

NMP 2020-2030: HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Housing can be one of the most challenging and important issues to be addressed in a Master Plan.¹ The need for a community to provide housing diversity is required by state law. Two Rockingham County Supreme Court Cases (*Britton v. Town of Chester* and *Soares and Lewis Builders v. Atkinson*) have led to the requirement that towns assess the housing needs of all income groups and adopt zoning and land use regulations that enable housing diversity.

For communities like Newington this requirement is difficult for many reasons. As a seacoast community the town has extremely high land costs, one of the primary factors in housing costs and a reason why the availability of affordable housing has not kept pace. In addition, federal and state agencies have precluded residential housing in over 55% of Newington’s land area. Residential development is prevented on land owned by the Pease Development Authority, NH Department of Transportation, NH Port Authority, US Department of the Interior, and NH Fish and Game. The Town envisioned the development of affordable housing on the former drive-in movie theater property but the NH Department of Transportation took the land for their use.

To address the affordable housing challenge, the Town has amended the Zoning Ordinance to allow most single-family home sites to add an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), as required by NH RSA 674:71-73. Accessory dwelling units are residential living units attached to or associated with a single-family dwelling, providing independent living facilities for one or more persons. The Planning Board recognizes that increasing affordable housing requires the creation of long-term solutions for Newington and towns in the region.

This chapter assesses the existing housing stock and housing costs in Newington in comparison to surrounding communities, reviews the Town’s existing residential zoning requirements, provides information on the 2015 Regional Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the Rockingham Planning Commission, and provides recommendations to address present and future housing needs.

DESCRIPTION OF HOUSING IN NEWINGTON

Newington has three distinct areas of town zoned Residential: Patterson Lane, South Newington, and the area near the town center, sometimes referred to as Newington Village. These residential zone areas encompass 2,133 acres, or 38% of the town.

¹ NH RSA 675:2.III - The master plan may also include the following sections: (I) A housing section which assesses local housing conditions and projects future housing needs of residents of all levels of income and ages in the municipality and the region as identified in the regional housing needs assessment performed by the regional planning commission pursuant RSA 36:47. II, and which integrates the availability of human services with other planning undertaken by the community.

Newington’s existing housing stock is comprised of primarily single-family homes located along town roads and small subdivisions. A few homes are located on the east side of the Spaulding Turnpike, adjacent to the waterfront industrial district. According to the US Census Bureau’s 2017 American Community Survey, there were a total of 355 housing units in town, with 333 (94%) of those home being single-family, 17 duplex units (5%), and 5 (1%) multi-family units. The Planning Board estimates there are 35-40 accessory dwelling units in town, comprising 10% of the housing stock.

Table 1 depicts the types of housing units in Newington, the surrounding communities of Greenland, Portsmouth and Stratham, as well as Rockingham County and the State of New Hampshire, based on the 2017 American Community Survey. Newington has the highest percentage of single-family homes when compared to surrounding towns; the percentage of duplex units, 5%, is comparable to other towns, Rockingham County, and New Hampshire state-wide.

To enable more affordable and higher density housing the Town 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. The Town is supporting the creation of workforce housing by enabling ADUs in the Residential District, with the current potential of 355 ADUs.

Table 1. Housing Unit Types
Source: 2017 American Community Survey

	Single Family Units		Duplex Units		Multi-Family Units		Manufactured Units		Boat, RV, Van		
	# of Units	%	# of Units	%	# of Units	%	# of Units	%	# of units	%	Total Units
Newington	333	94%	17	5%	5	1%	0	-	0	-	355
New Castle	531	94%	28	5%	4	1%	0	-	0	-	563
Greenland	1,424	92%	37	2%	57	4%	34	2%	0	-	1,552
Rye	2,301	86%	79	3%	144	5%	151	6%	0	-	2,675
Stratham	2,601	89%	51	2%	215	7%	31	1%	15	.5%	2,913
Portsmouth	5,248	50%	672	6%	4,349	42%	170	2%	0	-	10,439
Rockingham County	95,877	73%	4,886	4%	22,930	18%	6,426	5%	68	.05%	130,817
New Hampshire	432,983	67%	34,596	6%	105,065	17%	35,389	6%	166	.02%	627,619

Table 2 highlights the number of housing units in Newington, surrounding towns, Rockingham County, and the state of New Hampshire for the period 1990 – 2017. Excluding Portsmouth, which saw a decrease in the number of housing units for the period due to the closure of Pease Air Force Base, Newington had

a substantially smaller increase in housing units (10.9%) compared to surrounding towns, the county and the state.

