

# TOWN OF NELSON NH

## MASTER PLAN



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## VISION STATEMENT

Nelson, New Hampshire is a small town with big dreams. Since it was first settled in the late eighteenth century, Nelson has evolved from a wilderness settlement into a vibrant gem of a community. Nestled in New Hampshire's scenic Monadnock region, Nelson is dotted with beautiful lakes and ponds, and meandering trails that open to breathtaking vistas. Its picturesque nineteenth century town common is used for everything from sack races to concerts; from games of tag to tag sales.

But a town is an empty shell without its people, and Nelson is defined by its people. Much like the strong, stubborn, determined farmers of Nelson's past, today's residents maintain a fierce loyalty, and a reluctance to let "outsiders" do what can just as easily be done "by us." It doesn't matter if a resident is a native or a "flatlander"; Nelson has a way of changing even the most jaded cynic into an enthusiastic volunteer. This attitude has saved thousands of town dollars over the years, but it has served an even more vital function – it has made Nelson a community.

So, armed with the lessons of the past and the realities of the present, Nelson confidently presents the reader with our hopes and dreams for the future. Like the keystone of a bridge, Nelson's rural character forms the underpinning of our vision, with all other elements the interlocking building blocks that form the whole. With our vision of maintaining Nelson's rural character as the keystone, following are those building blocks:

**Sustain Nelson's vibrant community life** through events and activities that encourage social interaction, such as Contra dances, Old Home Week, ice cream socials, library forums, town cleanup day, and town meeting. In addition, encourage participation in organizations that promote volunteerism, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Nelson School, Nelson Town Band, town government, and the Friends of the Olivia Rodham Memorial Library.

**Preserve open space for wildlife and recreational purposes.** Support the efforts of the Nelson Conservation Commission, the Harris Center, the Monadnock Conservancy and landowners in the Monadnock region. Promote the concept of conservation easements among landowners, and maintain a list of local and regional conservation groups and agencies.

**Promote and protect Nelson's unique cultural environment.** Encourage support of and attendance at concerts sponsored by Monadnock Music, Apple Hill Chamber Players and contra dances and folk concerts organized by the Monadnock Folklore Society. In addition, support the continuation of Nelson School's music and art programs, and encourage local artists and musicians.

**Encourage, promote and use local businesses while maintaining Nelson's pastoral setting.** Support home-based businesses already operating in Nelson, and encourage small, non-polluting businesses to settle in town. Hire local businesses for town projects whenever feasible. Lobby internet providers to extend high speed internet coverage throughout Nelson as an incentive to businesses. Support the Nelson website, and offer businesses internet space on the website to help promote their products.

**Establish growth management goals that will protect Nelson from unrestricted growth, but will also enable people of varied economic means to live in Nelson.** If only the wealthy can afford to live in Nelson, the essence of its existence is gone. To maintain and encourage Nelson's economic diversity, alternative forms of development (on a limited basis) should be considered. In addition, to meet the requirements of New Hampshire legislation (HB1260), the Planning Board will submit a proposal to amend the town zoning laws to reflect the need for affordable workforce housing.

**Provide educational, cultural, recreational and social opportunities for children, families and individuals in the community.** Support the town library and encourage activities such as the speaker series hosted by the library trustees. Encourage volunteerism at the Nelson School and on local sports teams. Provide social opportunities for adults and senior citizens through luncheons, community suppers& public concerts.

**Maintain roads and town property in such a way that the needs of the town are met, yet do not**

**detract from the natural beauty of the town.** Preserve scenic nature of designated town roads, but make safety the highest priority. Similarly, maintain all town-owned buildings to meet state safety standards, but incorporate all architectural changes to reflect the rural setting in which the buildings are located.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Any New England town can rightly claim that its history is worth preserving, but few have the opportunity to actually make it happen. The Master Plan enables the town of Nelson to do just that: learn from the past to build a strong future.

Nelson's first Master Plan, called the Comprehensive Planning Program, was adopted in 1984. It opened with a brief history of the town, and went on to document trends of recent history, make projections and plans for the future, and establish a series of policies and goals designed to facilitate those plans. In some ways, much has happened to the town since 1984. But in other ways, remarkably little has changed, and folks seem to prefer it that way.

Nelson's ability to absorb the changes of the times while maintaining the essence of its unique character has been as much good luck as good planning. But there is another component: a keen awareness of history. History shows us how our community has worked in the past, and inspires us to maintain values that we recognize as important.

As the Planning Board set about creating this new master plan, it wanted to emphasize this history not because we want to live in the past, but because much of Nelson's past points to where we want to go in the future. However Nelson changes in the next twenty years, we hope that Nelson's future residents will be steered by the same spirit that has guided us thus far.

As Provided by RSA 674:2, the Primary Purpose of a Master Plan is:

*To envision the best and most appropriate future development of the community;*

*To aid the planning board in designing ordinances;*

*To guide the planning board in performance of its duties, to achieve principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource management;*

*To establish statements of land use and development principles;*

*To establish legal standing for implementation ordinances and other measures of the planning board.*

The Planning Board's job is to apply existing regulations, amending them as necessary, so that growth can occur in a manner consistent with the town's values. These values include a respect for open space, uninterrupted wildlife habitat, wetlands, and wilderness trails. They also include protecting the town from impacts (financial and otherwise) that could place undue burdens on the town's resources, and on the taxpayers who support these resources. It is incumbent upon the Planning Board, along with other town boards, to ensure that property values are not threatened by inappropriate residential, commercial or industrial development. But it is equally important that Nelson remains economically and socially diverse. Just as property values must be protected against decline, so must they, to whatever extent possible, be reasonable enough that they do not exclude young families and/or people of limited financial means from choosing or retaining Nelson as their home.

Nelson benefits from the active involvement of many citizens who cheerfully assume the various tasks that are necessary to keep the town going. Some are elected or appointed to their positions, but many others serve on committees, help youth organizations, or lend their assistance in countless, unseen ways. This is community life at its finest; it is Nelson life.

## **CREATING THE MASTER PLAN**

The process of updating the 1984 Master Plan began at a Planning Board meeting in October 2001. The Board was fortunate to have initial guidance from Carol Ogilvy of the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPA). As the plan developed, other staff members of SWRPA assisted us in a multitude of ways, and the Planning Board is grateful for their contributions.

At the onset we realized that we needed to involve a broader representation of the public in the process, so a committee was formed for this purpose. Committee membership was informal and changed over time, but the following individuals were active participants and deserve recognition:

Dave Birchenough	Rick Church	Jim Jarvela
Mike Blaudschun	Bud French	Val Van Meier
John Bunce	Vangie McCormick	
Tom Buttrick	Karen Tolman	

In the spring of 2005 a survey was mailed to all Nelson residents and landowners (See Appendix B for survey results). The mailing list was drawn from Nelson's *911* list, the town's most comprehensive source for address information. We mailed the survey to more than 350 addresses; distributed another 40 or so by hand, and made copies available in the Library and the Town Office. We sent one copy per address, but any member of the community who wished to participate was encouraged to do so by photocopying a blank survey. Because of that, the precise number of prospective respondents is unknown, but a fair estimate would be approximately 550 people. The Planning Board received 141 responses, which, in the world of surveys, is a phenomenal response rate. The survey questions and results are provided as an appendix to this document.

On July 12, 2005 the Planning Board held an informational hearing to present the results of the survey, and to solicit more input from the public. That meeting was attended by more than sixty people – again, an impressive turnout from a town the size of Nelson.

Over the next few months the Planning Board met with other Nelson town boards to solicit and fine-tune the contents of this plan. A review draft was completed in October 2007 and a final hearing was held on October 18, 2007.

The Planning Board came to realize that the process of refining and fine-tuning this document could go on indefinitely. But the Board was also acutely aware that an unpublished work-in-progress is of no value to the town, so this work, with all its imperfections and shortcomings, is at last available for community review. Thanks to the technical tools of our time, the process of revising this document will not be nearly as cumbersome, and we anticipate being able to do so at in a timely fashion.

## **THE NELSON PLANNING BOARD**

Troy Tucker, Margaret Schillemat, Hunt Smith, David Voymas

**Alternates** – Jennifer Fraser, Kathleen Vetter, Dawn Amer

**Past Members** – Sam Bouchie, Alicia Flammia, Elaine Giacomo, Rob Germeroth, Gordon Peery, Katharine Schillemat, Kathleen Vetter

Recording Secretary – Vangie McCormick

January 14, 2010

## **A LOOK AT NELSON'S PAST**

### ***Nelson Village***

The many hills and steep slopes that contribute to the beautiful natural environment of our town are the same geological features that led to the late settlement of Nelson. The fertile river valleys and flat lands

avored by early farmers were found elsewhere, so the hardy souls who ventured into the hills of Nelson did so only after more desirable land had already been settled.

The first meeting of the Proprietors of a tract of land then called Monadnock Number 6, (later named Nelson), was held in Portsmouth in December of 1751. An early sense of the necessary elements to establish a successful community was reflected in the stated intent of the meeting: settlement should be encouraged by offering land in a way deemed “most convenient for making good settlements, for the public good.”

In 1766, Breed Batchelder built a large timber-framed barn on his property and in the same year married Betsy Davis, establishing the first family with the birth of their daughter the following year. Within five years, several more settlers had arrived.

The first town meeting was held in February of 1772 at the house of Breed Batchelder. At that meeting, it was voted to raise a tax on each share for expenses of the Proprietors and use of the highways, which were little more than rough paths cut through the woods at that time. It was also voted to clear four of the ten acres reserved for public use to build a “Duty Meeting-House,” which was completed in June of 1773, serving the needs of both the church and town. It was built on the hill south of the present village, where the Nelson cemetery is now located.

In 1774, Governor John Wentworth, in the name of King George the Third, signed the Act of Incorporation filed by the town. Monadnock No. 6 thus became Packersfield. During this time, Thomas Packer had acquired a great amount of land, at one time owning almost the entire northwest quarter. He promised to give the town 500 acres if they honored him by naming the town Packersfield. However, Packer never gave the land to the town, so in 1814, the angry residents successfully petitioned to change the name of the town to Nelson.

By the early 1800’s, the rough frontier settlement had seen great changes. The population rapidly increased to 1076 by 1810. Records in the Nelson Archives show that as early as 1786 changes in land use determined the amount of taxes levied. Undeveloped land referred to as “wild land” was taxed at a different rate than three other categories of developed land use listed as meadows.

A village center developed around the large meetinghouse built on the hill (now the site of the Nelson Cemetery). Its generous proportions, 60 feet long and 45 feet wide, reflected the growing prosperity of the town. The old meetinghouse was sold and moved to the junction of Hardy Hill and Lead Mine roads where it served for a time as a village tavern and later as a woodworking shop and residence. The first schoolhouse, District No.1, was built across the road from the new meetinghouse. Just to the north was an early store run by Josiah Melville and his wife, Sally, across the street from their house. Scattered houses, a village pound and a granary completed the early village.

