

Rye Master Plan

Draft Recommendations

RP&D further developed draft recommendations that fit under the major action focus areas presented at the July Master Plan Committee Meeting. Please note that these may become more refined in the writing of the Master Plan. We do acknowledge there is some redundancy across some of the actions below that we would like to address as the Plan develops. However, we do believe this represents a good start and want to know if we are heading in the right direction. Are there any actions missing? Are there any actions that might not fit in Rye? Are there too many actions? We look forward to our upcoming conversation.

Please note that some key concepts referenced in the actions are hyperlinked in this document.

Please note that these actions are not formatted and will include a numbering system in the final implementation chart.

General Actions

- a) To guide the implementation of the Master Plan, Rye will establish a **Master Plan Implementation Committee** that meets, at a minimum, 2-4 times throughout the calendar year. This committee, which may be composed of Board/Committee Chairs, residents, department heads, or their designees, will prioritize and coordinate the completion of implementation actions outlined in the Plan to ensure implementation action items are being worked on by the appropriate parties. A Master Plan Implementation Committee also monitors progress towards the vision and future land use strategy in the Master Plan. Responsibilities of this Committee could include.
 - i. Developing the administrative procedures and responsibilities of the committee.
 - ii. Working with staff and the Planning Board to prioritize action items to work on annually.
 - iii. Serving as a liaison between town boards and committees that have a role in implementing the Master Plan.
 - iv. Assisting the various responsible parties in understanding how the Master Plan integrates with their existing priorities to enable these parties to advance their own goals while simultaneously advancing the goals of the Master Plan.
 - v. Identifying both successful strategies and barriers to progress and communicate them to the public.
 - vi. Being responsible for public education about the Master Plan and the progress of implementation.
- b. **Coordinate an annual end-of-year joint meeting** of all boards, committees, and local officials in Rye that are active partners in the implementation of the Master Plan to evaluate progress from the past year and plan for the upcoming year. This

would include the Planning Board, Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board, Town Departments, and other select groups.

- c. **Regularly report on the progress of the 2035 Master Plan** to the public through media channels, the town’s email lists, a newsletter, and through the town’s website.
- d. **Provide a progress report on the Master Plan annually** at Town Meeting and in the Town Report.
- e. **Ensure the Town’s Planning Department serves the role of “tracker” to document progress and the completion of specific action items** in a master implementation table that includes detailed information including responsible party, potential partners, and level of priority. This will ensure consistency and accountability over the coming years.
- f. **Annually review the goals identified in the Master Plan** related to housing and other issues and amend them when necessary due to changes in conditions, information, or legal requirements. This should be done in manner that is coordinated with the Rye Beach Village District’s efforts, when possible, given the unique planning and zoning relationship between the Town and Village District and compliance with RSA 674: 59.

Land and Development

• Economy and Future Development

- a. Create a Planning and Design Workshop Series for the Route 1 Corridor to create a vision for this area of town that is compatible with the Future Land Use Strategy. This will inform the drafting of land use regulations and infrastructure investments that will support the desired vision for this area of town. The resulting zoning should promote mixed use development, including housing and commercial activity, as outlined in Rye’s Future Land Use Strategy.
- b. Consider establishing a [Tax Increment Financing District \(TIF\)](#) to fund future investments along the Route 1 corridor.
- c. Identify potential parcels in the Town Center suitable for small businesses, like a coffee shop, and ensure these areas are zoned to support and foster this type of development.
- d. Continue to improve the streetscape environment in the Town Center and the commercial areas of Rye’s coastline by:
 - i. Creating new and maintaining existing landscaped areas
 - ii. Maintaining and expanding pedestrian-scale walkways and lighting as needed, and
 - iii. Incorporating wayfinding signage as needed.
- e. Conduct further studies of the water and sewer infrastructure capacity and service areas and use these findings to inform the location and density of future development within Rye.

• Housing Solutions

- a. Review the findings of the *2024 Rye Land Use Regulation Audit* and pursue possible land use regulation modifications that increase housing opportunities. Engage the public in this process and consider the pros and cons, level of effort required, identify support (or

lack thereof) for such changes, and anticipate the level of impact of these regulation changes would have on housing.

