

# Town of Washington, New Hampshire

## Master Plan 2015

### 4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION:

Washington's early economy was based on agriculture, forestry and related commerce typical of a pre-industrial rural community. The economic trends affecting present-day Washington depend far more heavily on regional economies rather than the prior centuries' localized economies as confirmed by the average 43-minute commute for the local labor force. *(Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).*

Washington has a very limited amount of commercial development. Most goods and services for residents are purchased elsewhere. Concord, Hillsborough, Keene, Newport and Claremont are the main economic centers that provide employment, a range of retail and wholesale goods, medical care, and personal and professional services. Most of the businesses in Town are of a home-based nature. The largest employers are the Town of Washington, Eccardt Farm and the Washington General Store.

Planning for the community's future must recognize Washington's reliance on regional employment and economic trends. The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Council's economic development strategies include developing specialized regional business incubators focused on value-added products in the agriculture, arts, entertainment, recreation and manufacturing sectors. Additional UVLSRPC strategies include promoting the tourism economy, developing vocational training opportunities and providing technical assistance to rural communities to expand cottage and home-based businesses. Involvement with these efforts could serve to benefit the Town of Washington.

The challenge for the Town will be to leverage our historical and cultural assets, recreational opportunities, artisans' and craftsmen's talents, vast natural resources, agriculture and forestry in order to develop a healthier local economy that will attract future employers and residents while preserving our cherished rural character. The cornerstones of such an economy include appropriate utilities/services (communications, energy, waste management, etc.), quality education, childcare, transportation infrastructure, housing options and public policy (land use and taxation).

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#### Population:

In 1773 when the first census was taken in Washington, the population was 132. By 1830, the population of Washington had grown to a high of 1,135. As of the 2010 census, the population is nearing that high at 1,123.

The table below indicates the changing age demographic of Washington from 2000 to 2010. Total population has grown over 25%, which is a much higher rate than the Sullivan County growth rate of 8.1%. Although growth is reflected in all age brackets, the 20-44 age bracket was the slowest and the 75+ had the highest growth.

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Council projects that the region, like the State of New Hampshire as a whole, will grow at slower rate, less than 9% between 2010 and 2040. This may not necessarily apply to Washington, as we grew at a much higher rate than Sullivan County in the past decade.

**Table 4.1 Population by Age Group** (Source: U.S. Census 2010)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Year 2000</b>		<b>Year 2010</b>		<b>Actual Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
0-19	211	24%	264	24%	53	25.1%
20-44	236	26%	264	24%	28	11.9%
45-59	220	25%	282	25%	62	28.2%
60-74	181	20%	236	21%	55	30.4%
75+	47	5%	77	7%	30	63.8%
Total Population	895		1,123		228	25.5%

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#### Employment:

The following three tables highlight the recent trends in employment, unemployment and employment by industry. As a primarily residential community, 88.4% of the Town's labor force commutes to work with an average travel time of 43 minutes. Approximately 10% of the labor force works at home, and 1.6% walk to work. (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau)

**Table 4.2 Annual Average Employment** (Source: NH Employment Security – Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, NHES-ELMI)

	<b>Year 2003</b>	<b>Year 2013</b>
Civilian Labor Force	454	493
Employed	435	467
Unemployed	19	26
Unemployment Rate	4.2%	5.3%

**Table 4.3 Annual Average Unemployment** (Source: NHES-ELMI)

	<b>Year 2003</b>	<b>Year 2013</b>	<b>Year 2014</b>
Washington	4.2%	5.3%	5.4%
New Hampshire	4.4%	5.1%	4.3%
U.S.	6.0%	7.4%	6.2%

**Table 4.4 Employment by Industry** (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau)

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Percent Employed 2000</b>	<b>Percent Employed 2013</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	4.9%	2.1%
Construction	10.9%	12.1%
Manufacturing	20.4%	20.3%
Wholesale trade	0.6%	3.7%
Retail trade	14%	6.8%
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	2.5%	1.2%
Information	0.2%	0.7%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, leasing	3.0%	4.2%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste mgmt.	4.4%	9.3%
Educational services, health care, social assistance	15%	24.9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food	6.0%	2.3%
Other services, except public administration	6.0%	4.9%
Public administration	3.0%	7.5%

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#### Income:

Median income levels in Washington lag behind the state but are higher than the U.S. average. The median household income is defined as the total earnings derived by all members of the household, which when ranked together with all household incomes would divide the top and bottom half of all incomes. It is a measure of economic well-being. The estimated median household income for Washington in 2013 was \$54,500, which was about 15% lower than the State of New Hampshire, but was 4% higher than the U.S.

