

Goals & Policies

Land Use

Goals

- Reinforce Merrimac's rural-village land use pattern by conforming future development to the historic arrangement of buildings and streets.
- Develop an orderly arrangement of residential, non-residential and public land uses along and adjacent to the Route 110 corridor.
- Use land efficiently and in an environmentally responsible manner when developing new neighborhoods and business areas.

Policies

- Promote cluster and planned unit development techniques to create quality neighborhoods, provide housing diversity and maximize the preservation of open space.
- Encourage infill development over new growth in outlying sections of Merrimac, using sewer policy, capital improvements, zoning and other regulatory means to achieve these ends.
- Promote high-quality commercial and mixed-use development along Route 110 with incentive zoning, architectural design standards and site plan review.
- Through regulatory, tax and other incentives, promote re-investment in existing commercial and industrial buildings in and around Merrimac Square.
- Implement coherent, internally consistent bylaws, regulations and policies so that boards and officials with a role in land development may synchronize their review practices and decisions.
- Adopt growth management policies that promote an orderly approach to land use diversity and achieve positive or neutral fiscal impacts wherever possible.

Traffic & Circulation

Goals

- Encourage pedestrian and bicycle access to all parts of town by providing a safe, scenic, interconnected system of roads, sidewalks and trails.
- Assure vehicular and pedestrian safety along Route 110 and within Merrimac Square, using development controls, public transportation, parking, traffic calming techniques, and corridor improvements to achieve these ends.
- Improve and enhance the Town's gateways.

Policies

- Use the Scenic Road Act and protective view shed regulations to maintain the character and appearance of roads that serve historically or visually significant areas.
- Adopt and implement a street classification system to set traffic control and enforcement policies, prioritize capital improvements, and determine appropriate road construction standards in new and established development areas.
- Encourage flexible street and sidewalk designs that limit disruption to land and topography, contribute to Merrimac's rural-historic character and promote a safe traffic & circulation system.
- Leverage funds and guide transportation improvements made by state agencies and private developers in order to enhance Merrimac's gateways and maximize the benefits of limited town resources.
- Encourage adequate, safe, environmentally responsible parking solutions in new developments and the redevelopment of such areas as Merrimac Square.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Goals

- Treat Merrimac's natural resources, historic architecture and landmarks as irreplaceable public assets.
- Assure that new development respects the topography and character of the land.
- Retain and enhance Merrimac Square as the Town's social, economic, civic and governmental center.
- Support and promote cultural activities for the education, entertainment and general benefit of Merrimac residents.

Policies

- Discourage degradation and loss of wetlands by enforcing the Wetlands Protection Act and a local wetlands bylaw, and adopting regulatory incentives to direct development to upland locations.
- Use development controls, environmental and utility policies, and public education to protect the quality and supply of Merrimac's water resources.
- Marshall and apply all available historic preservation tools – the National Register of Historic Places, local historic districts, federal and state funds and tax incentives – to protect the architectural integrity and character of Merrimac Square, West Main Street, Merrimacport and other significant locations.
- Adopt view shed and scenic resource protection bylaws to protect the Town's vistas and enhance its gateways.
- Take a government-wide, coordinated approach to direct development away from environmentally sensitive or scenic locations, such as open space acquisitions, regulatory, tax and other incentives.
- Provide storage, performance and exhibit space.
- Create mechanisms to take advantage of cultural funding opportunities.

Open Space and Recreation

Goals

- Preserve and connect large tracts of open space.
- Assure the continuity of agriculture as a vital open space feature in Merrimac.
- Provide accessible parks and recreation facilities that foster a sense of community, serve residents of all ages and increase public awareness of Merrimac's open space resources.

