

Approach One

Nurture Economic Growth

A vibrant local economy, one which takes community values into consideration and builds the tax base, will ensure a healthy future for the town.

Actions

- Create and maintain good relationships with existing businesses. Develop incentives so existing businesses can stay in town and prosper.
- The Chamber of Commerce and the town need to work together to encourage new commercial development.
- Hire an Economic and Community Development Director who has the expertise needed to secure State and Federal grants.
- Hire a professional planning consultant to assist in the updating of Rindge's Master Plan.
- Establish TIF Districts to control the size and types of industrial and retail businesses.
- Study how towns and colleges of similar size collaborate to their mutual economic benefit.

Advantages

- Careful and well-informed economic planning is the only way to ensure future economic stability.
- Expanding retail and industrial tax revenues will reduce the tax burden on residential landowners.
- Hiring our own Economic and Community Development Director will give us someone who understands Rindge and its residents.
- Exploring models for college-community partnering may provide Rindge with economic opportunities.

Disadvantages

- Because economic growth is tied to national trends, local efforts at development may be ineffective.
- Protecting land and preserving open space may create less of a tax burden than seeking relief through commercial development.
- Hiring additional town employees and consultants will increase the local property tax burden.
- We need to discourage commercial growth and development to maintain our small town way of life.

A Likely Trade-off?

While commercial and industrial development may create a flourishing local economy and pay for public services, it could degrade our natural environment and adversely affect Rindge's small town quality of life.

Approach Two

Sustain Our Natural Resources

Rindge is rich in natural resources that need continued management. These resources are essential for our public health, recreation and economic well being.

Actions

- Consider placing a one-year ban on residential development to allow for a comprehensive assessment of land use planning in town.
- Protect land through conservation easements and through direct public acquisition of significant parcels.
- Enforce environmental regulations fairly and consistently.
- Pursue source water protection linked to land conservation for existing public water supplies and high yield aquifers near village and lake neighborhoods.
- Create publicity materials that inform and educate residents about conservation opportunities, environmental regulations, and wise land-use practices.

Advantages

- Land protection sustains Rindge's rural character.
- Preserving open space reduces property taxes and benefits wildlife habitats. In addition, natural resource protection guarantees clean water and scenic beauty for future generations.
- Providing environmental information will help protect private property and enhance community.
- Enforcing environmental laws will enhance scenic beauty and improve personal health.

Disadvantages

- Limiting residential construction adversely affects local contractors.
- More protected land means less land for all types of development.
- Acquiring land, protecting wells, and emphasizing enforcement all cost the town money.
- Enforcing environmental laws can lead to restrictions in private property rights.

A Likely Trade-off?

Although sustaining our natural resources will help preserve a beautiful and healthy environment, these efforts add to town expenses and could limit a number of the private property rights we cherish.

Approach Three

Provide Quality Education & Public Services

Public services, including education, affordable housing programs, and health and safety services must be established, maintained and improved within an affordable framework.

Actions

- Enforce subdivision phase-in rules to regulate increases in services. Update the Master Plan regularly and the Capital Improvements Plan annually.
- Explore the implementation of impact fees.
- Build community networks to maintain connections between the schools and the citizens who fund them.
- Support the people who provide public services. Create a network to increase effectiveness and eliminate duplication.
- Purchase municipal bonds to pay for large capital expenses when appropriate.
- Develop zoning to keep housing affordable. Seek grants to fund local senior housing and help first-time buyers.
- Study transportation needs and work with other communities on finding regional solutions.

Advantages

- Investing in public services makes a tangible commitment to the town's past, present, and future.
- Quality public services enhance community pride and increase individual property values.
- Strengthening volunteerism increases social capital.
- Flexible funding mechanisms help provide needed services in a timely fashion and at lower costs.

Disadvantages

- Many public service issues require outside resources and expertise.
- Many public service expenses benefit only a targeted portion of the town's residents.
- Getting involved with other towns and groups may lead to unnecessary additional costs.
- Issuing bonds could force the town into debt.

A Likely Trade-off?

