

**SWANZEY MASTER PLAN UPDATE 2003  
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## **SWANZEY MASTER PLAN UPDATE 2003 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Preface**

The information and recommended changes contained in the Updated Swanzev Master Plan of 2003 are the result of systematic reviews of the Comprehensive Plan of 1979, and the Master Plan of 1990. The Update seeks to provide current information regarding population, housing, roads and bridges, municipal facilities and services, natural and cultural resources, commercial and industrial development, etc., and to develop policy recommendations in each area reflective of community values. Periodic review and updating of the Master Plan is required by state statutes.

The 2003 Updated Master Plan is a wholly "home-grown" document. None of it was contracted out to consultants (such as the Southwest Regional Planning Commission -- their preponderant role in the earlier Plans made it important for us to "write our own" this time). While the Committee willingly took on the task, a corresponding result is that there is a diversity of "voices" in our text, and some variation in format. We request forbearance for our inconsistencies of tone and format, as an acceptable price to pay for an authentic "grass-roots" document. As regards policy recommendations, we hope to be found wholly consistent.

The Committee acquainted itself with "community values" through interviews and surveys. We benefited from the "Community Profile" Project of May, 2000, our own survey of residents of 2001, and a series of interviews with Swanzev department heads and group representatives. Individual members have also informed themselves by attending workshops and presentations on planning and development issues around the region.

Committee membership began at 17, and concluded at 12. The Committee met every two weeks for 30 months. Attendance was exemplary, considering particularly the four members of the Planning Board who were already meeting on the alternate Thursdays, and the Selectman who had his own weekly meeting throughout the period, as well as the extraordinary convenings where Selectmen's presence was necessary. The Committee has been professionally and cheerfully served by "staff," which in a small government such as Swanzev's translates to a single person -- Town Planner Sara Carbonneau. Not only does she have "line" responsibilities as Planner, but she bears the onerous clerical burden of serving all land-use boards as secretary, producing minutes of each meeting in timely fashion. We salute and thank Sara for her

research skills, her sensitivity to the "pulse" of land-use issues in Swanzey, and her untiring support to this Committee. We also thank the Town Administration -- which translates to Beth Fox and the Board of Selectmen -- for support of our work, by underwriting the costs of survey preparation and distribution, and of printing and photocopying the respective portions of this report.

- *Richard A. Scaramelli, Chair*

### **Swanzey Master Plan Sub-Committee Members:**

Richard A. Scaramelli, Chair  
Glenn Page  
David Krisch  
Olivia Loy  
Reinhard Loy  
Sandy Allen  
Charles R. Beauregard, Sr.

Robert A. Beauregard  
Victoria Barlow  
Stephen Stepenuck  
Al Longe  
Bruce Bohannon  
Sara H. Carbonneau, Town Planner

The Swanzey Master Plan Sub-Committee would also like to thank former members Carrie Round, Bonnie Brunner and Rick Bauckman for all of their input and assistance.

### **Introduction**

Master Planning in Swanzey operates as a sub-committee to the Planning Board. While one or more public hearings will be held on the Updated Plan, it falls to the Planning Board alone to accept or reject this document as a guidepost to Swanzey's future. Residents need not fear that all of our many recommendations will be enacted, with indigestible funding consequences. We have identified many goals, and sometimes objectives by which to reach them, but in every case the issue of means falls to those holding fiscal and fiduciary responsibility. Not that feasibility was ever far from mind -- we pay taxes too -- but our assignment in fact was to imagine (to "dream") the five-to-ten-year future for Swanzey, without the wet blanket of the "reality-principle" to stifle that which might be, or ought to be. (The evidence actually demonstrates that Swanzey government is efficient and cost-effective.) We do suggest consideration of an expanded Capital Improvements program to accomplish some of our objectives, and the institutionalization of Master Planning, so that updating can be done one section (or two) at a time, in concert with town priorities for a particular fiscal year. We have been privileged to begin these important discussions.

A Master Plan is a process by which a community charts its future. It examines various elements of town life – economics, social services, utilities, housing, etc. – some prescribed by statute, some “elective,” and

projects priorities for the near-term future. It is meant to be a sustained, focused investigation of a town's strengths, uniqueness, shortcomings, vulnerabilities, needs and wants. The recommendations which result are meant to provide ballast for policy choices and direction that the land use boards (Zoning and Planning) and the executive (Board of Selectmen) may pursue during the next five to ten years.

The first "Comprehensive Plan" for Swanzey was written in 1979. The population was 5,000. It cited the availability of air service to Boston and Hartford, railroad freight service through Swanzey and passenger service via AmTrak in Brattleboro, and bus service from Keene. The police force consisted of a chief, and 25 volunteer part-time officers. Police dispatch was from the chief's home in East Swanzey. There was no town water system (apart from Keene's service to North Swanzey). There was no public sewer system. The Plan anticipated sustained railroad service for Swanzey. When the second Master Plan was prepared in 1990 (by Southwest Region Planning Commission), the population had risen 16% to 6,200.

Now comes the third Master Plan, the result of a two-year "update" process. The population is 6,800, an increase of 10% during the 1990s. Railroad corridors have devolved into trailbeds. Commercial airline service ceased the moment federal subsidies disappeared. The Police Department now has ten full-time positions, and one part-time. Change has been dramatic, and not always in ways that were predictable.

The Master Plan Sub-Committee began its work at the turn of the millennium. It is sobering to consider the changes that have occurred in American life just since our work began. National concerns have gone from Y2K to microbes in the mailbox. We have suffered the worst national attack since Pearl Harbor, counter-attacked halfway around the globe, and now gird for war on another front. The country prepares to inoculate for smallpox, a disease that had been eliminated worldwide in our lifetime. We began as 17 members, but moves and life changes have caused attrition, leaving us with 12 members at the finish. The committee has convened twice a month for 30 months. We have used all available information, including US Census data of 2000, the Swanzey Community Profile project, NH Office of State Planning data, town records, our own survey of Swanzey property-owners, and interviews of most affected interest groups and town department heads.

In all humility and good faith, we recommend the following primary goals for the Town of Swanzey for the decade ahead. We urge readers to consult the larger document, to understand these goals in their respective analytical and descriptive contexts, and to learn of the concrete objectives and action plans that accompany most of them.

Among the highest priorities of the Swanzey Master Plan Sub-Committee are the following:

1. *To accommodate change and growth in Swanzey while preserving the “rural character” of the town;*
2. *To preserve and protect the natural and historical resources, and the stated values of Townspeople, by recommending the enforcement of existing rules, regulations, and laws by an expanded Code Enforcement Department.*
3. *To keep abreast of changes in demographics, rules, laws, and priorities, by recommending the establishment of a standing Master Plan Committee. We envision the systematic “updating” of one or two sections of the Master Plan every year hereafter, so that the Plan is essentially “refreshed” every fifth or sixth year.*

### **Defining “Rural Character”**

Swanzey, like most towns beyond southeast NH, explicitly values its “rural character,” and regards preservation of that character as a high priority (- Community Survey, 2001). The Master Plan Sub-Committee has made most of its choices and recommendations with that baseline value in mind. The Committee has been consistently mindful, however, of the differing definitions, or meaning, the term holds for different individuals. For some, it may mean to cherish as much of nineteenth century life and esthetics as possible. For others, it may mean keeping the town as open to hunting and fishing as possible. Others see it as license to travel cross-country, via off-highway recreational vehicles (OHRVs) on the one hand, or snowshoes/skis/horseback/foot/etc., on the other. For some, it means retaining the Swanzey of their youth – be it the 1970s, 1950s, or 1930s. For others it means protecting the purity of water, air, flora and fauna, so that “invasives,” parasites, and contaminants remain beyond our borders. The Master Plan Sub-Committee offers the following as an operational definition against which to measure social policy;

*“Rural Character” is that which is most “natural” to the primary human senses of sight, sound and smell. To the eye, a “viewshed” of ridgelines, horizonlines, open fields, forests, uncompromised night sky, undeveloped lakesides and riverbanks, etc., betoken “rural” society as contrasted with suburban, urban, or generally “developed,” society... To the ear, the rural world presents sound of birdsong, coyote howl, deer floundering in snowdrift, wind in the pines, ice storm performing natural pruning... To the nose, rural society presents smells of swamp (“wetland”), animal manure, field, forest, and farm. Smoke too has been part of human occupancy of the country, first by Native Americans, then by Anglo*

*successors... This list does not mean to be exhaustive, but to posit the elements of “rural character” as apprehended by the senses. Put into the negative, we can say that most violations of rural character are what we define as “pollution,” be they of noise, light, blight, petrochemical exhaust and spills, smokestacks, reclaimed landforms. In managing pollutant of our natural environment, we are preserving rural character.*

Swanzey is a town of many parts. The overall impression of these 45 square miles may be “rural,” but included herein are the “village business districts” of West Swanzey and North Swanzey. The Master Plan Sub-Committee does not seek to turn the clock back on these densely-settled, and relatively industrialized, districts to uphold an arbitrary definition. Rather, we feel it reasonable to capitalize on the municipal infrastructure already in place to “channel” future high-density residential and commercial projects to those neighborhoods, while preserving as much as feasible the slopes, ridgelines, riverbanks, fields and forests of the rest of Swanzey. We recommend that zoning provisions conform to this conceptual template.

### **Population**

The Census of 2000 showed Swanzey’s population to be 6,800. The town has a total land area of 45.8 square miles, making for a population density of 148.47 persons per square mile. By comparison, the southwest region (1,031 sq. mi.) served by the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), consisting of 36 towns from Hinsdale to Stoddard, Langdon to Mason, has an overall population of 95,538, or an average density of 96 persons per square mile. The city of Keene’s density is 609 persons per square mile.

### **Environment**

It is our goal to protect the ecological integrity and the purity of air, earth, and water of the 46 square miles for which we Swanzey residents are momentary stewards.

### **Land Use**

It is the goal of the Town of Swanzey to develop and preserve a pleasant, attractive, healthy, safe, affordable and convenient environment for living, working, shopping, and recreation, by encouraging economic development in zoned areas served by infrastructure, and preserving the elements of rural character wherever feasible.

## **Housing**

It is Swanzey's goal to provide for a full range of safe and adequate housing to meet the needs of all Swanzey residents of all ages and income levels, and to contribute our "fair share" to regional needs.

## **Recreation**

We encourage support of activities which "re-create" mind, body and spirit of residents – whether physical exercise, cultural enrichment, historical and environmental awareness, solitude and meaningful "retreat."

## **Public Administration and Facilities**

It is our goal to maximize the safety, security, utility and social services that residents seek from civil society, and to upgrade the resources by which government fulfills these responsibilities.

## **Transportation**

It is our goal to provide a safe, efficient and diversified transportation network that is sensitive to the Town's rural character.

## **Education**

The Master Plan Sub-Committee affirms as its primary educational goal the realization of the full potential of every student, and the full utilization of every facility that lies within its borders, and supports the efforts of Swanzey School Board members to accomplish these goals within the means at their disposal.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

### **Carpenter Home**

#### Mission Statement

The mission of the Carpenter Home Elderly Care Facility is to provide high quality residential care services (assisted living) to residents of Swanzey and surrounding towns. The owner/operator of the Carpenter Home, the Town of Swanzey, is committed to providing services to those in financial need, while at the same time assuring for the long-term financial viability of the facility.

#### Goals and Objectives for 2002 – 2003

1. Enhance the quality of the services provided to residents at the Carpenter Home, including not only upgrades to the physical plant and equipment, but also through enhanced staff training and recruitment of additional staff. (Ongoing 2002-2003)
2. Complete renovations to add four additional resident rooms, upgrade license to allow occupancy of up to 16 residents, from current maximum occupancy of 11. (October 2002)
3. Develop and implement a marketing and public relations program for the Carpenter Home, not only to enhance the facility's visibility in Swanzey, but also to attract additional private pay clientele to the Home. (Ongoing 2002-2003)
4. Develop and maintain revenue sources for the facility, not only to offset the subsidy provided to Medicaid/Home & Community Based Care (HCBC) residents, but also to provide the Town of Swanzey with a positive cash flow from the operation of the Home. (Ongoing 2002-2003)
5. Provide short-term and long-term respite care services to clientele of the Carpenter Home. (Short-term respite care would range from a weekend up to several weeks, while long-term respite care would average 3-6 months). Clients could include private pay, Medicaid, or agencies such as MDS. (September 2002)
6. Provide transitional housing services of up to 6 months in an assisted living environment to seniors who might be on a waiting list for specific housing, such as Housing & Urban Development (HUD) housing. This service would be coordinated with and partially funded by agencies such as the Keene Housing Authority, Southwestern Community

Services, or the City of Keene Human Services Department. (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2002)

7. Investigate the feasibility of renovating additional areas of the Carpenter Home to provide additional resident rooms and/or apartments, including the upstairs area and the barn. (Fiscal year 2004)
8. Investigate the feasibility of adding additional services as needed by the community, such as adult day care. (2003)
9. Position the Carpenter Home to be more of a community-centered healthcare and health promotion center, with the ability to provide resources to the community at large. (2003)
10. Seek additional grant funding from a variety of sources to assist in accomplishing the above-stated goals. (Ongoing 2002-2003)
11. Investigate the feasibility of developing other services and/or facilities on the adjacent 230 acre parcel, such as other types of housing or assisted living facilities. (2003-2004)

### **Richardson Park**

The building on the site of the Town Beach has been used as the site for a Town-run summer camp. The building has restroom facilities and a snack bar. However, the building is in need of extensive renovations, including a new roof and restrooms, upgraded wiring and improved area drainage – among other items. The building has excellent potential to be used for activities such as Summer Camp, meetings, workshops, dances and social gatherings – all activities considered important in our Community Profile Workshop.

Goal 1 The Town should consider a capital improvements program to restore this facility so that it can again be used as a recreational facility.

### **Recreational Facilities**

The Town operates and maintains several recreational facilities such as beaches, athletic fields and trail heads. These are discussed in the Recreation section of the Master Plan Update.

### **Town Hall Facility**

The Town Hall is occupied by government offices on the first floor, and the Swanzey Center Fire Company on the lower level. This presents

an unhealthy condition as diesel fumes from the fire apparatus seep upward into the town offices. In addition, existing office space is extremely limited in relation to the existing work load. Using other buildings (such as Whitcomb Hall) for some departments has been considered and should be kept open to consideration, but has been considered impractical from a communications and logistics viewpoint.

Goal 1 A study should be undertaken to determine the Town's long-term needs for office and meeting space, including the feasibility of one versus multiple locations.

Goal 2 The issue of offices and diesel equipment in the same structure must be addressed and resolved.

### **Town Libraries**

The Stratton Free, located in West; and Mt. Caesar Union, located in Center, are administered by two separate Boards of Trustees. One member of each Board is elected by the Town – the other members being appointed by the Boards themselves. Both libraries receive operational funding from the Town.

Both facilities offer programs such as reading, story hours, and inter-library loan programs, and both facilities are well patronized.

Both facilities envision future needs to expand programs, increase staffing, and upgrade computer facilities, to name a few. Stratton Free is currently undergoing an expansion that will include restroom facilities and more working room. Mt. Caesar will need work done in the areas of structure, roofing and utilities.

Goal 1 Continue to support and work with the Trustees on future operating programs, as well as encouraging the Town to financially support needed capital improvements to the degree practicable.

Goal 2 The Town should, at some future date, address the issue of ownership of the Mt. Caesar Library building and land as it is the Town that funds the operation.

### **Whitcomb Hall**

Whitcomb Hall, formerly used for community and public functions, was closed for code and safety violations in 1988. Public sentiment has always been high to re-open the building, and in 1999, a committee was formed to investigate the possibilities. As of December 2001, monies have been appropriated at Town Meeting to effect repairs to open the first

floor, with additional funding for the second floor to follow from sourcing not yet developed. Specifications for the repair bids are being developed for first floor electrical, plumbing and heat, and should be available in 2002. In addition, the documentation has been completed to apply for inclusion on the National Historic Register.

Goal 1 Continue to gather input from the public and Town officials on potential uses for Whitcomb Hall.

Goal 2 Schedule and publicize events for first floor activities when above-mentioned work has been completed.

Goal 3 Research, and act on, sources of additional funding beyond Town funding for future improvements.

## **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS**

For the purpose of this master plan, construction materials will be defined as sand, gravel, stone, ledge, and loam.

Depending on one's point of view, Swanzey is either blessed or cursed with an abundance of extractable construction materials.

There are currently 9 parcels of land for which Intents to Excavate Earth have been filed, and many inactive and semi-active pits used intermittently to maintain private roads, logging roads and driveways.

Swanzey's current excavation ordinance closely parallels NH Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA) 155-E, the state statute regulating gravel banks. The Town requires developers of gravel banks to post a bond deemed sufficient by the Selectmen to cover the reclamation of the pit by the Town in the event the developer is unable or unwilling to do so. RSA 155-E does require grandfathered pits to comply with the express operational and reclamation standards set forth therein, but does not permit further review and regulation by the Planning Board (if the parameters of the pit's operation remain unchanged).

Gravel banks are limited to an active face of 5 acres and that area is taxed at the true assessed value of the land. The extraction of construction materials is taxed at a rate of 2 cents per cubic yard of material extracted. Enforcement of this tax, however, is currently on the honor system (for the most part).

Goal 1 While recognizing the need for construction materials for all manner of construction projects and a landowner's right to make use of their property, the Town must maintain sufficient controls on the extraction of construction materials to protect the public safety, the aquifers which underlie these sites, and the natural beauty of Swanzey.

a. Review the provisions of RSA 155-E and the Swanzey gravel extraction ordinance to determine if they adequately protect the public interest.

b. Review the procedure used by the Board of Selectmen in setting bonds for reclamation to insure their adequacy. Explore the option of establishing escrow accounts in lieu of bonding requirements.

c. Examine the issue of un-reclaimed pits with an eye toward establishing a mechanism to identify them and funding reclamation, if necessary.

