

# NMP 2020-2030: INTRODUCTION

THE CONCEPTS BELOW ARE FROM JOHN F. ROWE, PICTURED AT LEFT, AN EARLY PLANNING ADVOCATE AND CHAIR OF THE PLANNING BOARD. THEY ARE ADAPTED BY CURRENT PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS WITH EACH NEW MASTER PLAN.

Community planning is a Newington tradition dating back to 1640 when local residents established the first town forest in America that set aside land from which timber, firewood, and grazing areas were kept for the common good. Faced with massive federal & state takings of Newington land in the 1950's, the town became one of the first in New Hampshire to adopt a zoning ordinance to divide Newington into distinct land use districts. This early adventure in master planning allowed Newington to retain the historic character of its residential district, on lands originally owned by Newington families for over a century in some cases and passed from one generation to another, a legacy which has gone by the board in many southern NH towns. For over 50 years, Newington has been consistent that developments in the residential district must be compatible and benefit the quality of life of our residents. Districting has also enabled Newington to create separate attractive districts for business growth that restricted such developments to the waterfront and turnpike area and by doing so has boosted local finances and is primarily responsible for the lowest property tax rate in New Hampshire.

A basic tenet of early planning has been the proposition that, although situated in an area of rapid growth, the Town of Newington was interested in maintaining as much as possible its quiet, rural atmosphere, and in preserving its historic resources. This condition has now slowly undergone new challenge with the passing of the larger landowners, breaking up estates to meet the demand of heirs, many of whom reside in other areas and may have little sentimental attachment to the town when weighed against financial gain. Moreover, once the profit appetite is wetted with the initial fringe development along existing roads, demand will build for construction of parallel and interior roads to gain access to the back lots, with the possible end result that the town could become a fully developed suburban community.

There are some factors, however, that may serve to retard unbridled growth. Of great importance is the steadfast adherence to land use regulations by future Boards. Planner should face the fact that the town of the future will have little semblance to the present, and that the expenses associated with change should be borne by those who stand to gain from development. Controlled growth is wisely provided for in current master plan and town ordinances. All townspeople should be aware of these provisions and should make their wishes known to land use Boards if the turn of events is contrary to their best interest.

Our Master Plan sets forth policy for growth, identifies the capacity to do so, and guides all town officials and the courts as to how Newington residents desire to temper such growth. It is their right to do so when it is passed on a sound statistical, scientific, and commonly supported Master Plan. In a period in which legal challenges to town land use controls have become common place, any town operating in the absence of, or in contradiction to, an adopted Master Plan, does so at considerable legal risk.