

# Historic and Cultural Resources

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## Introduction

Historic and cultural resources are arguably among the most crucial aspects of any healthy community and an important quality of life factor. The preservation of places of historic value including buildings and landscapes of historical and architectural interest are considered important values to the people of Bedford.

However, Bedford is located on a crossroads, both physical and cultural. Major roadways cut through the Town, making it a convenient commuter location to Manchester and Nashua. Development pressures that result can put historic resources at risk. The Town of Bedford has few historic resources, including archaeological sites, identified in state inventories to acknowledge and document their important qualities and few structures landmarked to provide them protection or help recognize their importance, which puts the Town's historic resources at peril.

This section of the Town of Bedford Master Plan will outline Bedford's most prominent historic and cultural resources and provide recommendations to help strengthen their protection and increase the public's awareness and appreciation.

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## Historical and Cultural Resources Goals and Objectives

- Goal: Integrate historic and archaeological resource identification, documentation, and evaluation into local planning.
  - Objectives:
    1. Support historic preservation initiatives within the Town of Bedford, including inventorying buildings and districts.
    2. Nominate individual properties and historic districts to the National Register of Historic Places.
    3. Conduct a full site file archaeological review at NHDHR in support of creating a GIS layer defining zones of high and low archaeological sensitivity. The sensitivity map would then be used to make informed decisions regarding archaeological sites during the planning processes.
  
- Goal: Develop and strengthen local planning and protection measures for historic resources.
  - Objectives:
    1. Identify and document historic and archaeological resources throughout the Town of Bedford.
    2. Seek funding opportunities to conduct a community-wide historical resources survey.
    3. Encourage zoning mechanisms such as a demolition delay ordinance and local historic districts to further preservation and community character objectives.
    4. Ensure historic resources are considered during the planning and review of all development projects, which would include considering alternatives to demolition or alteration of a historic property's character.
  
- Goal: Incorporate specific historic preservation objectives in community revitalization and economic development efforts.
  - Objectives:
    1. Encourage rehabilitation of historic properties through financial incentives such as the Federal Historic Tax Credit program for income-producing buildings and the State Historic Tax Credit program for agricultural structures.



2. Encourage the adaptive re-use of historic properties as a sustainable development tool to offset sprawl.

- Goal: Heighten awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Bedford's historic and archaeological resources and their preservation.
  - Objectives:
    1. Develop illustrated individual brochures on historic and architectural resources of the Town of Bedford.
    2. Establish walking and/ or driving tours of historic districts and notable historic areas within the Town of Bedford.
    3. Design and install outdoor interpretative signage or other appropriate signage.
- Goal: Create and enhance cultural opportunities in Bedford.
  - Objectives:
    1. Support local cultural and performing arts organizations by permitting the use of Town facilities for performances and exhibiting space.

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## **Historic and Archaeological Resources**

The Town of Bedford has a rich history represented in physical cultural resources, its historic and archaeological resources, which include buildings, structures, objects, burial grounds, landscapes, and archaeological sites. These historic and archaeological resources are a valuable material record of the history of Bedford and significantly enhance the quality of life in the town. They enhance the scenic qualities of the landscape, establish community character and identity, and in large part define what is unique about the Town of Bedford. The historic properties and sites that comprise the cultural landscape in Bedford are both finite and non-renewable. Once destroyed, they are lost forever. Therefore, this section of the Master Plan presents a plan to assist in the management of Bedford's historic and cultural resources.

The Bedford Historic District Commission, which oversees the Bedford Historic District, and the Bedford Historical Society are the two primary historic preservation organizations in the town. The Bedford Historic District Commission reviews exterior changes to properties within the locally-designated Bedford Historic District and issues certificates of



approval when the work meets the Design and Construction Requirements specified in Article VI of the Historic District Commission Regulations, which has been amended most recently in 2007. The Bedford Historical Society) was founded in 1967 in response to rapid change in the Town of Bedford and the feeling that the Town's past needed protection. Since then, the Bedford Historical Society's citizen volunteers have helped collect and preserve buildings, features, and artifacts of Bedford.