- b. Identify development regulation amendments that will help Rye meet its housing needs as identified in the *2023 Rye Housing Needs Assessment* while maintaining the characteristics of the community expressed in the Master Plan. These could include:
 - i. Promote accessory dwelling unit construction to homeowners as a viable option for earning supplementary income and contributing to Rye's housing solutions. This could include creating design guidance and educational materials on ADU construction, allowing detached ADUs by right, and reviewing the town's ADU regulations on a regular basis to identify ways to make improvements to the ordinance.
 - ii. Review the conservation land development ordinance and identify ways to reduce barriers and encourage this type of subdivision in town.
 - iii. Consider allowing duplexes by-right strategically in certain areas of town, following the Future Land Use Strategy.
 - iv. Investigate zoning changes to allow for higher density housing along the Route 1 corridor.
 - v. Consider the establishment of an inclusionary zoning provision to promote the development of affordable housing units which could include, but is not limited to, density bonuses, growth control exemptions, and a streamlined application process.
- c. Maintain existing regulations or expand regulations that help reduce the risk of natural hazards - particularly from flooding and coastal storms - as key to protecting existing housing stock. This may require discouraging new housing in some areas and promoting new housing in areas less susceptible to hazards.
- d. Conduct additional public outreach on housing related land use regulation changes, particularly those regulation modifications that could be made to help Rye address the housing needs of residents and help the town to follow state housing laws.

- **Multi-Modal Transportation Solutions**

- a) Develop and adopt a town-wide [Complete Streets Policy](#) to ensure all new roadways are designed to accommodate all modes of transportation. This will ensure bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation improvements, along with vehicular traffic improvements, are considered during roadway maintenance and planning projects to the greatest extent possible.
- b) Review the 2009 Safe Routes to School Plan and determine how it can inform future pedestrian infrastructure improvements in the town center, especially when looking at connectivity between the town center, junior high, and the elementary school.
- c) Expand pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks and multi-use paths, where appropriate and enhance pedestrian connectivity throughout town. Priority areas should be roads that connect active areas of town, like the coast or the town center; specific destinations, like the schools or recreation facilities; and neighborhoods where people live. At a minimum, this should include Washington Road, Route 1A, and Wallis Road.
- d) Expand bicycle infrastructure, including bicycle lanes and off-road paths, where appropriate and enhance connectivity throughout town. Priority areas should be roads that connect active areas of town, like the coast or the town center, and specific destinations, like the schools or recreation facilities; and neighborhoods

where people live. Utilize NHDOT's recommended bike routes map to identify opportunities for bike infrastructure expansion.

- e) Investigate ways to capture potential bicycle traffic from the NH Seacoast Greenway by creating bike-friendly roadways that connect to key locations in Rye including the coastline.
- f) Improve beach accessibility. This includes identifying areas where pedestrian safety can be improved, including adding sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic calming, crossing devices, and improving parking regulations to alleviate congestion.
- g) Evaluate roads for sufficient emergency access and make improvements to those that are insufficient. Connect older cul-de-sac roads that lack connections to one another to improve emergency vehicle access should the primary road be obstructed and improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.
- h) Investigate the feasibility of expanding Rye's Senior Serve public transportation service.
- i) Continue to allocate additional annual funding for regular road pavement projects. Repaving roads also provides an opportunity to create additional pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Disclaimer – The action items listed below are meant to be complementary and add to those thoroughly provided in previous reports such as the Rye Natural Resource Inventory, Rye Hazard Mitigation Plan, Rye Vulnerability Assessment, and others.