Locating the meetinghouse on the hill followed an early tradition based on a formerly necessary defensive posture, but it presented serious travel difficulties, since from every direction, access was uphill. During spring mud season, residents, horses, and carts were mired on the rutted slopes; ice and snow made winter traveling laborious. With defense no longer a consideration, the village center eventually shifted north to its present location at the base of the hill.

The Tolerance Act passed by the state legislature in 1819 gave further impetus toward the move down the hill. It ruled that Congregationalism would no longer be the established church and town taxes could no longer support the church. Other religious societies could now share the use of the meetinghouse based on their numbers. Nelson was slow to follow the policy of separation of church and state since most of the taxpayers were members of the Congregational Church. By 1840, however, they decided to build a new church in the developing village “on the plain,” as it was called. The large meetinghouse was no longer needed since it would only be used for town business, so it was decided to build a town hall in the new village. In 1846 the meetinghouse was taken apart and a smaller building was constructed from its frame to serve the needs of the town.

The new village had already seen the building of a large red brick schoolhouse in 1838 and the construction of an impressive two story brick store and hotel by Reuel Nims in 1839 on what is now the

town common. The Reuel Nims house was built nearby the same year. The popular store attracted shoppers for miles around until it was destroyed by fire in 1894. In 1852, a parsonage was built behind the church, adding to the several homes and a blacksmith shop already in the village.

Little has been added to the village since the mid-1800s except for changes that centered on the library. Although two earlier library societies had been formed, (one as early as 1797) the first library building was constructed in 1925 as a memorial to Olivia Rodham, a beloved naturalist and Nelson resident. Her many friends funded the design and construction of this memorial building in recognition of her great love of literature. It served for 70 years until the needs of a growing community required more interior space than was available. The new library was built in 1996 with careful consideration to the design of a structure that would maintain the sense of place of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century village. The original library became the home of an art gallery that featured local artists. It is now owned by a descendent of one the original donors.

A conflux of factors caused Nelson's rapid growth in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The potential for power from falling water (a by-product of the hilly topography) made textile mills possible. These mills replaced the home-handicraft and small woodenware mills that had grown up in the subsistence farm period in Munsonville, and along what was then the border between Nelson and Dublin (now Harrisville). However successful the mills, they could not stop the mass exodus by Nelson's discouraged farmers, who headed west in search of fertile soil. By 1840 there were 6,000 sheep in town, but Nelson's population had already begun a steady 100-year decline.

Land cleared initially for subsistence farming was now in such significant use for sheep grazing to supply the wool for the weaving mills that the forests became a thing of the past. The Keene Sentinel editorialized in 1847 that the coming of the railroad would be a wonderful advance for the area - not because it would allow regional manufacturers to enter the world marketplace, or to allow the import of manufactured goods, but because it would allow Keene to import coal (for heating and cooking) ". . . now that the wood is all gone."

The Civil War accelerated the depopulation of the town by exposing Nelson's young men to the outside world, and by expanding the profits of local textiles mills, notably in what is now Harrisville. The Harrisville mill owners, faced with competition from mills on or near the railroads, correctly identified train access as a necessity if they were to continue to operate successfully. They also needed to buy less expensive wool from the American West (and later Australia), where sheep could graze through the winter. The local farmers of Nelson and Dublin, faced with the potential loss of their wool market, resisted a requested tax subsidy from taxes to construct a railroad to service the mill. However, the state legislature (heavily influenced by railroad interests) allowed the creation of the town of Harrisville from a large part of Nelson and Dublin in 1870. For Nelson, it meant the loss of more than a third of its population and land area. Predictably, the first official act of the new town of Harrisville was to grant a subsidy to build a rail line.

The railroad also brought some unintended but positive consequences. Milk and sawn lumber, among other local products, could be sold in the greater Boston marketplace. Even more important, Boston residents could now take the train to stations in Eastview, Harrisville, and Chesham, to summer in the hills around Dublin Lake. This led shortly thereafter to these same "rusticators" purchasing land, building summer cottages, and employing the farm families who had lost their agricultural livelihood. Nelson Village, Lead Mine Road, Center Pond Road, Blueberry Lane, and the entire Nubanusit area were profoundly affected by this development.

About the same time, Silver Lake (known then as Breed's Pond) and Granite Lake were colonized in the summer by newly affluent (thanks in part to the railroad) Keene families, whose trip was half a day's buggy ride; by World War I and the arrival of the automobile, it took even less time. The "discovery" of Nelson by non-residents resulted in an increase in the sale of lakefront property and the creation of a new local industry: summer boarders. There was another consequence whose effects remain to this day. Because they lived "among the natives," the summer boarders interacted with them on a daily basis, and



developed strong (sometimes romantic) social relationships, and frequently settled here permanently. Their descendents are still among us.

By the Great Depression in 1929, Nelson's population had plunged to about 130 residents, but the economic dislocations of the 1930s brought some people back to town. Gradually improved roads and automobiles allowed, for the first time, the possibility of commuting to Keene for work. Summer people began to retire here, and the population slowly grew. By the end of World War II, Nelson's future was clear: it would be a residential community. The farms and the industry were all but gone. The tourist industry, though not dead, was significantly subdued.

*In 1967 a study was done at MIT concerning the connection between Nelson and American urban centers. The conclusion made it clear that Nelson was deeply connected with the urban fabric of the east coast, and even to some degree, to the entire country. The economy, the information flow, personal interconnections, and the demographic movements were more strongly than ever reflective of regional and national trends.*

The rate of change continues to accelerate exponentially. Inexpensive travel, higher disposable income, better and longer education, and especially the computer age and its most notable manifestation, the Internet, are having an impact that is to our time what the railroad was in the 1800's. The future of Nelson is just as unfathomable now as it was to earlier generations. But there are two big differences:

1. The pace of change allows us to be much more cognizant of the fact that the future will be different from the present (even if we don't know what it will be);
2. We know, as those in earlier times did not, that our fate as a community is largely a product of factors that are beyond our control. Flexibility in the face of momentous changes will be the key to a successful transition into the future.

Such knowledge allows us as a community to better prepare for that future than those who have gone before us. This document is one step in that process.

To protect the village from changes that would impact the visual approach to the historic center, generous Nelson residents and the Nelson Conservation Commission have placed conservation easements on land that surrounds the village. The village center was one of seven areas cited in Town of Nelson Priority Conservation Plan for protection as a recognized cultural resource containing an aesthetically pleasing collection of historic buildings.

### ***A Short History of Munsonville***

The village of Munsonville lies on the northern corner of Nelson. The village that has grown up around Granite Lake has the heaviest population density in the town of Nelson. Summer cottages and year-round residences surround the lake; throughout the summer, the village is busy with residents and "summer folk" enjoying recreational activities such as boating, swimming, and fishing.

For most of the twentieth century, recreation was the most attractive quality of Munsonville life.

However, Munsonville began as a center of industry in town. In 1814, a cotton mill opened at the outlet of what was then known as Munsonville Pond. In 1840, Frederick Taylor opened a chair factory and, in 1850, moved his business adjacent to the cotton mill. The dam at the outlet provided power for both mills. From 1840 to 1929, the factory continued to produce chairs, as well as baskets, under a variety of owners. The business moved to Keene in 1929 and the mill buildings fell into disrepair. While the dam, now owned by the Granite Lake Association, continues to serve the purpose of controlling the water level in Granite Lake, all that remains of the mills are stone foundations.

A number of summer camps sprang up around the shores of the lake, including a boy's camp near the Munsonville fire station and two camps on the Stoddard end of the lake. These camps no longer exist and the property is now residential. The center of activity in Munsonville for generations was the Munsonville Store and the post office. It was a sad night when the building burned in 1989; all that remains today is the Munsonville zip code (03457).

For many years, New Hampshire Route 9 passed through Munsonville along the southeastern shore of Granite Lake. In the 1990's, the long-awaited bypass was constructed, diverting traffic away from the lake. The former state road is now known as Granite Lake Road. The state maintains the road in the summer months and the town is responsible for winter maintenance. With the advent of the Route 9 bypass, Munsonville became a quieter place, and Granite Lake Road offers a safe, peaceful walking and running route for many residents.

Today, the village of Munsonville is a companionable mix of year-round and summer residents, all of whom regularly avail themselves of Granite Lake's many recreational opportunities. The town supports the mission of the Granite Lake Association: to preserve the quality of life around Granite Lake. This mission includes the Lake Host program to keep the lake free of invasive species of plants and animals, regular testing of the lake's water quality, and encouraging property owners around and near the lake to take an active role in preserving the natural resources in and around Granite Lake.

The Granite Lake District is a separate entity with the authority to tax landowners within its borders. Nelson landowners in the Granite Lake District are assessed taxes in addition to town taxes to pay for the maintenance of the dam and other district expenses.

*Acknowledgement to "A Brief History of Granite Lake: Munsonville/Stoddard, NH" compiled by Thomas Jarvela, July 1999*

## **POPULATION**

*Compiled 2005*

The histories included in this Master Plan have provided information and insight into population trends. Following is census data from each decade:

Year	Population
1773	117
1775	186
1783	511
1786	567
1790	721
1800	977
1810	1076
1820	907
1830	875
1840	835
1850	750
1860	699
1870	744
1880	438
1890	332
1900	295
1910	231
1920	171
1930	162
1940	282
1950	231
1960	222
1970	304
1980	442
1990	535
2000	634
2010 Proj.	680
2015 Proj.	720
2020 Proj.	760
2025 Proj.	790

A Population Problem

In its early years, Nelson (then Packersfield) had to post a bond of 1,000 pounds and request an extension to fulfill its Charter obligation of having a certain number of settlers.

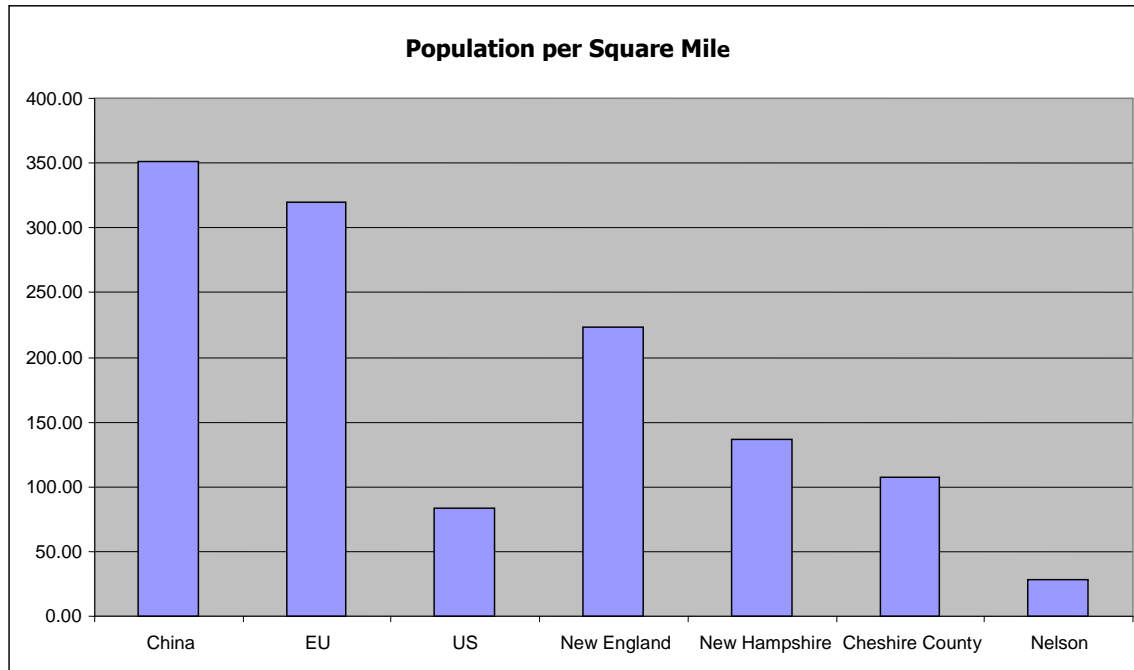
← The formation of Harrisville contributed to this significant drop in population.

