

# Town Of Meredith Visual Resource Inventory And Assessment



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**NOTE:** In reading the text of this report, reference is often made to specific numbered viewpoints. Slides of views related to all viewpoints are included in Appendix C and are coded with the corresponding viewpoint number.

In addition, a complete set of photographs related to the viewpoints are included as a separate component of the report. They are also coded by viewpoint number.

A reference map of viewpoint locations can be found in Appendix A.

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## **Background**

The Town of Meredith lies in the heart of the Lakes Region of New Hampshire and is located on the shoreline of Lake Winnepesaukee, one of the most recognized features in the State and in New England. Meredith also serves as one of the gateways to the



White Mountains located to the north. The Town offers a mixture of outstanding scenery and natural beauty that is made up of a combination of the lakes, surrounding mountains, rural environment, and traditional New England architecture found within the community. Despite the pressures of development that face this area and that have occurred, especially along the shorefront, the Town has for the most

part maintained a unique character and quality of life that many other Town's have not been able to achieve or hold on to.

Currently, the Town is in the process of updating its Community Plan. The desire to develop direction and a framework for Town growth that would enhance and preserve the existing quality of life and natural beauty is evident in the vision statement established for this planning effort. The vision statement outlines a desired condition that reads in part:

- "Our small New England village and surrounding countryside are complete with a rich history, exemplary architecture, .... picturesque scenery and friendly atmosphere. This setting helps to define what Meredith is, and why it is so special to us."
- "We are blessed by the location of our community. Our enviable location has been, and remains, integral to our way of life. As a destination we are readily accessible and surrounded with beautiful lakes and mountain vistas....Conversely, our location also represents major challenges as we strive to protect and improve the very quality of life that defines Meredith."
- "The abundance and quality of our natural resources contributes to our quality of life in many different ways. Open spaces reinforce our rural community character. Our lakes, ponds and forests provide invaluable wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. The pleasing, simple beauty of our views and vistas complement a chosen, more relaxed life style."
- "...Our small Town character and village setting are cherished and protected to a degree that is the envy of the region...."

- “The long standing environmental preservation and conservation ethic within the community progresses to an unparalleled level. Critical natural resources such as wetlands, undeveloped shoreline areas, scenic vistas....are conserved through a comprehensive open space strategy. Private landowners (old and new alike) recognize and welcome their responsibility as land stewards....”
- “....Our niche as a visitor destination is further developed without compromising the quality of our physical, visual and natural environments....”

It was in the context of the vision statement, along with concerns related to development issues facing the Town and that could potentially effect the Town’s visual quality and character, that a decision was made to complete a visual resource inventory and assessment of critical viewpoints and viewed areas within the community.

This inventory and assessment will serve as input into the planning and decision making process to help develop and define guidelines for all issues being addressed and to help achieve the balance between desired growth and development and maintaining the quality of the visual resource. Key issues that will benefit from this assessment include those dealing with commercial growth, second home and condominium development, lakeshore and hillside development, wireless communication development, and specific protection of those viewpoints that are at the very heart of defining the character of Meredith.

### **Project Goals**

The goal of the inventory/assessment is to locate and identify the key visual resources in the Town of Meredith that give the Town its character (“sense of place”) and which should be given full and adequate consideration in developing the future direction of the Town as well as the standards that will be outlined to address key management issues. Also, to identify those visual resources that are of such significance that they should be preserved and protected in themselves.

### **Scope of Project**

The desired end product for this project is for application of the inventory and assessment Town-wide. However, funding limitations dictate the need to break the project into two phases.

Phase I, completed in March 1999, was directed toward the inventory and related assessment of viewpoints and views associated with the key gateway routes into the Town of Meredith. The gateway routes include Hwy. 3, Hwy. 104, Hwy. 25, Parade Road, Waukegan Street, the northern portion of Barnard Ridge Road, and Pleasant Street. These routes were selected and given priority in the inventory and assessment process based on two factors. One was that assessment related to these features would

give coverage to a majority of those elements that contribute to the Town's total visual resource and that receive the benefit of a majority of viewers.

The other primary factor why dominance was given to the gateway routes for Phase I related to the development of the Town's wireless communication ordinance. The timing of implementing this ordinance along with the significance of incorporating visual effects data into its development was critical. There was a direct tie between the gateway routes and potential placement of wireless communication towers that could potentially have an effect on the visual resource. Work under this phase provided input into the Town's Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Ordinance.

Other applications of this initial work have related to use of the report in 1) development and support of the Highway 3 Scenic Byway Application; 2) proposal for a management initiative for Page Brook Prime Wetland; and 3) testimony during the NH Department of Transportation hearing on the proposed Highway 3 and 106 intersection reconstruction project.

Phase II, completed in December 2000, compliments the initial work completed under Phase I and provides for inventory and assessment of viewpoints and related views for the remaining portions of the Town. The work completed under Phase II was concentrated in the Meredith Neck area and the western portion of the Town, especially that area related to the Chemung Range.

In addition to completion of the basic inventory and assessment for these areas, Phase II includes outlining Best Management Practices for Hillside and Ridgeline Development. Of the several issues identified during Phase I, sensitivity to undeveloped hillside and ridgeline locations rated as a high priority land use planning need. These general guidelines are included as Appendix C.

Emphasis of the work completed under this phase also includes:

- Recognition of the significance of the more remote areas of the community, including the trails associated with the Hamlin Town Forest and Waukewan Highlands.
- Higher recognition of the historic and cultural components of the community as important elements in the make-up of the Town's Character and Highly Significant Views.
- Coordination of the findings and recommendations of the report with the Town of Meredith's proposed Architectural Design Review Ordinance.

## **Process**

### **Phase I**

Step 1 – Overview of the project and general review of the Town’s visual resources and related issues with John Edgar, Meredith Town Planner. This step involved two field trips. The first was oriented toward an awareness and understanding of the variety of views located throughout the Town and the development issues related to them. It also involved general discussions on how the resulting inventory and assessment might be incorporated into the Town master planning process and in the development of standards and guidelines concerning various developments and future growth. The second field review dealt primarily with the gateway routes and a more specific overview related to the project as outlined under Phase I and defining the limits of the project.

