# Master Plan
# Town of Sullivan, N.H.

2025 Update

# Sullivan Master Plan, 2025 Update

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Cover: The photograph is taken from the Center looking toward Gilsum Road, the Four Corners, and Hubbard Hill. It is meant to illustrate Sullivan's rural residential character. Photo credit: Stephen Heirtzler.

# Resolution

Be It Resolved That:

The Planning Board of the Town of Sullivan hereby adopts the document entitled, Sullivan Master Plan, 2015 under the provisions of the State of New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated, Chapters 674:2-4. It is adopted as a guide, or point of departure, for the logical future development of the Town of Sullivan.

Adopted on 5 March 2025 by the Sullivan Planning Board,

C. Christopher Pratt, Chairman

Timothy Newcomb, Secretary

Laura Lewandowski

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# Introduction

This document is presented to the community of Sullivan by its Planning Board. It represents an update from the previous master plan published in 2015. It attempts to collate changes that have occurred over the last 10 years, projections of future trends, and presents a vision of what the community should consider in the area of land use over the next 10 years. It is only an advisory guide for helping the community as we face the inevitable changes that will occur as face those changes.

The work begins with a vision statement that is, in turn, informed by the various aspects and needs of the community which are discussed in great detail in the sections that follow. The detail sections include housing, land use, economic activity, conservation, and community services. The plan concludes with a series of goals and recommendations for the community to consider over the next 10 years.

Ultimately, the master plan does not plan anything. Any sort of "lock step" planning would not do a community any good. It is meant to serve as an analysis of where we have been as a town and provides a "best guess" as to where we might go in the near term. What will happen over the next decade will be driven by factors such as state law and the desires of property owners to change the use of their property. That said, however, the plan will provide guidance to the Planning Board and the community.

# Vision Statement

Over the next 10 years, Sullivan will work toward:

- A town that balances incremental residential growth with preservation of Sullivan's rural-residential character, by encouraging patterns of development that preserve open space and natural resources.
- A town whose revenue base securely supports basic infrastructure and services that benefit the community to include childhood education, well-maintained roads and town buildings, and emergency response. In addition to revenue generated by the Town's property valuation, the Town should seek as much outside financial help as possible by applying for grants and sharing services with other towns.
- A town whose revenue base supports paid staff to help run the Town alongside volunteer and nominally paid officials, preserving institutional knowledge to improve efficiency and compliance.
- A town where communications by town government is kept as up-to-date as possible.

- A strong community where people share a sense of place fostered by Sullivan's shared values, its history, and the character of the land.
- A community where people collaborate with each other for the good of the town as a whole.
- A community that encourages and appreciates good governance and leadership, and has an entrepreneurial spirit.
- A town whose cultural amenities (public library, church, nature trails, Jewett Park, the Winch Forest, etc.) bring people together. This should also include encouragement of events that provide opportunities for fun, learning, and outdoor exercise.
- A town that supports the hiring of a qualified building inspector and/or a code enforcement officer.
- A town whose ordinances allow for a range of safe, sanitary housing options beyond large single-family detached houses, resulting in a housing stock that meets the needs of all its residents.
- A community committed to the importance of undeveloped lands for human enjoyment and wild animal sustenance.

# Location

Sullivan is one of 23 communities in Cheshire County and located in southwest New Hampshire. It is bordered by Gilsum on the north and west, Keene on the south and east, by Roxbury on the south, Nelson on the east, and Stoddard on the east and north. Sullivan has a total land area of 12,224 acres, 195 of which are surface water. Its elevations range from 795 feet along Otter Brook to a high point of 1,751 feet above mean sea level at Boynton Mountain. The town contains two major watersheds. Approximately 1/3 of the town's area drains in a northward flow toward the Ashuelot River and the remaining area drains toward Otter Brook. There are two "great ponds" in Sullivan—Chapman Pond (approximately 10 acres) and Bolster Pond (approximately 15 acres).

# Town History

**Summary**

Sullivan began as a small hill town and gradually grew to an agricultural community that included some small mills for grist and lumber production. As the 19th century closed, the number of people exclusively engaged in agriculture began a sharp decline that accelerated after the First World War. At the same time, the woodworking mills closed. By 1930, our population declined to its lowest point in history. During the Great Depression, a number of new families moved to town mostly seeking land to raise some or most of their food while working at wage jobs outside of the community. That trend continued after the Second World War and Sullivan's population began recovering.

The post-World War II growth in New Hampshire's population was seen in Sullivan from the 1970s through the 1990s as more land was made available for housing through subdivisions. The population reached another peak in 2000 and remained steady, albeit declining, through the 2020 census.

## 18th & 19th Centuries

Sullivan was formed out of the corners of four townships—Gilsum, Stoddard, Keene, and Packersfield (renamed Nelson in 1812). The first settlement occurred in the Gilsum "quarter" between 1769 and 1770, but settlement did not begin in earnest until about 1780. The town's first center began in the area around the Four Corners (the intersection of South Road, Gilsum Road and Centre Street). Other clusters of settlement appeared around Bolster Pond, on Nims Hill along South Road, and Gilsum Road. Concern over the distance to their meeting houses led some 34 individuals to petition the State Legislature to establish a new township to be called Orange. The name was later changed to Sullivan in honor of John Sullivan who had been a general in Washington's army as well as governor of the state. The incorporation date was 27 September 1787.

In the first half of the 19th century, Sullivan Center became the hub of our community. It was located along what is now Centre Street from the Four Corners to where the Sullivan Public Library stands today. This section developed from about 1785 and flourished until the Civil War era. It included taverns, blacksmith shops, a shoe makers shop, the post office, the first burying ground, a small potash factory, a carpentry shop, the Congregational and Baptist churches, an armory for the local militia, and Wardwell's Store which also had a meeting hall for events and social gatherings. From 1830 to 1850, the Center was a stop on the Keene to Newport stage coach. All of the services and small industries were gone by 1860 and the Center became little more than a cross roads for the town. However, it retained the Town Hall, the Congregational Church, and the central burying ground so the Center was still where all residents gathered for meetings.

East Sullivan, on the other hand, became a new population center after 1860. Beginning around 1797, small mills began developing along Otter Brook and its tributaries. In 1830, a highway was built through the village that connected it to Keene and the Nelson-Stoddard area. Around the same time, Valley Road was laid out to provide a connection to the timber lands in the northern portion of Sullivan. In 1869, the Ellis Reservoir was constructed to guarantee water power to all of the mills. After the Civil War, the village's original saw mill underwent a major expansion and began manufacturing tables, chair parts, and woodenware.

From the beginning Sullivan's topography made communications between the Center and East Sullivan difficult. East Sullivan responded by establishing its own institutions. This included a separate Congregational Church, its own cemetery, and a large meeting hall (originally called Union Hall, now 30 Centre Street) to accommodate the village's various clubs and organizations. It should be noted, however, that East Sullivan never made any move to separate or become an incorporated village.

While the mills of East Sullivan were important to the town's economy, most of the rest of the population was engaged in agriculture. Like most hill towns, settlers purchased

lots that were scattered across the town. Also, like most hill towns, these early farms seldom lasted for more than a generation or two before they were discontinued. Much of that land reverted to forest. By the end of the 19th century, farming was concentrated along Sullivan's main highways. These farms raised some cattle for both meat and dairy products. A few raised sheep and chickens. Major crops included hay, root vegetables, corn, oats, and potatoes. Many of the farms also produced maple sugar and syrup.

## 1900-1940

In the years between 1900 and 1930, most of the more prosperous farmers and mill owners passed away. Few of their children had remained in town to take over the land. While some farms continued under new owners, others ceased operations. The last of the mills burned in 1931. Forestry continued to be important, but most harvesting was by out-of-town companies looking for trees that were suitable for box and shook manufacturers. As a result of all of those changes, Sullivan's population in the 1930 census sunk to the lowest point in its history.

Ironically, the era of the Great Depression was one of expansion for the community as several factors reversed the population trend. The close proximity to Keene and improved highways meant that families could move into our town, raise some food on the land, and find wage-work in Keene. In some cases, new residents arrived to restart the old farms, but their production levels did not reach those of the previous century. While Sullivan had no large lakes or tourist attractions, a number of "summer people" also moved here after purchasing some of the old farms. Many of these summer homes would later become permanent residences.

Moreover, the community institutions remained strong. The two Congregational churches had a stable membership as did the Honor Bright Grange and other social organizations. Regular public programs were held at the Union Hall in East Sullivan as were weekly dances at Bushey's Hall where many local contra-dance musicians were featured.

One of the major changes that occurred in that era was the arrival of electricity. The New Hampshire Electric Coop was able to "wire up" most of the town in 1941. Public Service Company followed suit; and, by the end of World War II, most homes had access to electricity. This brought about a major change in the standard of living for the community and probably attracted more people to town.

## 1940-1960

In these decades, the population continued to expand slowly. Most people worked outside of town, although a few local businesses were established—mostly operated near or in the owner's home. While a few farms remained, they would not survive after the owner retired. Some specialty farms (poultry, beef cattle, etc.) came about but also did not last long. Land use began to change slightly with a small number of new homes being built on relatively small lots.

The role of local government began to change as well. Increased population also brought a need for more services. 1946 saw the establishment of the Sullivan Volunteer Fire Company. The early 1950s saw a reform in how the Sullivan Highway Department was

managed as the system of one road agent responsible for all operations was adopted. The town also began owning more equipment for better maintenance of the roads. The Town Barn had been built in the 1930s, but the 1950s saw expansion of its shop and storage facilities.

