town of Sandwich.

Aspirations for Sandwich expressed are:

Conserve its natural resources found in the land, forests, wildlife habitat, wetlands, lakes, aquifers, and scenic landscapes of the town.

Maintain its small-town rural character of low-density development, quiet roads, dark skies, historic scale, and limited commercialization.

Promote affordable housing, as well as options for long-term residents to age in place.

Effectively deal with demographic change and community viability by focusing not on just an aging population but also the school, workforce availability, volunteer capacity, and community vitality.

Endeavor to control property taxes and municipal costs by practicing good fiscal management.

Preserve the village center and local services by maintaining a modest, human scale village that is walkable, contains local businesses, and gathering spaces for local use.

Support the Town infrastructure and community services such as roads, public safety, childcare, eldercare and emergency and medical services.



Population, Housing, and Economic Base



"I believe a more diverse socio-economic population and affordable housing is important to the future of Sandwich but unsure of how to achieve without compromising things like zoning and loss of open spaces."

Survey Respondent, 2025



Survey Findings

The 2025 Sandwich Community Survey reflects a community trying to balance preservation, affordability, and long-term sustainability. While residents overwhelmingly value Sandwich's rural character and quality of life, many also recognize growing demographic and housing challenges.

Among respondents identifying the town's most urgent challenges, 65% say "protecting natural resources", 58% chose "maintaining small-town character", and 45% cite "attracting and keeping younger people". "Increasing the stock of more affordable housing" is noted s by 24% of respondents as a top three challenge.

Survey responses also reflect concerns about the town's aging population and the future viability of the community. In describing what they want Sandwich's future to be, 48% say "older population being able to age in place," while 35% say "more housing that is more affordable." Twenty-two percent want a "more diverse socio / economic population."

Economic concerns rank lower in the survey responses. Among the "urgent challenges" voiced by townspeople, "expanding employment opportunities and improving business climate" ranked eighth of twelve answer options with 14% making it among their top three choices.

Residents strongly reinforce the qualities they value most about Sandwich. Nearly 95% cite "natural beauty and outdoor access" as w "what makes Sandwich a great place", followed by "small-town / village feel" (85%), "quality of life and tranquility" (82%), and "historic character and aesthetics" (81%).

Some survey comments reflected this tension by expressing support for enabling younger families, workers, and older residents to remain in Sandwich, while also voicing concern about suburban-style growth and housing forms viewed as incompatible with the town's existing pattern.

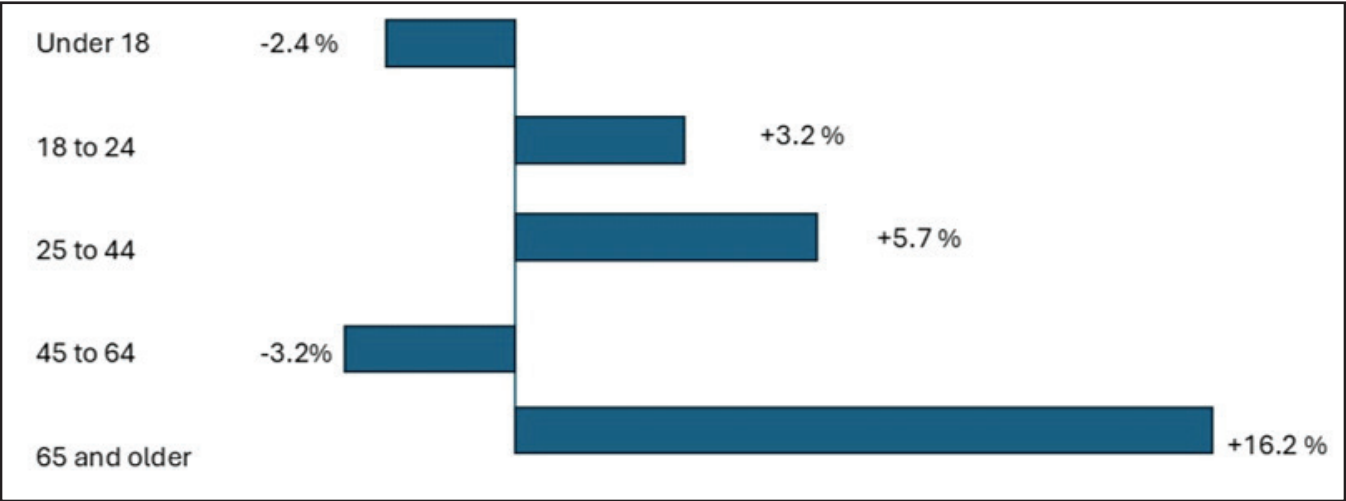
28% of respondents support reestablishing a general store, 15% want to attract and retain more young people and families, and 7.5% want to enhance support for childcare and elder care services. All of these have implications for the economic base. To enable these changes 53% support "public / private partnerships to enable new projects" and 24% support "less restrictive zoning" while 10% support "higher property taxes".

Existing Conditions

Population

As a population, Sandwich is the oldest town in the state in the oldest county in the state in the second oldest state in the nation. The demographic challenge that represents is driving community concerns about balancing the needs of a community with a significant older population and fewer younger residents. Sandwich is not an island, and our neighboring communities and states in the region are all competing for the same younger population and workforce needed to sustain viable communities. In context, this is a nationwide challenge. (Figure 1).

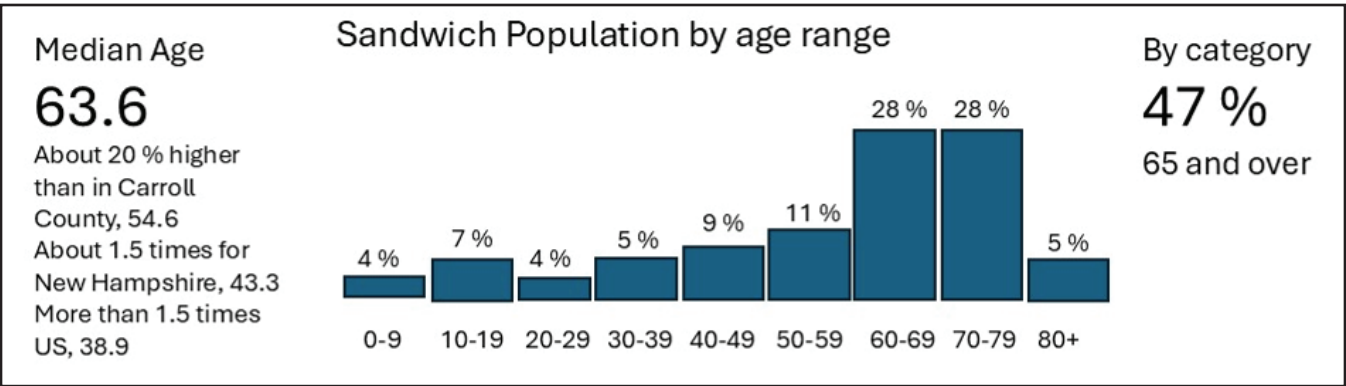
Figure 1. Change in the US Population by Age Group, 2020-2025



US Census Bureau Vintage 2025 Population Estimates

According to the state Office of Development and Planning, Sandwich had approximately 1,492 year-round residents in 2024-25; it is estimated that the population triples in the summer. The median age is 63.6 years; the town has a large cohort of residents in their 60s and 70s and much smaller percentages of younger demographics. (Figure 2.) Sandwich’s population is highly educated with nearly all residents completing high school and nearly 60% of residents having a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Figure 2. Sandwich Population by Age

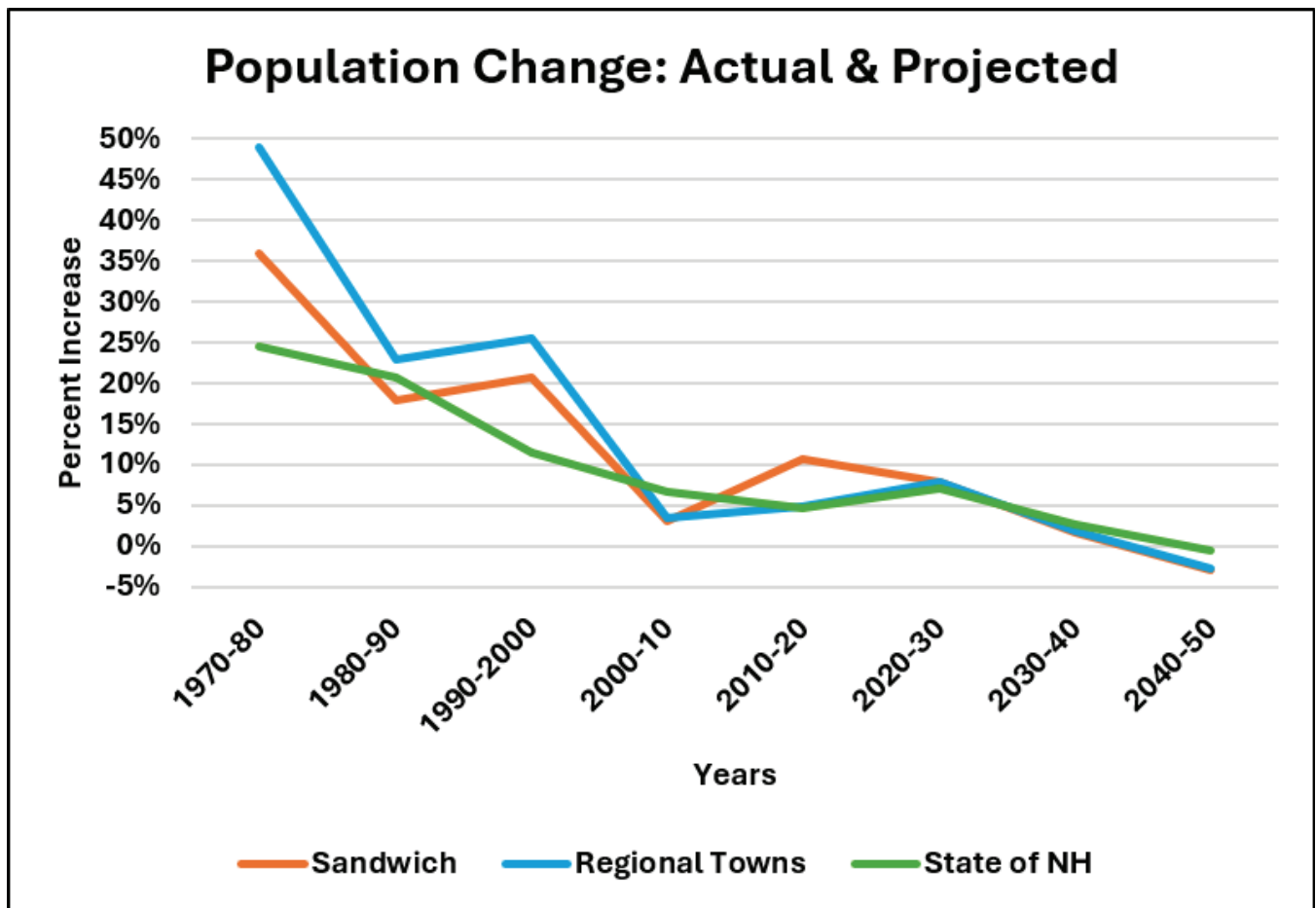


American Community Survey 2024-2025

After several decades of growth from the 1970s to the 1990s, Sandwich’s population growth has leveled off in recent years and is projected to reach negative growth by 2040. (Figure 3.)

Sandwich demographics likely reflect both the town’s attractiveness as a retirement destination and the difficulty younger households face in entering the community. The limited availability of smaller homes, rental units, starter homes, and lower maintenance housing options creates challenges both for younger residents seeking to establish themselves in town and for older residents hoping to remain in Sandwich as their needs change. Availability of services, such as childcare, health care, and access to other essential services, affect all age groups.

Figure 3. Comparison of Sandwich and Regional Town Population Change



Source: NH Office of Planning & Development & US Census

Housing

Sandwich is geographically large and rural in character, with more than 90 square miles in area and a population density of less than 20 residents per square mile. It is defined by dispersed homes, limited infrastructure, and long travel distances to services. Residents consistently cite the landscape, quiet, independence, and strong sense of community as reasons they choose to live in Sandwich. These conditions also shape the town's housing patterns.

Housing in Sandwich has historically developed at low density and remains overwhelmingly single-family in character. Approximately 98% of the housing stock consists of single-family homes, with very limited multi-family or alternative housing types. Rental housing is scarce with only about 7% of occupied housing units. Households are increasingly small, with one- and two-person households now dominating the community. (Figure 4.)

The town's physical landscape strongly influences where and how housing can be built. Significant portions of Sandwich contain steep slopes, wetlands, forest land, conservation land, or parcels enrolled in Current Use. Roughly one-third of the town is publicly owned or permanently protected. While Sandwich appears geographically large, much of the land is not practically or economically suited for building or development.

Figure 4. Housing Units in Sandwich by Type

Characteristic	Time period	Sandwich	Carroll County	NH	Sandwich
Housing- Single Family	2023	98%	77%	63%	Above average single family
Housing- Multi Family	2023	1%	16%	32%	Below average multi-family
Housing- Manufactured	2023	1%	6%	6%	Below average manufactured
Percent Seasonal Housing	2023	28%	41%	9%	Middling seasonal housing
Renters' share of housing	?	7%	19%	28%	Below average renters
Housing built 1939 or before	?	29%	15%	18%	Older housing stock

Source: Bradford Holmes Land Use Analysis 2025

In addition to physical constraints, Sandwich lacks municipal sewer and water infrastructure., with only limited sewer infrastructure in the Center Village. Development generally requires large lots, private wells, septic systems, road frontage, and significant site preparation costs. These conditions substantially increase the cost of building housing in town.

Although Sandwich zoning permits some forms of multi-family and clustered development, according to Town records, very little of this type of housing has been built. Simply allowing housing types through zoning does not necessarily make projects economically viable. In a rural community with large lot requirements, limited infrastructure, high construction costs, and relatively small development scale, many projects remain difficult to finance and build.

Housing affordability concerns are shaped not only by purchase prices, but also by the economics of building in Sandwich. Across New Hampshire and the Lakes Region, housing costs have risen significantly faster than wages and incomes in recent years, driven by limited housing production, second-home demand, rising construction costs, and infrastructure limitations. Sandwich reflects these broader trends through the realities of a rural town with limited infrastructure and high site-development costs.

Economic Base

Sandwich's economy is built on small local, businesses, tourism, agriculture, and forestry. Median family income is \$129,375, compared with the \$86,463 median income of Carroll County and \$116,546 in New Hampshire. But that doesn't show the full picture.

- Median earnings from full-time employment are \$116,875 for males and \$63,333 for females.
- The average wages for those employed in jobs within Sandwich are between \$50,960 to \$68,380 per year.
- More than 50% of Sandwich residents have Social Security and / or retirement income.
- About 11% percent of Sandwich residents have incomes of less than \$50,000 a year.

- About 5 % of Sandwich residents have incomes below the poverty level of \$15,960 for a single adult.

The unemployment rate for the nearly 800 working adults in Sandwich residents is less than 2%. The largest employers in the county are in Conway and Wolfeboro, a near hour-long drive away; residents also work in other regional communities and beyond. The Town and the Sandwich Central School are the larger employers tax-supported by the town, The Sandwich Children's Center and local construction and landscaping companies, restaurants, and local crafts establishments follow as major employers. Many Sandwich residents have solo businesses, including Sandwich's long tradition in arts and crafts.



Agriculture and forestry are local industries with about 1,000 acres in agricultural cultivation in small operations and 24,500 acres in forestland producing a range of forest products. The Town receives revenue from forestry yield taxes. The summer farmers' market and the Sandwich Fair provide opportunities for local farmers to connect with customers. The Sandwich Fair is itself an economic engine generating more than \$600,000 in annual revenues from the four-day fair and other events and activities.

More than 50% of Sandwich workers drive alone to their place of employment with slightly over half of those workers working "in the community" and 43% working in "another community." Just over 5% of workers drive out of state. More than 36% of Sandwich employees work from home; though that may change with recent 'Return to Office' requirements by many employers and the unknown impact of business use of Artificial Intelligence.



For Sandwich's tax base, assessed valuation comes from single-family homes, and property taxes, which contribute \$7.6 million to the Town's revenue. The 2025 property tax rate in Sandwich was \$9.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value, making Sandwich one of the lower tax burdened towns in the region, although markedly higher than nearby Moultonborough and Tuftonboro and slightly higher than Wolfeboro and Madison.

Themes, Key Issues, and Trends

Several key themes emerge from existing conditions, demographic and economic data, and community input.

Sandwich's population continues to age, while household size continues to decline. These trends

increase demand for smaller, lower-maintenance, and more flexible housing options. At the same time, the existing housing stock remains dominated by larger single-family homes on individual lots, with relatively few rental units, starter homes, duplexes, or other smaller-scale housing types.

Housing is not the only need; our residents need access to the services and infrastructure that support their lives here across the life span, including childcare, elder care, health care, food access, and property care.

These demographic conditions have broader implications for the town's future. The ability to attract and retain younger residents, maintain school enrollment, support volunteer organizations and emergency services, and sustain a year-round community is increasingly tied to housing availability and affordability, as well as the availability of key services.