- **Building Code, Zoning, and Regulatory Changes**
 - a. Continue to minimize development in areas likely to be inundated by sea level rise and storm surges through regulatory amendments and best practices. Consider the following:
 - i. Review land use regulations and identify potential amendments based on the NH [Coastal Flood Risk Guidance](#).
 - ii. Implement zoning changes to prevent new construction in vulnerable areas of the coast.
 - iii. Adapt building codes to ensure new developments are designed to account for flooding, sea level rise, and increased storm intensity.
 - iv. Increase building setbacks in shoreland zones.
 - v. Encourage the protection of riparian buffers and maintain floodplains in their natural state through updated zoning.
 - vi. Minimize the increase of impervious surfaces through Rye's land use regulations.
 - vii. Review and amend the existing wetland regulations to better protect wetlands.
 - viii. Prioritize water-dependent uses in flood risk areas. Examples include marinas, fishing and aquaculture operations, and recreational water uses.
 - ix. Evaluate existing vegetative buffer requirements and setbacks from tidal wetlands, freshwater wetlands, and surface waters and identify improvements to strengthen these to better address the impacts of

climate change; maintain [ecosystem services](#) (e.g. flood storage, storm surge attenuation, and to allow for inland migration of tidal marsh systems and conversion of fresh freshwater systems to tidal systems to accommodate projected changes in sea-levels.

- x. Establish a Coastal Hazard Overlay District with boundaries encompassing projected future flood hazard zones presented in the New Hampshire Coastal Viewer platform. The Coastal Hazard Overlay District should have higher regulatory standards to protect against flood impacts from sea-level rise and coastal storm surge. The Town of Durham recently adopted a [Coastal Hazard Overlay District](#) which applies higher standards for building freeboard height and other provisions to lessen vulnerability of new buildings and facilities to flooding due to sea level rise.
 - xi. Consider establishing a marsh migration overlay zone to prohibit new development in areas of predicted marsh migration under specific scenarios and timeframes. Utilize the 2024 NH Salt Marsh Plan as a resource.
 - b. Update property assessment practices to account for the impacts of sea level rise on future property values.
- **Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment and Resiliency Upgrades**
 - a) Identify and conduct a vulnerability assessment of coastal infrastructure (such as roadways, culverts, hard structures, etc.). Engage other partners and landowners in these efforts as needed.
 - b) Based on the assessment results, implement infrastructure improvements and coastal protection measures to minimize the impacts from flooding and erosion. This includes maintenance of existing infrastructure, and new measures that may include bank protection, berm construction, elevating the site on fill, constructing floodwalls, and upgrading drainage systems. Living shorelines should be utilized as much as possible to minimize the negative impacts of protection measures on local habitats, reduce "reflectance" of wave energy on adjacent sites, increase the lifespan and decrease management requirements for the protection measure, and provide environmental benefits.
 - c) Conduct a comprehensive study of flooding projections and impacts on the Jenness Beach Neighborhood and identify a plan of action for increasing resilience in this area of town. Aside from rebuilding seawalls, this may include drain repair, replacing collapsed pipes, and ongoing maintenance efforts by the town and state.
 - d) Determine sources of funding for infrastructure projects and implementation efforts. The American Flood Coalition developed a document on Federal Funding Opportunities for Flood Resilience – A Guide for Small Cities.
 - e) Establish a stormwater utility and fee to fund stormwater related coastal and groundwater resilience projects.
 - **Emergency Preparedness**
 - a. Continue to support and implement the action plan identified in Rye's 2022 Hazard Mitigation Plan. This should include:
 - i. Updating this document regularly.
 - ii. Ensuring written evacuation plans and procedures are prepared for Rye's at-risk areas.

