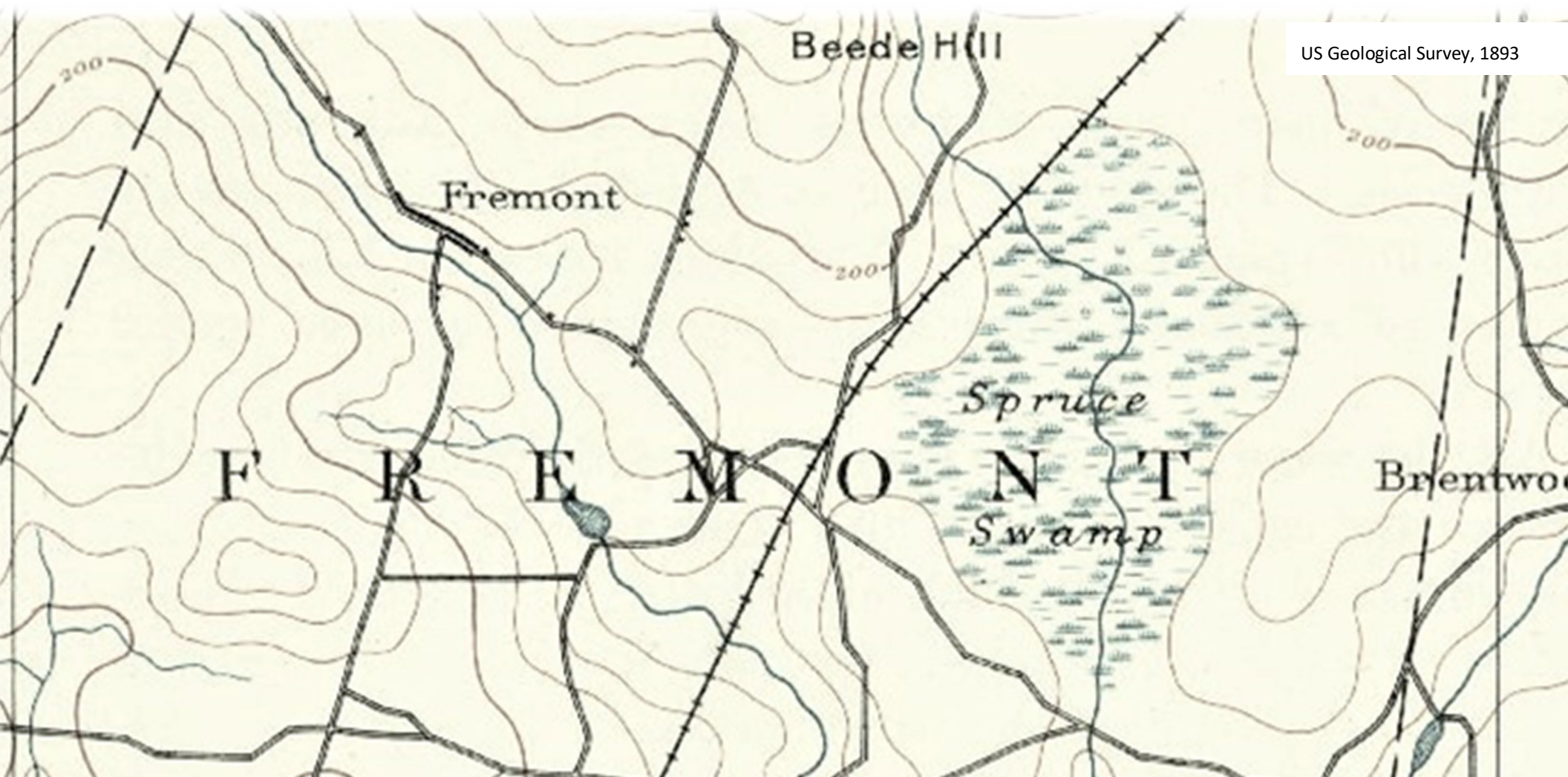


# FREMONT, NH

## MASTER PLAN – 2020

ADOPTED BY THE FREMONT PLANNING BOARD – SEPTEMBER 2, 2020



# VISION CHAPTER

## BACKGROUND

Under state law (RSA 674), municipalities must have a master plan to guide the development of the community. Master plans must be adopted and periodically update by Planning Boards to reflect changes in land use and municipal values. Fremont's Master Plan was adopted and updated most recently between 2008 to 2014 with the Vision and Growth Management Chapters most recently adopted.

The Fremont Planning Board began working on updates to the Fremont Master Plan in early 2020. The process began with a survey for residents; the goal of the survey was to gain current input about the current status and desired future of Fremont's land use, town services, and general amenities. (Many of the questions asked in the 2020 survey are the same as questions asked in 1998 and 2012 master plan surveys.)