The economics of building housing in Sandwich are shaped by the realities of a rural town. Large lot requirements, lack of municipal infrastructure, terrain constraints, road access requirements, and high construction costs all affect what can realistically be built. Even where zoning allows certain housing forms, builders may not pursue projects that are difficult or expensive to construct in a rural market.

While some survey respondents say they do not desire to attract a major employer or commercial establishment, others would offer more employment opportunities especially those to attract and keep young families. Some respondents did state a desire for more businesses in Center Sandwich and more use of the designated business and commercial corridor along NH Route 25. Specific survey respondent ideas to attract businesses include less restrictive zoning policies, for example but not exclusively with respect to setbacks for commercial establishments, use of tax dollars or tax incentives to attract businesses such as a general store, or to support local farmers and for affordable housing.



The key issue is building an economic base with more businesses without detracting from the rural and historic character of the town. There is a trend of support for businesses that will attract young families, support an agricultural and artisan renaissance, support an aging population and reflect the history and character of Sandwich.

Survey respondent's frame the central tension by saying that "preserving natural resources" and "maintaining small town character" are priorities along with "attracting and keeping

younger people" and "increasing stock of more affordable housing". Housing availability affects more than the housing market itself. It also influences the long-term viability of schools, volunteer organizations, emergency services, local businesses, and year-round community life. Housing discussions in Sandwich are therefore less about encouraging growth for its own sake and more about balancing modest adaptation with long-term preservation and community stability.

Goals and Recommendations

Goal 1: Encourage modest housing diversity that fits Sandwich's existing rural development pattern.

Recommendations:

- Continue allowing small-scale housing options such as accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and clustered development where appropriate and consistent with the town character.
- Explore reducing minimum lot size as a means of increasing housing density in identified appropriate locations.
- Investigate mechanisms to be used to proportionately reduce setbacks as minimum lot size is reduced.
- Develop development standards that reflect Sandwich's physical landscape, environmental constraints, and rural infrastructure limitations.
- Support housing approaches that allow residents to remain in Sandwich over time, including options suitable for older residents, smaller households, and younger families.
- Monitor housing and demographic trends over time so future Planning Board and zoning decisions remain grounded in actual local conditions rather than assumptions or statewide trends alone.

Goal 2: Attract more small businesses.

Recommendations:

- Create a committee to explore establishing a hub for incubation of new businesses for both growing local businesses and attracting young families who desire a rural environment with the ability to earn a living.
- Explore recruiting businesses that would be appropriate to the NH Route 25 corridor in order to attract a variety of commercial enterprises with zoning improvements.
- Explore revising any zoning that limits small, home base commercial businesses that could thrive in the Historic District Overlay (HDO), Village and Rural Residential Districts.
- To support the substantial number of commuters living in the town, explore partnerships with the state to continuously improve the road infrastructure.
- Likewise, home based businesses and remote workers require consistent and fast broadband and mobile telecommunications services. Continue to work to improve those services to the town. Currently, 3-phase power required by many businesses is only available in part along NH Route 109 and on Mountain Road.
- Explore ways to attract businesses that can support the aging population of the town and the ethos of the town as one connected to community and nature, such as elderly care/companion care, health care, and recreation and fitness businesses.

Sources

- Town of Sandwich Master Plan Survey, 2025
- Lakes Region Planning Commission Housing Needs Assessment, 2023
- Bradford Holmes Land Use Analysis, 2025
- Town of Sandwich Master Plan, 2011
- New Hampshire Housing Opportunity Program (HOP), 2024
- New Hampshire Employment Security, NH Community Profiles, Sandwich, NH
- NH Department of Revenue Administration Table of 2025 Municipal Tax Rates
- Barrett Planning Group materials, 2024
- US Census and American Community Survey
- Lakes Region Planning Commission

Land Use

"I think Sandwich's ongoing challenge is to find a balance across what can sometimes be seen to be conflicting goals, like creating opportunities for growth, while retaining its small-town feel. Not an easy job, but well worth the try, and I think it can be done, if planning decisions keep the bigger picture and wider goals in mind."

Survey Respondent, 2025



Agriculture

Waxing Moon Farm, Courtesy of Meg Simone



Forestry



New Construction

Survey Findings

The current character and future direction of development in Sandwich is a top priority among the people engaged. When asked “why do you choose to live, visit, or work in Sandwich?” the top response is “desire for rural / small town lifestyle” at 77%.

An ongoing planning balancing act is also evident in the voices of the town who cite competing urgent challenges: “attracting / keeping younger people” at 45%, “managing growth pressure” at 36%, and “increasing stock of more affordable housing” at 24%.

Existing Conditions



Courtesy of Kathleen Sperry

One of the larger towns geographically, the Town of Sandwich sits on approximately 59,000 acres of land of which some 17,000 acres are federally- or state-owned. Its scenic location between New Hampshire’s Lakes Region, the White Mountains, and the Ossipees is heavily forested and contains many lakes and ponds as well as numerous headwater streams that feed into Squam Lake, which feeds into the Pemigewasset River, as well as the Saco and Winnepesaukee River Watersheds. These varied water resources are vital for drinking water, recreation, aesthetics, aquatic life, flood control, fish and wildlife.

The presence of many large, contiguous undeveloped areas provides both critical and sustaining habitats as defined by the State for a wide range of wildlife, and numerous wildlife corridors cross the Town's area. These land areas also provide varied opportunities for recreation for residents and visitors alike.

Current Use

Based on assessment categories, of the approximately 42,000 acres of privately held land, approximately 72% is in the NH Open Space Program (RSA 79-A), including Current Use (CU) land in residential lots as well as exclusively CU parcels. Both the State and the Town recognize the value of land in CU for "providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation of the state's citizens, maintaining the character of the state's landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources." (RSA 79-A:1) Sandwich has about 27,000 acres in CU, of which more than 15,000 are open to the public for recreational uses, specifically skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking, and nature observation.

Twenty-two percent of privately held land is residential without CU, 2% is commercial, 2% is waterfront, 3% is exempt.

Agriculture

Agriculture in Sandwich is characterized by small-scale, diversified, and community-focused operations, featuring fresh produce, local meats, maple syrup, greenhouse plants and flowers. At present, approximately 1,000 acres are devoted to agricultural production as well as for haying. The town hosts a farmers' market during the summer months which supports local agriculture and makes farm-to-table products easily accessible. The annual Sandwich Fair hosts a number of agriculture-related competitions allowing local farmers to showcase their prize animals and other agricultural products.



Forest Lands

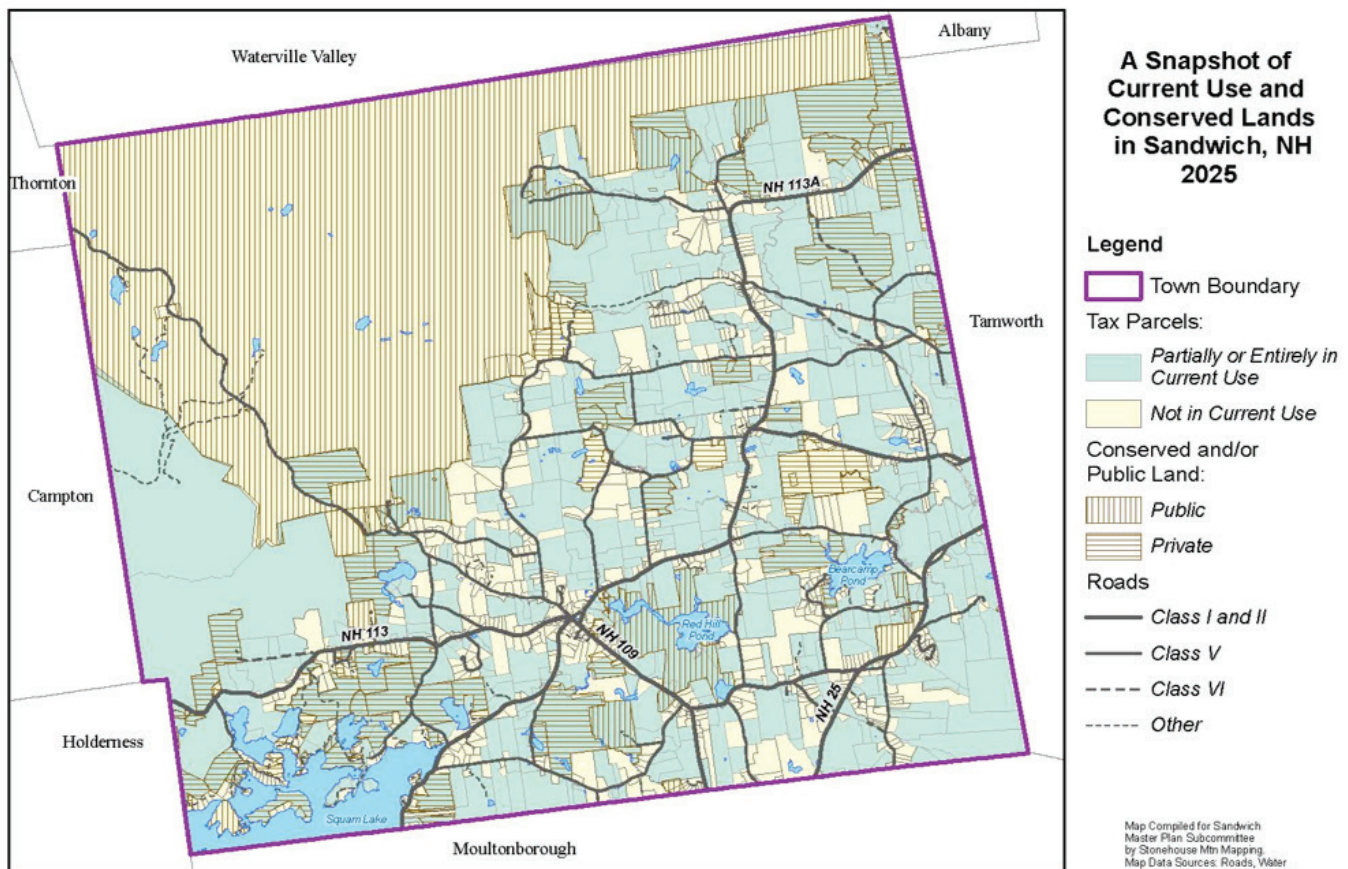
Over 50,000 acres of forestland exist in Sandwich, of which over 26,000 acres are in CU. Forestry activities are regulated at the state level, with requirements for intent-to-cut notifications and voluntary best management practices.

Conserved Lands

Nearly 9,000 acres of land in Sandwich has been placed into permanent conservation. These properties are either owned outright or held in easement by land trust organizations or the Town for the purpose of protecting natural resources. Figure 1.



Figure 1. Snapshot of Current Use and Conserved Land in Sandwich



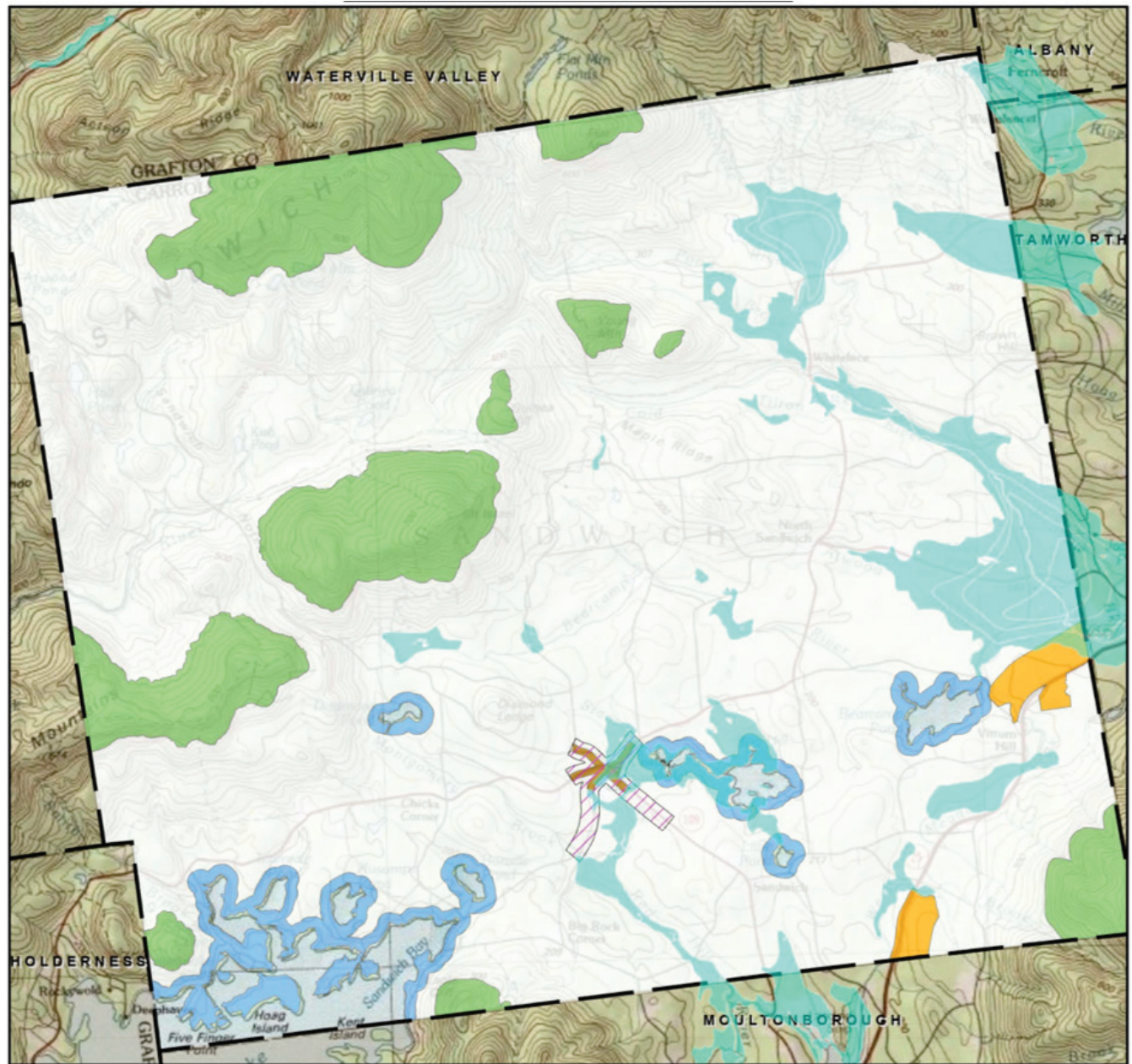
Map compiled for Master Plan by Stonehouse Mtn. Mapping. Map data sources: Roads, Water Features, Tax Parcels, Town Boundary; Protected Lands: NH GRANIT; Parcel Attributes: Town of Sandwich. June 2025.

Land Use Regulation

For planning purposes, Sandwich is divided into three zones: Village, Commercial, and Rural Residential (the remainder of town). In addition, there are four overlay districts that are superimposed on these zones: historic, shoreland, groundwater protection, and skyline districts. (Figure 2.).

Sandwich is a low-density town with two village centers: Center Sandwich and North Sandwich. Though Center Sandwich is the larger of the two, each is home to a variety of small shops, professional offices, and service providers. Further discussion of economic resources and businesses is included in subsequent sections of the Master Plan.

Figure 2. Land Use Zones



Key: White: Rural Residential; Cross-hatched: Village; Orange: Commercial; Brown: Historic Overlay; Green: Skyline; Blue: Shoreland Overlay; Turquoise: Aquifers.

Source: Town of Sandwich by CAI Technologies. Data shown on this map provided for planning and informational purposes only.

Themes, Key Issues, and Trends

Survey responses overwhelmingly support maintaining the natural beauty and rural charm of Sandwich. While respondents recognize that growth is inevitable some commented specifically that they want such growth to be carefully managed: no large housing developments, big box stores, or national franchises as well as carefully articulated and consistently enforced local zoning ordinances. As one survey respondent wrote: “Sandwich is truly a gem! Pairing some change and some growth with its charm and history is key – not impossible, but care will be required.”

At the same time, however, there are concerns about the viability of the Samuel Wentworth Library and the Sandwich Central School, the second and third most highly ranked responses to respondents’ vision of Sandwich’s future. Respondents also voiced concerns about the viability of local businesses, of the town’s volunteer capacity, and of overall community vitality. Another respondent wrote: “I love the timelessness of Sandwich but also don’t want it to fade away because of an inability to change or adapt when necessary.”

Paradoxical themes emerge from this survey data. A theme is the desire on the part of many older residents to age in place. Yet aging in place requires the presence of caregivers and other service providers who are generally younger and would likely need to be attracted to the area, thus increasing the population, volume of traffic, and need for additional housing.

Many survey respondents understand that attracting younger people is an important factor that addresses both these themes. Slightly under half of survey respondents identify “attracting and keeping younger people” as a key challenge facing Sandwich. More young residents could help provide additional support to older adults aging in place and families in need of childcare. Attracting younger people with children is also an important factor for maintaining the viability of community institutions, businesses, and traditions.

Housing affordability is a major consideration affecting most people’s decisions about relocating, but the current stock of affordable housing in Sandwich is quite limited given the high cost of land and construction. Further, almost half of respondents say they chose Sandwich due to “family connections / generational ties”, which suggests that many properties change hands inter-generationally, exacerbating the larger housing availability situation.

