

NMP 2020-2030: FUTURE LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

The Future Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan builds on the vision and strategies described in the Vision Chapter and the recommendations found in the Existing Land Use Chapter. The planning documents recognize the interdependent relationship between how land in Newington is used in the future and the Town's continued prosperity. There is pressure to develop land in Newington beyond what current ordinances allow and the Town needs to ensure land use decisions are based on enabling the highest and best use of the land, resisting efforts to make hasty decisions that could have long-term consequences.

This chapter is intended to serve as a guide for the community as it explores methods by which the Town can modify its zoning ordinance and local land use regulations in a way that balances Newington's rural residential character, high value commercial and industrial districts, and preservation of the town's historical and environmental resources.

NEWINGTON'S DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Policy 1: Preserve Newington's rural residential character with ample open access.

Policy 2: Promote industrial development, providing that conflicts between incompatible land uses are minimized, the environment is not adversely affected, and public safety is ensured.

Policy 3: Encourage attractive and efficient commercial and office development.

Policy 4: Reserve Piscataqua shorefront for seaport-based industry.

Policy 5: Seek a range of housing appropriate for a high land value area, recognizing that existing land use constraints precludes residential housing in over 55% of land in town.¹

Policy 6: Maintain and develop community services and facilities in a manner consistent with orderly growth and Newington's rural character, while not placing a financial burden on the community.

Policy 7: Protect the shorelines and tributaries of Great Bay, Little Bay, and Piscataqua River while improving access for all.

Policy 8: Protect Newington's historic architecture, scenic fields & forests, and cultural heritage.

¹ Upland residential land is 1,511 acres or 27% of the Town's land area.

POPULATION

Table 1 provides information on past and projected population for the Town as well as Rockingham and Strafford Counties and the State of New Hampshire. Newington has the lowest number of residents for any community in Rockingham County and ranks 198 out of 235 municipalities in the state.

Table 1: Past and Projected Populations for Newington, Rockingham County and the State of New Hampshire

	2000	2010	2020	2030
Newington	775	753	770	788
Rockingham County	278,733	295,223	307,013	321,441
Strafford County	112,686	123,180	128,801	136,372
New Hampshire	1,235,786	1,316,470	1,349,908	1,402,878

Sources: 2000 and 2010 US Census

2020 and 2030 projections provided by the NH Office of Strategic Initiatives

Population projections are useful for planning purposes to enable the Town to gauge future demand for services, including fire and police, water and sewer, and schools. Population projections for Newington do not indicate any drastic changes, but projections for Rockingham and Strafford Counties and the State of New Hampshire do indicate population growth that will put development pressure on undeveloped land in Newington, impacts roadways that travel through Newington, and increase the demand for retail and service industries that are in Newington. The NH Office of Strategic Initiatives estimates the ten-year population growth between 2020 and 2030 to be 2.3%, or 18 people. These estimates are based on historical trends in population and so it is important to note that the town's population could grow by several hundred people if new residential subdivisions are created resulting in more homes.

BUILD OUT ANALYSIS AND SCENARIO PLANNING

The Newington Planning Board, as part of the Master Plan update process, worked with the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) to analyze land development which may occur in the future under the Town's current land use regulations. This type of exercise is called a build out analysis and provides the Planning Board with information on development potential.

To conduct the build out analysis, the RPC used the Town's parcel data and land use regulations to estimate how undeveloped land could be developed in the future. A build out analysis is purely a planning

exercise and does not predict the type of development but identifies where the development may occur. The Planning Board can use this information to make changes to land use regulations in order to guide the type of development the town may desire.

A build out analysis uses scenario planning to consider alternate futures for a community based on competing development scenarios. There is no time line assigned to a build out analysis. Scenarios contemplated for Newington can be potential growth strategies for the future. They are neither forecasts nor predictions but represent an effort to tie land use planning into the needs and desires of the community. The essential requirement for any development scenario is that it be plausible, within the realm of what exists and what could be developed.

Working with the RPC, the Newington Planning Board identified two residential development scenarios:

- Scenario 1 - potential development under existing land use regulations.
- Scenario 2 - potential development under existing land use regulations, modified to reflect the density of development that currently exists in the Little Bay Road neighborhood. The Planning Board believes this is the type of residential development expected in the future.