Goal 2 In accordance with the provisions of RSA 72-B, the Town of Swanzey is due an extraction tax of 2 cents per cubic yard of material extracted and a mechanism should be put in place to insure that the Town gets an accurate accounting of material extracted and collects the tax due.

a. Make establishing an accounting system for collection of the extraction tax one of the duties of a full time Code Enforcement Officer and use the funds collected to offset part of the cost of maintaining this position.

b. Make the developer produce, as part of the site plan review application process, a cut/fill calculation. These figures should be checked by the Code Enforcement Officer as part of the review of the site plan review application process. If necessary, hire a civil engineer to check calculations, with the cost of the same being borne by the applicant.

Goal 3 Monitor and regulate the amount of excavation or fill on property not subject to site plan review regulations and/or RSA 155-E, to ensure that public health concerns, nuisance issues and aquifer protection are adequately addressed.

a. Establish reasonable limits on the amount of excavation or fill conducted on a parcel of land that may be conducted without receiving a permit from the Town.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Information obtained from the 2000 US Census

Population 6,800

Total Households 2,666

Total Housing Units 2,818

75.5% of the occupied housing units are owner occupied.

Median Age 38.4

**TABLE 1: Population**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Average Annual % Change</b>
1930	2,066	--
1940	2,262	0.9%
1950	2,806	2.4
1960	3,626	2.9
1970	4,254	1.7
1975	4,809	2.6
1980	5,183	1.6
1981	5,244	1.2
1982	5,394	2.9
1983	5,485	1.7
1984	5,528	0.8
1985	5,564	0.7
1986	5,661	1.7
1987	5,886	4.0
1988	5,992	1.8
1989	6,132	2.3
1990	6,236	1.7
1991	6,286	0.8
1992	6,284	0.0
1993	6,389	1.6
1994	6,530	2.2
1995	6,590	0.9
1996	6,653	0.9
1997	6,660	0.1
1998	6,713	0.8
1999	6,764	0.7
2000	6,800	0.5
<hr/>		
2005	7,090	0.8
2010	7,194	0.2
2015	7,399	0.5
2020	7,650	0.6

Sources: 1930 – 2000, U.S. Bureau of the Census  
1981 – 1989, Office of State Planning (OSP) Annual Estimates of the Population  
1991 – 1999, OSP Annual Estimates of the Population  
2000 – 2020, OSP Population Projections, October 1997

**TABLE 2: Natural Increase**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Births</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>Natural Increase</b>
1975	57	35	22
1976	55	37	18
1977	63	35	28
1978	56	41	15
1979	76	41	35
1980	59	33	26
1981	65	48	17
1982	80	34	46
1983	60	42	18
1984	63	48	15
1985	71	44	27
1986	61	45	16
1987	81	38	43
1988	63	38	25
1989	52	48	04
1990	84	48	36
1991	77	37	40
1992	69	43	36
1993	56	57	-1
1994	77	72	05
1995	88	49	39
1996	78	66	12
1997	71	57	14
1998	73	55	18
1999	82	48	34
Total	1717	1139	578
2000	81	--	--

Source:

Division of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics

**TABLE 3: Place of Residence Five Years Prior to the Census**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Same House</b>	2,417	66%	2,737	57%	2,887	50%	4,047	63.3%
<b>Different House, Same County</b>	661	18%	1,058	22%	1,997	34%	1,707	26.7
<b>Different County</b>	121	03%	156	03%	152	03%	612	9.6%
<b>Different State/Country</b>	465	13%	849	18%	762	13%	537	8.6%

Source: US Bureau of the Census  
DP-2 Social Characteristics: 1990 US Bureau of the Census

**TABLE 4: Age Structure of the Population**

	# 1970	% 1970	# 1980	% 1980	# 1990	% 1990	# 2000	% 2000	% Change 1970 – 1980	% Change 1980 – 1990	% Change 1990 – 2000
<b>Birth – 5 (&lt;5)</b>	473	11.1%	439	8.5%	458	7.3%	401	6.0%	-7.2%	4.3%	-12.5%
<b>(5)6 – 17</b>	1,024	24.1%	1,033	19.9%	1,104	17.7%	1303	19.0%	0.9%	6.9%	18.0%
<b>18 – 64</b>	2,382	56.0%	3,133	60.1%	3,892	62.4%	4215	62.0%	30.7%	25.0%	8.3%
<b>65 &amp; over</b>	375	8.8%	598	11.5%	782	12.5%	881	13.0%	59.5%	30.8%	12.7%

Source: US Census Bureau  
DP-1 General Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990 US Census  
Bureau

\*Figures for 1990 were for “under 5 years” versus “birth to 5” and from “5 to 17” versus  
“6 to 17”

**TABLE 5: Economic Characteristics of the Population**

**-- Level of Education, count of people age 25 and over who: --**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Did Not Finish High School</b>	995	42%	900	29%	875	21%	753	16%
<b>Finished High School</b>	770	33%	1,265	40%	1,583	38%	1,780	38%
<b>Had 1 –3 Years of College</b>	269	11%	501	16%	924	22%	1,159	25%
<b>Had 4+ Years of College</b>	315	13%	482	15%	757	18%	956	21%

Source: US Census Bureau  
 DP-2 Social Characteristics: 1990, 2000

**-- Median Family Income in 1980, 1990 and 2000**

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Swanzey</b>	\$18,507	\$34,306	\$51,500
<b>Cheshire County</b>	\$18,496	\$36,556	\$51,043
<b>New Hampshire</b>	\$19,724	\$41,628	\$57,575

**-- Families Below Poverty Level –**

	<b>1970 # Below</b>	<b>1980 % Below</b>	<b>1980 # Below</b>	<b>1990 % Below</b>	<b>1990 # Below</b>	<b>2000 % Below</b>	<b>2000 # Below</b>
<b>Swanzey</b>	50	6.3%	75	7.7%	134	3.0%	57
<b>Cheshire County</b>	803	10.0%	1,136	5.2%	950	4.4%	823
<b>New Hampshire</b>	12,243	8.5%	14,715	4.4%	12,842	4.3%	13,948

**-- Number of Workers in Family, 1980, 1990 & 2000**

Source: US Census Bureau  
 DP-2 Social Characteristics: 1990  
 DP-3 Economic Characteristics: 2000  
 DP-4 Income and Poverty Status in 1989: 1990

**TABLE 6: Subregional Population Trends****Population:**

<b>Town</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Swanzey</b>	3,626	4,254	5,183	6,236	6,800
<b>Keene</b>	17,562	20,467	21,449	22,430	22,563
<b>Marlborough</b>	1,612	1,671	1,846	1,927	2,0009
<b>Troy</b>	1,445	1,713	2,131	2,097	1,962
<b>Richmond</b>	295	287	518	877	1,077
<b>Winchester</b>	2,411	2,869	3,465	4,038	4,144
<b>Chesterfield</b>	1,405	1,817	2,567	3,112	3,542
<b>Subregion</b>	<b>28,356</b>	<b>33,078</b>	<b>37,153</b>	<b>40,717</b>	<b>42,097</b>
<b>Cheshire County</b>	<b>43,342</b>	<b>52,364</b>	<b>62,116</b>	<b>70,121</b>	<b>73,825</b>
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>606,787</b>	<b>737,578</b>	<b>920,475</b>	<b>1,109k,117</b>	<b>1,235,786</b>

**Annual Percent Increase:**

<b>Town</b>	<b>1960 - 1970</b>	<b>1970 - 1980</b>	<b>1980 - 1990</b>	<b>1990 - 2000</b>
<b>Swanzey</b>	1.7%	2.2%	2.0%	0.9%
<b>Keene</b>	1.7	0.5	0.6	0.0
<b>Marlborough</b>	0.4	1.0	0.4	0.4
<b>Troy</b>	1.9	2.4	0.1	-0.6
<b>Richmond</b>	-0.3	8.0	6.9	2.2
<b>Winchester</b>	1.9	2.1	1.7	0.2
<b>Chesterfield</b>	2.9	4.1	2.2	1.1
<b>Subregion</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Cheshire County</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

**Percent of Subregional Total:**

<b>Town</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Swanzey</b>	12.8%	12.9%	14.0%	15.3%	16.2%
<b>Keene</b>	61.9	61.9	57.7	55.1	53.6
<b>Marlborough</b>	5.7	5.1	5.0	4.7	4.8
<b>Troy</b>	5.1	5.2	5.7	5.2	4.7
<b>Richmond</b>	1.0	0.9	1.4	2.2	2.6
<b>Winchester</b>	8.5	8.7	9.3	9.9	9.8
<b>Chesterfield</b>	5.0	5.5	6.9	7.6	8.4

Sources: US Bureau of the Census

**TABLE 7: Existing Housing Stock**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Permits Issued</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>
1980 Base (1980 Census)	1,894	--
1980	49	--
1981	20	1.0%
1982	51	2.6
1983	35	1.7
1984	34	1.6
1985	92	4.3
1986	125	5.5
1987	77	3.3
1988	365	2.7
1989	51	2.1
Total for above	2,493	31.6%
1990 Base (1990 Census)	2,582	--
1990	43	--
1991	17	1.0%
1992	41	1.6
1993	55	2.1
1994	37	1.4
1995	23	1.0
1996	18	1.0
1997	42	1.5
1998	17	1.0
1999	17	1.0
Total for above	2,892	12.0%
2000 Base (2000 Census)	2,818	--

Source:

US Bureau of the Census &amp; NH OSP

**TABLE 8: Housing Types**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Multi-Family</b>	<b>Manufactured (Mfg.) Housing</b>	<b>Total</b>
1980 Census	1,393	335	166	1,894
1980	23	24	2	49
1981	18	0	20	20
1982	51	0	0	51
1983	33	0	2	35
1984	28	5	1	34
1985	43	46	3	92
1986	120	4	1	125
1987	71	3	3	77
1988	49	13	3	65
1989	48	1	2	51
Total	1,877	431	185	2,493
% of Total	75.3%	17.3%	7.4%	
1990 Census	1,783	534	265	2,582
1990	30	3	10	43
1991	17	0	0	17
1992	20	1	20	41
1993	13	16	26	55
1994	11	0	26	37
1995	13	0	10	23
1996	9	0	9	18
1997	14	23	5	42
1998	11	2	4	17
1999	20	-7	4	17
Total	1,941	572	379	2,892
% of Total	67.1%	19.8%	13.1%	
2000 Census	1,984	569	265	2,818

Source: US Bureau of the Census & NH Office of State Planning

**TABLE 9a: Comparison of Housing Types  
Swanzy and Subregion, 1989**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Multi-Family</b>	<b>Mfg.-H</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Subregion Total</b>		
					<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Multi-Family</b>	<b>Mfg.-H</b>
Swanzy	1,877	431	185	2,493	18.1%	8.3%	16.8%
Keene	4,860	3,872	409	9,141	46.8	74.5	37.1
Marlborough	596	216	36	848	5.7	4.2	3.3
Troy	568	244	101	913	5.5	4.7	9.2
Richmond	329	13	19	361	3.2	0.3	1.7
Winchester	1,050	252	295	1,597	10.1	4.8	26.8
Chesterfield	1,111	164	56	1,331	10.7	3.2	5.1
Total	10,391	5,192	1,101	16,684			
% of Total	62.3%	31.1%	6.6%				

**TABLE 9b: Comparison of Housing Types  
Swanzy and Subregion, 2000**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Multi-Family</b>	<b>Mfg.-H</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Subregion Total</b>		
					<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Multi-Family</b>	<b>Mfg.-H</b>
Swanzy	1,984	569	265	2,818	18.8%	9.8%	21.8%
Keene	4,541	4,308	446	9,295	43.0	74.3	36.6
Marlborough	586	272	35	893	5.6	4.7	2.9
Troy	505	173	100	778	4.8	3.0	8.2
Richmond	396	11	25	432	3.8	0.2	2.1
Winchester	1,106	323	312	1,741	10.5	6.0	25.6
Chesterfield	1,446	145	35	1,626	13.7	3.0	2.9
Total	10,564	5,801	1,218	17,583			
% of Total	60.1%	33.0%	6.9%				

Source: US Census & NH Office of State Planning

**TABLE 10: Housing Supply, Swanzey and Subregion**

<b>Town</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% Change 80-90</b>	<b>% Change 90-00</b>	<b>% of Total Units</b>		
						<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
Swanzey	1,894	2,582	2,818	36.3%	9.1%	13.6%	15.4%	16.0%
Keene	7,934	8,841	9,295	11.4	5.1	57.1	52.8	52.9
Marlborough	703	856	893	21.8	4.3	5.1	5.1	5.1
Troy	782	867	778	10.9	-10.3	5.6	5.2	4.4
Richmond	230	398	432	73.0	8.5	1.7	2.4	2.5
Winchester	1,342	1,673	1,741	24.7	5.0	9.7	10.0	9.9
Chesterfield	1,003	1,527	1,626	52.2	6.5	7.2	9.1	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,888</b>	<b>16,744</b>	<b>17,583</b>					

Source: NH Office of State Planning & US Census

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Before we can attempt to formulate policy for the future of Swanzey relative to economic development, we must look at what existed in the past and what currently exists.

For the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Town of Swanzey was a little dynamo of commerce and industry. Commerce, industry and working farms existed in all five villages of Swanzey. Large numbers of Swanzey residents worked in Swanzey.

West Swanzey had the woolen mill and all the businesses that supported it. East Swanzey had the bucket mill and the sawmill and logging operation to support it. North Swanzey had a chair factory and a vertically integrated dairy products operation and two hydroelectric plants. Westport had a rail depot and store. There were multiple construction products and building materials producers. Commerce and industry were everywhere you looked.

In the 1950s and 1960s things changed. The commerce, industry and agriculture began to go away and Swanzey evolved into what it is today – a bedroom community with high taxes.

Since 1987, which is the first year that the Town report divides total valuation into categories of residential, commercial/industrial, current use and utilities, the proportion of each category has remained virtually unchanged.

In 1987 total valuation was \$200,470,869. 87% was residential, 11% commercial/industrial, less than 1% current use, and 1.5% utilities. In 2002 the total valuation has risen to \$263,005,734 with 83% residential, 14% commercial/industrial, less than 1% current use, and 1.1% utilities.

Given the nature of the N.H. Legislature, the current tax structure is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

A number of studies have shown that if one sets a break even point relative to taxes paid and services required, all types of residential development fall below the break-even point. Commercial, industrial, and utility development are above the break-even point, as is land in current use.

Logic would dictate that we want to continue to raise the percentage of total valuation that is commercial/industrial.

If this is the our overall goal, what objectives should we set out to achieve that goal:

1. Zoning – Make sure that the zoning provides appropriate space for industrial/commercial development to take place with adequate safeguards to protect the environment and existing development.
2. Infrastructure – Commercial/industrial development requires water, sewer, 3-phase power and access. The Town needs to encourage the development of appropriate infrastructure to coordinate with appropriate zoning.
3. Innovation – The Town needs to coordinate its efforts with all available private and public economic development agencies to facilitate such things as development of the industrial park zone under the tax increment finance district financing, development at the airport, a free trade zone, and other innovative economic development measures.

### **Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District**

Swanzy voters authorized in 1999 the creation of a 155 acre Tax Increment Finance District between Routes 12 and 32 to facilitate business development. TIF entities enable communities to develop infrastructure (roads, sewers, etc.) by means of a municipal bond, but defer actual costs (net charges) until the tax revenue from contracted developments equals the cost of the Town's investment. Voters authorized a municipal bond at the same time, and an administrative committee was appointed to oversee the program.

Shortly thereafter, the enabling statute that governs TIF Districts was changed, and the entire concept has now become secondary to how New Hampshire resolves the primary issue of educational funding. TIF entities will doubtless continue as efficient incubators of business development, but the applicable tax rate structures will await the prior resolution of school funding. Swanzy's development of this district basically awaits the resolution of the broader tax issues at the State level.

Goal 1 The TIF administrative committee should actively pursue the development opportunities in the District using all available resources in the region.

Goal 2 The Town should encourage and support legislation that maximizes tax revenues usable for development of TIF Districts.

**Assessment in Millions**

	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial/Industry</b>	<b>Current Use</b>	<b>Utilities</b>
<b>1987</b>				
Land	39.5	4.1	0.7	2.1
Bldg.	<u>135.8</u>	<u>18.0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	175.3	22.1	0.7	2.1
	87%	11%	-1%	1.5%
<b>1990</b>				
Land	38.9	4.6	0.7	0
Bldg.	<u>157.1</u>	<u>20.7</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2.1</u>
	196	25.3	0.7	2.1
	87%	11%	-1%	1%
<b>1995</b>				
Land	37.4	5.3	1.3	0
Bldg.	<u>172.0</u>	<u>23.3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2.1</u>
	209.4	28.6	1.3	2.1
	87%	12%	-1%	1%
<b>2000</b>				
Land	75.0	13.0	1.7	0
Bldg.	<u>142.5</u>	<u>23.4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3.1</u>
	84%	14%	-1%	1.2%
<b>2001</b>				
Land	75.3	13.2	1.9	0
Bldg.	<u>144.6</u>	<u>24.7</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3.1</u>
	219.9	37.9	1.9	3.1
	83%	14%	-1%	1.1%

## EDUCATION

The Town of Swanzey is a member of the Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD), along with seven other communities: Fitzwilliam, Gilsum, Richmond, Roxbury, Sullivan, Surry, and Troy. Created in 1961, the MRSD opened its doors to classes in 1962. The District offers a comprehensive program, pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. District facilities include ten buildings, of which two administrative and three school buildings are in Swanzey – School Administrative Unit (SAU) 38 Administrative Center, Wilcox Building, the regional high school and two elementary schools. There are elementary schools in Fitzwilliam, Gilsum, Surry, Sullivan and Troy. Elementary students from Roxbury and Richmond are transported by school bus to Swanzey facilities. The Monadnock School District is a major employment center in the Town of Swanzey, with substantial impacts on water withdrawals, wastewater management, and daily traffic and parking.