In what seems like something of a disconnect, however, only about a quarter of respondents felt that increasing the stock of more affordable housing was an urgent challenge facing Sandwich, and only about a third of respondents say that “more housing that is more affordable” is part of their vision for Sandwich’s future. Yet, awareness of the need to address this issue is present. As one respondent wrote: “I think the North Star of the master plan should be the goal of making the town attractive and affordable to young people interested in a small-town, rural lifestyle....” Another wrote: “There must be ways to increase the availability of affordable housing for young families without controversial changes to zoning and density”.

Goals and Recommendations

A primary goal of the Master Plan is to guide the future of Sandwich, balancing the desire to maintain the Sandwich that is known and loved, protecting its scenic beauty, its natural resources, its small-town nature, its strong sense of community, and assuring a viable community for the future. The following recommendations are intended to support that goal.

Goal 1: Ensure that all existing zoning ordinances support the goals and vision of the Master Plan, amending ordinances as needed.

Recommendation:

- Continue to craft specific zoning ordinances to encourage growth while maintaining Sandwich's rural, small town nature, perhaps by adjusting minimum lot size and associated setbacks and frontage requirements.

Goal 2: Educate residents of the importance of the land as key to maintaining the character and appearance of Sandwich.

Recommendations:

- Endeavor to educate residents of the many benefits of on how the Current Use program impacts land use.
- Develop a plan to manage the Town forest and Town-owned conservation lands as a model for private citizens.
- Sponsor an informational presentation that addresses good management of forest lands, such as presentations on many aspects of conservation, wildlife, and water resources.
- The Agricultural Commission to explore programs and / or methods that will help increase both the number and success of farms in the town, and to identify agricultural land to protect.

Goal 3: Ensure that land use regulations enhance the availability of clean water for the town.

Recommendations:

- Continue monitoring of water quality in the local aquifers and increase the frequency of monitoring, especially during the Spring and Summer months.
- Support ongoing monitoring of the Elliott Spring in North Sandwich, which is used as a drinking water source by many.
- Coordinate regular communication among the various groups that currently monitor water quality in different bodies of water.

Goal 4: Establish programs that support the goals and vision of the Master Plan.

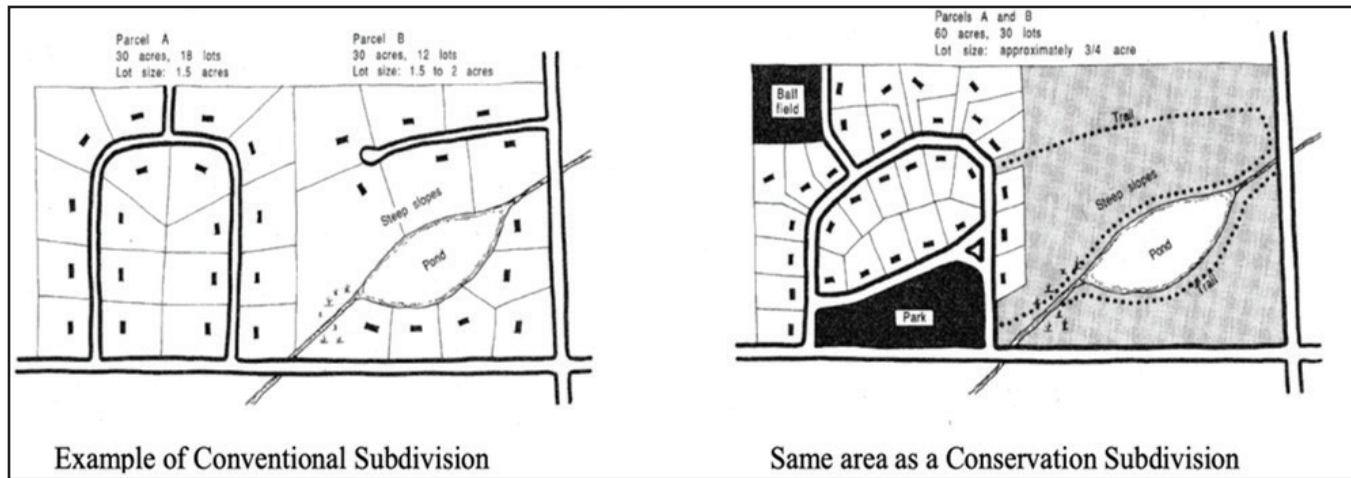
Recommendation:

- Seek federal, state, and/or private grants to help fund programs for example, infrastructure projects, community wells and septic systems.

Goal 5: Explore different models to promote affordable housing goals.

Recommendations:

- Review the cluster development section of the zoning ordinance to use the conservation subdivision development model in which a substantial amount of the site remains as permanently protected open space.



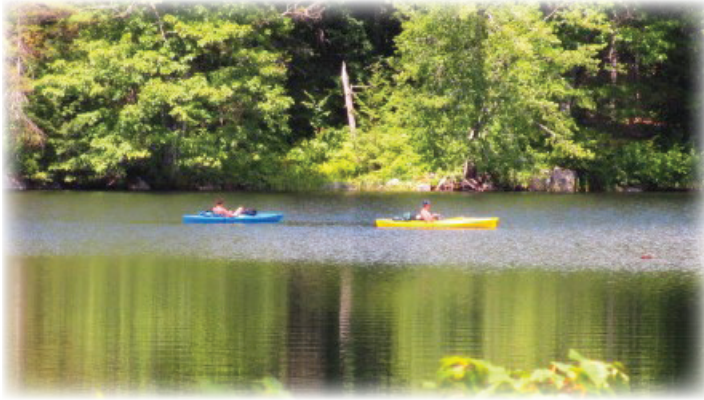
Source: Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques, 2008

- Explore creating density districts to support housing and support walkability and social connection.

Natural Resources

"The greatest threat to Sandwich is unrestrained development that undermines the very qualities that make it so unique. We must do everything in our power to protect the community and preserve the natural integrity that defines it – for our families, and for generations to come."

Survey Respondent, 2025



Measuring the state champion Hemlock



Survey Findings

The natural resources in town stand out as a high planning priority among the taxpayers, residents, visitors, and other Sandwich stakeholders interviewed and surveyed by the Master Plan Committee.

Ninety-five percent of survey respondents say, “natural beauty & outdoor access” are “what makes Sandwich a great place to live, work, or visit.” Sixty-five percent say, “protecting natural resources” is among their top three “most urgent challenges facing Sandwich.” Natural resources are the focus of respondent’s topmost responses to both questions.

Moving forward, the top response to the question “describe what you want the future of Sandwich to be” is “small town / rural character maintained” at 77%.

As one respondent put it “we must do everything in our power to protect this community and preserve the natural integrity that defines it – for our families, and for generations to come.”

Existing Conditions

Sandwich is defined by its remarkable natural setting – expansive forests, clear lakes, ponds, and rivers, and the dramatic presence of the White Mountains, the Sandwich Range, the Ossipee Mountains, the Squam Range and Red Hill. Scenic views, agricultural lands, and large undisturbed natural areas give the town its rural character. These open landscapes, rich with wildlife habitat, and wetlands, create a sense of peace and spaciousness that is increasingly rare in today’s built environment.

Wetlands and Water Resources

Sandwich has designated eight prime wetlands representing some of its most ecologically significant areas. In addition, there are extensive forested wetlands, marshes, peatlands, and seasonal vernal pools and ephemeral streams. Major water resources include Squam Lake, nine named ponds, and nearly 200 miles of tributary streams.

In response to the known threats of erosion, contaminants and run-off that can compromise the health of the community and its ecosystem, a mix of federal, state, and local regulations have been put in place to protect the water resources.

Due to existing protections and its relatively undeveloped landscape, water quality monitoring over the past two decades shows that Sandwich’s surface waters remain largely unchanged and serve as a reference point for high-quality waters in the region.

Portions of the Ossipee Aquifer underlie the town and are protected through a local groundwater ordinance that regulates land uses above the aquifer and around wellheads that provide drinking water for residents. The town requires setbacks to protect wetlands, restricts development on steep slopes and limits land uses within floodplains. The Shoreland Overlay District in tandem with the state Shoreland Protection Act, requires enhanced buffer protections and is the only area where herbicide, pesticide, and fertilizer use are explicitly regulated.

Smaller wetlands, vernal pools and ephemeral streams, which are also important for wildlife and water quality, are not currently protected.

Wildlife

The town provides high quality habitat for a diverse range of species, including moose, black bear, bobcat, coyote, fox, and fisher, along with numerous species of conservation concern such as bald eagle and common loon. The extensive forest lands in Sandwich also support rare plants, amphibians, and forest-interior birds.

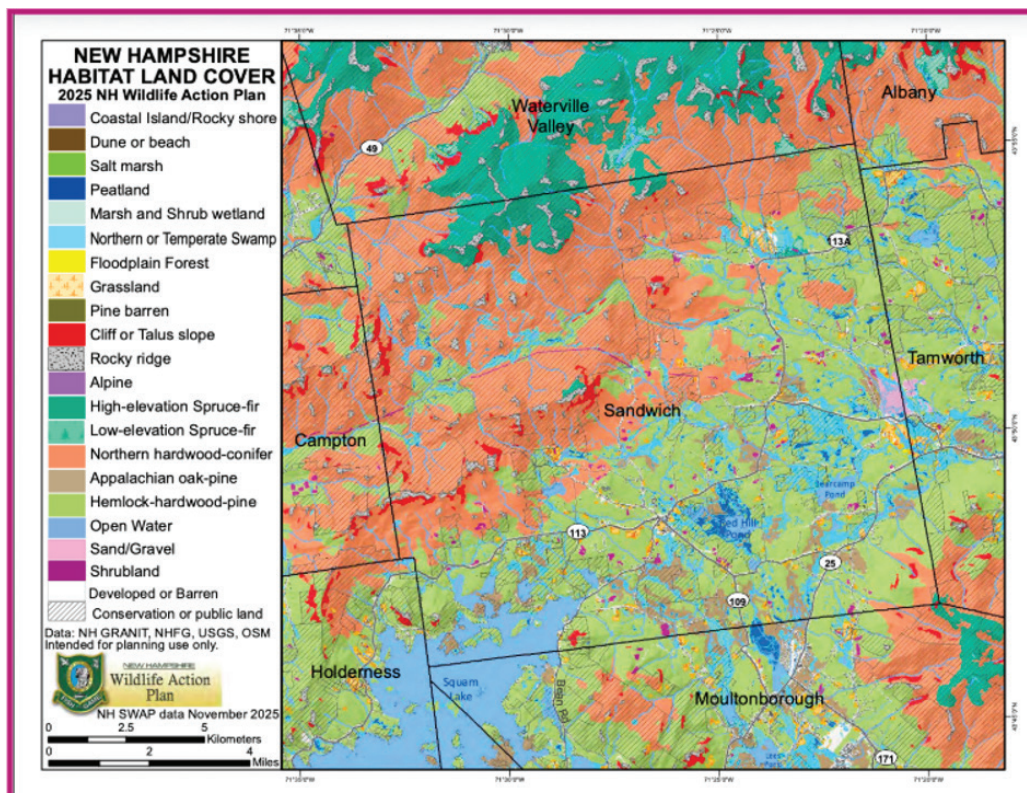
Despite these assets, ongoing habitat and wildlife corridor fragmentation continues to reduce connectivity, limit species movement and threaten local biodiversity. According to the 2025 NH Wildlife Action Plan, there are 100 species in Sandwich now identified as at risk due to habitat loss and other human-caused actions such as climate change, herbicide, pesticide, fertilizer, and rodenticide use, habitat fragmentation and light pollution.

In March 2020, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) issued a significantly more restrictive fish consumption advisory for Squam Lake due to high levels of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury. This arose from past land use practices and contaminated run-off in streams. Fish and aquatic organisms face an additional challenge when trying to navigate upstream through blocked or insufficiently sized culverts.¹

Explicit protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat is not currently included in our local zoning ordinance. There is limited regulation regarding artificial light at night in the Site Plan Review Regulations that apply to commercial and multi-unit development.

Fourteen distinct habitat types occur within the town, with approximately 54% of the town (32,320 acres) ranked as having the highest ecological condition in the state. Large contiguous blocks of protected and managed forest lands connect with White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) and create critical wildlife corridors, many of which lie along major waterways that cross the town. (Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Habitat and Land Cover



Scenic Resources

Forested hillsides and open fields contribute significantly to the town’s scenic quality, while the Skyline District and steep slopes ordinance protect prominent ridgelines and help maintain the visual integrity of high-elevation areas.

The town’s dark skies provide clear night views and are a valued characteristic of a rural environment.

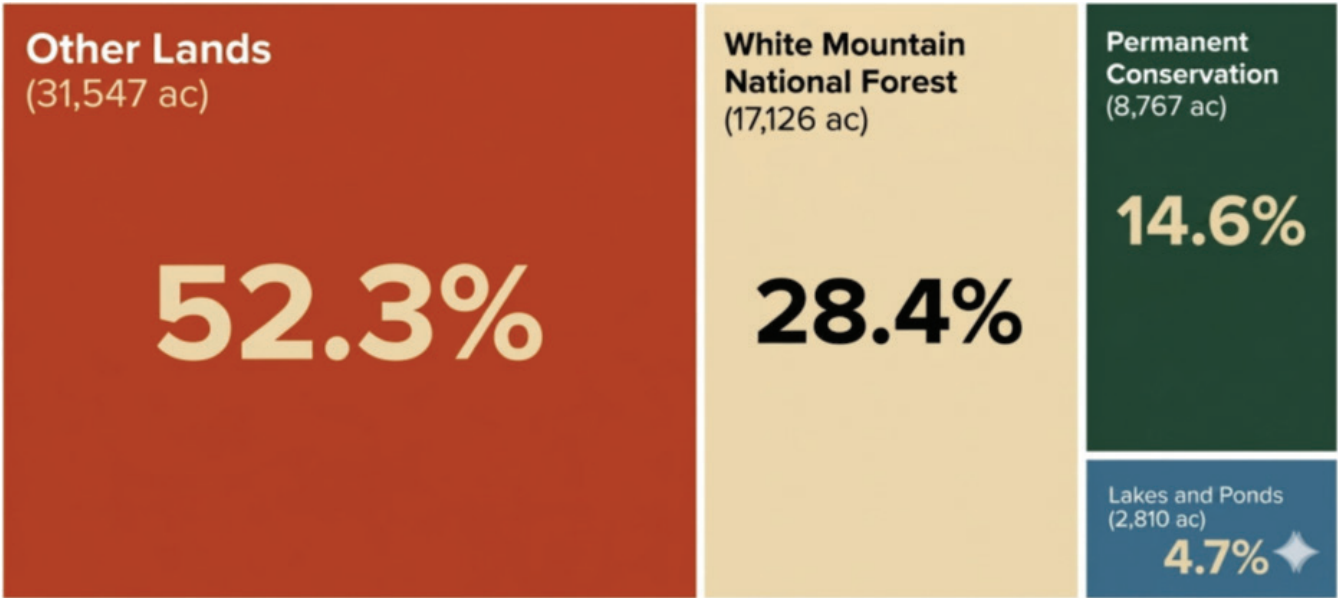


Water bodies and their shorelines contribute to scenic value as well as the town’s agricultural lands, which reflect the town’s historic land use practices and enhance the local food supply. There are no specific protections in the zoning ordinance for prime farmland soils nor for soils of state-wide or local importance.² According to a 2025 analysis, Open Space in New Hampshire contributes tens of billions annually to the economy when outdoor recreation, tourism, working lands, and ecosystem services are combined. In addition, conserving land around a watershed has been shown to avoid tens of millions of dollars in treatment costs.³

Conservation

Permanently conserved lands form the backbone of the town’s rural character and provide the most enduring protection for the town’s rural landscape and natural resources. Figure 2.

Figure 2 Proportion of Conserved Lands in Sandwich, NH



NH GRANIT, updated August 2025, Rick Van de Poll

Excluding the 17,126 acres in the White Mountain National Forest, which is federally controlled, 14.6 % of the total acreage in Sandwich can be considered permanently protected from development “in perpetuity” under IRS code 170(h).

Themes, Key Issues & Trends

Implicit in the protection of natural resources is the conflict between conservation and use. Although most master plan survey respondents recognize the value of “natural beauty and outdoor access” and wish for the “small town character” to be maintained, growth and development are inevitable.

