



MASTER PLAN

FOR THE

TOWN OF COLEBROOK

2013

Adopted: October 1, 2013

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

## Foreword

Comprehensive planning is not a new concept. It has been an ongoing process, in one form or another, for many years and in many countries, including the United States. The concept has been used in New Hampshire for a number of years.

Basically, comprehensive planning is concerned with three factors: (1) what was; (2) what is, and (3) guidelines for the future. Development of a master plan for a community is a form of comprehensive planning.

The Master Plan is the fundamental development plan and land use policy of a community. Normally consisting of maps and appropriate explanatory texts, it is an assessment of existing resources and an estimate of future growth. It should be emphasized that the Master Plan is not a regulatory document. As stated in RSA 674:2, the Master Plan's "sole purpose and effect is to aid the planning board in the performance of its duties".

A Master Plan is important and necessary to a community because effective planning and drafting of regulations cannot occur without sufficient knowledge of existing conditions and future trends. Local land use boards, including the planning board, can utilize the plan to properly assess proposals and support decisions.

It is our hope this revised master plan will help our community look at its future. The Master Plan, and planning in general, is not a static event. It requires an ongoing process, providing ample opportunity for amending the plan as well as implementing its policies.

Signed,

Members of the Colebrook Planning Board

## Process Used to Develop

In December 2003, the Town of Colebrook began the task of updating the Master Plan. An invitation letter was mailed to area businesses and groups, as well as an advertisement placed in both local newspapers inviting “all to attend to help direct the future of our town.” Two meetings were held in January 2004 with approximately 15 townspeople in attendance.

Because the Master Plan had not been updated since 1989, it was agreed the general property usage had changed as well as the needs and demands of the community. It was determined a survey needed to be utilized to get a better understanding of townspeople’s opinions and obtain basic data needed to develop a useful Master Plan for the Town of Colebrook. A committee prepared a 24-question survey which was distributed via the internet and mail, as well as copies left at the Town Hall, Colebrook Public Library, both banks, and local real estate offices.

In the interim, the Historical Overview section was revised, reviewed, and approved. Unfortunately, the momentum for this project fizzled while waiting for the tabulation of the results of the 451 responses received from the survey.

In 2008, a Planning and Technical Services Contract was agreed upon between the Town of Colebrook Planning Board and North Country Council. This agreement called for North Country Council to offer local assistance with a Master Plan update by facilitating two community discussions to gather input from the public at large, local officials and key stakeholders. The discussions would then be summarized in a report in a form suitable to serve as the “vision” statement for the Master Plan.

After the initial two meetings, it was agreed the Planning Board’s focus should be put on the Capital Improvement Plan before the Master Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan was completed in 2010.

In April 2011, the Colebrook Planning Board once again began the process to update the Master Plan. Townspeople were invited to a meeting via a newspaper ad, email invite and a post on the town's website; fifteen people attended. A general discussion ensued regarding Colebrook's assets and weaknesses. Once again, it was felt the vision of the town could have changed somewhat in the five years since the last survey and it would be prudent to address the current pertinent issues and gather opinions via an updated survey. The survey was made available on the town website and was put as an insert in the July 13, 2011 edition of the News & Sentinel. A "kicker" story and ad were also placed in that same edition.

One hundred and forty responses were received in the allotted two-week time period. Employment appeared to be the biggest issue, yet most people reported being happy with the North Country and resided here because they wanted to live here. Eighty-two out of 140 people responded they had lived here over 20 years.

A Public Hearing devoted to reviewing the main items found by the survey to most affect Colebrook's future was advertised; however, only seven people in addition to the Planning Board members attended. It was hoped to form task forces to consider and write about each of the issues but very few volunteers were forthcoming. These volunteers helped complete the Historical, Farming Trends and Economic Development sections of the Master Plan. The Planning Board then devoted a portion of the monthly meetings to tackling the remaining sections. An ad informing the public of this decision and their welcomed participation at any of the meetings was placed in the local newspaper.

The Planning Board has made every effort to address the top concerns expressed in the survey: (1) Employment Opportunities & Commercial Development; (2) Recreation; (3) Preservation of Areas of Scenic Beauty; (4) Farming & Small Business; (5) Improving Downtown Appearance; (6) Roads; (7) Education; (8) Marketing Colebrook. When possible, subject experts were consulted or asked to attend the meetings to discuss the issues with the Board. Upon completion, a draft of the updated Master Plan in its entirety was presented to five of the "movers and shakers" in the town for review prior to print.

## Vision For The Future

Quite frequently the area surrounding the Town of Colebrook is referred to as “God’s Country.” No doubt this is due to the rolling fields and hills beside the meandering streams and rivers. Survey results indicated residents would like the area to remain this way, yet provide a livelihood for those who choose to live here. The following is based on this premise as understood by the Planning Board.

- Colebrook should remain a rural community with a residential village served by neighborhood businesses, interspersed with productive farm and forestland.
  - The town’s natural and scenic resources should continue to be respected.
  - In order to respect private property rights, regulations should set reasonable limits rather than prescribe details.
- The image shows a white, cloud-shaped welcome sign for Colebrook, New Hampshire. The sign has a black border and features the town seal at the top center. Below the seal, the text reads "Welcome to Colebrook" in a mix of cursive and serif fonts. The sign is set against a background of snow-covered ground and bare trees.
- Experience a growth of business that supports the working landscape, as well as fostering a strong recreation and tourism economy, while providing livable wage jobs and keeping the historic value of the town.
  - Look to a growth in agricultural endeavors and cultural activities with a sense of creativity in all that meets the eye.
  - Continued stewardship of the Mohawk and Connecticut Rivers and Beaver Brook Falls, along with their tributaries, by the community and adjacent landowners, in effect, enabling a multi-use trail beginning in the town center and following along the river’s edge.

- Manage NH Route 26 and 3 corridor appropriately to attract tourists and recreationists; however, at the same time, ensure safe and efficient travel.
- Keep local property taxes and housing costs affordable for existing and future residents and their children by balancing growth and services.
- Continue to encourage the strong community spirit reflected in volunteerism, as well as promoting active healthy dialog on important issues, such as the needs of children and disabled and elderly residents, through participation in town events.
- Improve the town's infrastructure so Colebrook is an attractive magnet for business and tourism.
- Provide adequate signage and well-maintained kiosks, highlighting areas of interest, with attention paid to relevance of existing signs.
- Continue the search for a large employer or a number of small to mid-size employers to establish businesses in the community which would enable local residents to work here and not have to travel sixty-plus miles for work, which would also encourage younger residents and families to make Colebrook home.
- At the same time, encourage small cottage industries.
- Become pro-active in promoting the Town of Colebrook by utilizing the web, "welcome" signs, and readily available maps of local services and attractions.

## CHAPTER 2

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

### Historical Perspective

The area that is now Colebrook was originally sold twice. In 1762, Governor Benning Wentworth sold it to 64 individuals as “Dryden”. The requirements of the deed were not honored, so in 1770, Governor John Wentworth sold it to Sir George Colebrooke as Colebrook Town. Again, this time because of the Revolutionary War, the land was not occupied. Thus, when the first settlers came into this area around 1780, no one owned the land. They settled wherever they wanted to and took as much land as they needed for their own purposes.

The census of 1790 completely ignored the town’s physical being, although several settlers had already established themselves here. In 1795, with thirty families in the town, the need for recognition and incorporation was felt, and a petition bearing their names was presented. On June 11, 1796, the town became incorporated. From this time on, the town grew rapidly, and by 1800, it had 160 inhabitants.

The first school was erected in 1795 and the first church, the Congregational, was founded in 1802.

Agriculture and lumbering were the important industries at the time. Lumbering and its products created several fortunes and provided cash incomes for generations of our citizens.

The first sawmill in the Colebrook area was built and run by the MacAllaster brothers about 1800. In the course of a hundred years, about 16 sawmills were known to exist. Brick kilns were also one of the first industries in town. The first one known to exist was behind the present Colebrook House. The Walker House, which still stands today, has some of those bricks in its walls.

Having many sheep on the surrounding farms, a woolen factory was operating in Factory Village about 1825. Two grist mills were also up and running.

About 1840, as farmers were producing many bushels of potatoes, the starch and potato whiskey industries grew. One factory was in Kidderville, another at Factory Village, and a third in Colebrook Village which was owned and operated by Sherburn Merrill.

The inhabitants of the area, being industrious, started bobbin mills, cooper mills and a foundry that began around 1870. To operate these mills, waterpower was provided by the building of dams on the Mohawk River and its tributaries. It is estimated there were about 16 dams on these rivers.

Just before 1900, the dairying industry came into its own, exporting raw milk to cities as far away as Boston. This was feasible with the coming of the railroad and the harvesting of ice from ponds in the winter. Cans of milk were packed with ice and shipped by boxcar. Between 1944 and 1959, there were three milk companies located on Depot Street (now Colby Street). They were H.P. Hood and Sons, United Farmers, Inc., and Whiting Brothers. There were between 300 and 400 farmers in the surrounding area and in the month of June alone, these farmers would ship about 2 million pounds of milk a day.

This short history brings us to the 1900's and beyond, but the people of Colebrook are still inventing new ways to live and survive here. Some examples are tourism, Christmas tree farming, and the production of maple products.

Colebrook now serves as the business, banking and professional center for a large area of New Hampshire's North Country and Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. Located within sight of Dixville Notch in the state's most beautiful section, nature and our people have worked together to produce a lovely and tranquil town. As a vacation area, it is not to be excelled. Tourists and sportsmen are provided with the finest in golfing, fishing, hunting, skiing and snowmobiling. Every need for comfortable living can be met here – churches, libraries, excellent schools and a new, modern hospital.

## Social and Economic Characteristics

A list of statistics might seem to be a dry description of life in a town; however, numbers can be excellent indicators of the basic social and economic health of a community. Community and regional strengths and weaknesses in terms of providing sufficient jobs at reasonable wage levels can be seen. Current and past data can establish benchmarks on where Colebrook stands today and can identify relevant trends that should be considered when planning for the future.