Although quality public services are essential to community vitality, these services are increasingly specialized and expensive to administer.

Approach Four

Develop Village Centers

Rindge should revitalize current village centers and develop new ones to preserve its small town identity and discourage sprawl.

Actions

- Create incentives to revitalize the historic center and bring people together.
- Develop a new commercial center. Hire a professional planning consultant to lay the groundwork.
- Design and build gathering places to improve community life in neighborhoods and encourage activities such as picnics and sporting events.
- Provide guidance and support for high school and college students to design and manage a Rindge "intranet" site.
- Re-centralize residential development by changing zoning requirements for cluster development.
- Explore a two-tier property tax structure. If this seems beneficial ask the legislature to implement such a system.

Advantages

- New or revitalized village centers would help create tight-knit community bonds.
- A new commercial center would bring the college and campus communities together and benefit the town.
- Rindge would have the tools it needs to prevent sprawl and re-centralize residential development.
- Keep Rindge's small-town feel and protect our historic town center.

Disadvantages

- It may be difficult to get the necessary neighborhood support.
- Many people commute to work and may not have time or energy to invest in a centralized village.
- Regulating where people build homes violates personal property rights.
- Most people barely have time to stay in touch with the people closest to them, much less spend time on projects designed to create that small town feeling.

A Likely Trade-off?

While developing a village center strengthens social capital, the pace of modern life leaves many residents with little time, energy or desire to invest in community improvements.

Mapping Our Future: Where From Here?

Goals of the Project

- Bring townspeople together to discuss the future of Rindge, and foster better understanding of different viewpoints.
- Gather and disseminate information about the advantages and disadvantages of different courses of action.
- Assist townspeople in choosing and implementing one or more courses of action.

Achievements as of September 2002

- Completed 529 telephone and written surveys of Rindge residents designed to discover local attitudes and opinions regarding future growth and development in Rindge.
- Assembled a Steering Committee of 21 Rindge residents and FPC staff and students.
- Instituted a regular newspaper column focused on the Rindge 2020 Project in the *Monadnock Ledger*, and increased awareness of the project through press releases and other publicity.
- Held four evening issue-framing sessions with over 100 Rindge residents to hear their concerns about the future direction of the town.
- Held a one-day workshop to group the concerns into four possible approaches for the future of Rindge.
- Held five evening educational programs on topics related to property taxes and regional economics, local wildlife and open space planning, population and demographic projections, and future plans for FPC.
- Wrote, edited and published this discussion guide summarizing the actions, benefits and drawbacks of four approaches to mapping Rindge's future.

Plans for 2002-2003

- Hold promotional events in conjunction with other Rindge organizations to increase awareness of the project and the issues.
- Hold four evening deliberative dialogue forums to allow townspeople to discuss the four approaches outlined in the discussion guide.
- Work with townspeople to choose one or more discrete actions to be funded and rapidly implemented by the Rindge 2020 Project.

Last fall, Rindge residents embarked on an ambitious project to envision and prepare for the town's future. Over five hundred individuals took time to respond to survey questions focused on economic vitality, natural resource protection, and historic preservation. Over one hundred residents attended issue-framing sessions designed to bring people together to voice their shared concerns. The record of these sessions, together with a day long issue-framing workshop in November, provided the foundation for the four distinct approaches outlined in this discussion guide.

In the next phase, scheduled to begin this fall, residents will discuss these approaches to mapping the future of the town. Using the process of deliberative dialogue, participants will have the opportunity to share their views, and, more importantly, to discover the common ground upon which they can make sound decisions about the town's future. As in the past, these forums will be carefully structured and moderated so that each person's opinion is heard, recorded, and valued. The ultimate goal of the deliberative dialogue forums is to select one or more agreed upon actions the Town of Rindge should undertake. The Rindge 2020 Project has committed a minimum of \$10,000 in matching funds to assist Rindge in expediting the action or actions residents together decide to pursue. So for example, if town residents agreed that they wanted to attract a certain type of business, or to protect a certain parcel of land, the money is there to provide guidance and move the process forward.