Table 2: Residential Build Out Analysis – Scenarios 1 and 2

	Existing Conditions	Build Out Analysis Scenario #1	Build Out Analysis Scenario #2
Housing Units	354	631	579
Population	789	1,407	1,291
Acres	427	1,261	1,261
Estimated additional expected Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)		94	86

As illustrated in Table 2, Town records indicate there are 354 housing units in Newington in 2019. Scenario 1 of the build out analysis estimates an additional 274 units could be built under existing local land use regulations, for a total of 631 units. Scenario 2 of the build out analysis, modeled after the Little Bay Road neighborhood, estimates an additional 225 units could be built, for a total of 579 units. It is important to note that the build out analysis is a computer analysis based on a model that estimates the maximum number of new units.

Newington’s current Zoning Ordinance permits Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the Residential District and defines ADUs as a subordinate dwelling unit that is within or attached to a single-family dwelling unit and provides independent living facilities for one or more persons. The build out analysis estimates ADUs will account for an additional five more units.

The Planning Board also identified a third scenario, for non-residential development:

- Scenario 3 – potential new non-residential development under existing zoning and if an additional floor of space were allowed in non-residential zones.

Table 3: Non-residential/Commerical Build Out Analysis – Scenario 3

	Existing Conditions	Build Out Analysis	Build out Analysis with Extra Floor
Units	168	228	228
New Square Footage	NA	45,555,109	60,698,668
Acres	746	2,554	2,554

Town records estimate there are 168 non-residential properties in Newington. As illustrated in Table 3, Scenario 3 of the build out analysis estimates current zoning would enable 60 more non-residential properties, adding 45,555,109 additional square feet, for a total of 228 units. If an additional floor was allowed on non-residential buildings the result would be another 15,143,559 square feet, for a total of 60,698,668 square feet.

Scenarios considered for future land use in the Town of Newington visualize the intersection of new development, economic vitality, and the surrounding transportation system. Evaluating the tradeoffs and opportunities between competing development scenarios enables residents and Town boards to identify potential changes to local land use regulations and economic development policies.

FUTURE LAND USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL AND WATERFRONT INDUSTRIAL ZONES

Future land use in the Industrial and Waterfront Industrial Zones will be based upon encouraging responsible industrial development that broadens the Town’s tax base, provides quality jobs, and ensures land use along the Piscataqua River be dependent upon businesses using ocean-going transport. It is incumbent on the Planning Board to protect these zones from non-waterfront industrial use.

New building growth could result in taller buildings. This will have implications on the types of businesses and industries staying and coming to Newington. Increasing the building height to allow existing businesses to expand and new businesses to locate in town will create additional traffic in areas where there is little land left for additional roads. As a result, access to existing transportation corridors and intersections need to be enhanced, including the extension of Shattuck Way to Interstate 95 for industrial uses, expansion of rail service, and a proposed new cross-lot access to waterfront and industrial facilities. These factors may require land development applicants to identify routes for vehicles serving the industrial and waterfront zones and adding piers along the waterfront.

Intense competition in the national energy market may put the existing energy generating plants in Newington at risk. The existing infrastructure that serves these plants is valuable and it will be important for the Town to monitor this situation and suggest alternative land uses.

FUTURE LAND USE IN THE COMMERCIAL AND OFFICE ZONES

Future land use in the Commercial and Office Zones will be based upon encouraging the redevelopment of existing commercial sites to enhance attractiveness and efficiency, allowing development of parking lot perimeters, improving the transportation network along Woodbury Avenue, and planning for the possible redevelopment of existing facilities. As in the Industrial and Waterfront Industrial Zones, new building growth may be the result of higher building heights.

Key to enabling these activities is updating the Town's site plan development regulations to foster attractive site design to encourage commercial and retail development in undeveloped areas in the zone. The Town desires to be business friendly while being cautious regarding the types of development that is best for Newington.

FUTURE LAND USE IN THE RESIDENTIAL ZONE

Future land use in the Residential Zone will be based upon preservation of Newington's rural residential character, protection of agricultural lands and agricultural activities, and protection of natural resources, including wetlands, streams, ponds, and woodlands.