**Tracking 210 Years of Nelson's Population**

With all due respect to those who lived in New England prior to the arrival of the Europeans, there is no known evidence of any Native American settlements in what is now Nelson. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the presence of those who roamed, fished, and hunted here, and wish we knew more about them.

## Putting It into Perspective

	China	European Union	United States	New England	New Hampshire	Cheshire County	Nelson
<b>Population</b>	1,300,000,000	456,000,000	295,000,000	14,205,480	1,275,000	75,965	660
<b>Sq. Miles</b>	3,696,100	1,425,000	3,537,441	63,474	9,351	707	23
<b>Density</b>	351.72	320.00	83.39	223.80	136.35	107.45	28.33



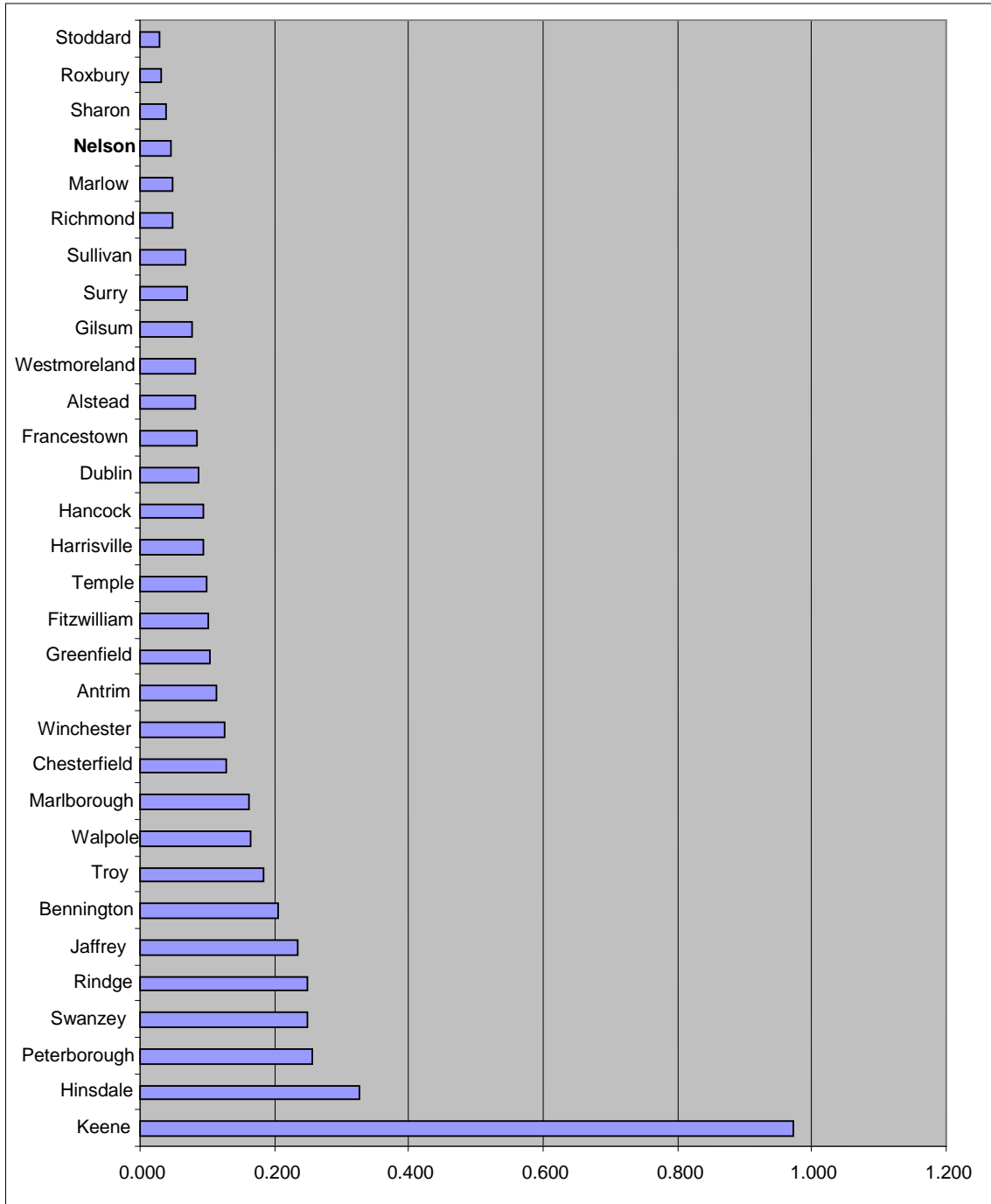
## Population Density

Nelson has a population density of .047861 people per acre, or 28.38 people per square mile. Nelson is one of the most sparsely populated towns in Southwestern New Hampshire; only Sharon, Roxbury and Stoddard have a lower density of population.

Having a low population density creates challenges when it comes to municipal services, as there is a base level of those services that is required. Increased requirements from the State and Federal government add to the workload of town government in ways that are not always related to the number of residents in

town.

The following chart compares Nelson's population density to other towns in the area; the bottom axis is population per acre.



## ***Population Growth in Cheshire County***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Population Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1970	52,364	-	-
1971	53,600	1,236	2.4
1972	54,900	1,300	2.4
1973	56,000	1,100	2
1974	57,200	1,200	2.1
1975	58,100	900	1.6
1976	58,700	600	1
1977	59,800	1,100	1.9
1978	61,100	1,300	2.2
1979	62,200	1,100	1.8
1980	62,116	-84	-0.1
1981	62,653	537	0.9
1982	63,056	403	0.6
1983	63,114	58	0.1
1984	63,972	858	1.4
1985	64,602	630	1
1986	66,295	1,693	2.6
1987	68,066	1,771	2.7
1988	69,393	1,327	1.9
1989	70,104	711	1
1990	70,121	17	0
1991	70,657	536	0.8
1992	70,896	239	0.3
1993	71,319	423	0.6
1994	71,124	-195	-0.3
1995	71,540	416	0.6
1996	72,203	663	0.9
1997	72,805	602	0.8
1998	73,144	339	0.5
1999	73,447	303	0.4
2000	73,825	378	0.5
2001	74,398	573	0.8
2002	74,938	540	0.7
2003	75,965	1,027	1.4

From 1970 through 1979, Cheshire County experienced fairly steady growth. The year 1980 saw an actual reduction in population, and growth then continued only modestly until 1986, when there was another little surge through 1988. While growth has been steady since then, it remained under 1% per year until 2003.

More recently, while some towns in Cheshire County (as well as neighboring towns in Hillsborough County) have experienced intense growth, most have not. It is wise to study what is going on in towns where rapid growth is occurring, both to learn from their experience they, and to regard it as an indicator for potential spillover into other towns.

Multiple factors ranging from local to global will influence exactly how fast the region grows. It is not possible to know exactly what will happen, but by becoming more educated about planning, zoning, and growth issues, town officials can endeavor to provide the town with the regulatory resources necessary to manage growth in the best possible

## Comparative Population: Cheshire County

Historical				Projected (U.S. Census)			Projected Change from 2005 - 2015	
	1980	1990	2000	2005 (proj)	2010 (proj)	2015 (proj)	Quantity	%
Alstead				2,050	2,150	2,290	240	12%
Antrim				2,570	2,670	2,760	190	7%
Bennington				1,490	1,590	1,670	180	12%
Chesterfield				3,750	3,940	4,190	440	12%
Dublin				1,550	1,620	1,720	170	11%
Fitzwilliam				2,270	2,370	2,510	240	11%
Francestown				1,610	1,740	1,850	240	15%
Gilsum				820	860	910	90	11%
Greenfield				1,760	1,880	1,980	220	13%
Hancock				1,790	1,900	1,990	200	11%
Harrisville				1,130	1,190	1,270	140	12%
Hinsdale				4,330	4,520	4,780	450	10%
Jaffrey				5,770	6,030	6,390	620	11%
Keene				23,040	23,490	24,110	1,070	5%
Marlborough				2,100	2,200	2,310	210	10%
Marlow				790	830	890	100	13%
<b>Nelson</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>11%</b>
Peterborough				6,250	6,630	6,940	690	11%
Richmond				1,150	1,210	1,300	150	13%
Rindge				5,900	6,210	6,650	750	13%
Roxbury				250	260	280	30	12%
Sharon				390	410	430	40	10%
Stoddard				960	1,000	1,060	100	10%
Sullivan				790	830	880	90	11%
Surry				710	740	780	70	10%
Swanzey				7,190	7,530	8,000	810	11%
Temple				1,420	1,510	1,590	170	12%
Troy				2,060	2,140	2,240	180	9%
Walpole				3,770	3,950	4,180	410	11%
Westmoreland				1,880	1,960	2,080	200	11%
Winchester				4,390	4,590	4,860	470	11%

**Average >11%**

### Building Permits for New Dwelling Units

This chart shows new dwelling unit building permits provided for each year from 1990 through 2003. The second column from the right shows the current (as of 2003) total number of dwelling units in each town, and the last column shows what percentage of that total is represented by the 1990 – 2003 cumulative number (the third column from the right).