The Bedford Historical Society owns and maintains two buildings-- Schoolhouse 7 and the Little Green House, now called the Kendall Shop Museum and Carriage House. The Schoolhouse dates to the early 1800s and was in use until the early 1900s, making it one of the oldest structures in the Town of Bedford. Today, Schoolhouse 7 is used to display historical artifacts, reference materials, and programs of historical interest. The Little Green House was originally used as a cobbler's shop until it was renovated in 1997 and renamed the Kendall Shop Museum. Today, both properties are located alongside each other and display the Town's artifacts along with a carriage shed of post and beam construction.

Beyond the preservation of antiquities, the Bedford Historical Society also maintains an interest in the Town's old homes and historic buildings. During the planning and development phase of projects in the Town of Bedford, Historical Society members regularly comment on impacts to historic resources. Public school students have also participated in the many of the Bedford Historical Society's programs, an activity that the Bedford historical Society desires to continue. Currently, the Bedford Historical Society has been interested in the preservation of the Town-owned Stevens-Buswell School, a 1921 two-room schoolhouse structure that once housed the Marconi Museum. Efforts are also underway to help protect the historic John Goffe Mill on the Merrimack River.

The following section of the Master Plan contains four separate components associated with preservation of historic and archaeological resources in the Town of Bedford: (1) Identification and Evaluation of Historic and Archaeological Resources; (2) Preservation-Related Tools and Programs; (3) Historic Preservation Goals and Objectives; and (4) Recommendations. The first section provides a brief overview of the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources' Inventory of Historic Properties as well as the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and notes the properties in Bedford that are included in both the State and National Registers. The second section describes tools and programs that could potentially be utilized by the Town for historic preservation



purposes. The third section delineates more specific goals and objectives related to issues defined by the Town of Bedford, and the fourth section provides overall historic preservation recommendations.



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## **Identification of Historic and Archaeological Resources**

The identification and documentation of historic and archaeological resources in the Town of Bedford would entail a fundamental research and preservation planning process designed to provide basic information on the current location, appearance, and condition of historic resources throughout the community. Evaluation of their significance and resultant recognition through their listing in the State Register of Historic Places or National Register of Historic Places is an important additional step. Only properties that have been determined significant through a state and federal nomination and approval process are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The State and National Registers of Historic Places are described below.

As noted in more detail below in the Preservation-Related Tools and Programs section, the National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The State Register of Historic Places is a key part of the state's efforts to recognize and encourage the identification and protection of historical, architectural, archeological, and cultural resources. The State Register is administered by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR), which is the state's Historic Preservation Office.

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### **State and National Registers of Historic Places**

The Bedford National Register program to date has been limited to the listing of two individual resources - the Bedford Presbyterian Church and the Bedford Town Hall. While a small number of other properties have been determined eligible for the National Register, formal nomination forms have not been submitted. No properties in the Town are listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

The following Bedford properties are listed in the National Register:



- The Bedford Town Hall is a Colonial Revival civic building located at 79 Bedford Center Road and was listed in the National Register in 1984. The Town Hall was constructed in the early twentieth century.
- The Bedford Presbyterian Church is a Colonial Revival house of worship that was constructed in 1832 and is located at 4 Church Road. The church was added to the National Register in 2007.

The Town of Bedford contains a number of prehistoric and historic period archaeological resources. The NHDHR was contacted regarding archaeological site files of locations in the Town of Bedford. Please note that no information on archaeological resources, especially their locations, can be disclosed in documents prepared for public review in order to protect the sites from possible looting or vandalism. For further additional information regarding on archaeological resources in the Town of Bedford, please contact the State Archaeologist at the NHDHR.

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### **Stevens-Buswell School**

The Stevens-Buswell School was built in 1921 as the first two room schoolhouse in Bedford. It was named for two local soldiers who died during World War I. NHDHR has determined that the building is eligible for listing on the New Hampshire Register of Historic Places, although that designation has not been made. The building is owned by the Town, which most recently housed the Marconi Museum. The Museum closed in 2007 and the condition of the building has deteriorated. Since the building has no heating system, it was not used in the winter. At this time, the roof also needs replacement.