A community's economic structure is determined by the way in which local residents, visitors, businesses and even town governments earn and expend their income. The success of one or a number of businesses impacts the well being of all. The availability of good employment opportunities provides income to the local labor force and can serve as a stimulus for new growth.

Data used in this chapter was obtained from the US Census Bureau, the NH Office of State Planning and the NH Department of Employment Security.

### **Population:**

**History of Growth** -- As evidenced by the following chart, the population in Colebrook is declining. We are not alone in this factor as all of Coos County is showing a decrease. In the past two years, this area has lost two of its largest employers, making it necessary for approximately 600 area citizens to find new jobs. Businesses in Colebrook were able to pick up some of these displaced workers, however, a majority of people either are traveling out of town daily to work or, as expected, many moved.

Population Growth – Colebrook & Coos County  
1960 - 2010

	<u>Colebrook</u>	<u>Coos County</u>
1960	2,389	37,014
1970	2,094	34,189
1980	2,459	35,014
1990	2,453	34,879
2000	2,325	33,156
2010	2,301	33,055

\*From 2010 Census Data

**Age Distribution --** Understanding the age composition of a community is vital in planning for future needs. A change in school age population, for example, may indicate a need for modification in educational policies. Likewise, a trend to a more elderly population would require that different type of services and facilities be developed. The age structure of a population can also identify certain characteristics of the community's population. The following table exhibits the age structure of Colebrook's population.

Colebrook Population Distribution By Age

	<u>2010</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Under 5 –	115	4.9%	203	8.2%
5 – 24	477	20.7%	811	32.9%
25-44	525	22.8%	640	26.0%
45-64	734	31.8%	505	20.5%
65- and over	450	19.5%	300	12.2%

It is interesting to note the population 5 to age 24 and those citizens over 65 equal almost the same percentage. The working age population (ages 25-64) equals approximately 54.6%. Also of interest is that the US Census Bureau figures for the Town of Colebrook for 2010 indicate the ratio of female (1,168 ) to male (1,133) population is almost equal.

It was noted in the 1989 Master Plan that the trend between 1970 and 1980 revealed an increase in the older segment of the population, including a large increase in the working age population and decreases in the number of preschool and school age children. This trend continues today.

**Seasonal Population** - It should be remembered Colebrook has a number of seasonal and second homes located in the rural areas of the Town. There are also motels, cottages and two campgrounds which can add to the amount of potential seasonal population. A review of the tax warrant for 2011 indicates approximately 550 parcels owned by non-residents. Some parcels contain a structure, be it a rustic camp, camper trailer or highly assessed home; while other parcels are land-only, waiting for development. With a total of 1,793 parcels listed, this equals 30.6% of the lots owned by non-residents; the same figure found during a review in 1989.

**Population Projections** - Population projections are important in terms of planning future land use and anticipating future municipal requirements. The 1989 Master Plan indicated a “good judgment projection of Colebrook’s population growth to continue at .6% annually with a projected 2010 total of 3,186.” The real population total from the 2010 Census indicates a total equalling 2,301. The 1980 population was given as 2,459. This is a decrease from 1980 to 2010 of 6.5%. It is felt Colebrook’s population will continue to decrease until there are more available jobs as population trends historically follow the economic trends.

## **Income**

**Current Income Levels** – Naturally, the income level of the town’s residents is one indicator of the condition of the Town’s economic atmosphere.

2010 Inflation Adjusted

Per capita income \$21,893

Median 4-person family income \$53,875

<b>Median Household Income of NH Towns and Cities</b>			
Compiled by NH OEP on 8/22/12 from 2006-2010 ACS estimates and 2010 Census data			
	<b>2010 Census Population</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Median Household Income</b>
	(2010 Census Data)	(2006-2010 ACS estimates)	(2006-2010 ACS estimates)
Clarksville	265	175	\$35,078
Colebrook	2,301	1,123	\$32,288
Columbia	757	311	\$45,875

\*NH OEP State Data Center American Community Survey

**Poverty Level** – The measure of the standard of living of a Town’s residents is also reflected by the number of persons living at or below the poverty level. In 2010, the US Census defined the poverty level for a family of four as earning less than \$23,021. This threshold is smaller for families with fewer members and higher for larger families. The NH Employment Security estimated in 2011 that 11.2% of Colebrook families live below the poverty level.

The increase in both the percentage of families below the poverty level and the number of children living below the poverty level has implications as far as planning for services which would benefit low income persons in the future. For instance, an increased amount of affordable housing, community day-care services and elderly assistance programs may need to be developed.

**Employment:**

A community’s income level is dependent upon the jobs available and the sectors of the economy in which people are employed. Even though the wage and employment statistics

included here are based on Coos County averages, they are indicative of Colebrook's particular labor force character.

	November 2012	October 2012	November 2011
<b>New Hampshire</b>			
Labor Force	736,480	739,530	738,920
Employment	696,940	700,930	702,450
Unemployment	39,540	38,600	36,470
Rate	5.4%	5.2%	4.9%

<b>Coos County</b>			
Labor Force	15,250	15,650	15,340
Employment	14,170	14,690	14,260
Unemployment	1,080	960	1,080
Rate	7.1%	6.2%	7.0%

NH Employment Security – Labor Force & Unemployment Data Source

Job categories are often separated into three industry sectors: manufacturing, non-manufacturing and local government. In general, manufacturing provides stability with a higher wage and a fairly skilled labor force. Non-manufacturing employment supplies the local economy with an adequate level of services to support the population and does not typically require as skilled a labor force as manufacturing. Non-manufacturing employment is traditionally not as stable as manufacturing firms. Government jobs provide a level of public service to the local economy, with wages usually falling below average but positions tend to be stable. Our local jobs at the moment tend to be part-time, lower paying non-manufacturing, service industry and tourism based.

Even though Coos County has a diversified economy, it must be remembered that the Colebrook area has been hard hit in the past couple of years with the loss of major area employers. The size of the total labor force has decreased since 1987. At that time, the NH Department of Employment Security predicted changes in the employment categories toward non-manufacturing occupations to continue in the service sector, such as retail salespersons, janitors, cashiers, registered nurses, general managers and office clerk. The smallest growth would be

seen in farmers, plumbers, police, firefighters, teachers. This projection appears to have held true through 2011 as our local jobs at the moment tend to be part-time, lower paying service industry and tourism-based jobs.

In 1989, Coos County's total labor force, employment and unemployment rates indicated monthly fluctuations in the labor force and employment levels, and the resulting unemployment rates. It appeared the highest unemployment rate occurred in April and the lowest rate occurred in August and September. These variations indicate an economy that is dependent, at least partially, upon tourism. April is a month commonly associated with rain and "mud season", characteristics which do not entice visitors to the region. The months of August and September are typically the most favorable times to visit the region as they offer comfortable summer temperatures and vibrant fall foliage.

Unemployment Rates for the Town of Colebrook

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
January	6.9%	10.3	6.1	5.9
February	7.0%	9.7	12.4	6.0
March	6.9%	9.5	11.8	6.1
April	10.4%	13.1	9.2	8.6
May	8.1%	10.8	7.5	5.4
June	6.2%	7.1	6.9	3.8
July	5.9%	5.9	5.9	3.9
August	5.5%	6.0	7.0	3.9
September	5.7%	5.0	9.0	4.4
October	7.6%	5.1	10.3	4.8
November	8.0%	11.8	13.9	5.7
December	6.8%	8.8	12.6	6.8

\*Source: NH Employment Security – Labor Force & Unemployment Bench Mark Data

It is evident Coos County's economy lags behind the state's economy. The county is not as developed economically as the State. In 2011, there was a 2.1 percentage point difference between Colebrook's and the state's overall unemployment rates. In 1988, this was a 0.8 percentage point.

#### Commuting:

A large amount of commuting occurs in the North Country and many of Colebrook's workers commute to jobs in other communities. The loss of large employers in the area has meant a majority of workers commute to points south and west to stay employed. The NH Employment Security reports 29.6% of the working residents commute to another NH community to work, while 16.1% commute out-of-state. The same entity reports approximately 54.3% of the working residents work within the community.

#### Wages:

A final employment related statistic is the average weekly wage. The NH employment security community profile indicates the following annual average covered employment comparison for 2001 and 2011 for Colebrook:

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2011</u>
- Goods – Producing Industries		
- Average Employment	173	143
- Average Weekly Wage	\$496	\$721
- Service Providing Industries		
- Average Employment	893	878
- Average Weekly Wage	\$405	\$540

- Total Private Industry		
- Average Employment	1,066	1,021
- Average Weekly Wage	\$420	\$566
- Government (Federal, State & Local)		
- Average Employment	157	173
- Average Weekly Wage	\$448	\$590

### Conclusions:

The preceding statistics indicate Colebrook's population is decreasing. Age distribution statistics show the largest segments of Colebrook's population in 2010 was the 40-64 year old working age population with the younger working age (20-39) and those 65 and over being almost equal. School age children (5-19) come in fourth with the youngest population being the least. When the Master Plan was last completed, first was young working age (25-44) with school aged (5-17) and middle aged next. As predicted in 1989, the elderly segment of the population increased at a greater rate than others.

Economic statistics indicate a trend of growing disparity in income levels, still dominated by middle incomes, but with higher concentrations of lower and upper income levels. These factors reiterate the importance of planning for services that benefit low-income persons, including day-care facilities, affordable housing and elderly services.

Projections based on existing trends anticipate smaller families and older population.

## Natural Resources

Colebrook's natural farm environment is comprised of clean air and water bodies, areas of good agricultural soil, vast forestlands, and an attractive rural landscape. Environmental features have factored significantly in the character of the Town's settlement; fertile agricultural soils supported a healthy farm economy, dense stands of hardwoods and softwoods yielded abundant resources for logging operations and a wood products industry, and abundant fish and wildlife provided sustenance for Colebrook's early settlers.

Natural resources and environmental quality have continued to be significant for Colebrook today.



Colebrook's climate is the product of its geographical location and topography. Like most of northern New England, Colebrook's winters are long and cold with heavy snowfall and its summers are short and cool. Information gathered by the National Climatic Data Center at the First Connecticut Lake Weather Station was used to develop the following precipitation and temperature estimates. Annual precipitation averages about 43 inches, seasonal snowfall averages 99 inches per year, but varies widely and in past years has ranged from 45 - 147 inches annually. Colebrook's average temperature is 37 F with a typical winter/summer range of -30 to 93 F, therefore homes must be heated from mid-October

until mid-May.