Town	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total new dwelling units 1990 - 2003	Total Dwelling Units as of 2003	% of total dwellings represented by growth since 1990
Alstead	9	9	8	5	6	1	7	4	12	2	7	6	12	4	92	970	9%
Antrim	12	1	0	5	0	0	3	1	6	10	10	4	32	21	105	1227	9%
Bennington	4	7	4	8	2	1	0	1	4	2	3	11	3	6	56	658	9%
Chesterfield	19	20	17	16	21	17	13	9	18	21	20	13	41	36	281	1742	16%
Dublin	12	3	6	3	6	4	5	5	13	4	3	11	9	15	64	724	9%
Fitzwilliam	11	5	2	6	6	6	6	13	2	15	13	21	18	15	85	1141	7%
Francestown	3	2	3	6	4	5	3	7	3	19	16	9	9	11	100	701	14%
Gilsum	3	0	2	0	1	2	4	1	1	3	4	4	2	1	28	354	8%
Greenfield	3	5	7	2	2	2	2	4	7	8	11	5	11	9	78	676	12%
Hancock	8	2	6	4	3	4	6	9	5	8	7	14	14	4	94	853	11%
Harrisville	6	0	9	3	6	3	5	7	3	10	5	8	5	8	78	724	11%
Hinsdale	15	3	11	11	10	13	25	27	17	12	24	20	10	27	225	1795	13%
Jaffrey	7	10	7	4	10	-10	9	2	12	19	19	17	39	46	191	2473	8%
Keene	111	0	41	5	13	17	23	59	52	95	45	21	28	32	542	9421	6%
Marlborough	5	15	6	15	8	8	2	6	2	8	7	10	11	5	108	929	12%
Marlow	4	1	1	3	4	2	3	1	5	4	6	7	2	4	47	415	11%
<b>Nelson</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>15%</b>
Peterborough	34	4	28	6	123	10	13	10	15	67	17	25	37	39	428	2627	16%
Richmond	10	6	9	6	3	5	5	5	12	13	7	4	9	7	101	459	22%
Rindge	24	18	20	13	16	9	17	13	20	38	38	38	57	31	352	2027	17%
Roxbury	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1			9	92	10%
Sharon	7	0	3	1	1	1	4	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	30	168	18%
Stoddard	9	10	6	6	7	5	16	7	5	17	12	10	12	20	142	993	14%
Sullivan	5	1	3	1	0	0	2	4	6	1	4		2	-2	27	303	9%
Surry	6	1	1	7	3	0	0	1	-1	4	4	9	12	5	52	312	17%
Swanzey	43	17	41	55	37	23	18	42	17	17	24	25	28	52	439	2957	15%
Temple	6	9	6	2	2	2	1	7	4	6	17	11	19	7	99	519	19%
Troy	0	11	3	4	2	3	2	0	3	6	4	4	10	14	66	807	8%
Walpole	10	7	13	10	5	13	15	13	10	21	7	13	14	15	166	1641	10%
Westmoreland	8	9	4	7	11	5	3	6	3	6	10	6	13	5	96	652	15%
Winchester	25	11	15	13	0	25	19	21	14	12	20	10	11	33	229	1815	13%
<b>Average</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>144.3</b>	<b>1309</b>	<b>12%</b>



## ***Population Breakout for Nelson***

The 2000 Census showed Nelson with a population of 634 (it is believed to be 660 for 2007). The Census breaks out the demographic data into fine detail (information available at <http://www.census.gov>). A simple breakout is as follows:

<b>Census Figures</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>2000</b>
Children under 5	25	44
Children 5 – 17	103	128
Adults 18 – 64	263	394
Adults 65 and older	51	68
Total Population	442	634

### **Children**

In 1980 school-aged children comprised 23% of the population; in 2007 the school-aged group has declined slightly to 20% of the total population. However, there is a general decline in the student population due to aging baby boomers who have passed their childbearing years. Therefore it is quite possible that even this modest increase in student population will not occur, at least as a result of general population increase. Just as this decline is driven by regional and national trends, so any changes to the current projections will be influenced as well.

### **Senior Citizens**

At the other end of the age spectrum are Nelson's senior citizens. Following national trends, it is safe to assume that the percentage of our town's population in this category will increase. While many people in this category are expected to remain working, and to remain in good physical condition well past the age of 65, it is not unreasonable to assume that the number of people who have limited mobility, and who have need of some level of assisted living and medical services, will increase.

In the Master Plan survey, questions were asked about the importance of assisted living facilities, and also about exploring organized transportation to Keene (or other locations) for those who were unable or preferred not to drive. Neither of these questions was met with overwhelming enthusiasm, but the Planning Board believes that as the general population of the town ages, these will re-emerge as important considerations.

### **Working Folks**

Most of New Hampshire's recent population growth is a result of people moving here from other states. This is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, at the Master Plan informational hearing on July 12, 2005, we determined through a show of hands that a significant number of current Nelson residents moved to New Hampshire from other states, and in fact only a small percentage of current Nelson residents were actually born here.

### **The Future**

*Many of Nelson's working residents commute to Keene to attend their daily jobs, as opposed to working at home or commuting to another population center. Since Keene's economy is expected to remain strong (to the extent that such things can be predicted), there is no reason to assume that Nelson will be exempt from the area's continued demand for housing. This is addressed from different perspectives in other sections, but strictly in terms of population growth, several assumptions can be made:*

1. *The population of Nelson will continue to grow, quite probably as the Census data predict.*
2. *The projected rate of growth is neither unreasonable nor, with proper planning, unmanageable.*

## **WATER AND LAND**

The 1984 Master Plan stated that Nelson was comprised of 15,168 acres, but more reliable information now puts this number at 14,898.2 acres. This corresponds with a figure of 23.3 square miles.

### ***The Water - Lakes and Ponds***

Nelson’s lakes and ponds provide countless opportunities for boating and other water sports, fishing, swimming and simply viewing.

Motorized boats are allowed only on Lake Nubanusit, Granite Lake, and Silver Lake. There is a public boat landing for Granite Lake along the southwest side of Granite Lake Road, not far from the center of Munsonville. The Center Pond boat landing is off Center Pond Road, about a half mile from Nelson Village. The public landings for Silver Lake and Lake Nubanusit are in Harrisville and Hancock, respectively. There is no official public access to the other bodies of water in Nelson.

At one time Nelson had the opportunity to purchase land on Granite Lake for a public beach, but the town voted not to pursue it. Since then, although the subject of a public beach has been frequently brought up, there are presently no financially feasible options. Given the current cost of lakefront property, plus maintenance and liability issues involved with a public beach, this would appear to be a remote possibility. However, the Selectmen and the Planning Board are aware of the strong interest in the matter, and will give serious consideration to any opportunities that emerge.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>Acres in Nelson</b>	<b>Shared with . . .</b>
Center Pond	31.3	31.3	
Granite Lake	238.2	103.9	Stoddard
Nubanusit Lake	722.5	348.5	Hancock
Rye Pond	13.8	7.8	Antrim
Silver Lake	332.3	107.4	Harrisville
Spoonwood Pond	166.6	166.6	
Tolman Pond	39.7	39.7	
Woodward Pond	137.2	23.6	Roxbury

Nelson’s largest bodies of water are subject to the standards of the Shoreland Protection Act (SPA) (RSA 483-B). Per these regulations, the town may adopt more stringent standards. As of 2008, Nelson’s Zoning Ordinance is stricter on three points:

- The setback of a primary structure from the Reference Line is 100 feet (the SPA requires 50 feet).
- The setback of an accessory structure from the Reference Line is 25 feet (the SPA requires 20 feet).
- 
- The amount of shoreline required for a single dwelling unit is 200 feet on Lake Nubanusit (SPA and all other lakes are 150 feet).

### **The Future**

*The Planning Board intends to work in coordination with the Nelson Conservation Commission, Southwest Region Planning Commission, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service, the Harris Center for Conservation Education, the Monadnock Conservancy, and Nelson landowners:*

*Achieve and maintain awareness of regulations, policies, environmental guidelines, and other issues for the purpose of regularly examining and, where appropriate, revising the Nelson Zoning Ordinance so that it reflects Best Practices in regards to lakes and ponds.*

*Determine if there are appropriate zoning regulations that could have a positive impact on the protection of bodies of water not covered under the Shoreland Protection Act.*

*Develop educational outreach materials that will allow Nelson residents to be more informed about our lakes and ponds.*

*Work with the Nelson Elementary School to increase student awareness of the lakes and ponds of Nelson.*

## **The Land**

### **Rocks and Hills**

If one had to describe Nelson in the simplest terms, it would be “rocks and hills.” Ironically, Nelson’s first settlers found the land quite hospitable. Dense layers of humus covered the virgin forest floor, and when the land was cleared it provided a few seasons of decent farming. But the absence of an annual buildup of fallen leaves allowed the frost to penetrate more deeply into the ground, pushing up boulders buried for millennia; the quickly eroding soil made farming harder. Raising sheep on the rugged terrain sustained farmers for a few more generations, but as the farms were abandoned, homesteads were quickly overtaken by new forest. Today we only have the cellar holes to remind us of this era.

### **Forests**

With the exception of fields used primarily for growing hay, Nelson’s rocky hills are now covered with a variety of trees: oak, maple, cherry, ash, birch, beech, and to lesser degree, poplar. Pines and spruces are the primary evergreens, though there are also hemlocks and tamaracks. Sprinkled among the long-overgrown fields are ancient apple trees, usually found near old cellar holes – a testament to Nelson’s long-departed farming community.

In recent years there have been two or three large logging operations in Nelson resulting in the establishment of fields. Other smaller logging operations have been conducted either for the purpose of creating small open areas, or selective cutting for the economic benefit of timber harvest, generally in keeping with the practices of good forestry management.

The forests also serve an invaluable function as a wildlife habitat for a large and diverse group of animals.

New home building will result in a modest reduction of forest area throughout the town, but there are few areas where it would be economically practical to conduct a major logging operation.

### **Agriculture**

Many beautiful fields in Nelson are used for growing hay and/or grazing sheep; several have been created/reclaimed just over the past 20 years. Sheep farming in Nelson today is not highly profitable, but the sheep serve a useful purpose in keeping land open, and occasionally the honored spot at the Sunday dinner table. There is some market for meat, but little for wool. Interspersed throughout the countryside are also horses, chickens, llamas, and rabbits, and perhaps a few other critters we don’t know about, but most are ancillary to other household activities and do not represent significant agricultural enterprise.

## Current Use

According to the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extensive Service's Overview of Current Use Assessment (RSA 79-A), the purpose of current use assessments is to, "Preserve open space – a property tax strategy to help landowners keep their open space undeveloped. The basic requirements are as follows:

- Parcel must be at least 10 acres in size or provide \$2500 in annual agricultural or horticultural products (this includes farm land, forest land, and unproductive land or any combination);
- Wetlands do not have a minimum acreage requirement, but may have an optional 100 foot buffer that is unimproved and in a natural state;
- Can sell or subdivide without penalty (if parcels are still at least 10 acres in size or meet other criteria);
- Encumbrance remains with land, no matter who owns it

Applications for changing property over to current use assessment are accepted or denied by each town, and no application is accepted after the tax rate has been set in town for that year. It is recommended that property owners submit applications by April 15 to ensure that the change is filed with the registry of deeds in a timely fashion, so that the owner can take advantage of the tax break for the current year. As of 2005, the following current use ranges were in place (Note: This is before the equalization ratio is applied):

**Farm Land:** \$25-\$425 per acre

**Forest Land:** Varies by grade, location and site quality of wood, and if the property is under stewardship as a Certified Tree Farm

	<b>With Stewardship</b>	<b>Without Stewardship</b>
White Pine	\$73 - \$130/acre	\$126 - \$191/acre
Hardwood	\$15 - \$44/acre	\$62 - \$94/acre
All Other	\$49 - \$94/acre	\$99 - \$150/acre

**Unproductive Land** (Including Wetland): \$15/acre. Unproductive land is defined as land that is incapable of producing a farm or forest crop.