In 1957, a new elementary school was constructed to replace the last two one-room schools. In 1961, Sullivan joined the Monadnock Regional School District and sent the junior high and high school students to the School District's new school in Swanzey. 1957 also saw the Sullivan Public Library moving into its first public building at what is now 30 Centre Street. The library had been in private homes since it was established in 1893.

## The Growth Years, 1970-2000

Between 1970 and 1990, Sullivan saw its greatest growth since the early years of the 19th century. The 1960s saw a few subdivisions of land—mostly one or two lots. As the 1970s began, the last of the large farms in town were broken up into smaller lots. Those lots, in turn, were subdivided into smaller lots for housing. The number of new dwelling units constructed was gradual but persistent. New houses began appearing along Centre Street, South Road, Valley Road, Gilsum Road and Hubbard Road. In addition, the population of the town rose dramatically between 1970 and 1990 (from 376 to 706).

In 1971, the Town Meeting voted to establish the Sullivan Planning Board. During the next decade, the Board wrote regulations for subdivisions, camp grounds, driveways, and manufactured housing. However, efforts to write a comprehensive land use regulation, failed for lack of voter support. In spite of the new growth in housing, the Town Meeting was reluctant to regulate it through "zoning" ordinances. The Planning Board was able, through the subdivision regulations, to set some standards. The Board was also able to keep some "scattered and premature" subdivisions from occurring in our more remote areas.

The Planning Board also drew up the town's first master plan in 1980. While discussing various issues involving growth, the plan also reflected the community's belief that it was a rural residential town. After much town-wide discussion, the Community Planning Ordinance was adopted in 1989. So, by 1990 the town recognized its future as a residential community that preserved elements of its rural nature and passed a set of rules to preserve and promote those ideals.

The 1970s also saw more changes in local government. A new fire station was constructed in 1976. The old town hall proved inadequate for Town Meetings as the population grew. After 1970, Town Meetings were held at the hall at 30 Centre Street. The upstairs room in the hall became the first town office which provided space for the Selectmen and the storage of town records. In 1974, the town hired its first part-time administrative assistant to run the day-to-day operations. The old town hall underwent a major renovation in the late 1970s and became the new home of the Sullivan Public Library. The facility also became the meeting venue for the Planning Board and other town-wide committees—ending the practice of having committees convene in private homes. The Sullivan Elementary School was expanded and renovated in 1979. Finally, the town committed itself to maintaining and improving its highway system with the

purchase of new equipment, the adaptation of modern construction techniques, and the creation of capital reserve funds.

The growth of new housing was not the only change. While new houses were being built on relatively small lots, some land owners continued to maintain timber lands and acres devoted to small scale agriculture. This was an important factor in preserving of our rural character. The 1990s saw this idea taken a step further with land owners selling their land (or their "development rights") to forest or agricultural preservation societies. The trend continued into the 21st century. By 2010, some 28% of our total acreage (mostly in the least developed portions of town) was in some form of conservation easement. This preserved wild life corridors as well as some of the places that make our town special—Otter Brook Falls, Bolster Pond, the upper reaches of the Otter Brook Watershed, the White Brook Watershed, etc.

The 1990's also saw major investments by the town in its infrastructure. Most of this took place as part of an effort to redevelop Sullivan Center. In 1993, the United Congregational Church of Sullivan completed an addition that included a meeting hall with a full kitchen. This provided an important venue for community gatherings that was modern and had a large capacity. In 1996, the town built a new town hall next to the Church. This provided adequate space for the Town Meeting, the town offices, the Police Department, a meeting place for all of the town committees and boards, and the Town Clerk. The fire station underwent a major addition. The library also had a major addition that added more shelf space, and a room for the town archives. A major expansion of the Meeting House Cemetery took place and the town assumed ownership of the East Sullivan Cemetery. Finally, the Town Highway Department was moved from behind the Church to its new home at 18 Church Street. This provided the department with an adequate amount of land to expand its facilities. Over the next decade or so this included a new garage, equipment storage space, as well as sand and salt storage facilities.

## 2000-2015

The first two decades of the 21st century saw Sullivan's growth slow. After peaking at 746 in 2000, the population declined to 659 in the 2020 census. New dwelling units were added at a much slower rate than that in the previous 30 years. This included along Apple Hill Road and Hubbard Road. Much of the decline in population was seen in the school-age group. This led to efforts on the part of the Monadnock Regional School District to consolidate the elementary schools in Surry, Gilsum, and Sullivan into one school and close the school in Sullivan. That along with problems with the MRSD Board and the accreditation crisis at the high school led to the withdrawal of Sullivan from the MRSD. The reconstituted Sullivan School District began operations in the 2013-2014 school year.

Another major change occurred in 2014 when the town began contracting its police services with the Cheshire County Sheriff's office. This was a direct result of an inability to recruit police officers. The Sheriff's contract has continued to the present.

## Since the 2015 Master Plan

Since the last Master Plan was written, the town weathered the COVID-19 Pandemic and found ways to continue to function during the lockdown. Two of the annual Town Meetings were held at the United Congregational Church where there was room to maintain social distancing. Board meetings attempted to use technologies to hold remote meetings with very mixed results. The public library went to curb-side delivery of books to patrons.

In 2021, the Town Meeting approved a bond issue in order to bring fiber optic cable for broad band communications to town. This gave residents the option of being able to upgrade their internet and other communications to a much faster transmission rate.

The post-pandemic housing boom in New Hampshire significantly raised housing costs in our town and prompted the Planning Board to review its regulations regarding minimum lot size, accessory dwelling units, and the concept of cluster housing.

In spite of the increase in the cost of existing housing, there has been only modest growth in the number of new houses constructed. Since the last master plan, subdivisions on South Road and Hubbard Road led to new construction, but most of the new housing has been built on existing lots. Housing has continued to be concentrated on the town's main roads with Hubbard Road being the densest.

Since the last master plan, the highway department has completed the town barn relocation project with the construction of a large and efficient salt-sand shed. Highway upgrades have continued. The Fire Department has steadily improved its training and readiness as well as updating equipment. The use of the DiLuzio Ambulance service was continued until the company filed for bankruptcy in 2022. Efforts to find a replacement led to our contracting with the City of Keene Ambulance Service.

# Housing and Population

The Town of Sullivan updated the Housing and Demographics chapter of its Master Plan in 2015. In that document the planning board emphasized the needs for safe, sanitary housing that meets the state-mandated building code, respects the current nature of the town but also encourages a diversity of housing to meet the needs of residents of all age and income levels.

In the spring of 2023, the town revisited housing and population in Sullivan to assess what kind of housing is currently available in Sullivan and what is likely to be built under current zoning, as well as to consider the match or mismatch between the existing housing stock and town demographics. As we see below, the town has added new housing units which are in compliance with state building standards and the zoning of the town, but the primary form of housing in Sullivan remains a single family detached house located on at least two acres. Ninety percent of all units are single family detached, and all the units added between 2010 and 2020 are in that category.

## Comparisons

What follows is a general overview of housing in Sullivan that may be used as a basis for identifying problems and seeking solutions. It also provides one means for tracking the growth of the town through the past and anticipating future growth. This overview will document the relative age, condition and availability of housing in the Town, comparing Sullivan's housing stock with the housing in Cheshire County as a whole and with nearby towns: Gilsum, Nelson and Stoddard. There is no suggestion intended that any town must match the housing condition, character or adequacy of any other town, but a general comparison can be useful in making judgments about the function of housing within a given community.

**Total Housing Comparison (Total Housing Units 1970-2020)**

| | Sullivan | Gilsum | Nelson | Stoddard | Cheshire Co. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1970 | 117 | 190 | 151 | 103 | 17,241 |
| 1980 | 201 | 237 | 171 | 260 | 23,274 |
| 1990 | 283 | 329 | 379 | 890 | 30,350 |
| 2000 | 299 | 343 | 400 | 939 | 31,876 |
| 2010 | 309 | 378 | 460 | 1044 | 34,773 |
| 2020 | 314 | 354 | 395 | 1056 | 35,612 |
| % change 2010 to 2020 | +2% | -7% | -15% | +2% | +3% |

## Tax Rates and Housing

The more seasonal homes there are in a town, the more widely the costs of services, such as schools, road maintenance, fire and police, can be spread. Sullivan's housing stock is made up almost exclusively of year-round homes. Gilsum has relatively few seasonal homes. Stoddard and Nelson, on the other hand, have many seasonal homes unoccupied during the school year. This accounts for a large measure of the substantial difference in tax rates from town to town.

Comparative tax rates are best understood as a function of three factors that can also be compared from town to town: 1) a town's total budget; 2) the total and median value of a town's homes; 3) the total number of a town's homes, both seasonal and year-round. The lower the value of a town's homes, the higher the tax rate is likely to be. The larger the number of seasonal homes compared to the number of homes occupied year-round, the lower the tax rate is likely to be. For example, the town of Stoddard, which has a high proportion of seasonal homes and more than half its land protected from development, has an extremely low tax rate.

**Comparison of Equalized Tax Rates per $1000 of valuation**

| | Sullivan | Gilsum | Nelson | Stoddard | Regional Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 25.53 | 25.95 | 19.11 | 12.80 | 21.16 |
| 2020 | 26.26 | 25.75 | 18.87 | 16.42 | 21.82 |

*Source: NH Department of Revenue Administration*

It should also be noted that the greater the number of homes in a town, keeping in mind the size of the gap between the number of seasonal and year-round homes, the more likely it is that more town services—road maintenance, schools, emergency services and the rest—will be required. And residents of towns with higher median home values often demand more and more expensive town services. In both these cases, total town budgets are likely to be greater, causing the tax rate to increase. However, because of Sullivan's relatively high tax rate, a homeowner in Sullivan will see a higher tax bill each year than will an owner of a home of equal value in a town with a lower tax rate.