The three schools in Swanzey are Mt. Caesar Elementary School (pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, grades 1-3), Monadnock Regional Junior/Senior High School (grades 7-12), and Cutler Elementary School (grades 4-6) in West Swanzey. Mt. Caesar Elementary and the High School, along with two administration buildings are situated on Route 32 in Swanzey Center on approximately 100 acres of land. Water is provided to these facilities from private wells on-site (classified as "community water systems" under the NH Wellhead Protection guidelines), and wastewater is also managed on-site.

The demographics of the Swanzey Center educational complex in January, 2003, are as follows: 1,660 students, 135 teaching staff, and 131 administrative, para-professional, and support staff. One thousand three hundred students attend grades seven through twelve at the High School, served by 101 professional staff, 33 para-professional and 26 support staff. Three hundred and sixty attend Mt. Caesar School, with 34 professional staff, and 32 para-professional and eight support staff.. The High School provides parking for 340 vehicles (of which 183 are assigned to students). Mt. Caesar School provides parking for 71 vehicles. SAU-38 headquarters, with 32 employees, has a small lot accommodating staff and visitor's vehicles, while the parking lot at the Wilcox Building can accommodate 10 vehicles. In addition to the daily commuting/ parking by staff and some students, there are another 24 "traveling professionals" who provide specialized services at the outlying District schools, as well as the daily bus services contracted to Laidlaw Education Services. In the 2002-03 year, 32 buses call at the "campus" three times per day, seven buses call four times per day, and five buses call seven times per day, for a daily total of 159 vehicle-trips per day.

Laidlaw's base of operations is also in Swanzey (Whittemore Farm Road), and it should be noted that 76 of the current roster of 86 employees are Swanzey residents, adding yet another 75 or so daily commutes from their respective homes to (and from) the school bus "depot" entirely on Town roads.

The 1990 Swanzey Master Plan noted overcrowding at every level, particularly in the elementary schools. The District addressed the problem at Swanzey facilities by a combination of new construction, and modular units. The High School added a new wing in 1994 and 1995, which expanded the library and contributed 10 additional classrooms. Another three modular units have been added since then, increasing the classroom inventory by an additional six rooms. At Mt. Caesar School, ten classrooms have been added by means of modular units since 1990. Cutler School had four modular classrooms in the mid-1990s, plus a construction project in 1996-97 that added a multi-purpose room, upgraded the kitchen facilities, and incorporated the modular spaces into permanent construction. The Junior/Senior High School enrollment is presently 1,300, which exceeds the building's designed capacity (original plus wing) by 25%. Expressed another way, space-utilization at the High School is currently 95%+ (*vs.* NH Dept. of Education standards of 75%). The "life-expectancy" of modular units is approximately 20 years, so they do not constitute a long-term solution to the modest but steady population increase of the member towns. The District School Board is currently proposing (2003) construction of a new high school on the 100-acre site, which would enable the existing 40-year-old building to be converted to a "middle school." There are sound educational and developmental reasons for separating the two age cohorts, but District ratepayers will be assessing whether enrollment projections justify the \$28 million investment in a new structure having a 50-year asset-life.

Cutler Elementary School has 350 students from Swanzey, Richmond and Roxbury in grades four through six, 25 professional and 21 para-professional staff, and seven support staff. Served by municipal sewer, and with far less daily commuting, its impacts have not been calculated, except to note that the Laidlaw bus total includes calls at Cutler School.

At this writing (2003), the US economy is in its third year of recession, with momentous decision-points and hazards immediately before us. Will New England business and technology continue to grow? Will southwest NH continue to experience in-migration? Will town populations continue to show positive "natural increase" (annual births minus deaths)? Will average household size remain at 2.70 persons per owned homes (2.08 for renters), or continue trending downward? Put another way, will District towns show population increases, but

introduce fewer children into the school system (as the three northern towns exemplified in the 1990s)? These are significant issues, answered one home and one company at a time, making collective projections especially speculative. Will the State of NH resolve the education-funding issue in a manner that achieves consensus, provides equity, and fulfills constitutionality, enabling towns and school districts to plan rationally for their respective futures?

The Swanzey Master Plan Sub-Committee affirms as its primary educational goal the realization of full potential of every student, and secondarily the full utilization of every facility that lies within its borders. The Committee supports the efforts of Swanzey School Board members (since 2001, six of the 15-member Board) to accomplish these goals within the means at their disposal.

*Sources: MRSD Annual Reports, AY2000, 2001, 2002, Buildings & Grounds, School Resource Officer, Laidlaw Transportation.*

## **HOUSING**

### **General Goal**

\* Provide for a full range of safe and adequate housing to meet the needs of all Swanzey residents of all ages and at all income levels.

### **Specific Objectives**

\* Ensure that the Town zoning ordinance accommodates a diversity of residential densities and locations.

\* Ensure that the Town zoning ordinance, site plan review regulations and subdivision regulations provide for a variety of residential design concepts such as conservation subdivisions and planned unit residential developments.

\* Ensure that the Town zoning ordinance, site plan review regulations and subdivision regulations provide for a variety of housing styles, such as condominiums, single family dwellings (including manufactured housing units), duplexes and multi-family dwellings.

\* Encourage residential rehabilitation and cooperate with nonprofit agencies and, if feasible, with for-profit corporations, to ensure a supply of affordable housing.

\* Establish appropriate support services for the elderly and those persons with special needs so they may continue to reside in the least restrictive environment possible.

\* Encourage higher density residential development in areas where community water supplies and sewer systems are available.

\* Recognizing the inherent differences between the built and the natural environment, establish regulations and guidelines to ensure that housing development will occur with as little negative physical and aesthetic impact on the natural environment as possible.

\* Encourage historical preservation of structures of 100 years of age or more.

### **Existing Housing Stock**

1980            1,894 (Population 5,183)

1990 2,582 (Population 6,236)

2000 2,818 (Population 6,800)

### Housing Types

<u>Year</u>	<u>Single Family</u>	<u>Multi-Family</u>	<u>Mfg. Housing</u>
1980	1,393 <b>74%</b>	335 <b>18%</b>	166 <b>9%</b>
1990	1,783 <b>69%</b>	534 <b>21%</b>	265 <b>10%</b>
2000	1,984 <b>70%</b>	569 <b>20%</b>	265 <b>9%</b>

### Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income

	<u>&lt; 20%</u>	<u>20 to 24%</u>	<u>25 to 29%</u>	<u>30 to 34%</u>	<u>&gt; 35%</u>	<u>NC</u>
Year 1989	102 <b>19%</b>	56 <b>10%</b>	68 <b>13%</b>	94 <b>17%</b>	181 <b>33%</b>	42 <b>8%</b>
Year 1999	209 <b>35%</b>	110 <b>18%</b>	74 <b>12%</b>	44 <b>7%</b>	150 <b>25%</b>	17 <b>3%</b>

(NC = Not Computed)

### Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income

	<u>&lt; 20%</u>	<u>20 to 24%</u>	<u>25 to 29%</u>	<u>30 to 34%</u>	<u>&gt; 35%</u>	<u>NC</u>
Year 1989	614 <b>47%</b>	153 <b>12%</b>	162 <b>12%</b>	90 <b>7%</b>	258 <b>20%</b>	22 <b>2%</b>
Year 1999	722 <b>47%</b>	277 <b>18%</b>	182 <b>12%</b>	87 <b>6%</b>	274 <b>18%</b>	8 <b>1%</b>

### Vacancy Rates

1990 Census	Homeowner vacancy rate	2.3%
	Rental vacancy rate	5.8%
2000 Census	Homeowner vacancy rate	0.8%
	Rental vacancy rate	2.8%

**Average Household Size**

1990 Census	Owner-Occupied Units	2.79
	Renter-Occupied Units	2.07
2000 Census	Owner-Occupied Units	2.70
	Renter-Occupied Units	2.08

**Persons 65 years and over with a mobility or self-care limitation**

1990            146 out of 774            19%

**Population 65 years and over with a disability**

2000            289 out of 881            32.8%

## **LAND USE**

### **Overall Goal**

It is the overall goal of the Town of Swanzey to develop and preserve a pleasant, attractive, healthy, safe, affordable and convenient environment for living, working, shopping and recreation.

### **Objectives**

1. Maintain the present character of Swanzey as a typical, well-balanced New England community.
2. Provide for the optimal utilization of the Town's assets in order to create the opportunity for future growth without sacrificing the economic well-being or the general character of Swanzey.
3. Provide for a variety of land uses, through careful management and guidance of new development, which should not detract from the rural, residential, scenic and agricultural character of the Town.
4. Provide for the conservation and management of the Town's natural resources and the protection of sensitive areas in order to ensure their continued availability for the enjoyment and well-being of all Swanzey residents and future generations.
5. Promote and encourage the development of commercial and retail growth along the existing corridors of Routes 10 and 12, the northerly section of Route 32 in the vicinity of the industrial park and the airport and in the Industrial Park. Such development will be undertaken in accordance with strict site plan review standards adopted by the Planning Board to minimize potential negative aspects of commercial and retail development.
6. Protect natural resources, preserve the Town's rural areas, and minimize sprawl by directing higher density development to occur within the existing villages and to parcels accessible to public water and sewer systems.
7. Ensure minimal pollution – light, noise, smell, and contamination.

### **Strategies**

1. Regularly update a Master Plan through which the local government can maintain a unified set of long-range policies for the

physical development of Swanzey. Maintain a standing Master Plan Subcommittee to continuously address the Master Plan section by section.

2. Maintain a referral policy between the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Adjustment, the Conservation Commission, and other Town boards and departments to continually relate all development proposals to the Town Capital Improvements Program and to keep Town officials aware of the cumulative effects of development.

3. Continually monitor and amend all land use controls (zoning, subdivision, etc.) designed to direct the development of Swanzey as visualized by the Master Plan.

4. Support any public and/or private efforts to preserve and protect open land in Swanzey – insofar as these efforts do not economically penalize the landowner.

5. The standing Master Plan Subcommittee should work with the Conservation Commission to develop a comprehensive plan to identify, establish and maintain greenways to protect wildlife corridors and to provide undeveloped areas for recreation and for aesthetics.

### **Recommendations for Future Land Use**

1. Direct higher density development towards the portions of the villages of North Swanzey and West Swanzey currently or potentially served by sewer and/or water.

2. Continue to direct low density residential development to occur along the Town's Class V roads, and discourage new residential development in the existing Commercial/Industrial and Business Zoning Districts.

3. Prepare and adopt a steep slope ordinance for all zoning districts which prohibits development on land with slopes of over 25% and prohibits the inclusion of lands with slopes greater than 25% in the calculation for minimum lot size.

4. Adopt the existing map of the Town's wetlands and aquifers to supplement the Wetlands Protection District defined in the Zoning Ordinance.

5. Existing zoning requirements in the Rural/Agricultural District call for a minimum lot size of 3 acres. This minimum should not be reduced

when topographical considerations would permit a higher-density of development.

6. The Planning Board, in conjunction with the Selectmen and the Public Works Director, should develop a road policy to help anticipate and address problems with development on private roads and Class VI roads. Road policies should be developed and administered in cooperation with adjoining towns.

### Strategies

1. Small, incremental changes in land use can cumulate in undesired changes in the Town as a whole. Planning tools and policies become outdated, or inconsistent with other policies. The Planning Board should review all planning tools and policies on an on-going basis, working to ensure that Swanzey's ordinances and regulations accomplish the goals of the Town. The Board should solicit input and recommendations from the Selectmen, Town committees and employees, and the public. Topics should include:

- \* Re-evaluate Town policies regarding development on Class VI roads.

- \* Evaluate the existing business district uses at Dillant-Hopkins Airport to coordinate with the uses permitted in the Industrial Zone, in addition to permitting aviation-related uses at both the Airport and the Industrial Zone. It is noted that the City of Keene is in the process of developing a Master Plan for the Dillant-Hopkins Airport. To the extent that the goals set forth in the Airport's Master Plan are compatible with those established in Swanzey's Master Plan, these goals should be actively pursued. Acknowledging that some goals may be difference or diametrically opposed, the two communities should seek to establish common ground.

- \* Update zoning amendments, subdivision and site plan regulations for conservation residential development. Such development would permit reduced lot sizes and reduced dimensional setbacks in exchange for permanently protected open land with special value for the Town.

- \* Determine the best way to maintain the proper balance between the residential area surrounding Wilson Pond and nearby industrial uses and the airport.

\* Recognizing that water frontage along the South Branch and Ashuelot Rivers will become more valuable, determine what steps will best protect the public's aesthetic and recreational access to these areas.

\* Future development of Yale Forest lands may be detrimental to the underlying high yield aquifer. Determine how to protect the Town's interest in this area, including consideration of an aquifer protection district.

\* Expand the review and regulation of lighting.

2. Promote the installation of sewer lines for Wilson Pond area and North Swanzey. Promote upgrading of the roads and drainage system and water system in this area as part of the sewer line installation.

3. Promote the construction of a new Town road between Route 32 and Route 12 in conjunction with the development of the Industrial Park.

4. Develop a long-range plan for lands owned by the Town. The plan should include:

\* A procedure for assessing the value to the Town of each parcel. The parcel's importance in historic preservation, aquifer protection, potential for wellheads, wildlife habitat, scenic qualities, and flood water storage should be considered.

\* A procedure for disposing of unwanted parcels.

5. Develop a management plan for parcels retained by the Town. For those parcels deemed to be of conservation or historical significance, establish formal and permanent protective measures, including the recording of restrictions on use at the Cheshire County Registry of Deeds.

6. The Town should review properties to determine those it may wish to purchase or acquire easements for conservation purposes, such as protecting wildlife corridors, providing riparian buffers and access, parks, hiking trails, preserving open space and protecting watershed and aquifer recharge zones. Once acquired, parcels should be incorporated into a management plan.

## **PRESERVATION**

Swanzey is a town with a history, as evidenced by the fact that its official history was itself published 110 years ago (Benjamin Read, *History of Swanzey, 1734-1890*, 1892). Laid out as "Lower Ashuelot" simultaneously with "Upper Ashuelot" (Keene), Swanzey retains outcroppings of its colonial past, as well as historical strata of the many transitions of the 19th and 20th centuries. Nearly every stage of Swanzey's history has left material evidence on the land, and in the built environment.

Efforts to preserve Swanzey's history have tended to be focused and/or episodic, rather than systematic and comprehensive. The notable exception is the Swanzey Preservation Society, founded in 1992 for the purpose of saving the Golden Rod Grange Hall, and expanding thereafter to include historical hikes, videotaped conversations on historical subjects, archaeological forays, mapping of old cemeteries, and more. The four covered bridges, the Golden Rod Grange Hall, the annual revival of *The Old Homestead*, and the collections of the Antiquarian Society and the Historical Museum, are foremost among Swanzey's preserved historical treasures. The survival of many older buildings, both public and private, is also to be celebrated. One thinks of Mt. Caesar Union Library, Stratton Free Library, the Carpenter Home, as well as Whitcomb Hall, Town Hall, Mt. Caesar Cemetery, and many others. However, as every homeowner knows, older structures are vulnerable to *both* change and time. A logging skidder can obliterate an inconvenient stone wall in minutes. A 200-year-old barn can succumb to the aggregate burden of animal waste, vermin, and weather in a decade. Well-intentioned homeowners can compromise the historical integrity of an old house in pursuit of an understandable "upgrade." The pattern applies equally to public and not-for-profit buildings as to residences.

This Master Plan encourages heightened awareness and appreciation of the history of Swanzey. It posits goals that seek to preserve the agricultural and early-industrial features of Swanzey that help define the town's rural character. It encourages greater efforts at communication of Swanzey's history, whether updating the century-old town history, or mapping historical trails and stationing historical markers throughout our 250-year-old cultural landscape. It encourages active STEWARDSHIP of Swanzey's past, invoking the wisdom of the 1963 law which first created "historic districts" in New Hampshire: "The preservation of structures and places of historic and architectural value is hereby declared to be a public purpose" (*RSA 31:89-a(1963)*).

## Goals and Objectives

1. To insure the recognition and preservation of the Native American traces in Swanzey.
  - a. Preserve the Ashuelot River weir and other Indian sites and artifacts.
2. To insure the preservation of the colonial heritage of Swanzey.
  - a. Map the stone walls, cemeteries public and private, and 18th century roads of town. [cf. blister-rust control maps][add global positioning satellite data, as feasible).
  - b. Conduct an inventory of colonial-era buildings and layouts.
3. To insure the preservation of the agricultural heritage of Swanzey.
  - a. Compile an inventory of surviving farmsteads, barns and agricultural outbuildings.
  - b. Facilitate the application of Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) funds to preserve the agricultural built environment.
4. To insure the preservation of the industrial heritage of Swanzey.
  - a. Compile an inventory of mill sites, dam-sites, quarries, power canals, clay-yards and brickyards, tannery sites, railroad sites and artifacts, manufacturing facilities, etc.
5. To insure that Swanzey's history be preserved and communicated, insofar as feasible.
  - a. Recommend the creation of a Heritage Commission. Such a Commission, enabled under RSA 673:4 - 674:44b, would be comprised exclusively of Swanzey residents, having advisory and review authority regarding local cultural and historic resources, analogous to the Conservation Commission regarding natural resources. Additional descriptions regarding New Hampshire Heritage Commissions accompany this report.
  - b. Install interpretive markers by mill sites, bridges, historical buildings, etc.
  - c. Commission an update of Read's *History of Swanzey*, including the 1930s Oakman manuscript.
  - d. Support the creation of Historic Districts in Swanzey, where appropriate, and the nomination of individual properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
  - e. Support historic preservation easements, as enabled under RSA 477:45,II.
  - f. Support the existing institutions dedicated to the preservation of Swanzey history and culture, namely, the Swanzey Preservation Society, the Swanzey Historical Museum, the Swanzey

Antiquarian Society, the Swanzey Libraries, the Old Homestead Association, Old Home Day, etc.

g. Recognize that historical information has value to the Town - for self-knowledge, for community identity, for tourism -- and provide funds and support necessary to realize the full potential of this aspect of Swanzey culture.