- iii. Ensuring evacuation routes are well-publicized and understood by the public and that they are marked with signage.
 - iv. Communicating evacuation routes to the public on the Town's website.
 - v. Coordinating evacuation plans with other towns in the coastal region, as well as with the State.
 - b. Improve emergency management, coordination, and delivery mechanisms to ensure continuity of services to essential facilities, people, businesses, and employment centers.
 - c. Maintain emergency access to critical facilities and essential services including schools, emergency response buildings, and municipal infrastructure. Maintain emergency routes with expanded road shoulders should Route 1A become inundated from a weather event or natural hazard.
 - d. Consider allocating emergency funds for natural disaster cleanup and repair.
 - e. Enhance communication systems for residents during storm events, including text alerts, etc.
 - f. Coordinate with neighboring towns and state agencies to coordinate emergency management services and planning.
- **Public Outreach and Education**
 - a) Prioritize public outreach efforts to engage and inform community members of flood hazards, vulnerabilities, and opportunities to increase resiliency. This also provides an opportunity to solicit input from residents. Education should include what to do when a flood occurs or is forecasted, and other important information.
 - b) Provide information to property owners about constructing living shorelines and the importance of retaining the functions of natural shorelines. This should include ways to implement landscaping best practices.
 - c) Educate property owners on steps they can take to reduce the impact of hazards on their properties. Encourage private property owners to incorporate the best available climate science and vulnerability assessments in their decision making and preparedness plans.
- **Salt Marsh and Coastal Open Space Protection and Restoration**
 - a) Participate in regional or state-wide groundwater rise and saltwater intrusion studies.
 - b) Conduct a study of Rye's drinking water resources to better understand potential threats, impacts, and solutions.
 - c) Assess lands where the protection of tidal and freshwater wetlands would provide tangible benefits to protect against flooding, or where conservation of open space will reduce flooding and promote the inland migration of species and habitats such as tidal marshes. Then, prioritize properties that can be permanently preserved as a mitigation strategy to reduce impacts from development in high-risk coastal areas and from rising sea levels. This should include prioritizing land conservation initiatives and marsh restoration in areas of projected marsh migration. This effort should be built into the Strategic Conservation Plan action referenced under the Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability section.

- d) Assure uninhibited saltmarsh tidal flow by regularly inspecting and cleaning out culverts and bridges of debris. Consider replacing culverts that are undersized, perched, or misaligned.
- e) Utilize the New Hampshire Salt Marsh Plan to guide town action and priorities for marsh restoration, conservation of adjacent lands to tidal and freshwater wetlands, improving marsh condition, reducing vulnerability, or facilitating migration.
- **Coordinated Beach Stewardship and Preservation of Beach Access**
 - a) Continue to improve the accessibility of Rye’s beaches and coastal areas for residents and visitors.
 - b) Work with partners to make improvements that address erosion, cleanliness, and runoff from parking areas and other impervious surfaces.

Community

- **Community Events and Programming**
 - a) Support existing annual community events in town and identify opportunities for new community events.
 - b) Create new public outdoor gathering spaces that provide opportunities for flexible programming, events, and informal gathering in Rye.
 - c) Utilize existing community spaces as Rye continues to provide community building and recreation programming, including the school gyms and library.
- **Recreation Improvements**
 - a) Implement the Town’s newly developed Recreation Master Plan.
 - b) Identify and prioritize existing recreational facilities in need of improvement to better address safety, access, and general maintenance issues. Estimate the related costs and develop a six-year schedule that can be incorporated into the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
 - c) Explore ways to expand capacity and funding for parks and recreation field maintenance and improvements to best meet the needs of the public.
 - d) Add amenities to existing recreation facilities (parks, trailheads, and athletic fields) as appropriate including trash cans, bike racks, dog waste bags, restrooms, and water fountains.
 - e) Work with the state to make improvements to Wallis Sands Beach including the addition of accessible restroom facilities, trash receptacles, and better year-round access.
 - f) Make improvements to Goss Farm including more defined parking and trails.
 - g) Make improvements to Parson’s Field to ensure it is better utilized as a community gathering space.
- **Expand Recreation Infrastructure Town-Wide**
 - a) Explore opportunities to expand recreation infrastructure in town to meet public needs. This may include parks, trails, playgrounds, additional outdoor athletic courts and fields, a bicycle pump track, etc.
 - b) Investigate the feasibility and need for a dedicated indoor recreation center for the Town of Rye.
 - c) Investigate opportunities to add new trails on existing or new conserved lands and increase trail connectivity throughout the community.