Colebrook's topography, the shape of the land, is shown on topography maps. Topography affects the natural processes of drainage and erosion, significantly impacting access to certain

land area. Therefore, these factors must be evaluated when considering certain land use proposals. Generally, land that is relatively level is considered good for development. Colebrook ranges in elevation from approximately 1005 feet at the Connecticut River to 2775 feet at Van Dyke Mountain.

Colebrook has two rivers; the Connecticut River and the Mohawk River, along with Beaver Brook stream. The Connecticut River is New England's longest river with a length of 410 miles, it flows along Colebrook's western border for 8 miles before crossing the Columbia town line. The river was used for the disposal of domestic and industrial waste for many years. The installation of pollution control measures and improved sewage treatment, resulted in the improvement in the river's water quality, except during periods of low flow. The Connecticut River Wasteload Allocation Study, undertaken by the NH Water Supply and Pollution Control Commission in 1980, indicated that the river met the requirements necessary to maintain its Class B water quality designation. This designation allows for fishing, swimming, and municipal water supply after adequate water treatment.

The Connecticut River valley in Colebrook provides a large amount of natural flood storage, as the result of its flat gradient and wide floodplain. This allows flood peaks to rise and fall slowly, the significance of maintaining this valley storage cannot be overemphasized. Also of significance is the floodplain's quality for ideal agricultural lands, as well as its natural use as a wildlife habitat.

The Mohawk River headwaters originate in Lake Gloriette in Dixville, flowing west through Colebrook for eleven miles until it joins the Connecticut River. The NH Water Supply and Pollution Control Commission classified that the river met the requirements necessary to maintain its Class B water quality designation. This designation allows for fishing, swimming, and municipal water supply after adequate water treatment.

The Town of Colebrook owns and maintains several Conservation parcels: 100 acres on South Hill, 40 acres at the now closed landfill on Sunset Drive, a 1,300 foot strip along the Connecticut

River in the Industrial Park, as well as the land between the sewer lagoons to the north side of the Mohawk River. There are also several private conservation parcels.

The thriving wildlife population in Colebrook offers the opportunity for successful photographic, hunting, and fishing trips for both residents and visitors.



Colebrook is fortunate in that it has not had to endure many natural hazard events. The most frequent occurring hazards would include winter weather snowstorms, along with minor flooding from thunderstorms and heavy rainfall. Mitigation via snow removal, ditching and grading, is

conducted annually as time and budget constraints allow. Hazards such as landslides, tornado winds and earthquakes have been far and few between. Rarely, however, ice storms have resulted in power loss for up to a week; therefore, large power generation systems may wish to be considered.

Wildfires have also been negligible; however, the Town has completed a Water Resource Plan and addressed where the development of dry hydrants and fire ponds would be beneficial. On going review of this document will be beneficial as well as mapping of access points and woods roads to improve emergency response to remote areas.

Town officials have just completed an update to the Town's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. One consideration for the Planning Board brought forward was to consider a steep slope ordinance to restrict and / or prohibit development in difficult to reach areas. It was also suggested the Board might wish to give consideration to including fire suppression regulations addressing the installation of cisterns, dry hydrants and fire ponds within the subdivision regulations.

Homeowner education remains the most effective mitigation action.

**Strengths & Resources:**

- \*Canoe/Kayak launch on the Connecticut River.
- \*Riverwalk along the Mohawk River in Colebrook is under development
- \*Cohos Trail for hiking nearby.
- \*Beaver Brook Falls scenic picnic area, a State of NH Wayside Park
- \*Unpolluted scenic rural landscape.
- \*Several maple sugaring operations that can be toured during “Sugaring Season”.
- \*Ready access to quality hunting and fishing.
- \*Rural “dirt” roads with wildlife, for a quiet drive or walk, especially during seasonal foliage
- \*Establishment of the Colebrook Conservation Commission.

**Weaknesses:**

- \*Loss of large tracts of agricultural/forested land to subdividing.
- \*Continued development in the floodplain.
- \*More private properties being “Posted“.

**Goals:**

- \*Limit or ban adverse development in floodplains and wetlands.
- \*Ensure landowners continue to enjoy freedom of choice regarding use of their property and receive reasonable protection from serious negative environmental/economic impacts.
- \*Preserve the high quality of local air/water resources and prohibit local land uses which might cause air/water quality degradation.
- \*Preserve trees and stone walls along specific rural/scenic drives to encourage more tourism.
- \*Preserve, protect and identify the natural and cultural qualities of Colebrook that lend themselves to the unique town character.
- \*Encourage conscious efforts to blend new development into the old/traditional Town setting.

- \*Conserve and protect the aesthetic, ecological, recreational, scientific, cultural, and economic values of wildlife and fisheries resources.
- \*Use accepted Federal, State, Town policies and practices, along with sound land management to ensure the man-made environment will complement and co-exist with the natural environment.

### Recreational, Cultural and Historic Resources

Colebrook has a wide range of recreation and cultural opportunities. Most notable is the North Country Community Recreation Center located in town on Rec Center Road. It offers an indoor swimming pool, skate park, playground, children's summer programs, soccer, basketball, and seasonal ice skating rink.

The Tillotson Center for the Arts provides the opportunity to enjoy the cultural diversity of the area, whether it be music, films, theatre, arts, and crafts. It also houses part of the Colebrook Area Historical Museum, supplementing the Town Hall Historical Museum.

The 162-mile Cohos Trail which goes from Pittsburg to the Presidential Mountains in the White Mountain National Forests passes nearby Colebrook and is easily assessible. There are several opportunities for kayaking and canoeing on the area rivers which can be accessed by two boat ramps within town.



For a more leisurely activity, you could go to Beaver Brooks Falls to enjoy a picnic lunch and the beauty of the falls. You even have the choice of just walking through the woods and enjoying the quiet solitude of nature at it's best. Plans for the future envision a Riverwalk along the Mohawk River to Beaver Brook Falls.

Colebrook is very fortunate to have many volunteer groups and organizations who work hard to bring entertainment to young and old throughout the year. Being busy is only hampered by your imagination. Some of the yearly activities include the Annual Winter Carnival in February where one can participate in the box derby or canoe races on snow, take a sled dog or horse drawn carriage ride, or take part in the highly competitive bocce ball tournament. In May, at the Mud Rally, spectators can view and cheer for 4x4 vehicles, big and small, that come from New

Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and Canada to try to make it through a slimy mud pit. The Shrine of Our Lady of Grace on the southern border of Colebrook and Columbia town line conducts the annual, heavily attended Motorcycle Blessing in June. Fourth of July always includes a pancake breakfast, kid's fishing derby, parade, chicken barbeque and fireworks. The Annual North



Country Moose Festival is held in August with craft vendors, antique auto show and parade, quilt show, barbeques, dances, and clowns for the young at heart.

Snowmobiling is also a significant winter time activity, lasting for approximately three months.

Snowmobilers from all over New England are attracted to the area's four

hundred plus miles of groomed trails, both through and around Colebrook, that connect with surrounding towns, the states of Maine and Vermont, as well as Canada.

In 2012, the State of NH gave permission to an area club to remove the rails on an inactive track through Colebrook, allowing the rail bed to be utilized as an ATV trail. The Selectboard of Colebrook in January 2013 approved ATV vehicles using selected portions of town streets and roads. Staging areas are proposed for several locations in town, promoting a user friendly atmosphere, giving people the chance to enjoy what Colebrook has to offer. It is hoped all these efforts will help in the creation of an interconnecting ATV trail system from Berlin to Pittsburg and stimulate the economy of towns along the way.

### **Strengths & Resources:**

- \*Public recreation facility.
- \*Well developed system of groomed snowmobile trails.
- \*Two established campgrounds.
- \*State of NH Rest Area north of town with Interpretive Center, seasonal

- \*Tillotson Center for the Arts.
- \*Memorial Park.
- \*Moose Festival, Harvest Fair, Blessing of the Bikes, Fourth of July, Winter Carnival, along with other established events in Colebrook and surrounding towns, allowing always something to do.
- \*Height restriction on new construction limited to 35 feet to maintain rural/quaint setting.
- \*Hub for tourists heading north, south, east, and west.
- \*ATV trails connecting area towns and trail systems.

### **Weaknesses:**

- \*No bike trails.
- \*No cross-country skiing trails.
- \*No snowshoe trails.
- \*Snowmobiling can be adversely affected with little snowfall.
- \*Lack of equine trails.

### **Goals:**

- \*Actively promote Colebrook through different media such as tourist information booth, computer website, broadcasting local events.
- \*Continue developing ATV trails connecting Colebrook to area towns and trails.
- \*Develop Rails to Trails for biking.
- \*Incorporate Snowmobile/ATV trail conditions on the town website.
- \*Encourage consideration of expanding current Town Recreation Department to include cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.
- \*Further develop the town Riverwalk.
- \*Establish a town common.

CHAPTER 3  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND  
SUPPORTING FACILITIES

**Colebrook Water Company** - The J.E. Lombard Water Works was first established about 1872, and began to sell water in 1877. The Water Works purchased the springs on Lombard Hill from the Parsons family. A reservoir with a 500-gallon capacity was erected by George W. Annis. It had a simple strainer as a purification system. All rights of this utility were transferred to the Colebrook Water Company on September 24, 1929.

The Colebrook Water Company was incorporated in February 1897 and amended in March 1903. The company first began to sell water in 1904, the same year their plant was constructed. Their sources of water were Beaver Brook and Durant Brook. There was no pumping station at first, just a gravity system. In 1964, the Town of Colebrook voted to start negotiations to take over the Water Company.

The water line on Main Street was first to be laid, with spurs to Colby, Pleasant, and Bridge Street. About this same time, six or eight old Ludlow hydrants were installed. Three horse watering spots also existed -- one near the present day Kiwanis Park, one at the corner of Main and Colby Street and a third one near Nugent's. In 1903, a spur was added for Spring Street.