Policies

- Maintain a current Open Space and Recreation Plan at all times and work continuously toward its implementation.
- Maintain and promote the McLaren Trail as a key resource for linking open space, fostering community pride and preserving local history.
- Take steps to increase and encourage resident access to the Merrimack River, Lake Attitash and Cobbler Brook.
- Acquire land and development rights, and adopt "agriculture-friendly" practices across town government to protect and maintain Merrimac's working landscapes.
- Adopt adequate fee schedules, retain and apply revenue toward maintaining and improving parks, playgrounds and playing fields.
- Coordinate the use of public recreation areas.
- To the maximum extent feasible, enlist developer cooperation to provide neighborhood-level parks and playgrounds in new residential and mixed-use developments.

Housing

Goals

- Provide housing choice throughout the community.
- Protect and enhance the historic, intimate character of existing neighborhoods.
- Use regulations effectively to promote neighborhood-scale design in new residential developments.

Policies

- Adopt and implement bylaws and regulations to promote the inclusion of affordable housing units in new residential and mixed-use development, and in the redevelopment of established areas.
- Encourage diversity of residential uses in new developments and the redevelopment/reuse of existing properties.
- Seek, obtain and use public and private resources to provide housing units that are affordable to and suitable for low- and moderate-income and middle-income families, and the elderly.
- Establish a community housing trust and/or a non-profit organizational subsidiary of the Merrimac Housing Authority to develop and manage affordable and elderly housing.
- Implement flexible development regulations that encourage investment and reinvestment in older housing stock, all toward preserving the architectural character, density and ambience of established neighborhoods while limiting growth in outlying rural areas.
- Encourage developers to design small, pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhoods that preserve the natural contours of land and existing vegetation, and connect to other neighborhoods with off-street trails and paths.

Community Facilities and Services

Goals

- Manage and maintain conveniently located public facilities that meet the needs of Merrimac residents and town employees.
- Provide high quality municipal and school services at a price residents can afford.
- Develop, manage and maintain public utilities and infrastructure to achieve the Town's land use goals in a fiscally sound manner.

Policies

- Taking a coordinated, government-wide approach that includes fee schedules, capital expenditures, water conservation and land use controls, develop a water supply and distribution system that can meet build-out demand.
- Establish and implement a pavement management system.
- Adopt an "adequate facilities" growth management policy to calibrate the rate, types and locations of development with the adequacy of community facilities and infrastructure.
- Provide for, maintain and manage adequate wastewater treatment and distribution facilities to preserve the Town's historic land use pattern and discourage development of outlying areas.
- Retain municipal services in the center of town.
- Preserve, maintain and manage Merrimac's public facilities for the cultural, educational and economic benefit of residents.
- Develop appropriate reuse/disposition plans for decommissioned public buildings in order to preserve Merrimac's architectural and cultural traditions.
- Support fiscally sound and regionally equitable expenditures for public education, recognizing that excellent schools are central to the quality of life for all Merrimac residents.
- Periodically evaluate the form and structure of local government in Merrimac to assure efficient, coordinated delivery of community services, control costs, maximize citizen participation and manage the Town's financial and human resources.

Economic Development

Goals

- Create commercial and mixed-use districts that encourage small businesses to thrive in Merrimac.
- Promote and nurture new small business enterprise.
- Develop and strengthen Merrimac's employment base to provide regionally competitive wages.
- Retain agriculture as a vital element of the local economy.

Policies

- Design zoning districts and adopt regulations to replace the potential for strip development along Route 110 with transitional and commercial development clusters that are safe, aesthetically pleasing, and suited to small-business activity.
- Provide adequate, suitable locations for light industrial, research and office development in Merrimac, and encourage these uses through reasonable regulation, tax incentives, and marketing support from regional economic development agencies.
- Adopt regulations and policies toward retaining and increasing live-and-work space in Merrimac.
- Discourage residential development adjacent to working farms in order to reduce land use conflicts and protect the profitability of agricultural operations.
- Establish a local economic development commission and charge it with responsibility to coordinate with regional economic development agencies, advocate for small business and agricultural development, provide technical assistance to local entrepreneurs, and participate in the review of commercial and industrial development proposals.