Table 2. Housing Count – Occupied Housing Units
Sources: 1990, 2000 and 2010 US Census; 2017 American Community Survey

	1990 Housing Units	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	2017 Housing Units	Total Change 1990-2017	Percent Change 1990-2017
Newington	320	305	326	355	35	10.9%
New Castle	345	488	537	563	218	63.1%
Greenland	1,082	1,244	1,443	1,552	470	43.4%
Portsmouth	11,369	10,186	10,625	10,439	-930	-8.2%
Rye	1,905	2,645	2,852	2,918	1,013	53.1%
Stratham	1,917	2,371	2,864	2,913	996	51.9%
Rockingham County	101,773	113,023	126,709	130,817	29,044	28.5%
New Hampshire	503,904	547,024	614,754	627,619	123,715	24.5%

Newington and towns in the Seacoast region continue to experience a strong housing market resulting in high housing costs. The New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA) compiles a housing purchase price database annually for new and existing homes. Results from 2018 for Newington and surrounding towns are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. 2018 Median Purchase Price for Homes in Newington and Surrounding Towns
Source: NH Housing Finance Authority

Town/Area	Median Home Purchase Price 2018
Newington	\$613,766
New Castle	\$765,000
Greenland	\$475,000
Portsmouth	\$449,500
Rye	\$650,466
Stratham	\$386,533

Rockingham County	\$330,000
New Hampshire	\$254,000

Based on the sales data, the median purchase price for a home in Newington was \$613,766, higher than surrounding towns, the County and the State.

Like housing stock and home purchase price, measures of income are important characteristics of a community. Table 4 illustrates income data from the 2017 American Community Survey for Newington, surrounding towns, Rockingham County, and New Hampshire. In 2017, the median household income in Newington was \$96,667, higher than Portsmouth, Rockingham County and New Hampshire but less than Greenland and Stratham.

Table 4. Median Household Income and Per Capita Income
Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Town/Areas	2017 Median Household Income	2017 Median Per Capita Income
Newington	\$96,667	\$46,688
New Castle	\$113,281	\$92,842
Greenland	\$105,609	\$49,777
Portsmouth	\$72,384	\$47,836
Rye	\$103,792	\$62,850
Stratham	\$107,297	\$54,956
Rockingham County	\$85,619	\$43,474
New Hampshire	\$71,305	\$36,914

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The high cost of housing in the region is challenging the belief that affordable housing means low-income housing. The term affordable housing means housing that does not cost more than approximately one-third of a family's income. Indications are that the lack of affordable housing in the region is becoming a barrier to labor force development. Recognizing the relationship between housing and jobs is important

because the long-term economic sustainability of the region will depend on part on the region’s ability to provide adequate housing for its workers.

New Hampshire RSA 674:2 requires the housing chapter of a town Master Plan include an assessment of local housing conditions and a projection of future housing needs for residents of all income levels and ages. The Regional Housing Needs Assessment completed by the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) for the 2015 Regional Master Plan provides data for Newington that satisfies this statutory requirement. http://www.rpc-nh.org/application/files/6014/6100/8417/6_RMPHousing.pdf

The RPC updated the Regional Housing Needs Assessment in 2015 to quantify and project the demand for housing in the RPC region in the horizon year of 2020, and to estimate the present and projected needs for housing that is considered affordable for various income groupings, for both owned and rented units. The 2015 Assessment used data from the 2010 US Census and the update reflects the passage of NH RSA 36:37 Workforce Housing by the NH Legislature in 2008. This statute provided definitions for “affordable” and “workforce” housing and placed new emphasis on the obligations that communities in New Hampshire have to accommodate the development of such housing.

Table 5 displays the Estimated Proportional Fair Share Workforce Housing Need for Newington and surrounding towns. This data is the best estimate currently for determining the number of workforce housing units (owner and renter units combined) a community should be providing.