The Bedford Historical Society would like to preserve the building, although no specific estimates have been provided for the extent of the necessary repairs. The Town Council voted to allow the Society to stabilize the condition of the roof of the building, but at this point only a tarp is in place for this purpose. The Society recently received a grant to have a preservation expert conduct a preliminary assessment of the building's condition and estimate the costs to restore it.

The Town has several options to consider – renovate the building, replace it, or sell or lease the building. The question is whether the Town determines it needs the building for future Town purposes, which is one of the issues being addressed by the Building Committee.



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## **Bedford's Historic Parks and Recreation Areas**

The following parks and conservation lands in the Town of Bedford represent some of the most important heritage landscapes in the Town.

### **Pulpit Rock Conservation Area**

The Pulpit Rock Conservation property is 200 acres of protected open space managed by the Town of Bedford's Parks and Recreation Department. The property includes three miles of walking trails and a former mill site at the southern end of the site.

### **Joppa Hill Farm**

The Joppa Hill Farm is a 312-acre property in the west end of Bedford, on the Bedford-Amherst border, and was acquired by the Town in 2001. The open fields of this conservation land are of great value to wildlife and to residents who can walk on trails and enjoy the heritage landscape.

### **Benedictine Park**

The Benedictine Conservation land is 27 acres property of active and passive recreational property ideal for cross country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing, walking, gardening, picnicking, and bird watching.

The property is home to two walking trails developed by the Bedford Land Trust. The trails are each just under a mile. The one trail follows the edge of the open fields, while another trail parallels Riddle Brook after a moderately steep run route through the woods.

### **Bedford Village Common**

The Bedford Village Common is a 12 acre property in the historic district for passive recreational use, including picnicking, bird watching, and special events.

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## **Archaeological Resources**

The Town of Bedford has 35 previously reported archaeological sites. These sites include pre-contact, contact, and historic era sites. More specific information can be gained on these sites by calling the NHDHR.

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## **Bedford Cemeteries**

The Trustees of the Cemeteries of Bedford maintains four cemeteries and an informational website providing information about the sites. The Trustees' mission is to support the preservation and maintenance of the cemeteries in Town of Bedford by promoting public awareness and by fund raising activities. The historic cemeteries are seen as open air museums that reflect the Town and its heritage. Important for studying the past, the cemeteries help tell the story of a locale and its people, highlighting a community's achievements and cultural values. The cemeteries also emphasize the quiet beauty of Bedford, with protected open spaces. Three of the cemeteries are designated as historic since they date from the colonial period. Burials range from the mid-eighteenth century through the current day. All cemeteries are accessible to the public, however the colonial ones are in fragile condition and visitors are asked to not touch the grave stones.



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## **Preservation-Related Tools and Programs**

This section of the Master Plan identifies a variety of planning tools and programs (both voluntary and regulatory) that are available for preservation planning purposes in the Town of Bedford. Many programs exist at the local, state, and federal levels that are available to assist in the preservation of Bedford's important historic resources. The three broad categories of preservation-related programs described in this section include local planning/ protection of cultural resources; Federal and State regulatory review; and financial programs and incentives.

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## **Local Planning / Protection**

### **National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nation's official list of significant historic properties. Properties listed in the NRHP



include sites, buildings, structures, districts, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Contrary to popular perception, listing in the NRHP does not limit a property owner's right to alter, manage, or sell the property when using private funds. Instead, the designation acts as a key to access preservation programs and incentives at the federal, state and local level.

Some of the key benefits to NRHP listing include eligibility for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits, access to income tax deductions for the donation of historic preservation restrictions, and matching grant funds for preservation related projects. NRHP listing also requires consideration in federal, state, and some local planning projects.

NRHP properties must be at least fifty years old (unless they demonstrate exceptional significance) and must possess physical integrity by retaining enough of its original materials to exhibit its historic appearance during the period of its historic significance. The NRHP recognizes properties associated with famous figures and events, but also acknowledges places that are associated with the history of important themes and trends in American history and pre-history. NRHP listing is accomplished through a nomination process initiated by an individual, or a private or public entity. Property owners may object to the listing through a certified letter to the Bedford Historical Commission. If 51% of the property owners within a district object to the listing through the certified letter objection process, the district will not be officially listed in the National Register. The number of properties owned by a single owner is immaterial; each property owner has one "vote". The nomination addresses the significance and integrity of the resource through a thorough report documenting its appearance and history. The report is reviewed by the NHDHR staff and the National Park Service National Register office before final designation.