In Nelson, more than 150 landowners have a total of 10,598.63 acres in current use. Land in current use cannot be developed unless it is taken out of current use.

Landowners who would like a complete set of current use guidelines can contact the Nelson town office or the NH department of Revenue Administration at 271-2687. It is also available at the Department of Revenue Administration website at HYPERLINK "http://www.nh.gov/revenue" [www.nh.gov/revenue](http://www.nh.gov/revenue) or at HYPERLINK "http://www.nh.gov/revenue/currentuse/currentuse.htm" <http://www.nh.gov/revenue/currentuse/currentuse.htm>.

## **The Future**

*The Planning Board intends to work in coordination with the Conservation Commission, Southwest Region Planning Commission, New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Services, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the Harris Center for Conservation Education, the Monadnock Conservancy, Nelson landowners, and other appropriate organizations or agencies to:*

- *Explore opportunities to preserve open fields for agricultural purposes through the use of conservation easements or other methods, and to encourage, where feasible, the responsible use of open fields for the economic benefit of the community and the landowner;*

- *Explore opportunities to use open areas for the responsible implementation of energy-producing facilities such as wind farms and solar collection stations;*
- *Encourage ongoing community-oriented educational opportunities and discussions, with a view toward developing and maintaining Best Practices in land and resource management.*

## **THE PEOPLE**

### ***Recreational and Youth Opportunities***

In addition to the bodies of water and trails already mentioned, Nelson offers a modest assortment of other recreational opportunities. Behind the town barn off Old Stoddard Road are two baseball fields. This land had been generously donated to the town some years earlier by Steve and Debbie Bosworth. The original field was built in the 1990's by local residents to accommodate the future big leaguers in the town. It perfectly suited the needs of the younger ball players, but did not meet the size requirements for the older players.

While it is not very big, it is important to note that the Town Common serves as an important recreational area. Volleyball games are held there, and summer evenings will often find young people playing tag or other games that involve running around and having fun.

There is an excellent playground at the Nelson School that is frequently used by children during non-school hours. Constructed by the townspeople following the completion of the school addition, it features swings, climbing structures and a slide for younger children. The playground also includes a basketball court, which makes it a draw for kids who might have outgrown some of the other features of the playground.

### **The Trail to Eagle – Nelson's Proud Boy Scouting History**

The Boy Scouts of America has played an active role in Nelson life for many years. With its mission of promoting community service and leadership in its members, Nelson Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts have contributed much to the fabric of our community. Civic activities for Pack 530 and Troop 530 have included town cleanup days, cleaning the sacristy of the Nelson Congregational Church (their chartered organization), raking leaves in the Nelson Cemetery, and collecting food for the needy through BSA's annual *Scouting for Food* program.

The highest achievement that a Boy Scout can attain is the Eagle Badge, which involves considerable dedication, achievement and leadership. Space constraints limit full descriptions of each Eagle project, but following is a list, in chronological order, of Nelson Boy Scouts (not necessarily from Troop 530) who have earned the coveted Eagle Badge from 1987 to 2007:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Project Description</b>
Jason Walter	1992	Built conservation trail behind Nelson School
Jacob Jarvela	1994	Restored fallen headstones in Nelson cemetery
Jeffrey Walter	1995	Designed and constructed new street signs for town
Daniel Tuttle		
Christopher Tuttle		
Christopher Blaudschun	1995	Constructed Bambino baseball field behind Town Barn
Paul Warner	1997	Built bleachers for Nelson baseball field

Michael Giacomo	2000	Designed and built wooden signs welcoming visitors to Nelson
Thomas Jarvela	2000	Developed information booklet about Granite Lake
Andrew Tuttle	2001	Upgraded Monadnock-Sunapee Trail
Gabriel Giacomo	2001	Built new voting booths for the town
Poul Schillemat	2002	Conducted census of Munsonville Cemetery
Brandon Schillemat	2002	Built nature trail behind Nelson School
Justin Derby	2003	Rebuilt roof over back entrance to Nelson Congregational Church
Ryan Schillemat	2003	Constructed path to “Black Top” recreational land in Nelson
Christopher Giacomo	2004	Rebuilt sagging mailbox stand in Nelson Village
Tyler Brnger	2005	Installed and landscaped granite sign for Nelson School
Daniel Bower	2006	Upgraded recycling area behind Nelson Congregational Church
Garrett Brnger	2006	Built workout stations around Granite Lake
Alex Mednick	2007	Built playhouse/storage area for Harrisville Children’s Center
Daniel Bower	2007	Rebuilt recycling bins behind Nelson Congregational Church
Jonathan Bower	2009	Painted Melville Hall of Nelson Congregational Church
Ian Frederick	2009	Constructed bridges and rustic benches at the Harris Center
Peder Schillemat	2010	Developed a location guide for Munsonville Cemetery

## Girl Scouts

For many years, Nelson had an active Brownie and Girl Scout program led by a number of energetic, dedicated leaders. The program is currently inactive, but Girl Scout Troop 1856 is just waiting for the right leaders to step forward and reinvigorate this vital program for Nelson’s girls.

## 4-H

For more than 20 years, Joan Warner and other people guided Nelson and Stoddard children as they eagerly learned about animal care, sewing, arts, crafts and other skills through the 4-H program. Each summer, the members proudly displayed their work at the Cheshire Fair, and they almost always returned home with awards.

## NSS Baseball

From the 1980’s until the mid-1990’s, the small baseball field behind the town barn echoed with the sounds of children’s voices, ringing bats, cheers and groans. Nelson children, teamed with children from Sullivan and Stoddard (hence the NSS), played baseball from the cold days of late April until the end of June. The players were divided into three age groups: first graders, Junior Bambino, and Senior Bambino. Competing against teams from Harrisville, Marlborough, Troy, Fitzwilliam and Dublin, the NSS players usually acquitted themselves admirably. Virtually every Nelson child born between the years of 1978 and 1990 played on an NSS team for at least one season, and most of their parents participated in some capacity.

In later years, a girls' softball team was formed, still under the aegis of NSS. However, as is often the case with small towns, the leadership of both the baseball and softball teams gravitated away from Nelson and into Sullivan and Stoddard. In addition, the falling school populations in all three towns decreased the pool of eligible players. The final blow occurred when the head of NSS Bambino team decided to move the baseball team into the far more competitive Keene league. The majority of the players, playing for the love of baseball and the camaraderie, decided to opt out of the new, aggressive NSS team. Today, the small field and a Senior Bambino field sit virtually unused, waiting for another generation of eager children and parents to experience the joys of baseball on a spring evening.

## ***Nelson Conservation Commission***

The Nelson Conservation Commission is a group of dedicated, knowledgeable residents who care deeply about preserving the natural beauty of the town. Nelson is also fortunate to have as a friend and neighbor the Harris Center for Conservation Education, based in Hancock. Over the years the Harris Center has either acquired or holds conservation easements on 2599 acres of land in Nelson, which are now permanently protected against development. This property is located in the eastern section of town, and includes land around Spoonwood Pond. In addition, the Monadnock Conservancy has acquired conservation easements on nearly 490 acres in Nelson.

A grant from the Wright Fund, the Commission undertook a natural resource inventory of the town, which was summarized in the *Town of Nelson Priority Conservation Plan*, completed in 2001 by Dr. Rick Van de Poll from Antioch New England Graduate School. The study gathered basic information including geological, wetlands, soils, aquifers, surface water data, as well as the location of priority conservation areas and existing easements. Using an attribute model developed by Dr. Van de Poll, seven ecologically significant areas were chosen to determine their relative conservation value. The two following examples demonstrate how the Conservation Commission has already taken action to preserve these areas:

### **Nelson Village**

The Nelson village center is noted for its cultural significance as a largely mid-nineteenth century village. As a means of protecting the village, the Commission worked with landowners to surround the village with conservation easements so that all approaches to the village would be a natural environment. Thanks to conservation easements donated by landowners and the town, plus land purchased by the Commission, the village project is now complete.

### **The Great Meadow**

The Great Meadow is the largest emergent wetland with the highest yield aquifer in Nelson. Because it is largely undisturbed by human activities, it supports wildlife habitat in an unspoiled, scenic area. To help protect this special place, three properties bordering the wetland complex have been placed under easement, and the Conservation Commission continues to explore the best means of protecting this important wetland.

### **Past Accomplishments**

When proposals were presented for the construction of a housing development on the 225-acre Hammond property on Apple Hill Road in 2003, the Conservation Commission took action. Besides overwhelming Nelson's ability to meet the demand for services including police, fire, and schools, the unspoiled Black Brook wetland and watershed in the rear of the property would have been seriously impacted. After months of negotiations and a successful fund drive, the Conservation Commission purchased a

conservation easement that protected 165 acres (including the wetland) while allowing only four houses to be built along the road.

### **Town of Nelson Priority Conservation Plan**

The Town of Nelson Priority Conservation Plan is on file in the Olivia Rodham Library, and may be perused for more detailed information about Nelson's Conservation Plan. The Planning Board will use this document for reference and as a guideline when considering the evolution of the Master Plan, and when considering subdivision proposals.

### **The Future**

*The 2005 Master Plan survey indicated strong community interest in preserving open space. About 75% of respondents also indicated that the town should support open space endeavors. This can be done through the continued efforts of the Conservation Commission, but it also suggests that well thought out warrant articles and other proposals concerning preservation of open space should be given encouragement by the Selectmen.*

*The current Nelson Zoning Ordinance has provisions for alternative development and also the development of back lots that encourage the creation of larger lots that cannot be further subdivided. The Planning Board will continue to look at ways in which the Zoning Ordinance can be used as a tool toward achieving this end.*

## **TOWN DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Overview***

As Nelson's adult population grows and the school population decreases, many residents voice concern that young families cannot afford to move to Nelson. Another worry is that our senior citizens on fixed incomes will eventually be forced to sell their houses and move elsewhere. These are legitimate concerns that the Planning and Zoning Boards recognize.

According to current Nelson zoning regulations, the minimum lot size that can be created, and upon which a house can be built, is two acres. A house that already exists on a non-conforming lot may be modified or replaced as long as it does not exceed the footprint of the original structure. Lots must also have a minimum of 200 feet of road frontage unless they are five acres or more, at which point a sliding scale goes into effect permitting less frontage for increased acreage, to the point of 50 feet of road frontage being acceptable for a lot of 25 acres or larger. Lots created under this town regulation are permitted only one dwelling unit, and the setback of the dwelling unit from the road is increased as the required road frontage is reduced. The purpose is to accommodate back-land development, and to provide creative alternatives for development that otherwise might result in a less desirable plan.