The length of roads which have to be maintained by every town also affect the town tax rate, and stands as a reliable proxy for the total tax burden of the town. It costs approximately $5 a running, center-line foot to salt, sand, plow, ditch, and mow a foot of town-maintained paved road. Costs for gravel (commonly referred to as "dirt") roads are similar, because, while they may not always require sanding, they do require frequent grading. Sullivan's requirement of 200 feet of frontage on a class 5 or better road for every building serves to indebt the town for more than the building is likely to pay for the road maintenance portion of its town tax bill. If the town had an area which allowed for historically-appropriate dense development patterns, the overall burden of road maintenance would be lightened by that section of town which allows for shorter road frontages.

The Town's budget may be affected by natural disasters (such as the wiping out of several Sullivan roads during the storm of May 2012) or by major changes to Sullivan institutions (such as the closing of the Sullivan School in 2012 and the subsequent need to repay the Monadnock Regional School District for improvements to the school over the years). Of course, increased values of Sullivan properties affect an individual's taxes, too. The table on the next page shows the marked escalation in home values throughout the county since 1970.

| | Sullivan | Gilsum | Nelson | Stoddard | Cheshire County |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1970** | $4,299 | $9,130 | n/a | $8,214 | $13,142 |
| **1980** | $35,000 | $33,000 | $42,700 | $37,100 | $41,000 |
| **1990** | $97,900 | $90,600 | $91,700 | $99,700 | $111,000 |
| **2000** | $91,700 | $89,100 | $106,000 | $115,900 | $105,300 |
| **2010** | $244,700 | $217,800 | $187,800 | $200,400 | $201,800 |
| **2023** | $295,500 | $291,823 | $407,940 | $410,000 | $353,000 |

**Median Home Value** *Source: US Census Data, Zillow for 2023 median home value.*

### Housing Types

According to the American Community Survey, as of 2021, 90% of the town's housing units are single unit homes, slightly more than 3% are two or more-unit buildings, and about 8% are manufactured housing.

The median number of rooms in a Sullivan house is 5.6 rooms. Almost 10% have 9 rooms or more, while almost 14% have 4 rooms or fewer. The rest have between 5 and 8 rooms.

Since 2015 the town has instituted requirements for certificates of occupancy and strengthened building code enforcement in an effort to improve the quality of housing in Sullivan.

## Demographics

Sullivan's population is 650 persons, according to the American Community Survey data from the 2020 national census. There are 338 women, and 312 men. Residents are 93% white, with a few persons identifying as Asian or Hispanic, and an additional few who identified as more than one race.

Population by age cohort

| 0-9 | 10-19 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 | 80+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 84 | 45 | 58 | 71 | 117 | 104 | 97 | 52 | 19 |

The town's population has remained virtually unchanged since the 1990 census. Median age in Sullivan is 45, identical to the state as a whole. New Hampshire has the second oldest median age in the United States; Maine has the oldest.

## Household Composition

According to data collected by the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, Sullivan has 294 households. Two-thirds of Sullivan's households, 213, are one or two person households; 48 are three-person households; and 33 are four or more person households.

Housing Availability According to the 2020 U.S. Census

- Total housing units in Sullivan, 314
- Single family units, detached or attached, 263
- Units in 2–4-unit multi-family structure, 22
- Manufactured homes and other housing units, 25
- Between 2000 and 2020 37 housing units were added
- Between 2010 and 2020 5 housing units were added
- These numbers include 20 unoccupied units.

## The Future of Housing in Sullivan

A short survey conducted by the housing task force in the spring and early summer of 2023 supports the idea that the town does not wish to make any changes that would change its rural character, which is in line with the results of the Town survey in 2012. In 2012 Sullivan residents wanted to maintain the Town's rural character. New zoning that would encourage housing development in Sullivan's backlands would be counter to this goal. Careful attention to maintaining open space and avoiding a steep increase in the Town's tax rate should be at the center of these deliberations.

Large lots and long frontages were among the variables the respondents in the 2023 housing task force survey found important to maintaining 'rural character'. However, long frontages contribute to higher road maintenance costs as the costs are spread over fewer properties.

Currently, Sullivan has only one district, the rural residential district, which allows one family residences by right on any lot of two acres or more, with at least 200 feet of frontage on a class 5 road or better. Duplexes and detached accessory dwelling units may be constructed by right on lots of at least 4 acres. The code is silent on the question of how much additional frontage is required or whether the requirement for 200 feet is sufficient. Residents have indicated on a town-wide survey that other forms of housing might be acceptable, such as Accessory Dwelling Units, conservation subdivisions, a new village node, and housing for the elderly.

As the code stands now it is unlikely that any form of housing other than single family detached will be built in Sullivan. Single-family detached is always the most expensive form of housing, particularly in a rural context where on-site water and septic must be provided. If the town wishes to encourage other, less expensive forms of housing some changes should be made to the community planning ordinance. Single-unit detached housing is the most expensive form of housing to create and maintain. Additionally, not every household wishes to live in such housing and would prefer choices such as small multi-family units or cottages clusters.

Sullivan should consider alternatives in its code that would encourage a variety of more affordable housing options.

Although the school-age population has declined markedly, the number of people over the age of 65 in Sullivan has increased. The growth in this segment of the population is a reminder that not all new housing development need be or should be housing for young families. While this group's need for housing—most particularly for affordable housing—is great, there is also significant need for housing suitable for other segments of the population, including single adults, couples whose children have left home, people approaching or entering retirement and the elderly. A community that mixes and balances these groups well will very likely be stronger and a more interesting place to live, work and grow up in than is a community excessively weighted only toward families with children of school age, or, as is now the case in Sullivan, a town increasingly becoming a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community.

## Population

In 1820, 582 people were living in Sullivan. This turned out to be the population peak for all of the 19th century. Beginning at about that time, the Town's population, like the populations of many towns in the region, began a steady decline as the result of heavy migration of people to the newly opened agricultural lands of the Midwest and to newly industrializing urban centers. By 1930, Sullivan reached a population low of only 192 people.

Over the next thirty years, U.S. Census figures show that Sullivan's population remained relatively flat, reaching 261 people by 1960. Through the decade of the sixties, the Town's population nearly doubled what it had been in 1930, growing to 376 people in 1970. The following two decades and especially the 1980's was a population boom period. By 1990 Sullivan's population had climbed to 706 people, nearly double what it was in 1970. The U.S. Census of 2000 set the Town's population at 746 people. By the time of the 2010 census, the population had dropped to 677.

Sullivan's Population 1820-2020

| 1820 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 582 | 192 | 255 | 272 | 261 | 376 | 585 | 706 | 746 | 677 | 650 |

*US Census Data*

U.S. Census figures for 1970 through 2020 show that the rate of population growth in Sullivan has been anything but uniform. The largest percentage increase in a ten-year period was between 1970 and 1980 when the population increased 35%; after that the population increases were very modest until 2000. After 2000 the population continued to decrease.

At the time of Sullivan's Master Plan in 1995, the Town's Planning Board projected that

Sullivan's population would grow at an accelerated rate of 3.5% per year reaching a total of just under 1000 people by the year 2000. At the same time, the state of New Hampshire was projecting that the Town would grow by 1% per year reaching a total of just under 800 by the year 2000. Both projections proved to be inaccurate.

As ever, the major factors tending towards growth continue to be Sullivan's proximity to Keene and other centers of employment, the development close to their capacity of towns to the south of Keene, Sullivan's rural charm and the attractiveness of small New Hampshire communities to new residents. Factors tending to restrict the growth of Sullivan continue to be the Town's uniform 2-acre zoning, its relatively high tax rate and, to some extent, its topography and limited road system.

## Conclusion

When we think about the future of Sullivan it is tempting to believe that nothing will ever change, and therefore no changes need to be made to the town's zoning code or Master Plan. The wild swings in population between the town's creation and 2023 belie that assumption: change is always more likely than not, and often in ways difficult to see in advance. But it is also a fact that through the 1990's Sullivan grew far more slowly with respect to new housing and population than in the previous two decades. At the time of this writing, the Town's growth has slowed even more. It is important to ask what principles should guide development in Sullivan to ensure smart growth and what changes in the Town's Community Planning Ordinance should be made to achieve that end.

We cannot depend on the town's growth remaining stagnant or retrograde: Sullivan's proximity to Keene over state-maintained highways, coupled with the State of New Hampshire's push for high-speed internet connections for every household in the state, and the likelihood of climate-driven migration, means that Sullivan needs to think about growth in a considered and thorough manner.

Sullivan residents, whenever they have been asked, have expressed a strong desire to maintain the Town's rural character, to encourage agriculture and to protect special places and environmental assets such as vistas, wetlands and forests. At the same time, many Sullivan residents worry whether the Town will be able to accommodate children and grandchildren who choose to continue living here in the future. If and when these goals conflict, balances will need to be struck, and new regulations will have to allow for the possibility of such balances.

Population growth, especially growth in the number of school age children, tends to increase taxes. But new development does not necessarily have to be restricted to the development of new housing, and new housing does not have to be only new family housing. One possibility to be considered is the creation of a new village node overlay district. This could allow an historically appropriate development pattern of housing of various types and sizes such as cottages and two-to-four-unit multifamily buildings, light manufacturing, and retail. This idea was supported in the 2023 survey, and is one

possible solution to Sullivan's lack of housing choice.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) were also reasonably well supported in the work of the housing task force in 2023. Allowing more ADUs by right would both add to housing choice and support current residents by providing income.

Since 1998, the Town has had a cluster housing ordinance that might serve these alternatives well as Sullivan meets both the need for new housing and the goals of preserving the Town's open space and its rural character, if it were reconfigured to encourage much smaller lots and aggregated water and septic facilities.