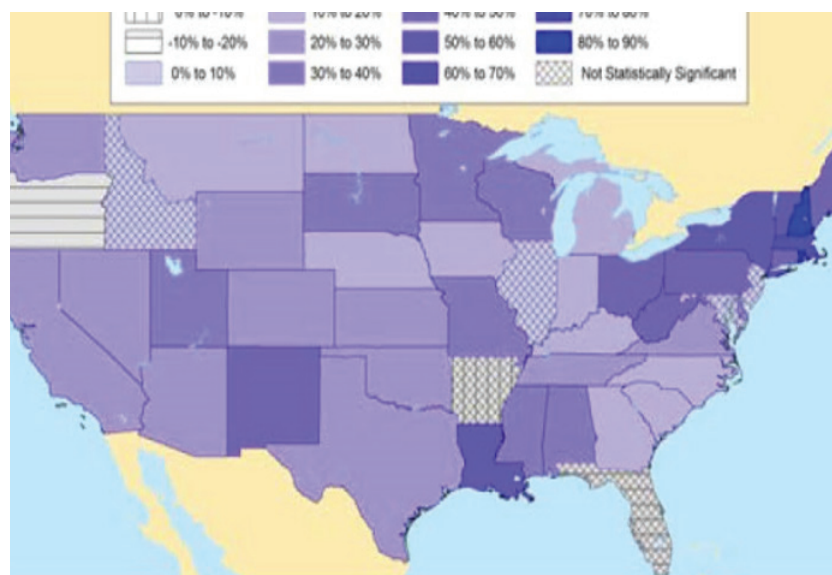
Several long-term trends shape these choices when thinking about the future of Sandwich:

- **Open Space** – based on a number of well-researched studies over the last 50 years, it is evident that Open Space has both direct and indirect economic benefits to rural communities in New Hampshire
- **Climate change** is bringing warmer temperatures, heavier rainfall, and more frequent extreme storms as well as “flash” droughts⁴;
- **Water resources** remain sensitive to land-use changes, especially near streams, wetlands, and aquifer recharge areas;
- **Habitat fragmentation** threatens connectivity as unprotected parcels are subdivided or developed;
- **Gaps in protection** leave some wetlands, wildlife corridors, and scenic landscapes vulnerable; and
- **Limited coordination** across planning and conservation tools can lead to inconsistent outcomes.

The challenge moving forward is not whether change will occur, but how to guide it in ways that respect Sandwich’s landscape, protect essential resources, and reflect community priorities.

Foremost among the concerns is climate change, which has already led to warmer temperatures, more rainfall and increasing numbers of extreme storms in the state.⁴ (Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Trend in the Frequency of Extreme Precipitation by State



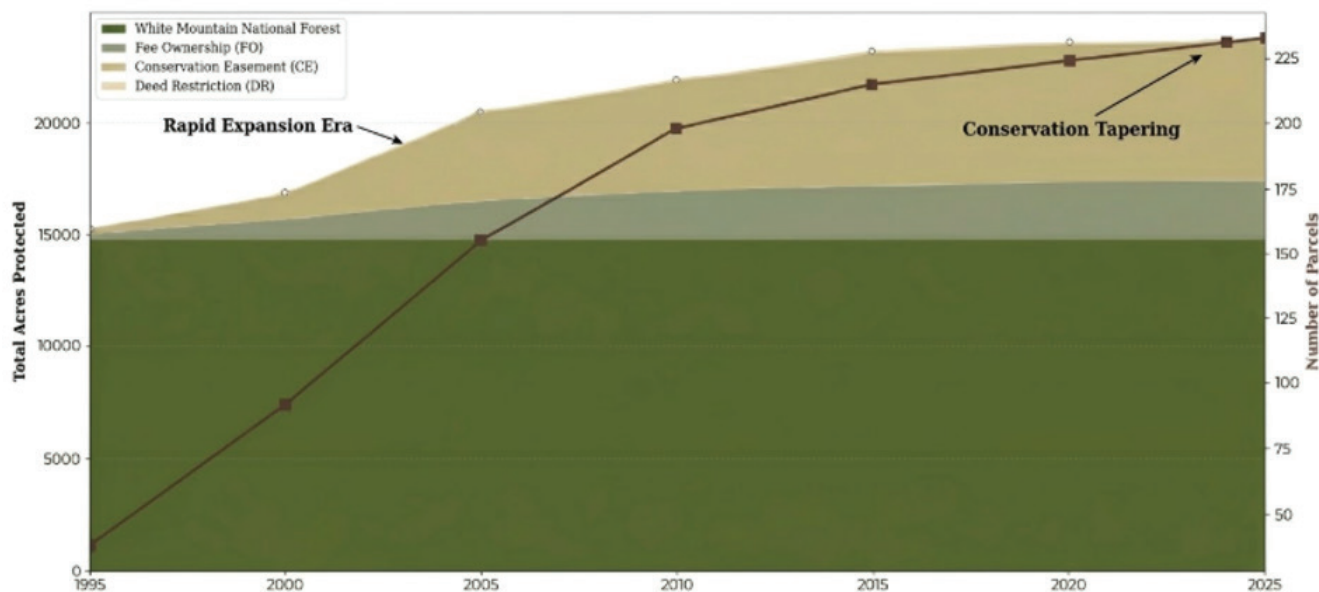
New Hampshire and Rhode Island show the highest increase in the frequency of storms with extreme precipitation. Source: Madsen & Figdor, 2007

The Squam Lake watershed is experiencing a significant decline in snowpack, which has already dropped 59% since 1971 and is projected to continue collapsing through the century. This loss of gradual spring recharge, combined with rising summer temperatures and increased evapotranspiration, creates a narrowing window for aquifer replenishment which threatens the reliability of private wells and local ecosystems. These trends, coupled with the potential for adverse impacts from further land development, mean the quality and quantity of water resources needs to be a top priority for Sandwich planners.

Another important trend relates to habitat fragmentation. In the last 15 years, over 10% of the Current Use forest land in Sandwich has been converted to non-forest use, including 5% in the Rural/Residential Zone according to Town records. Land conversions can disrupt unfragmented habitat blocks of wildlife corridors, and natural communities and species, including mammals, birds, insects as well as the native plants they rely on⁵

While the rate of permanent land conservation in Sandwich increased during the 1990s and early 2000s, it has slowed significantly since 2010 (Figure 4). Rapidly rising land values have contributed to this trend. Furthermore, the Town’s Conservation Fund – intended to offset the development of land taken out of current use – receives only a small percentage of the Land Use Change Tax proceeds (25%). This limited funding restricts the town’s ability to permanently conserve its most ecologically important lands in the future.⁵

Figure 4. Sandwich Conservation Land Trends 1995-2025



Goals and Recommendations

Goal 1: Explore ways to further protect water resources.

Recommendations:

- Review language in the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision, and Site Plan Review Regulations to

provide greater protection of aquatic resource areas such as wetland setbacks for identified vernal pools and the incorporation of stormwater management standards and the 2025 FEMA flood risk maps.

- Improve implementation of existing water resource protection measures by continuing to monitor compliance with applicable state and Town regulations; seeking Conservation Commission input on projects affecting water resources; and exploring opportunities to reduce potential impacts to water quality within sensitive watershed areas, especially Squam Lake.
- Implement further planning and outreach measures to better protect water resources in Sandwich by developing a town-wide Water Resources Management and Protection Plan; encouraging landowners to participate in the NH Lakes Association's "LakeSmart" program; and supporting ongoing water quality monitoring efforts.
- Support infrastructure improvements that increase flood resilience while protecting stream function and aquatic habitat.

Goal 2: Protect Forests, Agricultural Soils and Wildlife Habitat.

Recommendations:

- Continue to encourage cooperation among Town Officials, the Conservation Commission, landowners, independent land protection agencies and others to protect high value forest, agricultural land, and wildlife habitat parcels through purchase, conservation easements, donations and other mechanisms.
- Support conservation efforts through existing funding sources, including the Land Use Change Tax and Conservation Fund.
- Consider long-term stewardship strategies for Town-owned forest lands.
- Educate residents on ways to protect vulnerable wildlife from pesticides and herbicides. Ban the use of rodenticides on Town properties.

Goal 3: Preserve Scenic and Cultural Landscapes.

Recommendations:

- Explore options for undertaking a Visual Resource Analysis that identifies scenic points, scenic vistas and scenic viewsheds and ways to integrate findings into an Open Space Plan and the Site Plan Review Regulations.
- Consider options for amending the Zoning Ordinance to provide for greater protection of scenic quality from the impact of development.
- Review current Scenic Road designations.
- Develop a Dark Skies ordinance.

Goal 4: More Fully Integrate Natural Resource Protection into All Planning Decisions.

Recommendations:

- Develop a town-wide Open Space Plan that identifies and maps high value natural resource areas throughout Sandwich and recommends priority areas for protection.

- Encourage a Conservation Commissioner to join the Planning Board to facilitate communications.
- Continue to monitor natural resources and ensure their continued protection in light of climate change and other bioregional trends.

Footnotes

1. New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://www4.des.state.nh.us/NH-Stream-Crossings/>
2. 2026 Zoning Ordinance, Town of Sandwich, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://webgen1files1.revize.com/sandwichnh/Sandwich%20Zoning%20Ordinance%202026%20.pdf?t=202603231349290&t=202603231349290>
3. Jessica Sargent, “The Benefits of New Hampshire’s Open Space: The Value of Working Farms and Forests, Natural Lands, and Waters,” Primrose Research Group, June 2025. <https://www.forestsofnewhampshire.org/document/benefits-nhs-open-space-full-report.pdf>
4. Lemcke-Stampone, Mary D.; Wake, Cameron P.; and Burakowski, Elizabeth, “New Hampshire Climate Assessment 2021” (2022). The Sustainability Institute. 71. <https://scholars.unh.edu/sustainability/71>
5. Current Use Reports 2011-2024, NH Department of Revenue, <https://www.revenue.nh.gov/about-dra/municipal-and-property-division/current-use-board>

Sources:

1. NH GRANIT
2. 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan
3. New Hampshire Climate Assessment 2021
4. NH Lakes LakeSmart Program <https://nhlakes.org/lakesmart/>
5. https://cms5.revize.com/revize/nrpc/Document_Center/Publications/iTRaC/2010/FS25_DarkSkies.pdf
6. https://www.gmcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Dark_Sky_Regulations.pdf
7. New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration
8. New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative
9. The Benefits of New Hampshire’s Open Space: The Value of Working Farms and Forests, Natural Lands and Waters [see <https://www.forestsofnewhampshire.org/document/benefits-nhs-open-space-full-report.pdf>]
10. River Water Quality Data for Sandwich, Green Mountain Conservation Group.
11. 2025–2035 New Hampshire State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) was officially finalized in late 2025, here is the breakdown of the species counts and their relevance to Sandwich.
12. RSA 36-A: 3 In a town which has a planning board, one member of the commission may also be on the planning board.

Municipal and Community Resources

Sandwich's facilities and infrastructure are effectively the warp and weft that support lives here. Community facilities and infrastructure include Town- and other publicly- and privately-owned buildings and facilities, the transportation system, emergency services, utilities, and communications infrastructure. Sandwich has many public and private services that also support community life, including education, recreation, arts and culture, health and human services, and a range of businesses.



Survey Findings

In conversations with townspeople, the library, school, and parks and recreation facilities were all common mentions as resources of high value to Sandwich. In the survey, for example, 58% of respondents say, “recreational facilities and outdoor access” as the reason why they “choose to live, visit, or work in Sandwich”. In describing what they want “the future of Sandwich to be,” “the Wentworth Library and Sandwich Central School remaining viable” are top three desires.

Among the urgent challenges respondents perceive for the town, however, “addressing infrastructure constraints..., improving municipal services, and improving town finances” are the lowest three priorities they cite. However, in the response to “Which Town of Sandwich departments or services do you feel would most benefit from additional support (funding, staffing, facilities, volunteering)?” the top four responses are “Parks and Recreation..., Emergency Medical Services..., Library..., and Highway Department.”

The planning balancing act required to keep Sandwich infrastructure and services in decent shape, and address desired enhancements, comes through in these two respondent’s comments.

“Keeping the cost of living affordable for residents implies maintaining affordable tax rates for residents – this is far more important than expanding services – don’t price out your residents.”



“Sandwich should continue to seek to be connected to the economy of the state, the country and the world by having and maintaining state of the art infrastructure including roads (without frost heaves and potholes).”

Existing Conditions

Community Facilities

Sandwich relies on a mix of publicly and privately owned facilities to serve the town. Town-owned facilities include Town Hall, the two Fire Stations, Police Department, Highway Department, the

Samuel Wentworth Library, Transfer Station, and Town swimming and recreation areas. A number of recreation facilities are located on property owned by private trusts.

The *2025 Sandwich Hazard Mitigation Plan* outlines specific recommendations for Town facilities, e.g., using the Fire Station as a warming / cooling center and installing generators at key Town facilities for extended power outages.



Other publicly owned facilities include the Sandwich Central School and the two US Postal Service offices; the US Forest Service maintains hiking trails, but no buildings in Sandwich. Facilities owned by private, nonprofit organizations include the Sandwich Historical Society, the League of NH Crafts, the Sandwich Fair Association, the Doris L. Benz Center, the Sandwich Children's Center, the Sandwich Federated Churches, the North Sandwich Quaker Meeting House, and the East Sandwich Meeting House.

Accessibility of community facilities is mixed, with the more recently renovated facilities more compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Access to community buildings can be challenging for those with mobility issues; similarly, access challenges to recreational facilities have been noted.

Other essential elements of community infrastructure that are privately owned include local restaurants, businesses, and shops, a number of private fire ponds, and many hiking trails. Survey responses and comments acknowledged the importance of Sandwich businesses in our community life.



Infrastructure

Life in Sandwich relies on key infrastructure elements, including the transportation system, communications systems, electrical distribution system, and the Village sewer system.

Transportation

Roads

The transportation system includes the main arteries of State roads and highways and Town roads as shown in Figure 2. Major improvements to State roads are administered through the State Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Ten Year Plan; there are no projects in Sandwich in the current NHDOT 2027-2036 Ten Year Plan. Regular maintenance on State highways, such as paving, plowing, and culvert work are managed by NHDOT outside of the Ten Year Plan.

The Town maintains its public roads; major improvements to Town transportation infrastructure are included in the Town Capital Improvement Plan budget. Plans to prevent and mitigate threats to the Town transportation infrastructure from extreme weather events, fires, and other hazards are addressed in the 2025 Sandwich Hazard Mitigation Plan. More than half of the culverts assessed in town are considered at high risk of flooding during moderate storms. The Town has replaced a number of culverts to address increasing heavy rain events.



Figure 2. Local Transportation System

Highway Type	Miles in Sandwich	Examples	Responsibility
Class I	4.1	Route 25	NH DOT
Class II	26.2	Routes 109, 113, 113-A, Little Pond Rd., Squam Lake Rd.	NH DOT
Class III and IV	None		
Class V	68.2	All other Town Roads	Town of Sandwich
Class VI	5.1	Open to public travel e.g. River Rd.	Non-Maintained
Private Roads	26.2	e.g., Hannah Rd, Jimmy Point Rd.	Property Owners

Town of Sandwich Highway Department 2026

Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation

The Town maintains sidewalks in the Center Village on parts of Main Street, Squam Lake Road, and Skinner Street and a non-contiguous section on Maple Street. There is one designated crosswalk on Squam Lake Road, and no bicycle lanes, or bike paths in Sandwich. A small percentage of survey commenters noted a need in these areas. All roads mentioned here are state highways with physically restricted widths.

Other Transportation Resources

Sandwich relies on the key highway corridors of I-93, Route 16 / Spaulding Turnpike, and NH Route 25 and on airports in Manchester, Boston, and Portland. Twice daily bus service comes as close as Center Harbor; this bus connects to Boston Logan Airport but does not currently have an easy connection to Manchester-Boston Airport.

Taxis and ride-hailing services have not yet made much of a presence in Sandwich; spotty cell phone services in some parts of town limits growth in this area. Interlakes Caregivers provides volunteer rides to medical appointments with a three-week notice requirement. Transportation for more urgent needs, or for those who can't drive was noted as a concern in the survey comments.

The closest gas stations are in surrounding towns. There are no public EV charging stations in Sandwich as yet; most EV users tend to charge at home. Survey comments noted the lack of gas stations in town.

Utilities and Communications

Electricity

Electricity distribution is provided by NH Electric Cooperative, which covers about 90% of Sandwich properties, and Eversource. An increasing number of Sandwich properties are installing solar panels, with a small number completely off grid.

Sandwich's town-owned facilities set an example to inspire other buildings in town. They set examples in historic architecture and also set examples in energy efficiency. The Sandwich Energy Committee was tasked to set a path for the town to focus on energy conservation by the 2020 Town warrant Article 21: "To see if the Town of Sandwich, NH will vote to commit to a goal of



100% reliance on renewable sources of electricity by 2030 and for all other energy needs including heating and transportation, by 2050. The intent of this goal is to protect the well-being and health of our citizens by practicing and promoting energy conservation, ensuring food, water and heat security, by being fiscally responsible, and by keeping energy dollars in the local economy. We can, by actively shifting towards renewable energy, end dependence on and subsidies for fossil fuels and address the threat of global climate change on a local,

state and national level.” Town facilities are already using solar energy to power the Central Fire Station, Highway Department Garage and Transfer Station. The focus on energy efficiency in these facilities is also helping reduce our Town costs of operations. Over the next several years, the Energy Committee plans to continue working on energy efficiency improvements for Town buildings, as well as exploring the potential for, and where appropriate recommending, additional solar energy installations.

Telecommunications

The telecommunications system includes copper landline and internet DSL service by Consolidated Communications, fiber broadband internet from NH Broadband and Fidium (limited access in South Tamworth only), and wireless communications, primarily via Verizon Wireless towers. There is little access to over-the-air television in Sandwich and no cable TV access; residents generally rely on satellite or streaming television, which has increasingly limited local or state media coverage. Local radio stations provide emergency announcements.