It is believed the first water system included the stone reservoirs on Lombard Hill which held water supplied by springs. This water was then piped down to Main Street and Spring Street. A map located in the Historical Society indicates, when Bridge Street was initially added, the water was piped across the Connecticut River from springs on Mt Monadnock. At one time, South Main Street was fed from Durant Brook, a stream above Don Tase's place; however currently the town water line does not extend that far.

In 1929, the Colebrook Water Company bought 100 acres of land from John H. Brackett. This parcel begins by Beaver Brook Falls and runs south along Route 145, extending from South Hill Road to Route 145 and is identified on the Colebrook Tax Maps as 214-8. A dam was built above the falls on Beaver Brook and water was run through a four-inch (4") pipe to feed the town. Silt in the pipes was apparently a problem, therefore, "blow-offs" were created that could be opened up to discharge the silt out of the pipes and into the Mohawk River. Two of these

blow-offs were located on each side of the Mohawk River by Ducret's Sporting Store and one was on the north side of the river next to Hall's apartment house.

Sometime later, probably in the early 1930's, a series of well points were driven at the present pumphouse site behind Ducret's Sporting Store and water was pumped out of the ground to supply the town. In 1984, two wells were drilled in this area and hooked into the existing piping.

At a Special Emergency Town Meeting in August 1965, the townsfolks voted to purchase the Colebrook Water Company plant, property, inventory and accounts receivables for the amount of \$220,000. The land where the reservoir sits was purchased from the Jordan family in 1976. A new one-million gallon concrete reservoir which holds approximately three days worth of water most of the time was built that same year.

In 2004, the Colebrook Water Company bought 79 acres from Richard Feltham west of the Piper Hill Road intersection with Route 3. New wells and a pumphouse were begun in 2010 and completed the next year. Main water lines were run from the new well to the IGA entrance to tie into the existing distribution system. A new main was also run from Edwards Street east to Route 145 to loop that portion of the system.

The Town of Colebrook has close to ten (10) miles of water main in the ground. As the above indicates, portions of the water main infrastructure for the Town of Colebrook are very old, dating back to the 1800's. As breaks have occurred, the pipe has been replaced when possible. New lines have been added as the water district extended. There is no protective radius around the original pump house; today's regulations requires four-hundred (400) feet. Our water tests remain excellent but the potential for contamination is very real. Contaminants are measured today in parts per billion; therefore, it would not take much to ruin the water supply coming from the original pump house. Its close proximity to the Municipal Parking Lot creates the potential threat for contamination from a fluid leak from a vehicle.

**Strengths:**

- Colebrook has a million gallon water tank
- Two new water wells were brought on line north of town in 2011, bringing Colebrook's water supply system up to two water sites with a total of four wells.
  
- New water well has necessary protective radius and a back-up well
- 900,000 gallons per day can be pumped, if needed
- Portions of the water main are only 20 years old
- Creation of a Capital Reserve account for future major repairs

**Weaknesses:**

- Older distribution system, vintage 1880's, with few valves
- The three-mile water distribution system is very old
- Original wells lack protective radius, potential for contamination
- Water reservoir is in need of maintenance inspection and possible repair

**Goals:**

- Inspect and maintain water reservoir
- Replace the three miles of the water distribution system
- Put water main system on town tax map

**Sewer Department** - The sewer system for the Town of Colebrook grew as the town built up. The first houses utilized outhouses so there was no discharge of water from the buildings. The Walker House, known now as the First Run Video Store, installed the first flush toilet in town in the 1890's.

As was common in the past, sewers were piped to the nearest stream, allowing nature to treat the wastewater. Sewer mains were dug in Colebrook in the early 1900's, however, waste was still discharged into the rivers. The line on Bridge Street originally dumped into the Connecticut River just south of the present bridge. A pipe for this purpose can still be seen under the bridge by Howard's Restaurant. The major portion of the town's sewerage was discharged south down Colby Street, out behind Lewis Ford's body shop, down through the fields owned by Deblois and into the Connecticut River beyond the green barn south of the airport.

These discharge points were all sealed off in 1964 when the present day wastewater lagoons were built. All lines were diverted to the south end of Bridge Street where a large pump station (and treatment plant) was built to pump all sewerage to the lagoons. New electrical panels were installed at this pump station in 2000. There are also five small pump stations located as follows: Bromage Drive (replaced in 2000); Colby Street (rebuilt in 1993); Edwards Street (rebuilt in 1992); North Main Street (rebuilt in 1992) and Route 26 (rebuilt in 2012). As a footnote, the old sewer line on Bridge Street was converted by the state for their storm drains.

In 2000 we did an upgrade at the treatment plant, adding aeration, which eliminated the odor problem. This upgrade also allows more flow to be treated which, in effect, provides for expansion of the town if and when that might happen. Currently, 200,000 gallons of sewerage is treated a day.

**Strengths:**

- Ultra-violet treatment plant can handle up to 450,000 gallons per day
- Ultra-violet treatment plan life expectancy is another 15 years

**Weaknesses:**

- Older piping needs to be addressed
- Smaller pump stations need to be rebuilt

**Goals:**

- Rebuild Edwards Street & North Main Street stations
- Replace Main Street sewer line
- Replace Route 145 sewer line
- Build new line on Rte 145 from Corliss Lane turn to 59 Route 145
- Install headworks in the present system

**Roads** -- Colebrook's roads were originally laid out to reach each farmstead. There was no formal layout for the town or countryside. The roads were probably set out over whatever paths folks used for horse and foot travel when needed and as people settled. Most roads were never actually "built"; over time some gravel was added and in some cases pavement laid. This has meant that during an especially wet spring, we have an additional season, referred to as "mud season". This can make traveling the road difficult for a time.

Unpaved roads are common across the Colebrook landscape. A familiar sight in rural communities, unpaved roads offer a sense of timelessness, helping residents connect with the days of cart paths and carriage roads. Often narrow and bordered by stone walls and mature shade trees, or



following an alignment parallel to streams and brooks, unpaved roads offer a scenic escape from the realities of concrete and pavement. There are a total of 30.75 miles of Class V gravel roads to be maintained within the township.<sup>1</sup>

Our random growth also meant no pre-settlement planning. It appears the streets were either laid out because they were necessary for east to west or south to north travel by private individuals who wanted to open up their land for housing lots.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the in-precinct town streets are paved. There are two streets which are completely gravel and two which are half pavement and half gravel. There is approximately 7.51 miles of town streets within the precinct.

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Colebrook Road Management Plan

<sup>2</sup> Compilation of the Roads and Streets of Colebrook by Granvyl G. Hulse, Jr., Kevin McKinnon, Sheila Beauchemin

Colebrook also has eighteen roads, or portions thereof, classified as Class VI roads (approximately 4 miles). This includes all local highways discontinued subject to gates and bars and all highways that have not been maintained and repaired by the town in suitable condition for travel for five successive years or more. Class VI highways are full public highways in every respect except the town has no duty to maintain. Any gates and bars maintained by private land owners cannot be erected so as to prevent or interfere with public use of the highway. The gates and bars must be capable of being opened and closed by users of the highway.<sup>3</sup> In 2006, the Selectboard of Colebrook voted to accept the protocol delineated in RSA 231:59A. This allows (but does not require) the Town to do minimal summer maintenance to allow passage of emergency vehicles and specifically allowed maintenance to be done on Class VI roads without them automatically becoming Class V. The motion specifically excluded winter maintenance.

The Town is actively working on compiling a Road Management Plan. Once traffic counts are completed, the roads will be considered for priority listing. Pricing will then be calculated and a means of funding will be sought. Implementation of the road management program will help keep the roads in the best and safest condition.

Colebrook is a significant truck route to Canada, as well as locations in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. Any given day, you see wood products heading in all four directions, as well as other truck traffic with a variety of products.

**Sidewalks** -- Eight streets, out of 24, in the Town of Colebrook, have sidewalks. There are also sidewalks located on the four streets in town which are Class 3 State highways: Main, Bridge, Park and Parsons Street. It is the town's responsibility, however, to maintain the sidewalks. The town is currently pursuing a Safe Route to School grant to build a much-needed sidewalk along Dumont Street to the Colebrook Elementary School complex.

A portion of the east side of the Main Street sidewalk consists of a raised paved area with step-down shelf. This has complicated the cleaning of this sidewalk in the winter. The majority of

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<sup>3</sup> A Hard Road to Travel, NH Law of Local Highways, Streets, and Trails – Local Government Center

the remaining sidewalks are just above the level of the vehicular portion of the highway with a small curbing to separate the cars from pedestrians. There are currently about four miles of sidewalk in Colebrook.

Ongoing maintenance is a significant financial and operational responsibility for the Public Works Department. There is no question the sidewalks in Colebrook need repair; however, the type of material and construction technique need to be carefully considered, taking into consideration stormwater runoff, access for the disabled, and above all, the safety of the pedestrian.

## Colebrook Town Hall

The Town Hall, located on Main Street between 1854 and 1870, was destroyed in a fire in 1870. All the town records were also lost. A new Town House was built in the current location on Bridge Street in 1877. The new building had a wide gallery that went nearly two-thirds of the way around the room. It was promptly called the Opera House. The town hall was soon found



to be inadequate, and in 1898, the rear of the hall was extended to provide a stage. This building continued to be called the Opera House until it burned in 1938.<sup>4</sup>

A new town hall was completed on the same site in 1941 and has served the town ever since. For many years, town meeting business was deliberated on the floor while

residents and school children sat in the “gallery bleachers” and observed. School dances and proms were also conducted within the Town Hall. In 1971, when the Town obtained the former Academy of Our Lady of Grace School with a large gym, town meetings and dances moved to the gym. The main floor of the Town Hall was converted to offices, originally for the School Supervisory staff and later to become the Town Administration offices, with the basement area relegated to the Police Department. A third floor was created by putting a ceiling in the offices. The original “gallery” still remains in this third floor area which has become home for the Colebrook Historical Society.

