

CHAPTER 1 – OUR VISION FOR RYE

While the Master Plan does not apply to Rye Beach Precinct, our vision for Rye will continue to be characterized by respect for our neighbors, the common good, and the natural environment. Our land use policies will be fair, supporting balances of choice, convenience, safety, security, conservation, a sense of community, and in compliance with all applicable State Land Use laws. Our reward will be a strong town in a beautiful place, comprised of an active, empowered citizenry working for the well-being of the community.

Our desires to see Rye altered are few. It is our intent to make changes deliberately to adapt to the dynamic needs of our citizens and respect the rights of others with interests in our community.

Our vision for Rye's limited beach resources is to insure that all citizens will enjoy unencumbered access to all Town beaches and Rye Harbor. We will discourage any activities or organizations that would have the effect of making the beaches/Harbor or access to them exclusive to any portion of the population of Rye or the surrounding towns.

Rye has a rich and diverse heritage. From the earliest beginnings on our shores and nearby islands to the more recent artifacts created by World Wars, unique and valuable items have been left behind. These are cherished by the citizens of Rye and we will collect, catalogue, and preserve these items in Rye whenever such items are recovered regardless of the collecting body.

Our vision for Rye Town Center recognizes it as the foundation upon which the Town has grown. We will protect, preserve, and reinforce its character and integrity. There will be a palpable sense of community for residents as well as visitors. Many of the components of that vibrant town center are in place: Town Hall, library, safety building, school, a traditional New England church, veterans' memorial, cemetery, and historic district. We will promote additional opportunities to foster regular and multiple social interactions for all members of the community to include but not limited to: pedestrian paths, bikeways, and traffic-calming and mitigating features along town roads within and leading to the Town Center. We envision pocket parks and gardens for all to enjoy and a few apartments built over small retail establishments. The additions of a cafe and general store in our Town Center will increase our opportunities to foster a sense of community. This will be unified by human-scale density and architectural style honoring the historic buildings and character of much that already exists.

We will endeavor to create a viable communications environment by offering a free internet "hot spot" when and if the above additions to the Town Center are realized. Additionally we will strive to have all of Rye accessible by cell phone service. We will endeavor to create an atmosphere that will allow the commercial development of land to the west of Route 1. The absence of sewers has been a major impediment to development especially along the Route 1 corridor. We will work with the Sewer Commission to see if it is viable to extend the public sewer lines from Portsmouth to that area.

Our intent to foster a sense of community is consistent with enhancing a range of housing options for a diverse population. Our zoning ordinance should increase options for affordability, simplicity of transportation, conservation of Rye’s natural assets and housing opportunities for work force and seniors in Town, and continued compliance with state laws while maintaining Rye’s semi-rural character.

Our vision for Rye does not require major changes to our transportation infrastructure. Our roads are adequate and well located for the area but are heavily used and require continued maintenance. The modifications they require – traffic calming, shoulder widening, intersection control – will improve their safety and increase usage by pedestrians and cyclists. Our support of shared transportation options – park-and-ride usage, ridesharing, a bus route serving Rye needs – will require promotion and education. This will be supported by our involvement in ongoing regional transportation efforts.

The parameters of this vision extend to all members of our community, not just developers. Education will be important to our success. All will contribute to increasing our recycling of materials accepted at the Town’s Recycling Facility. Together we will continue to educate citizens about the need to minimize potentially hazardous chemical usage.

We will recognize that everyday compounds such as lawn treatments, garden fertilizers and snow melt products are beneficial only if used sparingly. Using such compounds within the aquifer protection zone will not be permitted. By banning these compounds we can further insure the integrity of the Town wells for present and future generations. Beyond that, we become polluters of our own waters. When we add to our houses, expand our driveways or build sheds, we increase the Town’s impervious surfaces burden. Each addition further minimizes the opportunity for water to infiltrate, naturally cleanse the water and recharge our aquifers. Impervious surfaces limit natural water cleansing and can potentially cause flooding.

Having committed ourselves to preserving our natural resources to the maximum extent possible, we will have to learn to manage the nuisance species of plant life and wildlife that have increasingly enjoyed their safeguarded habitats. We will protect the value of Rye’s uniqueness for native plants and animals. Where necessary, such as in our salt marshes, we will improve habitats.

We will do all of these things through formal and informal organizational structures. We know that Rye is rich in the amount of time that our volunteers give to the community in a myriad of ways. Our vision for Rye reinforces the bonds that form through that work, reinforcing the work of our town’s employees and elected officials. Expanded dissemination of information will create a more seamless network of communications. In addition to the above, we will continue to work to foster expanded transparency in town Government by providing easy access to town, board and commission meetings, meeting agendas and meeting minutes. We will actively encourage Rye residents to participate as board, commission and committee members where they can add their skills in addressing the challenges that we face today and in the future.

The sense of community in our schools will expand throughout the community. Our children strengthen the Town's identity through their academic accomplishments and extracurricular activities such as sports, scouting and volunteer activities. They will learn about their roles as future leaders by being involved in matters of importance within our community. School budgets will be increasingly recognized as an important part of local government.

We will support this vision by working together. We will support it by pursuing outside sources of funding for the improvements we require. We will support our vision by continuous re-assessment of what we have accomplished. This evaluation will assure that we are accomplishing that which is necessary to get where we want to go. We will protect our semi-rural and coastal character by protecting our open space, coastal and wetland resources by managing growth.