Other Communications

Regional newspapers still provide some local coverage, but it is increasingly limited. Town communications are currently limited to two bulletin boards in the Village, and the Town web site. The Town maintains a text and email system for alerts. The privately administered Sandwich Board email list is a venue for local information exchange and is currently not used for Town communications. The 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan makes recommendations for improving communications in emergencies.

The US Postal Service is an important communications lifeline for Sandwich residents for personal and business communications, commerce, civil life, mail order medications, and more. Hours at the North Sandwich Post Office have been reduced for some time. Further cuts to USPS services and operations are under constant discussion.

Water and Sewer

The Village Sewer System serves and is currently limited to 74 properties in the Village; it is run by the Sewer Commission with assistance of the Town Office. The remainder of the town has private septic systems. All properties rely on private ground water or deep wells, with the Elliott Spring in North Sandwich serving as water source for many of out of preference or necessity, with markedly increased use in the recent drought. The spring is tested periodically for bacteria but not maintained as public water source; users are noticed to use at their own risk.

Solid Waste

The Sandwich Transfer Station provides solid waste transfer to regional waste facilities and a collection point for mandatory recycling. Hazardous waste collection is through periodic Lakes Region Planning Commission collection days or access to regional collection sites. Nineteen survey commenters mentioned a desire to reinstitute the Swap Shop at the Transfer Station.

Community Services

Community is more than buildings, facilities, or infrastructure, and Sandwich has a web of institutions and services that add to the thriving community.

Education

As part of the cooperative Inter-Lakes School District (ILSD), Sandwich is served by the K-6 Sandwich Central School (SCS) and the Inter-Lakes Middle Tier and High School in Meredith for grades 7-12, as well as limited Pre-K at Inter-Lakes Elementary School. Enrollment at SCS has ranged from its peak of 125 students in 1993 to a low of 62 in 2007 and now to its current enrollment of 82. Some are tuition students from out-of-town, a trend that may expand in the future. More than 50% of survey respondents say that SCS is one of the things that make Sandwich a great place to live, work, or visit, and a similar percentage say that assuring the viability of SCS is a high priority. SCS also received many additional mentions in the comments. The ILSD is in the process of updating its Strategic Plan. Some families choose other educational options, including home school, private school, or other public schools.



Early learning is provided by the Sandwich Children's Center, which offers childcare from infancy to after-school care. More than fifteen survey commenters mentioned the need for childcare and keeping the Sandwich Children's Center viable. Other early learning and childcare options are available in surrounding towns, as well as home providers. The Bearcamp Center in Tamworth provides enrichment and out-of-school care for K-8 aged children during some school vacation periods.

Library

The Samuel Wentworth Library is a valued community resource supported by Town funds and the original Library Trust and is governed by the elected Library Board of Trustees. In addition to its book and media collections, the library provides programming for all ages, access to the State Library Inter-Library Loan and downloadable book, magazine, and audio collections, and a community meeting space. The very active Friends of the Library group provides financial and other support. More than 50% of survey respondents said the library is one of the things that makes Sandwich a great place to live, work or visit and nearly 60% of survey respondents see assuring the viability of the library as a high priority.



Health

Health is about more than the medical system and is driven as much by community and social factors – such as education, social connectedness, and a safe environment – as by access to care for individual health decisions. The health of Sandwich residents benefits from the natural environment and high levels of education, social capital, and community safety. Risks to the community and individual health include chronic illness, cognitive issues, mental health concerns for both children and adults, and infectious diseases, such as tick-borne illness and recent respiratory diseases. Social isolation is a real health risk in Sandwich for residents of all ages, but for especially older adults; loneliness is as dangerous to our health as smoking almost a pack of cigarettes a day. Access to food, transportation, and social and physical activity are also key elements needed to support health.

Health Care Access

Although Sandwich used to support a busy primary care practice and a dental practice even with a much smaller population, the current health care system makes this unfeasible.

Sandwich is in designated shortage areas for primary care and mental health care. Sandwich is on the cusp of four regional health systems, each with its own primary care system and referral relationships with specialty care systems; Sandwich residents tend to seek care in all four systems. With broadband now available in Sandwich, telehealth is now an alternative for some health care visits. Source: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt476/files/inline-images/shortage-map.jpg>

Although primary care is available despite shortages, NH now has several areas considered to be “maternity care deserts,” and Sandwich residents’ closest access to birth care is now limited to Plymouth, North Conway, or Concord. Care for higher risk births is given in Concord, Lebanon, Portland, or Boston. Younger families are less likely to choose communities where they can’t get adequate access to birth care.

Access to mental and behavioral health care is also challenging, particularly for children. Dental care is available in surrounding communities. Survey commenters noted the difficulties in traveling to care, especially in bad weather or peak traffic periods.

Emergency care is provided through hospital emergency departments, with free standing urgent care centers operating in Conway, Meredith, and Plymouth. The Sandwich Fire Department provides Emergency Medical Services, and the Town contracts with Stewart Ambulance for ambulance services.

The Town Health Officer assures compliance with state health regulations.

Recent pharmacy closures have limited access, with only one remaining pharmacy in Meredith; the next closest pharmacies are in Plymouth, Ossipee or Conway. Many residents are relying on mail-order pharmacies for non-urgent medications.

Skilled home health care and hospice services for Sandwich residents are provided by licensed nonprofit agencies and for-profit companies; these services require primary care provider referrals and are generally covered by Medicare / Medicaid or private health insurance if deemed medically necessary.

The Sandwich Community Nurse provides nursing assessment, education, and referrals to full-time and seasonal residents at no cost, generally through home visits, as well as community and educational events.

Sandwich has no long-term care or assisted living services; residents in need of residential or other higher levels care need to leave the community. Individuals and families sometimes elect to provide in-home care using agency or independent workers. The Mt. Washington Valley Adult Day Center in Conway is the closest option for daily care for individuals with memory issues.

Other Community Amenities and Services

Food

Sandwich and much of Carroll County meet the definitions of a “food desert” because of the distances to affordable, comprehensive grocery stores. Within town, the North Sandwich Store offers local products, prepared meals to reheat, and a small grocery selection through an innovative, unstaffed model. During the growing season the Farmers’ Market offers local produce and products. Convenience and discount stores are available in some adjacent towns. The closest local grocery store is in Center Harbor, with larger supermarkets in Meredith, North Conway, and Plymouth. Re-opening a village store ranked first as the one change respondents most wanted to see in Sandwich (27%) and more than 25 commenters also expressed a desire to have a store in Sandwich.

The Benz Center provides a weekly lunch for older adults, and Meals on Wheels for older adults are delivered by volunteers through Ossipee Concerned Citizens. The Bearcamp Center offers periodic in-person dinners and prepared take-home meals by donation. Local restaurants offer both food and much appreciated places to gather. Other local businesses also provide prepared meals. So far, there is no pizza delivery, DoorDash, Uber Eats, or similar service in Sandwich.

Food assistance is available for Sandwich residents at the Community Food Center in Tamworth, as well as other voluntary food pantries in the region.

Other Services

Sandwich residents rely on a network of community services to keep going, from fuel delivery to skilled trades and personal care, and yard maintenance, housecleaning, and fixit services, for those who can’t do it themselves. These services are becoming increasingly important as community residents wish to age in place.

Themes, Key Issues & Trends

On the whole, Sandwich residents and stakeholders value the town’s community resources and services, support current levels of investment for most municipal services, and would like to see increased resources for Parks and Recreation, Emergency Services, and the Library. Institutions such as SCS and the Library are highly valued, and survey respondents expressed concern about maintaining their viability. Survey commenters said the same about resources for early learning and childcare. A return of the Swap Shop at the Transfer Station was mentioned in comments.

Living in a dispersed rural area means accepting that many amenities of more populated communities just are not feasible, with an inherent tension between convenience and the quiet lifestyle most prefer. Nonetheless, access to basic infrastructure is a concern, whether its transportation, communications, health care, education or other key necessities.

The tensions highlighted in other chapters in this Plan play out here, as well: how to maintain community vitality and maintain our community preference for a quiet, rural community. Earlier personal and community land use decisions to favor larger lot sizes have led to neighbors that are less connected, to longer commutes and bus rides for children, to more fragmented habitats with implications for wildlife, and perhaps even increased tick populations. Decisions to not allow gas

station permits may have protected ground water but make driving farther to fuel vehicles. Better cell phone coverage is desired, but not looking at cell towers. Tree and stonewall lined roads are highly valued, but to be able to walk and bike safely is also wanted. The last decade has shown that change can creep up, but can also come quickly. The influx of residents during the pandemic brought fresh faces and energy to the community, and many stayed. Pandemic-instigated remote work arrangements made it possible for people to live here and work far away; newly available broadband internet facilitated that employment, as well as many new businesses, and helped existing businesses thrive. As some employers are instituting 'Return to Office' requirements, some residents may have to make tough choices. It is unknown how growing use of Artificial Intelligence is going to affect Sandwich community members.

What is evident, from the population data, is that without managing to attract and retain younger residents, Sandwich may not have the population to support the kind of community services that are desired or that exists today.

Goals & Recommendations

The following goals and recommendations reflect the over-arching themes of responses to the survey and the interconnected elements of our natural and built environment and community life.

Goal 1: Maintain multiple modes of travel and transportation infrastructure in Sandwich.

Recommendations:

- Consider ways to elevate town needs to reach the regional and State transportation planning processes.
- Updates to the Hazard Mitigation Plan should include any increasing threats due to energy market instability or climate change.
- Consider an ad hoc group to bring together various stakeholders and develop and implement pragmatic solutions for safer bicycle and pedestrian use.
- Evaluate safe, affordable, and convenient options for transportation for all age groups. Technological advances that could help, such as ride-hailing services, would require better cell phone access than is currently available in much of the town.
- Town officials should convene key stakeholders, including school officials, community service providers, and residents to workshop solutions.

Goal 2: Support a robust communications infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- Monitor potential changes to USPS service in Sandwich and advocate for adequate service with USPS and federal delegation.
- The Town and the community need to advocate with state and federal officials and telecommunications companies to resolve issues of increasingly poor coverage, which are likely due to a confluence of increased usage without increased capacity, technology change, cell tower location, as well as challenging topography.

- Continue to improve public communications for the Town with more channels for receiving information.

Goal 3: Maintain and improve community facilities.

Recommendation:

- The Town should consider an accessibility assessment of its buildings and recreation facilities and plan needed improvements accordingly.

Goal 4: Maintain a range of recreational opportunities, programs, and facilities for all ages and abilities.

Recommendation:

- Explore more recreation offerings for all ages, and especially for older adults at varying activity levels.

Sources

Bearcamp Center

Columbia University Department of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology, Columbia University <https://nycticks.e3b.columbia.edu/sites/nycticks.e3b.columbia.edu/files/content/pubs/pdfs/tjaa209.pdf>

Inter-Lakes School District Strategic Plan

Mt. Washington Valley Day Center

NH Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Health Services

Office of US Surgeon General, Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community, 2023

New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://www4.des.state.nh.us/NH-Stream-Crossings/>

New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services, Office of Rural Health and Primary Care

Town of Sandwich Energy Committee

Town of Sandwich 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Town of Sandwich Highway Department

Point32 Health Foundation Healthy Aging Data Report: New Hampshire, 2025.

Town of Sandwich Master Plan Writer Materials 2026

Town of Sandwich Parks & Recreation Department

Town of Sandwich Reports

USDA Economic Research Service, Food Access Research Service

Village Sewer District

World Health Organization

Historical Resources

“Sandwich is truly a gem! Pairing some change and some growth with its charm and history is key – not impossible, but care will be required.”
Survey Respondent, 2025

Quincy Barn Museum



Daniel Beede Homestead



The Bradford Jewell House, Courtesy of Sandwich Historical Society

Survey Findings

The historic look and feel of Sandwich rank highly among the desirable characteristics cited by the people spoken with and surveyed. More than 80% say, “historic character and aesthetics” are “What makes Sandwich a great place,” the fourth highest response among twelve options in the survey. In citing “the most urgent challenges facing Sandwich,” 58% say, “maintaining small town character” is among their top three concerns, the second most common response to this question. When asked, “If you could change one thing about Sandwich, what would it be?” survey respondents’ second highest answer is, “balance growth with historic preservation.”

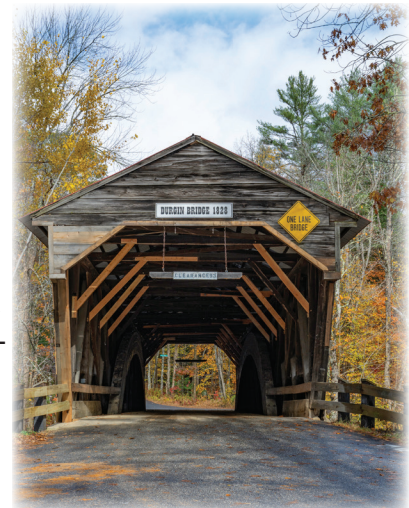
Respondents also perceive that the attributes that they value – the town’s historic character, small town look and feel, and historic architecture – are under pressure. A number of the optional comments mention specific concern about development pressure, including concerns about “McMansions,” “suburbanization,” and becoming too much like neighboring towns. One comment encapsulates what many indicate in the comments is the most urgent challenge they see facing the town, “Preserving the historic and peaceful style of life.”

Existing Conditions

Sandwich has many documented historical assets, including many formally recognized at the state or national level:

Durgin Bridge and the Daniel Beede Homestead are sites of state-sponsored historical markers

- The Town has two areas listed as National Register Historic Districts: Center Sandwich and Lower Corner. The Center Sandwich Historic District Overlay includes 73 properties while the Lower Corner District includes 12 properties and 32 buildings.
- Some individual sites in town are on the National Register of Historic Places, including North Sandwich Meeting House, Bradbury Jewell House and Durgin Bridge. Starting in 2012 and continuing, some individual sites in town and surrounding towns have joined the Register as part of a National Register Multi-Property Submission for their historical significance to the Squam Lake Viewshed.
- Sandwich has 210 barns, most of which are considered historic (75 years or older), and 34 barns / agricultural structures participate in the state’s Historic Barn Tax Incentive Program (RSA 79-D), a barn preservation easement program administered by



Courtesy of Brook Hedge



the NH Preservation Alliance. This participation number is higher than any other town in the state.

- Sandwich is also home to an estimated 85 cemeteries, many of which are private burial grounds. Sandwich Cemetery Trustees are responsible for the three town cemeteries – Grove Street, Elm Hill, and North Sandwich. Larger private cemeteries such as Little’s Pond, Rural (Burleigh) and Vittum Hill are managed by private organization boards. Property owners are encouraged to maintain the

small plots on their land and some are assisted by community efforts for their upkeep.

- Late 19th and early 20th century one-room schoolhouses are abundant in Sandwich as well. By 1847 there were 25 single-room schoolhouses in Sandwich, and while some have been lost, many remain and are reused as garages, studios, and private homes. One school that was not lost or repurposed – the John Quincy Adams School, built in 1825 and now known as Lower Corner School – is owned by the Sandwich Historical Society and maintained as a historical school building. Lower Corner Schoolhouse is open in the summer for visitors and every other year, SCS 4th and 5th graders spend a day there reenacting a school day in the 1800s.



The town has a Historic District Commission (HDC), established in 1972 and updated in 1981



Courtesy of Sandwich Historical Society

with an ordinance, to preserve the structures and places of historic and architectural value within the Historic Overlay District (HDO) essentially, the “heart of the village”. The HDC reviews proposed changes to the exterior of structures and landscapes within the HDO, provides the Planning and Zoning Boards with comments on applications and promotes preservation of historic structures and landscapes in the town. HDC members are appointed by the Town Selectboard.

Sandwich also has an active historical society, Sandwich Historical Society (SHS), as mentioned above owning Lower Corner Schoolhouse. Established in 1917, SHS is a private nonprofit organization that owns and maintains several buildings in Sandwich, offers programs and events to the public and access to researchers, and also curates special exhibits related to the town’s history. Since 2022, more than 7,500 people have engaged with the Society through these offerings.

Themes, Key Issues and Trends

Survey respondents rate the town’s historical resources – its historic character and aesthetics, architecture, and small-town feel – as among the important elements contributing to their positive experience of the town. They want to preserve these, even as they identify other priorities, such as attracting / retaining younger people and housing affordability. A significant number of survey participants are concerned about balancing future growth with historic preservation. While historic preservation and development can coexist, they can also be at odds. The town’s approach to zoning and development may need to adapt to address respondents’ additional priorities as identified in the survey while retaining the historic elements that comprise the town that people love.

Appreciation for the historical buildings and historical landscapes is woven into most of the highest priority issues for survey respondents. Yet little action has been taken to assess and prioritize these resources. It appears that there is not a natural “home” within Town government for addressing historical resources in the context of town-wide zoning, planning or other important governmental functions. Without creating a framework to better understand Sandwich’s historical buildings and landscapes or assigning that responsibility to a specific entity, there is risk of significantly changing or even losing some of these highly valued resources. This concern is especially relevant as the town faces development pressure and weighs, as it must, potential trade-offs between historic preservation and growth, a key concern of survey respondents.