In addition to the Town Administration offices, Police Department, and Colebrook Historical Society, the Town Hall also contains the Colebrook Area Dispatch Center which dispatches for police, fire and ambulance for the surrounding area. The State of New Hampshire utilizes space within the building every other week, renewing and issuing driver’s licenses. A portion of the

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<sup>4</sup> Excerpts from Colebrook, A Place Up Back of New Hampshire by William H. Gifford

building is also rented by the State of New Hampshire Court system, with a judge sitting at least once a month to hear cases. New Hampshire State Police also have an outpost office within the building. Needless to say, there can be a significant amount of traffic in and around the Town Hall on any given day.

### **Colebrook Public Library**

In 1921, the Women’s Club asked each Colebrook alumnus to donate \$1 towards creating a library. By 1926, enough money was gathered to purchase the lot the Colebrook Public Library sets on. Construction of the library began in 1927 and was completed in 1928. The Town Meeting of 1928 voted \$1,500 and the deed was turned over to the town. This building still serves the community and surrounding area today.

In 1988, the town voted to enter into an agreement with the Masons of the Evening Star Lodge to build an addition to the Colebrook Public Library. The library would have the first floor and basement with the Masonic Hall occupying the second story. The addition would be annexed to the present library and would have an elevator. It was completed in 1990.<sup>1</sup>



Today’s libraries are no longer a place for “just books”. The Colebrook Public Library circulates books, videos, CDs, DVDs, and puzzles. The computers set up in the library are used extensively to search for jobs, connect with family and do homework, with classes offered for novices. Wireless access is available. The library’s website means the resources are available twenty-four hours a day and can be accessed for newspaper, magazine articles, or homework help. One can even download audio books, movies or ancestry information since the library is a member of the three-state consortium to provide these services. There is a separate area within

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from Colebrook, A Place Up Back of New Hampshire, by Dr. William H. Gifford

the Library designated specifically for children. Throughout the year, various programs are offered for children of all ages, ranging from computer nights, games, movie nights, lego club and “snowflake teas”.

### **Colebrook Transfer Station and Public Works Garage:**

The Colebrook Transfer Station came into being in 1993. A small triangular piece of property located off Bridge Street was utilized for the “design, build” project instituted to save the taxpayers money. Prior to this time, Colebrook residents and surrounding towns had utilized a landfill on Skyline Drive from 1977 to 1993.

The passing of Federal laws too cumbersome and expensive for the town to implement caused the town to close the landfill in 1993. At the same time, a cooperative was begun at the Coos County Farm to help the surrounding towns who had been utilizing the Colebrook Landfill. Recycled material such as cardboard, paper and tin amassed by Colebrook residents was trucked to the County Farm Cooperative until October 2011. Recycling is accomplished on a larger scale today and it is felt this amount will only grow over time as we recycle more of our waste stream.

Late in 1995, a new highway garage with six bays was built on this same property. This building is used to maintain and house the extensive equipment needed to keep up with the maintenance of roads, water & sewer lines, and all public works projects. Colebrook currently owns a fleet of equipment to include: four dump/plow trucks, a pick-up truck, grader, backhoe, loader, bobcat plow, chipper, rock rake, and numerous other pieces of equipment.

### **Colebrook Village Fire Precinct**

In 1880, the fire wardens were instructed to form a fire company not to exceed 40 members and to promise to pay them \$5 each for one year’s service.<sup>5</sup> Today you will find 31 volunteer fireman on the roster, ready to answer the call whenever the tone is sounded. They proudly

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<sup>5</sup> Excerpted from Colebrook, A Place Up Back of New Hampshire, by Dr. William H. Gifford



serve towns in two states, including Colebrook, Columbia, Stewartstown, Dixville, Canaan, Lemington and Bloomfield, Vermont. Mutual aid and station back-up is provided as requested for surrounding communities, including townships in Quebec, Canada.

The scope of fire fighting has changed in the last few years and includes rescuing victims from drowning and responding to recreational vehicle accidents, as well as providing assistance to the 45<sup>th</sup> Parallel EMS. The Colebrook Village Fire Precinct has included the following in its arsenal of equipment to be ready for any event: an aerial ladder truck; two engines, one tank truck, one rescue truck, ice rescue boat, jaws of life and accessories, rescue sled and snow machine, trailer and ATV.

### **Colebrook Cemeteries:**

Colebrook has within its boundaries four cemeteries. These include the Village Cemetery located on US Route 3 at the northern edge of the village; the Titus Hill Cemetery which is for all practical purposes closed to future burials and the Reed Cemetery at the junction of the Forbes and Reed Roads. This cemetery has limited space available so is dedicated to those persons with a strong family connection to the cemetery or who already own their lots. The fourth cemetery is a private Roman Catholic cemetery located on South Main Street.

In 1996, the townspeople voted to elect a Board of Cemetery Trustees to oversee the general care and maintenance of the three public cemeteries. Even though a large portion of the money for the maintenance comes from perpetual care trusts set up in years past, the Trustees of Trust Funds are charged by State law with the task of insuring that the trust money is used as original donors expected it to be used, whether it be cleaning stones, flower funds, general maintenance or restricted to the care of a specific lot. Today the purchase price of a cemetery lot includes the cost of the lot and perpetual care.

## **Colebrook Elementary School**

Colebrook has demonstrated throughout its history that it values education. According to Dr. William H. Gifford, author of *Colebrook: A Place Up Back of New Hampshire*, very soon after Colebrook petitioned to be incorporated as a town in 1795 (in fact, the same year), it built a log cabin schoolhouse on what is now Pleasant Street. Being thrifty people, Colebrook citizens also used this building as a church on Sundays. Two “terms” or sessions of school were held each year for grades 1-8.

In 1826, a one-story brick schoolhouse was built on Main Street. It was torn down and replaced with a two-story wooden building between 1871-1874 on the same site. This structure burned in 1903 and was replaced.

Colebrook had many “districts” during the nineteenth century, each with its own elementary school (usually one-room schoolhouses). Because the terms did not always overlap, teachers might be hired to teach in more than one school during the year. By 1883, there were thirteen separate schools; in 1885, the numerous school districts were consolidated into two districts: the “town” district and the “special” district. The “special” district was composed of the outlying neighborhoods - each with a one-room schoolhouse. In 1954, all districts were consolidated with the Colebrook Town District and became one entity, the Colebrook School District. All children were then brought to town to be educated at the “village school” on Main Street.

In 1999-2000, the townspeople of Colebrook agreed to build a new complex on the grounds purchased from the Sisters of Our Lady of Grace in 1971. This new complex replaced the grammar school originally built by the nuns in 1949, but incorporated the high school portion and gym completed in 1963. Included in the construction was a new wing and other new rooms, including an Art room, two Music rooms, new locker rooms and a complete new administrative wing. Today the complex houses approximately 270



students in Kindergarten through Grade 8. It contains an in-house cafeteria. Its gym is used extensively for basketball games, graduations, the annual town elections and meeting, as well as other public meetings. It is also designated as the Emergency Management Shelter for the Town of Colebrook.

The Colebrook School District has continued in the last decade to expand its educational offerings to keep up with the needs of the community. Kindergarten became a full day program in 2012. A Pre-Kindergarten program was added in 2011.

### **Colebrook Academy**

As early as 1832, citizens of Colebrook planned to have a secondary school. In 1849, the present location of Colebrook Academy was adopted and a two-story structure with large assembly hall



completed in 1852. It remained a private school until 1889, consisting of mostly local youngsters who paid tuition. In 1911, the old building was moved from its foundation and a new brick building was erected in its place. High school was seen as a valuable alternative to college which

many students were too poor to attend. The philosophy was to fit the curriculum to the needs of the community, and have done with studies with “no direct relation to lives out of school and no rational functions in life.”<sup>6</sup>

No major changes occurred until 1952 when a new brick agricultural building was completed. In 1959, to accommodate the expanding student load, a new wing was built on the southeast end of the Academy. Major renovations occurred in 1991 when the large study hall was made into

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<sup>6</sup> A Place Up Back of New Hampshire, Colebrook, by Dr. William H. Gifford

classrooms, the wooden stairs were replaced with steel and an elevator was installed to accommodate any handicapped person.

Colebrook School District has continued in the last decade to expand its education offerings to keep up with the needs of its community. Advanced placement classes through Project Running Start are offered in English and Math, and more subjects for advanced placement classes are being contemplated.

### **Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital**

Colebrook is very fortunate to have the Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital, a healthcare resource center for the northern tri-state area, within its township. This is a federally designated critical access sixteen-bed hospital facility that also offers ambulatory, nursing service, care management, diabetes and dietary education, radiology and rehabilitative services. There is an emergency department, open 24-hours a day, ready to serve adult and pediatric patients with all types of acute illness or injuries. Also contained within the hospital is the Urgent Care Clinic offering an alternative way to receive same-day care for patients not requiring diagnostic use of x-ray or blood testing that does not require an appointment.



Physical and occupational therapy, along with speech pathology services are available at the Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital. An aquatic program is even available through partnership with the North Country Recreational Center. Other community outreach programs are provided to enhance community health and well being.

General surgery, consisting of laparoscopic and open procedures such as hernia repair, gallbladder surgery, or appendectomies are available throughout the month. Special providers in

cardiology, ENT, neurology, orthopedics, and urology travel to Colebrook to offer services within the hospital. It should be noted that UCVH, as well as ISHA, are two of the largest employers in the area.

### **Indian Stream Health Center**



The Indian Stream Health Center (ISHC) is a federally qualified health center serving the needs of Colebrook residents, as well as other surrounding areas, including Maine, Vermont and Canada. Built more than 30 years ago, the health center is located on a medical campus along with the Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital and offers a variety of comprehensive primary health services to include an internal

medicine physician, family practitioner, physician assistants, social worker and nursing staff. A myriad of other services are provided, including behavioral health, community outreach and health promotion activities; and low cost prescription medication program. A case management department providing care coordination in health visits and nursing, home health and hospice, meals, transportation and social services is also available. In 2013, a pharmacy was added to this facility.

### **45<sup>th</sup> Parallel EMS**

The 45<sup>th</sup> Parallel EMS began serving the residents of the North Country in 2009. Today they offer a paramedic level service, administering to patients in the communities and performing critical transfers to other facilities when necessary with four available ambulances.