### **Old Home Day**

"Old Home Day" has its origins in an early phase of "heritage tourism." Once the Erie Canal made migration westward possible, and the lure of the frontier, of free land, and then of gold, provided the incentive, rural New England experienced a diaspora from 1845 through 1930. Most farm communities peaked in population in the Censuses of 1840 or 1850, and then steadily declined as younger generations left the farms for the advantages of wage labor in industrial villages and cities (Manchester, Nashua, Lowell, Holyoke, etc.), or the adventures of pioneering anew in western New York, Ohio, Indiana, and beyond. By the 1890s, a new phenomenon was developing, of transplanted families returning to New England, first by rail, later by automobile, to revisit "the old homestead," to introduce children to their grandparents, to rediscover the landscapes of their youth. The summer months brought so many family reunions, so much returning "to the roots," that the State of New Hampshire responded with an official proclamation of "Old Home Week," by Gov. Frank Rollins in 1899. An association was formed in the Governor's office, to help coordinate publicity and to assist towns in organizing celebrations. Many towns experiencing waves of returnees to the "old homestead" happily paid dues to join the association and learn how to capitalize on this early phase of the tourist industry. Whether members or not, many towns designated an "Old Home Day," or Week, and organized a parade, perhaps a church supper, a band concert, etc.

Swanzey celebrated its early Old Home Days at the recently-donated Richardson Park on Swanzey Lake. Old-timers can recall the unpaved roads to and around Swanzey Lake being lined with horse-drawn buggies, as families conducted their reunions in the "resort" atmosphere of the lakeside pines. One such occasion in the 1930s featured a water carnival performed by camp boys from across the Lake, a performance of the "Swanzey Bicentennial March," led by the composer Prof. Edward Bouvier, singing of "Auld Lang Syne," picnic lunches in the pine grove, speech by attorney (later, Judge) John Goodnow, an amateur contest conducted by Dr. Hopkins, and the annual baseball game pitting West Swanzey against the Swanzey Athletic Association. A dance and musical "revue" constituted the evening program.

Old Home Days have continued in Swanzey into the twenty first century, bolstered in part by the 1939 revival of "The Old Homestead," the play by Denman Thompson drawing upon his childhood memories of Swanzey life in the mid-nineteenth century. Families from across the United States still choose to convene in Swanzey, NH, for the same reasons as their grandparents did three and four generations ago, to celebrate the simpler values of rural life, as depicted in Thompson's country drama, to rediscover the homesteads of their ancestors, to meet anew their far-flung cousins and together visit the weathering stones of the family plot in Mount Caesar Cemetery. So long as volunteers are willing to commit, so long as diaspora families choose to seek out their roots, the Town of Swanzey should continue to support, in kind and in funds, the valuable work of reuniting which both Old Home Day and Old Homestead make possible.

### **Swanzey Historical Museum**

The Swanzey Historical Museum originated with the wish to salvage and preserve the horse-drawn, steam-powered fire pumper, which served Swanzey in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning in 1901. Charles Hanrahan began the project in 1982. As recently-retired president of Kingsbury Machine Tool Corporation in Keene, he had access to a technology-savvy working space, and the support of the volunteer fire companies of his home town of Swanzey. Thus began a project refurbishing and replacing corroded springs, petrified leather bushings, etc., of the pumper, proceeding every step by touch and experience (rather than by blueprint or design), so that a high-tech apparatus of the early 1900s was recreated system by system, and inch by inch. As restoration proceeded, attention turned to preservation and display. Providing a roof over the salvaged historical pumper became the linch-pin for the Swanzey Museum. A fund-raising effort in the middle 1980s generated enough support to build, with the assistance of the Town, a free-standing museum building on Rt. 10, large enough to accommodate the restored fire pumper, and many other Swanzey artifacts and documents. Frank Worcester volunteered to catalog and curate the many objects and collections that came forward once the Museum was established. The Museum was dedicated in 1987.

Since its opening, the Historical Museum has maintained an accessible schedule during three seasons of the year, staffed entirely by volunteers. It has continued to serve as a magnet for historical objects of importance to Swanzey history, offering high-quality cataloguing and preservation procedures. Acid-free containment, humidity and temperature control, are central to the long-lived preservation of historical materials. Museum volunteers are becoming trained in textile

preservation and photograph management. Vinyl record albums have been cleaned and restored. In 2001 the Museum won a grant to have its preservation program appraised.

### Goal

The Museum keeps as its goal the preservation of the primary materials of Swanzey history.

### Objectives

1. Install a second dehumidifier in basement storage area, plus humidity monitoring equipment.
2. Make furnace room ceiling and door fire-resistant.
3. Install ultra-violet-resistant film on all south and west-facing windows.
4. Construct an addition to the building, to accommodate other items awaiting accession and display.

### **Swanzey Preservation Society**

In August of 1992, seven people formed the Swanzey Preservation Committee. This Committee's purpose was to secure measures to save the Golden Rod Grange Hall #114 in Swanzey Center from certain adverse change, if not destruction. In an effort to gain help and monetary support from local, state, and national levels, the Preservation Society needed to be a legal entity. In October of 1992, the Swanzey Preservation Committee evolved into the Swanzey Preservation Society and was registered with the State of New Hampshire as a nonprofit organization.

Since that time, the Society has worked closely with the State of N.H. Historical Division; placed the Grange Hall on the National Register of Historic Places; painted the entire building twice; painted and replaced shutters; dug out and cemented a full cellar and replaced all of the floor joists and sills; collected thousands of artifacts from the excavation process of the cellar and unearthed an 1840s fireplace base and an "historical gem of a cistern," according to Gary Hume, N.H.'s head archaeologist; rewired the kitchen; wired the cellar for plumbing and heating; landscaped the back and side lawns; and built stone walls around the flower garden and maple tree. The Society has received two awards for exemplary preservation efforts on this building, one from the State of New Hampshire and one from the Grange organization.

As the restoration of the Grange Hall has been the driving force of the Society, it has not been its total focus. The Society has sponsored an

archaeology training school – through which the fish weir in the Ashuelot River was measured and registered with the State; found and transported early grist wheel to the Swanzey Museum; dismantled and secured the “Thompson Room” from Denman Thompson’s homestead; participated in Old Home Days; replanked the Carlton Bridge – before its restoration; established the Swanzey Liberty Cane; established a reward fund to help capture the arsonist of the Slate Bridge, as well as donated monies to its reconstruction. The Preservation Society also designed and placed the “Welcome to Swanzey” signs along the Town’s major highways.

The Society is currently updating the Town history; conducting ongoing historical hikes – which includes finding forgotten gravesites; as well as continuing the Grange Hall project.

The future for this organization holds the completion of the above-mentioned projects. Some are soon to be completed, while others are five to ten years in the making. The Society will continue to educate the public on the community’s history and heritage. The Society is a dedicated group determined to preserve the Town’s past for the Town’s future.

### **Swanzey “Historian’s Afternoon”**

Beginning with the "Covered Bridge Day" celebration in 1994, the "Historian's Afternoon" is a monthly round-table of discussion and exchange on various aspects of the history of Swanzey. The 25 or so attendees of the 1994 Bridge forum encouraged the organizers to continue the discussion, so Al and Eileen Longe, Walt Calkins, Stan Earle, and Bob Hobbs worked out a schedule with some suggested topics for each. The monthly "Afternoon," which began at Town Hall, has moved over time to Mt. Caesar Union Library, and then on to the Swanzey Historical Museum. All sessions are videotaped, and transcriptions are under preparation.

The published History of Swanzey, by Benjamin Read, appeared in 1892. Since that time, much has happened, but little recorded formally, in the community life of the villages of Swanzey. A manuscript was begun in the 1930s to update Read's History, but the project was not completed. The stark reality is that Swanzey's history throughout the twentieth century remains largely a blank slate, the only exceptions being a newspaper column here, a personal memoir there.

The "Historian's Afternoon" is a sustained exercise in "oral history," in which first-hand participants and residents share their memories (scrapbooks, photographs, diary entries, fishing logs, etc.) in a setting where other long-time and interested residents can respond with their

respective memories, whether divergent or affirmative. It is a genuine conversation among folks with first-hand knowledge. Such memories, if not captured, pass into oblivion, leaving "history" merely the record of what government agencies and the media have chosen to record, such as tragedies, blizzards, warrant articles, car registrations and animal licenses, etc. The first-hand experiences of the natives of Swanzey, and long-time residents and workers, "flesh out" the stark truths of demographics, land valuations, and periodic news items such as floods.

There are no dues or membership fees to the Swanzey "Historian's Afternoon." Any person with interest or information about any aspect of Swanzey history is cordially invited to the Historical Museum, on Rt. 10, on the last Sunday of each month, January through October, between 2:00 and 4:00 pm., to participate. The NH Division of Historical Resources, and Inherit New Hampshire, have recognized the significance of the work of the Swanzey "Historian's Afternoon."

### **“The Old Homestead”**

"The Old Homestead," a stage play written by Denman Thompson (1833-1911), premiered in Boston in 1888, and swiftly became a national, and eventually international, platform for the customs and character of Swanzey, New Hampshire. Thompson's parents, both Swanzey locals, briefly tried "frontier" life in eastern Pennsylvania as soon as the Erie Canal made such a journey feasible. It was in Girard, Pa., that son Denman was born. But the Thompsons returned to Swanzey in less than a decade, so this was the society in which Denman spent his formative years. Denman grew up to be a stage performer of the song-and-dance variety, never enjoying any financial success until arthritis in his fifties forced him to slow down, and consider alternative means of livelihood for a family man with three children. Denman Thompson combined his familiarity and love of the stage, with his childhood memories of life in Swanzey, to compose a melodramatic play set in rural New England at the peak of its agricultural economy (1840s - 1850s). A simple country farmer travels to New York City in search of his prodigal son. Josh the father struggles to understand the values and pace of urban life against the yardstick of his pastoral world, providing both empathy and humor for this elemental generational conflict. Thompson wrote the Uncle Josh role with minimal physical demands, so that he himself could play the part, a shrewd career move which yielded some 15,000 performances and national acclaim, enabling a wealthy retirement to the village of his roots, West Swanzey.

"The Old Homestead" is significant for striking such a responsive chord in late nineteenth-century America. It was a nostalgic "flash-back" for city theater-goers in a newly industrialized, urbanized society. After

its successful opening in Boston, it moved to New York where it ran for four years, Philadelphia for two years, and so on to Chicago, San Francisco, and eventually to Europe, including a command performance before the aging Queen Victoria. "The Old Homestead" retained its stage appeal for 20 years -- a remarkable phenomenon in itself, and evidence of the psychological hunger it slaked for the many who had opted for the glamour of "bright lights and big cities," but who retained an emotional toehold in the traditional life of soils and seasons. For the city-dweller, "The Old Homestead" translated to "The World We Have Lost." [Swanzy can take pride in representing the traditional.]

Thompson enjoyed the fruits of his good fortune, but the stage moved on to the latest sensation. "The Old Homestead" fell into theatrical limbo for a quarter century. In the 1930s, however, as town bicentennials were celebrated in Swanzy and Keene, the play was revived in Keene City Hall, with Henry Horton, the last "Uncle Josh" in New York, playing the lead. The revival triggered a local effort in Swanzy, initially in the form of a silent pageant entitled "The Blazing Arrow," then a full-scale reproduction of the play in a central site chosen as a natural amphitheater, a concavity on the southeast slope of Mt. Caesar. It was designated the "Potash Bowl" as being the site where wood ashes were collected a century before for processing into lye. Once the amphitheater was completed, "The Old Homestead" was presented in 1939, and with the exception of three "black-out" years during WWII, it has been performed annually (by Swanzy citizens and others) in the Potash Bowl for 60+ years. It is a genuine community effort, based on community identity. While our tastes, and entertainment media, have "progressed" far beyond the agricultural economy of mid-nineteenth-century New England (a distant memory even to the playwright), it is good to refresh our knowledge of simpler times, and to celebrate this play, drawn on Swanzy NH, which swept the western world a century ago.

*Postscript:* Howard Mansfield, author of The Memory House and other books drawing on New England history, is preparing a biographical study of Denman Thompson and his work

## RECREATION

The provision of adequate recreational facilities and opportunity is an important responsibility of local government. Despite the impediment which traditional New England limited government sometimes places on assuming municipal leadership for activities which are seemingly individual, the fact is that the era of farmers allocating a hayfield for village baseball are over. It falls to government to provide baseball diamonds, soccer fields, playgrounds, recreational trails, places of assembly, etc., which are designed (and maintained) for safety and accessibility and minimal nuisance consequence. The 1990s generated a number of surveys for identifying “best places to live,” best college campuses, etc. It is noteworthy that each of the top-ranked communities made substantial commitments to recreational opportunities for its residents.

Recreation is as necessary to the complete development of the individual as work is to the wallet. It is in leisure, in play, in solitude and quiet that the individual re-connects with self, with spirit, with the world of nature. He or she literally “re-creates” self. The *good community* makes provision for *re-creation* to happen. Such a town not only enables residents to relieve the tensions of the workplace, the commute, the noise of the contemporary world; it also *invests* in the health and well-being of its citizens – many of whom will live out their lives within its borders. In a period when 45% of all Americans are clinically obese, no community can passively ignore the long-term costs of a populace courting dire health consequences. Government has intervened forcefully in regard to nicotine addiction, on just such grounds. Doubtless other public health campaigns lie ahead. How much more affirmative for government to *foster* good health through sustained encouragement of recreation.

Swanzy Recreation at Present.

Swanzy townsfolk have benefited from community recreation over the past 20 years, thanks to the efforts of very part-time staff, immeasurable volunteerism, and availability of school facilities. Most activities have been summertime ones focused on children. The following programs have been offered annually for more than a dozen years:

Summer Day Camp	Bicycle Safety Course
Track & Weight Room at MRHS	Swimming Lessons
Life Guards at Town Beaches	Ice Skating Hours at Cheshire Arena
Activities, Games at Old Home Day	Easter Egg Hunt (with Police Dept.)

Current recreational facilities and sites in Swanzey include the following:

- \* Schools (Cutler, Mt. Caesar, MRHS) – playground, athletic fields, tennis courts, track, nature trail

- \* Municipal athletic fields (East and West Swanzey)

- \* Ponds (beach, pavilion and boat launch at Swanzey Lake; beach and boat launch at Wilson Pond)

- \* Streams (Ashuelot River, South Branch – each with public access points)

- \* Open space and conservation land (trails of varying levels of development). A partial listing of these properties is as follows:

  - Carpenter Home property, including Mt. Caesar

  - Muster Field property

  - Carpenter-French lot (Town forest) at Mt. Cresson

  - Horatio Colony Preserve (77 acres located in Swanzey)

  - Dickinson Memorial Forest (SPNHF)

  - Honey Hill (private easement)

  - Belding Meadow (Monadnock Conservancy easement)

  - Two Rail-Trail corridors – Ashuelot Line; Cheshire SouthRail Line

  - Potash Bowl

  - Picnic area, boat launch beside Cresson Bridge

  - Gordon & Persis Brown Forest (easement)

  - Miscellaneous smaller parcels throughout Town

  - Current use land = 17,525.6 acres (63% of all of Swanzey's 27,684 acres, of which 6,500 acres are enrolled in recreation use)

Swanzey has gone far to remedy the principal deficiency, cited in the 1990 Master Plan, of insufficient open space for its population. Under the standards of the national Recreation Association, which stipulated one acre of recreational space for every 100 residents, Swanzey then offered only 50% of what was desirable (31 acres for 6000 residents). Thanks to conservation easements and other additions, Swanzey now offers 727 acres for its 6800 residents. An inventory of the properties owned or under conservation easement is attached as Appendix A.

Open space availability is not in itself a recreation program. The current recreation program, based upon volunteers and a summertime staff, cannot begin to develop programs that would capitalize on Swanzey's bounty of open space, or serve other age cohorts. The Master

Plan Sub-Committee concludes it is time for Swanzey to make a stronger commitment to its recreational obligations. The Town needs to communicate its opportunities, and organize programs and facilities for all age groups, for the furtherance of public health and community well-being. Hikes organized around natural and historical themes could be developed. Trails could be developed to minimize erosion and to capitalize on resources; existing trails need to be maintained. Open meadows need periodic mowing and/or brush-hogging. The elderly deserve support.

#### Age and Ability Considerations.

Most of the programming offered by the Recreation Committee serves Swanzey children. The Town would do well to support recreation for its older residents, its prime-of-life adults, with appropriate consideration for those citizens whose physical abilities are impeded. Systematic program development on Town open spaces seems in order. Nature and history hikes would seem fitting; continuing the covered bridge tours by bikers, runners, ralleyers, etc., equally so. Family-friendly events benefit all, be they tennis classes at the High School courts, or outdoor concerts at village centers... support of seniors is another matter. Should Whitcomb Hall be designated a Senior Center? Should "community education" programs be undertaken at local school facilities? Could schools be used for exercise and wellness programs after hours? Should walkers' clubs for retirees be encouraged? Could cultural tours be sponsored, bridge and chess competitions hosted, computer training offered? Swanzey has thus far committed foremost to its youth, and rightly so. But as America grays, local populations age, and life spans expand, Swanzey would do well to commit some resources to those residents of tax-paying and Social Security stages of life. It is a matter of both investment and equity. And equity considerations inspire us to include those fellow citizens living with disabilities into our planning and program development without fail.

#### Active vs. Passive Recreation.

Previous plans distinguished between active and passive recreation, depending on whether group organization and programming were involved, vs. individual initiative. This plan defines "active" recreation as that which entails healthful physical exercise, versus "passive" varieties that entail driving an internal combustion engine (OHRV, jet skis, etc.). There is no question that dirt bikes, snowmobiles, speedboats, etc., are a form of "recreation," along with fast cars, old cars, airplanes, model planes, etc. The Master Plan presumes that "recreational vehicles" will be operated on Swanzey roads and lands so long as the marketplace continues to produce, and individuals can afford to purchase and fuel,

them. They do bring costs, however. There are environmental costs, of exhaust emissions, or noise, of oil drips and fuel spills, or worn trail corridors, of disrupted wildlife habitat. There are social costs, of conflicting or competing uses of trails, lands, water bodies, of inadvertent trespass onto private properties. Like all towns husbanding a rural character, Swanzey needs to address the inherent conflicts in these different recreational uses, ideally encouraging those that foster aerobic exertion and reduce noise and pollution.