The Zoning Ordinances also allow for alternative development, which resembles what is often referred to as Cluster Development. This permits lots of less than two acres to be created, provided that a minimum of two acres per dwelling unit is set aside and held in common by the owners of the lots.

The most densely populated area in Nelson is around Granite Lake, where the majority of house lots are quite small. These lots were created prior to the two-acre minimum lot size requirement. While there are plenty of houses elsewhere in town that were also built prior to this regulation, most of them are on larger lots, and the lots upon which they sit cannot be subdivided to less than the two-acre minimum.

Furthermore, if they are "grandfathered" structures on lots of less than two acres, they tend to be adjacent to larger lots, so there is less density in the general area.

Looking to the future, Nelson will need to decide whether to designate certain areas of town as having



larger or smaller lot-size requirements. The consequence of increasing minimum lot size will be a shortage of land available for new home construction by young families and/or people with low to moderate incomes. This would have a significant impact on the social fabric of the town, and could reduce the number of children in the community to the point that maintaining the Nelson School would not be economically viable. Conversely, creating a substantial area where smaller lot sizes are permitted could result in rapid growth and a potentially unmanageable demand on various town services, including the school.

The Planning Board will continue to explore various scenarios, with the goal of finding a balanced approach to development that will allow Nelson to absorb its reasonable share of the growth occurring in the region and strive to address the housing needs of young families and senior citizens while preserving its unique, economically diverse social fabric. At the same time, the Board will continue to focus on preserving significant areas of undeveloped space. These challenges face many rural New Hampshire communities, and the Nelson Planning Board will continue sharing information, ideas, and resources with those communities.

### **The Future**

*To date the only use of alternate development is the Lehi Lane property, where cluster homes sharing a common road and common conserved property behind them, was approved. The Planning Board believes that this is a good concept, but will be examining the language and implications of the legislation to ensure that it most effectively serve the interests of the town, and in particular, as a device for the preservation of open space.*

*In addition, the town will immediately take steps to insure that it remains in compliance with the workforce housing requirements as outlined in RSA 674:58-61.*

## **Growth Management**

Growth management is one of the major challenges faced by our town. The Planning Board recognizes that this is a complex subject, and that such things as Growth Management Ordinances, Growth Management Plans, or Impact Fee Plans can have unintended consequences.

The Planning Board is fortunate to have numerous resources available through the state and other organizations, much of which are available on the Internet. We welcome suggestions of resources that the public wishes to bring to our attention.

### **The Future**

*The Master Plan survey of 2005 showed that 78% of respondents favored some kind of growth management. About 60% favored restricting building permits and 40% supported managing growth through increasing minimum lot size.*

*The creation of a Master Plan is a prerequisite to a Capital Improvements Plan, which in turn is a prerequisite to either a Growth Management Plan or an Impact Fee Plan. By having this Master Plan in place, the Planning Board will be in a position to pursue those options, but at this time the Board has not determined which (if either) plan is most appropriate for Nelson.*

*It is noted that the State parameters for a Growth Management Plan provide limits for how restrictive a building permit quota can be, and that Nelson has never approached those limits. In other words, had a Growth Management Plan been in effect during the last decade, it would not have reduced the number of houses that were built.*

*The Master Plan Survey of 2005 also showed that about 60% of respondents opposed cluster development. This is somewhat at odds with the support for open space in that cluster development can be a very useful tool for encouraging open space. The Planning Board will be obliged to carefully examine cluster development projects should they emerge, considering both the modest opposition to the*

*concept, weighed against the potential benefits of open space preservation, which the majority of townspeople support.*

*Finally, the Planning Board recognizes the effectiveness of the efforts of the Nelson Conservation Commission in preserving certain areas, and encourages the Commission and landowners to continue to work together to target and preserve appropriate tracts of land. Future Planning Boards are encouraged to become as informed as possible if they choose to pursue any type of programs that have the intention of restricting growth.*

## **Workforce Housing**

In 2008, the New Hampshire legislature enacted the “New Hampshire Workforce Housing Law,” RSA 674:58-61. Essentially, this statute requires that all towns must provide “reasonable and realistic” opportunities for rental and multi-family housing. The statute does not require such “workforce housing,” but stipulates that each town allow for its possibility.

Accordingly, several steps have been or will be taken:

1. The Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances must be reviewed to eliminate language that may be considered as obstacles or deterrents to “workforce housing.”
2. The abovementioned ordinances should include language that is supportive of such housing opportunities.
3. Information should be gathered from surrounding communities in the Cheshire County area to determine if the area as a whole achieves balanced provisions for such housing.
4. Each application for “workforce housing” should be carefully reviewed to determine its suitability under the town’s ordinances.
5. Appropriate site planning regulations should be adopted by the Town at Town Meeting.

The Planning Board is examining the language and implications of the new legislation, as well as the Town’s current ordinances, to ensure that the Town’s interests are most effectively served. The Planning Board sees such legislation as a potential device for the preservation of open space, as well as a means of enabling young families to become Nelson residents.

## **ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT**

There is little industry within Nelson. One small company, a steel fabrication business, provides employment for a handful of people. There are a quite a number of self-employed individuals such as carpenters, loggers, writers, consultants, and artists. There is also some agriculture, primarily sheep farms and hayfields. Some Nelson landowners continue to derive some economic benefit from timber harvests, and proper forest management can also yield conservation benefits. The town has generally encouraged cottage industry; provisions for various levels of businesses are provided in the Zoning Ordinance.

One issue in recent years has been the lack of high speed Internet access throughout most of the town. Various individuals are exploring options, and as regional and technical developments occur high speed Internet access is now available. This allows more people to work from home, either in the service of an outside company, or in a self-employed capacity. The Nelson Elementary School, the town library and the Town Offices have high speed Internet access.

Since the last Master Plan was written, the Munsonville General Store (which also housed the post office) burned and was not replaced. At this time the economic viability of a store is questionable, and the U.S. Postal Service has not indicated a desire to re-establish a facility, as current needs are being met through the Sullivan Post Office.

### **The Future**

*There are no indications that any manufacturing or retail industries are likely to emerge, nor has there been significant public expression of interest in seeing the development of industry or designated locations for retail businesses.*

## **THE TOWN**

### ***The Olivia Rodham Memorial Library***

#### **History**

In the early 1900's, Nelson residents, inspired by the life and work of Olivia Rodham, built the Olivia Rodham Memorial Library, the small building that sits on the south side of the Nelson Common. For many years this facility served the town well, but a number of factors demonstrated the need for a new facility. One was the size – the building in its current location could not be expanded. The other was that it would have been both complicated and costly to retrofit the library to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The building also lacked plumbing facilities, and the site could not support a septic system.

Some years earlier the town acquired the Quigley property, located just north of the town hall. The house sitting on the property was demolished and a modest park was created on the site. When the need arose for a new library, this was the logical site, and thanks to many generous benefactors money was raised to build a new library, along with a structure that connects it to the town hall and provides the entrance for both buildings. (A plaque acknowledging the donors is mounted on the wall to the right of the central entrance.) This project also provided toilets and a new heating system for both facilities.

The new library (still called the Olivia Rodham Memorial Library) has two historic stained glass windows from the original building; otherwise it is entirely new. It was designed to blend in with the town hall and enhance the village motif. A newcomer to town might assume that it is of the same vintage as the Town Hall.

The library enjoys a high per-capita use compared to other small towns in New Hampshire. While it is currently at capacity for housing books and other media, the librarian keeps a good rotation by either discarding older or less-in-demand books, or saving them for the Old Home Day Book Sale. The library participates in the State Library lending program, so any book in any library in the State of New Hampshire can be located and borrowed by Nelson residents. The town's library Trustees oversee the library's budget and overall needs.

In addition to taxpayer support through the annual budget allocation, the Library has been the recipient of many donations over the years, including annual donations of funds and supplies from the Friends of the Olivia Rodham Memorial Library. Some of this money remains in principal, with interest being used to support appropriate projects. While the library appreciates bequests that are designated for specific areas of interest, it is important to note that needs change over time, and designating gifts for specific purposes may present a challenge to the Trustees. Individuals or families wishing to make financial donations to the library are encouraged to confer with the Trustees to determine what is most appropriate. The library also accepts donations of new or lightly used books for the annual book sale on Old Home Day.

#### **Library Use**

Library use has increased and evolved. More programs are offered, more technology is available and more people are using the books and other library materials. The library has also seen a sharp increase in the use of films and recorded music and books. At a time when we have the world at our fingertips, the library is a public place that connects us to each other, as a public center and a community gathering place. The library now provides high-speed wireless internet service, and, thanks to a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, four computers that residents may use whenever the library is open.

### **Anticipated Needs**

The Library Trustees anticipate the following needs.

#### **MEETING SPACE**

The library aspires to serve the community in many ways. The library is experimenting with an after-school program; if successful, additional space may be needed to expand the program. Other possibilities include:

- Showing movies and documentaries
- Providing convenient and comfortable meeting space for other town functions. The library basement could be finished to accommodate all these uses.

Costs related to these projects would include renovations, access for those with disabilities, and where relevant, additional library staffing to supervise the lower level. When and if these things are considered, the library Trustees would first need to consider any emergent space needs for primary library functions, to insure that those needs would not be compromised.

#### **MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION OF EXISTING SPACE**

The library is in good condition, but it has been over a decade without any significant renovation or maintenance expense. At some point it will be necessary to renew the interior of the library, including new carpets and paint. Regular exterior maintenance is also needed to prevent costly repairs in the future.

#### **INCREASED STAFFING AND HOURS**

In spite of an increase in usage and in the number of programs offered, the library has not expanded its hours or staffing level significantly in recent years. At some point this will need to be considered.

#### **The Future**

*The library Trustees will advise the Selectmen at least annually of any needed expansion of service, or other needs that appear imminent.*

### ***The Old Library***

After the library moved to its new facility, for several years the old building was used as a gallery for Nelson artists. This was a welcome addition to the town, but was not economically feasible. Public use of the building was problematic due to accessibility issues and lack of plumbing.

At the 2006 Town Meeting the townspeople voted to sell the property to a private individual (a descendent of one of the original library benefactors). One of the conditions of the sale is that the property reverts back to the town if it is not maintained in its present condition. The facility will be used to house conservation project resources, and may be used for other projects of interest and value to the town.

### ***The Nelson Town Hall***

For many years The Nelson Town Hall displayed a sign saying, "Built 1787." This is somewhat misleading, since the old Meetinghouse, which was actually built in 1787, was dismantled and timbers from the structure were used to construct the current town hall in 1846. As New Englanders are predisposed to embellish their history, the older date remained on the building.