Supplementing the service provided are EMT-Intermediates and EMT-B's. Other endeavors offered by personnel of the 45<sup>th</sup> Parallel EMS to complement the health of the region include: blood pressure clinics, servicing of remote AED's throughout the area and continued training with area hospitals.

## **North Country Recreation Center**

In 2005, an indoor community rec center and swimming pool located on Rec Center Drive in Colebrook was opened to the public. It benefits over 8,500 residents in 21 surrounding North Country towns in New Hampshire Vermont, and Maine. Recreational swimming or lessons and other water programs are available. There is a large multi-function room for meetings or small programs. This room can also be rented for birthday parties and the like.

In 2007, an outdoor skating rink was constructed, open in season, and illuminated for night skating. It is reserved for hockey two evenings a week. During the warmer months, the rink may be used for basketball, street hockey or other activities.

Picnic tables and barbeques offer a place for family meals or larger parties. A children's playground was completed in 2008. Sand volleyball, shuffleboard, bocce courts and horse shoe pits round out the outdoor area.

## **Tillotson Center**

The Tillotson Center is a community heritage museum, visual arts gallery and 175-seat acoustical theater, housed in a historical building that was formerly a carriage barn for the



Balsams stagecoach and subsequently a grange hall with theater and dance floor. The newly renovated building has been restored to a state of the art facility for community events, performances and entertainment.

## **Public Transportation**

Outside of private vehicle, transportation in the Town of Colebrook is limited. There is a carpool matching program currently being developed by North Country Ride Share. North Country Transit offers bus service through Tri-County CAP which concentrates on taking people to and from local doctor's appointments. Occasionally trips can be scheduled to the grocery stores. This service, like others, is limited due to finance limitations. The closest commercial bus service is located in Berlin or Littleton. Rail service is non-existent, with the closest AMTRAK trains being White River Junction, Vermont; Portland, Maine or Boston, Massachusetts.

## **Airport:**

An airport was built in the Town of Colebrook in the summer of 1963. Four private individuals formed a nonprofit corporation and built the airstrip on a parcel of land just west of and parallel to the Maine Central Railroad tracks, extending from Keach Road southerly for one-half mile and leased by the owner to the New Hampshire Aviation Association. A four-plane hanger was constructed in the northeast corner of the airport.

In the beginning, it seemed everyone wanted to fly. Flight instruction was offered and the designated traffic controller, who lived in a home near the end of the runway, logged 645 "foreign" planes landing on the little grass strip in 1964.<sup>7</sup>

Today the airport is a state-operated airport on privately owned land which can accommodate small aircraft. It has a 2,245 foot unlighted turf runway, used primarily by private individuals. No maintenance or fuel facilities are located at the airport.

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<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from Colebrook - A Place Up Back of New Hampshire by William H. Gifford

### **Utilities:**

Electricity – Two electricity providers, Public Service of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Electric Coop have substations within the Town of Colebrook, allowing for minimum downtime for outage coverage and speedy repairs.

Cellular Phone Service – With a Verizon cell tower located in the Town of Colebrook Industrial Park, there is 100% cell service within the area.

Internet – Fairpoint, Verizon, Great Auk Wireless and most any other satellite service is available.

### **County, State & Federal Satellite Offices:**

Many of the county, state and federal agencies have satellite offices in Colebrook. This makes it convenient for residents and the surrounding area. Some of the offices are:

- Tri-County Community Action & Senior Meals (Offers fuel assistance, home weatherization and meals on wheels to elderly and low income individuals)
- North Country Senior Wheels (Offers transportation to seniors)
- AHEAD, Inc. (Offers low / moderate income family help obtaining and keeping their home through budgeting classes, etc.)
- CASA (Court-appointed volunteers who work with children in need of support services)
- Northern Health & Human Services, including Vershire and The Haven (Assists people affected by mental illness, developmental disabilities and related disorders in living meaningful lives)
- NH Employment Security (Works with employers and employees to help secure jobs)

It should be noted plans are in process to have a satellite Veteran Administration Outpatient Clinic in the area in the near future.

## CHAPTER 4

### LAND USE

## Farming Trends

As mentioned in the Historical Perspective, Colebrook thrived as an agricultural and logging community from its inception in the late 1700's. Potato and dairy farms were still prevalent until the early 1970's. It was after that the face of farming in Colebrook began to change. Economics (price of milk, etc) and the younger generation going off to college and not coming home to farm may have created some of this change.

In 2011, farming in Colebrook is very diversified. Tree farming, hay and silage, and produce are the three main farming industries. Tree farming is the sole source of income for several families. Hay is baled, (both the square and the newer round bales) along with silage, throughout the summer. There has been a significant rise in the number of people turning personal vegetable gardens into part time income. Several homes have chicken and beef cattle. Fresh eggs can be obtained all year long. Beekeeping and apple orchards are new undertakings.

The day of large dairy farms in this area appears to be gone forever, but the tilling and productiveness of the land is not. More greenhouses are being built every year because people see a potential for an increase in farm business. A local distribution system has been developed in the past four years to increase marketing and sales of local farm produce.

Presently Colebrook has enough open land to be able to support a variety of farming ventures.

### **Strengths and Resources:**

- Rich forest lands and large tracts of undeveloped lands
- Rich, long, heritage of dairy farming
- Excellent soils that are largely unspoiled by chemicals
- Significant acreage conserved for family-sized farming operations
- Significant rise in family gardening, community gardening, and gardening education
- Several established farming organizations. Several business organizations communicating and coordinating efforts to assist farmers and gardeners with production, training, marketing, and branding their products

- USDA Rural Development investment into high tunnels for marketing gardeners/farmers
- Utilization of high tunnel greenhouses results in nine (9) weeks longer growing season
- Market demand for locally grown produce and locally raised meats
- Area schools and local farmers incorporating local food in school lunches

**Weaknesses:**

- Most producers work in isolation
- Aging farming population
- Little interest from local young adults
- Aging harvesting equipment, with little funds to purchase new equipment
- Weather pattern changes & imported pests threaten production of traditional products, crops
- Excessive regulations thwart raw milk sales
- Lack of USDA certified slaughterhouse within 50 miles severely curtails meat sales
- Lack of distribution / refrigeration facilities thwart large exports of many types of food products

**Goals:**

- Development and funding of local business organizations are currently helping to raise and train local farmers
- Revitalization of local farming organizations
- Improve local educational opportunities for local farms and market gardeners
- Improve land use plans for farmland
- Equipment sharing or leasing programs for new farmers
- Offer incentives for young farming families to settle in Colebrook
- Offer incentives for existing families to produce, process, sell and export food
- Develop area-wide broadband so local products can be sold via the internet
- Improve utilization of internet for farm sales
- Create local refrigeration storage area
- Encourage USDA certification and utilization of nearby meat processing plant
- Establish a commercial kitchen to be used by local growers / food processors (canning, jellies, etc.)

## Existing and Future Land Use

Colebrook's development is reflective of the traditional New England town settlement pattern. Historically, the village, or community center, was primarily an area of residential and commercial development. Industrial development in the 1800's occurred along the Mohawk and Connecticut Rivers. In the outlying areas were hillside farms that provided most of the necessities for Colebrook's inhabitants. Farming also flourished in the fertile area along the Connecticut River.

The historical character that had been retained over the years is being challenged. There is a distinct village center; however, few, if any, outlying farms remain. Roads which once served to connect Colebrook with neighboring communities have become principal northern New Hampshire highways. Residential development is expanding in the outlying areas and it is not uncommon to see single-family homes being constructed within farmer's hay fields.

**Land Use** -- Colebrook's exact total land acreage is unknown, but an average of existing sources indicates that it contains approximately 40.8 square miles and 0.02 square miles of inland water area. This total land acreage lies in the different uses which are described below:

**Undeveloped:** Land which lies idle. This land may presently be open space or in early stages of forestation. Previously used for agriculture, it is now abandoned. Undeveloped acreage is often considered to be a transitional land use.

**Forest** Land which supports tree growth and is typically greater than one-quarter acre in size.

**Agricultural:** Land supporting tilled croplands, pasture, hayland, orchards, nurseries, greenhouses, and any open area being cultivated, hayed, mowed, etc.

**Residential:** Land used for supporting residences, including single-family homes, multi-family dwellings, mobile homes and seasonal homes.

Commercial / Industrial: Land used for activities carried out for financial gain, including stores, professional offices, manufacturing operations, warehouses, etc.

Other Uses: Public / quasi public lands and utility rights-of-way.

**Breakdown of Town-wide acreage** -- Table 4.1 exhibits a breakdown of the Town-wide acreage for each use. These figures are useful in that they provide a general understanding of the current use of land in Colebrook. However, it is important to consider that differing uses of land often occur on one lot of record and mixed use of land is becoming increasingly common. For example, a downtown building with a store on the first floor and apartments on the second is considered to be a commercial use of property. Similarly, a parcel of former pasture land with a single-family house on it is considered to be a residential use of property. In categorizing various land uses, the more intensive use of the land determines in which category it belongs.

Table 4.1  
Acreage by Land Use  
Number of Acres

	<u>1989</u>	<u>2012</u>
Total Acreage	24,082	25,499
Undeveloped	3,781	
Land in Current Use		
Forest	14,088	17,004
Agriculture	4,206	3,941
Unproductive		269
Commercial / Industrial	180	568
Residential	1,861	3,121
Non-Taxable		591

Source: Town of Colebrook, Abbreviated Property List (11/07/12)

It should be remembered these figures may not be entirely accurate. For example, not all of the undeveloped or agricultural land in Colebrook is in current use and it was the current use figures which were used to determine the acreages in the undeveloped, forest and agricultural use categories. In addition, the figures for residential acreage may seem high due to the fact that the acreage of the entire parcel, regardless of the total acreage, is included in the residential acreage category if it has a residence on it. The exception to this is acreages of land in current use with residences on the parcel. In these cases, the area of the parcel in current use is included in the appropriate current use category and acreage accompanying the residence (usually one acre) is included in the residential category.

**Forest** -- The amount of acres of land in forest use has increased substantially since 1989 – from 58% to 66%. Forests are an important component of Colebrook’s character, as well as the Town’s natural environment. There are also significant economic gains to be made from the harvesting of wood for paper, timber, chips, etc. The most economically beneficial method of harvesting is through clear cutting, which has both environmental and aesthetic impacts. Because there are few regulations controlling this practice, Colebrook should encourage timber harvesters to solicit the advice of the Cooperative Extension Service and Coos County Conservation District.