Goal 1 Establish and expand recreational opportunities for all age segments of the Swanzey population.

a. Develop a Recreation Plan that encourages healthful, positive experiences in Swanzey for residents of all ages and ability.

b. Develop a Plan that accommodates the differing interests of recreation users.

c. Provide municipal support for such a Plan.

d. Consider (parts of) Whitcomb Hall for some activities. It was built as a community center. It has housed plays, lectures, dance classes, card tournaments, public and club meetings, as well as athletics. It needs occupancy.

e. Search out and identify comparable meeting spaces in the other villages of Swanzey.

f. Coordinate with the Conservation Commission the identification and usage of lands in the public domain, or an appropriate easement, which might be put to recreational purposes. Establish from the outset a strong municipal statement of “green ethic,” in permitting public access to property that may remain private, or quasi-private.

Goal 2 Develop multi-use corridors toward Keene to enable commutation and travel by alternative means than the automobile, as well as jogging, biking, etc. Bike trails and sidewalks were a high priority in the Community Profile Project.

a. Focus especially on Routes 32 and 12 corridors, to provide alternative commuting access to the Swanzey Industrial Park/North Swanzey area.

Goal 3 Maintain existing facilities and programs.

a. Swanzey's traditional commitment to youth recreation should be continued.

b. Maintain current open-space tracts as appropriate. Meadows must be mowed. The Muster property needs selective brush-hogging. Trails need to be monitored annually. Outdoors clubs and citizen groups should be mobilized to maintain trail use, and be recognized for their contributions.

c. Support Conservation Commission in its monitoring of wetlands and open spaces.

d. Communicate existing programs. Recognize and support volunteer programming done by private individuals.

## **RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

In the 2001 town-wide survey, people chose overwhelmingly “rural character” as the first reason they prefer to live in Swanzey. Without a doubt, our natural resources are a large part of that “rural character.” Respondents to that survey clearly are concerned about the compromise of our natural resources, listing pollution control first in significance for conditions necessary when considering future economic development.

Natural resource and historical assets of a community contribute significantly to the quality of life for residents and play an integral part in defining community character. Streams, rivers, walking trails, working farms, forests, clean air, historic buildings and bridges, wildlife, and open land help determine a community’s personality and contribute to everyday pleasures of community life. A sustainable community recognizes the importance of these assets, and takes appropriate measures to assure their continuance.

### **Air**

#### **General Goal**

Preserve and protect Swanzey’s air quality so that it will continue to be a healthy resource.

#### **Specific Objectives**

1. Insure that development is planned carefully to prevent contamination of the air.
2. Promote the use of green spaces as a bio-chemical and physical means of buffering the polluting effects of fossil fuel combustion.
3. Require tree planting in site plan reviews for projects having impervious surface coverage of 35% or greater.
4. Seek conservation easements and other protective measures, including purchasing tracts of land, for large and/or unique forest tracts or open lands.
5. Mobilize politically to ensure upwind economies do not “dump” their air pollution on New England and Swanzey.

### **Water**

#### **General Goal**

Swanzey has the highest concentration of groundwater resources in the region. While we will probably not run out of water, every effort

should be taken to protect this rich inheritance from pollution and/or squandering. Our water may well be an economic advantage in the future.

Surface waters provide opportunities for recreation, as well as habitat for many wildlife species. While currently no surface waters in Swanzey are drinking water sources, they are used for irrigation and wastewater mitigation.

### Specific Objectives

1. Continue public education about our water resources.
2. Update inventory of potential sources of water contamination and take steps to eliminate or minimize threats.
3. Consider a systematic program of drilling “monitoring-wells” near known or suspected pollution sources to protect known important aquifers.
4. Protect shorelines and stream banks from uses and settlements that have a probability of causing erosion or pollution, or of reducing scenic qualities of surface waters.
5. Continue to educate homeowners as to the environmental and financial benefits of maintaining a healthy, working septic system.
6. Continue to educate residents adjoining water bodies, watercourses, and aquifers of their special responsibilities and best management practices.
7. Adopt and continue to implement the recommendations of the Water Resource Management and Protection Plan of the Town of Swanzey, notably the protective buffer zones for wetlands and surface waters. (See below.)
8. Site plan reviews should highlight the need to manage parking lot and roadway run-off and improve drainage.
9. Consider a conservation protection overlay zoning district for sensitive areas, providing for protection beyond the current zoning ordinances. Target sensitive areas to include: extensive wetlands, watercourses and water bodies, Swanzey Lake Watershed, historically and aesthetically important areas, and connected areas that could create a green corridor.
10. Establish a wellhead protection overlay district to protect existing wellheads serving community water supplies from potential sources of pollution.
11. Recognizing the great wealth of drinking water resources contained within the Town and the potential future need for sources of clean and safe water, the Town should undertake identification of potential wellhead sites for municipal water systems. Areas with high potential for becoming future municipal wellhead sites within

- areas of future growth should be protected by purchase of the property or by establishment of protective easements.
12. Consider a groundwater protection ordinance.
  13. Encourage the Town's delegation to the State legislature to actively initiate, pursue and support legislation to permit the Town to license and/or franchise and/or tax commercial water extraction operations within the Town's borders.

**SWANZEY WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & PROTECTION PLAN**  
**[orig. 1990]**  
**2003 UPDATE**

Regulatory Programs

The following actions are recommended to bolster the water protection and water management provisions currently existing in the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision regulations, Site Plan review regulations, Floodplain Development Ordinance, and Wetlands Conservation District.

1. Consider a Groundwater Protection Overlay District above all medium- and high-yield aquifers. Regulations within the district should supersede those of the existing zoning and land uses. Prohibit potentially hazardous land uses within it, or at least permit them only by special exception, so that conditions of approval may be set. Require hookup to municipal sewer where possible.
2. Uphold the limitations to development in the Wetlands Conservation District to additions and extensions to one and two-family dwellings. Consider adding a protective buffer between wetlands and developments, such as a 50 ft or 100 ft. setback.
3. Establish a protective buffer between surface water areas and development. Town should follow the recommendation of the Governor's Shoreline Protection Study committee in their final report dated Oct. 31, 1989:
  - a. All septic systems to be 125 feet from a public water;
  - b. All principal structures not water-dependent to be 125 ft. away from a public water;
  - c. Apply the current forestry standard of a 125-foot setback for tree-cutting around public waters, to land-clearing for development as well.
4. Map and document prime wetlands in accordance with RSA 483-A:7, and recommend their adoption as part of the Wetlands Conservation District.

5. The Planning Board will create a register of underground storage tanks (USTs), adding new ones as approved during site plan review. The Register will document the location, type, contents, age and capacities of all known USTs.

- Town Planner will introduce this at Planning Board.
- Aquifer Protection Task Force will submit list of abandoned tanks to Selectmen, for possible remediation under the NH Leaking UST program.
- The register of information regarding underground storage tanks will be provided on a regular basis to the Fire, Police, Public Works and Emergency Management Departments.

6. Require owners of all above-ground storage tanks to mark the contents, to aid firefighters.

7. Planning Board will create and maintain a register of Potential Contaminant Sources (of surface and ground water). An inspection schedule should be coordinated by the Health Officer and the Conservation Commission.

8. Consider additional land use controls such as timing incentives on developments to "soften" the impact of large projects.

9. In light of the unacceptable phosphorus-load findings, 1991-2002, consider a Lake Protection Overlay District over the entire Swanzey Lake watershed. Alternatively, consider a moratorium on development in the watershed pending attainment of specified biochemical testing benchmarks. Alternatively, consider initiating a program of systematic purchase of development rights within the watershed. (Information obtained from NH DES indicates that permissible phosphorus-loading is 121 kg/yr. In 1991 the phosphorus load in Swanzey Lake was 206 kg/yr [70% over permissible limits] and in 2002 the phosphorus load in Swanzey Lake was 190 kg/yr [58% over permissible limits].)

#### Non-Regulatory Program Recommendations

1. Keep Water Plan up to date, adding new data and incorporating new state and regional programs as appropriate, consulting regularly with SWRPC.

2. Educate public about the proper operation, use, and maintenance of septic systems, leachfields.

3. Advise residents living above high-yield aquifers of the sensitive nature of their properties.

4. Advise customers of community water systems of water conservation measures.
5. Continue household hazardous-waste collection programs.
6. Educate public on proper storage and disposal of household hazardous wastes. Continue the inspection of PCSs (Potential Contaminant Sources) above significant aquifers to ensure Best Management Practices. Inspections could be conducted/overseen by Health or Code Enforcement Officer.
7. Conservation Commission should work with owners of wetland and aquifer areas to obtain such areas by gift, grant, bequest, or covenants and easements, especially areas above principal aquifers. Consider adding funds for land acquisition to Conservation Fund (or to Capital Improvements Program, earmarked for land acquisition).
8. Coordinate with contiguous towns for consistent water management programs in areas of shared watershed and/or aquifers.
9. Water quality of Swanzey Lake and Wilson Pond should be tested thoroughly (i.e., more than just coliform) on annual or semi-annual basis. Ashuelot River and South Branch should also be monitored regularly. All surface waters should be monitored for their biological, chemical, and physical characteristics.
10. Encourage Public Works Department to minimize potential salt contamination of water supplies.
11. Install monitoring wells at sites that pose potential hazards to surface and ground water.
12. Establish a septic system maintenance and inspection program for lots fronting on Wilson Pond.
13. Continue efforts to inform and educate the public re: existing and potential sources of pollution and hazards to public health, and to support Best Management Practices by identified Potential Contaminant Sources in Swanzey.
14. Monitor the annual test data for Swanzey Lake performed by VLAP (Volunteer Lake Assessment Program), published by the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES), for consideration of growth controls and strengthening Best Management Practices, within the Lake watershed.

## **Soils/Earth/Agricultural Land**

### General Goal

The same geological forces that created a wealth of stratified-drift aquifers in Swanzev also bequeathed an equivalent wealth of sand and gravel deposits. Extractive industries have worked those deposits commercially for two generations and undoubtedly will continue to do so; but Swanzev needs to balance those grandfathered private interests with its own public responsibility to conserve aquifers and their recharge areas.

“Farmlands provide much more than a place to produce crops and livestock. In a state as heavily forested as New Hampshire, fields and other farmlands provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species and are important elements of favorite views. Farmlands also provide an important link to the past – some of New Hampshire’s farms are more than 200 years old.” (from Natural Resources: An Inventory Guide for New Hampshire Communities by Phil Auger & Janice McIntyre 1992) Preserving existing farmland also provides the option of providing crops in the future as farmland becomes scarcer locally.

### Specific Objectives

1. Ensure that soil types and their capabilities are an important consideration in site development.
  2. Ensure that extraction and/or processing of earth resources do not have adverse environmental effects.
  3. Ensure site rehabilitation after extraction of earth resources to create sites suitable for alternative uses.
  4. Encourage land uses that minimize soil erosion.
  5. Encourage best management practices designed to prevent erosion and to minimize pesticide/herbicide usage.
  6. Continue current-use incentives that mitigate development pressures.
  7. Consider additional incentives to encourage productive agriculture.
  8. Conserve farmland through conservation easements, and association with local land trusts or other appropriate methods.
- Farmland is:
- agricultural land that is considered important for agricultural production within the Town;
  - that has public benefit as an environmental, cultural or open space amenity;
  - that may serve as a buffer area between developed, natural areas and agricultural areas; and/or

- may be subject to market pressure for development.
- 9. Support local farms by “showcasing” in a town brochure with map, identifying products, season, open hours, etc.
- 10. Include agriculture in any and all economic development plans.
- 11. Support the adoption of a steep slope ordinance that would, in part, prohibit the inclusion of land with slopes greater than 25% when calculating minimum lot size for subdivision purposes.

## **Wildlife**

### General Goal

Maintenance of diversified habitat and wildlife. Part of the “rural character” savored by Swanzey residents includes the diverse woods, fields and streams that provide habitat for numerous wildlife species. Development pressures these areas, resulting in fragmentation and loss of important lands supporting healthy wildlife populations.

### Specific Objectives

1. Seek conservation easements on properties showing one or more of the following characteristics:
  - abuts large parcels of already protected land;
  - has exemplary habitat characteristics, conditions or vegetation;
  - protects a particular species or species threatened by encroaching development;
  - provides wildlife travel corridors otherwise inhibited;
  - harbors threatened or endangered species.
2. Support private owners’ maintenance of lands for wildlife by:
  - working with state and federal agencies to inform and educate landowners of methods to integrate biodiversity, timber conservation, recreation and wildlife planning; and
  - developing a forest management plan that designates some tracts to remain in a natural, unaltered condition.

## **Threatened/Endangered Species**

A listing of species presently recognized as imperiled in Cheshire County (as established by the NH Natural Heritage Inventory) can be found in Appendix B.

### General Goal

To protect rare and endangered species as defined in the NH Natural Heritage Inventory for Cheshire County.

### Specific Objectives

1. Safeguard the habitat of threatened species and exemplary ecological communities by purchase and/or conservation easements.
2. Identify and protect exemplary specimens, such as the White Swamp Oak at Massey Hill Road.
3. Encourage through education landowners to inventory their properties, especially sites prone to disturbance or development.

### **Additional Natural Resource Recommendations**

1. Hire a full-time code enforcement officer whose jurisdiction would include environmental issues.
2. Consider increasing green space requirements to reduce environmental impacts of development.
3. Consider more stringent lighting requirements to reduce light pollution of our night skies.
4. Consider ways to reduce noise pollution.
5. Continue to support funds for land acquisition and possibly increase the percentage of land use change taxes set aside for the purchase of conservation lands and easements.
6. Maintain reasonable dumping fees at the recycling center in order to discourage illegal dumping. Illegal dumping poses not only aesthetic issues, but also threatens soil, ground and surface water.
7. Continue to promote and encourage town-wide recycling efforts and litter clean up.
8. Maintain and update the inventory of town-owned properties and develop management plans where appropriate.
9. Encourage the use of volunteers for maintenance and upkeep of town-owned conservation lands.
10. Recognize and encourage the concept of “adopt a highway” for town roads in order to preserve the Town’s scenic roadside beauty.
11. Encourage discussion with contiguous communities on matters that may affect them, recognizing that actions taken in Swanzev have potential impact upon surrounding communities, a vice versa.
12. The Conservation Commission should take a leadership role in the coordination of an update of the Town-wide Natural Resource Inventory.
13. Communicate a “green” ethic of land use for public and semi-public lands.

## **Town-Owned Properties (Open Land/Land Dedicated to Recreational Use)**

The Town of Swanzey owns approximately 775 acres of land (70 parcels). 727 acres (including land owned by the Swanzey Conservation Commission) are primarily open lands and/or lands dedicated to recreational uses (including ball fields, boat launches, and Richardson Park). The remainder of the land is utilized for governmental use (Town Hall, Public Works, Police Department, cemeteries, etc.)

The only Town owned properties that have any type of management plan associated with them are those purchased with LCIP funds (Carpenter French parcel located off of Matthews Road, consisting of 142.8 acres; Muster Field off Pine Street, consisting of 13 acres; and the Swanzey Lake Dam and boat launch area consisting of 1.6 acres). In addition, the Carpenter French parcel is also designated as a Town Forest pursuant to RSA 31:110. Therefore, the total percentage (acreage-wise) of Town owned properties with any management plan established thereon is 20%; that number drastically plummets when one calculates the percentage on a parcel-wise basis (4%).

Goal 1 The Town must evaluate the properties that it owns to determine the benefit each parcel serves for/to the Town. Parcels that provide wildlife habitat, flood water storage, etc. should be formally protected, with restrictions on use recorded at the Cheshire County Registry of Deeds. Those parcels that do not serve a conservation purpose (and are not currently being utilized for governmental use) should be sold so long as the Town determines that the lot would not be suitable for future governmental use.

Goal 2 In addition to evaluating the properties the Town currently owns, the Town should be reviewing properties in order to determine those that it may wish to purchase or acquire easements for conservation purposes. The establishment of wildlife corridors, riparian buffers and access, parks, trails and the preservation of open space are priorities established in this Master Plan Update.

Goal 3 Also, the Town should carefully review its current cluster zoning provisions to ensure that land designated as “open space” in a cluster development serves a purpose other than being the “remainder land.” While most “open space” land generated via the cluster development ordinance remains in private ownership, it is important to integrate these parcels into a larger scheme of open space preservation.

Goal 4 The Town should be reviewing properties to purchase with an eye toward future building needs of Town government. At the present

time, the only governmental office that meets its physical space needs is the Police Department (a new building was constructed in 2001). All other Town facilities are in need of updating and/or new construction. Whether the existing sites are adequate for future building needs must be reviewed.

Goal 5 The Town should take steps to inform its residents of the lands within the public ownership, and encourage them to become actively involved in organizing appropriate uses for the same.

Goal 6 Maintain long-term vision to connect recreational parcels and to add river frontage whenever feasible. This may be accomplished, in part, through the continued annual funding of the conservation acquisition fund and the encouragement of land donations and conservation easements.

### **Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan (December 2001)**

The Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan was prepared by the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (LAC) with assistance from the Swouthwest Region Planning Commission and the NH Department of Environmental Services Rivers Program. Covering the river from its headwaters in Pillsbury State Park in Washington, NH to its mouth at the Connecticut River, the report “proposes a management approach with the mission of protecting plentiful clean water, thriving riparian and aquatic habitat for wild plants and animals, providing balance for continued development of land use and water uses, recreation, and other public needs.” The report also provides a summary of issues, management goals and site/issue specific analysis and recommendations for the segment of the Ashuelot River contained within Swanzey’s Town limits. The entire Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan (December 2001) is included as Appendix C to the 2003 Master Plan Update.