# Economic Analysis

Sullivan's economic history was that of a typical northern New England hill town. Most of the community was engaged in farming and a smaller portion of the population worked in a few manufacturing enterprises located in East Sullivan and along Otter Brook. By the beginning of the 20th century, the woodworking mills were gone and many of the farming enterprises were disappearing. By the second half of the 20th century, most of the population was working outside of town although there were some who established businesses within the community. That pattern continues to this day and is unlikely to change in the future.

Sullivan has always benefited from its close proximity to Keene. During the 19th century, the city provided markets for agricultural and manufactured products. After the transition to a more suburban community in the 20th century, Sullivan people found work in the various offices and factories in Keene. Others found work in other communities in the Monadnock Region.

The 2015 Master Plan included a statistic from the 2010 census that noted that about one-third for our population was engaged in occupations classified as "managerial, business, science and arts." Another 20% were employed in "production, transportations, sales, or office work." 10% were listed as self-employed. Interestingly, these statistics do not measure those involved in health care, social services or education. These sorts of statistics, of course, are somewhat vague and open to some subjective interpretation, but it is probable that if we had the same set of statistics for the 2020 Census, they would reach a similar conclusion. Suffice it to say that the people of our community are employed in many different skills, professions, as well as self-employment.

For the most part, Sullivan's work force is employed outside the town as there is no large employer within the community. Since the last Master Plan, there has been a small rise in people who have "work-from-home" jobs. This has been facilitated by the introduction of broad-band, fiber-optic cable systems. Some of that was from our main communications utility (Consolidated Communications), however they did not cover the entire town. The 2021 Town Meeting agreed to a bond arrangement with a company

called Fibercast. That company agreed to "wire" the rest of the town with fiber-optic thus making broad band available town-wide. The project was accomplished by 2022. This may or may not encourage growth in "work-from-home" employment or self-employment in the future.

## Income

Per capita income (PCI) in Sullivan (as of 2019) was $37,445. That places our town slightly below the state PCI ($39,634) and above the Cheshire County PCI ($31,912). That figure, however, represents a 50% increase over the amount recorded for the year 2000 ($37,445 v. $19,617). That increase compares to a 40% increase state-wide and 35% for the county for the same time period.

The median household income in Sullivan is $83,750. 17% of individuals are living within 150% of poverty, defined as an income of $37,290 for a family of 3. That figure is large unchanged since the last master plan was written in 2015.

## Education Levels

Statistics for Sullivan's workforce education show that around 90% of our population have a high school diploma or higher education. 26% of our population hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The 90% figure coincides with the state and county average of around 93%. However, the number of advanced degrees is lower (34% for the state and 37% for the county.

## Town Expenditures and Revenues

Budgeting in Sullivan follows the rules set out in the NH Municipal Budget Law. Individual town departments construct their budgets annually and submit them to the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen present a draft budget to the Budget Committee which holds hearings with the departments. The Budget Committee than holds a public hearing to receive input from the community. Using all of that information, the Budget Committee proceeds to construct a budget that considers needs for our town government as well as how those needs will be met given our revenue income structure. The result is the final budget that is presented to the Annual Town Meeting. Each article includes the amount recommended by the Budget Committee. Of course, the budgets for each department are subject to amendments from the Annual Meeting which has the final say on appropriations.

Expenditures are driven by many different factors including the cost of fuel, electricity, communication services, IT, salaries, office supplies, etc. The cost of major purchases is often aided by the use of capital improvement funds which allow the town to set aside certain amounts of money into funds that do not lapse at the end of the fiscal year. These act as "saving accounts" toward major purchases such as highway equipment, fire department equipment, repairs to town buildings, etc.

In the budget year 2024, all expenses paid by the Town amounted to $2,660,465 (as reported in the 2024 MS-535 form). That includes the projected expenditure (to be raised from property taxes) by the Sullivan School District for their equivalent budget

year (2024-2025) as well as taxes to the county and state. As we will see below, not all of these expenses are met through property taxes.

The following list reflects the percentage of expenses broken down by budget area:

- Sullivan School District (including payment for the State Education Tax), 51%.
- Highways, 17.5%
- County Government, 8%
- General Government (the "selectmen's budget" includes administrative costs, legal, building maintenance, insurance, etc.), 7.8%
- Public Safety (fire, police, etc.), 4.5%
- Capital outlay (expenses covered by capital funds), 4%
- Paid to capital funds, 2.6%
- Health and welfare, 1.8%
- Library and recreation, .08%
- Debt service, .01%
- Conservation, .001%

Keep in mind that this is a "snap shot" for one year. The actual expenditures will vary from year to year, but the major sources of expenditures (schools and highways) have not changed since the town was incorporated in 1787.

The major source of revenue for our town is the property tax charged to land owners based on the valuation of their property. In addition, the town takes in money from such sources as car registrations, timber taxes, change of use taxes, fees, and permits.

However, there are other income sources as well. The Federal government may offer grants or emergency funds. These are usually one-time expenses for specific projects. Federal money may also be channeled through the state in the form of grants. The state sends our town a portion of the money collected by the state-wide rooms and meals tax. They also provide an annual "block grant" to support highway improvement projects. Finally, the state collects an "education tax" also based on property valuation in town. This tax is intended to equalize the amount of money spent on education by towns across the state. Since Sullivan is a "receiving town" (as opposed to a "donor town") most of that money remains in Sullivan and is used for the school district expenses.

According to the MS-535 for 2024, the town took in $2,656,608 from all of those sources. The following list reflects the percentage of expenses broken down by income area:

- Property tax (including interest and penalties), 82%
- Motor vehicle permits, 5.4%
- Income from capital funds, 3%
- Highway block grant, 2.8%
- Rooms and meals tax distribution, 2.4%
- Federal grants (one-time), 1.75%
- Miscellaneous revenues, 1.45%
- Miscellaneous income, 0.5%
- Interest from investments, 0.5%

- Income from departments, 0.4%
- Change of use from current use and yield tax, 0.3%
- Income from permits and fees, 0.1%

Like the percentages for expenses, these figures represent a snap-shot for revenue. However, the largest percentage of revenue remains (far and away) the property tax.

The property tax is a regressive tax since those with middle or low incomes pay a higher percentage of their incomes toward their property tax then do those in the higher income brackets. Those in the State administration and the State Legislature have seldom considered any serious proposals to address this imbalance and there is no reason to expect that to change in the near future.

Sullivan's property tax income derives almost exclusively from residences. There are some businesses in town but their impact on property tax income is minimal. Sullivan has virtually no "summer residents" and no lake front properties which help other towns to spread the burden of the tax.

In light of these factors, town and school district administrators will have to continue their policies of coping with the inevitable growth in expenses while considering the impact on those who pay property taxes. This includes careful monitoring of expenses throughout the fiscal year while still meeting our obligations. It also places an obligation on the town to conduct revaluations in a timely manner to ensure an equitable distribution of the burden.

Another factor to consider is growing the tax base. This is usually done by increasing dwellings and/or by encouraging commercial and industrial development. Currently, the Community Planning Ordinance allows for commercial and industrial development by special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment and with a site plan review by the Planning Board. This allows such development and has long been part of our plans. Yet, Sullivan's non-residential development has only happened on a small scale and has had virtually no impact on revenues.

Sullivan's topography greatly limits any large scale commercial or industrial growth. There is simply not enough flat land in town for such development. Commercial development also requires a large population base to be support its market—something our low population cannot provide. Thus, commercial development in Sullivan would have to be situated on a highway to attract customers from all over. The only location in town that fits that description is Route 9 (a Class I, limited access highway). Development along the highway south of East Sullivan is impossible due to the topography. North of East Sullivan is difficult due to the structure of the highway and several wetlands. Such a development would involve a major investment by the developer and include expensive engineering and traffic studies.

The other aspect of growing the tax base is increasing residential housing. That is more practical than expanding commercial or industrial development in Sullivan, but new housing brings increased demand for services—especially schools. Since the property tax is a shared burden, the increased costs would be reflected in a higher tax rate. The lower amount of revenue generated by a house with a low valuation is compensated by those homes with a higher valuation. However, the more expensive our services become,

the higher the tax rate will rise. Eventually, that pattern will force lower income and lower middle-income people out of our community. That, in turn, will upset a population balance that has existed in our town since World War II.

All of this means that the community through its Planning Board and Community Planning Ordinance must ensure that any future residential development achieves a balance that permits both expensive and moderately priced homes.

## Land Use in Sullivan

As noted elsewhere, the pattern of land use in Sullivan has long reflected the community's desire to have a rural-residential character—something in between a suburban "bedroom community" and rural community of farms, fields, and forests. The large amount of privately owned property in current use and the acreage in conservation easement has kept housing development confined to our highway system. Moreover, our rough and broken topography has discouraged any large-scale development of our back land. Our Community Planning Ordinance's definition of a house lot as having a 2-acre minimum with a 200-foot frontage on a Class V or better road has done much to keep new housing from clustering too close together. This has also served to limit access for the development of the larger pieces of land away from our road system. Finally, our lack of municipal water and sewerage practically guarantees that housing will have to be on fairly large lots.

All of this has provided a certain balance that has addressed housing needs while maintaining the community's perception of itself as rural-residential. However, one must also consider Sullivan's size and the growth in housing over the last 50 years and how all of that impacts our land use.