While the town hall has been used for countless public and private events over the years, two traditions specific to the building must be noted here. For as long as anyone knows, the hall has been used for contra dancing. Nelson boasts a strong tradition of musicians bearing a rich repertoire of dance tunes from Ireland, Scotland, Cape Breton, French Canada, New England, and Nelson itself. These tunes provide the inspiration for the long sets of facing couples who dance through many of the other ornate figures that comprise traditional New England contra dancing. Several dance callers have emerged from the Nelson dance scene, and many have gone on to national fame. At this time (and for the past twenty or so years) there is a dance in Nelson Town Hall every Monday night.

Probably the most important use of the town hall is for Nelson's annual Town Meeting, held each March. While many towns in the area have grown too large to retain this form of self-government, it is difficult to imagine Nelson ever giving up its annual rite of debating the finer points of whether or not to buy a used dump truck, or new software for the town's computer. The debate often gets heated, but ultimately serves only to warm the community spirit.

The town hall is also used for private functions, and for concerts sponsored by local organizations or individuals. It has also served as a concert hall for the Nelson School's spring and Christmas concerts, a venue for the Cub Scout Pinewood Derby, and a place to welcome new friends and bid farewell to others. If the library is the brain of the town, the town hall is its heart and soul.

### **The Future**

*The town acted well when it voted to rent the building to residents and locally based cultural organizations at a lower rate than for private out-of-town rental, thus making it a true community resource. Looking ahead the Nelson Town Hall presents a number of opportunities for gains in energy efficiency through "in character" renovations. Addressing the issues of facility maintenance is on the priority list so that the public can use the building with greater comfort and practicality.*

### **The Brick Schoolhouse**

Although it ceased its original function in 1945, the building that now houses Nelson's town government is still known as the Brick Schoolhouse. It has a wonderful history that includes the upstairs being used as a concert hall, and the downstairs used for community suppers and other gatherings.

By 1998, it became increasingly evident that the familiar old building no longer met the community's needs. The upstairs offices were not handicap accessible, and no longer met New Hampshire safety codes. A work group was formed at the 1998 town meeting to develop plans that would bring the building into compliance. Their findings resulted in a \$65,000 appropriation for the repairs, which was approved at the 1999 town meeting. By the 2000 town meeting, town offices were moved downstairs into the renovated first floor, a new roof was installed, and the attractive work area retained the historical integrity of the building. The building also met the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New Hampshire safety rules, and the New Hampshire labor administration laws.

The years since 2000 have seen other changes in the Old Brick Schoolhouse. A half-wall was constructed between the doorway and the secretarial office as a safety measure, and the building is now equipped with wireless internet. The upstairs is not available for public civic functions but is still used as storage for town archives. The police department moved to the new Safety Building, which significantly eased the space problem.

### **The Future**

*It has become clear that the brick schoolhouse is no longer adequate for the administrative needs of the town. This situation is being evaluated by a Selectmen appointed committee.*

## ***The Highway Department***

The Nelson Highway Department (Town Barn) is located on the south side of Old Stoddard Road, about a quarter of a mile outside the village common. The buildings house town equipment, as well as work areas and tools needed to maintain the equipment. Behind the town barn are storage sheds for sand, piles of stone, and other resources including the newly built salt barn used to maintain and repair roads.

In 1995 an addition was placed on the town barn to house fire trucks - the structure had previously been used as a state highway barn, and was moved to its current site. Prior to the addition, the only fire station for the entire town was located in Munsonville.

### **The Future**

*The town's road agent works hard to ensure that Nelson road equipment is well maintained and matches the needs of the town. In concert with the Selectmen and the Highway Committee, he works to obtain vehicles, equipment and supplies that are not out of reach of the town's budget. As road equipment and town roads do not adhere to a maintenance schedule, those responsible for expenditures will continue to make their best estimates in determining needs.*

*Road maintenance will continue, with an eye toward the preservation of the environmental attributes of the roadsides; however, safety will remain a primary aim.*

## ***The Safety Building***

One of Nelson's most unique and endearing qualities is the willingness and ability of its residents to tackle projects that other towns would pay "professionals" to perform. Past examples include the Nelson School addition, which was completed ahead of schedule under budget, and the town baseball fields. The most recent project – the Safety Building - is the most impressive of all.

Nelson residents built a beautiful addition to the Town Barn that contains offices for the Nelson Police Department, restrooms for the long-suffering fire department, a fully outfitted kitchen, and a garage bay for emergency vehicles.

Until 2007, the Brick Schoolhouse not only served as Nelson's town offices, but also housed Nelson's police department. The "department" consisted of one desk pigeonholed into a corner near the kitchen, and police officers had to hold confidential conversations in the kitchen itself. It was not the ideal way to run a police department.

Around the same time, Nelson Fire Chief Rick Lothrop expressed a need for running water in the central firehouse. Besides the lack of bathroom facilities, fire fighters returning from a fire had to use a hose to wash themselves off. A decision was made to combine the needs of the police and fire departments with an addition to the town barn that would extend to the left and behind the existing building.

Supervised by project manager Mike Blaudschun, the addition was constructed almost entirely with volunteer labor. The talents of Nelson's community once again manifested itself in a beautiful, useful addition to our town's physical plant. Many thanks are extended to the scores of volunteer workers, cooks and "go-fers" who contributed to the success of this project.

### **The Future**

*At this time there are no identified needs for expansion or major maintenance projects for the new safety buildings.*

## ***Nelson Police Department***

Nelson Police Department currently maintains a force of a part-time Police Chief and two part time officers.

## ***Nelson Fire Department***

Founded in 1937 by Gordon Tolman, the Nelson Fire Department has been in operation more than 73 years. Since the beginning, volunteers have provided the membership of the department.

The town's first real piece of fire equipment was purchased in 1956 with the support of the town. The first fire station followed in 1957 at minimal cost, built with membership and volunteer labor. The town purchased its first *new* piece of equipment in 1968, and over the years equipment has been updated or replaced.

At present, fire department operations consist of two engines, a tanker, a forestry truck, and a rescue truck. To best support the needs of Nelson residents, the equipment is operated out of two fire stations – one at Granite Lake and the other on Old Stoddard Road. The addition of the Police and Emergency Management Center at the Safety Building on Old Stoddard Road has allowed the fire department to support the increased demands of the town.

The vital role played by the Nelson Fire Department is exemplified by their actions following the ice storm in December of 2008, when the entire town found itself without power, heat and water for more than a week. The fire station, which is powered by a generator, opened its doors to residents needing a hot shower, hot food, or just a warm place to commiserate with neighbors. The building remained open day and night until power was restored. The selflessness of the Nelson fire and police departments during this crisis confirmed the high regard in which they are held by Nelson residents.

The Nelson Fire Department has been a volunteer entity since its inception, relying upon its membership of more than 20 people to perform the necessary fire and rescue services to the town. It is a member of the Southwestern Fire District Mutual Aid system, which covers the southwestern corner of New Hampshire, southeastern Vermont, and down into parts of Massachusetts. Calls from Nelson run in the vicinity of 30 to 50 per year, but most Mutual Aid calls come from the surrounding towns of Harrisville, Sullivan, Stoddard and Hancock. The Nelson Fire Department assists these towns when requested, and they reciprocate. Ambulance service is provided by the City of Keene. Emergency calls are routed through Mutual Aid, which can be reached by dialing 911; the phone number for non-emergency calls is (603) 352-1100.

Men and women who are physically able to perform the job are always welcome, and will receive the necessary training. Those interested can contact Fire Chief Rick Lothrop or any member of the Fire Department.

### **The Future**

*At this time, the Nelson Fire Department has not identified any need for major equipment purchases or renovations to either fire station.*

## ***Town Cemeteries***

The town of Nelson has two cemeteries - the Nelson Cemetery and the Munsonville Cemetery.

### **The Nelson Cemetery**

At the first Nelson town meeting (then known as Packersfield) held in 1772, residents voted to build a meetinghouse to serve the needs of the town and the church. Three years later they started work on the burial ground near the meetinghouse, which was then located on Cemetery Hill. Some 27 years after the Tolerance Act of 1819, the large second meetinghouse on the site was dismantled and removed and the cemetery expanded into to that space. Over the years additional land was generously provided by the late Henry Fuller (a benefactor to the town in countless ways). The Nelson Cemetery is located up the hill from the Village.

In 1917 a stone monument was built to commemorate Nelson residents who fought in the American Revolution. It was placed in the far side of the Nelson Cemetery. By the late 1990's this monument had deteriorated to the extent that it was in danger of falling down, so a committee was formed to determine if

it could be restored (or replaced in some other form). The repairs were complicated and costly, but the generosity of Jack and Bess Bradshaw allowed the town to completely restore the memorial. This was completed and a dedication ceremony was held on Memorial Day in 2003.

## **The Munsonville Cemetery**

In 1828, Joseph Osgood sold land “for the purpose of a burying ground” in Munsonville. It appears that there were already burials on that land as Polly Osgood had been buried there in 1810. Additional land was acquired over the years and a series of boards have managed the cemetery. It was officially incorporated as the Cemetery Association of Munsonville on October 8, 1896 and remained a private cemetery until 2005, when the Selectmen of the Town of Nelson voted to accept the cemetery, to be managed by the Nelson Cemetery Board.

The Munsonville Cemetery is located on the west side of Granite Lake Road just west of the Nelson School. This cemetery is now full and closed to sale of new plots.

Early records indicate the existence of a third cemetery, however its location is no longer known.

### **The Future**

*At this time there no identified needs regarding cemetery expansion or major maintenance projects.*

## **Roads**

Nelson has 37 miles of public roads. Nine miles are state roads, including approximately three miles of Route 9, which run from the Sullivan to the Stoddard town lines; the section of Old Route 9 from the Route 9 off ramp to the Nelson Road; and the Nelson Road itself which begins with a westerly turn off of old Route 9, passes through Nelson Village, and continues to the Harrisville town line.

Following the completion of the Route 9 bypass; and after considerable debate and legal action, old Route 9 was “given” to the town by the state. However, as part of the agreement the state provides the winter maintenance of this road, which extends from the Route 9 off-ramp eastward into Stoddard before rejoining Route 9.

Of the 28 miles of town roads, six miles are paved, and 22 are dirt (or, seasonally, ice or mud). Over the years the roads have been improved by the addition of larger and more strategically placed culverts, as well as careful attention to drainage patterns. As a result that they have held up remarkably well in spite of major rain storms and snow melts that had the potential to do significant damage and make the roads impassable. The skill and forethought that goes into maintaining roads of this nature has not gone unappreciated by the citizens of Nelson.

Concern has been expressed about widening roads in such a way that detracts from their scenic value and, more importantly, facilitates faster driving. This is a complicated issue that is beyond the scope of this plan. However, it is noted that in the Master Plan survey done in 2005, the vast majority of respondents were happy with the roads in their current state.

