

Acworth Master Plan 2008



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CHAPTER ONE - A VISION FOR ACWORTH

NEED FOR A PLAN

The Master Plan should be a vision of the future that provides a foundation for local ordinances and regulations, which will preserve and enhance the character of the Town.

Development of the plan is a Planning Board duty. This is defined in NH Planning and Land Use Regulation 674:2: “The purpose of the master plan is to set down as clearly as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection”

HISTORY OF THE ACWORTH MASTER PLAN 1973-2008

The Acworth Planning Board initiated this planning process in 1973. In October of 1978, the Board formally adopted and published the Acworth Comprehensive Master Plan. Efforts to revise and update that plan were undertaken with a survey being conducted in 1992. The text was rewritten shortly after but no new edition was published. In the summer of 2003, a new survey was undertaken and a Planning Board Committee was appointed to produce a new edition of the Master Plan.

ACWORTH PLANNING BOARD

The Acworth Planning Board has the responsibility for promoting interest in and understanding of a master plan for the Town. This plan seeks to represent the diverse opinions of how Acworth should move forward. To assure a safe and healthy environment, the plan seeks to provide direction for plans to facilitate and manage growth in land subdivision, housing, road building, public services, industry, environmental protection and other necessities. This also attempts to recognize that Acworth is a part of and is affected by a regional community.

VISION FOR THESE ACWORTH HILLS

In the future, we hope that Acworth will provide its citizens with a special sense of place, embodied in traditional rural and village centers, undeveloped lands supporting working farms and forests, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation. Residential development will have been planned and guided in a way that sustains the natural resource base of the Town.

We envision that the traditional village centers will provide focal points for community activities and retain the historical and architectural character of the present day. Agricultural land will have been protected and be in production. Large areas of protected multiple use forests with sufficient ecological diversity will support wildlife and maintain a local forest products industry.

Private and public forest land will exist in areas of the Town, which will contribute to a vibrant natural landscape that provides clean air and water for local people. Increased residential development will have occurred along Town roads and the views across valleys and hilltops will be of a forested and scenic natural landscape. A diverse population consisting of varied ages and economic levels will have access to sufficient, affordable housing choices.

Acworth will continue to be a place where the quality of life of its residents is enhanced by the rural setting, the natural landscape and a strong sense of community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE TOWN OF ACWORTH:

1. *To retain the rural, scenic and historic appearance and small town character of Acworth as reasonably as possible.*
2. *To be responsive to the residents of Acworth and to develop the Town as directed by citizen mandate.*
3. *To provide for orderly long term growth and development of the Town while maintaining a healthy natural resource base.*
4. *To maintain a strong local government and extended volunteer services.*
5. *To respect individual rights and the needs of the community.*
6. *To seek regional cooperation with neighboring communities to meet needs such as roads, planning, transportation, health services, policies and energy services.*
7. *To give due respect to all local, State and Federal laws and regulations.*





Land Use and Community Design Goals

1. *Encourage a healthy and balanced mixture of land uses such as residential (year round, seasonal); municipal services, forestry, agricultural and supporting small-scale commercial services.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Identify land constraints within Acworth
Maintain flexibility in future land use ordinances

2. *Minimize development of fragile or important natural areas and habitats- flood plains, stream banks, large forested tracts, wetlands, lakes, ponds and steep slopes.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Prioritize the natural areas discovered through the Natural Resource Inventory

CHAPTER TWO - LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This section seeks to describe factors, which have influenced past land use patterns and attempts to describe current land use patterns. An understanding of existing land use is important before determining future plans.

EXISTING LAND USE

The pattern of land use that has evolved in Acworth is the result of over 200 years of settlement and utilization. Old and new development is concentrated in the two village centers, along the shore of Crescent Lake, and along all Town roads that allow development. Lands away from these development centers, though increasingly sought after for residential development, continue to be in traditional uses. Agriculture and forestry, industry and business, residential and public uses are noted in past Master Plan summaries and continue to this day.

Acworth's population has subsided since its maximum in the mid 1800's. At that time, 95% of the land in Acworth was cleared for subsistence and commercial agriculture and forestry. Because horsepower and foot traffic were the methods of transportation, few areas were too remote to be unsuitable for a farmstead and to raise crops and animals. Mining operations were also common as early settlers made use of natural resources available.

As better agricultural lands opened in the Midwest and resources were more easily shipped by train, the population dropped and once-cleared land began to return to forest cover. Cheaper foods from the west made subsistence farming less important and fewer commercial farms could keep up with the need for ever-increasing technology requirements and stiff price competition. More of Acworth's inhabitants found work outside of Town in mills, factories and service positions. This left little time or need to have more than a small garden and woodlot for sustenance and heating fuel.

As cleared lands reverted to forest, the mature second growth was harvested by a forest products industry. Fluctuation in the values of these products was common. Many of the old farms were kept open by timbering but some were abandoned to the forest. Some of the cleared lands were kept open for aesthetic reasons and some for the hay crops that could be made annually. Except for a dwindling number of commercial farms, the farmsteads became residences for working families, second homes, or left to decay and fall down.

In the 1960's and 70's, demand for residential housing grew and Acworth's population increased for the first time in decades. These houses were built mostly on the Class V roads on parcels of land that were still in a more or less open state. Some hunting camps were built on the edges of the growing forests as recreational use became more popular. People began to reclaim some of the overgrown farmland. This demand for residential housing has seen some growth spurts and lulls, but has generally increased until the present time.

VILLAGE CENTERS

Traditionally there have been two village centers in Acworth, South Acworth Village and Acworth Center on the hill. Though historically there were various stores and businesses, there are few commercial establishments now, the South Acworth Village Store being one exception. Both of these areas are mostly residential, with churches, post offices and, on the hill, the fire station, primary school, library and town hall being the only public buildings. Most, if not all, of the buildings in these areas are well maintained or in process of renovation. Acworth zoning recognizes two district residential centers and a district around Crescent Lake, which have smaller lot sizes and reduced frontage requirements.

MINING AND SAND AND GRAVEL EXCAVATION

Though Acworth has various abandoned feldspar and beryl quarries, and clay brick ovens, none are active now. There is a dimension stone quarry operating on the Duncan Road, which mines and prepares stone for building trades across the country. Sand and gravel are currently being excavated in East Acworth on NH Route 123A and on Beryl Mountain Road along the Cold River.

PLANNING HISTORY IN ACWORTH

Zoning was first proposed in 1955 to stabilize property values, to provide a framework for fighting forest fires, to promote safety and general welfare, and to preserve the character of the Town. Junk yards were outlawed and buildings were required to comply with state health and water pollution standards. A Planning Board established in 1958 had little impact. Town Meeting in 1967 voted to reestablish a six member Planning Board, appointed by the Selectmen. The new Board was empowered to approve or deny subdivisions. In 1972, Town Meeting debate focused on Town roads. Three roads were closed subject to gates and bars and 12 roads were designated as scenic. The Conservation Commission was also established to advise the Town on matters of natural resources. These moves were an attempt to limit large-scale development and preserve the Town's rural character.

A lawsuit filed against Davis and Symonds Company in 1972 was settled out of court but required the Company to concede that the Town had the legal right and obligation to implement zoning and planning functions. The suit set legal precedent statewide.

At the 1976 Town Meeting, voters approved the electing rather than appointing of Planning Board members. The first Master Plan was begun and was published in 1978.

LAND USE ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

A Zoning Ordinance providing for an appointed Board of Adjustment was adopted in 1970, establishing three zoning districts with differing regulations: Residential, Rural and Crescent Lake. A Conservation Zone was also established within 100' of all water bodies. In 1982, the Town voted that all non-residential development and multi-family housing were to go through Planning Board Site Plan Review, the regulations for which were updated and re-adopted in 2002.

Subdivision Regulations were adopted in 1972 and amended in 1983. New regulations were adopted in 2006. These regulations provide for the systematic and consistent dividing of property to ensure safe access, adequate drainage of groundwater and wastewater disposal. Records are kept of all subdivisions and assurance is made that the proper documents are sent to County and State authorities.

ENFORCEMENT OF ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

There are three levels of enforcement that effect Acworth: Federal, State and local. Town Meeting vote enacts *ordinances* but the State empowers the Selectmen to create and enforce certain *regulations* and *policies*, and to enforce regulations originating with the Planning Board.

FUTURE LAND USE

Increasing residential and commercial demands will need to be balanced with the Town's goal of retaining its historic agricultural land and working forests, as well as its small town character. An expanding population puts pressure on the resources that sustain a healthy community. This Master Plan should guide how the Town develops over 5 and 10-year increments.

Land Use and Community Design Goals

3. *Encourage land use policies that promote and maintain an ecologically sensitive, settlement pattern to efficiently use land, resources and town investments in roads and other infrastructure.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Revisit current regulations to ensure they are consistent with the new Master Plan

Explore innovative lands use techniques for preservation of open space

4. *Encourage land use policies that preserve the traditional village centers*





Transportation Goals

1. *Protect and properly manage and maintain the existing town road system.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Support the town highway budget and Capital Improvement Program
Explore ways to protect town roads

2. *Maintain connections with surrounding communities that enable employment outside of Acworth.*

CHAPTER THREE - TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

When the need for planning is contemplated, roads are sure to be high on the list of areas that have a dramatic effect on the future characteristics of a town. Human activity is based upon transportation. How goods and services are moved, and how people travel distances near and far, has a substantial impact on quality of life.

The original settlers in Acworth probably reached town on foot, then cleared rough trails on routes that are close to the main routes we use today. What was once easy for a horse or ox cart to travel may be dangerous or seasonally impassable to today's heavier wheeled vehicles. Aside from usage issues, location, construction, and maintenance of roads and trails in these days of high energy costs make a serious impact on the Town's operating budget. Misuse of the Town road system through improper or excessive development either in Town or on adjoining road systems, hazardous curves and driveways, poor drainage, increased traffic and change or deterioration of the roadside environment all lead to increased concerns and costs. With that perspective, it begins to be apparent how important planning can be for both maintenance of existing roads and adoption of new Town roads.

STATE HIGHWAYS

There are approximately 9 miles of State roads and five State bridges in Acworth. These roads and bridges are maintained by New Hampshire Department of Transportation. They are subject to State regulations including abutting landowner alterations that may occur.

LOCAL ROADS

There are approximately 55 miles of Class V (Town maintained) roads in Acworth. They range in surface from gravel to paved and have over 600 culverts. Gravel roads are graded frequently. Paved surfaces sustain yearly damage from heavy truck and car traffic along with winter's freezing and thawing. There are five bridges that the Town maintains and repairs at considerable cost.

There are approximately 30 miles of Class VI (unmaintained) public rights of way. Increasing development of building sites on Class VI roads is a matter of concern. In 2006, the Town voted to adopt policies for the use and maintenance of these roads. Landowners may apply to build on existing lots of record. Approval requires review by the Planning Board and signing of a waiver of Town liability. The waiver is recorded with the Sullivan County Registry of Deeds in Newport. Any repair or maintenance of Class VI roads must be approved in writing by the Board of Selectmen. Work is done with oversight by the Town Road Agent. There are numerous private roads in Acworth. These roads are maintained by the residents and include Shaw Road and Crossover Road. Waivers of services are also required by State statute on these private roads.