Goals and Recommendations

The 2011 Master Plan recommended some specific actions the town could take to help protect Sandwich’s historical resources and preserve the town’s rural, small-town character, but according to the town’s own assessment, done in preparation for this 2026 Master Plan, few actions have been taken. Below are the Historic Resources goals and recommendations from the 2011 Master Plan which could help address some of the issues the 2025 Master Plan survey shows respondents continue to care about deeply.

Goal 1: Address historic resources outside the Historic District Overlay.

Recommendations:

- Explore establishing a Heritage Commission under NH RSA 674:44 for historic and cultural resources in town that are located outside the Historic Overlay District.
- Consider applying to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) through the NH Division of Historic Resources, which could unlock resources (including funding) to local properties of historic, architectural, and archaeological interest.
- Research how to prepare a comprehensive historic resources inventory of all historic buildings and sites in the Town of Sandwich. A Heritage Commission could be responsible for this and other inventories (see below). Sandwich Historical Society has a significant repository of documents that could probably be tapped to help speed this effort.

Goal 2: Identify historical resources, landscapes and gateways to prioritize for preserving.

Recommendations:

- Consider preparing a comprehensive survey of the historic landscape including its villages and rural landscapes, plus the gateways into town, such as Squam Lake Road, Skinner Street, Maple Street and Wentworth Hill Road.
- Evaluate the proposed town historical resources, landscapes and gateways inventories (above) to identify high priority landscapes and structures to prioritize and preserve.
- Explore local, state and federal programs that could support preservation of these priority locations to help safeguard the town’s historic character, small town/rural feel and natural vistas.

Sources

Sandwich Master Plan, 2011

Sandwich 2026 Master Plan Writer Materials, Historical Resources Section

Sandwich Historical Society

Sandwich Cemetery Trustees

National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places

National Trust for Historic Preservation

New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, Heritage Commissions in New Hampshire

Personal communications: Mark Longley, Kelly Cox, Anne Gallivan, Jennifer Rowan

Village Centers

The volume of respondent comments that relate to the village centers suggest that they are front and center in how they see the town today and moving forward. As one person summed up the village center planning challenge: “I love the town of Sandwich and its small-town feeling. I do wish we had a general store so that we didn’t have to drive 5 miles for milk, paper goods, and everyday essentials.”



Survey Findings

The village centers are a significant source of value to the townspeople engaged. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents say, “small town / village feel” makes Sandwich a “great place.”

While “maintaining small town character” at 58% is a top urgent challenge, so too is “improving access and sustainability of private services (retail, healthcare...) 23%.

As for the future, those looking for “little to no change” at 38% are nearly matched by those who envision a “more vital village center” at 33%.

The top response to “if you could change one thing about Sandwich what would it be?” was “reestablish a general store / grocery store” at 28%.

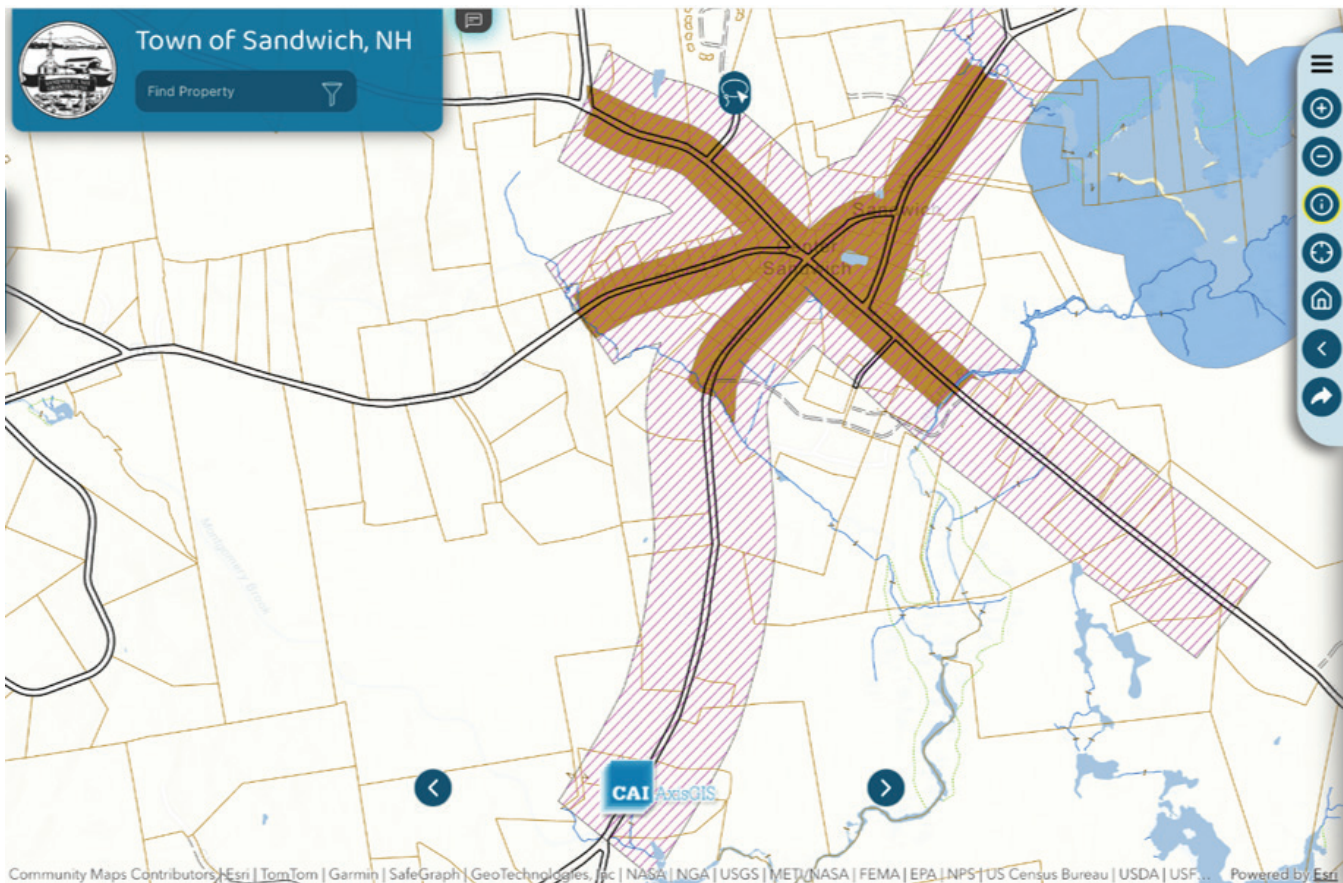
Overall, the survey illustrates a high level of support for maintaining a modest, human-scale village center with local businesses, walkability, and gathering spaces, while resisting large-scale development. In terms of services that exist in the Village Centers, over half of respondents note Art and Culture, the Sandwich Wentworth Library and Parks and Recreation Facilities make Sandwich a great place to live, work or visit.

Existing Conditions

Although historically there have been several village centers in Sandwich, the focus on the future primarily has been on the Village in the center of town and the North Sandwich Village anchored by the North Sandwich Post Office and Remick Park. The Center of town was established as a Historic District Overlay (HDO) first in 1972 and revised in 1981 with specific regulations overseen by the Historic District Commission. A Village District was established in the town zoning ordinance in 2015 with boundaries extending out from the HDO with its own set of regulations. Both the Center and the North Villages have great historical character and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Center Village is home to town service, such as the Town Hall, the Post Office, the library, the Sandwich Children’s Center, as well as two restaurants, several retail establishments, churches, the Sandwich Central School, the Benz Community Center, cultural attractions, and Town Parks & Recreation facilities. New to Center Village as of the summer of 2025 is a vibrant weekday Farmers’ Market that runs from June to September. North Sandwich likewise has a Post Office with limited hours, a multi-use store front and a revitalized Remick Park. Sidewalks are limited in the Village Center and there is only one crosswalk on Squam Lake Road. Public Parking is in designated lots near Town Hall, the library and tennis courts or along the street.

Figure 1. Historic District Overlay and Village District



Brown = Historic District Overlay. Hatched Village District

Source: GIS map on Town of Sandwich web page

Arts and Culture

Sandwich has an active cultural life with both visual and performing arts, as well as its long history as a center of fine craft, most of which are focused in the Center Village. In addition to local theater, as well as a busy music scene, there are poetry, book, and discussion groups that are active year-round.

Gathering Places



The Villages also provide the places to gather or at least cross paths, also known as “third spaces,” for both casual interactions and more formal meetings and gatherings. In Sandwich, the Town Hall, Sandwich Central School, the library, and the Benz Center provide space for meetings, presentations, and performances. The Sandwich Fair Association has outdoor performance space and provides walking and cross country skiing in the fields. Quimby Field, the Bearcamp and Squam beaches, and the Potholes are also

popular meeting places: families with young children are enjoying the playgrounds at Remick Park, SCS, and the Sandwich Fairgrounds. Informal meetups at the library, Post Offices, and local businesses help keep people connected, but the community misses the opportunity to interact at the village stores and while grateful for the unstaffed North Sandwich Store, misses the opportunity to interact at that end of town.

Themes, Key Issues and Trends

It is clear from the survey data that the village feel, anchored in the natural beauty and outdoor access, the quality of life and tranquility, as well as the historic character and aesthetic of the town, are key to making Sandwich a great place to live, work or visit. People come to Sandwich because they are attracted by the rural, small town lifestyle, the aesthetic, the outdoors and the sense of home or belonging that the town of Sandwich evokes. Above all else, survey respondents desire to protect the natural resources and the small-town character, and attract young families while managing growth. There is a high degree of support for the Samuel Wentworth Library and Sandwich Central School (SCS) – anchors of the Center Village district.

Two high profile improvements to the Center Village emerge from the survey data and comments. When prompted to choose among a prepopulated list of things that could change about Sandwich, just over a quarter of the respondents choose the reestablishment of a general store while nearly a fifth emphasize balanced growth with historic preservation. While other answers are dispersed, with enhanced public spaces and walkability garnering only two percent of responses, a few respondents who choose to write in their own items included an urgent need for sidewalks and crosswalks in the Center Village, along with maintaining its tranquility and quaintness. Some respondents want a vibrant town center, others caution against “transformative growth.”

It bears noting that in order to enable change, such as the re-establishment of a grocery or general store or adding more sidewalks for walkability, only roughly 10% of respondents would support higher taxes and only approximately 12% would support higher facility fees. Appetite for improvement that causes fees or taxes to increase may be limited. Yet, over half of survey respondents support a private public partnership to enable new projects suggesting that a path forward on village improvements in the way of a grocery store or sidewalks may require a more nuanced solution. A few commenters express concern over noise, lighting and signage in the Village Center compromising its character and charm, a reminder that the center is a residential community as well as a commercial one.

Goals & Recommendations

Goal 1: Increase opportunities for new businesses in the village.

Recommendations:

- A volunteer working group could explore options for re-establishing a general store in the village.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with the Sandwich Business Group to support existing and new businesses in the village districts.

Goal 2: Continue to preserve the rural, small-town character and the historic aesthetic of the Villages by maintaining a modest, human scale village that is walkable, contains local businesses and gathering spaces for local use.

Recommendations:

- Communicate to promote the various areas available for parking in the villages.
- Encourage community groups and town committees in their efforts to provide additional opportunities to gather in the village districts.

Master Plan Survey Methodology and Results

Background

Over the course of 2025, the Master Plan Committee conducted 19 focus group interviews and participated in eight public outreach events, including at the Sandwich Farmers' Market and Transfer Station. A standard set of questions was asked at each session to gather broad input into important planning questions ranging from "what makes Sandwich a great place to live, work, or visit?" to "what are the most urgent challenges facing Sandwich?" to "if you could change one thing about Sandwich what would it be?"

Methodology

Building off of respondents' feedback, the Committee crafted a survey posing these same questions and offered as response options the range of answers most commonly heard in the focus groups and outreach events. An open-ended "other" response option was also included for each question to capture all relevant respondent input.

A hard copy of the survey was then mailed to all taxpayers in October of 2025, made blanks available in other public locations in town, and offered online survey completion as well. The survey was conducted anonymously and was available to any person with an interest in the future of Sandwich, residents, and non-residents alike. Around 700 responses were received.

Results

The results were used to identify key priorities, which were distilled into seven core themes that shape the Vision Statement of this Plan. Also, each chapter of the plan opens with select survey findings relevant to that area of planning focus.

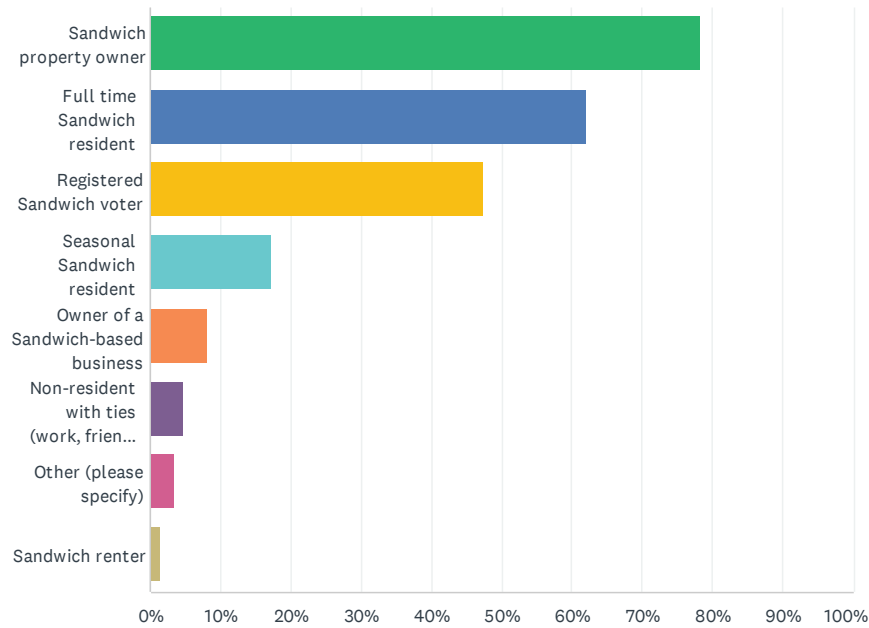
What follows are the raw responses to the survey in both graphical and tabular form. For the final two questions in the survey, both of which were open-ended, relevant quotes were used where applicable, in each chapter.

Statistical Relevance

As the responses to question 1 show, the survey represents the input of a non-scientific sample of people willing to share their input into this planning process that includes residents, taxpayers, youth, adults and non-residents alike. While 695+ responses lend good statistical validity to the results, the purpose of the survey and use of the results is intended to be directional in value. The resulting data and quotes in the report were used to emphasize the input of respondents into a wide range of potential planning priorities.

Q1 Tell us about yourself. Check all that apply. I am a:

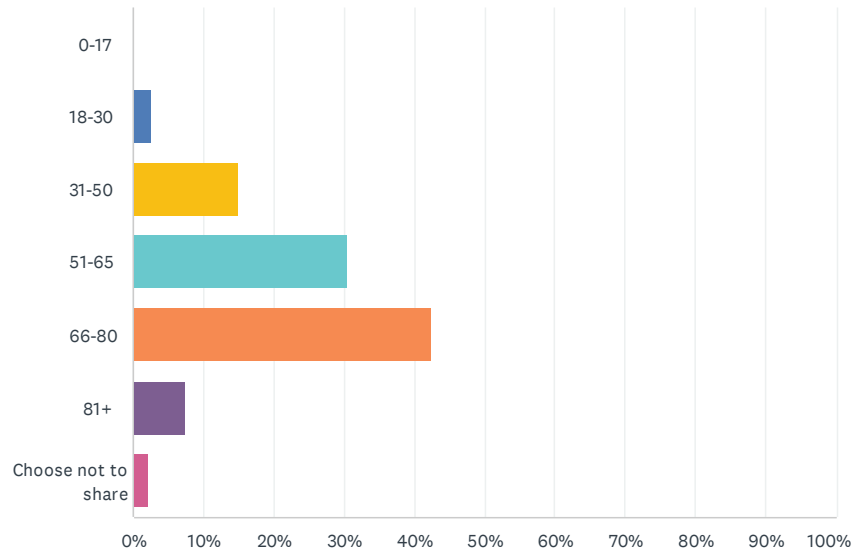
Answered: 692 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Sandwich property owner	78.32%	542
Full time Sandwich resident	61.99%	429
Registered Sandwich voter	47.25%	327
Seasonal Sandwich resident	17.20%	119
Owner of a Sandwich-based business	8.09%	56
Non-resident with ties (work, friends, school, family) to Sandwich	4.77%	33
Other (please specify)	3.32%	23
Sandwich renter	1.59%	11
Total Respondents: 692		

Q2 What is your age?