### **Demolition Delay Ordinance**

The objective of a Demolition Delay ordinance, which has been instituted in some New Hampshire communities, such as Keene and Concord, is to encourage owners of historic buildings to seek and consider alternatives to demolition and encourage preservation or relocation of significant buildings. The adoption of a Demolition Delay ordinance by the Town of Bedford would add an extra level of protection to historically significant buildings by requiring demolition permit applications to be reviewed by the Historical Commission. Communities vary on the age and type of properties to be included in their Demolition Delay ordinance, but communities typically require buildings that are at least 50 years old,



and determined to exhibit architectural or historical significance to be reviewed before demolition is allowed.

### **Local Historic Districts**

Local Historic Districts (LHD) can protect the exterior appearance of historic properties and encourage new construction to be designed to complement the historic setting. The designation of a LHD imposes a review and approval process by a commission of appointed members for proposed exterior changes to properties. The primary strength of a LHD is that it can be tailored to specific community needs while providing greater protection for local resources. Design guidelines are developed to address the significant defining characteristics of a particular area. Designation as a LHD is one of the most effective ways to protect the historic character of buildings, streetscapes, neighborhoods, and special landmarks from inappropriate alterations, new construction, and demolition. In addition to protecting historic resources, locally designated districts across the country consistently produce stable property values, increase commercial activity, and attract tourism dollars.

Currently, the Town of Bedford has one local historic district, the Bedford Historic District, which was established in 1970. The district is roughly bounded by Wallace Road, Church Road, Ministerial Road, and Liberty Hill Road. The Historic District Commission regulations outline various standards regarding removing historic materials or altering a building's character-defining features. Usually removal and alteration is not permitted; rather repairing of historic features rather than replacement is encouraged. Any architectural changes or necessary replacements are expected to be compatible with the property's historic character and be approved through a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability, or a certificate of hardship with respect to such construction or alteration.

As mentioned above, there are several historically significant areas in Bedford, such as Joppa Hill, that could be considered for the future establishment of additional LHD. New Hampshire law governing Historic Commissions (RSA 674:46) gives the authority to "establish, change, lay out and define historic districts" to the local legislative body, i.e. the Town Council. The Bedford Historical Commission regulations define an historic district as "an area or areas within the Town of Bedford specifically so designated by a majority of the voters". Thus, the Town has the authority to establish new LHD's, which would be regulated by the Bedford Historic Commission pursuant to its existing



regulations, although the regulations would need to be amended to specify the boundaries of the new district.

## **Preservation Easements**

A preservation easement is a legal contract by which the property owner agrees the property will not be changed in a way that would compromise its historic and architectural integrity. Any proposed changes to the property are reviewed by the organization to which the preservation restriction is donated or sold. The preservation easement runs for a defined term or in perpetuity with the land and is binding on both the owner who grants it as well as on all subsequent owners. A preservation easement allows the owner of a historic property to retain title and use of a property and, at the same time, ensure its long-term preservation. The owner retains the major interest in the property and can sell or will it to whomever he or she wishes.

Preservation easements are specifically tailored to the individual building and the elements being sought to be preserved. Some agreements only protect a building's façade, while some include stipulations to protect elements of the interior, significant architectural details, or significant landscapes. The terms of the agreement are negotiated between the qualified organization and the property owner. The owner of the property subject to a preservation easement must secure approval before undertaking significant changes to the property, such as altering the building's historic elements or constructing an addition. The owner also agrees to repair and maintain the property to an agreed-upon level of maintenance.

Significant federal income tax benefits can result from the donation of a preservation easement. If the property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the value of the development restrictions imposed by the preservation easement is normally considered a charitable donation. Often a preservation restriction-holding organization will require a fee or endowment to provide adequate resources to monitor the preservation easement in the future.

## **New Hampshire Historical Markers Program**

NHDHR and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation jointly manage a program to commemorate significant New Hampshire places, persons, or events on highway markers. Any municipality, agency, organization, or individual may propose a new highway marker, but



must explain why the place, person, or event is significant in New Hampshire history. The markers are funded from the state's General Transportation fund or in cooperation with local municipalities.