## **TOWN GOVERNMENT**

Swanzey enters the twenty-first century with the long-standing form of governance typical of rural New England, a legislative Town Meeting, an executive Board of Selectmen, and a bare-bones administrative staff in Town Hall of 7 full time employees, of whom 4 hold line responsibilities, notably vital statistics and registrations, tax collection, administration, and land use planning. In addition, there are also 3 people who work at the Town Hall on a part-time basis. Town Hall has been rendered handicap-accessible, and parking has been expanded to accommodate as many individuals as can fit into the assembly room for a well-attended public hearing. Much of the policy and regulatory work of Town Government is performed by volunteers or citizen-stipendiaries. It is difficult to conceive of a more cost-effective structure for managing community affairs.

The Town provides public safety services in the form of police, fire, ambulance, and emergency management; operates the recycling center, transfer station, and one wastewater treatment plant; maintains roads, bridges, dams, and cemeteries; operates the Carpenter Home facility; designates health and animal control officers; maintains library operations and the Historical Museum building; and keeps active liaison with regional (and state) agencies having roles or responsibilities in Swanzey life.

As Swanzey's population and administrative responsibilities continue to grow, however, the Town must consider the space requirements and working conditions of its administrative staff. Town Hall is a structure (re)built in 1921, and it has served its purpose admirably for 80 years. The presence of the Swanzey Center Fire Company in the basement, however, creates a situation of unhealthful and unproductive noise and fumes for the office workers upstairs. Space is now exhausted upstairs. The public meeting hall has been encroached upon by an office cubicle serving the Inspections Department. Any additional staffing (as recommended in this Plan) will only encroach further upon the remaining public space in Town Hall. Providing a dedicated public-safety facility for the Fire Department is a high priority, and reallocating that space for additional administrative worksites would be a substantial corollary benefit.

### **Ambulance Service**

The Town of Swanzey Fire Department operates a Rescue Squad, providing medical first response. A rescue vehicle is based in each of the East and West Swanzey Fire Stations. If transport is needed to the

hospital in Keene, ambulance service is provided by the DiLuzio Ambulance Service, under a contractual agreement with the Town of Swanzey.

### **Code Enforcement Department**

The Code Enforcement Department currently consists of the Code Enforcement Officer and the Fire Inspector. Both of these positions are part time (approximately 520 hours and 200 hours per year, respectively). The Code Enforcement Department holds regular office hours on Wednesday evenings, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Inspections and consultations are scheduled on an as-requested basis. It should be noted that the Code Enforcement Department receives administrative and clerical support from Town Hall staff.

The Code Enforcement Department is responsible for the review and issuance of building permits, as well as conducting inspections during construction and issuing Certificates of Occupancy. In addition, the Code Enforcement Officer is charged with the responsibility of investigating and enforcing code and zoning violations. The Fire Inspector is also responsible for conducting inspections for the issuance of occupancy permits.

A current limitation of the Code Enforcement Department is lack of access to computer equipment and computer programs and materials regarding the codes. Due to recent changes in State law, the Town now has three building codes in effect, in addition to the fire, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical codes. Access to these codes on computer would facilitate research and provide the Code Enforcement Department with the ability to answer questions in a timely manner. Also, equipping the Code Enforcement Department with computers would assist in scheduling, correspondence and tracking of building permits, investigations and enforcement actions.

During the 2002 calendar year, the Code Enforcement Department issued over 150 building permits. During the period 1997 through 2001, the Code Enforcement Department issued, on average, 124 building permits per year. The estimated value of construction during 2002 was 10.5 million dollars, up from 4.2 million in 2001.

An important aspect of the Code Enforcement Officer's position is the investigation and enforcement of the Town's building and zoning codes and Town ordinances. In addition, the Code Enforcement Officer's duties include the review of development to ensure compliance with approved site plans, the on-going monitoring of various conditions of site plan approval (such as maintenance of oil/water separators) and

investigation regarding compliance with environmental regulations. This Master Plan also recommends that the Code Enforcement Officer monitor excavation and timber activity, ensuring that the Town receives an accurate reporting of materials removed. It is anticipated that the additional revenue generated by this on-site monitoring will partially offset the cost of a full-time Code Enforcement Officer.

Due to time constraints, the Code Enforcement Officer is unable to devote the time required to investigate and enforce code violations. This task has fallen to the Town Administrator and Town Planner, in addition to their numerous other responsibilities, with enforcement being handled by the Board of Selectmen and Town counsel. With 6800 residents, it is time for the Town to commit the funds to hire a full-time Code Enforcement Officer. Currently, only the bare-bones functions of the Code Enforcement Department are being met (i.e., building permits being issued). Inspections are often delayed (or sometimes do not occur at all), questions occasionally remain unanswered and investigations and/or enforcement are done on a “squeaky wheel gets the grease” basis.

Finally, this Master Plan has also recommended that a full-time Fire Department be established. If this occurs, thought should be given to integrating the Fire Inspector’s duties within a full-time position in the Fire Department.

Goal 1 Hire a full-time Code Enforcement Officer.

Goal 2 Obtain computer equipment and software for the Code Enforcement Department.

Goal 3 Evaluate the possibility of integrating the Fire Inspector’s duties within a full-time position in the Fire Department.

### **Emergency Management**

The Swanzev Office of Emergency Management is located in the Police Department on 34 Eaton Road. The emergency organization of the Town consists of the following departments:

- Board of Selectmen
- Emergency Management Director
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Health Department
- Public Works Department

The following natural or man-made emergencies are the prime considerations of an emergency plan:

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Earthquake                 | Civil Disturbance            |
| Tornado                    | Terrorist Incident           |
| Hurricane                  | Bomb Threat                  |
| Flooding                   | Electrical Outage            |
| Multiple Vehicle Accidents | Hazardous Materials Accident |
| Snow & Ice Storm           | Nuclear Attack               |
| Fuel Shortage              | Nuclear Power Accident       |
| Water Outage               | Hazardous Materials Storage  |
| Forest Fires               | Incident                     |

The Town has drafted an emergency plan and is waiting for the State of New Hampshire to approve it.

The Town is developing a Hazard Mitigation Plan. Hazard Mitigation is any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human lives and property from natural hazards. When the plan is adopted it will enable the Town to receive federal funding through various federal assistance programs following a disaster that it may not otherwise qualify for. Examples include the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program and the Hazard Mitigation Program.

There is a nuclear power plant in the area. It is located in Vernon, VT on the Connecticut River. A portion of Swanzey is located within the ten-mile emergency-planning zone of Vermont Yankee. The areas affected are West Swanzey and Westport. A graded incident exercise for Vermont Yankee is conducted every two years with the last one conducted in September 2001.

### Objective

The Emergency Management Office must be trained and prepared to respond to threats and incidents, man-made or natural, that disrupt the normal function and safety of our every day lives.

Goal 1 Maximize the opportunities for funding through corporate and private donations.

Goal 2 Establish a unified Incident Command System that will work efficiently and effectively in any situation with state and local agencies.

Goal 3 Get the Town of Swanzey's Emergency Plan adopted and update all other emergency plans.

- Goal 4      Form a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC).
- Goal 5      Identify and contact all inhabitants who live in the 100-year flood zone about the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Goal 6      Build a portable decontamination chamber.
- Goal 7      Identify possible emergency shelters and get a memorandum of understanding with each shelter owner.
- Goal 8      Install a town-wide emergency warning system.

**Fire Protection**

The Swanzey Fire Department consists of a paid per call force of up to 75 fire fighters, under the direction of a part-time Fire Chief. The Department maintains three stations, one on Main Street in West Swanzey, one on South Road in East Swanzey and one on Old Homestead Highway in Swanzey Center. Each station can have a total of 25 members. The three stations are equipped as follows:

West Swanzey	1000 gallon engine 750 gallon engine 250 gallon brush truck
East Swanzey	1000 gallon engine 1000 gallon engine 250 gallon brush truck
Swanzey Center	1250 gallon engine 1000 gallon engine 3300 gallon tanker Hose reel truck w/4000' of 4" hose 250 gallon brush truck

The Town has arranged through a capital reserve fund to replace equipment for the Fire Department every seven years.

In addition to providing fire protection to the Town, the Swanzey Fire Department is a member of the Southwestern New Hampshire Fire District Mutual Aid. The Mutual Aid system serves as a dispatch center for police, fire and ambulance services for the member towns.

Fire Department activity has increased by 20% between 1996 and 2000, according to reported incidents. Expenditures for fire protection (including forest fires, hydrants and rescue truck leases) increased 67%

for the same period. The Fire Department has undergone many changes over the years. The same technology that makes computers obsolete months after their purchase has affected the emergency services industry. While the department does not have a full roster, it still has enough members to function well. The problem is that most members work outside the Town limits and cannot respond to emergencies during the daylight hours, or if they can respond are delayed by the distance they have to travel. This along with proposed commercial growth in the Town shall bring in the need for some kind of full time coverage. The facilities are in need of upgrade. First, a new station in the center of Town is needed. One that can house a full time crew and the administrative offices. The stations in East and West need to have upgrades for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) supply decontamination.

### General Goal

To provide fire and ambulance services adequate to meet the needs of an expanding population in an increasing complex and mobile society.

### Objectives

1. Construct a new fire station in or near Swanzey Center, of sufficient size to serve as headquarters for fire and rescue administration and communications, and to accommodate a full-time crew (minimum 3 individuals) for one pumper for daytime coverage.
2. Upgrade other station houses to enable decontamination of EMS gear.
3. Support continued training and certification programs for emergency personnel (hazardous materials, emergency medical technicians, fire-fighting, etc.).
4. Support systematic upgrade of fire-fighting and communications equipment.
5. Continue support of capital reserve funds for regular replacement of fire-fighting vehicles.

### Fire Protection – Hydrant System

Currently, there are three separate hydrant systems in Swanzey. Of the three systems, only one is Town-owned. The other systems are owned by the West Swanzey Water Company and by the North Swanzey Water & Fire Precinct. However, all three systems benefit the residents and businesses of Swanzey. Therefore, it is important that the Town of

Swanzy work cooperatively and look to establishing written agreements with the West Swanzy Water Company and the North Swanzy Water & Fire Precinct regarding the use and maintenance of these systems.

The Town-owned hydrant system located in West Swanzy is a dry-hydrant system. This system is located on the east side of the Ashuelot River. At the present time, the system is in need of repair. However, until such time as a decision is made whether to breach the Homestead Woolen Mills Dam (the impoundment is the water source for the hydrant system), it is may be financially prudent to wait until a resolution regarding dam removal/retention is made.

It should be noted that the establishment of a new hydrant system on the east side of the Ashuelot River is an option for the future. In 2002, water lines serving the West Swanzy Water Company were run under the river in order to serve a multi-family housing development. The fact that water is now available on the east side of the Ashuelot River provides a valuable option for fire protection in the event that the impoundment for the existing hydrant system is removed or compromised in the event the Homestead Woolen Mill Dam is breached.

Recognizing that fire protection on the east side of the Ashuelot River is an important asset to the community (especially with the projected continued growth of West Swanzy village), any proposals that negatively impact fire protection should be carefully evaluated by the Town. It is recommended that until such time as assurances that adequate water supply for fire protection in West Swanzy Village will be available and measures are taken to secure the same (whether by retention of the dam and the resulting impoundment or by the establishment of a new hydrant system), the Homestead Woolen Mills Dam should not be breached.

Objective 1 Establish agreements with the North Swanzy Water & Fire Precinct and the West Swanzy Water Company regarding the use and maintenance of their hydrant systems.

Objective 2 Secure adequate water supply for fire protection in West Swanzy village, whether by retention of the impoundment created by the Homestead Woolen Mills Dam or by a new hydrant system (in the event the dam is breached.)

### **Police Department**

The Swanzy Police Department is a full service, community oriented agency that is charged with the protection of the 6,800 residents and approximately 40,000 daily “visitors” of Swanzy. It is the Town’s

only 24 hour, seven day a week department handling a multitude and variety of calls. Presently there are 10 full time and one part time police officers. In addition, there are two full time Secretary-Dispatchers, one part time Secretary/Dispatcher, a full time Prosecutor that is shared with five other communities and one part time Animal Control Officer. In addition, there is a K-9 program, the Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education program, the School Resource Officer at MRHS, bicycle patrol, as well as officers trained in other specialties.

In November 2000, the department moved into a new 3,450 square foot facility on Eaton Road. This gives the department the opportunity to work in a safe and functional environment that should suffice for many years. Included within the building is a lobby, dispatch center, booking room, training room, sallyport and individual offices. With the generous assistance of several local contractors, the new police station was built at a substantial savings to taxpayers.

As for the future of the department, its needs are based solely on the dynamics of the Town. The department's business is almost entirely generated by people. Its reporting system counts calls for service as any activity that requires a police officer to act. For example, people who walk in asking for directions or phone requests are not counted. Accidents, thefts, domestics, etc. do generate one number per call. As such, the department handled 4547 calls of various types during the year 2000. From January 1, 2001 through July 12, 2001 the department handled over 2600 calls. Increasing activity levels have occurred each year that has been tracked.

Short term goals:

- Increase staffing levels to meet increases in demands.
- Implement community oriented policing philosophy.
- Review and update department General Orders (Rules and Regulations) and begin accreditation process.
- Develop and present an annual Swanzey Citizens Police Academy.

Long term goals:

- Foster better citizen/police understanding and relationships to improve the quality of life in the Town of Swanzey.

- County-wide data and intelligence information links between law enforcement agencies.
- Full in-car police data access.
- Finalize accreditation process.

### **Public Works Department**

The Public Works Department is located on Pine Street in West Swanzey across from the Swanzey Recycling Center. It employs a staff of eight full time and three seasonal workers. The full time staff maintains approximately 110 miles of roadway. The University of New Hampshire has been conducting an inventory of the Town's roads and estimates that 59% of the roads in Town need rehabilitation at a cost of \$454,000.00. This estimate is thought to be low and more funds would be required.

In addition to maintaining roadways, the department is responsible for the maintenance of the Town's five dams and four covered bridges. Miscellaneous tasks such as putting up voting booths, moving details and building maintenance fill in their work schedule. In the summer months, the three seasonal workers provide maintenance of the Lane ball fields in East Swanzey, Richardson Park on Swanzey Lake and the Town's six cemeteries. In addition, land has been acquired for a seventh cemetery.

The equipment inventory consists of four dump trucks with sanders and plows, two 1-ton pickups with plows, a grader, loader, wood chipper, backhoe, 1 ½ ton pickup, 1 sidewalk plow and other miscellaneous equipment. The backhoe is scheduled to be replaced in 2002-2003 budget year. Money is set aside yearly from the department's budget for equipment replacement as needed.

Even though a modest addition was put on the Public Works building in 1999, the building is cramped. An evaluation of the facility and site location needs to be completed. One unanswered question looms in the future of the department is whether the Town will take over the existing water and sewer companies in Town, which will potentially affect facilities and staffing.

Goal 1      Development of a comprehensive management plan for Town properties.

Goal 2      Staffing – Hire two full time staff, plus administrative help.

Goal 3 Facilities – Construct enclosed barns for grader and backhoe to meet certification requirements. Salt and sand storage issues need to be addressed for environmental concerns. Wastewater treatment from truck washing needs to be addressed.

Goal 4 Equipment – Update computers and software, new laptop for road inventory and sign inventory requirements. Purchase leaf collection equipment.

### **Solid Waste/Recycling**

Swanzy operates a Transfer Station/Recycling Center on the site of its former landfill in West Swanzy. The facility is for Swanzy residential and business drop-off and is funded by income (16%) and town appropriations (84%). With an extension on its main building in 2000, the facility has sufficient physical capacity to serve the Town's needs through the year 2010 – assuming linear growth.

Looking to the future, there are several trends that the Town should continue to monitor:

1. There is a national and state trend towards charging residents for the actual amount of trash they actually dispose of (pay per bag). A committee was formed in 1999 to investigate this program, but public support was insufficient to continue at that time.

2. The field of solid waste is changing extremely rapidly as to increasing costs and increasing environmental and disposal legislation. Legislation adopted in Concord or Washington could easily impact the Town financially in terms of new processing equipment and/or facilities.

Goal 1 Swanzy should periodically review the feasibility of a pay-per-bag disposal program, or any other system(s) such as regional co-op efforts, to reduce rising costs of processing and disposal.

Goal 2 Swanzy should closely monitor all trends and developments in the solid waste/recycling field with a view to reducing costs, increasing efficiencies and achieving governmental compliance.

Goal 3 Begin reserve capital account for monitoring wells and eventual capping of landfill.

Goal 4 Coordinate with appropriate Town Departments and Committees regarding environmental issues and programs.

## **Other Agencies Working with the Town**

Swanzey works with many regional, non-profit, and quasi-governmental agencies such as Home Health Care and Community Services (HCS), Southwestern Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), Southwestern Community Services (SCS), and New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) – to name just a few – in such areas as health care, community planning, and affordable housing.

Goal 1      The Town should continue to work with and support all outside agencies in the many areas that can benefit Swanzey residents and increase the effectiveness of Town government.

# **TRANSPORTATION**

## **Swanzey's Transportation System**

The transportation system is a limited resource requiring careful management to preserve the significant public investment in system capacity, functionality and safety. While satisfying our societal needs for mobility and access, the transportation system superimposes a grid on the landscape that essentially determines the pattern of development in a community. The type and density of development adjacent to the roadways likewise determines how efficiently the system operates. Finding the appropriate balance in this complex relationship is vital to Swanzey's future character and its transportation system.

The Town of Swanzey also recognizes that a diversified transportation system has the power to influence the community's social, economic and natural characteristics - where a diversified system supports a variety of travel modes and provides links between modes. The more alternatives to the personal motor vehicle there are the more efficient and effective the existing transportation system becomes - reducing the need for infrastructure expansion and empowering residents without personal vehicles to access employment, and cultural and social opportunities.