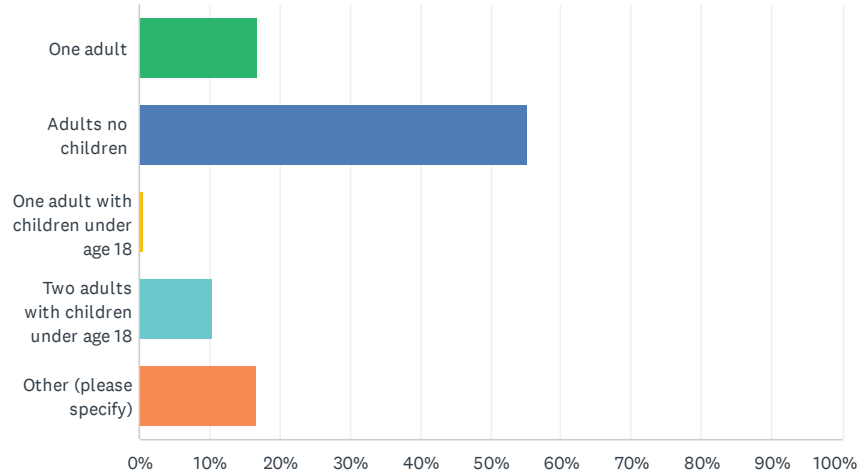
Answered: 691 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-17	0.00%	0
18-30	2.60%	18
31-50	14.91%	103
51-65	30.54%	211
66-80	42.40%	293
81+	7.38%	51
Choose not to share	2.17%	15
TOTAL		691

Q3 What is your Sandwich household composition?

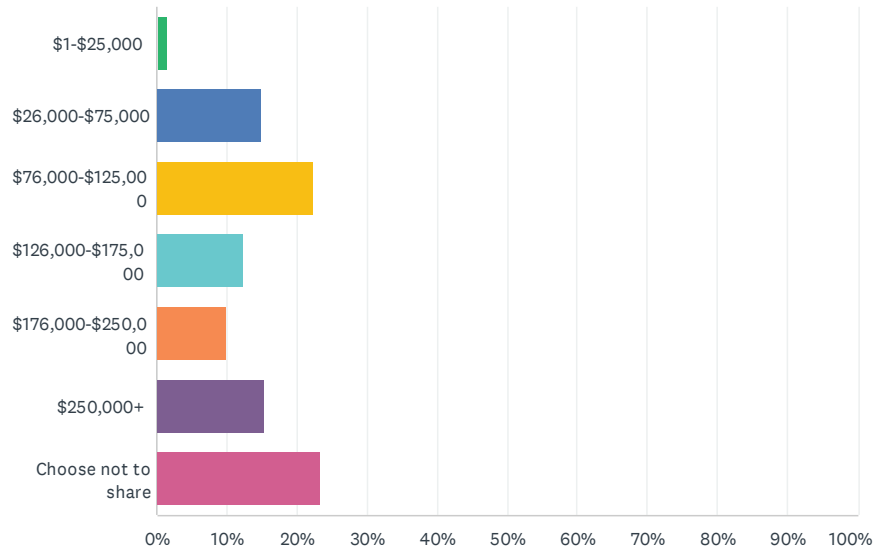
Answered: 685 Skipped: 10



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
One adult	16.93%	116
Adults no children	55.18%	378
One adult with children under age 18	0.73%	5
Two adults with children under age 18	10.51%	72
Other (please specify)	16.64%	114
TOTAL		685

Q4 What is your annual household income range?

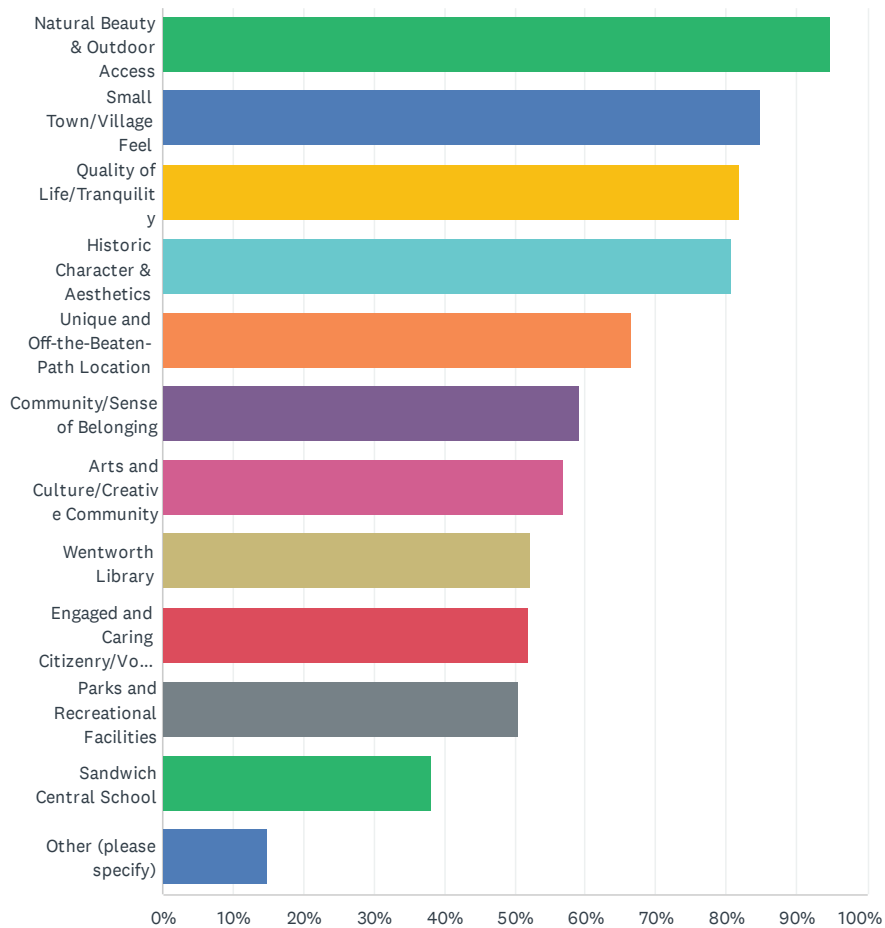
Answered: 680 Skipped: 15



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$1-\$25,000	1.47%	10
\$26,000-\$75,000	14.85%	101
\$76,000-\$125,000	22.35%	152
\$126,000-\$175,000	12.35%	84
\$176,000-\$250,000	10.00%	68
\$250,000+	15.44%	105
Choose not to share	23.53%	160
TOTAL		680

Q5 What makes Sandwich a great place to live, work, or visit? Check all that apply.

Answered: 691 Skipped: 4

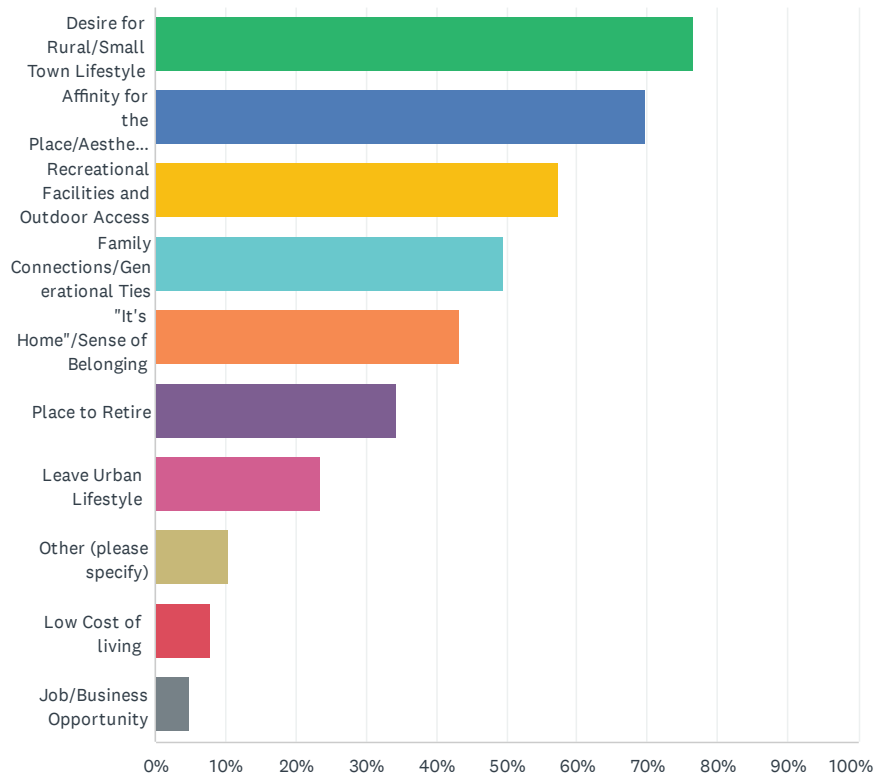


Sandwich Master Plan 2026

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Natural Beauty & Outdoor Access	94.79%	655
Small Town/Village Feel	84.80%	586
Quality of Life/Tranquility	81.91%	566
Historic Character & Aesthetics	80.75%	558
Unique and Off-the-Beaten-Path Location	66.57%	460
Community/Sense of Belonging	59.33%	410
Arts and Culture/Creative Community	57.02%	394
Wentworth Library	52.24%	361
Engaged and Caring Citizenry/Volunteerism	52.10%	360
Parks and Recreational Facilities	50.51%	349
Sandwich Central School	38.06%	263
Other (please specify)	14.91%	103
Total Respondents: 691		

Q6 Why do you choose to live, visit, or work in Sandwich? Check all that apply.

Answered: 692 Skipped: 3

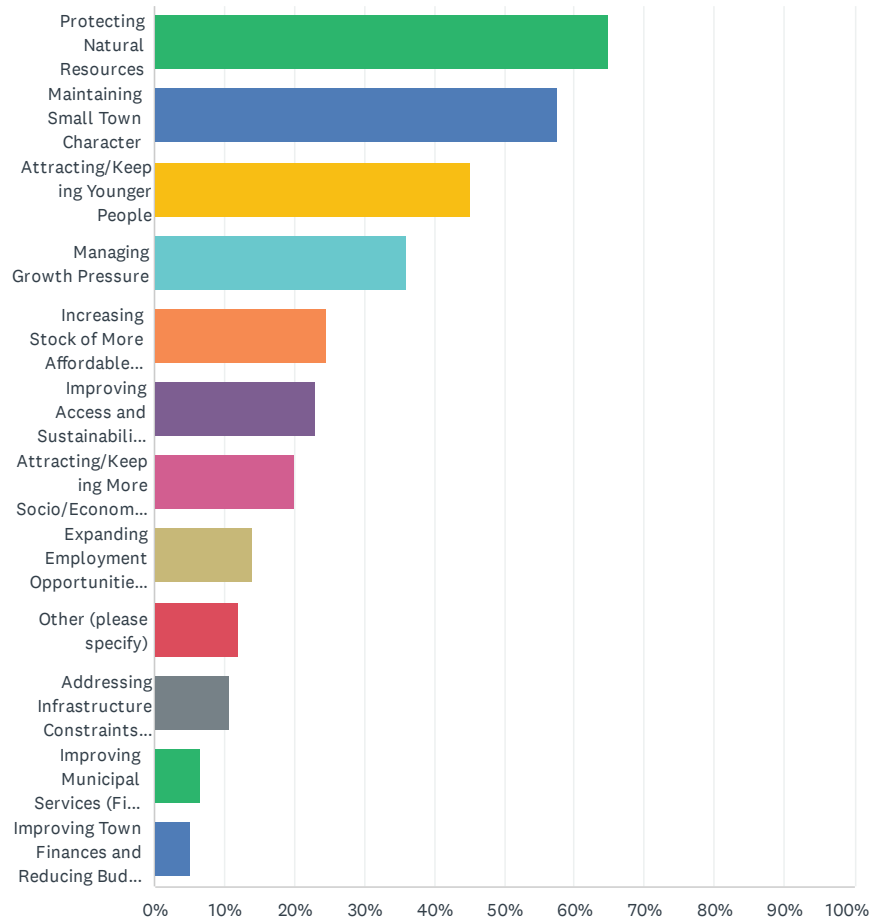


Sandwich Master Plan 2026

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Desire for Rural/Small Town Lifestyle	76.59%	530
Affinity for the Place/Aesthetic Appeal	69.65%	482
Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Access	57.37%	397
Family Connections/Generational Ties	49.42%	342
"It's Home"/Sense of Belonging	43.35%	300
Place to Retire	34.39%	238
Leave Urban Lifestyle	23.41%	162
Other (please specify)	10.55%	73
Low Cost of living	7.95%	55
Job/Business Opportunity	4.91%	34
Total Respondents: 692		

Q7 What are the most urgent challenges facing Sandwich? Choose your top 3 only.

Answered: 691 Skipped: 4

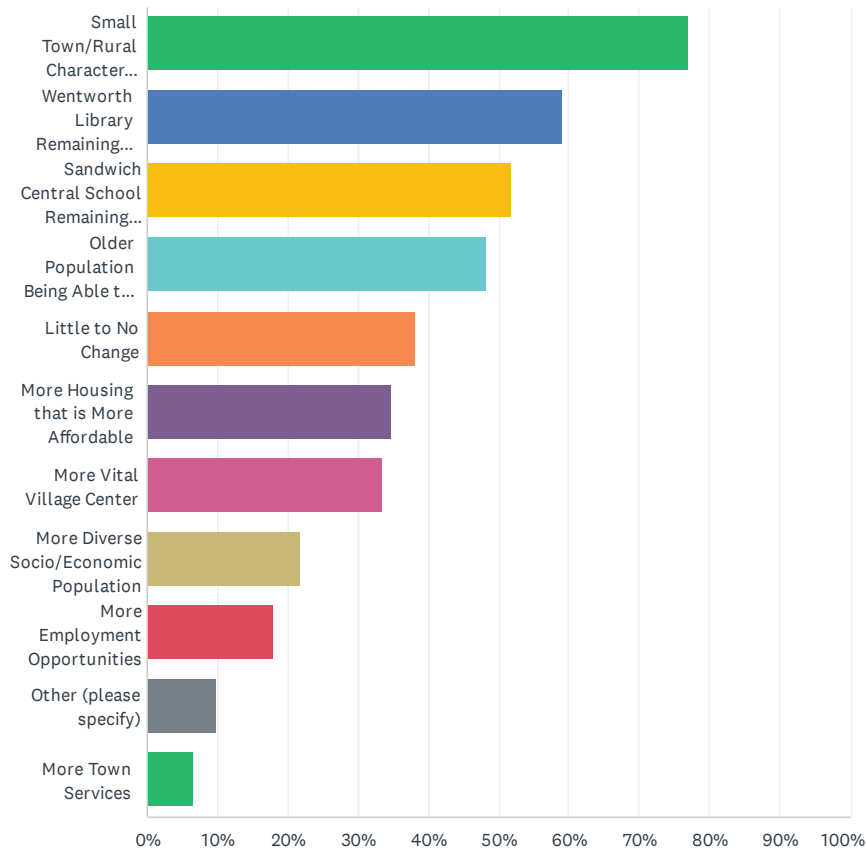


Sandwich Master Plan 2026

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Protecting Natural Resources	64.83%	448
Maintaining Small Town Character	57.60%	398
Attracting/Keeping Younger People	45.30%	313
Managing Growth Pressure	36.03%	249
Increasing Stock of More Affordable Housing	24.46%	169
Improving Access and Sustainability of Private Services (Retail, Healthcare, Childcare, Eldercare)	23.01%	159
Attracting/Keeping More Socio/Economically Varied Population	20.12%	139
Expanding Employment Opportunities and Improving Business Climate	14.04%	97
Other (please specify)	11.87%	82
Addressing Infrastructure Constraints (Sewer System & Roads)	10.71%	74
Improving Municipal Services (Fire, Police, Parks and Recreation)	6.51%	45
Improving Town Finances and Reducing Budget Constraints	5.21%	36
Total Respondents: 691		

Q8 Describe what you want the future of Sandwich to be? Check all that apply.

