

WALPOLE MASTER PLAN

LAND USE ANALYSIS AND PLAN

INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the present land use pattern in a town is one of the first steps in the formulation of a Land Use Plan. Since the type and intensity of existing land uses has a strong influence on future development patterns, it is important to understand how land and other resources are used within a given area before recommendations can be developed relative to future land uses.

Typically in the history of any town's growth and development, the public sector provided for schools, police and fire protection, the building of roads, municipal water and sewer systems, a judiciary and facilities for administering town government, while the private sector was concerned with the provision of jobs, shopping opportunities, and the construction of residential dwelling units.

Today these historical divisions of responsibility are not always so clear-cut. Though not the case in Walpole, more and more around the country are examples of overlapping of typical responsibilities and crossing of these old boundaries; for example, the public sector is frequently involved in the provision of housing for low and moderate income persons, and the private sector is taking over such "public" services as police and fire protection and the collection and disposal of municipal solid waste. Therefore, an important goal of this master plan is to ensure that adequate, safe, and sanitary housing opportunities exist in Walpole. To achieve this goal, the town should implement and administer its land use regulations so that there exist no regulatory barriers to the provision of a range of housing types in a variety of price categories and that the town complies with all state laws and guidelines governing affordable housing..

Thus, the total volume of development (and, therefore, of land uses) that occurs in any community is directly related to the joint efforts of the public and private sectors, as well as to the changing economic and social conditions of the area. In many cases, public investments can be as influential as private development in shaping land use patterns and determining the growth of a town. Such investments in the public infrastructure as state highway improvements, electric generation stations, etc. respond to and, at the same time, have an effect on where development will take place. Future land use is very much determined by the pattern of existing land uses - and any man-made or natural physical constraints that make development environmentally and/or economically prohibitive.

This chapter describes the pattern of existing land uses in Walpole and analyzes the changes that

have taken place in the land use pattern since 1985. Maps will be used to identify the areas of town that have been developed, the kind of development that has occurred, and the relationship of one land use to another. This information provides the baseline necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of future development and the availability of suitable land for such development. Tables and graphs will provide an overview of the changes in land use by category, comparison of area devoted to land use, and development potential and constraints.

LOCAL PLANNING EFFORTS

In planning for the future of a town, it is important to bear in mind that once raw land is converted to a developed use - whatever it might be - the land is usually committed to that use for a very long time, if not indefinitely. An exception to this is agricultural land, which could be easily further developed, resulting in the loss of open space. It is extremely difficult to change a pattern of development once it takes hold. Therefore, decisions about future land use should be made carefully, with a studied eye to the potential ramifications of those uses. A well-conceived land use plan will allow for new growth and development while it protects and preserves the integrity of neighborhoods, businesses, transportation routes, agricultural lands and the environment.

As mentioned above, the development of a land use plan forms the basis of land use regulations, which are effected through zoning ordinances, subdivision, and site plan review regulations. The land use plan describes the goals and objectives envisioned by the town; the regulations are the means to put these goals into place. For instance, if in the process of describing present land use patterns in Walpole, recommendations are made relative to encouraging more commercial activity in town in a particular area, the zoning ordinance should be amended to permit that kind of activity in that location - if it does not already do that. Or, by the same token, the land use plan might recommend that the zoning ordinance be made more restrictive in particular areas, for the purpose of protecting and preserving certain natural features in town.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

The first step in the land use analysis is to classify the various structures, uses and land areas that exist in Walpole. A land use classification system must be developed so that each use can be described in concise and easily understandable terms. The second step is the field survey where present land uses and activities are recorded on a map to facilitate an interpretation of the land use pattern. The field survey is conducted by car along all state and town-maintained roads. In general, land is classified according to its physical characteristics and/or the present activity that occurs on it. The two major divisions in a land use classification system are "Developed" and "Undeveloped" uses. Each of these divisions can be further subdivided into specific land uses. The following is a listing and description of the standard land uses categories used to prepare a Land Use Plan:

- ♦ **RESIDENTIAL:** The residential category identifies all land and/or structures used to provide housing for one or more households. These include site-built single family homes, manufactured homes (previously known as

mobile homes), factory-built modular homes, duplexes, apartment buildings, condominiums, and seasonal residences.