**Agricultural** -- Colebrook’s farmland is being continually challenged. In the past twenty years, throughout northern New Hampshire, the value of land escalated and the benefits of profiting from land sales was strong, particularly when considering the competitive agricultural market within which small scale farms must contend. This is evidenced by the reduction in acreage of farmland from 4,206 acres in 1989 to 3,941 acres in 2012. Many areas currently in agricultural use are ideally suited for development.

**Current Use** -- In Colebrook’s taxation schedule, as allowed by State law since 1973, there exists current use tax. Current use designation allows land parcels of 10 acres and greater that are actively devoted to agricultural, silvacultural or horicultural use or which lie as forest or open space to be taxed at the predetermined rate set by the State which is lower than the normal

municipal rate. A penalty fee of 10% of the land's market value must be paid to the municipality if the parcel is taken out of current use. The purpose of granting current use status is to encourage landowners to allow large parcels of land to remain as open space.

In 1989, the total acres in Colebrook in current use totaled 18,155 or 75% of the total land acreage. Tax records for 2012 indicate 21,215 acres are designated land in current use, 83% of the total land acreage. With the down turn in farming and loss of income, it is thought more farmland was put into current use in order to lower the tax rate on the properties. This is also evident in the increase in forestland as fields have been allowed to revert back to forests. In addition, some landowners have purchased abutting tracts and combined them with their homestead lot, creating the 10 plus acreage to qualify for current use designation. Again, it is presumed this is done to decrease the overall property tax amount.

**Residential** -- Residential development increased dramatically in the past twenty years, as evidenced by the increase from 1989 to 2012 in the number of residential acres as shown in Table 4.1. The percentage of total land acreage allotted to residential went from 7% to 12%. This acreage includes single-family dwellings, seasonal homes, multi-family units and manufactured housing. Residential use in Colebrook occurs most densely in the downtown area; however, residences of varying types are located in all areas. Manufactured housing is not only concentrated in Colebrook's two manufactured home parks, but also found dispersed throughout the town, both in-precinct and out-of-precinct. Most multi-family housing is typically found in the precinct area as many of the former, large single-family residences in the downtown area are now apartments. Multiple apartments are also quite often found on the upper floors of several commercial establishments.

**Commercial / Industrial** -- Acreage classified as commercial / industry has also seen an increase in the past twenty years, going from 180 to 568 acres. This amounts to 2% of the total acreage in Colebrook. Although this percentage is small and it is concentrated within the downtown area and in the Industrial Park



located off Bridge Street, it has served to make Colebrook the business center of the western portion of New Hampshire's North Country. It should be noted that water, sewer and electricity stubs are available in the Industrial Park. The proximity of the natural gas pipeline running along the outside boundary could be an added advantage.

There are a few problems, however, that are associated with commercial and industrial development. Traffic congestion on Route 3 and other roads in the downtown area is becoming increasingly common. Parking problems slow the traffic flow, but the Town has worked to alleviate this problem by establishing the municipal parking area located off Main Street. Through the Town's zoning ordinance compliance permit system and site plan review regulations, Colebrook's Planning Board is attempting to ensure that new commercial and industrial developments are well constructed and do not negatively impact surrounding land uses and the Town.

**Land Ownership** -- Land ownership patterns also affect present and future land use in Colebrook. A review of the tax cards in 1989 revealed that of the total 1,221 individual lots in the Town, 863 (70%) were owned by residents. Interestingly, a review of the abbreviated property list for November 2012 shows the total number of individual lots appear to have doubled; however, the number of lots owned by residents has decreased by 12%. The total number of parcels for 2012 equals 2,632, delineated as 523 parcels in current use, 1,549 in residential, 166 in commercial / industry / utilities, and 62 in non-taxable. The 1,549 lots classified as residential equals 58% of the total lots owned in Town.

There are 603 parcels of land in the precinct and approximately 430 of these (71%) are owned by residents. Colebrook's residents own approximately 460 (48%) of the 941 out-of-precinct lots. Non resident owners often purchase land for speculative purposes or for their own seasonal recreational enjoyment. It is most interesting to note that most non-resident landowners do not participate in the current use program. This indicates that these parcels are not in current use due to one or two reasons: the landowner is either uninformed about the program or is intending to develop the parcel and does not want to incur financial penalties for a change in use.

**Location of Current Development** -- Colebrook has a long established planning board that works to ensure that new development does not detract from the existing natural and built environment. The Town’s Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Review Regulations are the tools used to review and evaluate development proposals. These regulations will need to be periodically updated in order to best suit the Town’s evolving needs.

An examination of Colebrook’s subdivision activity since 2000 is provided in Table 4.2. This same table also details the number of lots created by the approved subdivisions.

Table 4.2  
Colebrook Subdivision Activity  
2000 – 2012

	# of Subdivisions	# of Lots created	Boundary-Line Adjustments
2000	4	9	1
2001	5	9	7
2002	4	10	7
2003	9	18	6
2004	8	16	3
2005	7	39	2
2006	5	10	9
2007	6	16	4
2008	7	14	6
2009	3	8	3
2010	2	5	1
2011	2	4	4
2012	5	12	4

Source: Colebrook Planning Board Records

As exhibited in this table, building lots continue to be created by the subdivision of land. The last large subdivisions completed were both in 2005, creating eleven lots and fifteen lots respectively. Both were created on new subdivision roads. Generally, however, subdivision activity is occurring outside the precinct along existing roads. An open space ordinance to

preserve as much open land as possible by allowing development to be clustered on back lots in order to keep vistas from roadways open was created in 2004.

**Housing** -- Housing is a dwelling or shelter provided for people. In our society, however, housing acquires greater significance. As a shelter, it protects the basic social unit, the family. As a commodity, it is often the single largest financial commitment a person makes in a lifetime. Approximately 25 – 30% of the average American’s income is dedicated to housing.

Providing data regarding various housing types is valuable in assessing Colebrook’s specific housing needs and in developing increased local awareness of housing issues. In this chapter, housing types are separated into categories as determined by use and design. These categories are:

Single-family Dwelling – a structure containing one dwelling unit.

Duplex - a structure containing two dwelling units.

Multi-family Dwelling - a structure containing three or more dwelling units such as an apartment house or condominium.

Manufactured Housing – any structure transportable in one or more sections, which, in the traveling mode is eight or more body feet in length, or when erected on site, is 320 square feet or more and which is built on a permanent chassis and is designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation when connected to required utilities which include plumbing, heating and electrical systems contained therein.

Permanent Residence / Domicile – a dwelling unit inhabited on a constant basis.

Seasonal Unit / Second Home – a dwelling unit used on a part-time basis, such as during weekends or vacations. A seasonal unit/second home is not the inhabitant’s permanent or primary residence. (Note: A person may have a number of residences, but the permanent or primary residence is called the domicile.)

Cluster Development – a residential subdivision of a tract of land where instead of subdividing the entire tract into house lots of conventional size, the land is subdivided into small lots upon which buildings are placed with the balance of the land deeded to all owners in common and reserved for open space. Cluster development is intended to encourage flexibility in design of single-family subdivisions.

**Housing Units** -- The Census Bureau American FactFinder and Economic Labor Market Information Bureau Community Profile of residential permits indicates that from 2000 to 2011, the housing units in the Town of Colebrook changed as follows:

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>
Single Family	767	653
Multi-Family	410	510
Manufactured Housing	<u>134</u>	<u>252</u>
Total Housing	1,312	1,415

The 2012 abbreviated property list for the Town of Colebrook showed the following housing units:

Residential	1,071
Manufactured Homes	204
Commercial / Industrial	127

The Colebrook Planning Board issue zoning ordinance certificates of compliance for new construction, (including garages, sheds, etc.); exterior dimensional additions to existing structures and the placement of manufactured housing. Sign permits are issued for new signs and alteration and relocation of existing signs. Table 3.2 exhibits the number and type of permits issued between 2003 and 2012.

Table 3.2  
Zoning Ordinance Certificates of Compliance Issued by Type

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
New Construction	11	10	9	12	8	7	3	2	2	0	64
Mfg. Housing	11	6	0	1	3	2	1	2	2	1	29
Additions	87	90	75	56	65	66	43	51	50	42	625
Signs	15	7	12	18	20	7	18	10	9	7	123

Source: Colebrook Planning Board Records

As shown in Table 3.2, in the beginning of the new century, Colebrook experienced a significant amount of single-family residential development. Much of that development occurred in areas outside of the precinct and consisted of second-homes. This increase has added some strain to Town services, in particular road maintenance and emergency response. This development has caused many of Colebrook's fine scenic vistas, open fields, and prime agricultural land to be turned into house lots. As the difference between household incomes and housing costs expands, the Town may need to pay special attention, in particular, to housing for the elderly, handicapped and/or low to moderate income families.

### **Future Land Use**

Colebrook is well positioned to build on its rich history and natural resources. The converging of US Route 26 and Route 3 makes Colebrook a hub, providing services and amenities, for neighboring towns and travelers. This is an economic driver and an incentive to property owners to invest in the preservation and restoration of the features that make the town special. Current trends that could attract investment in the features of the community valued by residents and visitors include:

- Growing interest in local foods
- Increasing number of people who desire to live in a friendly walkable village in close proximity to varied outdoor recreation opportunities
- Growing awareness New Hampshire's landscape and clean water are critical foundations of the state's economic base

Consideration needs to be paid to development guidelines, such as, access management to ensure local traffic and traffic in and out of roadside businesses does not interfere with flow and safety of through traffic.

## CHAPTER 5

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Economic Opportunities / Commercial Development

In recent years, citizens of Colebrook have witnessed a vast employment structure change. It has become evident the well paying jobs of manufacturing have left us with the closure of a number of major area employers. In addition, many large blue collar employment possibilities were severed with the closing of the mills in nearby North Stratford, Berlin, Groveton and Beecher Falls, Vermont. It should be noted this was due to the economic downsizing, not due to the quality of the work force. The trickle down effect of these closings touched all areas of business opportunities from loggers to parts stores, to restaurants, to Main Street businesses. Town officials, along with the school board, and even the healthcare facilities, have had to become creative with financial solutions.