The Town of Bedford currently has one historical highway marker located on US 3, 0.2 miles north of the junction of US 101. The marker identifies the site of Squire John Goffe's log homestead on Bowman's Brook. John Goffe's Mill, now part of the motel complex across the road, was built in 1744 by his grandson, Major John, and was rebuilt in 1834 by his great grandson, Theodore, following a fire, and again in 1939 by another descendant, Dr. George Woodbury. Prominent in Bedford history, the family name was given to neighboring Goffstown and Goffe's Falls. Four generations of Goffes, with their wives, rest side by side in Bedford's Old Burying Ground. Other descendants rest in the Bedford Center Cemetery.

### **New Hampshire State Conservation and Rescue Archaeology Program**

New Hampshire contains an array of archaeological sites worth protecting. These sites are a non-renewable resource which, collectively, constitutes a unique record of human achievement spanning at least 12,000 years, from the first human occupation after the retreat of the glaciers, through the displacement of Native American Indian cultures by European colonists, and up to the recent past.

The New Hampshire State Conservation and Rescue Archaeology Program (SCRAP) is a public participation program for archaeological research, management, and education. SCRAP is administered by the Archaeology Bureau in the Division of NHDHR. The program is supported by state and federal funds, donated private funds, and the volunteered services of trained and certified archaeologists.

As a part of its research and management responsibilities, the Archaeology Bureau conducts workshops to train interested members of the public in archaeological research skills, interpretation, conservation, and education. By making more people aware of archaeology, and by involving the public in its practice, SCRAP seeks to increase the rate of site discovery and evaluation, to reduce the rate of site destruction, to recover information from archaeological sites about to be destroyed, and to conduct original research.

The SCRAP program regularly conducts field work across New Hampshire. The Town of Bedford could request the program help it



review specific sites and inventory findings to increase the level of knowledge of the Town's past through archaeology.

### **Survey & Inventory**

According to NHDHR, less than 25 percent of New Hampshire communities have up-to-date, comprehensive, professional quality historical resource surveys. Without that information, it is difficult and irresponsible to make informed decisions about historic properties or land use planning issues that may affect them. Mobilizing a statewide survey effort to help all communities, including the Town of Bedford, compile a preservation database is one of NHDHR's top priorities.

Currently, NHDHR has one Project Area Form on file for the Town of Bedford, which was prepared in 1992. The form covers properties in the vicinity of US 101 and Wallace Road. There have not been any other substantial surveys or inventories on Bedford's historic resources.

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## **Regulatory – Federal and State**

### **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act**

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), was originally enacted to address the widespread loss of historic properties during federally-sponsored urban renewal initiatives and highway construction projects during the 1960s. The law requires that any project that receives federal funds or is required to obtain permits or licenses from a federal agency is required to be reviewed for its effects on historic properties. Section 106 review is required for properties that are both listed or determined eligible for the National Register. This determination is part of the review process if the property has not been previously assessed for its eligibility.

Typical examples of federal undertakings that do and can take place in the Town of Bedford are the requirements of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) permits for development projects and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) supported road improvement projects. If a property is determined eligible for the National Register or is already listed in the National Register, then the impact of the proposed project on the resource must be determined by the federal agency or its assignee and concurred upon by the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources. If the project is determined to have an adverse effect

on the resource, the federal agency must consult with NHDHR in order to determine mitigation options.

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## **Financial Programs and Incentives**

### **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit**

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit program encourages preservation of historic structures by allowing favorable tax treatments for rehabilitation through a 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of an income-producing NRHP-listed building. Since 1976, this investment incentive has proven to be one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community development programs.

In order to be eligible for the credit, a building must be listed in the NRHP either individually or as a contributing structure in an historic district, or within a certified local historic district. The proposed project must also be a substantial rehabilitation costing more than \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the property, whichever is greater. The building must be rehabilitated in a manner that meets the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and is reviewed by the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources and the National Park Service.

For the purposes of the tax credits, income-producing buildings include commercial, agricultural, retail, and rental properties, but do not include owner-occupied residences or most condominiums.