- ♦ **PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC:** This category includes establishments and facilities supported by and/or used exclusively by the public or non-profit organizations, such as fraternal, religious, charitable, educational and governmental facilities. Also included are the various public utility facilities such as water and sewage treatment plants, electrical substations and generating facilities, and natural gas transmission facilities.
- ♦ **AGRICULTURAL:** This refers to lands that are utilized for the cultivation of crops, dairy farming, the raising of livestock and poultry, and nurseries for horticultural purposes.
- ♦ **COMMERCIAL:** This category denotes all lands and structures that supply goods and/or services to the general public. This includes such facilities as restaurants, motels, hotels, service stations, grocery stores, furniture and appliance sales, and other retail and wholesale establishments as well as establishments which are primarily oriented to providing a professional and/or personal service to the public, such as medical offices, banks and financial institutions, personal care establishments, etc.
- ♦ **INDUSTRIAL:** This category denotes land and/or facilities used for mining, construction, manufacturing, treatment, packaging, incidental storage, distribution, transportation, communication, electric, gas and sanitary services, and wholesale trade.
- ♦ **HOME-BASED BUSINESS:** This identifies a residential property that houses a home occupation or home-based business. The residence continues to be the principal use of the land, and the occupation is by definition secondary and incidental.
- ♦ **ROAD NETWORK:** This category identifies all public and private rights-of-way that are designated for carrying vehicular traffic. This includes Class VI roads, which are no longer maintained and do not presently carry public traffic.
- ♦ **PROTECTED LANDS:** Included in this category are all federally-owned lands, all State parks and forests, land protected under the State Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP), land protected by the town, sensitive land and wildlife habitats protected by the NH Audubon Society, land held by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, and conservation easements on privately owned land.

- ♦ **UNDEVELOPED:** This category includes all lands that are not being used for any of the above uses. Lands which are brush-covered but not heavily forested are in this category, also abandoned farm lands, derelict land, poorly drained, swampy areas and other areas that for various reasons lack development potential, as well as those areas that have some potential but are under-utilized at present.

LAND USE DETERMINANTS

Several factors, known as land use determinants, act singularly or in combination to influence growth and development in a town. The major physical and topographic features, such as the existence of flat or gently-sloping land, steep slopes, rivers, wooded and open spaces, wetlands, etc., are the primary factors that influence the initial as well as the subsequent development of land. Secondary factors usually consist of man-made features such as roads, railroads, utilities and major commercial, industrial or recreational facilities that attract and/or stimulate new or expanded development. The following land use determinants have played an important role in the development of Walpole:

- ♦ **SOILS**

Soil conditions play an important part in the development process. Good soils encourage development and can support a wide variety of land use activities. By contrast, poor or marginal soils have limited development potential because of construction constraints caused by such factors as: shallow depth to bedrock; ledge; a seasonal high water table; limited ability to accommodate on-site septic sewage disposal systems; and road construction problems. Soil potential ratings of development, developed by the county soil conservation service, indicate that a large portion of Walpole's land area has either low or very low potential for development, or is comprised of wetlands and floodplains. On the other hand, Walpole has some of the best agricultural soils, perhaps in the entire country. Unfortunately, these soils are also easy and less expensive to develop, putting them at great risk to be lost. The soil potential ratings are described in greater detail in the Natural Features Section of this Master Plan.

- ♦ **RIVERS**

The existence of two rivers in Walpole has played a major role in the town's development. Both the Connecticut River and the Cold River supplied the hydropower for the many and varied industries that developed in North Walpole and Drewsville. In addition, the river valley of the Connecticut River was the site of farming operations running nearly the entire length of the river through Walpole. Conservation efforts along the river corridor have reduced the potential area for development and have been an effective tool for protecting this valuable natural resource.

- ♦ **TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS**

Two land routes in Walpole influenced the settlement patterns already discussed earlier: Route 12, running the entire length of Walpole along the Connecticut River; and the Cheshire Turnpike

through Drewsville. Route 12 is still a highway of significant local as well as regional importance. The Cheshire Turnpike, on the other hand, while once the focal point for intense land use activity and part of a major regional network, today serves only local needs. The historically important Vilas Bridge connects Bellows Falls, Vermont, to North Walpole. Maintaining this vital link is essential to the economy, social fabric, and public safety of our Upper Valley community. Another transportation system that influenced the settlement pattern of Walpole is the railroad, also following the river and servicing the industries of North Walpole, leading to more intensive land use in this area. This rail system is one of the few remaining railroads still in operation in the state of New Hampshire. Continued use and support of this railroad is important as an alternative mode of transportation in the state as well as in the country.

♦ TOPOGRAPHY

Topography has, in the past more so than today, affected where roads would be sited and houses built. It is no coincidence, in looking at existing land use and topographical maps, the areas of steep slopes have either very little or no development. The topography of Walpole varies from the flatlands along the riverbed to steep slopes scattered throughout most of the town. In fact, 41% of Walpole's total land area has slopes of greater than 15%, which makes development at best difficult and expensive. Adoption of ordinances that limit development on steep slopes serves many important functions. Such ordinances protect property and streams downslope from potential flooding and erosion that can occur due to cutting of trees and clearing of undergrowth for house and driveway construction. Such ordinances also preserve the aesthetic value within the town that is lost forever if development occurs in a scenic vista.

THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The pattern of land use in any community reflects the mutual participation of both the public and private sectors in meeting the social and economic needs of the residents, given the limitations of existing physical constraints, such as wetlands and steep slopes. Ownership patterns, economics, natural features and transportation routes all contribute to a town's development pattern, and are important complimentary considerations in the planning process. Recognizing these development constraints and developing ordinances that work in conjunction with them strengthen both the development potentials and protection of our valuable natural resources for future generations. Current planning techniques use innovative land use methods to encourage development that is better suited to work with our natural resources instead of against them. These innovative techniques should be encouraged wherever possible.

Walpole's pattern of development reflects the influences of the transportation system that formed along the river bed, the presence of steep slopes, described above, as well as public investment in the railroad and other infrastructural improvements. Development in Walpole has gone through several changes over the years, as economic emphasis has shifted from one period to the next.

Like most New Hampshire towns, Walpole began as a predominantly agrarian community, with

many farms located in the fertile riverbed of the Connecticut River Valley, which forms the entire western boundary of Walpole. Due in part to the sheer size of Walpole (36 square miles) and particular physical characteristics of the town, (e.g., the rivers) there was mill development, railroad construction, and the accompanying commercial and industrial activity that ultimately resulted in the establishment of three separate villages.

Village centers tend to be small, mixed-use areas of moderate density, which serve as the focal point for governmental, social and business activities. For example, Walpole Village center grew up near the river and approximately in the longitudinal center of the town. This center accommodated the usual mix of land uses associated with rural New England towns, i.e., the town common, a town hall, churches, schools, a post office, fire station, a bank and a variety of commercial establishments.

In the north of town, near the borders of Alstead and Langdon, the village of Drewsville was settled. Hydropower from the Cold River provided the energy source for various mills and other industry. The building of the Cheshire Turnpike through the center of Drewsville ultimately secured Drewsville's existence as a village of its own. While not quite as large as Walpole Village, Drewsville nevertheless supported two stores, a public house, a hotel, a church, and a school.

In the northwestern section of town, the Connecticut River was also providing the energy source for significant industrial activity, which led to the establishment of the village of North Walpole. Eventually, the railroad followed the river through town to North Walpole, crossing over to Bellows Falls, Vermont, which was developing industrially in much the same way as North Walpole. Today, both Walpole Village and Drewsville are largely residential, with some mixed commercial uses. North Walpole, however, continues to provide the greatest amount of concentrated commercial and industrial uses in town. This is in part due to the continued presence of the railroad.

EXISTING LAND USE

This section will describe the various land use activities existent in Walpole today, and compare them with the observed land use in 1985 and 1999. The existing development pattern reflects the natural constraints and historic travel routes of the town. The total area of Walpole is approximately 23,872 acres, or roughly 37 square miles. Of this total area, 832 acres are surface waters, leaving 23,040 acres for development. The tables and graphs on the following pages present the acreages devoted to the various land use categories in 1985, 1999, and 2009, compare the difference between the time periods, and illustrate what percentage of the developed land and the total land area is accounted for by each land use category.

This information was developed by calculating acreages according to the following guidelines: residential uses are allocated one acre for each single family home and one-half acre for each multi-family structure, except in the Village area and in North Walpole, where single family homes represent only half an acre, due to the density of development and the prevalence of smaller lot sizes; for home occupations, one acre is allotted for the residence (except, again, in

the Village or North Walpole), and one-half acre for the business; and, in other cases, primarily the commercial and industrial uses, estimates were developed as to how much of a parcel in question was devoted to certain use. The acreage accounted for by roads is calculated using the mileage of the roads and the right-of-way width allocated to each class of road, based upon standards of the NH Department of Transportation.

TABLE #1
COMPARISON OF EXISTING LAND USES

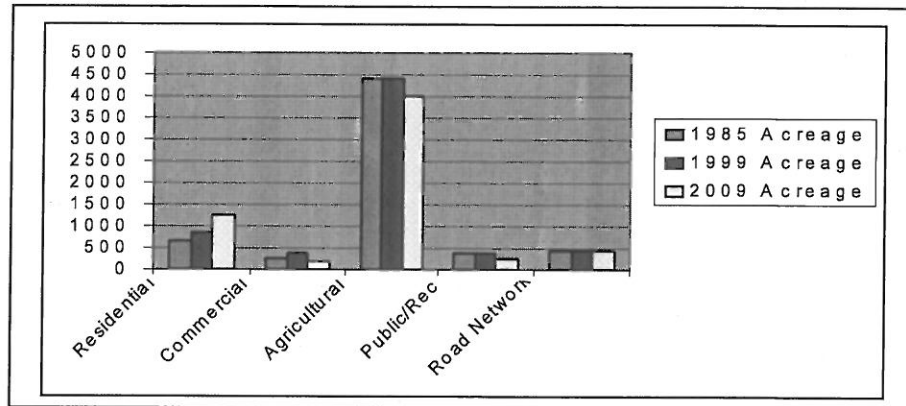
	1985	1999	2009*
<u>LAND USE:</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Residential	641	838	1240
Commercial/ Industrial	259	363	202
Agricultural	4405	4405	3994
Public/Recreational	373	383	246
Road Network	444	444	447
<u>Total Developed Land</u>	<u>6,122</u>	<u>6,433</u>	<u>6,129</u>