SCENIC ROADS

In 1972, pursuant to RSA 253:17-18, the Town voted to designate 12 sections of Class V roads as scenic, thus protecting roadside trees and old walls. These roads are subject to review prior to alteration. Removal of trees over a certain size, other than by the abutting landowner, requires a public hearing and written permission of the Planning Board (RSA 231:158). Included in the vote were sections of Campbell, Ball, Grout Hill, Gates Mountain, Pfohl, Breier, Lynn Hill, Five Points (Luther Hill), Nye, Derry Hill and Cold Pond Roads. The preservation of scenic resources is important in maintaining the rural character that defines the Town of Acworth.

TRAILS AND PATHS

The Town of Acworth is fortunate to have a network of formal and informal trails; they fall into six categories:

Class VI Roads:

Many undeveloped Class VI Roads are used as trails and must be respected as a public resource.

Class A Trails:

Five Points Road and Dodge Brook Road (beginning at a point 900' from River Road) were designated Class A Trails by Town Meeting vote. Both are in public use for hiking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing and bicycling. They are maintained by landowners with assistance, if needed, by the Conservation Commission. "Motorized Wheeled Vehicles" are forbidden on these trails except for emergencies or for farm and forest work by landowners.

Snowmobile Club Trails:

Two clubs maintain trail networks in Acworth: the Tri-Town Trail Blazers and the Crescent Lake Sno-riders. Generally, the snowmobile networks are a combination of private trails linked with public trails and Class VI Roads. Because they are not public rights of way landowner's permission is required to use them. The clubs obtain landowner permission for winter use only. Trail maps showing the networks in Acworth are available from the clubs.

Town Forest Trails:

The Conservation Commission and Forest Advisory Board for the Gove (300 acres) and South Acworth (100 acres) Town Forests are in the process of developing low impact hiking trails on these Town owned lands. The Gove Town Forest was designated in 1997. It includes a snowmobile trail and warming hut on the top of Gove Hill, which are maintained by the Crescent Lake Sno-riders and the Conservation Commission. Gove Town Forest was permanently protected in 2004 by a conservation easement held by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (the easement is on file in the Town offices).

Private Land Trails:

Many landowners have built trails on their lands. Courtesy dictates that permission is sought before using these other than during winter when some are maintained by snowmobile clubs.

State Land Trails:

Honey Brook State Forest is the only State owned land in Acworth. Of the total 974.9 acres, 206.7 acres lie within Acworth's southeastern corner. A trail system on logging roads is open to all users other than trucks and cars. Located near the headwaters of Honey Brook, a tributary of the Cold River, this State forest provides important forest, wildlife, and open space within the Cold River Watershed.

PROBLEM AREAS

Poor drainage conditions can result from heavy storms and thaws, often making sections of roads difficult or impossible to traverse. Increasing traffic by heavy vehicles can add to difficult situations. The cost of stabilizing poor roads continues to increase. Safety concerns arise from poor sight lines, increased driveways accesses and varying surface conditions.

In 2007, the Planning Board adopted a Capital Improvement Program, which provides a format for identifying and prioritizing needs, but the gap between small town resources and the maintenance burden of a large road system is daunting. There is a need for more State help funding the planning and implementing of road projects. Acworth should cooperate with adjoining towns. Town roads are an important part of the State economy and their use impacts far beyond Town boundaries.

In the 2003 Master Plan Survey, 14 roads and intersections were noted as problem areas. The intersections at Hill Road and NH 123A, and Charlestown and Luther Hill Roads to the Town line were cited most frequently. School buses travel long distances on our roads daily carrying children to and from local schools. Priority maintenance for these roads is part of the Town Highway Department schedule.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Though a slight majority of respondents to the 2003 Master Plan Survey thought Acworth should investigate public transportation options, none of the local boards have spent any effort in this area. Perhaps as fuel costs rise, there will be more incentive to develop public transportation. The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Planning Commission has done studies of this issue but there is no immediate solution. Currently, private organizations, State agencies and neighbors offer the only local transportation options.

Traffic Counts in 2005

NH 123A East of Cold
River (.75 miles east of
So. Acworth) = 420

Allen Road at Lempster-
town line = 100

Forest Road over Cold
River = 200

Beryl Mountain over Cold
River = 160 (1999
count)

Cold River Road over Cold
River = 80





Community Facilities Goals

1. *Maintaining the historic facilities that Acworth has invested in.*
2. *Enhance zoning ordinances and related policies that support the Town Vision, Principles and Goals as outlined in this Master Plan.*

Strategies to meet this goal:
Revisit current regulations in Acworth

CHAPTER FOUR - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

At present, Acworth has very basic community facilities that provide various required services for the residents that are common to most small towns. The buildings that provide these services are characteristic of New England in their practical design and reflect the era in which they were constructed. Until recent times, the current facilities have been adequate, providing the bare necessities of small town living. As Acworth grows, it will demand more services and updated facilities to match the needs of a growing and more sophisticated community. This was evident at the town hall where meeting space was overbooked and proper storage of records had become a problem. Fortunately, the town has now upgraded its offices and is well set to provide for town governmental needs for the foreseeable future.

TOWN HALL

Since 1820, the Acworth Town Hall has been located in the middle of the Acworth Village District just west of the “Church on the Hill.” When the “new” 1820 church was built, building materials from the “old” church were recycled for a “new” Town Hall. The old 18th century pew-backs became assembly hall wainscoting and the old church’s double-topped chord trusses still hold up the Town Hall roof. They are one of the hidden wonders of the town. Originally, the town hall was about 40 feet square with the assembly hall at ground level and a small meeting room tucked in the attic. The Board of Selectmen at one time met in the attic room, warmed by a small wood stove. About 1976, a rectangular addition was added to the north side of the building for much needed office and meeting space. In 2005, the 1820 section of the Town Hall received a long overdue refurbishing, inside and out. This was accomplished with considerable local volunteer labor. Since then, the 1976 addition has been totally renovated and expanded to accommodate meeting space and administrative and storage needs. Concurrently, the building has been brought up to handicap access codes, had drainage and electrical issues addressed, and been made more energy efficient.

LIBRARY

In July 1891, former resident, Ithiel Homer Silsby, bequeathed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to the town for the building of a library “of brick and granite.” Hira Beckwith served as architect and builder, creating a double thick exterior brick wall with air space and a third brick wall, as well as an interior plaster wall, designed to ensure sufficiently dry air to protect the library’s collection of books. Private book collections and funds were donated to fill its shelves and many of those original books are still part of the present library collection. The library also contains the newest technology in computers awarded to the library by a grant from Bill and Melinda Gates. The library contains the Acworth Genealogical Collection and many of the town’s archival papers. It is located in the center of Acworth, at the top of the hill, just a few feet from the Church. The main floor of the building consists of a children’s room to the right of the entrance hall, a research room containing the infamous G. Gilmore Dickey bird collection to the left and the main stacks and librarian’s desk in the center and rear of the building. The basement and attic are marginally unusable: one being too wet and the other too hot.

There are five trustees to the library who are elected at Town Meeting. The trustees hire the Librarian/Administrator and there is an Assistant Librarian. The Library is affiliated with the New Hampshire State Library system and is able to make use of the Interlibrary Loan system. The town is rightfully proud of its library and its contribution to the town and school system. Its small size is prohibitive to additional services and prevents using the library for events, meetings and programs. Planning for its future may include the need for an addition to the building.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

In the 1940's a group of Acworth residents got together and decided that it was time to form a Volunteer Fire Department. They felt the best location would be between Acworth Village and South Acworth. The Neil family donated the present piece of property, and money was raised and volunteers began to work on building a Fire Station. It was decided that the department would be independent from the town because of the liabilities created by the service even though the town partially supported them with tax funding. The rest of the money needed was raised through raffles, donations, auctions, dances and the infamous annual Turkey Shoots.

In the mid 1980's, the Fire Department took advantage of an opportunity and built a Post Office on the Fire Department's property and leased the building to the U.S. Postal Service. The rent from the Post Office helps to support the continuation of the Acworth Fire Department. The department's first fire trucks were anything that could carry firefighting equipment. The first truck was a Model T! Any truck was used including one that was built by the department to carry water and a pump. The first new fire truck was a pumper and it was purchased in the 1960's. The next truck purchased was a Quick Response truck, which would later become a rescue truck when the Fire Department created a Rescue Squad. At that time, the department officially became the Acworth Volunteer Fire and Rescue, Inc., a private non-profit organization with a Board of Directors, which continues to oversee operating expenses and the required equipment and training. A used tanker was purchased to transport water. Also purchased were turnout gear, rescue equipment, air packs and other hand tools. As recently as 4 years ago, the Rescue Truck was replaced. In 2006, the 40-year old pumper was replaced with a pumper tanker truck. The Acworth Volunteer Fire and Rescue, Inc. is part of the area Mutual Aid service and is now part of the 911 Universal Emergency Number Response service. As the town has grown, the department has continued to service the area with assistance from border towns. When planning, the department will have to consider other options, as fewer residents are able to volunteer. Volunteers have saved Acworth many tax dollars in past years and the town is grateful to those who have dedicated service to their hometown.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Acworth has no town Police Department and relies on dispatch service to the New Hampshire State Police in Keene, NH. Whether this will be a satisfactory system remains to be seen, but there is no current plan by the Town to change. With continued growth, this system should be carefully reviewed each year. In the future, it may be necessary to change the current system with a more definite contract specifying a certain number of hours of service. This contract may be with either the New Hampshire State Police or the County Sheriff's Department. Significant growth in Acworth may require a local department.

RECYCLING CENTER

The Acworth Recycling Center and Transfer Station is located on Beryl Mountain Road in South Acworth. This facility is open to all residents and taxpayers for disposal of municipal solid waste. Designated hours of operation are posted at the gate with open days presently Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday. Acworth's recycling is handled by vendors working with the Northeast Resource Recovery Association. Household hazardous waste collections are managed through the Keene Recycling Center on Rt.12 in Keene, NH.

CEMETERIES

Acworth has two town-owned cemeteries. The older cemetery on Nye Road contains the earliest town burials and the newer cemetery on Hill Road was created in 1837. The Acworth Cemetery Trustees have recently placed surface corner markers in a large portion of the new section of the cemetery in order to make lot locations more certain. It is the intention of the Trustees to continue to

Community Facilities ***Goals***

3. *Balance the community's service needs with the community's ability to support those services.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Survey public opinion on the need and support for community facilities

4. *Maintain adequate public buildings that support town services.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Support the Capital Improvement Program process for buildings





employ a surveyor until ambiguities can be resolved. A new section was added in 2005 when the Lubetkin property located between Hill and Nye Roads, acquired through private funding and donated to the town, was accepted by vote at town meeting. The Trustees, with the aid of our Sexton, have developed a ten-year plan for the maintenance and control of the cemetery trees and shrubbery. Additionally, a ten-year plan has been instituted for the repair and maintenance of the monuments. The Trustees are actively developing ways to improve documentation and record keeping for the cemeteries. The town cemeteries occupy approximately twenty (20) acres of land. A large percentage of this has yet to be developed into burial plots. Plans for future plots, with any statutory, regulatory, or restrictive covenant framework, will become vital before existing planned burial lots are sold.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

The Town of Acworth is part of the Fall Mountain Regional School District, which serves Acworth, Charlestown, Langdon, Alstead, and Walpole. Acworth Primary School is the only school located in Acworth and serves kindergarten through fourth grade. An addition to the school was constructed primarily with volunteers to double the space in the 1990's. The enrollment in the Acworth Primary School was twenty-eight (28) in 2006, with an additional twelve (12) students who were transported from other communities. The Middle School (grades 5 through 8) is located in Alstead at Vilas School. Twenty-seven (25) students from Acworth are enrolled in Vilas School and eight (8) attend Charlestown School. High School (grades 9 – 12) is located in Langdon at the Fall Mountain Regional High School, with fifty-eight (58) students from Acworth enrolled in the fall of 2006.