The summary of the 2020 Master Plan survey can be found on page 4 of this chapter and the full results are available on the Fremont Planning Board webpage at: [www.fremont.nh.gov/planning-board](http://www.fremont.nh.gov/planning-board). The most recent survey, along with results from past master plan surveys and charettes, land use and demographic data, and opinions expressed by Fremont residents through Town Meeting results are the sources for the community goals listed on page 2 of this chapter. Additionally, prior to adoption of this chapter, the Fremont Planning Board held a public hearing on September 2nd to gain public input.

Fremont residents have continuously voiced that protecting Fremont's rural nature is one of their primary desires. Through previous iterations of the Master Plan, community surveys and at town meetings, residents have expressed a desire to maintain Fremont's open spaces, natural areas and historic resources. Many of these rural characteristics are what drew many long-term residents and those more recently calling Fremont home. These rural characteristics are same features that make Fremont a desirable place reside or start a buisness. Therein lays the challenge facing Fremont today. The very features that make Fremont a prized community to live in can be jepodized by development that is either too intense or uses that are not compatible with Fremont's goals.

Balancing development, maintaining town services and keeping Fremont an affordable community for new and long-term residents is increasingly difficult. Pursuing certain types of non-residential development was supported by many in the 2020 Master Plan survey. The support for this type of development is likely for multiple reasons; however, the potential impact on tax revenue is presumably among them.

As referenced in the 2020 Master Plan survey, the tax rate and rising costs associated with property taxes and the school district is a concern to many residents. Many residents expressed a willingness to maintain the existing level of town services to help mitigate these costs. An additional benefit of protecting existing open spaces in Fremont is that open spaces require relatively little town services (primarily occasional fire or police services) and therefore can help keep costs lower. Maintaining rural character, protecting open spaces and minimizing additional costs associated with developments are all feasible through thoughtful and careful planning. Fremont's goal for the coming years is to balance its small town charm with the land use changes in town and throughout the region. It is the goal of Fremont's citizens to balance protecting the rural character of the town so enjoyed by all of us and, at the same time, find a way to share these prized features with those who wish to settle here today and in the future.

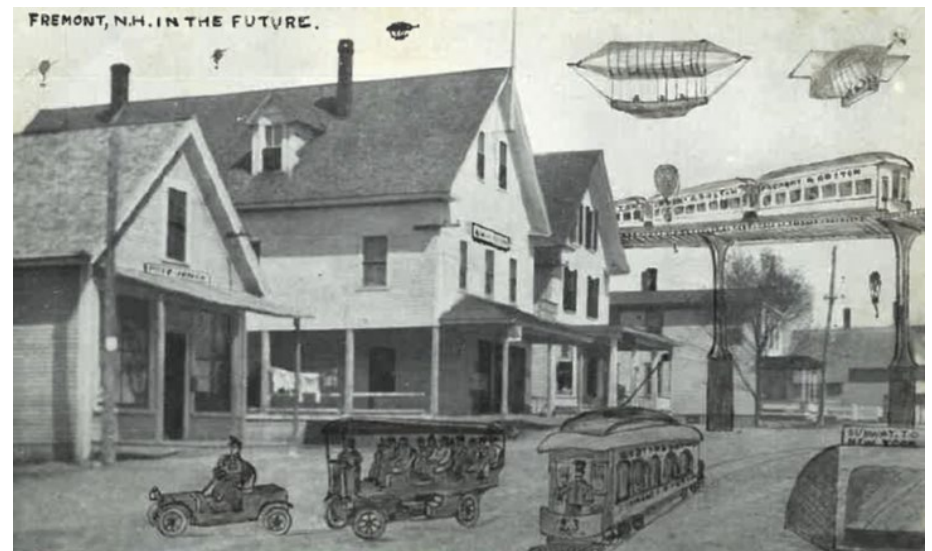


Photo of a postcard from Matthew Thomas' collection.

## COMMUNITY GOALS

The following are the overarching community goals for Fremont as expressed by residents. The goals have largely remained the same since the original Master Plan adoption in 1988, though there have been shifts as Fremont has grown and new information has become available. The goals are not prioritized, but should be considered collectively. When municipal decisions about projects, regulations, or spending are considered it is recommended that the Master Plan goals and any specific recommendations or actions be consulted. This consideration can help guide the development of the community in a consistent, cohesive manner.

### GOAL 1

**Protect Fremont's rural character while balancing residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses.**

Protecting Fremont's rural character has been the most prominent desire expressed by residents in the past thirty years through various Master Plan updates, community surveys, and visioning sessions. Fremont residents should be protected from land uses that may be incompatible with the characteristics that make Fremont a desirable place to live.

