

CHAPTER IX FUTURE LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

Since its incorporation, Sutton has evolved from an agricultural community to a primarily rural, residential community with many residents commuting daily to surrounding areas for employment. There are many home-based and small businesses located in Sutton, which provides a local employment base but does not draw many people in from outside the Town for employment opportunities.

As Sutton considers the planning of its future land use, thought must be given to how the land is currently being used and regulated in order to evaluate future outcomes and development. The Current Land Use Chapter contains information on how land in Sutton is currently being used and regulated.

As Sutton moves into the 21st century, the following goals can serve as starting points for discussions on zoning changes, land development regulations, and actions taken by the town on the issues of land conservation, business development, and community facilities expansion.

- 1) Develop a long-range picture for future land development – the types, uses, location, and density – and modify the Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Regulations, and Subdivision Regulations to allow such development to happen.
- 2) Promote development that complements the natural and historic resources of the community.
- 3) Ensure that all development in Town happens in a manner that ensures community services are not negatively impacted.
- 4) Provide for open space throughout the Town that can be used for forestry, agriculture, recreation, and conservation.
- 5)

This Chapter describes the recommendations that the Town of Sutton can undertake in order to move toward achieving the future land use goals listed above. The recommendations contained within this Chapter are proactive, comprehensive, and long-range in scope and should not be considered a “quick fix.” Rather, the recommendations should be looked at as a starting point for further discussions on how Sutton wants to grow and develop in the next 10 years.

VISION OF FUTURE LAND USE IN SUTTON

Sutton’s land use future is at a cross-roads. With development pressure moving north from Concord and south from the Dartmouth Upper Valley region, relatively large tracts of undeveloped land within its borders, and minimal land use regulations, Sutton has the ability to choose how it will look in the future.

Land Use Vision

The future land use vision of Sutton is that of a rural community with a mix of housing located in the villages, neighborhoods, and in the countryside, with small-scale businesses providing services and employment opportunities to local residents. Community services and infrastructure will be development, located, and maintained in order to best serve the community in an effective and efficient manner. Agriculture, forestry, and recreation lands will be scattered throughout the town and the natural and historic resources will be preserved and protected for future generations to enjoy.

The following are principals that can help guide this future land use vision of Sutton.

- Maintain traditional compact settlement patterns by using land, resources, and investments in infrastructure efficiently.
- Foster the traditional character of Sutton villages and neighborhoods by encouraging human scale of development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life.
- Incorporate a mix of uses by providing a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services, and social opportunities for all members of the community.
- Preserve Sutton's working landscape by sustaining farm and forest land, and other rural resource lands, to maintain contiguous tracts of open land and to minimize land use conflicts.
- Provide choices and safety in transportation by creating livable, walkable communities that increase accessibility for people of all ages, whether on foot, bicycle, or in motor vehicles.
- Protect environmental quality by minimizing impacts from human activities, and planning for and maintaining natural areas that contribute to the health and quality of life of communities and people in Sutton.
- Involve the community in planning and implementation by ensuring that development retains and enhances the sense of place, traditions, goals, and values of Sutton.
- Manage growth locally, but work cooperatively by working with neighboring towns to achieve common goals, and address common problems more effectively.

Overview of Master Plan Chapter Recommendations

SHOULD WE INCLUDE THIS INFO??????

Natural Resources Chapter

Housing Chapter

Transportation Chapter

Community Facilities Chapter

REGIONAL CONCERNS AND PRESSURES

While the Sutton Master Plan focuses on issues within the Town or within the control of the Town, some emphasis should be given to the outside influences that have an impact on the community. Within the Central NH Region and beyond, regional concerns such as environmental factors, population and housing growth, transportation pressures, and groundwater strongly affect the Town of Sutton.

Partnerships opportunities are identified to foster good relations with neighboring communities on issues that affect multiple towns. Involvement in regional projects, which include Sutton will help the community better place itself in a larger context and participate in activities which will benefit the Town. In this section, specific ideas about how Sutton can become involved in those issues most important to the Town are given to help guide the Town in thinking how its actions can have an effect on the entire Region.

Influences on Sutton from Neighboring Communities

Sutton has a number of outside influences which may affect the Town but which the community has little control over. This section highlights the primary influences that Sutton should be concerned about and offers suggestions about how the Town can get involved. A small amount of participation in these multi-town activities will ensure that Sutton has a better “say” in what can happen. For many of these issues, Sutton can similarly affect other communities with its own actions.

I-93 Highway Expansion

According to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was released in April 2004, the basic purpose of the Salem to Manchester section of the project is to “improve transportation efficiency and reduce safety problems associated with this approximately 19.8-mile segment of highway from the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line to Manchester.” If the current schedule is adhered to, construction will begin in 2005 and be completed by 2015.

The I-93 Bow to Concord improvement project was added to the New Hampshire Ten Year Transportation Program (Ten Year Plan) in 2001, with the initiation of construction not expected until after 2010. The project will necessitate study of a wide range of options and issues between the I-89/I-93 interchange and Exit 16, including the number of lanes, improvements to exits within the study area, safety improvements, the protection of a future rail corridor, and traffic demand measures. The study is currently underway and the first phase, Phase A, is anticipated to be completed in 2005.