The total amount of land in Sullivan is 11,980 acres. About 14% of the land is taken up by the road network, areas of open water and land currently designated as wetlands. 27.6% of our land has conservation easements which basically prevent further development. 34% of our land currently has a dwelling unit located on it. Much of that land includes lots that are greater than 2 acres. These have the potential for further subdivision if they meet the requirements listed in Sullivan's land use regulations. Another 143 acres (.02%) is owned by the town. That includes land for town buildings and the 113-acre Winch Forest which cannot be sold or developed. That leaves about 23% (or almost 2800 acres) of our total land area that does not currently contain residences.

Another consideration is the average acreage per dwelling unit. According to a survey of the property listings contained within the annual town reports, in 1970, the average dwelling unit included 39 acres of land. By the year 2000, the average had dropped to 15 acres. That should not be surprising as some 55% of our current housing was built during that 30-year period. The period between 2000 and 2020 saw less growth and a more modest fall in average acreage to 14 acres. That would seem to indicate that our housing growth is largely in line with our desires for a rural-residential community.

However, one must also consider where our housing stock is located mostly along our Class V highways. Using the same methodology used in the previous paragraph, an analysis was done using the 2022 Town Report list of properties but then applied to specific streets. For the most part, the averages were similar to the 14 acres noted in the 2020 survey. However, if one disregards those properties on large lots (20 acres or greater) then the average drops to nearly 5 acres. For example, Apple Hill Road contained 18 properties with a dwelling unit at the time of the survey and an average acreage of 14 acres. By removing the 3 properties with 20 acres or more, the average drops to 6.1 acres. Most of the other roads surveyed had averages ranging from 4 acres on Hubbard Road to 6 acres on South Road.

If we look at the remaining property with no housing, we find that much of it is "back land" that has no or very limited access to a Class V or better road. Much of that land contains wet areas and steep slope which would make development difficult and expensive. Under current regulations contained in the Sullivan Community Planning Ordinance and Sullivan Subdivision Regulations, development off of our highway system would require action by the Sullivan ZBA, the construction of new roads, and other obstacles. The costs involved in such projects would discourage all but the well-financed developer which is probably the reason why the planning board has received few serious proposals of this nature.

The conclusion of the analysis might lead one to think that Sullivan is running out of standard housing lots (2 acre minimum, 200 feet of road frontage). Such a conclusion would be incorrect—at least in the near term. As noted above, the average property containing a dwelling unit is still greater than 2 acres. Those lots with greater than 4 acres are still "subdividable." However, whether or not they will be subdivided in the near future will still depend on the desires of individual properties owners combined with the town's regulations regarding frontage, the adequacy of the land for water and septic facilities, topographical obstacles, etc.

Most importantly, future subdivisions will depend on individual land owners. A survey of subdivisions that occurred from 1970 to 2000 showed that almost all of them were by individual land owners and not by real estate or commercial developers. Moreover, subdivisions and the resulting new housing has been a slow and incremental process. Given this past, there is no reason to believe that the pattern will change significantly in the near future.

That conclusion is also informed by projections for growth in our population. Unlike other New England States, New Hampshire's population continues to grow. If current trends continue, the state's population (according to the State Planning and Development Office) is predicted to grow some 9% by the year 2050. However, most of the growth will occur in other parts of the state. Cheshire County's growth for the same period is expected to fall by 3.5%. Perhaps because these projections are based on current population trends and since Sullivan's population decline since 2000, the state's planners project a 14.7% decline by 2050.

Such predictions of events 30 years from now are, of course, subject to a great deal of changeability. However, they seem to predict that Sullivan's land use will continue to add new housing lots at a steady pace regulated by our 2-acre minimum and will

continue along our Class V or better highways. For the most part, large scale development of our back land would be too expensive to accomplish profitably.

Still, the town, and particularly the planning board, must be prepared for proposals to develop land off of our Class V or better highways. The state-wide pressure for more housing will probably lead to new legislation in the near future which will call into question our town's commitment to single family housing on a 2 acre or greater lots. This means a constant, perhaps annual review of our regulations to make sure they conform to changes in the state law as well as potential changes in real estate transactions and new subdivisions. As noted in the housing section, the planning board will need to continue consideration of alternatives to single family dwellings.

## Current Use

Current use refers to a series of state laws that were passed after World War II and modified over the years. The purpose was to preserve forest and agricultural land from housing or commercial development. It did so by changing the tax structure to rate the property's valuation at its current use rather than its potential use for housing or commercial activities. The policy has led to the preservation of open and forested land across the state which was seen as a way to preserve farms and forest resources. It also had a secondary benefit of preserving a "rural atmosphere" in order to attract tourists.

A property owner has to maintain the current use in order to retain the lower valuation. Unlike a conservation easement, which is practically impossible to change, a property owner can remove their current use on some or all of their land at any time. There is a cost for doing that involves paying back to the town a portion of the money saved by having a current use valuation. This would be a major consideration for a property owner considering developing their property.

Sullivan has a great deal of land (both "back land" and land with frontage on a Class V or better highway) in current use. A survey conducted in 2012 using data from the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration found 9,800 acres of land in current use in Sullivan. At the time this represented 83% of our land and was somewhat higher that our "comparator towns" (Nelson, Gilsum and Stoddard). Of course, the 3,300 acres in conservation easement was included in that figure. That still leaves about 54% of our land in some form of current use. This is probably what contributes to our rural-residential character as much of the current use land surrounds or abuts our housing areas.

## Conservation and Preservation

Since the 1970s, Sullivan has had an active Conservation Commission. They have promoted best forestry practices; urged home owners to avoid planting invasive species; conducted annual road-side clean up days; and promoted hikes to educate the community about our wildlife, plants, wetlands, and town history. Members of the Commission have advised the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment on issues related to wetlands as well as issues air and water quality. They have promoted land conservation and have assisted land owners interested in conservation easements. The results of those efforts have preserved

important acreage for wildlife corridors, hiking, fishing, hunting, and forest preservation. Many of the tracts of land under conservation easement also connect with conservation land in Gilsum and Stoddard which form large areas of protected land.

The work of the Conservation Commission and private land owners have done much to preserve the rural residential character of the town. However, much of the land that is in conservation easement is located in the northern portion of town. As noted above, much of the remaining undeveloped acreage in the rest of town is private property restricted by current use regulations. Such land, of course, has the potential for development, but at the cost of removing it from current use.

Previous master plans and our Town Resources Inventory have noted areas in town that are environmentally sensitive. In the future, the planning board must continue to take these areas into consideration should a nearby development plan be presented. The following list represents land that previous master plans have identified and their current status. This status has not changed since the last master plan:

- Bolster Pond: Currently protected on all sides by conservation easements.
- Chapman Pond: The west side of the pond contains developed land (average acreage is 3 acres) and some current use land. The east side is in current use.
- Otter Brook Watershed (upper end): The Ellis Reservoir wetland, and much of the main brook (including Otter Falls) is in conservation easement. The land containing seasonal streams flowing from Warren Ridge is in current use.
- Otter Brook Watershed (lower end): Most of the area contains a major wetland and a stratified drift aquifer. The area along Valley Road contains housing (average lot size 7 acres). The east side of the brook contains land in current use.
- Otter Brook Watershed (Spaulding Brook): Most of Spaulding Brook (including Great Brook and Chapman Brook) flows through land in current use. Once it begins following Valley Road, it passes developed land (average acreage 15) until it flows into Otter Brook. Its other major tributaries (White Brook, Stony Brook, and Meeting House Brook) flow through a mix of residential and current use land.
- Otter Brook Watershed (Granite Lake Brook): Granite Lake Brook follows Old Concord Road which is mostly residential with some current use land (average residential acreage is 18 acres).
- Ashuelot River Watershed: This includes Hemenway Brook as well as a number of seasonal streams. While much of this watershed begins on conservation easement land, it soon flows through land in current use.
- Ferry Brook Watershed: This area begins at Centre Street and flows through a number of significant wetlands in the area around Price Road and along Ferry Brook Road. This area is a patchwork of some house lots and large tracts that are in current use.
- Hubbard Brook Watershed: This area contains a number of significant wet lands and flows through land in current use.

- The ledge land leading from Sullivan into Bears Den: Some of the approaches to the area are in conservation easement, the approaches to the south are on current use land.
- The Brooks land on South Road: The members of the Brooks family have placed several parcels under either agricultural, restrictive, or conservation easements.
- Jewett Park: The land for the park is owned by the town. The area is underutilized, but its location within the Center makes it perfect for town-wide gatherings such as special events and picnics. Trails connecting the park with the Winch Town Forest have been proposed in the past.
- The 70-acre parcel at the corner of Church Street and Gilsum Road: The land was formerly a farm, a golf course, and a night club. The parcel borders on the Winch Town Forest and has been found to contain excellent agricultural soils. It is relatively flat which makes it ideal for development and it is not in current use.

The preservation of open space and forested land—especially around our important natural areas—is one of the components of our rural residential character. However, a major part of preservation is also to retain physical reminders of our past. This is especially important in our modern era when our population is highly mobile and has many interests outside of the community.

At the present time, there is no committee or board in Sullivan with the specific mission of historic preservation. Thus, the preservation of our heritage has fallen to the Conservation Commission, the Town Archives, the Planning Board, and various interested individuals. Information regarding the history and past uses of land should be part of the considerations for the future development of the town. It should be noted that there are no structures or sites in town that have designations as National Historic Register sites or New Hampshire Landmark sites.