The Master Plan and associated regulations will be directed toward maintaining Fremont's character as a residential town with a rural atmosphere, balanced by encouragement of appropriate commercial and industrial land uses within allowed zoning areas that are compatible with Fremont's rural character. Rural character in Fremont is often described as the open spaces, farms and forested areas that are dotted with businesses, neighborhoods, and homes. The most developed portion of Fremont is Main Street (Route 107) is a mixture of homes, Ellis School, small businesses, and some larger industrial and commercial businesses. A notable feature in Fremont, even within its downtown area is that there is not a single traffic light. Maintaining the quiet nature of Fremont, with its general lack of traffic, friendly atmosphere, and spaciousness is the goal, while also allowing reasonable development.

### GOAL 2

**Encouragement of the establishment of conservation areas and the protection of open space and natural resources (ponds, wetlands, woodlands, prime agricultural land and unique and fragile areas). Specifically, encouragement to preserve the hydrology of the area of Spruce Swamp.**

This goal is based upon the results of the recent and past visioning sessions and community surveys that showed that maintenance of open spaces and preservation of wetlands should be a town priority. By coordinating open space preservation concerns with the need to protect water resource areas (see Goal 8 below), land can be protected for a variety of reasons and uses. In conjunction with this effort, the town should carefully review existing town owned properties for any notable natural resource value and provide for their conservation and protection as open spaces. Open space, wildlife corridors, and buffers also decrease impending tax impacts, preserve rural character, protect visual resources, establish and protect wildlife habitat, and provide numerous and unquantifiable intangible benefits to the citizens of the surrounding neighborhood and the town as a whole.

### GOAL 3

**Ensure that town services are able to serve all resident's needs while balancing tax impacts.**

Fremont's population has seen many changes in recent decades. There have been periods of rapid growth to virtually no growth, the population has grown older like the rest of New Hampshire, and the expectation of services of both new and long-term residents have shifted. In order to effectively meet the needs and desires of all residents while balancing costs, Fremont needs to continue implementation and updating the town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to help oversee the long-term costs associated with improvements to services that go beyond a single budget year. (The CIP can and must work in conjunction with the Fremont Budget Committee in order to be an effective planning tool.) The CIP allows Fremont to prioritize capital expenditures from all town departments over a six year period. Additionally, the CIP is required to be updated every five years, and enables the town to collect impact fees from potential developers.



#### GOAL 4

**In order to assist in the preservation of Fremont's rural character, the town seeks to protect its historic resources.**

Maintenance of Fremont's rural character, so strongly supported by residents, can be in part accomplished by a vigorous program aimed at protecting the town's historic resources and associated scenic vistas. Interested citizens and organizations can play a vital role in maintaining Fremont's historic amenities.

#### GOAL 5

**Ensure a safe, well-designed, and maintained road system suited to Fremont's rural character.**

Residents have routinely expressed a desire to keep traffic volume low in Fremont, with minimal truck traffic from commercial and industrial uses. In an effort to keep the road network rural, many have expressed a desire to not have sidewalks (with exception of near the school), but to allow for wider shoulders to allow for biking and walking. Financing the maintenance of the local roads has continued to be a struggle for Fremont and long-term planning must be considered as part of the CIP process noted in Goal 3 above.

#### GOAL 6

**Encouragement of modifications and/or expansion of recreational facilities and opportunities (such as trails) that fit the needs and desires of all Fremont residents.**

Residents of all ages have expressed a desire to have recreational opportunities using or investing in existing facilities or investing in new opportunities. Work on recreation possibilities should include collaboration efforts of the Recreation Committee, the Open Space Committee, the Conservation Commission, Ellis School, and others to ensure a broad array of options are considered.

#### GOAL 7

**Protection of drinking water resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of Fremont's water supply.**

With over 95% of Fremont residents relying on private drinking water wells, ensuring the viability of those wells is a very high priority for the town. The most cost-effective method for protecting the Town's water supply is to ensure that land uses do not negatively impact water quality or quantity.

#### GOAL 8

**Provide a diverse housing opportunities to meet the needs of Fremont residents.**

The Planning Board should continue to review Fremont's zoning ordinances and regulations to examine strategies for encouraging the provision of diverse, fair and equitable housing opportunities. The Town should strive to have a variety of housing opportunities that allow current residents to remain in their homes, allow people who grew up here to be able to afford a home or allow for a variety for new residents.