**Table 4.5 Estimated Median Household Income Comparison** (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey, U.S. Census)

	<i>Estimated Median Household Income</i>
<b>Hillsborough County</b>	
Antrim	\$64,224
Hancock	78,702
Hillsborough	52,788
Windsor	51,500
<b>Sullivan County</b>	
Acworth	\$53,945
Charlestown	45,080
Claremont	42,236
Cornish	72,356
Croydon	77,000
Goshen	51,563
Grantham	96,810
Langdon	71,522
Lempster	58,942
Newport	51,000
Plainfield	101,250
Springfield	71,797
Sunapee	74,890
Unity	60,250
<b>Washington</b>	<b>54,500</b>
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>64,230</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>52,250</b>

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#### SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT:

The Vision Statement for Washington's future states that we cultivate opportunities for economic development that will not hinder our community's rural character but rather will expand our tax base and encourage small enterprise and home-based cottage industry.

Through the December 2013 **Community Survey** the following input was received relative to Economic Development:

Specific sections of Town should be designated for different land uses, such as rural, residential, business and industrial	74% strongly agreed or agreed
Farming, forestry, building trades, professional services, retail services and home-based businesses should be encouraged.	60% or more of the respondents chose those economic activities to be encouraged.
Manufacturing should be discouraged.	Almost 60% agree to discourage.
Bakery/coffee shop, bed and breakfast lodging, guided tourism and communication services ranked highest of desired businesses.	60% or more of the respondents wanted to see these businesses/services in Town.
Areas in which to locate businesses and industrial development should be identified.	84% of respondents strongly agree or agree that it is important to identify these areas.
An Economic Development Committee should be created.	50% strongly agree or agree, 20% no opinion.

The **Community Workshop** held in June 2014 generated the following strengths/weaknesses/opportunities relative to economic development.

**STRENGTHS:** Increasing year round population; established Farmers Market; local farm stands; cottage industries; Pillsbury State Park; hiking trails and Monadnock Sunapee Greenway; local artisans; July flea market and November holiday bazaar; Washington General Store; home-based businesses; Snowriders club that draws visitors.

**WEAKNESSES:** Washington's remote location; lack of broadband and cell phone service; lack of communication and marketing of local businesses and activities; cumbersome business license process; limited public access to some lakes and ponds; lack of a Town niche; lack of activities to attract young people and families.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** Improved broadband and cell service; continuing education for all ages; more social activities; artisans cooperative; Town wide community website; vibrant general store; restaurant and B&B; local newsletter for businesses and activities; guided tourism (sugarhouses, hiking, mountain biking, snowmobiles, x-country skiing, kayaking); winery/brewery; renewable energy sources; paramedic services in Town.

The **Community Workshop** priorities that relate to Economic Development include:

- Improve communication services (cell and broadband).
- Create local newsletter and community website for marketing social events and businesses.
- Buy local, use local businesses if possible (plumbers, store, builders).
- Keep education local.
- Encourage businesses in downtown areas and cottage (home) businesses in neighborhoods where they blend.

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#### GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Goal A:** Encourage economic growth that achieves a balanced, diversified and healthy local economy and enhances Washington's comparative advantage and uniqueness over other communities.

**Recommendations:**

1. Lobby appropriate authorities and providers to improve broadband, cell service and power supply which are potential barriers to entry for certain businesses and limit residents' ability to telework. Work with the UVLSPRC to implement the UVLSRPC Regional Broadband Plan.
2. Foster the formation of businesses and tourism that showcase our historical and cultural assets, recreational opportunities, artisans' and craftsmen's talents, our vast natural resources, agriculture and forestry.
3. Consider public/private partnerships, tax incentives and grants to attract businesses/services important to a healthy local economy such as: paramedical service, technology services, childcare, restaurant and lodging.
4. Encourage the formation of cooperative enterprises to reduce the cost hurdles of business startup.
5. Establish an agricultural commission to work cooperatively with Town boards and commissions to make sure the concerns and interests of farmers are understood and considered.

**Goal B:** Guide the physical location of economic growth to complement and protect our rural and historical character.

**Recommendations:**

1. Define and designate specific sections of Town for different land uses: agricultural, forestry, residential, business and light industry.
2. Modify the LUO to allow different lot sizes and setbacks in these different sections.
3. Foster the use/renovation of existing historic buildings in village centers for appropriate retail and professional service businesses and ensure the LUO provides appropriate flexibility to encourage this use.
4. Provide a predictable local permit process with clear expectations that is equitable to all applicants.

**Goal C:** Foster a supportive economic development and planning environment for existing and potential new businesses.

**Recommendations:**

1. Encourage diverse private-interest participation in economic planning and promotion through the creation of a Town Economic Development Committee.
2. Actively provide marketing and promotional support through a variety of media and channels, an online business directory and a community website.