Step 2 – This step centered around the field inventory work. It involved several days of driving the highway corridors, identifying the viewpoints, photographing views associated with the viewpoints, recording viewpoint data (Map location, angle and cone of view, and appropriate notes related to the viewpoint).

Step 3 – Catalog photographs and slides. Computer data input. Download USGS terrain data and create project topographic map for viewpoint analysis.

Step 4 – Viewpoint classification and determination of significance.

Step 5 – Viewpoint analysis and visibility studies (This step was completed utilizing Visual FX software).

Step 6 – Based on steps 4 and 5, develop critical viewed area map. This map represents those areas of the Town within the views of the key or most significant viewpoints. These viewpoints were determined on a basis of desirable visual elements present (dominant landforms, water, cultural features, etc.), integrity or wholeness of the view was high (did not have distracting elements within the view), historic significance, best representative view of Town character, and the general concern of the public was considered to be high. Areas delineated included both foreground and middleground areas with respect to the viewpoint.

Step 7 – Work with John Edgar (Town Planner), Tim Bates (Legal Council), and Alan MacRae (Communications Management Specialist) to draft District Map for Town’s Wireless Communication Ordinance.

Step 8 – Meet with the Conservation and Community Recreation Subcommittee to provide overview of work completed to date, obtain feedback, and seek additional comment and input into remaining work to be completed.

Step 9 – Complete remaining field work to fill any data gaps or to follow-up on needs identified in steps listed above, especially steps 7 and 8.

Step 10 – Complete final Wireless Communication Ordinance District Map and provide input into draft for the Town Wireless Communication Ordinance. Attend first public hearing on proposed ordinance.

Step 11 – Complete first draft of summary report and documentation for Phase I. Work with John Edgar on management recommendations. Provide opportunity for John's review of the initial draft of report.

Step 12 – Complete final draft of Phase I report.

## **Phase II**

- Viewpoints for all remaining areas of Meredith not covered under Phase I were identified, classified, photographed and documented using same basic format outlined above (Slides of views were not provided under this phase).
- Report was updated and amended to reflect completion of Phase II.
- Viewpoint Map was updated to reflect additional Viewpoints 55 – 92.
- Minor adjustments were made to the Critical Viewed Area Map based on new viewpoint data.
- Appendix B updated with additional Viewed Area Maps for newly identified Highly Significant Views.
- Viewpoint photo file updated to document Viewpoints 55 – 92.
- Drafted Best Management Practice Guidelines for Hillside and Ridgeline Development (Appendix C).



## **Landscape Character**

### **Framework For Landscape Character Description**

Landscape Character consist of the combination of physical, biological and cultural attributes that make each landscape identifiable or unique. It embodies distinct landscape attributes that exist throughout a geographic area that create its visual and cultural image or impression (“sense of place”). Existing Landscape Character may range from primarily natural appearing landscapes to those that are heavily influenced by cultural features, and in some cases may be dominated by negative elements. Generally, the Existing Landscape Character description includes the natural scenic attributes of the landscape (elements related to landform, water, vegetation, rock) in combination with the existing land use pattern or cultural features (open fields, rock walls, historic structures, etc.)

The purposes of Existing Landscape Character descriptions are:

- To establish the current overall visual impression of a landscape and to identify those attributes that create or contribute to its identity (“sense of place”).
- To establish a baseline from which to measure scenic integrity or wholeness of the landscape.
- To provide a reference for potential changes in the landscape that might occur due to project or general management proposals.

### **Town Of Meredith Existing Landscape Character Description**

The Town of Meredith encompasses approximately 38 square miles of land that range from flat to gently rolling to minor mountain formations near its western edge. Although it doesn’t include any major formations within its boundaries, it is surrounded by mountain ranges that serve as magnificent backdrops to open fields, many of the highway and trail vistas, and the larger lakes that exist within the Town. What Meredith may lack in major landforms it makes up in its abundance of lakes including substantial frontage on Lake Winnepesaukee, the largest lake in New England. Other major lakes located in the Town include Winnisquam, Waukegan, Wicwas, and Pemigewasset. In addition, there are numerous ponds that can be found throughout the landscape.

Wetlands are also a natural water feature occurring in various locations. Some of the most dominate being the areas associated with Page Brook and Hatch Brook Prime Wetland as well as Dolloff Brook. Often the shorelines of these water features serve



as key viewing points as well as adding a key scenic attribute to some of the more significant views located in the Town. In some cases, such as Page Brook or Hatch Brook Prime Wetlands, they not only have environmental significance, they are also important viewed areas and are visually unique in themselves. Other than small streams, there are no major linear water features that can be identified.

The majority of the Town is vegetated with overstory vegetation. Contrast of open area is usually found with the open wetland areas or in the few remaining open farm fields scattered throughout the community. There is a significant portion of Meredith that is not heavily developed and in many cases appears as undisturbed forest. This undisturbed wooded environment is most evident in the western portion of the Town in and around Leavitt and Ladd Mountains and Saddle, Meredith, and Bachelder Hills. Although new housing construction is occurring in most areas of Meredith, there is not a large amount of hillside development that is highly evident and slopes appear dominantly vegetated. The primary location where residential developments are beginning to occur and becoming visually evident in areas outside the village and in somewhat of a natural setting include Tracy Way off Parade Road and the Grouse Point Condominiums. Effects of development in these settings outlines the importance of good site planning and incorporating construction standards that minimize contrast in the landscape.

The primary concentration of cultural features occurs within and around the immediate village itself. Overall, the village of Meredith is quite picturesque and has retained much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture and image that one envisions when visiting New England. Even though new development has occurred along some of the major routes entering into the village, especially Highway 3, the Town has managed to retain a desirable image. Visually, the focal point of the village area is centered around Meredith Bay. To the Town's benefit, rehabilitation and development work over the last few years around the water front has contributed to enhancement of the villages New England character. The combination of open park land adjacent to Lake Winnepesaukee, restoration of the Mill Complex, commercial development that for the most part has repeated the existing architecture, and in a setting that has the immediate village and distant mountains as a backdrop, presents a mix of attributes that are unique and



dominant in defining the visual character of Meredith. Factors that might distract from this setting include conflicting architectural styles, commercial signing, a major highway close to the lake, and separation of the immediate shorefront from the core village setting created by the highway.