Key to enabling these activities is protecting the Residential Zone from development that may negatively impact quality of life, such as flight paths, transportation corridors, and new utility easements, as well as working with landowners and conservation organizations to open space from development.

In June 2017, a law went into effect in New Hampshire requiring municipalities to allow internal or attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in all zoning districts where single-family dwellings are permitted. The purpose of the law was to enable more diverse affordable housing opportunities for all residents, including elderly and disabled people and their caregivers. The Town has taken its own approach to meeting the requirements of this law by allowing ADUs on existing and new buildable sites in the residential zone, enabling affordable and higher density housing that is more in line with maintaining Newington's rural and open neighborhoods. The Planning Board estimates that within the 10-year timeframe of this Master Plan approximately 10% of existing homes and 20% of new homes will include an ADU, an average of 15%. While this provision will increase density, Newington's rural character will remain relatively the same.

TRANSPORTATION

Newington has a unique transportation network, encompassing rural roads, a major state highway, a deep-water port, rail service, and portions of Portsmouth International Airport at Pease. This network is key to mobility and economic development in town, and future land use, particularly in the Industrial, Waterfront Industrial, and Commercial and Office Zones, will benefit from improving access and connectivity between properties.

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

For a community of less than 800 people, Newington has a complex mix of utilities and infrastructure, including two power generation facilities, a waste water treatment plant, a public water system managed by the City of Portsmouth, and several utility easements bisecting the town. Preventing additional transmission line corridors through residential areas that do not directly serve homes is important for protecting residential neighborhoods from conflicting land use.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Natural resources in Newington include soils, fresh water and tidal streams and rivers, Great Bay, groundwater and aquifers, wetlands, farmland and forests, and plant and animal communities, including fisheries. Threats to natural resources include contamination of surface waters, groundwater and drinking water supplies, loss of productive farmland to development, and fragmentation of wildlife habitat by roads and buildings. Future land use decisions need to include on-going protection of these resources through voluntary land conservation, stormwater management, and environmental stewardship.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Newington's historic landscape of rural roads, stone walls, homes, farms, forests and fields are valued by residents. The Town established an Historic District Commission in 1972, designated the center of town as a Local Historic District in 1974, and designated Bloody Point as second Local Historic District in 1975. An historic building survey completed by the Rockingham Planning Commission identified 38 structures dating from 1690 to 1860. The Town can continue to protect historic resources through maintenance of buildings in the Old Town Center, enforcing the Scenic Road Ordinance, and preserving open spaces surrounding historic homesteads.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTATION PLANNING

Newington's location along Little Bay, Great Bay, and the Piscataqua River create shoreland at risk of flooding due to sea-level rise and storm surge. A Vulnerability Assessment report completed in 2017 for the Town by the Rockingham Planning Commission identified parcels and infrastructure most susceptible to sea-level rise and storm related flooding due to an increase in the intensity of precipitation events, including land along Great Bay Marina, Fox Point, Fabyan Point, and Shattuck Way. Additional impacts of coastal flooding may include sensitive wildlife habitat associated with Knight Brook, Pickering Brook, Paul Brooks, and the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Future land use decisions should include adaptation planning strategies, including designing infrastructure improvements to accommodate sea-level rise and providing information about potential flood hazards to businesses and residents.

FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

Newington intends to remain a prosperous, safe and well-planned community with rural residential neighborhoods and thriving commercial and industrial districts. The town will continue to collaborate with neighbors on regional opportunities but will work to prevent future loss of land for Federal, State, and utility uses.

Recommendations for future land use in Newington include:

- Protect residential neighborhoods from development that has excess levels of conflict with residential life.
- Ensure Newington's shorefront industrial zone is used by industries requiring ocean-going transit and prevent uses that conflict with heavy, ocean-based industry.
- Encourage development in areas of existing, underutilized commercial and retail parcels.
- Improve the transportation network in the Woodbury Avenue commercial and office district.
- Protect wetlands, shorelands, streams and ponds from the impact of development.
- Protect agricultural lands and agricultural activities.
- Preserve woodlands, open spaces, and wildlife habitat.