NON-PROFIT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

There are several non-profit organizations in Acworth.

The Acworth Historical Society, which owns the Acworth Village Store and the Grange Hall Building both in South Acworth.

The Acworth Fire and Rescue, Inc., which owns the Fire House and the Acworth Post Office building

The Friends of the Acworth Silsby Library, which assists the library with events and donates funds for special projects. They also sponsor and distribute a community newsletter that has been in existence for more than 60 years.

The Acworth Community Charitable Trust, which was organized in 2007 to support charitable projects benefiting the Town of Acworth and its citizens.

The Female Charitable Society, which was formed in the late 1800's to support the Acworth United Church and other church events and charities.

The Acworth Woman's Club, which was organized in 1929 and continues to raise funds for improvements to the Town Hall, the Town Common and other town charities.

Cold Pond Community Land Trust, which has 275 acres on Cold Pond Road that are used for conservation and leased to farmers and residents. Sixty-three acres are now under conservation easement with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

United Church of Acworth, owns the Church on the Hill and the Parsonage in Acworth Center, and the Community Aid Building and Church in the valley in South Acworth Village. The Church on the Hill, a Historic Landmark on the National Register is currently undergoing a major restoration.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The Acworth Highway Department, located on Beryl Mt. Rd in South Acworth, has a three-bay garage that houses all road equipment and is used for maintenance work. Staff for the Highway Department includes a Road Agent and one (1) full-time employee and two (2) part-time employees. In addition to an active sand bank, a gravel bank behind the garage is currently being developed.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Acworth contracts with the Lefevre Ambulance Service of Westminster, Vermont for transportation to local hospitals in emergencies. The Acworth Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service is the first responder to local emergencies. Once the ambulance arrives, the Lefevre Ambulance Service takes control of the situation.



CHAPTER FIVE - UTILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Living in a remote and rural community, Acworth residents adapt to the utilities and public services currently available. There are residents who are working to update local technologies by working with providers. As the demand for services increases with population growth, providers will become more willing to invest their services in the area.

ELECTRICITY

During the fall of 1929, electricity came to Acworth. The Rural Electrification Agency (REA) brought power to the more rural areas, and in 1939, the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative was formed. Today the National Grid and the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative supply electric service to the Town of Acworth. The NH Electric Cooperative is owned by the users of power from that company and is served by a board of directors that is made up of representatives from their service area.

TELEPHONE

In early 1884, telephone service first became available at the South Acworth Village store. Today, most of the town is able to receive telephone service provided by Verizon. There is one pay telephone available to the public, at the South Acworth Village Store. Plans to remove that pay phone a prior to 2007 caused such a local outcry that the State government was forced to enact the public interest pay phone program for small communities, subsidized by funds from unclaimed service deposits.

Cellular telephone service through various providers has been in use since the 1980's. However, cell phone reception in Acworth is not available in all parts of the town. The hills and valleys create conditions that block reception to some users and some service providers have better coverage than others do.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications are somewhat rudimentary as low population and hilly terrain deter effective and profitable service delivery. Zoning ordinances limit the height of any proposed local telecommunication towers and the hills and valleys of Acworth limit the use of services available. There is no cable television service available to Acworth residents. At one time, a small cable service attempted to provide that service to area residents but was unable to maintain a continuous service to its users and so met its demise. Residents, at present, are limited to using a satellite system or house antenna, sometimes with rotary equipment. Many areas of Acworth receive good reception of local channels from Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine by using an antenna while other residents use the satellite systems or do without.

Radio reception from local stations is equally good or bad, depending on a resident's location in town. Most local stations can be heard and FM band is best. Weather, seasons and time of day can affect the radio reception of the area. These also affect the use of mobile radios as communication for police, fire & rescue and ambulance services in some Acworth areas.

Internet connections, at present, are via dial-up service or satellite hookup. The New Hampshire Electric Cooperative has recently introduced a new service that is faster and more direct than dial-up connection but costs considerably more for subscribers. A few private citizens have been working to organize a group of providers to bring high-speed internet service to Acworth. The cost of service is quite high at present, and hopefully with more residents expressing interest, the future of service will improve.

Utilities and Public Service Goals

1. *Reduce, recycle and dispose of solid waste in a sound manner, while considering costs to the Town.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Investigate how to move toward a unit-based disposal system for solid waste such as Pay As You Throw
Establish a recycling center
Develop an educational program within the school system
Investigate regional cooperation options that will promote public awareness of the cost and impact of waste disposal

2. *Ensure proper placement of commercial communication towers and other like structures.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Review the telecommunications ordinance
Investigate local placement options

Utilities and Public Service Goals

3. *Maintain and support public safety that provides adequate fire and emergency services.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Create an evacuation plan in the floodplain areas of town

Research the potential for municipally owned and run Fire and Emergency Services

Investigate the use of Impact Fees for services when appropriate

4. *Support our local library services.*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Maintain the annual budget

5. *Encourage access to developing technologies that fit within the rural character and that are consistent with the vision statement.*

SOLID WASTE AND LANDFILL

After thirty years of use, the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) closed the Acworth landfill in 2001. At that time, it was suggested that the town retain an engineer to prepare closure plans. Underwood Engineers of Concord was engaged by the town, particularly because of their willingness to deal with steep slope conditions.

In 2002, a Capital Reserve account was established to accumulate funding to cap the landfill. It was projected that such a project could cost in excess of \$100,000. In 2003, NH House Bill 593 legislated a change in the landfill closure requirements for towns with populations under 5,000. The legislation shifted the emphasis from clean up to closure with monitoring which represented a substantial reduction in anticipated costs. Underwood Engineers managed Acworth's compliance with the new expectations through the installation of new monitoring wells, filing of a Groundwater Management Permit application and preparing to develop a closure plan.

In 2004, DES advised towns that it was re-evaluating its policy for the submission of closure plans as well. In 2005, Acworth's Groundwater Management Permit was approved and recorded and a semi-annual sampling of the monitoring wells executed. This practice is anticipated to continue pending different direction from the State. Further funding of the Capital Reserve account has not been appropriated, although Underwood Engineers recommended maintaining some level of funds in the account. Underwood continues to oversee the ground water monitoring and files an annual Site Summary Report with DES as part of its contract with the town.

CHAPTER SIX - POPULATION AND HOUSING

POPULATION

The population of Acworth grew from three-hundred and seventy-one (371) in 1960 to 836 in 2000. The growth was nearly 30% during 1970-1980 and again near 30% from 1980-1990. There was significant drop-off in growth from 1990-2000 when the growth was only 7.7%. (See following chart). The growth pattern in Acworth was similar to neighboring towns. Acworth has had a percent-age increase of population from 1970-2000 of 82%. In comparison, Lempster grew by 169%, Unity by 115% and Charlestown by 24%.

Acworth's population density as measured in 2000 was 21.2 persons per square mile (p/sq.mi.) for a town of 38.9 square miles. Only a few towns in our region have lower density (e.g. Washington at 18.8 p/sq.mi.). This contrasts with Langdon at 304.5 p/sq.mi., Claremont at 298.5 p/sq.mi. and Charlestown at 124.8 p/sq.mi.

Both total population and density are affected by distance from job areas, lack of housing development and relatively limited land area suitable for home construction. Significant increases could occur in the future as housing shortages develop in the region and job growth continues to grow in the Keene, Claremont and Lebanon-Hanover areas where housing is limited.

There have been significant changes in the population age groups. The population age 65 and greater increased from 11.3% in 1990, to 15.2% in 2000. The population group age 0-7 decreased from 27% in 1990 to 25.7% in 2000. An increasing shift toward an older population seems inevitable as it is occurring also on the national level. Acworth seems a very attractive place for seasonal and permanent retirees and those seeking second homes.

The projected population estimates for Acworth according to the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning Projections for 2005-2025 and Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), is that the town could grow to nine-hundred and seventeen (917) people by 2010 and could pass the one thousand (1000) mark in 2020. The current average annual percent growth is 0.75%. The present growth rate for NH is 1.09%.

HOUSING

In 1810, Acworth's population was 1523, although the number of housing units necessary to accommodate this population is unknown. The current population of 907 has consistently risen from 371 in 1960, according to the US Census. Housing stock will most likely follow the recent population trend. The NH Office of Energy and Planning estimated that the number of households in Acworth would increase to 347 by 2006.

According to data gathered by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, the number of households increased from 285 to 318, an 11.6% increase, between 1990 and 2000. While the average household size during that time decreased by 3.4%, this decrease is consistent with statewide trends. Figures are not available for average household size in the 1800's, but it is assumed that families were larger at that time.

The vast majority of households in Acworth, 67% in 2000, continue to be married-couples with families. There tends to be very little change in residents in Acworth, supported by the fact that 73.6% of the residents in 2000 had lived in their same home for the previous five years. This may however, be a recent trend given that only 33.7% of Acworth residents were born in NH, according to

Population and Housing Goals

1. *Support a diverse population consisting of varied ages and economic levels that is sensitive to land development*

Strategies to meet this goal:
Maintain flexibility in land use regulations

2. *Support a diverse population and provide for affordable housing choices that are consistent with the land use goals*

Strategies to meet this goal:
Support the Community Land Trust
Re-visit zoning ordinances, cluster housing and sub-division options





the 2000 US Census. That same year, 43.3% of the NH population reported that they were born in NH, a somewhat higher average than Acworth.

Type of housing unit	Total units in 2000	Number of residential permits							Total units in 2006
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Single family	455	0	2	6	11	11	10	10	505
Multi-family	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
manufactured	40	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	46
Total Housing Units	512	1	4	6	13	12	10	10	568

Source NH OEP

The number of housing units in Acworth has only slightly increased over the past few years. In 2000, there were 455 single-family homes, being the dominant type of housing unit. That same year, there were 17 multi-family units and 40 manufactured housing units.

The number of mobile homes has increased from 1980 to 2000 by 7.8%. This is a small increase compared to neighboring Charlestown where the number of mobile homes increased 30.4% and in Lempster where it increased 15.5%. The number of manufactured housing units has increased significantly. Neighboring towns have experienced similar changes in their housing stock.

The median value of Acworth homes has risen significantly from \$31,000 in 1980 to \$97,900 in 2000. These numbers are based on appraised value and are not necessarily reflective of the market. Housing prices in Sullivan County by comparison may be higher. In 2007, 447 homes were sold in Sullivan County with a median price of \$190,000. This was an 11.7% decrease from 2006, when 540 homes were sold. This information is from the Northern New England Real Estate Network.

Of the total 201 housing units captured in the 2000 Census, 16 were rental units. Rental costs have risen from \$131 in 1980 to \$500 in 2000, according to Census data compared to the median monthly mortgage of \$873 for homeowners. Housing in Acworth could be affected by a need for more housing in the region to meet growth, particularly in Keene and Lebanon-Hanover. Among many concerns about housing, such as high cost, is the concern for housing for the elderly with limited incomes, and for younger individuals and families with lower incomes wishing to reside in Acworth. Regional trends in housing growth show condominiums, cluster housing, and rental housing development to offset the housing pressure for lower cost housing. These types of units have not been established in Acworth to date.