Swanzey's transportation system is an integral part of the larger regional system. The impacts of local land use decisions can extend beyond town boundaries, imparting significant regional consequences. The Town is sensitive to this relationship and strives for continued coordination and integration of the Town's transportation system and land use patterns with those of the Region.

### Overall Goal

- Provide for a safe, efficient and diversified transportation system that is sensitive to the Town's rural character.

### Objectives

- 1) Minimize the need for extensive investments in roadway expansion by improving the efficiency of the existing transportation system;
- 2) Continue to coordinate land use and transportation decisions;
- 3) Enhance pedestrian, bicycle and public transit opportunities;

- 4) Preserve covered bridges and scenic roadside vistas that exemplify Swanzey's rural character; and
- 5) Coordinate and integrate the transportation systems of the Town with those of the Region.

### Targets

- Develop an access management plan for residential, commercial and industrial land use districts, addressing such issues as minimum distances between driveways, corner lot access, number of driveways per lot, shared driveways, interconnections between developments, minimum driveway throat length, right turn deceleration/acceleration lanes and tapers, left turn pockets, one-way in/one way out access, frontage/service roads, minimum turning radius, signs, minimum corner clearances, medians, and signalization/traffic control.
- Enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) to ensure coordination between the Town's access management plan and the NH DOT driveway permitting process.
- Develop a comprehensive road policy addressing the potential impacts road improvements have on current and future land use and vice versa.
- Investigate the feasibility of implementing traffic "calming" measures on NH Route 32 in the vicinity of Monadnock Regional School, including the reconfiguration of NH Route 32/Sawyers Crossing intersection to address safety concerns.
- Monitor the development of the City Express Transit System in the City of Keene and participate in any regional discussions regarding expanded service, the establishment of park and ride lots, or any other initiative that has the potential to provide viable options to the personal motor vehicle.
- Convene a committee to assess the existing sidewalk and trail network for adequacy, determine future needs, and identify appropriate ways of addressing these needs.
- Establish effective sidewalk and trail connections between residential areas, commercial nodes, and recreational activities within Town.

- Coordinate with adjacent towns to ensure inter-municipal pedestrian/trail system connections.
- Consider expanding the sidewalk and trail network by incorporating pedestrian facilities into projects involving reconstruction where feasible.
- Support Public Works in establishing a Road Surface Management System to assist with monitoring conditions and prioritizing, planning and budgeting for road improvements.
- Develop a local speed management program utilizing traffic “calming” techniques to address residents’ concerns with excessive traffic speed.
- Submit a NH Route 32 Safety and Engineering Study proposal for consideration in the State's Ten Year Transportation Improvement Program.
- Participate in the update of the Dillant-Hopkins Airport Plan and any other discussions involving the Airport’s development.
- Participate in regional transportation issues affecting the Town of Swanzey.

**The Transportation System**

Swanzey’s transportation system currently consists of 104.293 miles of road, 20 bridges and culverts, a network of sidewalks in west Swanzey and a lesser developed network in North Swanzey and Swanzey Center, approximately 10 miles of rail trail, over 10 miles of state bike route, and a public airport.

The road network, described in terms of the State Classification System, the National Highway System, and the Functional Classification System is as follows:

**State Classification System**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Mileage 2001</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>
Class I - State Primary System	9.025	State
Class II - State Secondary System	19.765	State
Class III - State Recreational Roads	0.00	State
Class IIIa - Access to Public Waters	0.00	State
Class IV - Towns Roads w/in Urban Compact	0.00	Municipality

Class V - Town Roads	59.69	Municipality
Class VI - Town Roads, Not Maintained	15.813	Not Maintained
<b>Total Mileage</b>	<b>104.293</b>	

New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) in accordance with NH RSA 229:5, has assigned all roads in the State to one of seven classes. This classification system defines ownership and maintenance responsibilities and is used in part to determine annual state aid highway block grants to municipalities.

As of January 2001, there was a total of 28.79 miles of State maintained roads (Class I & II) in Swanzey, which include NH 10, NH 12, NH 32, Flat Roof Mill Rd, Homestead Ave west of Swanzey Lake Rd, Lake St, Sawyers Crossing Rd, South Road, Swanzey Lake Rd, Swanzey Factory Rd, and Westport Village Rd. Despite the state classification, the Town of Swanzey is responsible for winter maintenance of Flat Roof Mill Rd, South Road, and Swanzey Lake Road.

Since 1990, there has been a modest increase to the local road network (Class V & VI), with approximately 10 miles of additional roadway. The majority of roads in Swanzey are Class V - roads maintained by the town. Class VI roads are not maintained and are subject to gates and bars. While development is generally not promoted on Class VI roads, Swanzey's 15.813 miles of Class VI road represents significant development potential should they be upgraded.

### **National Highway System**

Highways classified as part of the National Highway System serve to connect population centers and inter-modal facilities by providing a continuous travel corridor from state to state. Route 12 is part of the National Highway System. Route 12 provides access to Keene and all points north, west and east, through its connection to the Region's other two National Highways - NH 9 and NH 101, and to all points south, through its connection to highways in Massachusetts. Given the important function of this highway, decisions regarding future land use should include consideration of potential impacts on the functionality and capacity of these roadways.

## **Functional Classification**

Of more significance to local planning is the Functional Classification System. Based upon standards developed by the US Department of Transportation, this system describes roadways by the principal type of service they are intended to provide relative to the regional and statewide highway network.

Roadways are designed to serve two essential purposes – to provide access to property and mobility to travelers. Roads providing the highest level of mobility (conveying high traffic volume at high speed for long distances) with little emphasis on access to individual properties are classified as *arterials*. On the other end of the spectrum, roads with the highest level of local access are classified as *local roads*. Harmonizing land use with a roadway's purpose can preserve roadway capacity and reduce the need for highway expansion by reducing conflicts between land use activities and traffic movements.

The primary function of arterial roads is to efficiently move traffic from one area to another with a minimum of interruption until the desired collector or local street or destination point is reached. Arterials are intended to support travel between cities and towns (through traffic) as well as travel between major commercial centers and outlying residential areas within town. Traffic characteristics are high volume of vehicles for medium to long distances and usually at medium speeds. Direct access to adjoining property is a secondary function. Swanzey's arterial roads include NH 12, NH 10 and NH 32 north of Page Court to the Keene town line.

The primary function of collector roads is to funnel traffic from residential areas or other traffic generators and connect them to arterial roads. Collectors differ from the arterial system in that they may penetrate residential neighborhoods, distributing traffic from the arterials through the area to their ultimate destination. Collector roads include NH 32, Swanzey Lake Road, Flat Roof Mill Road, South Road, and Old Westport Road.

All other streets in Swanzey are part of the local street system. The primary function of these roads is to provide direct access to abutting properties and access to higher order systems. It offers the lowest level of mobility and through traffic is usually discouraged.

The Town's road mileage by functional classification is presented below:

<b>Rural System</b>		<b>Urban System</b>	
Principal Arterial - Other	2.940	Principal Arterial - Other	0.513
Minor Arterial	5.572	Minor Arterial	1.032
Major Collector	6.260	Collector	0.395
Minor Collector	9.190	Local	4.6
Local	57.883		
Other	15.051		
<b>Total Rural</b>	<b>96.896</b>	<b>Total Urban</b>	<b>6.54</b>
<b>Total Mileage</b>	<b>103.436</b>		
Unknown:	0.857		

## **Access Control**

Managing how traffic moves between the highway and adjacent properties is an effective means of preserving the capacity and safety of the existing roadways, enabling capacity expansions on-alignment, and avoiding the need for extensive new investments in capacity, including new roads on new alignments while supporting municipal and private development goals.

NH DOT manages access to and from any segment of a state highway by one of three means:

1. Limited access - the most restrictive, by state statute (RSA 230:44) is *“designed for through traffic, and over, from or to which [abutters] or other persons have no right or easement or only a limited right or easement of access, light, air, or view...”*. This requires a finding by the NH Governor and Council that the denial of access and required property acquisition is in the public interest. Limited access is used almost exclusively on new major arterial roads.
2. Controlled access - predetermined points of access are negotiated between NH DOT and property owners. NH DOT purchases frontage for the remainder of property to delimit access points. Very large properties may only be permitted one or two points of access and required to provide internal circulation. Controlled access is an expensive method of managing access because the State must purchase the frontage to delimit access points and is acquired by the State as part of most new road construction or major reconstruction of exiting roads.

3. All other access is managed through the State driveway permitting process – principal criterion for permitting driveways is safety as a function of visibility, posted speed and functional classification. Determinations for permitting are carried out by NH DOT Maintenance District personnel following application to NHDOT by property owners or developers.

NH 12 is the only controlled access highway in Swanzey. NH 10 and NH 32 are managed through the NH DOT driveway permitting process. There are no limited access highways in town.

Access to and from town roads is managed through Swanzey's Driveway Regulations.

### **Traffic**

Daily commuter travel is responsible for a significant proportion of the traffic on Swanzey's roadways. According to the 1990 US Census, approximately 83% of employed Swanzey residents commute to another town to work. Their primary destination is Keene. Non-residents, commuting from municipalities near and far, fill the majority of jobs in Swanzey. The majority of workers in towns south of Swanzey (Winchester, Richmond, and Troy) are also destined for Keene, assumingly via Swanzey roadways.

There is also a significant amount of daily non-commuter traffic generated by residents in Swanzey and surrounding towns destined for the retail, institutional, medical and entertainment establishments in Keene. All of this commuter and non-commuter activity has the potential to create serious safety, maintenance and capacity implications for the Town of Swanzey and its roadways.

Traffic volumes on Swanzey's roadways for the period 1980-2000 and commuter activity for 1990 are presented below:

## Traffic Counts - Town of Swanzezy 1980-2000

### Annual Average Daily Traffic

Location	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000	Total % Change	Annual % Change
NH 10 at Keene TL	5,650	8,500			9,000			59.3%	2.6%
NH 10 south of Base Hill Rd				10,256	9,856	10,423	10,302	0.4%	0.1%
NH 10 at Winchester TL	3,400	5,500	5,700	6,100				79.4%	4.0%
NH 32 at Richmond TL	500		1,100	1,100			1,200	140.0%	4.7%
NH 12 at Keene TL		13,000					14,000	7.7%	0.5%
NH 12 south of Park St					13,000				
NH 12 south of Rustway Rd				12,000	13,000			8.3%	8.3%
NH 12 at Marlborough TL	5,115	6,734	8,241	8,234			9,305	81.9%	3.0%
NH 32 at South Branch					4,700				
NH 32 over Martin Brook					2,700				
Swanzy Factory Rd at Keene TL				2,200	2,100			-4.5%	-4.5%
Airport Rd west of NH 32							220		
Flat Roof Mill Rd south of NH 12			1,500		2,300			53.3%	5.5%
Westport Village Rd over Ashuelot River					570				
West St over Ashuelot River					290				
Cobble Hill Rd over California Brook					380				
Main St over Ashuelot River					2,300				
Denman Thompson Rd over Ashuelot River				1,300		1,500		15.4%	3.6%
Sawyers Crossing Rd over Ashuelot River						2,800			
Flat Roof Mill Rd over South Branch				730		1,000		37.0%	8.2%
Carlton Rd over South Branch					550				
Old Richmond Rd over South Branch				750			850	13.3%	2.5%
Old Mill Rd over Troy Brook					2,600				

Source: NH DOT Traffic Volume Reports.

### Commuting Activity - 1990

	Swanzy	Keene	Marlborough	Richmond	Troy	Hinsdale
Residents Employed	3,133	11,322	1,018	481	1,006	2,106
Total # of Jobs in Town	1,208	18,041	439	90	632	871
Residents Working in home Town	539	9,065	204	74	301	550

### Commuting Out

Residents commuting - out of Town	2,594	2,257	814	407	705	1,556
Commuting rate - out	82.8%	19.9%	80.0%	84.6%	70.1%	73.9%
Most common commute to:	Keene	Swanzy	Keene	Keene	Keene	Brattleboro
No. of Commuters	2001	254	537	210	347	998
2nd most common commute to:	Mass	Brattleboro	Jaffrey	Mass	Fitzwilliam	Keene
No. of Commuters	80	266	38	60	85	170
3rd most common Commute to:	Peterborough	Peterborough	Swanzy	Winchester	Mass	Chesterfield
No. of Commuters	78	185	32	30	49	89

### Commuting In

	Swanzy	Keene	Marlborough	Richmond	Troy	Hinsdale
Non-residents commuting - in	669	8,976	235	16	331	321
Commuting rate	55.4%	49.8%	53.5%	17.8%	52.4%	36.9%
Most common commute from:	Keene	Swanzy	Keene	na	Keene	Winchester
No. of Commuters	254	2001	123	na	92	122
2nd most common commute from:	Winchester	Chesterfield	Troy	na	Swanzy	Vermont
No. of Commuters	62	691	14	na	59	93
3rd most common commute from:	Chesterfield	Winchester	Dublin	na	Fitzwilliam	Chesterfield
No. of Commuters	41	648	13	na	41	31

Source: US Census 1990

## **Roadway Conditions**

### State Roads:

Roadway conditions on State roads in Swanzey are generally good. The pavement condition of NH 10 is in good to fair condition from the intersection of Whittemore Farm Road south to the Winchester Town line; NH 32 requires minimum-major work; and NH 12 requires little to no work. Flat Roof Mill Rd was sand sealed in 2001 and is in good condition. Sawyers Crossing Road and Swanzey Lake Road are in fair to good condition.

The scheduled upgrade to the Keene-Swanzey bypass will address the safety and congestion issues currently experienced at the intersections of NH 10 at Base Hill Road/Ash Hill Road and the intersection of NH 12 and NH 32.

### Town Roads:

Swanzey's Department of Public Works in cooperation with the University of New Hampshire's Technology Transfer Center, is currently inventorying local road surface conditions. Initial estimates indicate that 59% of the Town's roads are in need of rehabilitation. The Department of Public Works is investigating the feasibility of establishing a Road Surface Management System to assist with monitoring conditions and prioritizing, planning and budgeting for road maintenance.

## **Bridges**

Bridges present an ongoing maintenance and repair concern for all towns, oftentimes accounting for a large portion of local highway budgets. Bridges also present the potential for a number of safety hazards in instances where they are significantly narrower than the road they serve.

NH DOT monitors bridge conditions regularly as part of their Bridge Maintenance Program. Bridges are categorized as either being in good condition, structurally deficient, functionally obsolete or red-listed. Structurally deficient bridges no longer meet current highway standards while functionally obsolete bridges do not meet the functional needs of the current highway system. Red listed bridges require more frequent inspections due to known deficiencies, weight restrictions or type of construction.

There are 20 bridges and culverts in Swanzey, half of which are state-owned and maintained. Of the state bridges and culverts, two are

structurally deficient and one is red-listed: NH 32 over the South Branch of the Ashuelot River (Silver Bridge), and the two bridges on NH 32 over Martin Brook. These deficiencies are being addressed through the state transportation improvement program. Replacement of the Silver Bridge is scheduled to begin in Spring of 2002. The other two deficient facilities will be addressed through the State's Bridge Maintenance Program.

Seven of the ten locally owned bridges and culverts are on the NH DOT Municipal Red-List, two of which are structurally deficient. The West Street bridge over California Brook is scheduled for replacement in 2005 through the State Aid Bridge Program. Covered bridges are automatically red-listed, as they have height, weight and travel lane limitations. This categorization, however, does not imply structural deficiency.

#### Swanzey's Bridges and Culverts

ID #	Location	Facility Type	Owner	Status
080/124	West Street over California Brook ( <i>Red Listed</i> )	Metal Pipe	Swanzey	Programmed for Replacement - State Aid Bridge Program
082/115	Cobble Hill Road over California Brook ( <i>Structurally Deficient, Red Listed</i> )	Metal Pipe	Swanzey	
093/124	Thompson Covered Bridge ( <i>Red Listed</i> )	Covered Bridge	Swanzey	
094/119	Denman Thompson Highway over Ashuelot River	I Beams with Concrete Deck	Swanzey	
098/122	Christian Hill Road over NHRR ( <i>Structurally Deficient, Red Listed</i> )	Timber Bridge	Swanzey	
120/072	Rabbit Hollow Road over Perry Brook	Metal Pipe	Swanzey	
135/068	Warmac Road over Perry Brook ( <i>Red Listed</i> )	Metal Pipe	Swanzey	
136/143	Cresson Covered Bridge ( <i>Red Listed</i> )	Covered Bridge	Swanzey	
148/100	Carlton Covered Bridge ( <i>Red Listed</i> )	Covered Bridge	Swanzey	
167/094	Old Richmond Road over S BR Ashuelot River	Prestressed Voided Slabs	Swanzey	
080/090	Westport Village Road over Ashuelot River	Covered Bridge	NH DOT	
085/109	NH 10 over California Brook	Concrete Box	NH DOT	
143/087	NH 32 over Martin Brook	I Beams with Concrete Deck	NH DOT	
146/086	South Road over S BR Ashuelot River	Concrete Tee Beam	NH DOT	
146/129	NH 32 over S BR Ashuelot River ( <i>Structurally Deficient, Red Listed</i> )	Low Truss	NH DOT	Scheduled for Replacement May 2002
149/072	NH 32 over Martin Brook ( <i>Structurally Deficient, Red Listed</i> )	Concrete Slab	NH DOT	To be addressed byNH DOT Bridge Maintenance
150/056	NH 32 over Martin Brook ( <i>Red Listed</i> )	Concrete Slab	NH DOT	To be addressed by NH DOT Bridge Maintenance
166/171	NH 12 over Troy Brook	Metal Pipe	NH DOT	
167/175	Swanzey Factory Rd over Troy Brook	Metal Pipe	NH DOT	
192/123	Flat Roof Mill Road over Small Brook	Concrete Slab	NH DOT	

Source: NH DOT Bridge Design, Red List Summary 2001 - municipal and state; and 2001 Bridge Report.

## **Dillant-Hopkins Airport**

Swansey is home to the only municipally owned public air facility in the Southwest Region. The airport, located on 830 acres of land in Swansey, is owned and operated by the City of Keene. There are approximately 70 private aircraft based on the field and one helicopter flight school. The airport does not offer commercial passenger air service at this time.