Mt. Sunapee Expansion

I WILL HAVE FOR THE MEETING

Developments of Regional Impact

At the time of plan acceptance, the individual Planning Boards of New Hampshire communities should determine whether or not the project before the Board is a development that has regional impact. As provided in RSA 36:55, a development would be considered as having regional impact if the project could reasonably be expected to impact a neighboring community because of its size, proximity to the neighboring community's transportation networks, proximity to aquifers, and if facilities such as schools and solid waste are shared. If the Planning Board concludes that a project is a development having a regional impact, notice has to be provided by certified mail to the respective regional planning commission and the affected municipality. All recipients will have the status of abutters for the purpose of being provided notice and giving testimony.

Participation in Regional Groups and Organizations

The benefits to being involved with regional groups are a heightened awareness of how outside actions will have an impact on Pembroke and the ability to take advantage of the services and knowledge that is available to members or representatives. The shared pool of resources is an asset waiting to be tapped. In addition to the regional groups and organizations mentioned in the previous sections, solid relationships with the following entities should also be developed.

Central NH Regional Planning Commission

The Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) is a voluntary member-driven planning advisory entity in the Concord area. Twenty communities are served. Membership to the CNHRPC provides access to free or low cost planning services such as Master Plan development, development review assistance, traffic counts, zoning ordinance revision, educational workshops, geographic information system mapping, information on latest available programs, grant projects, and statistical data.

Regional Resource Conservation Committee

The Regional Resource Conservation Committee (R2C2) is an advisory committee of the CNHRPC that meets quarterly. Comprised of Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Selectmen representatives from the 20 towns in the Central NH Region, the group discusses issues which affect their communities and holds guest speaker presentations to inform the R2C2 about the latest environmental or land preservation topics.

Transportation Advisory Committee

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is an advisory committee of the CNHRPC which is comprised of local appointed representatives from communities within the region as well as members from other local, state, and federal agencies. The official purposes of TAC are to provide technical advice and policy recommendations regarding transportation planning issues. The TAC organizes and recommends projects for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, the State Transportation Improvement Program, and ranks Transportation Enhancement and Congestion Mitigation-Air Quality grant applications for funding. TAC meets quarterly.

NH Office of Energy and Planning

The Office of Energy and Planning (NH ESP) – formerly the Office of State Planning - is based in Concord and is legislatively required to plan for the orderly development of the state and the wise management of the state's resources; compile, analyze, and disseminate data, information, and research services to advance the welfare of the state; encourage and assist planning, growth management, and development activities of cities and towns; administer select federal and State grant-in-aid programs; and participate and advises in matters of land use planning regarding lakes and rivers management programs. The Office of Energy and Planning typically does most of its work with communities through the regional planning commissions.

Concord Area Trust for Community Housing

Since 1989, the Concord Area Trust for Community Housing (CATCH) has been helping families to become homeowners or find a stable, affordable apartment in the Concord area. Their mission seeks to increase the supply of affordable apartments, searching beyond city limits to expand housing choices, educating and empowering families to take control of their finances, and nurturing neighborhoods through quality local management. To date, 142 dwellings have been built or rehabilitated and 350 people have gained access to decent and affordable housing.

Goal

To partner with neighboring communities and local groups to enable Sutton to improve the quality of life for its residents and be better able to respond to issues which affect the Town.

Recommendations

- Hold discussions among all area town planning boards to help facilitate a regional housing dialogue.
- Establish a regular regional dialogue, perhaps facilitated by the two regional planning commissions, among Sutton, Warner, Bradford, New London, Wilmot, and Newbury as commercial and residential growth in those towns will have an impact on Sutton.
- Coordinate planning efforts with area Towns, including the regular use of the Developments of Regional Impact statute, obtaining copies of Master Plans and regulations, and holding sub-regional planning conferences on a semi-annual basis.
- Follow the proposed Mt. Sunapee expansion debate to ensure that Sutton will be prepared for any regional impacts the expansion may cause.

Goal

To become involved with state or regional groups, organizations, and agencies to form relationships and to take advantage of free or low cost services and information.

Recommendations

- Encourage landowners to take advantage of assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Merrimack County Conservation District to best learn the options for protecting agricultural resources.
- Continue to work with the NH Department of Transportation (NH DOT) on roadway improvement projects in Sutton.
- Work with the Highway District Engineer regarding road maintenance, winter plowing, and driveway permitting to pursue to continue strengthening relationships between the Town and NH DOT.

- Sustain the relationship with CNHRPC to ensure that Sutton continues to learn how to utilize wise growth principles and techniques as the Town faces new development pressures.
- Appoint two representatives to the CNHRPC's Regional Resource Conservation Committee (R2C2).
- Continue to be represented on CNHRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee to ensure that the transportation interests of Sutton are represented.
- Encourage Town officials to regularly visit the NH OEP website to view the calendar of educational planning workshops and events.