- **Recreation Promotion and Outreach**
 - a. Publicize Rye’s parks, open spaces, and recreation resources to residents and other community members and encourage their use by:
 - i. Creating a public GIS layer of open spaces, trails, parks, and playgrounds in Rye.
 - ii. Maintaining maps for all parks, forests, and recreation resources and distribute at the town office, library, and elsewhere.
 - iii. Improving signage and trail markings.
 - iv. Partnering with local organizations to identify other strategies for publicizing these resources to the public.
- **Partnerships**
 - a) Encourage collaboration between the Recreation Department and Rye Senior SERVE to coordinate a broad range of day trips and outings for older adults.
 - b) Maintain a strong partnership with the Rye School District.
- **Accessibility**
 - a) Evaluate and improve, where needed, the ADA accessibility of Rye’s public facilities, transportation network, parks, and public spaces.
- **Heritage and Culture**
 - b) Seek ways to highlight Rye’s history and culture through public art and interpretive signage at key locations across Rye’s built environments and natural landscapes.
 - c) Consider applying to become a Certified Local Government community through the NH Division of Historic Resources to access grants related to historic and cultural resources including preservation, education, and others.
 - d) Provide educational resources to the public on the relationship between Rye’s history and heritage, recreation, conservation, community pride, and more.
 - e) Consider implementing and promoting the state barn preservation incentive program to protect historic barns in town.
- **An Aging Population**
 - f) Evaluate elder services in Rye and the surrounding region and determine if services are adequate for the town’s aging population.

Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability

- **Community Power**
 - a) Increase participation in Rye’s Community Power Program through public education and outreach.
 - b) Consider developing microgrids to minimize disruptions to service and decentralize electricity.
 - c) Continue to expand access to three phase power in Rye.
- **Renewable Energy Development and Energy Efficiency**
 - a) Consider developing community solar projects on town-owned land.
 - b) Reduce regulatory restrictions for larger solar projects.
 - c) Upgrade building codes to meet the energy reduction requirements of the International Energy Conservation Code.

- d) Support and incentivize the efforts of residents, landowners, and businesses to complete energy efficiency measures, upgrade heating systems, install renewable energy systems, and invest in battery storage systems.
- **Sustainable Transportation**
 - a) Research and investigate the feasibility of transitioning Rye’s municipal fleet to electric vehicles.
 - b) Strategically invest in electric vehicle charging stations on select town-owned sites.
 - c) Promote electric vehicle charging stations on private land and remove any related regulatory barriers that may exist.
- **Strategic Land Conservation**
 - a) Continue to support and implement the recommendations from the 2021 Natural Resource Inventory. This should include documenting key natural resource features and updating the natural resource inventory on a regular basis, such as every 10 years.
 - b) Create a strategic conservation plan for Rye that identifies and prioritizes the remaining undeveloped lands for acquisition/conservation, preserves the character of the rural areas of town, increases Rye’s coastal resilience, protects water quality and quantity, and creates wildlife corridors and ecological connections. Identify key parcels of concern and critical importance, as part of this planning process. Prioritize the conservation and regulatory protection of lands over or near public water supply aquifers, wellhead protection areas, coastline, and marshes for viewing and recreation and public use where appropriate.
 - c) Continue to pursue conservation opportunities through partnerships with local land protection organizations and local landowners to acquire and conserve important open space in Rye. This is especially important for land near the drinking water aquifers, the coastline, and in the rural areas of town. Balance other community needs, such as housing, with the prioritizing of these future conservation efforts.
 - d) Devise a funding strategy for future conservation that includes more than taxpayer money. This could include grants, use fees, and other sources that increase available funding for land conservation. As part of this, investigate the feasibility of developing a conservation fund to help supply funding for future land acquisition and conservation projects.
 - e) Plant native trees and plants to support pollinators and other wildlife and improve current land management practices on municipally owned lands to reflect best sustainable management practices and nature-based solutions.
- **Surface and Subsurface Water Quality and Quantity Protection**
 - a) Prioritize wetland restoration in areas identified in the Natural Resource Inventory for stormwater mitigation.
 - b) Continue to engage landowners and foster stormwater best management practices through MS4 permit requirements.
 - c) Continue investing in long term water quality monitoring and investigatory sampling of Rye’s water bodies.
 - d) Continue monitoring fecal sources in Parson’s Creek and continue working to better understand how septic systems may be impacted by saltwater intrusion.
 - e) Protect headwater streams, particularly Berry’s Brook where the impacts of pollution on the brook’s water quality restrict fishing currently; and Baily Brook,

which is home to important groundwater resources including two gravel wells, two bedrock wells, and other potential wells currently under investigation.