Answered: 690 Skipped: 5

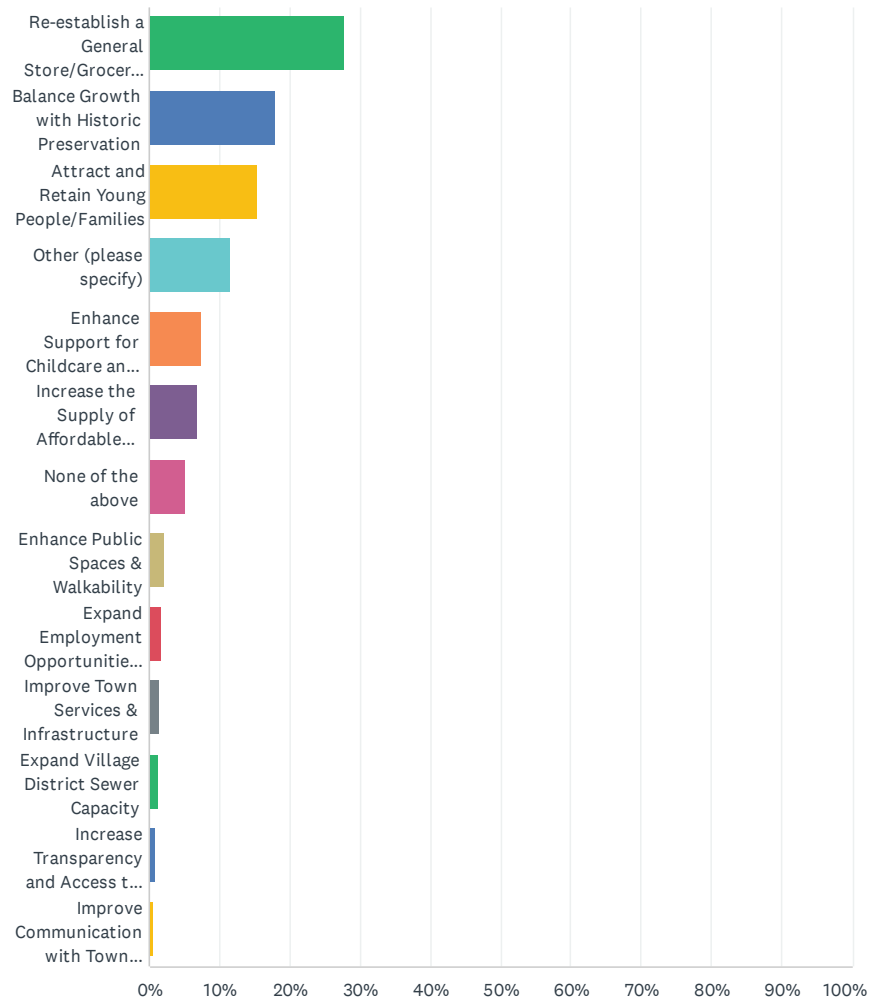


Sandwich Master Plan 2026

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Small Town/Rural Character Maintained	76.96%	531
Wentworth Library Remaining Viable	59.13%	408
Sandwich Central School Remaining Viable	51.74%	357
Older Population Being Able to Age in Place	48.26%	333
Little to No Change	38.26%	264
More Housing that is More Affordable	34.78%	240
More Vital Village Center	33.48%	231
More Diverse Socio/Economic Population	21.74%	150
More Employment Opportunities	17.97%	124
Other (please specify)	9.71%	67
More Town Services	6.67%	46
Total Respondents: 690		

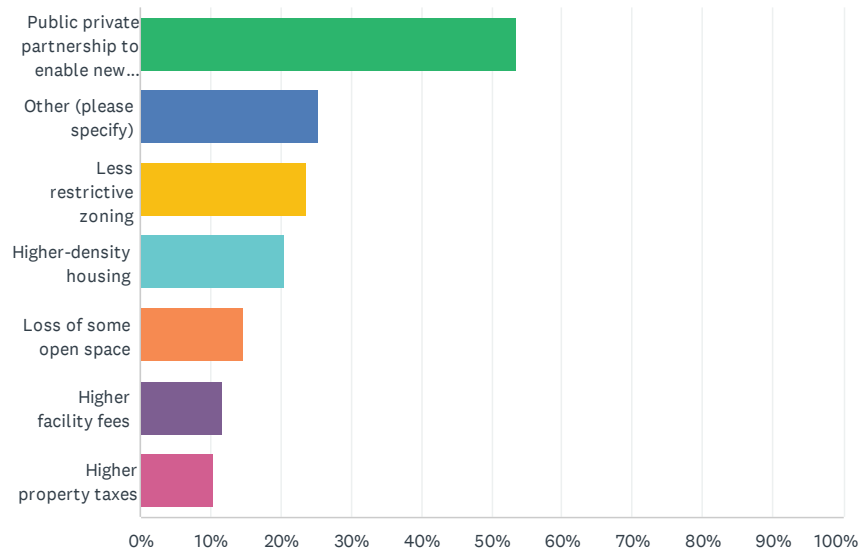
Q9 If you could change one thing about Sandwich, what would it be? Choose one only.

Answered: 680 Skipped: 15



Q10 Given your response to “the one thing you would change” question above, what would you support to enable that change? Check all that apply.

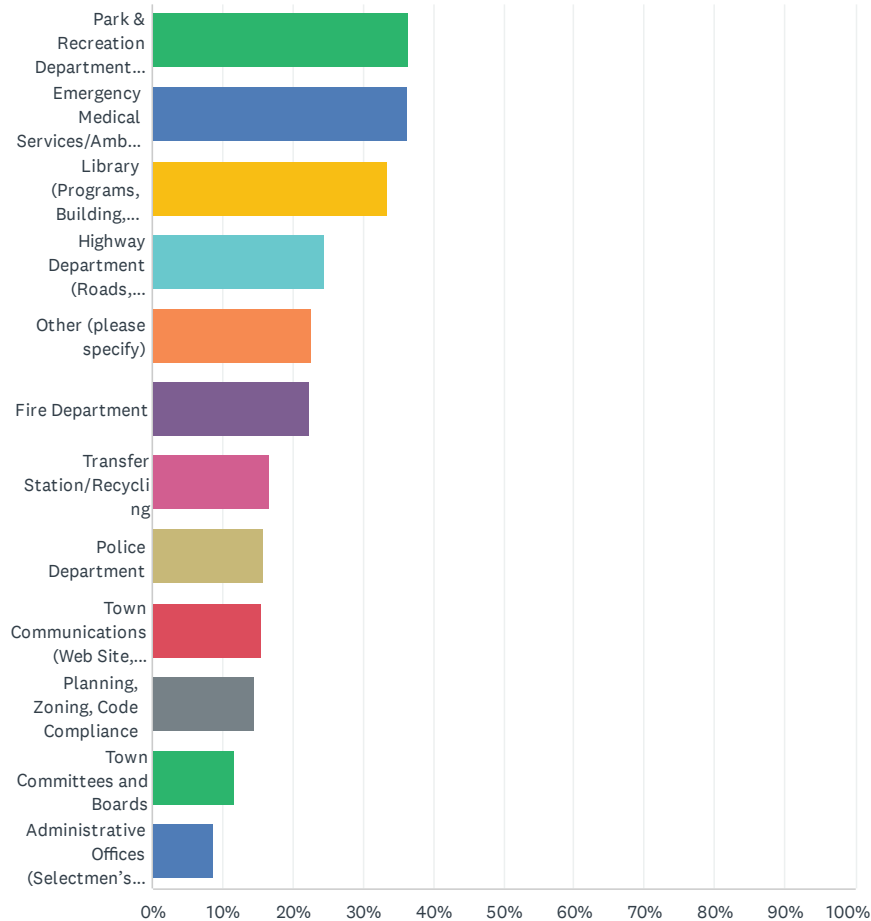
Answered: 593 Skipped: 102



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public private partnership to enable new projects	53.46%	317
Other (please specify)	25.46%	151
Less restrictive zoning	23.61%	140
Higher-density housing	20.40%	121
Loss of some open space	14.67%	87
Higher facility fees	11.80%	70
Higher property taxes	10.46%	62
Total Respondents: 593		

Q11 Which Town of Sandwich departments or services do you feel would most benefit from additional support (funding, staffing, facilities, volunteering)? Check all that apply.

Answered: 605 Skipped: 90



Sandwich Master Plan 2026

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Park & Recreation Department (Youth Programs, Town Beach/Pot Hole, Trails)	36.53%	221
Emergency Medical Services/Ambulance	36.20%	219
Library (Programs, Building, Technology)	33.39%	202
Highway Department (Roads, Plowing, Bridges)	24.46%	148
Other (please specify)	22.64%	137
Fire Department	22.48%	136
Transfer Station/Recycling	16.69%	101
Police Department	15.70%	95
Town Communications (Web Site, Email Alerts, Newsletters, Social Media)	15.54%	94
Planning, Zoning, Code Compliance	14.55%	88
Town Committees and Boards	11.74%	71
Administrative Offices (Selectmen's Office, Town Clerk, Treasurer)	8.76%	53
Total Respondents: 605		

Sandwich Master Plan 2026

Q12 How might you like to be involved in the future of Sandwich?

Answered: 291 Skipped: 404

Sandwich Master Plan 2026

Q13 Please add anything else you want, that we have not asked, to help guide and shape the Master Plan for Sandwich.

Answered: 233 Skipped: 462

Implementation Recommendations

This Implementation Guide compiles the goals and recommendations contained throughout the Master Plan. The Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC), a subcommittee of the Planning Board, will further define the specific action items and work with appropriate Town boards, committees, staff, volunteers, and community partners to establish responsibilities, collaboration, priorities, and timelines. The MPIC will report annually to the Planning Board and the public through the Town Report.

Chapter	Goal	Recommendation	Lead Entity	Timeline	Funding Considerations
Population, Housing, and Economic Base	Goal 1: Encourage modest housing diversity that fits Sandwich's existing rural development pattern.	Continue allowing small-scale housing options such as accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and clustered development where appropriate and consistent with the town character.			
		Explore reducing minimum lot size as a means of increasing housing density in identified appropriate locations.			
		Investigate mechanisms to be used to proportionately reduce setbacks as minimum lot size is reduced.			
		Develop development standards that reflect Sandwich's physical landscape, environmental constraints, and rural infrastructure limitations.			
		Support housing approaches that allow residents to remain in Sandwich over time, including options suitable for older residents, smaller households, and younger families.			
		Monitor housing and demographic trends over time so future Planning Board and zoning decisions remain grounded in actual local conditions rather than assumptions or statewide trends alone.			
	Goal 2: Attract more small businesses.	Create a committee to explore establishing a hub for incubation of new businesses for both growing local businesses and attracting young families who desire a rural environment with the ability to earn a living.			
		Explore recruiting businesses that would be appropriate to the NH Route 25 corridor in order to attract a variety of commercial enterprises with zoning improvements.			
		Explore revising any zoning that limits small, home-based commercial businesses that could thrive in the Historic District Overlay (HDO), Village and Rural Residential Districts.			
		To support the substantial number of commuters living in the town, explore partnerships with the state to continuously improve the road infrastructure.			
		Home based businesses and remote workers require consistent and fast broadband and mobile telecommunications services. Continue to work to improve those services to the town. Currently, 3-phase power required by many businesses is only available in part along NH Route 109 and on Mountain Road.			
		Explore ways to attract businesses that can support the aging population of the town and the ethos of the town as one connected to community and nature, such as elderly care/companion care, health care, and recreation and fitness businesses.			

Chapter	Goal	Recommendation	Lead Entity	Timeline	Funding Considerations
Land Use	Goal 1: Ensure that all existing zoning ordinances support the goals and vision of the Master Plan, amending ordinances as needed.	Continue to craft specific zoning ordinances to encourage growth while maintaining Sandwich's rural, small-town nature, perhaps by adjusting minimum lot size and associated setbacks and frontage requirements.			
Land Use	Goal 2: Educate residents of the importance of the land as key to maintaining the character and appearance of Sandwich.	Endeavor to educate residents on the many benefits of and how the Current Use program impacts land use.			
		Develop a plan to manage the Town forest and Town-owned conservation lands as a model for private citizens.			
		Sponsor an informational presentation that addresses good management of forest lands, such as presentations on many aspects of conservation, wildlife, and water resources.			
		The Agricultural Commission to explore programs and/or methods that will help increase both the number and success of farms in the town, and to identify agricultural land to protect.			
Land Use	Goal 3: Ensure that land use regulations enhance the availability of clean water for the town.	Continue monitoring water quality in the local aquifers and increase the frequency of monitoring, especially during the Spring and Summer months.			
		Support ongoing monitoring of the Elliott Spring in North Sandwich, which is used as a drinking water source by many.			
		Coordinate regular communication among the various groups that currently monitor water quality in different bodies of water.			
Land Use	Goal 4: Explore different models to promote affordable housing goals.	Review the cluster development section of the zoning ordinance to use the conservation subdivision development model in which a substantial amount of the site remains as permanently protected open space.			
		Explore creating density districts to support housing and support walkability and social connection.			
Land Use	Goal 5: Establish programs that support the goals and vision of the Master Plan.	Seek federal, state, and/or private grants to help fund programs, for example, infrastructure projects, community wells and septic systems.			

Chapter	Goal	Recommendation	Lead Entity	Timeline	Funding Considerations
Natural Resources	Goal 1: Explore ways to further protect water resources.	Review language in the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision, and Site Plan Review Regulations to provide greater protection of aquatic resource areas such as wetland setbacks for identified vernal pools and the incorporation of stormwater management standards and the 2025 FEMA flood risk maps. Improve implementation of existing water resource protection measures by continuing to monitor compliance with applicable state and Town regulations; seeking Conservation Commission input on projects affecting water resources; and exploring opportunities to reduce potential impacts to water quality within sensitive watershed areas, especially Squam Lake. Implement further planning and outreach measures to better protect water resources in Sandwich by developing a town-wide Water Resources Management and Protection Plan; encouraging landowners to participate in the NH Lakes Association's "LakeSmart" program; and supporting ongoing water quality monitoring efforts. Support infrastructure improvements that increase flood resilience while protecting stream function and aquatic habitat.			
Natural Resources	Goal 2: Protect Forests, Agricultural Soils and Wildlife Habitat.	Continue to encourage cooperation among Town Officials, the Conservation Commission, landowners, independent land protection agencies and others to protect high value forest, agricultural land, and wildlife habitat parcels through purchase, conservation easements, donations and other mechanisms. Support conservation efforts through existing funding sources, including the Land Use Change Tax and Conservation Fund. Consider long-term stewardship strategies for Town-owned forest lands. Educate residents on ways to protect vulnerable wildlife from pesticides and herbicides. Ban the use of rodenticides on Town properties. Explore options for undertaking a Visual Resource Analysis that identifies scenic points, scenic vistas and scenic viewsheds and ways to integrate findings into an Open Space Plan and the Site Plan Review Regulations. Consider options for amending the Zoning Ordinance to provide for greater protection of scenic quality from the impact of development. Review current Scenic Road designations. Develop a Dark Skies ordinance.			
Natural Resources	Goal 3: Preserve Scenic and Cultural Landscapes.				
Natural Resources	Goal 4: More Fully Integrate Natural Resource Protection into All Planning Decisions.	Develop a town-wide Open Space Plan that identifies and maps high value natural resource areas throughout Sandwich and recommends priority areas for protection. Encourage a Conservation Commissioner to join the Planning Board to facilitate communications. Continue to monitor natural resources and ensure their continued protection in light of climate change and other bioregional trends.			

Chapter	Goal	Recommendation	Lead Entity	Timeline	Funding Considerations
Municipal and Community Resources	Goal 1: Maintain multiple modes of travel and transportation infrastructure in Sandwich.	Consider ways to elevate town needs to reach the regional and State transportation planning processes.			
		Updates to the Hazard Mitigation Plan should include any increasing threats due to energy market instability or climate change.			
		Consider an ad hoc group to bring together various stakeholders and develop and implement pragmatic solutions for safer bicycle and pedestrian use.			
		Evaluate safe, affordable, and convenient options for transportation for all age groups. Technological advances that could help, such as ride-hailing services, would require better cell phone access than is currently available in much of the town.			
		Town officials should convene key stakeholders, including school officials, community service providers, and residents, to workshop solutions.			
Municipal and Community Resources	Goal 2: Support a robust communications infrastructure.	Monitor potential changes to USPS service in Sandwich and advocate for adequate service with USPS and federal delegation. The Town and the community need to advocate with state and federal officials and telecommunications companies to resolve issues of increasingly poor coverage, which are likely due to a confluence of increased usage without increased capacity, technology change, cell tower location, as well as challenging topography.			
		Continue to improve public communications for the Town with more channels for receiving information.			
Municipal and Community Resources	Goal 3: Maintain and improve community facilities.	The Town should consider an accessibility assessment of its buildings and recreation facilities and plan needed improvements accordingly.			
Municipal and Community Resources	Goal 4: Maintain a range of recreational opportunities, programs, and facilities for all ages and abilities.	Explore more recreation offerings for all ages, and especially for older adults at varying activity levels.			

Chapter	Goal	Recommendation	Lead Entity	Timeline	Funding Considerations
Historic Resources	Goal 1: Address historic resources outside the Historic District Overlay.	Explore establishing a Heritage Commission under NH RSA 674:44 for historic and cultural resources in town that are located outside the Historic Overlay District.			
		Consider applying to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) through the NH Division of Historic Resources, which could unlock resources (including funding) for local properties of historic, architectural, and archaeological interest.			
		Research how to prepare a comprehensive historic resources inventory of all historic buildings and sites in the Town of Sandwich. A Heritage Commission could be responsible for this and other inventories; Sandwich Historical Society has a significant repository of documents that could probably be tapped to help speed this effort.			
	Goal 2: Identify historical resources, landscapes and gateways to prioritize for preserving.	Consider preparing a comprehensive survey of the historic landscape including its villages and rural landscapes, plus the gateways into town, such as Squam Lake Road, Skinner Street, Maple Street and Wentworth Hill Road.			
Village Centers		Evaluate the proposed town historical resources, landscapes and gateways inventories (above) to identify high priority landscapes and structures to prioritize and preserve.			
		Explore local, state and federal programs that could support preservation of these priority locations to help safeguard the town's historic character, small town/rural feel and natural vistas.			
	Goal 1: Increase opportunities for new businesses in the village.	Recommendation A volunteer working group could explore options for re-establishing a general store in the village.	Lead Entity	Timeline	Funding Considerations
		Explore opportunities to collaborate with the Sandwich Business Group to support existing and new businesses in the village districts.			
Village Centers	Goal 2: Continue to preserve the rural, small-town character and the historic aesthetic of the Villages by maintaining a modest, human scale village that is walkable, contains local businesses and gathering spaces for local use.	Communicate to promote the various areas available for parking in the villages. Encourage community groups and town committees in their efforts to provide additional opportunities to gather in the village districts.			