Also important to the Town of Meredith are factors that relate to lake or water use that, if not planned properly, could have undesired effects on the exiting Town character and viewed landscape. Some boating activities, boating facilities, and other water based recreation activities could have permanent or temporary effects similar to those created by structures constructed on land. With the importance of lakes as a key attribute in scenic views, thorough evaluation of projects or other proposals on use is of critical importance.

The other major landscape attributes that are important in defining the Town's visual character are the rural characteristics and the historic element. However, little remains of the agricultural element once very prevalent. Few open fields can be found. Those that still exist offer the remaining evidence of an agricultural based existence that was part of much of early New Hampshire. The dominant open fields that do remain, besides offering visual evidence of the past, also offer desirable open areas in contrast to wooded and enclosed space. They generally offer the opportunity for outstanding views as well as being points of visually interest in themselves, especially when farm structures are still located on the property. Moulton and Longridge Farms provide obvious examples of these past rural settings. The community planning process has recognized open space planning and the need to preserve this element as part of the Town's character as an important issue. The Town does hold a conservation easement on the Moulton Farm. There has also been initiative taken to open up some of the old fields such as the one located off Parade Road that offers magnificent views to the north.



Open space also exist in the form of several parks distributed across the Town. These include Prescott Park, Leavitt Beach, Scenic Park, Heskey Park, Swazey Park, Waukegan Highlands Park, and Hamlin Conservation Area. There are also several gravel roads, primarily in the vicinity of Leavitt and Ladd Mountains, that have been given a scenic road designation to help maintain their rural character.

Overall, the Existing Landscape Character of Meredith offers a unique combination and blend of attributes that make it special among the towns located in the Lakes Region and especially around Lake Winnepesaukee. The focus of its unique visual character is centered around the bay and village area but also exist in the scattered remaining rural element and the natural appearing areas that still remain within the Town. To complement this setting, there are many opportunities for outstanding

views that present these attributes in a combination that creates a signature on the image that defines the character of Meredith. All one needs to do is spend a little time around Scenic Park, coming into Meredith Bay from the water, or perhaps setting by one of the large old maples looking across the Moulton Farm fields at the Ossipee Range to understand and acknowledge the image that defines the Landscape Character of Meredith.

## **Viewpoint Summary**

A total of 92 viewpoints were identified in completing Phase I and II of the project. In some cases, the individual viewpoints inventoried included multiple views which have been identified as an a,b or c component of the viewpoint. These components might include opposite views down a highway from the same viewpoint or may include a different perspective of a view by moving a position slightly in the general area of the viewpoint. Viewpoints and related views described ranged from simple and rather confined, but visually important viewpoints (due to a point of interest involved or determined critical due to its position and orientation in the landscape), to highly significant views that included a number of desirable visual attributes such as water, highly dynamic landforms, and interesting cultural or historic features. These views were often panoramic in nature. An examples of the more simple view would be looking across a small field with a hill as a backdrop or one that was simply looking down a stretch of highway with a directed focus on a specific landform at the end of the road alignment. The Highly Significant views would be represented by those found around Meredith Bay that include combinations of the lake, mountains, and elements of the village within the view, or looking across an open field with mountains in the background.

## **View Analysis**

The primary focus related to the viewpoints is not as much on the viewpoint or viewing location itself but the view(s) that exist from that point. Although the dynamics and quality of the viewing location are important, it is what the viewer is observing that generates the significance of that particular location. In this regard, the first level of analysis that was completed for the views identified and documented was to assign a level of significance, i.e. what is the importance of a specific view compared to other views in the community. What is its level of scenic quality or attractiveness and what is its importance with regard to the well being and quality of life for the residents of Meredith. For the purposes of this project and anticipated application, it was felt that the ranking process should remain simple and be rather easy to understand for those using the data and product of this assessment.

There are numerous visual assessment methods that have been used to identify the quality and importance of landscapes. However, there tend to be common attributes among these processes that can be identified and applied in a more general application to classify those landscapes that are considered high in scenic attractiveness and important to the viewer. Most of the attributes used to classify landscapes are natural occurring physical features but also include positive cultural features placed on the landscape, i.e. rural and pastoral (agricultural) features. The natural physical features found are usually catagorized under landform (mountains, hills, etc.), water bodies (lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands, etc.), rockform (cliffs, outcrops, etc.), and vegetation (woods, grassland, openings, etc.). In most

cases the more dynamic any one of these attributes is by itself, or when they tend to occur in combination with each other, the more scenic the landscape. Also, the two attributes that tend to be a component in most highly scenic landscapes, and merit the highest rating factor when a rating system is used, are landform and water.

It is important to note that there is often mutual support between resource areas, where one serves as a key attribute or component to the other. As an example, concern and proper management for wetlands and open fields are important resource in themselves, the wetlands from an environmental stand point and the open field in an historic context. Yet these areas contribute or are key attributes to the visual resource and scenic quality of landscapes. Proper management of any specific resource often provides multiple benefits. This relationship between resource areas was the basis for much of the discussion under Landscape Character where key visual attributes were drawn from other resource areas.

Scenic integrity or wholeness of the viewed landscape is another component that needs to be taken into account. Landscapes with a high degree of scenic integrity



have conditions that create minimal evidence of discordant elements that take away from the aesthetic value of the view. Discordant elements might include alterations on the landscape resulting from timber harvest areas or other significant removal of vegetation, power lines, placement of structures, land alteration itself, or other alterations that are done in a way that they contrast highly with and/or

are not in keeping with the desired and valued character of the landscape. The contrasting roof of Annalee Doll warehouse that occurs in viewpoint 14a and 25, and the Grouse Point development which highly modified the existing landscape in viewpoint 1 and 21 offer examples of discordant elements in the landscape.