### **The Future**

*The Planning Board recommends that the road agent work with representatives of the Selectmen, Police Department, and a citizens committee, to establish guidelines and policies that will help to address concerns about road conditions and traffic issues. Given the time demands that community service already places on these parties, the Planning Board recommends a tightly organized and facilitated approach so that meeting times can be minimized. In addition to establishing guidelines for present circumstances, this process will also be important for future town employees and officials to have in place.*



## ***Schools***

### **Nelson Elementary School**

Nelson Elementary School is located at 441 Granite Lake Road (Old Route 9). The school consists of three multi-grade classrooms serving K, Grades 1 and 2, Grades 3 and 4, and Grades 5 and 6.

Kindergarten is provided in a half-day format. The school also contains a main office, a principal's office, a library, a multi-purpose room (used for art, music, lunch and indoor physical education when necessary) and a small institutional grade kitchen.

The Mission of the Nelson School is *to instill strength of spirit, and ignite a love of learning*. The school prides itself on its small nurturing atmosphere and its close connections to the community. The Nelson School culture creates an environment where students, while developing a strong sense of individuality and respect for others, prepare to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The staff and School Board believe that a quality education is a fundamental right of all children and that the education and social development of each and every Nelson student is a shared responsibility among the school, the parents and the community. Nelson School believes in a safe and nurturing school environment where everyone is treated as a worthwhile individual, where intellectual growth in a cooperative setting is encouraged, and where independent thinking is fostered. Nelson School places strong emphasis on the basic skills, creates excitement about learning, sets high and clear expectations of performance, and challenges each student to reach his or her full potential.

Special Education is provided by the practice of inclusion as much as practical. Nelson School believes in and celebrates the individuality and uniqueness of every child and strives to meet the individual needs of each student within the regular classroom to the greatest extent possible.

### **Middle and High School**

After sixth grade, Nelson students progress to the Keene Middle School for seventh and eighth grades, and then to Keene High School for grades nine through twelve. The Nelson School staff and school board track the success of Nelson students at higher grade levels to insure that the education received at Nelson Elementary School prepares students for smooth transitions and success in middle school and high school. Traditionally, Nelson students in Keene Middle and High School have shone academically, outperforming students from other elementary schools.

The Nelson School district is one of seven districts in SAU 29, which consists of Keene and six towns, each of whom have their own elementary schools, but send their older students to Keene. Supervisory and administrative activities are conducted cooperatively through the SAU 29 central office at 34 West Street in Keene. Financial services (budgeting, procurement of payroll and accounting), personnel/human resource services and superintendent services are provided to Nelson through this arrangement.

The tuitioning of students to Keene Middle School and Keene High School is governed by the AREA agreement with the Keene School District.

### **Current Condition of Nelson Elementary School Building**

Each year the school board works diligently to insure adequate maintenance of the school building, adding projects to the budget as needed.

### **Major Projects Initiated and/or Completed in Recent Years**

- In the past four years, there have been renovations in three main areas: the playground, kitchen, and maintenance of the facility.
- The playground was rearranged and new equipment was purchased and installed as a result of fundraising by Packersfield (the Nelson version of PTA). Part of the playground was

blacktopped, two new basketball hoops were installed, and white court lines were added to the blacktop. Two new benches were installed and two older benches were renovated.

- The kitchen area was renovated in 2006-2007. A three bay sink, new stove, dishwasher, and counter were installed; and a commercial refrigerator and small chest freezer were purchased. A security monitor was installed that allows guests to be “buzzed” into the building while lunch is being served.
- Building maintenance has included new casement windows for the foundation, repointing the bricks in the original part of the school, a new roof and entryway, and painting of the school interior and exterior.
- In addition to building maintenance, the driveway has been hard packed and outside security lights have been installed.
- A window was added to the office for better air quality and circulation. A portion of the kindergarten is now the principal’s office
- Windows replaced due to rotting sills in the front of the building
- An emergency generator was recently installed at the school

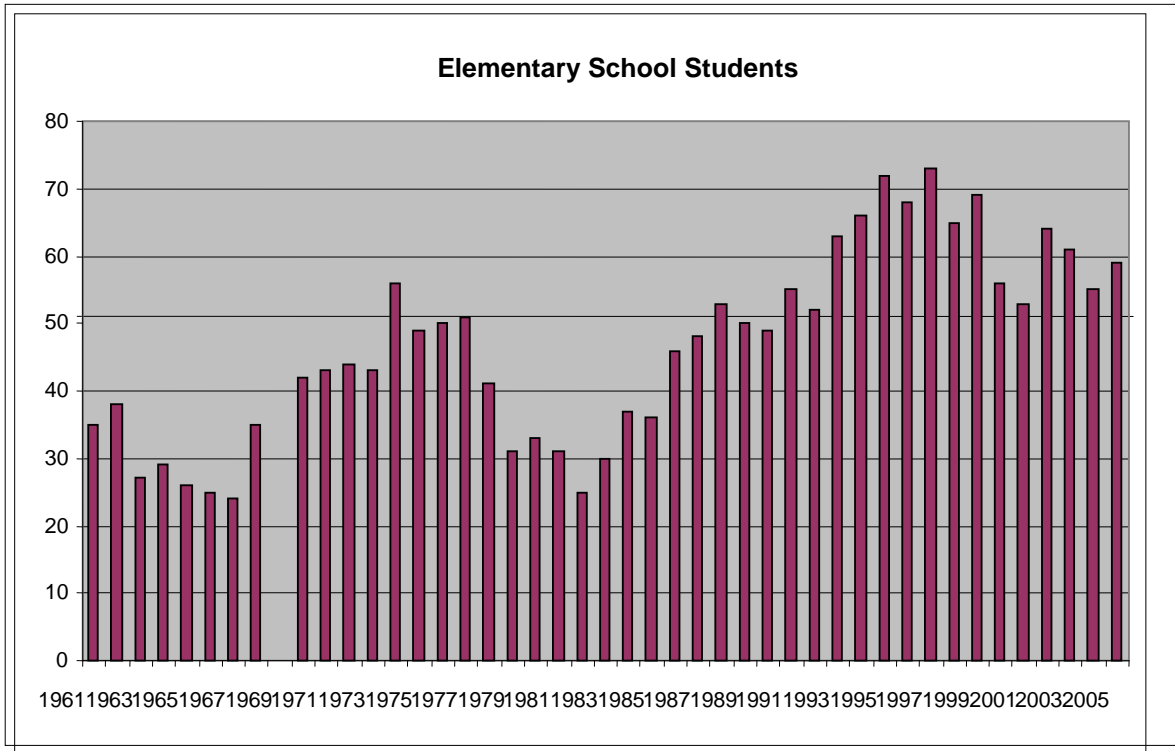
### **Anticipated Projects**

In the next ten years, major projects requiring capital expenditures may include the following:

- Rewire classrooms for increased technology usage;
- Complete renovation of student bathrooms;
- Storage space for custodial equipment, teacher materials, specialist’s supplies and materials, etc.;
- Better phone system (cordless system for safety as well as individual mailboxes for staff);
- Window repair/replacement in R/1/2 classroom;
- Updated security system;
- Fire alarm upgrade.
- There is no gymnasium at the Nelson School. A gymnasium could serve the needs of the community as well as the school’s students.

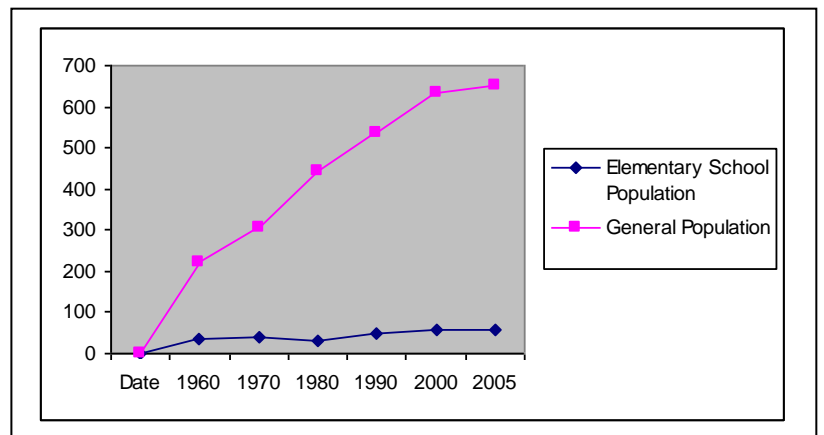
## Enrollment

The Nelson Elementary School population has fluctuated considerably over the years, as the following chart indicates.



The Elementary School population as a percentage of total population has declined significantly in recent years.

Date	Gen. Pop.	Elem. Sch. Pop.	%
1960	222	35	16%
1970	304	42	14%
1980	442	33	7%
1990	535	49	9%
2000	634	56	9%
2005	651	59	9%



The 2008 – 2009 school year student enrollments were 36 students.  
The 2010-2011 school year student enrollments are 24 students.

## **Formal and Informal Goals for Continued Nurturing of Community Support**

Creation of family nights that bridge the home/school connection  
Continued open door policy for parents  
Meeting community educational requirements as well as meeting state mandates  
Maintaining a reasonable school budget  
Involvement of families in school functions  
Soliciting and valuing the opinion of members of the school community and town

### **The Future**

*The projected lack of growth in the student population means that the current facility will remain adequate for some years to come.*

## **CONCLUSION**

The history, demographics and economy of Nelson reflect two overriding themes: continual change, and Nelson's small town/rural setting. Herein lies the vision and challenge of Nelson's Planning Board and its citizens: how to anticipate, adapt to and manage inevitable changes, while simultaneously working to preserve Nelson's unique character.

Change will come about in two ways: internally, and from "outside." As Nelson's population grows/declines and the needs of its residents change over time, we must be prepared for all situations through such means as modifying our zoning regulations, upgrading our buildings and infrastructure, and budgeting for the future, while also conserving our precious natural resources. External changes (state and federal regulations, natural disasters) are often beyond our control, but these, too, are manageable if Nelson maintains the adaptability, resilience and optimism that typify its residents, while drawing upon the strengths of our past and the mutual commitment of our citizens.

The Nelson Master Plan is a work in progress, and not a document etched in stone. Its purpose is to review the town's history, examine its current state, and, using the information at our disposal, plan for the future. Our vision statement outlines where the residents of Nelson want to see our town in the foreseeable future – maintaining the special qualities that make us unique, while closely examining if we are welcoming to newcomers and vigilant in protecting our natural resources.

The Planning Board has and will continue to utilize many resources to achieve our goals: state and regional planning agencies, local advocacy groups and professionals, and local towns with similar experiences. These resources were used to develop this Master Plan, and will undoubtedly be used for future Master Plans. However, Nelson's most valuable and important resource is Nelson residents. This Plan, and all future Master Plans should be a continuous dialogue among the people, to identify mutual concerns and develop long lasting solutions.

**APPENDIX A**

***TOWN OF NELSON PRIORITY CONSERVATION PLAN***

*AVAILABLE IN THE NELSON OLIVIA RODHAM LIBRARY*

## **APPENDIX B**

### ***2005 Master Plan Survey and Results***

*AVAILABLE IN THE NELSON OLIVIA RODHAM LIBRARY*