The following list contains areas within the town that are historically sensitive:

- The Center: Generally speaking, this is the area along Centre Street from Church Street to the Sullivan Public Library which contains Sullivan's public buildings. The area to the north of the Center includes the Winch Town Forest and the Meeting House Cemetery. Most of the land to the south of the Center is in conservation easement. While this preserves the Center in its current state, it makes any further development of public facilities difficult if not impossible.
- The Soldier's Monument: This was the first Civil War monument to be raised and dedicated in New Hampshire. Jewett Park surrounds the small space for the obelisk.
- The United Congregational Church of Sullivan: The structure was built in 1848 and represented a break from tradition as it was built strictly as a house of worship rather than a town meetinghouse. It is also one of the few churches in New Hampshire that has retained its horse sheds. It was recently designated as a site worthy of preservation by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance.
- The Sullivan Public Library: The library building served as the Sullivan Town Hall from 1851 to 1970. It was built on the site of the Second Meeting House

and many of the meeting house's timbers were incorporated into the library building.

- The Four Corners (where South Road and Gilsum Road meet Centre Street): From 1800 to 1860, this was the center of Sullivan. It is difficult to visualize, but a one time it contained a store, a meeting hall, a potash factory, the Baptist Church, the militia armory, a black smith, a post office, a shoe maker, and was a stop for the Keene to Newport stage route. Today, most of the houses in the area have been built in the recent past. There are two cellar holes and remnants of a third on private land. The southeast corner is in conservation easement. The site also contains the Four Corners Cemetery were many of our first settlers are buried. Finally, there is a stone fence located to the south of the four corners which once served as the town pound. The land is owned by the town. Mention should also be made of the privately owned house at 35 South Road which has the significance of being the only brick house in town.
- East Sullivan: The village was once the center of Sullivan's mill operations and supported two tanneries, a large saw mill, a grist and fulling mill, a wood products manufacturing company, and a blacksmith. Changes in the location and bridges on Centre Street and Route 9 have done much to remove any evidence of the mill village. A corner of the foundation of Goodnow-Hastings Mill was preserved and the cellar hole of the second tannery is still visible.
- The Goodnow Turning Mill: South of the village of East Sullivan and sandwiched between Route 9 and Otter Brook is a foundation and sluice way that supported Leslie Goodnow's mill. It is located on land that is in current use.
- Mill sites on the Otter Brook Watershed: There two significant sites on Otter Brook that are located within the conservation easement. The first is the Dauphin Spaulding Mill located south of Otter Falls. The second is the Ellis-Harris Mill located south of Ellis Reservoir. Both are stone foundations. The Ellis Reservoir is now a marsh land but was once the pond that provided the water power to run the mills down-stream as far as East Sullivan.
- The Jacob Spaulding Mill Site: The is located at the junction of Cross Road and Bowlder Road. The site includes a stone dam and foundation. The land is in current use.
- The Norcross Mill Site: This was the last of Sullivan's water powered mills (1920-1931) and is located on land in conservation easement. Although it is located on Spaulding Brook, the power was provided by diverting water from Otter Brook and running it through a penstock to the mill site. The wooden structures are long gone, but their concrete supports still show the location of the mill and its penstock.
- The Felt Brothers Mill Site: This is the remains of a stone foundation located on private land (169 Old Concord Road) along Granite Lake Brook.
- Stone Walls and Foundations: Much of the Sullivan's land contain stone walls and cellar holes. Many of these are on private land and some are on conservation easement land. For the most part, these have been preserved over the years. However, poor forestry practices have destroyed some sites and walls. While destroying stone walls—especially those marking property boundaries—is illegal, enforcing the law is difficult. Future development could also threaten cellar holes which mark the location of early settlements. Several of these sites located on private property have been bulldozed over the years to make way for new housing.

- Meeting House Rock: This marks the site of Sullivan's first meeting house and is located on the Winch Hill Town Forest.
- Masonian Patent Line Marker: This small stone monument was erected to mark the location of the Masonian Patent Line in Sullivan. It is on land in conservation easement. The line marked the western boundary of the royal grant to John Mason. The grant marked the first official recognition of the colony that became New Hampshire. The line bisects Sullivan from south to northeast. The stone was placed where boundaries of three of our predecessor towns (Keene, Gilsum and Packersfield) joined.
- Nims Monument: This marks the location of the farm of Frederick Nims. It is on land in current use. While the stone marks the site of the family home and commemorates the Nims family, it also marks the location of a farm settled in 1777. Among the owners over the years was the family of Peter and Catherine Freeman who were the first African Americans to live in Sullivan (1798-1808).
- Rugg Monument: This marks the location of the Kendall-Rugg farm on Kendall Lane. The Rugg family was prominent in the 19th and early 20th century. It is on land in conservation easement.
- 30 Centre Street: This is now a privately owned apartment house. It was constructed in 1869 and served as a community gathering place. It once held the Honor Bright Grange and the Union Evangelical Congregational Church. It served as the Sullivan Town Hall from 1970 to 1995.
- 33 Centre Street: This is now a private home, but was once the District #1 Schoolhouse (East Sullivan).
- 492 Centre Street: This privately owned property contains the parsonage once owned by the First Congregational Society and the District #2 Schoolhouse (Center School).
- 279 Bowlder Road: This privately owned property contains the District #3 Schoolhouse (the Fifield or Seward School). Past owners of the property have maintained the school in its original condition (as of 1930) and it's a good example of a rural one-roomed school.
- 334 South Road: This privately owned property is the District #4 Schoolhouse. It was purchased by the Brooks family and used by different family members as a summer home until the 1970s. It deteriorated badly over the years and is now being restored by the property owner.

# Town Departments and Services

## Sullivan School District

The Sullivan School District was reconstituted in 2012 following the Town's withdrawal from the Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD). The School District began operations on 1 July 2013. The decision allowed the residents of Sullivan to create an independent district for more local decision-making and oversight.

Since then, the Sullivan School District has been guided by its mission statement. "The mission of the Sullivan School District is to provide our resident students with access

to a high-quality educational program that promotes achievement and prepares our students to be contributing members of our society." The mission informs the duty of the School District Board to provide, at direct expense, elementary and secondary education to all students residing in the School District. This is in compliance with RSA 189:1-a and, when applicable, RSA 186-C. Another applicable statute is RSA 194-b which allows for resident students to enroll in chartered public schools.

The Sullivan School District does not operate any schools and is recognized as a sending district. It provides education through contractual relationships with other schools and school districts. Since 2013, these contracts have been with the Keene School District (grades 6-12) and the Nelson School District (K-5). This arrangement is provided through participation in an Authorized Regional Enrollment Area (AREA) agreement with Supervisory Unit #29 (SAU #29 includes the Keene and Nelson Districts). The AREA agreement is reviewed on a periodic basis and is subject to revision on the part of the member school districts. This arrangement is likely to continue into the future.
The School District expenditures for education are determined by a per-student tuition rate that is set by the receiving school districts. Students with special needs often require a higher level of service and, thus, a higher tuition rate. Such rates, in turn, are based on the assessment of the student's needs and the resulting individual education plan (IEP). The provision of special education services is governed by federal and state governments. School districts have the obligation to provide special education services to all eligible children in our public schools. If the student's IEP cannot be met by the faculty and staff of the Nelson School District or the Keene School District, then the Sullivan School District is required to find an "out of district" placement for the student. Such placement usually results in a significantly higher tuition.

The Sullivan School District is governed by an elected, five-member school board. The School District elected officers also include a District Moderator, District Treasurer, and District Clerk. School budgets are drawn up by the School Board with the advice of the SAU #96 staff. The budget is then submitted to the Sullivan Town Budget Committee where it is subject to revision. All budgets are approved and/or amended by the Annual Sullivan School District Meeting.

At the time of the withdrawal from the MRSD, the Sullivan School District also had to create its own SAU (#96). The SAU provides administrative services through a part-time superintendent, part-time business manager, part-time book-keeper, and part-time special education coordinator.

Like Sullivan's overall population trend, its school age population (75-85 per annum) appears to be steady for the foreseeable future. Of concern is the number of special needs students since their tuitions can be twice as much as a general student. Currently, each of our "cohorts" (primary, middle, and high school students) contain 1 to 4 students with special needs. Further, the District is required by State and Federal rules to provide education for preschoolers who have been identified as having special needs through an IEP. Another area of concern is students who will require "out-of-district" placement in order to meet their special needs. While the cost of such students can be covered in part by the District's capital fund, the expense can be a major driver of overall school costs in the future.

Finally, the cost of transportation is a notable budget item that will increase in the future. The contract with the First Student bus company includes a basic charge for transportation plus a fuel charge that varies with the current price of fuel, and for any additional charges resulting from late bus runs and service to and from extracurricular activities. The projected incremental increases are scheduled to rise at about 3% per annum. There is no reason to believe that transportation costs will decrease in the future. The current contract expires in 2027.

Since Sullivan's incorporation in 1787, the cost of maintaining education programs for our students has always been the largest part of the Town's expenditures. Historically, this has been true when we were our own district and when we were part of the MRSD. There is no reason to believe that the level of expense will change in the near future. While the Sullivan School Board and the SAU administrators provide the district with careful, well monitored control of the expenses, any disruption in the budget plan due to unforeseen circumstances (more students moving into the district, increases in special education students, etc.) can easily send the plan into deficit. Sullivan's weak tax base will require continued "tight" management of school expenses for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that the current source of the vast portion of our revenues (the property tax) will change.

## Highway Department

The Department maintains our town's public highways (Class V roads). This includes (among other things) upgrades to road surfaces, bridge repair, ditch and culvert maintenance, brush removal, mud mitigation in the early spring, and snow removal from both roads and town buildings in the winter. In addition, The NHDOT also maintains Centre Street, Route 9, and a small portion of Valley Road from the Route 9 intersection to the East Sullivan 4 corners.