The U.S. Forest Service in its Scenery Management System process identifies three levels or classification of Scenic Attractiveness of landscapes – Distinctive, Typical, and Indistinctive. The classification that was the greatest concern for this project relates to Distinctive Landscapes. The definition for this class is:

“Areas where landform, vegetation pattern, water characteristics, and cultural features combine to provide unusual, unique, or outstanding scenic quality. These landscapes have strong positive attributes of variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony, uniqueness, pattern, and balance.”

The emotional and subjective aspects of scenic assessment are also part of the consideration that needs to be incorporated into determining the value of specific views. It is important to seek the input of those who experience these landscapes on

a day to day basis and to understand those views and scenes that are important to them and contribute to the value of the community. It helps provide a common sense approach in the designation of areas of outstanding scenic quality and in identifying those areas in the community that are important to those who live there. In this regard, both the Town Planner and the Conservation and Community Recreation Sub-Committee provided input and review of the information collected and the views identified as highly significant.

For this project the viewpoints and related views were broken into five categories to indicate their significance (See Table 1, page 13). These are Highly Significant, Important, Focal Landscapes, Point of Interest, and Potential View. Of these, the Highly Significant are the ones determined most critical to maintaining the Town's Visual Character and the quality of life within the community. Based on the general discussion above, they will tend toward high scenic quality. Most important, they contribute in a major way to the character of Meredith as outlined in the Existing Landscape Character summary described on page 6. Although a formal rating system was not used for this project, there was general criteria, based on the above discussion, that was consistently applied that did facilitate selection, especially for the Highly Significant Views:

- Variety in the views tended to be high and individual views included several of the positive attributes discussed for natural and cultural features.
- Integrity or wholeness of the views tended to be high. Either there was little development in the view or where there was, it was well integrated into the landscape with minimum distraction and in some cases added to the uniqueness of the composition. Scenes around the bay and village are examples.
- Scene or view had cultural or historic significance.
- Views selected provided the best representation of the Town's Landscape.
- For Phase I, there was group (Sub-Committee) involvement and support for the selection and classification of the viewpoints presented.

**Table 1 – Viewpoint Classification (Phase I / Viewpoint 1 – 54)**

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<u>Highly Significant</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Focal</u>	<u>Point of Interest</u>	<u>Potential</u>
VP 4	VP 1	VP 2	VP 4	VP 10
5	2	5	16b	32
6	3	6	17	47
12	7	9	18	
13	8	14a	19	
14a	9	25	30	
14b	11	26	31b	
17	15	27	34	
18	16a	31a	41	
19	26	33b	45	
20	28	36a	51a	
21	29	36b		
22a	31b	37		
22b	37	38		
23	39	42		
24	40	44		
33a	43	46		
33c	48	49		
35	49			
50				
51a				
51b				
52				
53				
54				



**Table 2 - Viewpoint Classification (Phase II / Viewpoint 55 - 92)**

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<u>Highly Significant</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Focal</u>	<u>Point of Interest</u>	<u>Potential</u>
VP 55	VP 58	VP 57	VP 62	VP 59
56	61	59	70	60
57	67	66	80	67
59	68	68	92	68
60	69	70		69
62	71	76		79
63	73			84
64	76			85
65	79			86
66	84			
70	85			
72	91			
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88				
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90				
92				

### **Critical Viewed Area Composite Map**

A composite map was prepared to identify those land areas that represented the most critical viewed areas related to the viewpoints identified in this project. Several factors provided the framework for the development of this map. For the most part, the map is representative of the viewed area as observed from those viewpoints categorized under Highly Significant. However, it also includes some portions of seen area observed from the other categories listed. Focal landscapes were especially evaluated for inclusion on the composite map due to their sensitive location in the landscape. Because of their very nature of being highly focal they tend to draw attention. More specifically, they would tend to draw attention to any development that was implemented on that location in the landscape. They tend to be any area that can be very difficult to implement a project without bringing attention to it, and in most respects are areas that should be avoided if the goal is to maintain the scenic attributes and wholeness of landscapes.

Another factor dealt with the concept of distance zones. For planning purposes, the viewed or seen area of landscapes are broken into three zones. These zones are foreground, middleground, and background. Each presents different considerations when being evaluated with respect to project development, planning and implementation:

- Foreground - defined as those landscapes ranging 0 – ½ miles in distance from the observer. These landscapes are usually subjected to more scrutiny than other distance zones. They are small in scale and detail of components (natural or man-made) is readily evident to the viewer.
- Middleground - defined as those landscapes ranging ½ - 4 miles in distance from the observer. When people view landscapes at this distance, they often view them more coherently and in better context with their surroundings than they do foreground landscapes. At this distance, one can usually still define detail of the various components found in the view (individual treeforms, fields, rock outcrops, structures). Form, texture, and color remain dominant elements and patterns become important in interpretation of the landscape. Middleground landscapes can be the most important for evaluating potential changes due to the scale and amount of the landscape being observed, the ability to still determine some level of detail, and potential to create contrast changes such as silhouetting along ridgelines, especially where vegetation is involved.

- Background – defined as those landscapes ranging from four miles distance to the horizon. Background areas often provide significant backdrops and pleasant distant vistas to landscape views. They are observed more in context of form and large patterns. Most detail that one can observe in foreground and middleground landscapes is not evident.

In application of the distance zones, major land features within the middleground zone of highly significant views were identified as critical viewed areas as were the related immediate foreground areas. Viewpoint 33a looking from Hwy 104 southwest across Wicwas Lake toward Leavitt and Ladd Mountains and adjacent ridgelines provides a good example of identifying the most important features in the view. Although all the viewed landscape observed from this viewpoint are significant and important, the dominant higher elevation peaks and lower ridgelines were key elements contributing to the scenic quality as well as being sensitive to potential changes because of their natural appearing characteristics, their dominance in the landscape, and were locations one tended to focus on. The immediate foreground area was also identified from this viewpoint as being critical as it contributed to overall scenic quality of the view and was relatively undisturbed. The entire view provided the best open panoramic view of a landscape where most of the lands observed were within the Town of Meredith. Other distant views identified usually included significant middleground located in adjacent towns.