- f) Incorporate guidance from NHDES to enhance water quality measures in the land use code.
 - g) Conduct a vernal pool survey for the town to inform future wetland protection efforts.
 - h) Review Rye's wetland conservation ordinance to ensure it meets or exceeds best practices set out by the NH Department of Environmental Services for buffers, setbacks, etc.
 - i) Require or incentivize green infrastructure, low impact design, nature-based solutions, and stormwater infiltration best practices in future development projects through Rye's land use regulations.
 - j) Develop an inventory of properties along shorelines that have old septic systems that need to be upgraded. Provide educational materials to those homeowners to inform them of potential funding options for system replacement. This could include encouraging septic system testing.
- **Stewardship of Open Space Resources**
 - a) Create and implement stewardship plans for major public open space parcels to address any needed resource enhancement and improvements to public access.
 - b) Combat the spread of invasive species, particularly purple loosestrife and common reed.
 - c) Keep waterfront and adjacent lands free of trash, debris, and dog waste.
 - **Public Education and Outreach**
 - a) Conduct public education to increase awareness and understanding of Rye's natural resources, best management practices, and other environmental assets. This could include:
 - i. Educating town staff and the broader community on reducing or eliminating fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide use on town property and residential lawns; and alternative pest management mechanisms that do not harm water quality.
 - ii. Educating the broader community on Rye's Community Power Program, energy efficiency upgrade programs for homeowners, and sustainability issues.
 - iii. Educating the broader community on the importance of recycling and composting and how they can engage in these practices in town.

Municipal Operations and Organization

- **Municipal Processes**
 - a) Review the town's permitting and administrative procedures as they pertain to the land use code. Identify ways to streamline the process, make applications easy to find and navigate, digitize forms, and ensure the materials and process are easy to follow by applicants.
 - b) Evaluate ways to improve the enforcement of Rye's land use regulations. This includes improving the tracking systems used, analyzing staff roles, and identifying where capacity needs to be increased.

- c) Explore alternative governance structures such as expanding the selectboard or reevaluating the current roles and functions within the town administration. This may include investigating the potential to create a town manager position and may require requests for more information, cost-benefit analysis, and clarity on specific duties and responsibilities of such a position.
 - d) Prioritize clear municipal communications, transparency, and broader representation within local government to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and that barriers to participation are reduced.
 - e) Develop strategies and an overarching approach to enhance municipal communication to residents and other community members regarding town projects, initiatives, permitting regulations, and events. This should include examining the use and effectiveness of the town website, newsletter, media channels, and other forms of communication.
- **Municipal Facilities Assessment**
 - a) Commission a town-wide municipal facilities assessment. This should include an action plan, a timeline to guide budgeting and clear details that will inform the updating or replacement of Rye’s municipal facilities. This should include:
 - i. Modernization, upgrades, renovations, or replacement of existing municipal buildings.
 - ii. Renovation, restoration, and improvement of the Town Hall building including additional features that support community use and the restoration of its historic character.
 - iii. Improvements to Rye’s Transfer Station including improved traffic flow, expanded recycling options, and better handling of hazardous waste.
 - iv. Expansion of the library, including enhancements to its facilities and increasing community programming.
 - v. Upgrading the Recreation Department buildings and recreation facilities based on findings from the Recreation Master Plan.
 - vi. Proper maintenance of the athletic fields.
 - vii. Integration of the energy audits completed for all of Rye’s municipal buildings to guide future energy efficiency retrofits.
- **Planning and Tracking**
 - a) Develop an asset management program for tracking the maintenance of all town-owned facilities and infrastructure, and to inform Enfield’s Capital Improvement Planning.
 - b) Improve the capital improvement planning process by forecasting capital improvement needs further into the future beyond the current standard of six years. This will ensure there is enough time to properly plan for funding and communicate projects clearly to residents.
 - c) Manage public infrastructure to keep pace with current and future capacity demands and resilience in conjunction with the state agencies.