**Table 5. Estimated Proportional Fair Share Workforce Housing Need
For Newington and Surrounding Communities
Source: Rockingham Planning Commission 2015 Regional Master Plan**

Town	2010 Households US Census	2020 Households NH OSI Estimate	Estimated Workforce Housing Need 2020 (units)
Newington	297	280	120
New Castle	449	415	178
Greenland	1,382	1,490	640
Portsmouth	10,452	10,409	4,468
Rye	2,270	2,262	971
Stratham	2,746	3,047	1,308

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment relied on estimates from the NH Office of Strategic Initiatives for the number of households in Newington and surrounding towns in 2020. As depicted in Table 5, OSI estimated the number of households in Newington to decrease from 297 recorded in the 2010 Census to 280 in 2020. The Assessment estimates Newington needs to provide 120 affordable housing units to meet the Town’s fair share of affordable housing within the region.

Based on the Town’s current zoning, there is a limited amount of land (1,540 acres) available for residential development. Generally, areas east of the Spaulding Turnpike have water and sewer and land to the west is served by water. The Patterson Lane neighborhood is zoned residential; however, a stated goal of the 2010 Master Plan was the phasing out of residential uses there because of the close proximity to heavy waterfront industry. The 2010 Master Plan also noted that multifamily housing on Patterson Lane is not appropriate and violates sound land planning principles due to its proximity to existing heavy industrial uses.

Table 6 illustrates the constraints on additional land being available for residential development in Newington.

Table 6: Land Uses as a percent of the Town’s area

Land Use	Acres	Percentage of land in Newington
Upland Residential	1,540	27%
Pease Tradeport	1,436	25%
Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge	1,088	19%
Commercial and Industrial Development	790	14%
Conservation and Municipal Lands	553	10%
Spaulding Turnpike	152	3%
Wetlands in Residential District	116	2%

In addition to the limited availability of land for residential development, land values in Newington are an impediment to workforce housing. Newington has some of the highest in the state, with an 80,000 square foot buildable lot selling for approximately \$300,000.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING ZONING

The Town’s current Zoning Ordinance permits residential uses in the Residential District. Newington has established eleven Zoning Districts, described below:

- Residential District – the principle use is for single-family dwellings. Permitted uses include single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). One ADU is permitted on parcels containing one existing single-family detached family dwelling with no other accessory dwelling residences.
- Office District – the principle use is office buildings, research and development facilities, and light manufacturing.

- Commercial District – the principal use is retail sales, office buildings, research and development facilities, and light manufacturing.
- Marina District – the principle use is the repair, servicing, storage, dockage, moorage and maintenance of vessels.
- Industrial District – the principle use is industry and associated uses.
- Waterfront Industry and Commerce District – the principle use is activities dependent upon the ocean for transport of resources.
- Historic Districts – established for the preservation of places and structures of architectural and heritage value.
- Shattuck Way Overlay District – established to enable specific setback requirements in this corridor.
- Pease Tradeport District – land use in this District is under the regulatory authority of the Pease Development Authority.
- Natural Resource Protection District – established to conserve natural resources, protect wildlife habitat, protect significant potable water resources, and to provide the public with opportunities for passive recreation.
- Wetlands Overlay District – established to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare, as well as the wetland’s ecological integrity and function.

The Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum of 80,000 square feet for a single-family residence and 120,000 square feet for a two-family residence. Lots which fall within the Wetlands Overlay District may require greater acreage as areas designated as wetland may be used to fulfill no more than 50% of the minimum lot size.

A Build Out Analysis conducted for the Planning Board by the Rockingham Planning Commission in 2019 estimated an additional 274 units² could be built under existing land use regulations; this estimate does not include the opportunity for ADUs to be constructed subordinate to a single-family dwelling unit. The Build Out Analysis is discussed in the Future Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan.

HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage flexible design and siting in the development of new housing by reviewing Town land use regulations to identify opportunities to regulate housing design and location based on site characteristics and enable different types of housing.
- Support housing options such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), duplex structures, and age-restricted housing development to provide long-term opportunity for a wide spectrum of residents.

² It is important to note that the Build Out Analysis relies on a computer model which estimates the maximum number of additional units

- Maintain low tax rates to help elderly and younger resident offset the region's high home assessments.
- Establish a safe distance for development from gas transmission lines.

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