The dominant critical viewed area delineated on the map lies in the central area of the Town. It incorporates several scenic attributes that include Meredith Bay (Lake Winnepesaukee) and Lake Waukegan along with adjacent shoreline features, the village area, several dominant landforms, two dominant agricultural features found in Meredith and other open space, and in general, most of the key attributes listed as important in identifying the character of Meredith. Several of the specific views that were used to delineate this particular area were highly scenic in themselves and will be important in future management of the Town. This is particularly true of those viewpoints identified around the bay area and that incorporate the lake and adjacent landforms.



Another factor contributing to delineation of this area related to landform and number of times viewed. There were a number of specific landforms that were a component in several different views. These included Pinnacle Hill, the hill adjacent to North View Drive, the hill adjacent to Lake Waukegan and forming the backdrop for the village area, Oak Hill, Pease Hill, and Barnard Ridge. Each landform can be found in a minimum of three of the highly significant viewpoints identified.

Although the map delineates those areas determined most critical, analysis also noted some areas that were less observed than most areas in the Town. These were not mapped but will at least be mentioned as this factor could have a bearing on certain types and levels of project proposals as related to management of scenic resources. The primary locations identified were the area of Gilman Hill and the area north of and outside the foreground of Highway 104 and West of Hatch Corner Road. However, setting the ability to observe factor aside, these areas still have qualities that would need to be evaluated for potential effects. This is particularly true of the later area as Dolloff Brook and associated wetlands are involved as well as some portions of Hatch Brook Prime Wetlands. Besides having environmental importance, wetland attributes generally contribute greatly to scenic quality when one is able to observe them.

Overall, the entire Town of Meredith contains scenic attributes that are significant. The viewpoint analysis and resulting composite map outline those portions of viewed areas that are most critical. However, it is important to recognize that all landscapes have value and need to be given consideration in the planning process whenever a planned activity may have an effect on the Existing Landscape Character of a view or scene. Those areas identified as highly critical only represent those landscapes that provide a good representation of the Town's character and values, and have high visibility.

## **Management Considerations**

During the course of the project there were several discussions concerning changes and effects that might occur (due to development and other management needs) within the viewed areas identified and inventoried. These discussions ranged from protection/preservation of critical viewed areas to Best Management Practices that might be addressed with respect to different projects and for different settings. There is much existing literature available that offers general considerations for management of visual concerns as well as specific recommendations for different activities that can occur on the landscape. What is important in the context of this report is to document the general observations related to the inventory and assessment and to outline some of the considerations that should be given in planning of projects and activities for the Town of Meredith. Also discussed was the importance of outlining some of the ways and methods that the contents of this report could be utilized in creating awareness and support for the visual resource and its management.

## **Communication And Awareness**

Communication and awareness efforts will very likely play the most important part in ensuring success of the findings, considerations, and recommendations outlined in this report. Building constituency and support within the community toward recognition of the important landscape features and how best to manage for them will be key to maintenance and enhancement of character of Meredith over time and in adding to the health and well-being of its citizens. To be fully successful, this support must be achieved from all that are involved in decisions related to the Town's growth and development – from landowners, developers, transportation planners, utilities, to Town officials. The report itself and its components can provide a good basis for identifying and supporting the importance of views within the Town, especially those that are classified as Highly Significant. However, it is again emphasized that management of all landscapes are important. Although the Highly Significant Views may carry more weight in their protection, full success will be achieved only when good landscape management principles and and guidelines are applied to all viewed landscapes with activities that have the potential to alter or change the landscape being viewed.

### **Recommendations:**

- Provide awareness and knowledge of report and its findings to all appropriate Town officials, departments, and committees that have involvement in decisions related to growth and development.
- Develop an awareness program that can be presented to or is readily available to the community in general, individual landowners, interested groups, developers, and those having a responsibility or interest in changes that might occur on the landscape. An awareness program should include a

summary of study findings, utilize slides to provide examples, and outline standards and guidelines that are appropriate to apply toward different activities implemented on the landscape.

- Develop brochure readily available to individual landowners outlining significance of the visual resources within the Town of Meredith and considerations they should give in development of their land or in construction of any facility that may have an impact on the landscape (For their own property as well as part of the total landscape of Meredith). Information provided should identify resources available to assist landowners, developers, and others in planning for visual resource elements in their projects.

### Viewpoint Management

Viewpoint (VP) management concerns maintaining the opportunity for viewing as well as maintaining and/or enhancing the view itself. Several of the views, including VP 4, 17–19, 22, 33, 50, 51, 78, 80, and 81-83 are dependent on open field for both. In cases where the Town or other organization does not hold conservation easements on these fields or open areas, or has outright ownership, consideration should be given in working with the landowner to pursue avenues that would afford protection of these foreground landscapes.

Within the total view itself there will generally be more than one landowner involved. The ability to encourage implementation of good landscape management principles becomes more complex. In these cases, the communication and awareness factor becomes important in encouraging all parties concerned in working together to achieve positive results. To help facilitate viewpoint management, it may be of value to develop a database that identifies the ownership of lands within the view, particularly those lands within the foreground and immediate middleground zones that generally are the most critical.

Within the framework of the project, the inventory has identified the Highly Significant and Important Views. However, it is again emphasized that all landscapes are important to some level and consideration needs to be given to application of Best Management Practices (BMP's) no matter what landscape is being addressed. Adoption of BMP's is a primary consideration in achieving good management results with respect to scenic quality and Town character. In this case, BMP's are simply those practices that recognize the benefits and value of scenic quality in landscapes and are applied to achieve implementation of projects in a way that enhances and/or protects those benefits and values. Examples of Best Management Practices range from guidelines that are designed to encourage management of vegetation in ways that create natural appearing openings and feathering of edges to ones related to communication tower placement. Other BMP's might require computer or photo simulation analysis of

specific type projects such as communication towers or those projects having the potential to be of high contrast and visibility in the landscape.