CHAPTER SEVEN – *ECONOMY*

INTRODUCTION

Like the rest of the region, Acworth began its history with the early settlers gaining a living by subsistence farming, sheep raising and crafts such as tool making and wagon repair. Trade was limited since roads were poor and even a trip to the Connecticut Valley towns took most of the day. Water and turnpike travel was only available after travelers reached the Valley.

Self-sufficiency was a necessity. Several small water-powered mills produced flour and later produced lumber. Orchards, sugaring operations, and mining operations were natural businesses to develop.

BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Acworth is still a town of relatively small locally owned businesses. The Bascom Maple Farm, a sugaring operation and the Balla sawmill and trucking business are most notable. Numerous small shops repair automobiles, produce furniture and crafts. Farming is still significantly important to the town. While the town has lost a number of large operating dairy farms in the last two decades, a variety of smaller farms with sheep, goats, hens and organic vegetables have been created. Building contractors and heavy machinery operators are a common occupation in Acworth. Acworth appears to be limited in its economic growth by little or no infrastructure beyond electricity and telephone service. Town roads and bridges have limited and seasonal capacity. There are no sewer systems, public water services or public transportation. There is no pool of labor or adequate housing for any sizable industry. Additionally, there is no economic development organization serving Acworth.

Keene, Claremont, Walpole, Charlestown, NH and Springfield, VT, are the closest centers of industry that are reachable within a thirty-minute drive. Tables following this chapter show the distribution of the work force and areas of significant employment.

Economic Goals

Support independent cottage industries that provide individuals with a sustainable living and create a vibrant and diverse economy that is consistent with the land use goals.

Strategies to meet this goal:

Support the Community Supported Agriculture programs and the local network of businesses
Create visibility for local products and services
Maintain a local business directory
Distribute information to local residents

Maintain the infrastructure connections residents need to employment centers in surrounding communities

Strategies to meet this goal:

Support the highway budget and CIP process
Explore the potential on Class VI roads to ensure proper maintenance and access

Employment and Wages in Acworth

Employment & Wages in 2006

Average Weekly Wage = \$663

Goods Producing Industries =
\$655

Service Producing Industries =
\$1,789

Private Industry = \$745

Government Employment =
\$359





Largest Businesses in Acworth

Sawmill # of employees =
10

Maple products # of employees = 7

Bed & Breakfast # of employees = 5

General Store volunteers

Support resource-based and farming industries and production that are consistent with the land use goals

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Identify appropriate sites for extraction industries
- Re-visit excavation regulations
- Support the Current Use program
- Maintain flexibility in regulations for forestry and agriculture
- Maintain large tracts of open land
- Promote community support for agriculture by maintaining buffers and divisions of land uses
- Support protections for family farms
- Investigate appropriate permitted uses to cite in zoning

Allow limited, light commercial and industrial development, when it is consistent with the natural resource and land use goals

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Research the benefits, strengths and opportunities for industry and community development
- Revisit zoning and site plan review regulations that clarify permitted locations that are consistent with the Master Plan
- Amend zoning to limit the size of industrial footprints

Seek ways to help the town improve access to educational services and opportunities for youth and adults

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Investigate the purchase of the school
- Support the continued operation of the Acworth Primary school
- Foster interaction between the school and local businesses and farms
- Support public access to the Internet

Seek ways to improve access to health care

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Explore transportation to health care facilities
- Support Trustees for Trust Funds work in bringing clinics to town
- Pursue funding through health planning/ pandemic planning in Sullivan County
- Improve support for town Health Officer
- Explore town group status for health insurance

CHAPTER EIGHT - NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

INTRODUCTION

Although there is no evidence of permanent settlements by the Abanaki Indians in Acworth, it is thought they regularly followed the Cold River as they traveled from the Connecticut River to Lake Sunapee. Certainly, they fished, hunted and foraged through the Acworth forests and hills. The first European settlers began to arrive in the late 1760's, mostly from the Londonderry section of Massachusetts. Throughout our local history, people have clearly used and influenced the quality and quantity of our natural resources. At the same time, the surrounding hills, forests and waterways have shaped the people who settled here. This special place we call Acworth and the quality of life of its inhabitants are dependent upon the quality and abundance of its natural offerings.

This section provides an overview of the natural features of Acworth. Included are descriptions of geology, topography, climate, water, soils, vegetation and wildlife resources. By using this information and the natural features maps, townspeople may develop a better understanding of the physical and natural features of Acworth. This will lead to better decisions about land use and conservation.

CLIMATE

Acworth's climate, at 43° latitude and 72° longitude, is generally temperate. It is characterized by extreme annual climatic fluctuations in temperature, rainfall and length of day, resulting in a clearly defined winter, spring, summer and autumn season. There are large elevation changes throughout the town. Sometimes in the fall or spring, rainfall along the Cold River will be snowfall at higher elevations.

Temperatures vary from a January average daily high of 28.4 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) and a daily low of 5.8 °F to July with an average daily high of 81.1 °F and a daily low of 55.7 °F. Temperature extremes vary from possible highs in the upper 90 °F in July and August to possible lows in the -20 °F in January and February.

Because of local topography differences, the length of growing season and the number of frost-free days can vary from place to place. Local gardeners generally assume they are out of danger from frost by June 1st and they hope for a frost free September before the cold months begin again.

TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Acworth is generable a glacially modified upland composed of hilly terrain with mostly moderate to steep slopes. The maximum relief within the town is approximately 1288 feet, the highest point being Gove Hill with a peak elevation of 1945 feet above sea level and the lowest point being the surface of the Cold River with a surface elevation of approximately 657 feet above sea level as it flows out of Acworth.

The slope analysis used for land use planning purposes utilizes a slope rating system expressed by percent in order to reduce the impacts of development on water quality and soil retention.

The topography within Acworth has been analyzed and rated according to the follow breakdown by percent slope for use in the Town's development ordinances:

Level or nearly level slope: 0-3%

Gentle Slope - 3-8%

Moderate Slope-8-15%

Natural Resources Goals

1. Protect, maintain, and encourage scenic and natural areas

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Maintain Scenic Roads
- Raise awareness of limitations on the Scenic Roads
- Encourage increasing the Town Forest and open space
- Develop an open space plan
- Inventory and prioritize natural areas throughout the community
- Support the Conservation Commission
- Offer local seminars on conservation and options



Natural Resources Goals

2. Protect our shared ground and surface water resource and maintain the water quality and quantity

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Create a Water Resource Plan that includes Crescent Lake
- Locate wells and water sources to identify their sustainability
- Enforce conservation zone and watershed protection area provision
- Support Cold River Advisory Committee and Crescent Lake Association

3. Promote and support public and private efforts to improve, manage and protect local wildlife and wildlife habitat

Strategies to meet this goal:

- Support and promote the work of the Conservation Commission
- Collaborate with Fish and Game
- Ensure that connectivity is part of the open space plan

Moderately Steep Slope-15-25%
Steep to Very Steep Slope over -25%

GEOLOGY

The sequence of recorded geologic events indicates that the formation of the area initially began as a 10,000-foot thick sedimentary deposit of sandy mud at the bottom of an ancient inland sea. This sedimentary formation developed during the Devonian Period of the Paleozoic Era approximately 330 million years ago and has been classified as the Dakin Hill member of the Littleton formation. This sedimentary deposit was formed into rock and late in the Devonian Period was folded and then under intense heat was recrystallized into foliated gneiss. At about this time, bodies of granitic pegmatite intruded the gneiss.

Following this initial formative stage came an extensive period of erosion that lasted for approximately 270 million years. During the Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era, certain masses of the formation were uplifted by geologic action and were further eroded. This uplifting action, approximately 60 million years ago, was the initial action by which the major topographic features of the Acworth area were developed. After these major topographic features had developed, great ice sheets thousands of feet thick invaded what is now the Acworth area, moving in a southeasterly direction. The thick ice sheet did little to modify the existing topography. The hills and valleys were much as they are today. The retreating ice left deposits of unsorted glacial debris called till. Large volume of water from the melting ice into deposits of sand, gravel and lake clays. The ice age began about one million years ago and was comprised of four separate stages. Between the first three stages, the continent was virtually ice-free. The present stage began its retreat about 12,000 years ago and is continuing, however retreats are characterized by long-term major temperature fluctuations, which may be expected but not, unfortunately, reliably predicted.

HYDROLOGY

Acworth's average annual precipitation, when converted to water volume, amounts to an average of approximately 91,400 acre/feet of water per year for the town of Acworth. Of the precipitation received annually by Acworth, slightly more than one-half the volume (25 inches per year) takes the form of surface runoff, which is carried off via the surface drainage system composed of permanent and intermittent streams. Acworth is divided into two sub-watersheds: the Cold River and Little Sugar River, both of which are within the larger Upper Connecticut River watershed.

Precipitation is an important determining factor in the local climate. Average annual precipitation is 44 inches per year with yearly averages ranging between 30 and 40 inches of total accumulation. A significant portion of precipitation falls as snow concentrated during the period from November to April. Snowfall amount and snow cover depths vary greatly from year to year.

The surface drainage condition map shows the permanent and intermittent stream system, permanent and seasonal wetlands, flood prone areas, lakes and ponds. Adding to the adequate precipitation, steep topography and shallow bedrock can often create rapid runoff and extreme fluctuation in stream flows, which may range from a trickle to a torrent overnight. Ground water adequate for domestic use may be obtained from bedrock wells, wells in surficial deposits and springs. Water in crystalline bedrock is contained in fractures. The yields are unpredictable, are usually low, and may be high in iron. Wells in surficial deposits may yield substantial amounts of good quality water in areas of sand and gravel. However, these sources are very vulnerable to pollution so proper construction and protection is essential.

SOILS

The soils of Acworth are primarily glacial tills consisting of a mixture of clays, silts, gravels, cobbles and boulders. There is often a glacial till hardpan underlying the surface soils that is relatively impervious to water and results in generally moist soils with frequent springs, seeps or wet areas even at high elevations. This till overburden is generally thicker in the valleys and thinner on the hills throughout town. It may be largely absent on many steep slopes and ridge tops leaving exposed bedrock layers.

The most common soil conditions in Acworth are the shallow to bedrock hardpan and deep stony conditions, as would be expected in glaciated uplands such as those that dominate in town. Steep slopes, surficial stones and erosion hazards can be a limitation for farm and non-farm use in Acworth. Less prevalent are the alluvial deposits and/or sandy/gravelly soils, which are generally found in the low-lying or bottomland sites, scattered throughout limited areas of town. These conditions are most often encountered in or along the beds of various streams and rivers. If drainage and flood hazard conditions are not excessively severe, then these soils are generally well suited for agriculture. Because these soils are not prevalent, the Town of Acworth should take measures to preserve soils suitable for agriculture and forestry.

SOIL LIMITATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Almost 90 percent of the soils in town have severe limitations for road construction. This compares with 7% having moderate limitations and 3% with only slight limitations for road construction and maintenance. Areas that have fewer limitations for roads are also widely scattered in small isolated pockets. The result is that road construction and maintenance is a difficult and expensive undertaking for the town. Varying only slightly from the analysis for roads, 80% of the land in town has severe limitations for on site disposal of domestic septic effluents. Fourteen of the land area has moderate limitations and 6% has only slight limitations.

Finally, looking at soil limitations for building foundations, about 65% of the land has severe limitations, 20% with moderate limitations and only 5% with slight limitations.