A stroll from Piper Hill to the Columbia town line will show “Downstreet” Colebrook still boasts primarily mom and pop stores, containing the essentials of food, clothing and hardware. These small businesses are the heart of the area. That is not to say box stores do not exist because Rite Aid, Dunkin Donuts, Subway, and Family Dollar are also seen.

In 2000, Colebrook voters approved the advent of Colebrook Downtown Development Association. This organization, who is part of the National Main Street Program, is dedicated to making Main Street come alive by enhancing existing store fronts, enabling each business to become a calling card. Through this organization’s development and innovation, unique stores, each offering a different venue, are peppered along Main Street. Another group of individuals who are constantly striving to bring new business ventures to town is the Colebrook Development Corp. These two organizations, along with a myriad number of individuals, are determined to help Colebrook remain a thriving community.

This bodes well for Colebrook’s downtown landscape. The major detriment is the lack of parking in the center of town. Parking is available as long as people are willing to walk a little. Plans are being put together to create a Town Common, a place to congregate and provide the vital information of the town via a Welcome Center and the North Country Chamber of Commerce.

It must be kept in mind that Colebrook has an abundance of natural resources. With creative thinking and innovation, it just might be possible to take advantage of this fact and establish a product which puts Colebrook in the export business.

### **Strengths for Business Opportunity:**

- Colebrook has numerous strengths for securing its own brand management for tourism.
- Strong number of dedicated individual and volunteer organizations who continually establish economic development projects
- Recent upgrades to enable cell phone coverage and broadband internet
- Strong and resilient community
- Ready and able work force with strong manufacturing skills
- Strong academics and local healthcare
- Natural scenic beauty
- Long history in tourism makes Colebrook a natural stop for eco-tourism
- Close proximity to Canada, providing a potential new market of tourists and consumers
- Valuable relationships with State agencies
- Potential usage of natural gas pipeline
- Hub for tourists heading north, south, east, and west.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Lack of proximity to interstate
- High cost of heat and power
- Lack of available 20,000+ square foot warehouse for utilization
- Small commercial airport
- Lack of rail system

**Goals:**

- Be open to new ideas and innovation.
- Market and encourage a stronger retirement base and recreational atmosphere.
- Support eco-tourism projects.
- Market and establish a stronger Canadian and southern tourism base
- Utilize Colebrook's resources, such as the natural wood basket
- Take advantage of the natural gas pipeline's close proximity

## CHAPTER 6

### FUTURE PLAN FOR COLEBROOK

## **Future Plan for Colebrook**

In July 2010, Plan New Hampshire came to Colebrook. A team worked together to design a charrette, focused on the vitality of the community's downtown as a center of economic activity, community identity and tourism. This team looked at how Colebrook's residents envisioned the town center's streetscape being improved to serve pedestrians, vehicles, shoppers and residents. Four planning factors were identified as means for renewing and expanding the vitality of Colebrook's social and economic areas: (1) Proposal for streetscape improvements to serve pedestrian safety and access to stores, open space and centers of community activity; (2) Proposal to improve transportation circulation and parking within downtown; (3) Proposal to improve accessibility and connection between Colebrook and the region; and (4) Proposal to provide affordable energy.<sup>8</sup>

### **Main Street Revitalization Project:**

The officials of Colebrook are very aware that the town's center street is in need of revitalization to meet today's pedestrian and vehicle traffic. It is also understood that the infrastructure under the Main Street is, for lack of a better word, ancient and needs to be replaced. Should something be done, it is known it should be done in tandem. The town officials are in the process of seeking grants to help with this project.

Proposed improvements would involve Main Street from (and including) the triangular traffic island at South Main Street to the bridge just south of Cooper Hill, approximately 2,600 feet. Water main pipes should be replaced along the entire length of the project and stubs, with new valves, provided on all the side streets. Services to the right-of-ways or back side of the sidewalk will also need to be replaced. The same will also need to be done with all sewer main pipes along the entire length of the project, with tie-ins to the side street lines.

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<sup>8</sup> Plan NH Colebrook Charette, July 2010

At the same time, it is hoped to replace all the sidewalks to their current width along the entire length of the project. It would be advisable to replace the drainage pipes (circa 1960 concrete); however, since Main Street is US Route 3, this would be a State of New Hampshire responsibility. It is desired to construct a new roadway from curb to curb and lay new asphalt along the length of Main Street during this project. Again, because it is a State highway, it is hoped the State of New Hampshire will help fund some of the roadway improvements. No work is proposed for the three bridges which cross the portion of Main Street being considered.

The ultimate revitalization for Main Street would be the relocating of the overhead wires. Ideally they would be buried during the reconstruction of Main Street; however, all are aware the cost would be exorbitant. Many have suggested the poles be moved to behind the business district, rather than being located along the actual street. The businesses would need to absorb a portion of this cost. More consideration is needed.

### **Envisioning a Colebrook Town Common**

The Colebrook Common Council was formed in 2011 to attempt to acquire, without using town funding, three buildings located in the vicinity of the center of Main Street. These buildings would then be removed to create a square (Town Common) that abuts the present Monument Lot and Municipal Parking area. It is envisioned by the Council, once the structures are removed, to grade and seed the green space for utilization by fellow townspeople.

Colebrook is one of the very few towns north of the notches that does not have a substantial green space, or Town Common, to bring residents together for all manner of community functions and events. It is felt this area might be used to hold concerts, art shows, dances, fund raisers, parade reviews, car shows, antique engine displays, winter carnival happenings, Dixville Races finish-line hoopla, July Fourth events, Moose Festival festivities and myriad other community events. It would provide a large place in the center of town to congregate, enjoy and enhance our community spirit.

In addition, this project might be able to offer a support center for the North Country Chamber of Commerce. The region's existing tourism and roadway network makes Colebrook a logical center for regional and local hospitality services to resident's and traveler's needs.

### **Plans for A Riverwalk:**

The beauty of the area is definitely one of Colebrook's strongest assets. Being able to stroll along the river and listen to the relaxing sound of a gently flowing stream would be beneficial to all. Colebrook volunteers are busily working on plans for a Riverwalk along the Mohawk River to Beaver Brooks Falls. The possibility of having it originate at the Colebrook Town Common is being considered.

### **Biomass District Energy System**

In December, 2011 the Town of Colebrook hired the Biomass Energy Resource Center in partnership with Wilson Engineering to conduct an in-depth feasibility analysis of establishing a biomass district energy system in the Town of Colebrook. The final 97-page report, funded by grants from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Northern Forest Center, Clean Air Cool Planet, and First Colebrook Bank details how a woodchip-fired central hot-water boiler plant, located in the Industrial Park, could provide hot water for heating to commercial buildings and homes throughout the downtown of Colebrook via a network of buried pipes. The study also examined how such a project could start small, beginning with just 41 heat customers and expand to eventually connect over 400 buildings. The report explores the logistics, engineering, and financial viability of such a district heating plant that conceptually would be operated as a heat utility by the Town of Colebrook. The study concludes that, with some grant funds to lower the project's initial construction costs, the plant could reliably deliver heat to buildings and homes that choose to connect to the system for less than it would cost to heat their home or building with oil or propane.

Woodchip heating is very common and has been growing in popularity in New Hampshire and Vermont over the past few decades. Today, dozens of schools, hospitals, colleges, and businesses in New Hampshire use boilers fueled with woodchips and pellets to lower their heating bills. Concord Steam, a private company, has operated a biomass district heating plant for over twenty years in Concord, New Hampshire. Unlike Concord Steam, who pipes steam to dozens of buildings, the proposed district heating plant in Colebrook would use modern hot water pipes commonly used in Europe.

The recently released in-depth study, builds upon earlier preliminary studies, and draws the same end conclusion—that a woodchip fueled districting heating plant is logistically, technologically and financially feasible and such a project would generate additional economic benefits. The benefits cited in the study include lower and more predictable energy costs and air quality improvements by reducing the number of small individual boilers in the town, local job creation and more dollars retained in the local economy by using local wood fuel. A dedicated group of volunteers, who have formed the Colebrook Energy Committee, continue to work on obtaining funding to further this project.

### **Micro-business for Farmer's Market:**

Currently there is a North Country Farmer's Coop within the area whose ultimate goal is to restore the former focus of agriculture as the basis of our local economy. One way would be the establishment of a Food Hub – a system of businesses that would support local farm sales. The potential for this type of infrastructure to fuel small farms and food production businesses in our whole North Country is immense. Some of the infrastructure exists but at a great distance for local producers. It is essential to bring the infrastructure needed to make this a lucrative business closer to the source. For a successful and lucrative micro-business, the following needs to become a primary focus: USDA slaughterhouse; community cold storage facility for businesses to temporarily store produce and meat, and certified kitchen(s). There is also a small proliferation of goat and dairy farms, who given the knowledge and facility, could become cheesemakers.

This area historically produced grains that sustained local sales and is capable of doing that again. The creation of a grist mill would give the budding bakery industry the ability to grind specialty grains that are grown locally.

### **School Consolidation:**

As stated earlier, Colebrook voted in 2001 to build a new K-8 elementary school. A “Phase Two” was planned in which additional rooms would be built onto the elementary school to house Academy students and administration, thus consolidating both schools in the same facility on the south side of town. This would be looked at once the original bond was satisfied.

One of the biggest challenges facing Colebrook is its dwindling population. With the down turn of the economy in the area, the Master Plan Committee feels it would be remiss of them to not mention the work that has been on-going with the area schools, including Colebrook Elementary and Colebrook Academy. Colebrook and the neighboring communities have begun looking for ways to pool educational resources, in order to be able to offer the very best of twenty-first century education to all students in the area, without unnecessary expense and duplication of services. Proposals at the moment are to make use of existing facilities. It bears noting that, at the 2013 Annual School Meeting, the voters directed the School Board to investigate closure of Colebrook Academy and consolidating under one roof at the Colebrook Elementary School complex as promised when the community voted to rebuild in 1999.