Another significant aspect of viewpoint management concerns cumulative effects. Quite often, it is not just one specific project that distracts from a view but several smaller ones that occur over time. Hillside development represents a current example occurring in the Lakes Region that illustrates this point. Often, these hillside developments begin with little noticeable effect. But over time as areas develop, whole hillsides can be effected and what was once forested slopes become dotted with an abundance of small openings and dwellings that dominate the original forested landscape character. It is often too late to address the issue effectively when it reaches this state. It is important to know the desired condition of important views and landscapes in order to establish BMP's for maintenance of the view, and if there is significant concern, to provide regulatory measures to achieve the desired condition.

It should also be noted that where undesired effects have occurred over time, it is still possible to identify the desired condition and develop the goals and guidelines, along with a timeline, to achieve positive results. Commercial development along Hwy. 3 is an example where development or redevelopment could still occur, but with good planning and encouragement of BMP's.

Dominance of commercial signs could be reduced and designed to blend in better with the landscape. Architectural styles appropriate for the community could be promoted, as well as opportunities to enhance or reclaim views of the distant mountains when property becomes vacant, and the general highway corridor could be improved through enhancement plantings and redesign of parking lots and entrance points.



The last consideration discussed in this section on viewpoint management concerns maintenance of and, in many cases, improving on the opportunity for people to enjoy and take in the view presented. This is an important consideration when relating to recreation areas and facilities, trails, scenic roads and byways.



Considerations here may include providing facilities to afford a specific location to stop and enjoy the view and perhaps participate in another activity such as picnicking or gaining knowledge and enjoyment through reading an interpretative panel. Another consideration relates to maintenance of the vegetation at or adjacent to the viewpoint and that can have effects on the area being viewed. This point came up in discussions related to VP 6, a highly scenic but narrow view looking across Lake Winnepesaukee. Historically, this view was more

open but unmanaged vegetation growth has closed in the view.

## Recommendations:

- Evaluate opportunities to help insure open fields remain as an integral component of the landscape for VP 4, 33, 50, 51, 78, 80, and 81-83. Opportunities may include conservation easements, ownership, or other arrangements with the landowner to encourage maintenance of the current setting. Develop data base of land ownership within Highly Significant Views to help facilitate communication and management needs.
- Give consideration to working with landowner(s) to design and implement vegetation management for VP 6 to create more open view.
- Develop minimum Visual Resource Best Management Practices for the Town of Meredith and encourage use in planning for all developments and activities having potential to effect changes in the landscape, especially in those views related to Highly Significant and Important classifications. Integrate visual resource management as a fundamental component in all planning processes. (See Appendix C for Hillside / Ridgeline Best Management Practices.)
- Strive to maintain the Existing Landscape Character associated with the Highly Significant Views. These viewsheds warrant a high degree of consideration so that potential effects are subordinate to the Existing Landscape Character.
- Utilize computer and/or photo simulation to help design and evaluate alternatives for projects having potential to be of high contrast and visibility in the landscape (See computer simulation examples - Figure 1, page 22).
- Give consideration to pull-off's and interpretative panels for selected viewpoints, especially VP 18, 22, and 33.
- Give consideration for improvement and opening up of views related to VP 10, 32, 47, 60, 84, and 85.
- Avoid placement of developments and/or activities that lie in the critical area of focal landscapes.
- Avoid management practices that result in major alteration of landforms and that create permanent undesired contrast of the landscape.



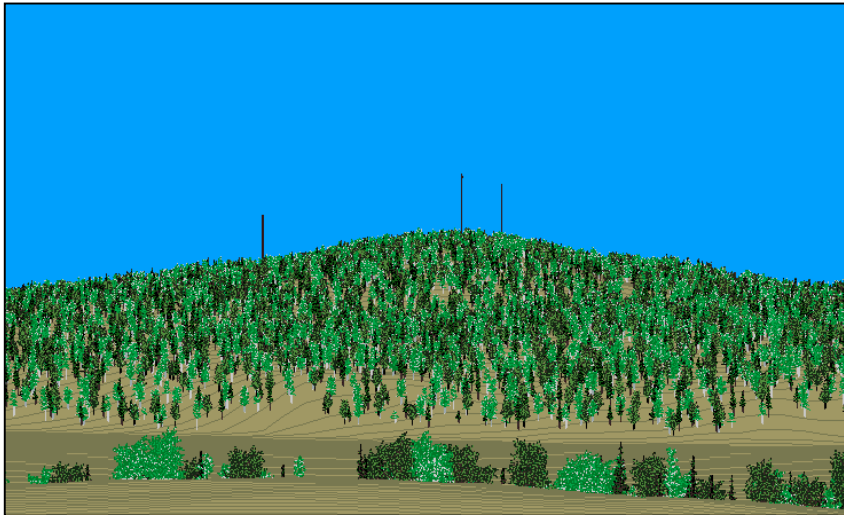
- Coordinate with adjacent Town's in management of highly significant views where middle and background landforms lie outside the boundaries of Meredith. Promote management of significant views from a regional perspective.
  - VP 23 / 24 (Lake Waukegan) – Town of Center Harbor
  - VP 39 (Lake Pemigewasset) – Town of New Hampton
  - VP 13 (Scenic Park) – Town of Gilford
- Utilize Critical Viewed Area Composite Map as a tool in indentifying key viewed areas in the Town and in evaluation and decision making for all categories of development and management.



Existing View



Housing Development



Telecommunication Towers

Figure 1. Example of computer simulation using VP4 - Longridge Farm scene looking across at Pinnacle Hill. All examples are hypothetical but represent using simulation graphics to compare the existing scene with a proposed housing development and a 200' telecommunication tower development.

## Wireless Communication Towers

Application of data and findings in this report has already been made in the development of Meredith's Wireless Communication Tower Ordinance. Primary emphasis was directed toward those areas identified as most critical (related to highly significant viewpoints) and which outlined those areas of the Town most important to establishing the character of Meredith; having high visibility; or were in visually critical areas such as important foreground zones, focal views and highly visible ridge lines. These areas were delineated on the Critical Viewed Area Composite Map, and for the purpose of the Ordinance District Map, were basically the same areas identified where towers would not be permitted. In the remaining area of the Town where towers of different specifications would be permitted, the ordinance outlined standards and guidelines that would be used to integrate the tower into the landscape.