WATER RESOURCES

Surface Water

Acworth contains several significant water resources in the form of lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, wetlands and stratified drift aquifers. Twenty (20) named surface water bodies exist throughout the town- one (1) river, fifteen (15) brooks, three (3) ponds and one (1) lake (Table 1). Numerous other tributaries, permanent ponds and beaver ponds are not named but contribute significantly to the community and feed the larger water sources.

Lakes and Ponds

Comprised of 116 surface acres, Crescent Lake is a well populated with seasonal residences. It is a separate zoning district and maps are developed each year by the Crescent Lake Association.

Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as areas that are inundated or saturated for a duration sufficient to support wetland vegetation. Wetlands provide great value in groundwater and stream recharge, cleansing pollutants, moderating the effects of floods and providing valuable wildlife habitat, open space and scenic and recreational value. Wetlands require careful attention to protection due to their fragile nature and value. Nearby buffer areas should be included in protection efforts as erosion and sedimentation can destroy a wetland as

Table 1. Named surface waters of Acworth

Crescent Lake (Cold Pond)
Cold River
Back Brook
Milliken Brook
Hilliard Pond
Bower Brook
Mitchell Brook
Mitchell Pond
Copeland Brook
Pierce Brook
Chatterton Pond
Five Points Pond
Crane Brook
Putnam Brook
Dodge Brook
Swett Brook
Great Brook (2)
Tracy Brook
Honey Brook
Underwood Brook
Trask Brook

*Derived from USGS topography maps and Cold River Watershed maps produced by Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission.



Natural Resources

Goals

4. *Increase public and private awareness for energy and resource conservation*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Increased support and participation in the Energy Committee
Publicly distribute minutes from the Committee meetings
Conduct energy audits on the Town buildings
Develop a plan in anticipation of reduced fuel resources and include in Emergency Management Plan

a functioning system.

Wetlands are distributed throughout Acworth, along stream corridors as well as perched on the hills above. One of the largest wetlands, the East Acworth Town Wetland, has been protected with a conservation easement by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. The Mitchell Pond wetland complex is an important wildlife resource as a regular stopover point for migrant waterfowl. Other smaller, though significant, wetlands can be encountered throughout the town area.

Floodplains

Floodplains have been mapped for the Town by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

SHORE LAND PROTECTION

Protection through buffer corridors along the stream and ponds is widely recognized as essential to maintaining water quality and long-term habitat value. In Acworth, a 100 ft zoning setback exists for all stream banks and shores of natural ponds and lakes. This setback is known as the Conservation Zone in the Town of Acworth Zoning Ordinance (last revised 2006). Additionally, the NH' Comprehensive Shore land Protection Act sets minimum standards for development, use and subdivision of all land within 250 feet of public waters.

SURFACE WATER QUALITY

There is an annual water quality testing program including a report based on three water-sampling tests for Crescent Lake that is administered jointly by the Unity and Acworth Conservation Commissions, the Crescent Lake Association and individual lake residents. Water sample analysis and yearly summaries are provided by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Service (DES) through a NH Volunteer Lake Assessment Program.

According to the 2002 Bi-Annual Report for Crescent Lake, Acworth, by the DES, Crescent Lake water quality generally meets or exceeds state standards. With twelve years of annual water sampling data, the following sample parameters show no significant changes or concerns for chlorophyll-a, transparency, phytoplankton or e-coli. The water is slightly acidic with ph levels between 6.10 and 6.46 and low acid neutralizing capacity, leaving the lake moderately vulnerable to acid precipitation. A ph between 6.5 and 7 is ideal for fish.

The Cold River Local Advisory Committee conducts water quality testing at nine locations along the Cold River. Three of these are located in Acworth. Citizen volunteers sample river water each month and measure dissolved oxygen, conductivity, temperature, oxidation reduction potential, turbidity, stream stage and velocity. Results are sent for analysis to the DES as a part of the volunteer river monitoring program. Results indicate the water of the Cold River is excellent to good overall.

VEGETATION

The vegetation in Acworth is influenced by climate, topography, soil conditions, and the historical use made of the particular parcels of land. The influence of man on the vegetative cover through the history of settlement, and clearing, development of various uses and sometimes abandonment has had a profound impact upon the forest and meadow cover we see today. The widespread discontinuation of farming and sheep herding has resulted in a mixed second growth woodland cover throughout most of the town, with uncounted miles of old stone walls running through them.

Fifteen percent of the non-forested land in Acworth is either agricultural or residential. There are increasing numbers of residences and a declining proportion of fields actively used for farming.

Farming the Acworth hills is a difficult economic endeavor. Most farming is a part time or seasonal venture. Full-time farms usually have an outside source of income. The distinction between farm and forest is not clear. Most local farms include substantial forestry operations including maple sugaring and seasonal logging. Open farmland is a mix of cultivated fields, grasslands and pasture. On the better soils with minimal slope and few stones, corn will often be grown in rotation with a legume forage crop. Poorer sites tend to be pastures or hayfields. Blueberries and small orchards can be found cultivated at a smaller scale than other crops.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

A viable population of native Brook Trout can still be found in selected tributaries of the Cold River. New Hampshire has more than 60 types of mammals that live on land the majority of which are present in Acworth. We commonly see deer, grey and red fox, raccoon, red squirrel, gray squirrel, meadow mouse, skunk and beaver. Less frequently, our paths will cross those of moose, black bear, bobcat, otter, mink, weasel, muskrat, snowshoe hare, fisher, porcupine, coyote and woodchuck. Many mammals are active only at night or in the early morning or evening hours.

SCENIC RESOURCES

Scenic views range from the bucolic scenes of the South Acworth Village and surrounding fields with its classic New England architecture of the church and buildings around the Acworth Center common, to the well-known panoramic views from Derry Hill, Gates Mountain, Gove Hill and Beryl Mountain.

Extensive stone walls trace the forested hills and historic cellar holes dot the wooded landscape. It is unusual to hike through the woods and not come upon an abandoned cellar hole.

CONSERVATION

The Acworth Conservation Commission exists (per order of N.H. RSA 36:a) to support the sound conservation of the natural and cultural resources of the Town of Acworth. The Commission is charged with advising town officials on matters of natural resource concern, promoting public education about conservation issues, and supporting the protection of local water, soil, forest and wildlife resources through direct conservation initiatives. These actions are planned, funded and implemented by mutual agreement and as authorized by the townspeople of Acworth via the town meeting and the town Selectboard.

Conservation priorities are of ecological significance on the local, state, and regional level as well as co-occurrences of existing natural resources. The Cold River Corridor has been the most studied of all, but the Conservation Commission has been expanding this to the rest of the Town.

Acworth currently has 3300 acres of Conservation Easement lands; some public and some private. These lands have been preserved in perpetuity for natural resource value with the assistance of the Conservation Commission. By maintaining an updated accounting of conserved lands, a town is better equipped to understand how effective these lands are at protecting significant natural resources. This helps to identify gaps in conservation and measures that will preserve a community's natural resources. It also provides an opportunity to link already protected areas with travel corridors for wildlife, public access, and natural resource biodiversity. **Honey Brook State Forest** is the largest state owned land within Acworth. Of the forest's total of 974.9 acres, 206.7 acres are within Acworth's southeastern corner. Located near the headwaters of Honey Brook, a tributary of the Cold River, this state forest provides important forestry, wildlife, and open space within the Cold River watershed. Although without formal conservation status, several town-owned parcels have significant natural resource attributes. Some of these parcels are being managed to preserve their significant conservation potential, including but not limited to, the Jennison-Nelson Lots. The remainder of the conserved land in Acworth is privately owned with conservation easements that primarily were placed between 1982-1992 with and without the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program

Natural Resources ***Goals***

5. *Maintain natural ecosystems by promoting land use practices that maintain open space in large, contiguous parcels*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Determine if the zoning regulations impact the Town negatively or positively

6. *Support stewardship of primary soils that sustain working farms and forests*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Promote awareness of soils
Revisit zoning of prime agriculture soils
Explore tools available to preserve prime agricultural soils





(LCHIP). These lands, mainly clustered in the western section of town, are restricted from development forever. Beginning in 2003, the Town received Town Meeting vote to permanently protect several lands that it already owned. Interest in additional easements comes from other private landowners as well. The following easement prosperities are held and monitored by the conservation entities listed below:

Name of Property	Date protected	Owners at that time	# acres	Primary easement holder * monitoring responsibilities	Secondary easement holder	Current Owner of this Property
Raymond Roy Farm	1991	Raymond & Evelyn Roy	1000	LCHIP	Town	Paul and Verna Thibault (dau of Roy's) Claremont, NH
Pierce Brook (Pan Northern Property)	1982	Stevin Levin & partners	500	Town	SPNHF	Fred and Elsa Ernst Ridgefield, CT & Walpole NH
Clark's Farm		Alvin & Nancy Clark	179 & 35	LCHIP	Town	Alvin and David Clark, Langdon, NH
Maude Moody	1991	Maude Moody	100	LCHIP	Town	Bruce & Liz Bascom now owners
Bascom's Sugar House	1990	Bascom Sugarhouse	113.4	LCHIP/ NH Dept of Agriculture	NH Dept of Ag	Bruce & Liz Bascom
Bruce and Kenneth Bascom	1990	Bruce & Eliz Bascom	238	LCHIP/ NH Dept of Agriculture	NH Dept of Ag	Bruce & Liz Bascom
Harvey Bascom Grey Dawn Farm	1990	Harvey & Edie Bascom	398.9	LCHIP/ NH Dept of Agriculture	NH Dept of Ag	Bruce & Liz Bascom
Acworth Town Forest: Gove	2003	Town	296	SPNHF	none	Town
Acworth Town Wetlands	2003	Town	36+/-	SPNHF	none	Town
Abe and Helen Sirkin	2004	The Sirkins	112	SPNHF	none	Helen Sirkin, Maryland
Bill and Anne Russell	2005	The Russells	296	SPNHF	none	Bill and Anne Russell, Lincoln, MA
Cold Pond Community Land Trust	2007	CPCLT	63	SPNHF	none	CPCLT, Acworth, NH

CHAPTER NINE - RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

Early on, Acworth provided natural recreation, country style and low cost, with hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, swimming, boating, etc. Nature provides this means of recreation for residents, of all ages, with woodlands, rivers, streams and lakes that are the bounty of the area. Summer residents on the lake and on the hillsides come to Acworth for just this kind of recreation, and take it for granted that it will always be here in the future. Even as the population increases, this kind of recreation is still part of the enjoyment of living in Acworth. Commercial recreational facilities are still not well suited to Acworth, as there is not enough population to make that kind of investment profitable. Currently, residents seem to discourage the building of large recreational centers, preferring the still popular natural recreational activities. The N.H. Fish & Game Department oversees much of the fishing, hunting and motorized recreational vehicles. Tax credits for recreational land use are provided to land owners through the State's Current Use program.

Acworth has an active Recreation Committee sponsoring a variety of activities. Upcoming events for youth and adults are usually posted in local newsletters and on bulletin boards around Acworth.

EXISTING RECREATION ACTIVITIES

4-H is the oldest youth group organized by the parents for their children to learn how to sew, take care of animals, as well as many other activities. It is still active today. This was followed by organized sports; Little League Baseball, Soccer, and Basketball (played in Alstead). There was also a men's softball team for a short time. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling takes place in winter. Cycling along our roadways by regional residents is very popular. White water canoeing takes place on the Cold River in the spring run-off. Boating takes place on Crescent Lake in both the spring and summer and hiking takes place year-round. From the 1950's through the 1980's, the Fire Department held Turkey shoots which offered all kinds of sport gun shooting.