The airport has implemented several improvements since 1990, including the installation of a Precision Approach Slope Indicator System and construction of additional hangars. Improvements to the runways, aprons, fencing and terminal area have been scheduled in the State Transportation Improvement Program at an estimated cost of \$4.08 million.

Keene's 1991 Airport Master Plan, the Airport Advisory Commission, and the City of Keene direct development of the airport. The City of Keene is in the process of convening a committee to update the 1991 Dillant-Hopkins Master Plan. The Town of Swansey has two representatives on this committee.

## **Transportation Issues - Discussion**

### **Access Management**

Providing for safe access to private property while maintaining the functionality of the highway network can be challenging, as nothing erodes highway capacity and safety faster than curb cuts. The highway network is a public resource representing a significant economic investment that should be preserved.

Access management techniques that control the design, location and number of driveways offer viable means to preserving our investment. A well-designed access management program has the potential to improve traffic flow, reduce traffic accidents, reduce the need for highway expansion, protect economic viability of adjacent land, and create safe, enjoyable public spaces for interaction.

An access management program should be developed for commercial, residential and industrial land use districts to preserve roadway capacity and safety and avoid costly expansion in the future (Appendix D). Once a program is developed, the Town should enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the NH DOT to ensure coordination

between the Town's access program and the NH DOT driveway permitting process.

### **Pedestrian Safety and Sidewalks and Trails**

Pedestrian safety, especially in the vicinity of the Monadnock Regional School was identified as a serious concern among many Swanzey residents. The speed of vehicles traveling on NH 32, combined with limited sidewalks, traffic congestion during the a.m. and p.m. school drop off /pick up times, and the geometry of the Sawyers Crossing/NH 32 intersection, create serious safety issues for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists alike. Pedestrian safety is also a concern in Swanzey's other village centers and on Swanzey Lake Road.

To address these safety concerns, consideration should be given to implementing traffic calming measures on NH 32 in the vicinity of Monadnock Regional School, including the reconfiguration of NH 32/Sawyers Crossing intersection, and in other village centers where feasible. Traffic calming measures can include such things as raised sidewalks and crosswalks, enhanced traffic enforcement, and concepts for roadside landscaping and roadway design. Traffic calming measures are known to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists, reduce traffic accidents and relieve congestion. Traffic calming measures also have the potential to formalize the center of town thereby further enhancing Swanzey's community character.

Swanzey is one of the few towns in the Southwest Region with a well-established network of sidewalks and rail trails. An extensive network of sidewalks has been developed in West Swanzey, with limited sidewalks serving North Swanzey and Swanzey Center. Significant pedestrian activity also occurs in areas where there are no sidewalks or bike paths to support such activity (East Swanzey near the ball fields, on Flat Roof Mill Road and in the residential areas of East Swanzey and Swanzey Center). Swanzey residents generally support expanding the system to better accommodate pedestrian and cyclist activity.

Given the Town's predominantly residential nature and residents' desires for an expanded system, efforts should be made to maintain, enhance and expand the existing network of sidewalks and bike paths. The existing sidewalk and trail system should be assessed for adequacy, future needs determined, and appropriate ways of addressing these needs identified. Consideration should be given to establishing effective connections between residential areas, commercial nodes, and recreational activities. The Town should also examine the feasibility of expanding the sidewalk and trail network by incorporating pedestrian facilities into projects involving reconstruction where feasible.

## **Public Transit**

Public transportation in Swanzey is currently limited to services provided by public organizations such as Southwest Community Services, Rotary Club, etc., on an as-needed basis. According to the Community Profile and the Community Survey, there is interest in establishing a more formal system of public transit in Swanzey.

The City of Keene is the only municipality in the Southwest Region where a fixed route public bus system is currently offered. Home Health Care and Community Services (HCS) operates the fixed route/fixed scheduled bus service known as the City Express. Last year the City Express expanded from a single route to a three route system. HCS, in cooperation with the City of Keene and the Southwest Region Planning Commission, is exploring the feasibility of further expanding the public transit system within the City limits. It is expected that an expanded multi-route transit system will enhance the viability of other public transportation features such as park-and-ride lots and shuttle services to the outlying towns.

The Town of Swanzey should monitor the progress of this system and participate in any regional discussions regarding expanded service, the establishment of park and ride lots, or any other initiative which has the potential to provide viable options to the single occupancy vehicle. The Town should also encourage local volunteer groups to coordinate their transportation services.

## **Development Potential - NH 32/NH 12 Link, Conversion of Uses, and Class VI Roads**

Construction of a NH 32/NH 12 connector, continued conversion of uses from residential to commercial or from low density residential to high density residential, and the future development potential of Class VI roads, are all likely to have a profound impact on Swanzey's physical infrastructure and its natural environment. To maintain an effective and efficient transportation system and to safeguard Swanzey's rural character, a comprehensive road policy which addresses the potential impacts road improvements have on current and future land use and the impacts land use decision have on the road system should be developed.

## **Maintenance of the Existing Road Network**

Maintaining the existing roadway infrastructure is critical to preserving the significant investment made in the network. Poorly maintained roadways and unsafe intersections and road segments

increase travel time, decrease road capacity and can create unsafe conditions for the traveling public. The Town of Swanzey should support the Public Works in establishing a Road Surface Management System.

### **Traffic Speed and Truck Traffic**

Traffic speed and truck traffic is a concern on a number of local and State roads in Swanzey. Excessive traffic speed creates hazardous conditions for pedestrians and other motorists. Heavy truck traffic has an impact on the condition of roadways and can create unsafe conditions for pedestrians and motorists. The Town should develop a speed management program – which could include such measures as traffic calming and increased police patrol.

## **UTILITIES**

In the Community Survey conducted in January 2001, public interest in Town ownership of utilities was high – including such “non-traditional” ones as cable/communications and electric generation.

Goal 1 The Town should continue to actively investigate new opportunities for utilities ownership that would provide convenience and financial benefits to Swanzey citizens.

### **Electrical Supply/Hydroelectric Power Generation**

In the recent Community Survey, over two thirds responded affirmatively to the question as to whether the Town of Swanzey should continue to explore the feasibility of an electricity generating facility at Homestead (Dickinson) Dam in West Swanzey.

#### General Goal

To evaluate the many competing interests regarding the continued existence of the Homestead (Dickinson) Dam, and to make an informed determination of its value, present and potential, to the Town of Swanzey. We recommend the appointment of a Task Force to conduct this study, with a clear charge and timeline for reporting.

#### Objectives

1. Assess the potential consequences of dam retention, particularly with respect to:

a. ownership by the Town of Swanzey. Master Plan survey showed two-thirds positive interest in feasibility of public generating facilities at the Homestead Dam. Negotiations with current owner should proceed, so that repairs to the dam can be undertaken without delay.

b. economic potential of the dam as a hydroelectric facility. Note: Preliminary study indicates that conversion to electric generation is technically feasible. Within a three-mile radius is a market for all that it could produce, including the West Swanzey Sewage Treatment Plant, the West Swanzey Water Company, Homestead Mill complex, densely-developed residential and commercial village districts. A June 28, 2000 feasibility study calculated that hydropower sold at 5.5 cents/kwh would produce net revenues to the owner of \$40,000/year.

c. retention of "ponded" area above dam (45 acre total), enabling improved fire-protection, recreation, etc.

2. Assess the potential consequences of dam removal (primarily biological ones resulting from the restoration of natural river flows up to the Faulkner & Colony Dam in Keene) vs. the costs (primarily social and economic, but with potential natural costs also). Some criteria of evaluation to be weighed, include:

- a. restoration of spawning runs for shad, salmon, etc.
- b. flushing effects of an unimpounded stream
- c. reduced liability exposure for dam "owner"
- d. reduced liability exposure for proprietor of water rights
- e. increased exposure of, possible adverse effects on, riparian Native American sites
- f. loss of artifact of Swanzey's historical heritage, the *raison d'etre* of village of West Swanzey
- g. possible undermining of Thompson Bridge abutments
- h. possible adverse upstream consequences, e.g., riparian erosion, accelerated flows from Branch, South Branch, etc.
- i. possible lowering of water table in West Swanzey, with probable negative impact on shallow water wells.

### **North Swanzey Water & Fire Precinct**

The Precinct was established in 1936 and water was available to the precinct customers in 1937. The North Swanzey Water & Fire Precinct (NSW&FP) operates under RSA 52 as a Village District. Its boundary lines are determined by the Selectmen. It currently has 415 water customers – 12 of those are commercial customers. The precinct is servicing customers on 26 different streets in the North Swanzey and Matthews Road areas.

Many of the houses in the North Swanzey area are either adjacent to Wilson Pond or are very small building lots. With the exception of the customers on Greenwood Avenue and a few on Monadnock Highway (Route 12), the remaining lots must accommodate their own septic systems.

The need for a water system that can provide potable water and fire protection was recognized to be essential in the 1930s. The water system has been well maintained but it is in need of upgrading.

Currently, the Precinct is exploring and testing a working relationship with the Town's Public Works Department. If results of this initial collaboration are successful, the Precinct may consider a long-term relationship with the Town.

Ten year goals of the Precinct are:

1. Complete the looping of the lines on some of the streets (replacing water-main cul de sacs).
2. Rebuild the lines on Routes 12 and 32 to coincide with the State's road improvements on both of these highways.
3. Replace line around Wilson Pond to coincide with sewer project.
4. Accommodate new commercial customers that may be developed at the airport and the Med Care property.
5. Procure enough revenue to keep up with future project and upgrades.

### **Radio Communications**

The Town's two-way radio communication system needs upgrading. The only person who can communicate with all Town departments is the Fire Chief when he is in the Fire Chief's vehicle.

The Fire Department's main frequency is 33.78mHz. All Fire Department personnel including Rescue and EMTs are paged on that frequency. Each station has a low band base radio. Some of the newer fire trucks have high band fire radios on 154.43mHz. All fire trucks have low band fire radios. Chief Dunham has submitted a grant application to the federal government to upgrade all radios and pagers to high band, 154mHz. This will mean that the fire department will need to submit a license application to operate in the high band.

The Police Department is in the best shape of all agencies. All of their communications are in high band. They can communicate with other towns in the county including the Sheriff's Department and New Hampshire State Police. This can be done from vehicles as well as from the Police Station.

The Public Works Department is on another low band frequency of 45.76mHz. The base station is located in the Town Hall and there is no base station in the Public Works building on Pine Street. The Emergency Management Office applied, on behalf of the Public Works Department, for a license to operate up in the high band. Once approved by the frequency coordinator, the Emergency Management Office will purchase 12 radios for the highway vehicles and two base radios. One radio will be for the Town Hall and one radio for the Public Works building. The license will be set up for three base stations, 12 mobiles and 5 portable hand helds. The third base station license for the Public Work

Department frequency will be located in the Police Station, where both Police and Emergency Management personnel will have access.

The Emergency Management Office has also applied for new high band frequency for the Town of Swanzey. This will allow interagency communications that all Town departments will have access to, once everyone is relocated in the high band and all licenses have been submitted and coordinated. The licensing process takes about 1-1/2 years to complete for each license and \$500. per license.

The Swanzey Center Fire Station has emergency back-up power that serves the Town Hall and the Fire Station. The East station is set up with a "Gen-Tran" hook up and the West station needs to have a "Gen-Tran" hook up installed. They would then be self-sufficient for emergency power. A "Gen-Tran" hookup allows a generator to be hooked up and would not back feed into the Public Service loop. The Police Department and Emergency Management have emergency power. The Public Works Department also has emergency power.

All radio license applications are licensed through a third party such as R&R Communications or Southwestern New Hampshire District Fire Mutual Aid with the International Municipal Signal Association and Federal Communications Commission.

### **Sewage Treatment**

The majority of the homes and businesses in Swanzey are serviced by individual anaerobic subsurface treatment systems consisting of a septic tank and either a leach field or a dry well. This situation will continue to be true for the foreseeable future.

The village of West Swanzey is serviced by an aerated lagoon treatment plant of 160,000 gpd capacity. Current flows are in the 60,000 to 70,000 gpd range. The plant has 262 customers (# of bills sent out).

An \$813,000+ upgrade to the West Swanzey plant was completed in 2001 and should allow the plant to service West Swanzey village for the next 20 years.

At town meeting 2002 voters approved \$165,000 to upgrade to current standards the plans for sewer in the Wilson Pond area of North Swanzey that were designed in 1978 and never built.

At town meeting 2003 the voters will be asked to fund construction of a collection system and pump station to service North Swanzey (375

projected hookups) using the 280,000 gpd capacity the Town owns at the Keene Regional Treatment Plant.

The Town maintains a capital reserve fund for the extension of sewer lines. Most years the budget includes an appropriation to fund this reserve.

### Goals and Objectives

The ultimate goal to be achieved by maintaining adequate sewage treatment facilities is to protect the aquifers that exist under much of Swanzey and to avoid pollution of our ponds, lakes and rivers. To achieve that ultimate goal the following objectives should be achieved:

1. Construct a collection system and pump station to service the area around Wilson Pond, the "Patch" (which is defined as the area of North Swanzey bounded by Rte. 32, Rte. 12, Lake Street and Old Lake Street), the proposed industrial park and if funding is available, Rust Way, Longwood Drive and Swanzey Factory Road area.
2. Continue to expand the collection system in West Swanzey to take advantage of the excess capacity of the treatment plant.
3. In those parts of town served by individual subsurface treatment systems, make sure that lot sizes remain adequate to support such systems.
4. Encourage the use of new technologies such as mini-treatment plants (Mt. Huggins Cabins & Pilgrim Pines) to deal with existing problem areas and to improve treatment as older subsurface systems fail and must be replaced.
5. Monitor technology for disposal of biosolids ("sludge") with the aim of developing a science based policy regarding disposal within the Swanzey Town limits.
6. Develop a program of financial incentives/aids to encourage the maximum use of the capacities of the treatment plants in West and North Swanzey available to Swanzey residents and businesses.

### **Telecommunications**

While the residents of Swanzey want to retain the rural character of the Town, they are also part of the global economy and desire internet connectivity, both for personal and business reasons. The availability of high speed broadband capability at a reasonable price is essential to

meet these needs. This region lags way behind in services available in other communities, i.e., local broadcast of community and school meetings, sports and other events, learning programs (including two way capability) involving the schools, college and medical institutions.

### General Goal

Recognizing that the current cable provider is a virtual monopoly, all efforts should be made to promote the best and most up to date technology-wise communications service (either wired or wireless) possible for the largest number of households and other users in Swanzey.

### Specific Objectives

1. Continue cooperative effort with Keene and the surrounding communities to see that the current cable system is upgraded to the best possible technology and that the communities secure the best contract terms possible.
2. Continue negotiations with Time Warner to obtain the best service capability.
3. Explore the possibility of establishing studio/broadcast capability within the Town.
4. Explore the feasibility of a community owned cable system (purchase the existing system?).
5. Determine if franchise fees are the proper manner in which to finance broadcast facilities within the Town.
6. Determine if subsidies are appropriate to extend cable to remote areas.
7. Explore the need to establish a standing subcommittee to monitor and review cable, telecommunications and information technology within the Town.

### **Telecommunications Facilities**

In March 2000, the Town of Swanzey adopted zoning ordinances regulating the siting of telecommunications facilities. Shortly thereafter, the Planning Board adopted site plan review regulations specifically dealing with telecommunications facilities. The 2002 Master Plan

Update recognizes and affirms the general goals of the ordinances and regulations to be as follows:

### General Goals

To preserve the authority of the Town of Swanzey to regulate and provide for reasonable opportunity for the siting of telecommunications facilities.

Enhance the ability of providers of telecommunications services to provide such services to the community effectively and efficiently.

Reduce the adverse impacts such facilities may create on, including, but not limited to: migratory bird corridors, impacts on aesthetics, environmentally sensitive areas, historically significant locations, health and safety by injurious accidents to person and property, and diminution of property values. To that end, it is specifically recommended that telecommunications facilities should be sited in existing facilities, whenever possible and practicable.

Preserve Swanzey's unique view sheds and scenic values, including, but not limited to, those associated with Mt. Monadnock, Franklin Mountain, Honey Hill, Mt. Caesar and Mt. Cresson.

### **Water Supply**

Based on the recent Community Survey, the public appears interested in community owned/operated water supply/supplies. Coupled with the necessity of protecting our aquifers into the future and providing for the future needs and growth of the Town, steps should be taken to insure the availability of adequate water supplies for as many of the townspeople as possible.

The North Swanzey Water and Fire Precinct Commissioners and the Town Selectmen have been discussing the manner in which the Precinct's operations could be "folded into Town operations" over time. Disbanding the Precinct as an entity seems to be nearly impossible to do as it requires 100% approval from the precinct members. Presently, the Town's Public Works Department and Precinct are working together in making repairs to the water system. The owner of the West Swanzey Water Company has indicated a willingness to sell that system which could be expanded to provide municipal water, including hydrant protection, to the east side of the river. All of this, coupled with the current planning to upgrade portions of the North Swanzey water system, makes combining into one department advantageous.

## General Goal

In so far as possible, combine all community water services into one Town Water Department. This would enable one centralized billing system, a common service facility utilizing existing Town equipment and the ability to raise funds necessary to expand/upgrade.

## Specific Objectives

1. Continue the cooperative effort between the North Swanzey Water & Fire Precinct and Town to merge operations – either by contractual arrangement of operating agreement/s.
2. Continue negotiations with the West Swanzey Water Company relative to acquisition.
3. Develop long range water plans for the Town.
4. Insure that construction plans for multi-user/commercial developments mesh with existing, long range views.
5. Establish a standing working committee to make recommendations on integrating existing systems with long range plans.
6. Make sure water is or can be made available in the industrial park.
7. Determine whether expansion of water services is to be borne only by the users or whether a portion is to be borne by all taxpayers.
8. Protect the aquifers, particularly the 5 high-yield and medium-yield ones.