### Recommendations:

- Do not place towers in any views identified as focal and that are not identified within the critical area on the Critical Viewed Area Composite Map.
- Utilize computer simulation and/or photo simulation for tower alternative development and impact assessment.

## Commercial Development

Commercial developments and redevelopment will be an important consideration in the future development and growth of Meredith. Both existing and new developments in this category need to be weighed for their impact on the landscape and within the significant views identified in this report. By their nature, most commercial developments have a high potential to effect the viewed landscape. Since they are generally developed along major travel routes where visibility is important for marketing, their tendency to effect the viewed landscape can be high. Other aspects that can effect the visual resource are architectural styles, scale, use of material and colors, and identification / advertising signs related to the facility.

As documented in other reports and assessments completed for the Town of Meredith, the village is a representation of an evolution of architectural styles, not just one type. These styles range all the way from the late 1700's to mid 1900's. These reports which should be referenced for appropriate architectural styles for establishment of guidelines are; Main Street Resource Team Visit, Meredith NH by the NH Main Street Center (May 1998); Determination of Eligibility, Meredith Village, State Dept. of Cultural Affairs, Division of Historic Resources (Aug 1994); Environmental Assessment (Meredith NH Routes 3, 25, 104 Draft) – Architectural Historic Properties, Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, Preservation Consultant (March 1992); and The Architectural History of Meredith, A description and Assessment, Hengen, 2000.

For the most part the commercial developments in Meredith are concentrated along Route 3 north and south of Town and segments along Routes 25 and 104. They are mixed in with some of the Highly Significant Views, especially those that are situated around the Bay area (VP 11,12,13,14 and 20). Other than some conflicting architectural styles and obvious identification signs, the commercial developments do not contrast significantly with the natural and historical components of the view and character described for this area. However, there are other Important Views where commercial developments are more obvious due to building style and related signage. Of particular note is the stretch along Hwy 3 from Parade Road in toward the village. Viewpoints 7 and 8 provide spectacular distant views but are somewhat distracted from by the commercial developments in the scene.

Other effects occur when commercial structures may be a component in a view but would remain subordinate to the view if it were not for contrasting elements of the structure. As pointed out earlier, this occurs in view 14a where the Analee Doll warehouse roof stands out against a wooded slope. A non-reflective roofing material or color that blended in with the existing setting would reduce this contrast.

#### Recommendations:

- Commercial developments existing or proposed within views from Highly Sensitive Viewpoints should be in character with the existing landscape and should remain subordinate in middleground views. Architectural styles, use of material and color should be in keeping with positive elements found in the existing view.
- Commercial developments (existing and proposed) related to VP 11-14, and 20 should be keeping with the architectural styles and character of the village area outlined in the section on Landscape Character.
- Encourage identification and advertisement signs that are of a design, scale, and color to blend with the setting. Consider developing direction to encourage Best Management Practices for commercial signs.
- Provide awareness and sensitivity presentations to those involved in commercial development.

#### Residential Development

Residential development may pose a higher concern than commercial development as this area has the potential to effect areas of the Town not zoned commercial and that include those areas of Meredith that are more natural in their setting and afford views of the mountains and lakes, characteristics desirable to home owners. Residential development placed in these settings also has the effect to place them in landscapes

that are part of highly significant and important views identified in this project. For the most part, residential development in Meredith has not created effects in the landscape that are of concern and reflective of the hillside development that is occurring in other areas of the Lakes Region. However, certain views are beginning to show evidence of development in ways that are in high contrast to the existing landscape character can be found in VP 1-3, 21, and 35.

The most significant development that stands out in high contrast is the Grouse Point Condominiums. Future developments should give consideration to dominance of landforms being developed, density that effects the amount of vegetation removed, architectural style, and color. Color in some cases may be the dominant element effecting the contrast. Even though some developments such as Grouse Point already exist, some efforts can still be made in reversing some of the undesired contrast. Encouraging vegetation growth and change of colors are two that could have substantial effect in this regard.

However, contrast with the existing character, especially if it tends more toward the natural setting can occur with single family dwellings as well. Evidence of this can be seen in new houses being constructed along Tracy Way. Besides standing out for similar reasons stated above, night lighting can also come into play when unusual light patterns occur in places one would not expect lights to appear. Highlighting of ridge lines through thinning or breaks in vegetation can also seem out of place and is a danger in hillside and ridgeline development. Although not highly dominant in the view, this has already occurred at Viewpoint 35 as one looks across Lake Wicwas at the ridge in the middleground. Proper thinning techniques and feathering of treatment area edges, if possible, can help reduce these type of effects.

#### Recommendations:

- Encourage developers and home owners to incorporate Best Management Practices in developing and managing their properties. Be especially sensitive to hillside and ridgeline locations and effects of vegetation changes. (See Appendix C for Hillside / Ridgeline Best Management Practices.)
- Provide awareness and sensitivity presentations to developers and home owners.
- Give special emphasis to those highly significant views that have landform features as key elements in the view. Viewpoint 33 and other viewpoints having views of Ladd and Levitt Mountains are especially critical as they are desirable places for home owners to build yet they provide one of the most significant views and backdrops in Meredith.

## Open Space Management

As discussed under the sections on Landscape Character and Viewpoint Management in this section, the occurrence of open space is a key element in highly significant views. The primary recommendation and consideration for Open Space Management is to strive to maintain this element in the landscape. It is an important area to coordinate between those committees involved with visual resource management and open space management. Each area compliments the other.

### Recommendations:

- Utilize Visual Inventory and Assessment Report as broader component of Open Space Management.

## Transportation And Byway Planning

The key focus during Phase I of the Visual Resource Inventory and Assessment was an orientation toward the gateway routes of Meredith. As a result, all the viewpoints identified and inventoried during this phase relate to key transportation routes in Meredith and are an important component of their management. The visual quality and opportunity for viewing varied widely between the routes used in this phase of the project. Hwy. 3 from Weirs Beach north offered some opportunity for significant views but also related to much of the commercial or other development detracting from the positive elements in the view.