All types of fishing go on in Acworth. Crescent Lake has bass, pickerel and pan fish. Cold River has always been a good trout river and is now stocked by the State each year numerous times. The Town's small brooks, in earlier years, had very good native trout, but when the beaver moved into the swamps, the vegetation changed and the trout population declined. Today, the Recreation Committee sponsors a "Fishing Derby" at Earl Luther's pond for the children and grandchildren of Acworth residents.

Trapping of fox, mink, raccoon and skunk were profitable in the early years of the town. In later years, came the beaver, fisher, and coyote. Hunting has always been a very popular sport in the fall. Deer are on the top of the list. A State moose lottery allows some hunting for the increasing numbers now inhabiting our woodlands. In earlier years, it was popular to hunt small game such as ruffed grouse, woodcock, and rabbit. This has declined with an increase in predators like fox, bobcat, weasel, owls, hawks, fisher and coyotes. This has also contributed to the decline in trapping. New hunting seasons include moose, bear and turkey, all of which have increased in number in Acworth.

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

The Sno-riders snowmobile club was formed in 1972 to create a contiguous trail system that would link to the trails of nearby clubs. The club created trails in Unity, Acworth, and to a minor extent, Lempster, utilizing Class VI roads and public and private property. An extensive trail system was born from these efforts. In 1974, the club worked with the Town of Acworth to place a small warming hut on Gove Hill, which still stands today and is in the Acworth Town Forest. The club had a significant transformation from the

Recreation Goals

1. *Support recreational activities for the people of Acworth*

Strategies to support this goal:

- Support the Recreation Committee
- Assist the Recreation Committee to develop closer ties with the Selectboard and the Conservation Commission
- Have space on the town website for the Recreation Committee
- Make maps available to the public of recreation areas
- Develop a recreation opportunity on town lands to increase public awareness for town owned property





1990's to present. Today, the club has a solid base of members, with 100 families in its roster, and is a member of the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association. The membership represents local citizens, weekend visitors, and others who enjoy the sport.

The clubs have steadily improved their trail grooming efforts, with a steady group of volunteers and new, more reliable machines purchased with assistance from the State of New Hampshire through the snowmobile grant-in-aid program and the federally funded Recreational Trails Program. These programs are administered by the NH Bureau of Trails.

Recent focus has been on widening the trail system, and creating larger bridges to accommodate a full-size grooming tractor and grooming implement. This required renewed effort with private/public landowner partnerships, and more logistics and expertise. Talented volunteers and equipment operators fulfill the necessary tasks. Once again, funding assistance was used on many of the off-season projects. Nearly half of the trails maintained by the Crescent Lake Regional Sno-riders have received a Corridor of Primary Trail Number from the State. Most winters, riders from many areas of the State travel through our area.

The Tri-Town Trail Blazers were formed in the 1970's. Members are from the Acworth-Langdon-Alstead area and are actively involved with the formation of trails, maintenance of trails, building of snowmobile bridges, and grooming trails during the winter season. The club created a trail system in Acworth, Langdon and Alstead, utilizing Class VI roads as well as public and private property. Fund raising projects are held throughout the year and the organization is a member of the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association. The State provides assistance with funding for trail projects and trail grooming equipment and local support has continued throughout the years. Private landowners provide trail connections for members through yearly-renewed agreements. A snowmobile map is available for member use and was updated in 2004.

HIKING TRAILS

The Town of Acworth is fortunate to have a network of formal and informal trail systems. Many Class VI roads are often used for hiking. In addition to those trails fall into four categories:

Class A Trails

Five Points Road and Dodge Brook Road were designated Class A Trails by Town Meeting vote. Both of these trails remain in public use for hiking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and bicycling. They are maintained by the landowners with assistance if needed from the Conservation Commission. "Motorized, Wheeled Vehicles" are forbidden except for emergencies or for farm and forest work by landowners along these trails.

Snowmobile Club Trails

Two clubs maintain trail networks in Acworth: the Tri-Town Trailblazers and the Crescent Lake Sno-riders. Generally, the snowmobile trails are a combination of private lands linked with public lands and Class VI roads. The clubs receive landowner permission for winter use only on private lands. These lands are not public rights-of-way and require the owner's written permission to use them. There are maps available of the trail systems in Acworth made available by the clubs. Some State funding is available to clubs to assist in maintaining their trails.

Town Forests

The Conservation Commission and Forest Advisory Board of Gove Town Forest (300 acres) and the South Acworth Town Forest (100 acres) are in the process of developing low impact hiking trails on these town-owned lands. The South Acworth Town Forest was designated as a town forest in 2005. Snowmobilers use the Class VI road, Hilliard Road, goes along the edge of this property. The Gove



Forest, designated as a Town Forest in 1997, includes a snowmobile trail and warming hut on the top of Gove Hill. The trails and hut are maintained by the Crescent Lake Sno-riders with help from the Conservation Commission. Gove Town forest is permanently protected with a conservation easement held by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in 2004. (A copy of this easement may be read at the Town Hall.)

State Land

Honey Brook State Forest is the largest parcel of State owned land within Acworth. Of the forest's 974.9 acres, 206.7 acres are within Acworth's southeastern corner. There are snowmobile trails within the State Park, but they are limited to winter use for snowmobiles only.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

There are many activities available in neighboring towns. Golf is available in Newport, Sunapee, Grantham, Claremont, Walpole and Keene. Private Tennis Clubs operate in Newport and Charlestown. Various trails and Class VI roads provide opportunity for hiking, horseback riding and mountain bike riding in spring, summer and fall as well as cross-country skiing and snow shoeing in winter.

Alpine skiing and snow boarding is available within reasonable driving distances. Snowmobile enthusiasts can utilize the Class VI roads or the marked trails in various parts of the town, or continue beyond the town and throughout the State. Spectators may enjoy auto racing in Claremont and Winchester. Lempster has a Moto-sports park. Keene has semi-pro baseball. In addition, a variety of high school sports are available throughout the area and Keene State College provides opportunities to watch college level sports.





Cultural and Historic Resource Goals

1. *Protect and preserve historic town owned structures and scenic places*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Develop an Historic District
Inventory stone structures
Revisit Acworth's Roster of Special Places

2. *Support and encourage local community organizations*

Strategies to meet this goal:

Assist the Historic Society with restoration of the Grange
Create a safe storage area for archival materials

CHAPTER TEN - CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Acworth is steeped in local history beginning with the first settlers to arrive in the early 1700's. Places of interest like Pulpit Rock on the Charlestown Rd and the "Beehives" early stone structures on Kennedy Hill, along with the Ballet Academy and Button Museum bring a story of Acworth's culture and history. Acworth's Church on the Hill (The United Church of Acworth) and the Acworth Library are both on the National Historic Landmark Registry. The original Province Road from Charlestown to Concord ran through the middle of Acworth Village and over the years, sections of it became the roads we use today. Very little of the original road exists but there are small portions still apparent to the eye.

THE ACWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The first records of the Acworth Historical Society go back to 1952, when a small pamphlet with bylaws for operation was published and adopted. Little record of the groups activities remain though there are scattered minutes of meetings up through the 1960's. During this time, extensive research work was done by the members to update the genealogical files now housed at the Acworth Silsby Library. Acworth archives on town history have been collected and filed for reference material and are now part of that collection.

The Historical Society was incorporated with the State of NH in April 1974. Its mission is "to store and display objects of historical significance to the Town of Acworth." The reprint of the 1869 Centennial History of Acworth came out in 1978.

The group was active in the 1980's and 90's under Secretary Edith Bascom. The Society engaged historian Helen Frink to write the history, "These Acworth Hills," which was published in 1989. The Society raised funds and spearheaded the placement of new road signs in 1993. The aging members had trouble keeping active and the charter was about to expire in early 2000. A group of citizens attempting to save the South Acworth Village Store took up the cause. The first job was to update the state incorporation and file for recognition of exemption with the IRS. The store was purchased with the support of local residents and the Upper Valley Community Foundation in 2001. The building was restored over the next two years with assistance from a New Hampshire Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) grant.

The Historical Society now leases the store facility to the Acworth Community Project and leases the fields and river bottomland for vegetable production. They oversee the upkeep and maintenance of the building. The Society acquired the Grange Building (Old Methodist Church) in South Acworth from the town for a nominal fee. It is planned that the Grange will be restored and then used in part as a repository for artifacts and historical documents.

LOCAL REGULATIONS

Acworth has some regulations that help to maintain the historical and scenic preservation of the area. Scenic roads were created in 1971, giving some protection to large trees and stone walls. Currently there are twelve (12) scenic roads in Acworth. The stone walls, which were built over two-hundred years ago and bounds the old roads and properties, are also protected by State regulations. Many of these early stone walls continue to delineate the property lines of current lots of record. Removal of them constitutes a violation of property bounds. Most residents protect and maintain them as much as possible.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLS AND PLANS

On several occasions, it has been suggested that the Town of Acworth preserve their historical areas with a Historic District. Efforts to create a Historic District in the Acworth Village have not been successful.

Protected Historic Structures in Acworth:

United Church of Acworth

Acworth Silsby Free Library

South Acworth Village Store

Work in progress: Grange Building (Old Methodist Church)

Cultural and Historic Resource Goals

3. Promote and encourage community cultural events, festivals and activities

Strategies to meet this goal:

Identify ways to be supportive of various activities and how to coordinate them on a town-wide level



CHAPTER ELEVEN - *REGIONAL CONCERNS*

INTRODUCTION

Regional concerns are important to Acworth because most of the goods and services that Acworth residents need and use are produced outside of their town. Food, fuel, healthcare, jobs, etc. are for the most part available or acquired in the region's larger towns and cities. This makes Acworth vulnerable to economies beyond its control.

ACWORTH'S ROLE IN THE REGION

Due to Acworth's difficult terrain and location away from major transportation routes, it has the distinction of being the least developed town in the region. Even as development proceeds in the region, over time Acworth will likely provide housing for regional industry and retirement. Acworth's role will be as a place where open space is available for public enjoyment as a recreation destination. Acworth resources that are dependent on open space will be of greater significance over time. These include water resources, forest products, and wildlife and wildlife habitat. Although agricultural resources are of somewhat limited nature, sustainable local agriculture will play a significant role as transportation costs continue to rise.