The Town of Sullivan has had some sort of Highway Department since its founding in 1787. The modern Department has its origins in 1934 when the first Town Barn was constructed behind the Church's horse sheds. In the mid-1990s, the Department was moved to its current location (18 Church Street) as part of the Town Center Project. This provided more land for the Department including adequate space for the storage and maintenance of its equipment as well as the storage of sand and salt. The main building is a 45 x 64 wood frame building that houses the vehicles and maintenance facilities as well as an office and small washroom. It includes a floor drain containment system. It is heated with a wood boiler system and supplemented with propane heaters. Other buildings include sheds for sanders, a fuel storage facility, a general storage building, and structures for storing salt and sand. The completion of the salt shed on the west side of the highway land completed a project begun around 2020.

The Highway Department employes 2 full-time workers and as many as 2 part-time workers. One of the full-time workers is the Town Road Agent. Originally, the officer was elected every two years. In 2018, after years of discussion, the town meeting finally voted to have the Road Agent appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Funding for the Department comes from an appropriation from the Annual Meeting for operations as well as a separate appropriation for special projects. In addition, the town also has capital funds that may be drawn upon for major expenses. In 2022, the town

formed an equipment committee to draw up a more formal schedule for the replacement of vehicles and other major equipment.

The Department has the following equipment:

- 2022 International CV515 dump truck (new condition).
- 2016 International Terrastar dump truck (good condition).
- 2014 Mahindra 5010HST tractor (good condition).
- 2004 International 7400 dump truck (good condition).
- 2002 John Deere 410G backhoe (good condition).
- 1987 John Deere 670B grader (fair condition).

While most of the equipment is relatively new, however, there is concern that the age and condition of the grader may cause its replacement in the near future.

The major concerns for the future are maintaining our highways in adequate condition. Every year has brought increased costs in materials—especially asphalt—and there is no reason to believe that trend won't continue. Moreover, the UNH Center for Infrastructure Resilience to Climate Change had determined that with weather-related impacts to roads (made worse by heavy road repair vehicles traveling over wet road base) in our region we can expect reduced pavement life. Our bridges continue to pass inspections; but, at some point, will need major rebuilds. Finally, the normal aging of our vehicles requires constant attention. Much of these concerns will require increased support from the Annal Town Meeting for appropriations and to continue to build Highway capital funds into the foreseeable future.

## Fire Department

The Sullivan Volunteer Fire Department was formally established in 1946. Currently, it provides fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS) for the town. The Department operates in accord with State standards and protocols, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards. In addition to local EMS, the town also has contracts with the City of Keene for ambulance services and transport as required. The town also has an Emergency Management Plan

The Department is entirely volunteer and no one receives compensation for responding to emergency calls. However, training, equipment, and protective gear are provided by the Town. That is usually through an appropriation by the Annual Town Meeting. This includes maintenance expenses and updating equipment as NFPA/ISO standards change. Other funds, especially for major equipment, are provided though withdrawals from various capital funds set aside for major fire equipment purchases.

The Department is currently housed in the Fire Station (440 Centre Street in the town center) that was constructed in 1975-1976. A major addition was completed in 1998 and there have been several renovations and minor changes over the years. The building has 5 vehicle bays that provide adequate space for the trucks and EMS vehicles. The building also contains and space for equipment storage, meetings, classroom space for training, a small kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Principal equipment for the Fire Department includes:

- 2003, Sterling, 1250 Gallon, Class A Pumper.
- 1990 Tanker.
- 1983 heavy EMS truck.
- 2002 truck equipped for brush fires.
- 1994 EMS response truck.

The major concern for these vehicles is the pumper which would be a costly replacement. It is currently 20 years old and was built to standards that were current at that time. Future improvements to the fire station building include better ventilation for the truck bays and areas for the decontamination of personal protective equipment, tools, and personnel.

The Department does its best to maintain equipment, training, and vehicles to NFPA/ISO standards. This is important as these organizations rate our fire-fighting and emergency response capabilities. Those ratings, in turn, are used by insurance companies to determine the cost of home owner's insurance within our community.

## Police Services

The Town of Sullivan maintained its own police department until 2013. In that year, long-time Police Chief Karl Wheeler retired. Facing the prospects of a long search to fill the position with a certified police officer, the Board of Selectmen decided on a short-term agreement with the Cheshire County Sheriff's Department to provide police services in town. The contract was made permanent on 31 December 2014. The agreement has continued to the present and is subject to renegotiation periodically. Money to fund the contract is voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. It is anticipated that this arrangement will continue into the future.

## Library

The Sullivan Public Library has served our community since 1893. It meets the New Hampshire State Library Accreditation Standards for an "associate library." It is open 15 hours per week and is staffed by two librarians who share the hours. The library is a member of the Nubanusit Library Co-op and is linked to the New Hampshire State Library System through the computer service NHAIS (New Hampshire Automated Information System). Both memberships help the librarians gain new skills and discuss library related issues with other librarians and state library personnel. Membership in NHAIS also allows us to borrow materials from other libraries in exchange for sharing our materials. The library serves its patrons with a number of media including eBooks, access to the internet, and an automated collection management system. In addition to money received from the town, the library also receives financial support from the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library and donations from individuals. Ongoing concerns include the aging of our patrons, finding ways to engage children, and the costs of building maintenance.

The library building was the first Sullivan Town Hall and was constructed in 1851. The building underwent a major renovation between 1970 and 1981 which modernized the structure and converted the space from a hall to useable space for a library. A major

addition to the rear of the building was completed in 1998. A number of energy efficiency problems were noted by the Town Energy Committee in 2010-11. This led to a project to install more insulation, energy efficient storm windows, and an energy efficient lighting system. These projects were completed by 2014.

The library's operating budget covers the librarian's salaries, materials purchases, utilities, and year-to-year IT upgrades. The library also receives support from the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library. Unlike a lot of public libraries in New Hampshire, the Sullivan Public Library is not funded by an endowment. However, the Library Trustees established a trust fund a number of years ago in memory of Carolyn Wheeler. Income from that fund can only be used for materials purchases (books, CDs, e-books, etc.).

Since the last master plan, the Sullivan Public Library has continued to provide library services to the community. It has added a number of on-line services including full access to the world-wide-web, ancestry.com, access to the State's downloadable eBook program, and public wi-fi access. Computer services for the patrons was recently upgraded with the installation of fiber-optic broad band. The biggest change in our library was the adoption of an automated check in/out and cataloging system called LibraryWorld. This relatively inexpensive system is tailored to small libraries and enables the librarians to maintain patron records, the inventory of materials, and the status of individual books.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the library introduced a number of community programs. One of the most successful was Saturday Morning Coffee and Conversation. This was an unorganized gathering of anyone who wished to participate and conversations usually included town news, current events, and history. Efforts to restart the program after the pandemic have not been successful, but a few people still show up on Saturdays. Book groups were organized. One was an ongoing mystery book group that meets once a month to discuss a specific book. Other programs began after the pandemic with the Saturday library hours being the busiest.

For the future, the Sullivan Public Library will continue to provide services for the patrons. This means purchasing books, videos, eBook services, and other materials that reflect patron tastes and reading desires. One of the major concerns has been the decline in usage by children and young adults which seems to reflect the town's overall population trends. The majority of the patrons are older adults.

State law allows public libraries to raise funds to purchase items not covered by the operations expenses provided by the town meeting. For many years, the Friends of the Sullivan Public Library have taken on that task, however, its membership has dwindled over the years and continues to age. Efforts to recruit new members have been difficult. Without this fund-raising group, the library would be unable to fund needs that are over and above the library's operating budget. Past work by the Friends has included a water filtration system, renovation of the bathroom, insulated window curtains (part of the energy upgrade) as well as contributions toward our 1998 addition and 2010-2014 energy update project. These efforts have been vital in keeping the library's expenses for the taxpayers at a minimum. The loss of this group would be a major problem for the future of the Sullivan Public Library.

Finally, a major concern for the future is the library building itself. Given its age, major issues with its physical plant are bound to occur. Over the years, the Library Trustees have found funds in the operating budget for minor repairs such as windows or minor roof leaks. However, any major repairs such as structural damage, exterior painting, or the roof (last replaced in 1990) will need to come out of the Town's capital fund for building repair. That fund is currently designed to provide funds for all Town buildings—not just the library building.

## Town Archives

The Sullivan Town Archives is a collection of public and private papers that document the history of Sullivan, New Hampshire. It is located in a secure, fire-resistant room in the Public Library building. Established in 1997, the facility was created to properly house the Sullivan Public Library's collection of historic documents. In 2006, the Town Clerk authorized the Town Archives as the repository for the permanent records of the Town. These include the Town Clerk's record books, minutes of board and committee meetings, and correspondence from and to town officers. The records are stored in acid-free folders and boxes in accordance to established archival standards. The collections are cataloged with finding aids. Current records management standards are used to determine when paper records should be moved from the Town Offices to the archives. Currently, there are no plans to store electronic records as the archives has no means for such storage.

The archives is staffed by a volunteer archivist who receives documents, processes collections, and catalogs their location within the archives. The archivist also addresses any preservation issues regarding the collection.

The storage space is adequate for the near future. A major concern is the age of the current archivist. In the future, the Town will need to recruit a new archivist or reassign their duties to another town officer.

## Town Hall

After many years of debate, the community was finally convinced to construct the current Town Hall building in 1996. The building contains the town offices and a secure office for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector. It also contains a large meeting room where town meetings are held as well as the meetings of town committees and boards. The space is also used for community gatherings and for private gatherings such as weddings or parties. The space would be used by the Emergency Management Office as a shelter in event of natural disaster. The lower level contains a storage room, an office for the Planning Board, and a small conference room that used by the Sullivan School Board; but is available to other town boards and committees as well.