# MASTER PLAN SURVEY - 2020 SUMMARY

## RESULTS

Between February 1, 2020 and March 15, 2020, a total of 406 individuals took the survey and provided over 23,000 responses or comments to the survey questions. The survey was a predominantly online survey with links posted on the Town website, the unofficial Fremont Community Facebook page, announcements at multiple municipal board meetings, and on flyers posted around Fremont. Paper surveys were made available at the Fremont Town Hall and Public Library. While this survey is neither statistically nor scientifically valid, it did have a many more participants than the 2012 survey (123 versus 406 ). This survey will serve as one of many resources used in the current Master Plan update; other sources may include public meetings, census data, and other resources.

Only Fremont residents' responses were included in the results of this survey. Approximately half of survey participants had lived in Fremont for more than 10 years and a third of participants were over the age of 55. The vast majority (95%) of survey participants were homeowners and 68% work full time.

The full survey results are available at: <https://publicinput.com/FremontNH2020> and on the Fremont Planning Board website.

## NEXT STEPS

The Fremont Planning Board is working with Rockingham Planning Commission in drafting updates to the Vision and Growth Management Master Plan chapters. The expected completion date for both chapters is June 2020. **Any updates to the Fremont Master Plan will require a public hearing prior to Planning Board adoption.**

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following outline some of the major findings of the survey. The survey itself was published to assist the Fremont Planning Board in updating the Master Plan, however, some questions were also included to assist other municipal boards. Many of the questions asked in this survey are the same as previous Fremont

surveys published in 1998 and 2012 to allow for tracking changes in residents goals and priorities.

Several major themes emerged from survey responses:

- Most residents want to maintain Fremont's rural nature, but many are concerned about what the tax impacts will be depending on the type of future development (businesses versus more housing).
- Many are concerned about protecting Fremont's natural resources and potential negative side effects from certain types of businesses.
- Services provided by the Town are generally highly regarded, but costs and impacts on tax rates was a strong concern.

"We moved to Fremont in 2006 because of the small town, and lots of trees and privacy on our lot. So many other towns had lots that were clear cut with no personality. People are very friendly too. The school taxes are insane though, with no end in sight - that's the only blight of living in Fremont."

The major themes are consistent with previous survey findings, however, there was an increase in concern about land uses changing more rapidly. (Land use change is when land converts from a natural state or agriculture to more intense uses as residential or commercial uses.)

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT LIVING IN FREMONT?

Top three answers:

- 69% Like the rural atmosphere.
- 50% Like the friendly atmosphere
- 44% Like that it is near main highways

## WHAT FEATURES ARE IMPORTANT TO FREMONT'S CHARACTER?

Many features in Fremont were showed strong preferences among residents:

- 85% thought locally owned business were important or very important.

- 72% felt it is important to keep commercial uses in the currently allowed zoning districts.
- 90% of residents indicated that maintaining open spaces, natural areas, and working farms.

In my opinion we currently have an excellent mix of "old with the new". We have many new construction homes as well as historic homes and buildings. It would be a shame to lose the New England charm this town has, personally it is one of my favorite things about living here. Bringing in some additional small businesses would be a great addition within the allowed zones.

#### WHAT FEATURES SHOULD THE TOWN PURSUE MORE OF?

There were some areas where residents had diverse opinions about what Fremont needs more of:

- There was a mix of the types of commercial property uses that were more desired in Fremont, but generally low impact businesses or services (such as restaurants) were preferred.
- For future housing options, more residents preferred single family or elderly housing options and generally did not want more multifamily or manufactured housing.
- Amenities such as open spaces, trails and recreation facilities were overall desired by most residents.

#### COST OF TOWN SERVICES

From participant comments received throughout the survey property taxes (both town and school portions) are a major concern for residents. The survey focused on the cost for town services specifically as it is more related to land use planning activities. However, the survey results indicate tax rate impacts are a major influence about future decisions for Fremont.

Please indicate your opinion regarding the following statements about the cost of TOWN services.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would like improved town services and am willing to pay increased taxes to pay for them.	6% Strongly agree	10% Agree	25% Neutral	26% Disagree	33% Strongly disagree
I would like improved town services, but am NOT willing to pay increased taxes to pay for them.	18% Strongly agree	24% Agree	39% Neutral	12% Disagree	7% Strongly disagree
I would accept decreases in town services in order to lower taxes.	15% Strongly agree	21% Agree	26% Neutral	27% Disagree	12% Strongly disagree
I would NOT accept decreases in town services even if taxes remained the same.	25% Strongly agree	33% Agree	29% Neutral	7% Disagree	7% Strongly disagree
I would not accept decreases in town services even with lowered taxes.	14% Strongly agree	31% Agree	28% Neutral	17% Disagree	10% Strongly disagree