Hwy. 3 from the Center Harbor Town Line south had little opportunity for viewing and is a section of highway that is in need of enhancement to improve its quality and character, especially as part of a designated State Scenic Byway Route. Possible enhancement opportunities could include improvement through vegetation management techniques and encouraging conversion of some of the open older residential areas close to the road to green areas. The other leg of the designated Scenic Byway Route through Meredith is Highway 25. Although this section also includes a segment of the commercial developments found in the Town, it also includes some of the most dynamic views inventoried (VP 13,14, and 17-19). Maintenance of the sites inventoried is important to the quality experience along this route. In addition, these locations offer the opportunity to provide more formal facilities in the way of pull-offs and interpretive signing to give the user an increase in time to appreciate and experience the view in a more intimate way (See discussion under Viewpoint Management).

Consideration for these type facilities or improvements could also be given to some of the key viewpoints along Parade Road and Hwy. 104 (VP 22 and 33). These two routes have very little development associated with them and both offer pleasant drives where one can relate to a more natural appearing roadside environment. Hwy. 104 provides two Highly significant Views, one toward Mt. Ladd and Leavitt (VP 33) and the other

looking across Wicwas Lake (VP 35). In addition, there are numerous opportunities for a variety of views ranging from glimpses of the mountains, to viewing the wetlands associated with Hatch Brook Prime Wetlands, to looking across an occasional small open field. With the lack of commercial or other development and little billboard signing, Hwy. 104 probably offers the best opportunity to maintain a gateway access into Meredith that provides a very warm and inviting welcome for visitors.

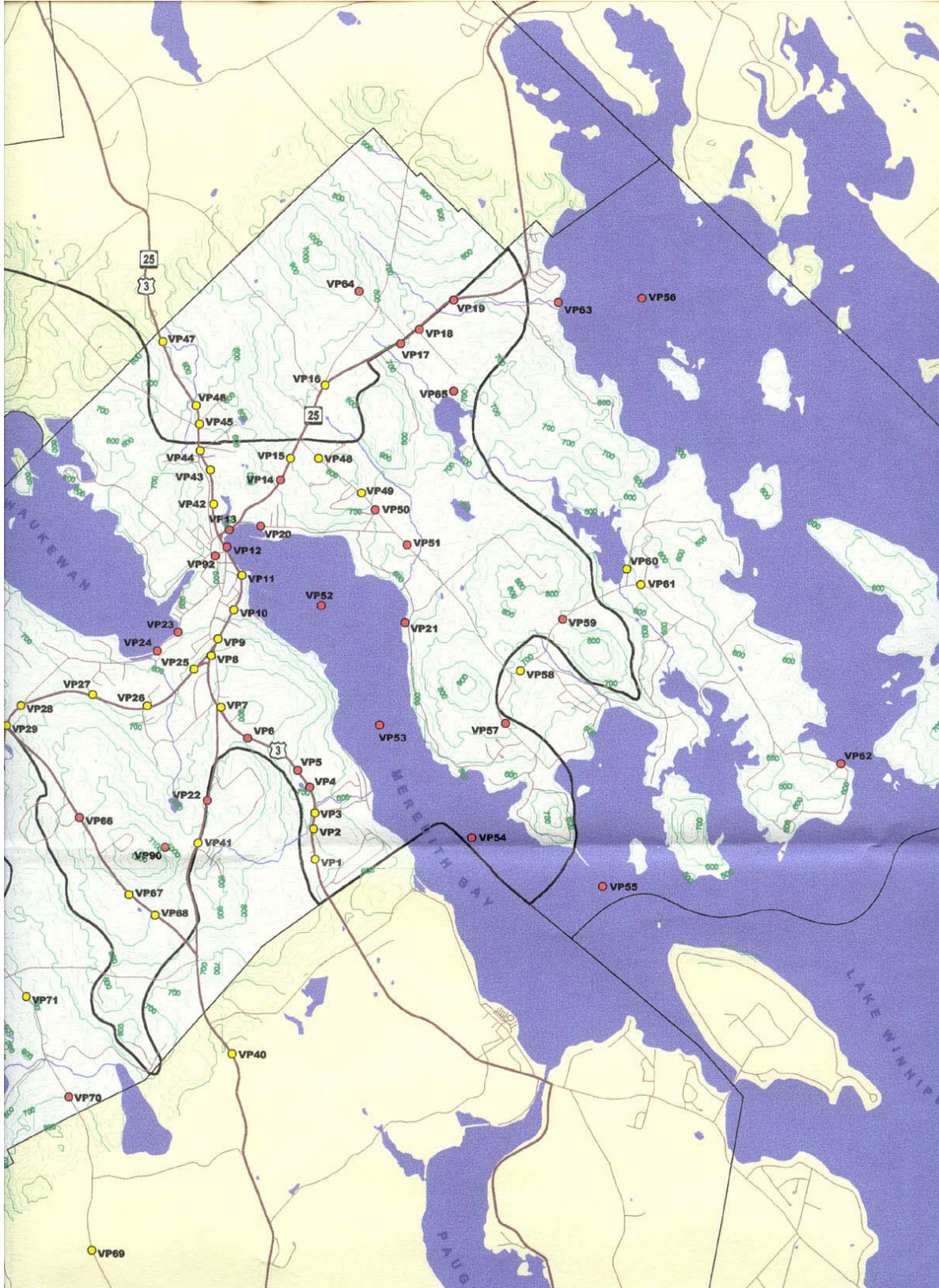
Recommendations:

- Develop a Byway Management Plan for Route 3 and 25 through Meredith that would provide coordinated direction for view protection and enhancement. Besides maintenance of views, standards and guidelines could be developed for architectural styles, signs, vegetation management and enhancement, and in general, those components that would add to the quality of the driving experience.
- Identify key viewpoints for developing pull-offs and interpretive signs. Develop coordinated theme to tell the story of Meredith and the Region.
- Evaluate guidelines and coordination measures that could be put in place to maintain the existing character of Route 104.

## Appendix



## Appendix A: Viewpoint Location Map



## Appendix B: Seen Area Maps