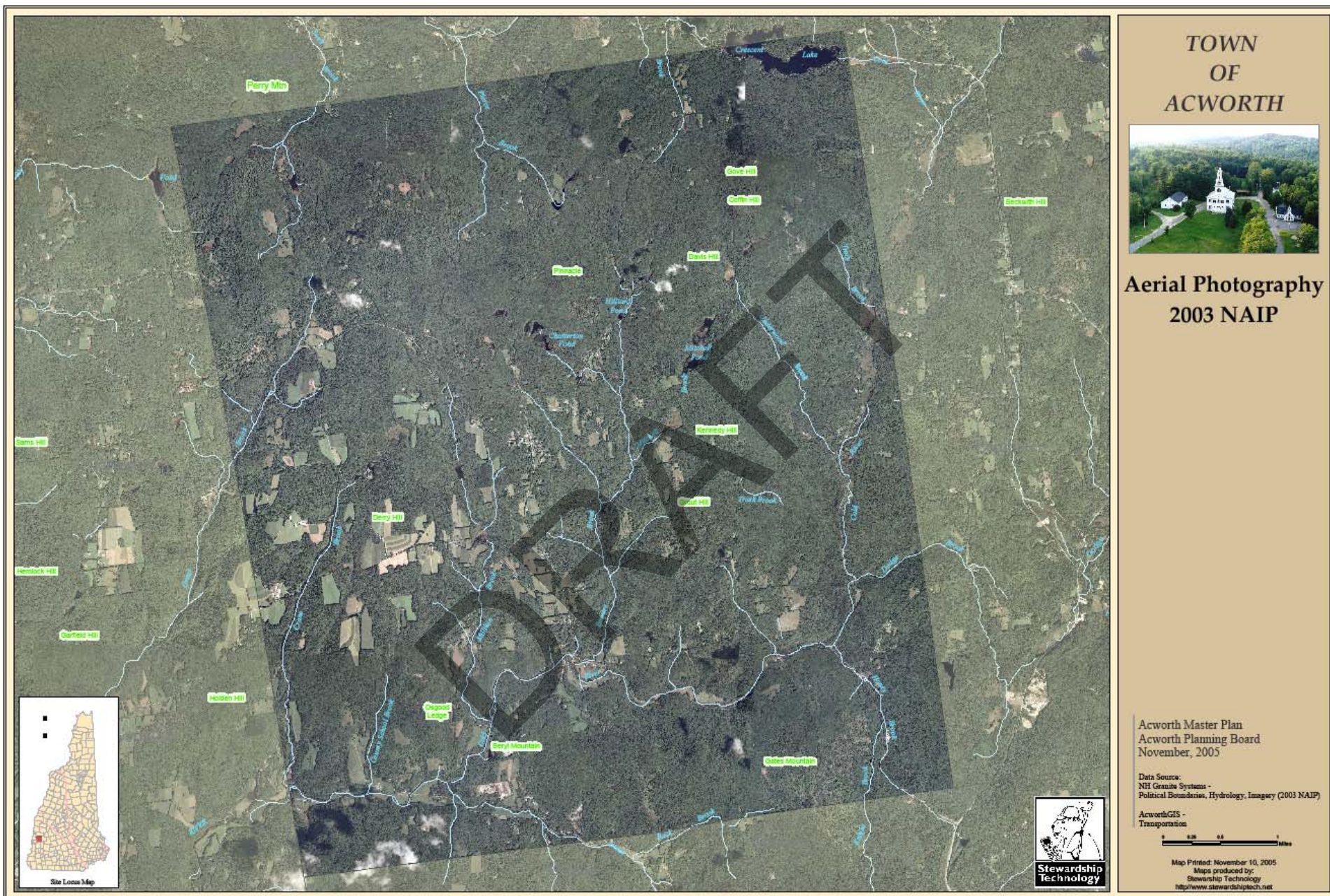
REGIONAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

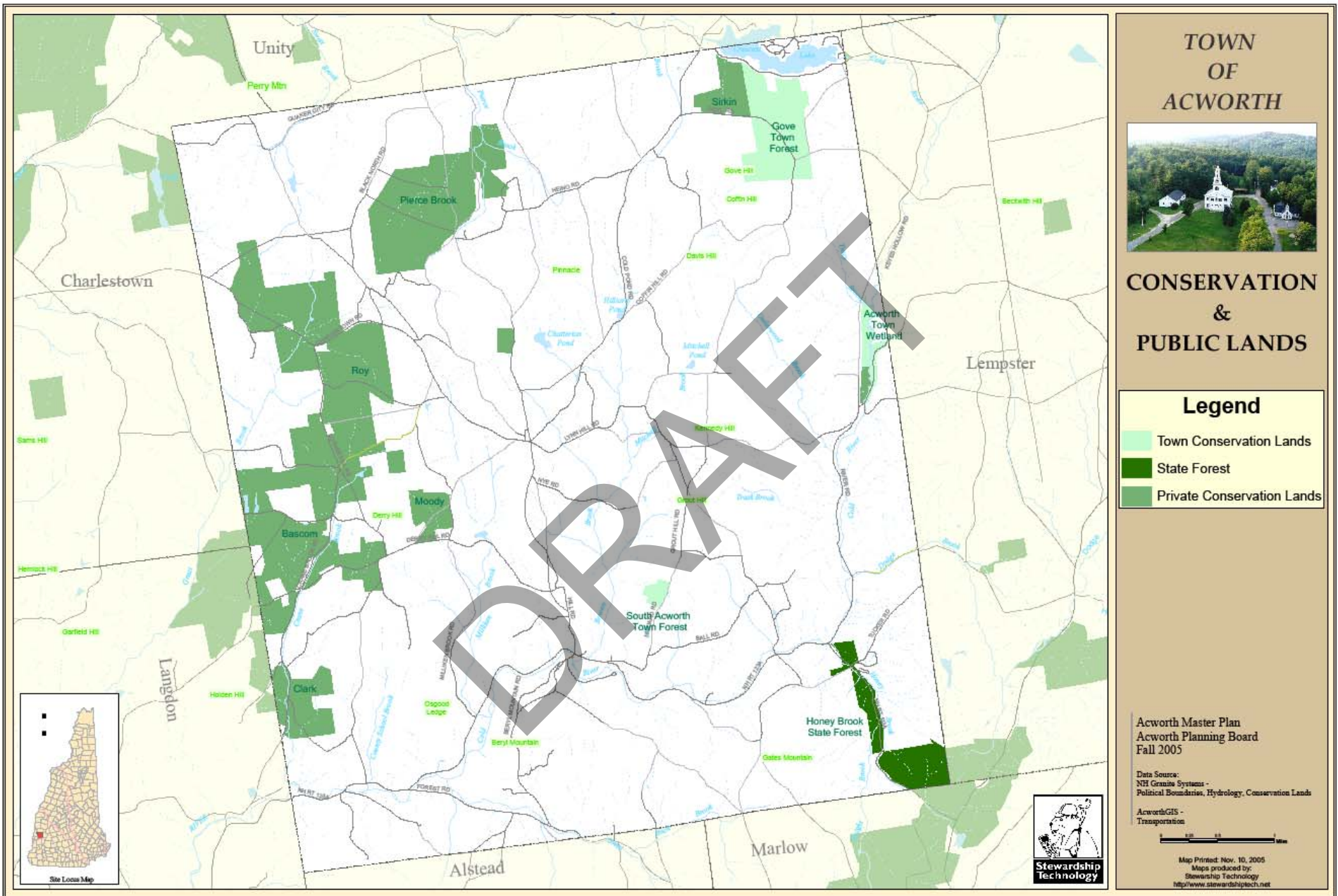
Acworth has membership in various regional organizations. These include: the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, the Cold River Local Advisory Commission and the New Hampshire Municipal Association. The Library is affiliated with the State Library Association.