Federal tax credits have the potential to encourage economic development in structures that have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the historic rehabilitation tax credits, a 10% Federal tax credit is also available to non-historic structures (buildings not listed in the NRHP) built before 1936. The requirements for the type of rehabilitation for these properties are not as stringent as those mandated for the historic tax credit.

### **Historic Barn Tax Incentive**

The State of New Hampshire offers a tax credit program designed to encourage the preservation of historic barns and other agricultural buildings. A 2002 state law (RSA 79-D) authorizes communities to grant property tax relief (reduction of 25 percent to 75 percent of full assessed value) to barn owners who can demonstrate the public interest in



preserving their barn and commit to maintaining the historic qualities of the barn through a minimum 10-year easement.

### **Land and Community Heritage Investment Program**

The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) is a grant program funded partially from monies raised from a special state license plate (60%) sold to promote conservation and also from an existing trust fund (40%). The LCHIP program has approximately \$12 million of annual funds to spend on a variety of historic preservation projects. Local governments, such as the Town of Bedford, and cultural organizations may apply for funding anytime throughout the year for initiatives such as the protection, restoration, or rehabilitation of the following cultural or historic resources:

- archaeological sites;
- historic buildings and structures which house cultural events and programs;
- historic properties including buildings and structures; and
- historic and cultural lands and features.

The following aspects of a project can be funded from the LCHIP Fund:

- Acquisition of real property in fee simple;
- Acquisition of easement interests in real property;
- Restoration or rehabilitation of cultural or historic buildings or structures which are publicly-owned, or which are owned by a qualified publicly-supported nonprofit corporation, except for the following activities:
  - (a) routine maintenance that does not require specialized historic preservation services, except when necessary to fulfill the recommendations of a Historic Structure Report or preservation plan for the property;
  - (b) furnishings (modern or historic);
- Surveys, appraisals, title work, and other legal or ancillary work necessary to carry out acquisitions that can demonstrate linkage to the permanent protection or restoration and rehabilitation of eligible resources;
- Resource inventories and planning that can demonstrate linkage to the permanent protection or restoration and rehabilitation of eligible resources; and
- Other professional services that can demonstrate linkage to the permanent protection or restoration and rehabilitation of eligible resources.



There have not yet been any LCHIP projects funded in the Town of Bedford.

### **Conservation License Plate Grants**

New Hampshire's conservation moose plate program also funds additional historic preservation efforts. This program is targeted to support the preservation of publically-owned resources or artifacts that contribute to New Hampshire's history and cultural heritage. The NHDHR accepts applications from local governments and non-profits for funding in March of each year and grants recipients up to \$10,000.

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## **Cultural Resources and Activities**

Cultural resources are not limited to historic sites and districts. They also include groups, events, and traditions—all of which help shape the community's sense of place. The following section outlines the community groups and activities that help define and nurture Bedford's character.

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### **Cultural Groups and Centers**

#### **Pulpit Rock Questers**

The Pulpit Rock Questers is an educational organization devoted to the study and appreciation of antiques and history.

#### **Southern New Hampshire Dance Theater**

Southern New Hampshire Dance Theater (SNHDT), regarded as the region's finest dance school, was founded in 1996. Highly skilled faculty provides quality training and a sound education in dance as a performing art. While nurturing the development of each student's technical and artistic skills, SNHDT emphasizes an understanding of the inherent traditions that lie behind each dance form. SNHDT's goal to



support the philosophy that dance, much like any art form, is an important part of our cultural fabric and heritage. Various performances are held throughout the year and are open to the community.

### **Bedford Youth Performance Company**

The Bedford Youth Performance Company (BYPC) was founded in 1996 to provide quality performing arts instruction and experiences for youths in Bedford and surrounding communities. Programs are offered for young students through adults in the tradition of the Boston Conservatory and Julliard offering comprehensive programs in music, dance, and theatre for over 1,400 students in southern New Hampshire and beyond. The BYPC has regular performances open to the community at various venues in Bedford and the region.

### **Bedford School Department**

The Bedford School Department contributes to the cultural offerings of the Town by producing student performances in theater, music, and visual arts.

### **Bedford Recreation Department**

The Bedford Recreation Department manages a variety of Town parks and recreation fields for active and passive recreation. The Department also offers courses in various subject areas, including ballroom dancing, cooking, and bridge, among others.