The building contains three bathrooms. It is well lighted, comfortably heated, and handicapped accessible. It is currently wired for all foreseeable needs required by changes in computer technology. The parking lot is maintained by the Town Highway Department. It is shared with the United Congregational Church which pays a monthly fee to the town for maintenance.

The building is functionally adequate and it is not anticipated that it will need any major upgrades in the near future. However, given its age, there may be a need for increased maintenance expenditures—especially for things like roofing and painting. Another issue is whether or not to pave the parking area. Increasingly heavy rainfall in the future may lead to washouts of the current surface. Moreover, during mud season there is a problem with dirt being tracked into the building—especially on Town Meeting Day in March. In the past, this has caused damage to the floors that requires refinishing. Finally, the town should consider installing audio-visual capabilities so that remote meetings might be conducted in event of disaster such as another pandemic.

## Health Services

There are no health services provided by Town government other than emergency services provided the Fire and Rescue Department and contracted ambulance transport services. Regular medical services are provided by facilities outside of the community—especially in Keene, Peterborough, Lebanon, etc.

The Town has an appointed Health Officer who is empowered by State Statutes to inspect septic systems, issues on private property that effect health and safety on adjacent properties, and foster home inspection.

## Cemeteries

The Town maintains three cemeteries—The Four Corners Cemetery, the East Sullivan Cemetery, and the Meetinghouse Cemetery. Only the Meetinghouse Cemetery is being used for new burials. The cemeteries are administered by Cemetery Trustees, which is an elected, three-member board. Since the mid-1990s, the Town has expanded the acreage of the Meetinghouse Cemetery and it is probably adequate for the near term.

## United Congregational Church of Sullivan

The Congregational Church's main building was constructed in 1848. The horse sheds behind the building were added a few years later. From 1988 to 1994, the Congregation was able to add an addition on the main building which includes two meeting halls (upper and lower), a full kitchen facility, four bathrooms, space for the community food pantry, and some office space. The upper-level hall (known as the Friendship Hall) has adequate space for community meetings and events as well as dining provided by the adjacent kitchen. The lower-level space is currently used for storage and an office rental, but was used for several years by the Sullivan Day-Care Program until its demise in the early 2000s.

The Congregation is engaged in several service activities including support for the Kurn Hattin School, the Hundred Nights Shelter, and an annual assembly of about 175 disaster relief kits for Church World Service to distribute. Locally, the Church has operated a food pantry that has provided food for around 25 individuals per month.

In terms of Emergency Management, the Sullivan Church would provide emergency shelter because of its space, bath rooms (one of which has a shower), and kitchen facilities. Moreover, the septic system was designed to accommodate at least 150 people.

An example of such emergency use occurred during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Church's sanctuary and Friendship Hall were used for two Annual Town Meetings because there was no other facility in town where proper space between individuals could be maintained.

The Town's main interest in the Church is its facilities—community meeting spaces and emergency shelter. However, the maintenance of those facilities is in the hands of a private organization. Like other groups within our community, they have had difficulty recruiting new members and have an aging population. This raises the question of whether or not the Town should take over the facilities should the Congregation no longer have the ability to provide upkeep or dissolve altogether.

In the area of emergency management, it should be noted that the Church does not have an emergency generator. While the Sullivan Emergency Management Office and the Sullivan Fire Department have portable generators that can be used at the Church, it might be appropriate to install a more permanent facility. Obviously, the cost sharing of such a facility would have to be negotiated between the Town and the Church.

Another issue for the Town to consider is the historic nature of the facility. The building's classic New England church design is often featured in photographs and articles about our town. Moreover, it recently achieved the status of "historic building worthy of preservation" from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. This enables the possibility to apply for grants to aid in the upkeep of the facility.

## U.S. Post Office

The Sullivan Post Office is located on Centre Street in a building leased by the U.S. Postal Service. Currently, the Town Government does not support the facility in anyway. The post office is easily accessible from all parts of town. In addition to our Zip Code, the office also provides services for the Town of Nelson's Zip Code area. The facility is modern and kept up to date by the USPS. Like all rural post offices, it is subject to change as the needs of the USPS change. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that Sullivan will retain its post office for the near future.

## Recreation

Formal recreational activity in Sullivan has been limited. The community has had a number of recreation committees over the years that have organized events such as Old Home Day and community picnics. In addition, the Sullivan Conservation Commission has sponsored events and educational hikes. The current Recreation Committee has received consistent support from the Annual Town Meeting, but its activities were curtailed during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Their annual Christmas Pot Luck has since resumed. Jewett Park is maintained by the Town as a picnic and walking area, but gets little use. A recent logging and brush clearing operation there has greatly improved the facility.

There are many places in the Town where an individual can engage in "unorganized" recreation. Our road system has several loops for walking, biking, and jogging. These activities raise some safety concerns as there are no sidewalks or other dedicated areas for pedestrians.

There are numerous pieces of backland that are open to hunting, although property owners are placing more land off-limits. Fishing on our two ponds (Chapman and Bolster) is open to all since they are accessible to via public highways.

The largest pieces of conservation land are opened to the public. These include the two properties owned by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests between Gilsum Road and Great Brook, the Nature Conservancy Land which contains much of the Town's northeast corner, and the Winch Town Forest. All have hiking trails with maps available and contain many natural and historical sites. They also contain many of Sullivan's "special places" such as Otter Falls, Bolster Pond, and the Ellis Reservoir wetland.

# Goals and Recommendations

## Goals

1. Continue implementing policies and regulations that enhance our rural residential character.
2. Promote a community that has a balance between the inevitable growth of housing and the preservation of our open spaces, natural resources, and heritage.
3. Promote a governance structure that continues to rely on volunteers and paid volunteers but recognizes that full-time, salaried staff are essential for good operations and the preservation of institutional memory.
4. Promote the passage of ordinances and town meeting articles that will address housing issues and help the community find a balance between single-family houses and alternative designs.

## Recommendations

### Housing

1. The Planning Board should carefully and thoroughly undertake consideration of the possibility of designating a number of different zones or districts of varying lot sizes.
2. The Planning Board should reconsider the town's current cluster housing ordinance to encourage smaller lots to provide for more meaningful open space.
3. Developers should be required to abide by the cluster (or conservation) subdivision requirements unless they can demonstrate conclusively that a conventional subdivision is preferable.
4. Whenever suitable and possible, the Town, and especially the Planning Board, should urge developers seeking to build in Sullivan to consider the full range of

reasonable options open to them: retirement housing, elder housing, housing for single adults and for couples whose children have left home, and even some kinds of institutional housing, as well as low impact commercial and light industrial uses.

5. The Planning Board should carefully monitor developments on the legislative level that may cause us to abolish some of rules and regulations in the name of expanding New Hampshire's housing stock. This might include, the two-acre minimum, the amount of frontage required on a Class V highway, the number of studies we can require for large developments, the amount of time the Board will have to consider large proposals, etc.

## Economy

In terms of budgeting, the Town Government and the Sullivan School District should continue their policy of careful, needs based budgeting to ensure that expenditures are closely aligned with the community's ability to pay property taxes.

## Land Use

1. Investigate the feasibility of regulations to govern developments in areas prone to erosion and on steeply sloped land. Encourage housing developments that make use of cluster construction designed to preserve open space.
2. The Sullivan Planning Board and Board of Selectmen need to monitor changes in State land use regulations in order to keep Sullivan's ordinances and regulations in order to manage anticipated growth.

## Conservation

1. Through land use regulations, promote development patterns which protect Sullivan's important natural resources—wetlands, ground, and surface waters, geological sites, vegetative zones, animal habitats, and heritage sites.
2. Continue Sullivan's commitment to improving forestry practices.
3. Continue Sullivan's practice of setting aside money for land conservation—especially near the town's special places.

## Preservation

1. Consider a formal historical inventory of the Town to identify sites of importance.
2. Consider applying for State Landmark Site status for East Sullivan's mill village and/or the Four Corners.
3. Continue to support the Sullivan Town Archives.

## Town Departments and Services

1. Continue to support Sullivan's town services with carefully crafted budgets that meet our needs while keeping the property tax low enough to attract working- and middle-class families to our community.
2. Begin lobbying (in person or through organizations such as the NH Municipal Association) our representatives and senator to urge them to pass legislation to ensure equitable funding for education.
3. Consider a substantial increase in the fees that the town charges for services such as building permits, driveway permits, filing fees, and so forth.
4. Begin preparing for increased highway costs associated with the effects of climate change especially for sudden rain events (such as the May 29, 2012, thunderstorm).
5. Continue to perform timely revaluations to ensure a tax rate that is equitable across the community.
6. Consider contracting with an outside organization to have our regulations reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with current State law.
7. Hire a building and/or code enforcement officer to ensure equal enforcement of our rules and regulations.
8. Continue to support volunteering for town government positions, but recognize that we may have to hire administrators as our population ages and interest in serving on boards and commissions declines.
9. Improve communication between the Town Government and the community through as many sources as possible including continued support for *The Sullivan Community Newsletter,* for a user-friendly town website, and through postings on social media.
10. Continue support for capital funds to ensure timely purchases of equipment especially for the Fire Department, Highway Department, and repairs to our public buildings.
11. Continue to support our cultural resources such as Jewett Park, the Sullivan Public Library, etc.
12. Continue to support maintenance of our three town cemeteries and continue planning for future expansion of the Meeting House Cemetery when needed.
13. Begin forming a closer relationship between the Town and the United Congregational Church of Sullivan in order to ensure that this vital and historic facility can remain available for town use in the future should the Congregation dissolve.
14. Encourage community gatherings by using Jewett Park and town buildings.
15. Have committees such the Conservation Commission continue to develop, publish, and post brochures showing recreational trails in town.
16. Begin planning for Sullivan's 250th anniversary in 2037.