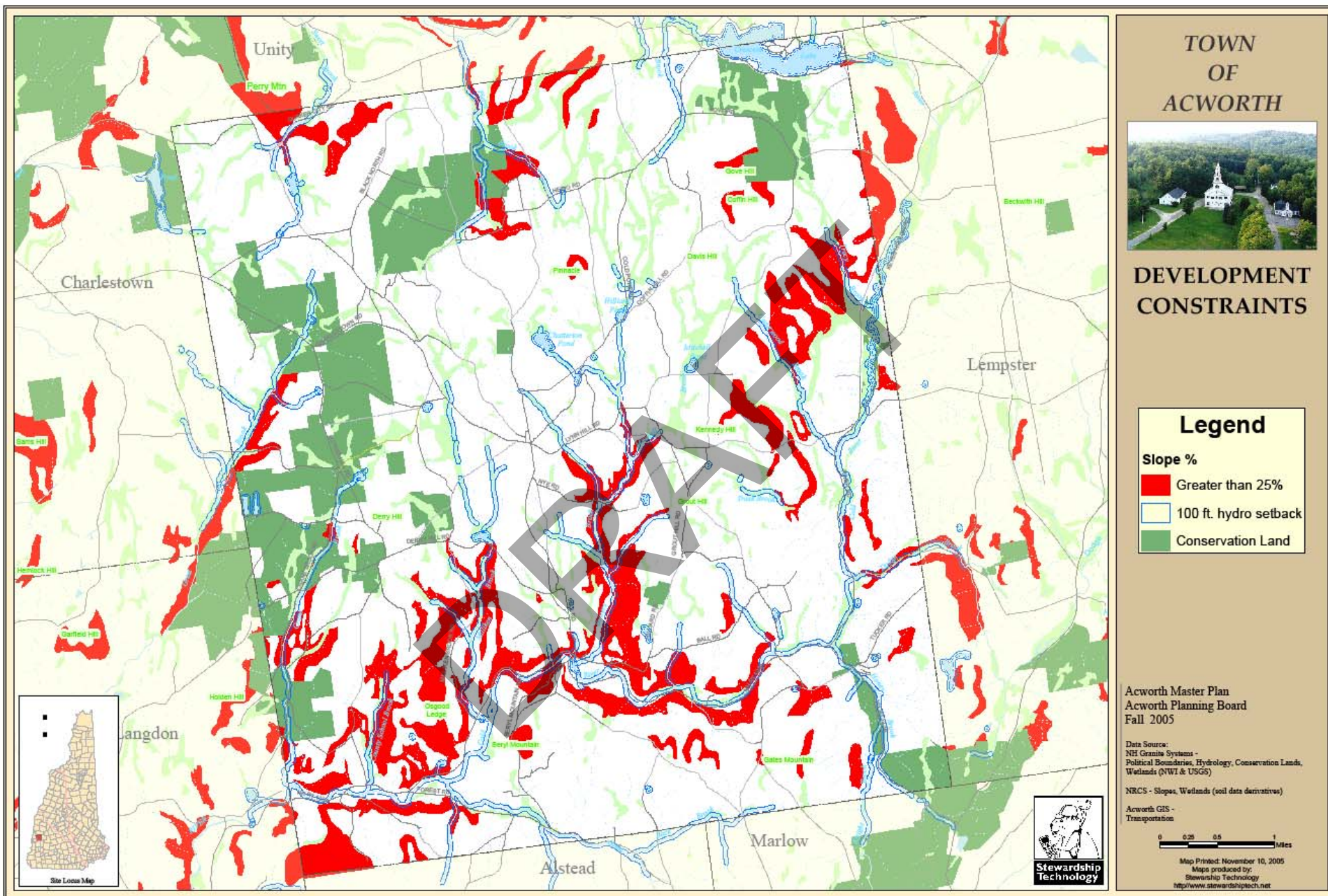


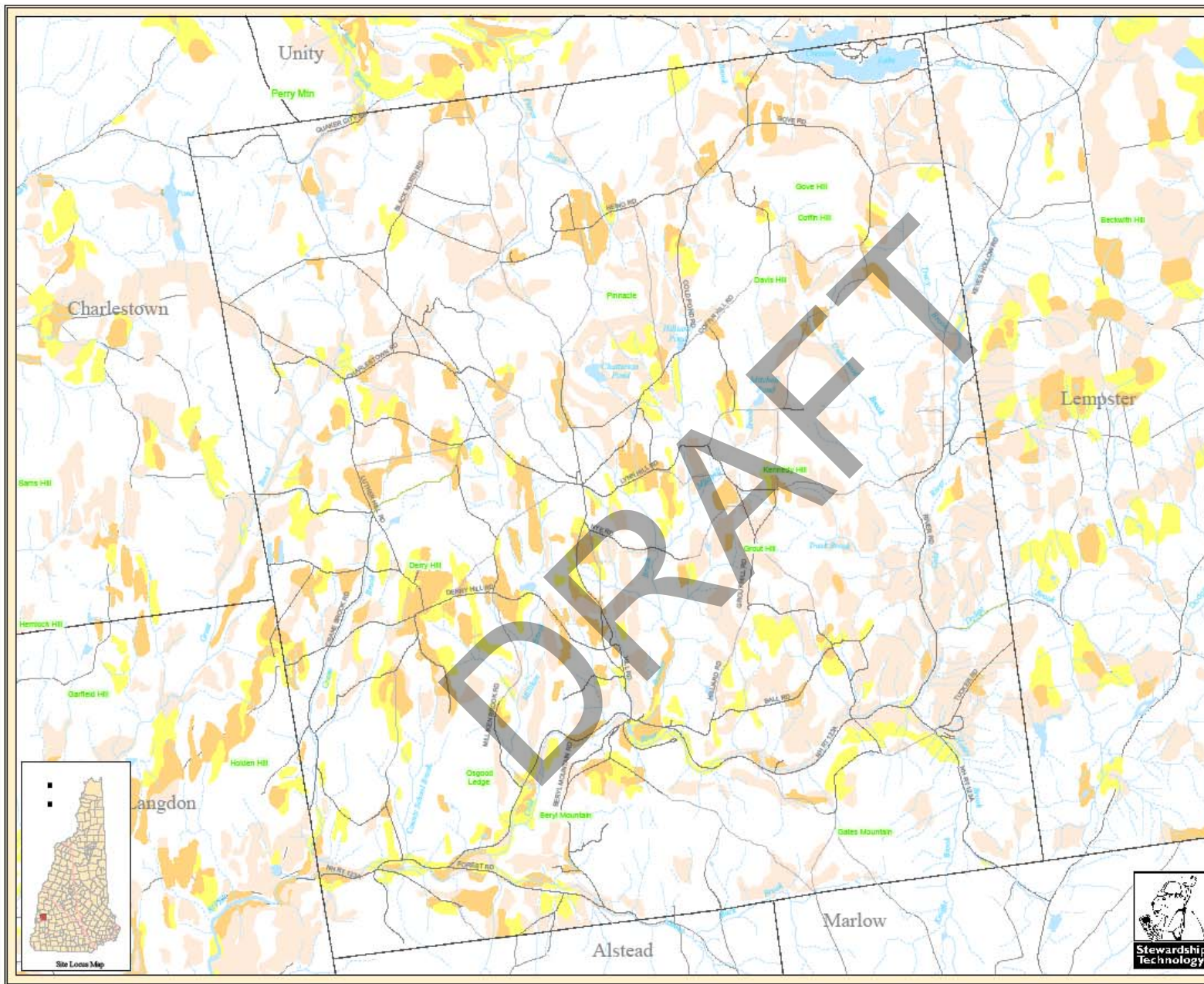
Regional Goals

1. *Coordinate planning efforts with surrounding communities, regional planning organizations and state agencies*









TOWN OF ACWORTH



IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL & FOREST SOILS

Legend

IMPORTANT SOILS

- Soils of Prime Importance
- Soils of Statewide Importance
- Soils of Local Importance

Acworth Master Plan
Acworth Planning Board
Fall 2005

Data Source:
NH Granite Systems -
Political Boundaries, Hydrology

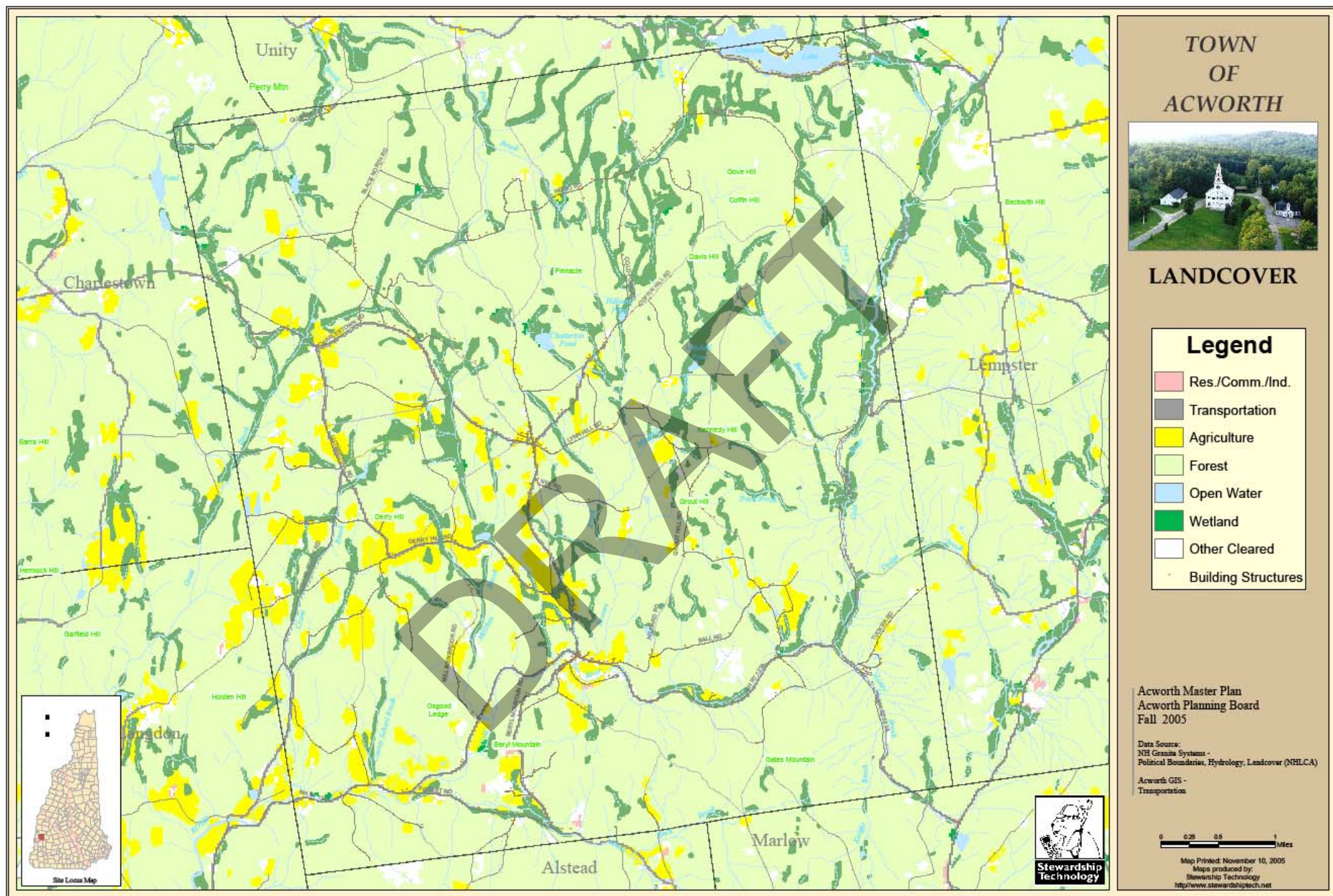
NRCS - Soils

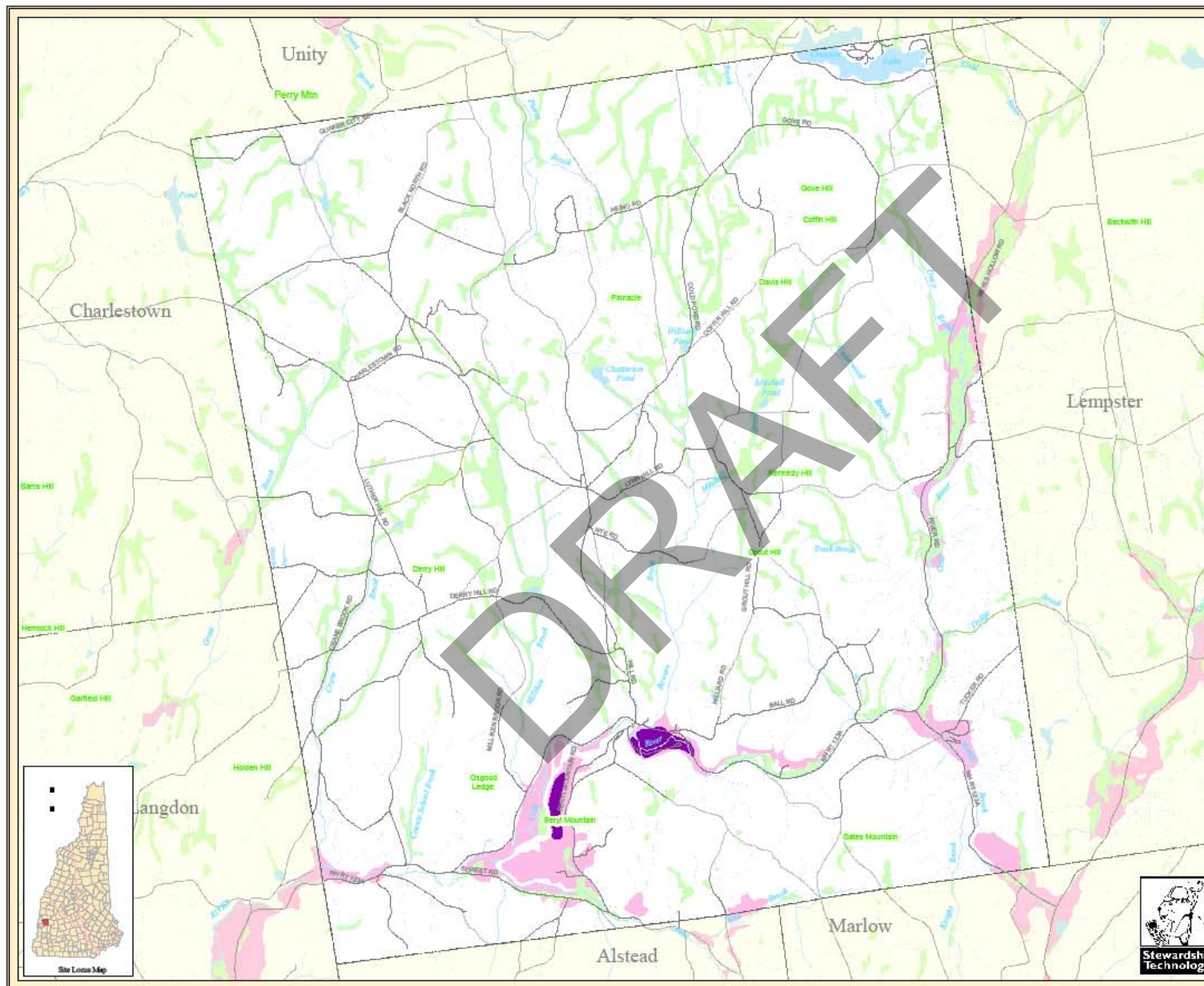
Acworth GIS - Transportation

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Map Printed: November 10, 2005
Maps produced by:
Stewardship Technology
<http://www.stewardshipst.com>







TOWN OF ACWORTH



WATER RESOURCES

Legend

Aquifer Storage Capacity

- Medium
- High
- Wetland

Acworth Master Plan
Acworth Planning Board
Fall 2005

Data Source:
NH Granite Systems -
Political Boundaries, Hydrology, Aquifer,
Wetland (NWT / USGS)

NRCS -
Wetlands (soil derived)

Acworth GIS -
Transportation

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Map Printed: November 10, 2005
Maps produced by:
Stewardship Technology
<http://www.stewardshipstech.net>