### **Bedford Public Library**

Besides offering traditional library lending services, the Bedford Public Library serves as a key cultural institution in the Town of Bedford. Throughout the year, the Library hosts numerous speakers, art exhibits, and musical performances, including the Sunday at the Library concert series.

### **Bedford Community Television**

The Bedford Community Television network operates two stations - one for the broadcast of Town Council and School Department meetings and a second one for a variety of community programming. Cultural offerings on the station include programs on New Hampshire and world history, musical performances, book discussions, and information on outdoors activities in the state.



### **Bedford Big Band**

The Bedford Bbig Band is a 21 piece band that performs at a variety of events, including free public performances.

### **Bedford Off Broadway**

Bedford Off Broadway is a community theatre that presents two productions a year at Bedford Town Hall.

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## **Cultural Activities**

### **Heritage Trail**

The Town of Bedford maintains an approximately four-mile heritage walking trail along the Merrimack River on the Manchester line. The trail is open to walkers and cyclists most of the year except during the winter when the area is closed off for roosting American Bald Eagles.

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## **Moving Ahead: Recommended Actions**



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### **Overall Historic and Cultural Resources Recommendations**

This section of the Master Plan offers general recommendations relevant to preserving the character of the community that would be applicable to a wide range of Bedford's historic resources. Future preservation activities for the Town need to focus on a combination of programs that take into consideration planning and protection of these resources and the development of financial programs and incentives. The recommendations in this section of the Master Plan were devised by determining which of the available programs described in the section above were applicable and appropriate for the Town of Bedford.

Many of Bedford's residents highly value the community's strong sense of place, which is created by its varied built environment, much of which is comprised of well-kept historic homes. The Town should take measures to document and evaluate its most significant buildings, both public and private, and areas through a new historic survey. The Town should create local preservation programs (such as the establishment of a



demolition delay ordinance or additional local historic districts) to protect the historic resources that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most municipalities, Bedford is facing multiple pressures for change that threaten historic properties. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

Preservation planning is a three-step process: **identification, evaluation, and protection.**

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of historic resources are discussed below.

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## **Village and Neighborhood Character**

As described above, thorough documentation on NHDHR inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Two preservation planning strategies could be adopted and expanded by the Town of Bedford:

- **Demolition Delay Ordinance** provides a time period in which the Town can explore alternatives to demolition. Typical demolition delay bylaws provide a period of delay from 6 months to over a year. Such protection measures, which provide time for both developers and the town to find alternatives to demolition.
- **Local Historic Districts**, adopted through local initiative, recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. Local historic district designation and regulation is one of the strongest forms of protection for the preservation of historic resources. While there is one local historic district already established in the Town, the use of this tool could be expanded to other areas that may need protection.

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## **Funding of Preservation Projects**

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. The NHDHR and New Hampshire Preservation Alliance have programs to assist communities in preservation-related issues including:



- **Federal and State Historic Tax Credit Programs**, administered by the National Park Service and the NHDHR.
- **Conservation Licence Plate Grants**, administered by the NHDHR.
- **New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program**, administered by the independent state-authority, Land and Community Heritage Investment Program.
- **Preservation Project Development Grants**, a program of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, is designed to assist local organizations in developing successful preservation projects by providing funding for specialized assistance from preservation professionals. This source of funding was used by the Bedford Historical Society to pay for a structural assessment of Schoolhouse 7.
- **Barn Assessment Grants**, which is another program of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, provides matching funds for an expert in the field of barn restoration to conduct an assessment of a barn's needs, and prepare an in-depth report. The assessment can help address immediate stabilization issues, re-use strategies and budgeting

Funding for state programs varies year to year. When planning any preservation planning programs, it is important to contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

The Town of Bedford and other preservation advocacy groups should also encourage the use of historic tax credits by providing more information on federal and state rehabilitation tax credits to the general public. Appropriate Town staff should be aware of the tax credits and be able to direct citizens to the appropriate literature and agency officials, including links to more detailed information on the Town's website. This effort should be augmented by including a discussion and explanation of historic tax credits in any public education efforts about promoting preservation.