

Chapter II Current Land Use

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter describes how land is currently being used in Sutton, along with some of the development history and trends that have brought us to that current status. The Future Land Use Chapter tackles the tough question of “What will the Town look like if changes are made today in the land development patterns, if history does not continue forward?” Both Chapters are necessary in the Master Plan, one to tell people where the Town is and one to say where it could and should be going.

Increased population growth, evolving housing needs, and changing social and economic trends discussed throughout the Master Plan have had a direct impact on the landscape of the community. Land is a finite resource and thoughtful use of land is a critical issue for all communities. How a community uses its land base has a direct impact on aesthetics, community character, transportation infrastructure, housing affordability, as well as the tax base.

The history of Sutton's development pattern began long before there were any land use regulations in the State or Town. Development occurred in those areas with good drainage, access to a water supply, transportation, and waterpower. The institution of zoning ordinances and other land use tools reflects a relatively recent effort to assure that development proceeds in a planned and controlled manner rather than being allowed to “just happen.” The intelligent use of such tools becomes increasingly important as the economic expansion of southern New Hampshire focuses increasing development pressure on the Town.

This Chapter reviews the land development patterns in Sutton and the abutting communities since 1994 and describes the provisions of the Towns Zoning Ordinance that impact land development.

CURRENT LAND USE TYPES

The existing land use pattern in Sutton is typical of many communities in New Hampshire; commercial land uses are located along heavily traveled regional roadways while the majority of residential development is located in the back lands of the community. Please see the **Current Land Use Map** for more detailed information. The following table is a summary of the current composition of land uses in Sutton.

Residential Land

Residential land uses are scattered throughout the community, with current development pressures influenced by Concord and Lake Sunapee. In total, residential land uses occupy nearly X% of the community's land area.

Public / Institutional Land

In total, public and institutional land uses occupy approximately X% of the community's land area. Examples of such uses include the school, Town Offices, the Department of Public Works, Town-owned recreation land, Library, and local churches and cemeteries.

Commercial Land

This land use occupies less than X% of Sutton's total land area. Commercial uses involve the sale or trade of goods and services, examples of which include restaurants, convenience stores, warehouses, and gas stations.

Excavation Land

This use occupies slightly more than X% of the community's total land area. The excavation of land encompasses any land use where raw materials are removed from the earth and processed.

Utility Land

Utility lands include electric, railroad, cable, and telephone rights-of-way, which occupy X% of the communities total land area.

Conservation Land

Conservation lands include land that has been permanently set aside for conservation, with development thereby prohibited. Such land includes Town forests, lands owned by private conservation organizations, and properties subject to conservation easements. Occupying nearly X% of the community's total land area.

Undeveloped Land

Undeveloped lands, which are lands that are neither currently developed nor protected from development, comprise X% of the Town's entire land area. Some of these areas are located on land with steeper slopes, limited road access, or other development constraints that make them much more difficult to develop. Land classified as undeveloped includes forested areas, fields, and agricultural lands.

Summary of Acreage Developed by Land Use Category

Category	Area (Acres)*	Percent of Total Land
Residential Land		
Commercial Land		
Public / Institutional Land		
Excavation Land		
Utility Land		
Conservation Land		
Undeveloped Land		
Total		100%

Source: CNHRPC Geographic Information System (GIS), 2004

* Estimates based on GIS mapping for 2004 Master Plan

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS, 1994-2003

Research and analysis of development patterns is important to help Sutton better plan for future development. Knowledge of development patterns helps people be aware of and understand the changes taking place within a Town, as well as in abutting communities. By looking at how many subdivisions and site plans were approved, building permits issued, and land placed in and taken out of Current Use during the past ten years, the Town is able to accurately report trends.

Subdivision Activity

During the period of 1994 through 2003, a total of X subdivisions were approved in Sutton. The largest subdivision consisted of X new lots in XXXX on a piece of property off of XXXXX. The table below compares the amount of subdivision in Sutton to the amount of subdivision in abutting communities.

Number of New Lots Created, 1994-2003

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Sutton											
Bradford											
New London											
Newbury											
Warner	9	1	4	1	2	2	3	3	7	13	45
Wilmot											

Source: Annual Town Reports, CNHRPC Development Trends Report, and Town Staff, 2004

Site Plan Activity

From 1994-2003, there were X Site Plans approved by the Town of Sutton. These approved Site Plans included a change of use from a commercial or industrial use to another, as well as approvals for new commercial or industrial operations. The table below shows the comparison to abutting communities.

Number of Site Plans Approved, 1994-2003

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Sutton											
Bradford											
New London											
Newbury											
Warner	1	2	2	3	1	5	1	5	7	9	38
Wilmot											

Source: Annual Town Reports, CNHRPC Development Trends Report, and Town Staff, 2004

Residential Building Permits

During the period of 1994 through 2003, Sutton issued X building permits for new residential construction. This number does not include the tear-down and rebuilding of existing residential structures. See the Housing Chapter for more information.

Number of New Residential Building Permits Issued, 1994-2003

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Sutton											
Bradford											
New London											
Newbury											
Warner	4	7	12	12	12	10	13	23	25	26	150
Wilmot											

Source: Annual Town Reports, CNHRPC Development Trends Report, and Town Staff, 2004
 NHOEP 1999 Current Estimates and Trends in NH Housing Supply

Current Use

Current Use is one of the easiest and most popular methods of preserving undeveloped land, forests, and agricultural fields. Current Use is a preferential tax program (RSA 79-A) in which the land is taxed on its potential to generate income in its existing or current use. Sutton residents have continually participated in this program, as can be seen by the figures below.

Current Use Acreage for the Town of Sutton for 1993-2003

Year	Acres in Current Use	% Total Land in Current Use
1994		
1995		
1996		
1997		
1998		
1999		
2000		
2001		
2002		
2003		

Source: Town Staff, 2004

CURRENT ZONING REGULATIONS

The power to regulate private property is one of the most important powers granted to local governments. Used properly, zoning can be a powerful tool to improve the aesthetics of a community, protect the natural environment, and enhance the quality of life. Used improperly,

zoning can serve special interests, diminish the natural environment, and increase disparities between socioeconomic classes.

Zoning District

See the **Current Zoning Map** for information on where these Districts are located.

Overlay Zoning Districts

Overlay Districts are superimposed upon the Base Zoning District, described above, so that the regulations pertaining to the Overlay Districts shall be *in addition* to the regulations of the Base District. The land within the town may be used if and to the extent that such use is permitted in both the applicable Base and any relevant Overlay District(s).

Other Zoning Ordinance Provision

In addition to the Zoning District, Webster has adopted numerous other Land Use Regulations that influence and help shape the land use patterns in Town. Some of these Zoning Ordinances are specific to a District, while others can be applied to the entire Town, when certain criteria are met.

CONCLUSION

This Chapter describes how the land in Sutton is currently being used and the historic development patterns that brought the town to this point. Potential new developments may impact the town visually, environmentally, historically, or fiscally, all of which merit the attention of the Planning Board and Zoning Boards. How these lands are to be used will impact all aspects of town life, town services, schools, conservation, commercial growth, and residential growth. The Town is currently in a position to make decisions on future land use that will impact the development, feel, and character of the Town. The following Chapters in the Master Plan contain recommended changes to the land development regulations. Those recommended changes seek to guide future growth and development in a manner that builds on the foundations established by Sutton's history, and reflects the interests and desires of its current citizens.