*information obtained from 2009 Walpole Tax Parcel Assessment Data

The figures in Table #1 point to a very small overall change in the amount of land devoted to a committed use in Walpole during the 24 year period being examined, although individual categories have seen rather significant changes. Acreage in residential use has increased the most significantly, while agricultural use has seen the largest loss of acreage. This reflects a pattern statewide and throughout the nation as more and more farms are developed into residential subdivisions

Acreage in active commercial use doubled between 1985 to 1999, largely accounted for by the new developments along Route 12. However, the period between 1999 to 2009 shows a reduction in acreage in this category. This change could be due to several factors including conversion of structures formerly used for business to a residential use, closing of gravel mining operations, or a change in the methodology used to calculate these land uses. The remaining categories, Public/Recreational and Road Network have experienced only minor changes during this time period.

GRAPH #1
LAND USE CATEGORIES IN ACRES



Source: 2009 Walpole Tax Parcel Assessment Data

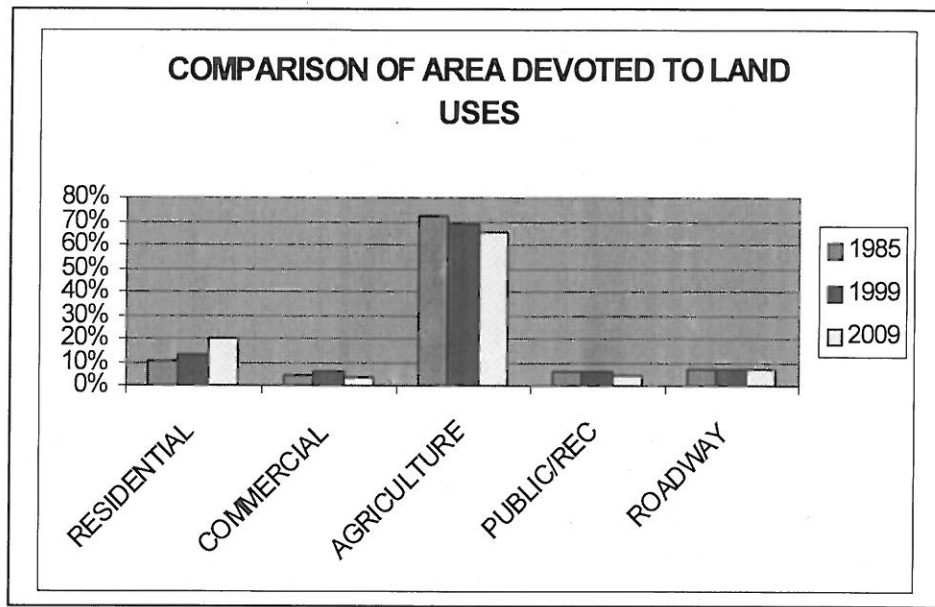
Table #2 below compares the amount of land in use to the total land area of Walpole, for 1985, 1999 and 2009. The figures for each individual category are presented in percentages, in order to view land use as a relative impact, rather than in terms of absolute acres in use. The data indicate that much of Walpole remains undeveloped today. Of the total land area of 23,040 acres, 6,129 acres are being used for the various land use activities described in this analysis; this represents 27.3% of the land area in Walpole that is devoted to some type of developed use, which is only a slight increase from 1985, when 26.6% of the land was in a developed state.

The chart shows that the greatest change of land use during the 24-year period is in the residential category. It indicates that from the analysis done in 1985 to the present analysis, the percentage of developed land for residential use in Walpole has doubled. This should not be interpreted as double the residential units, instead it is a reflection of the change in “developed land”. The largest percentage of developed land remains agricultural at 65.1% which is a decrease of 6.9% during that time period. There has been little or no change in the remaining categories. This information is also presented graphically.

TABLE #2
COMPARISON OF AREA DEVOTED TO LAND USES

	1985	1999	2009
Land Use	% of Developed Land	% of Developed Land	% of Developed Land
Residential	10.5%	13.0%	20.2%
Commercial/Industrial	4.1%	5.7%	3.7%
Agricultural	72.0%	68.5%	65.1%
Public/Recreational	6.1%	5.9%	4.0%
Road Network	7.3%	6.9%	7.0%

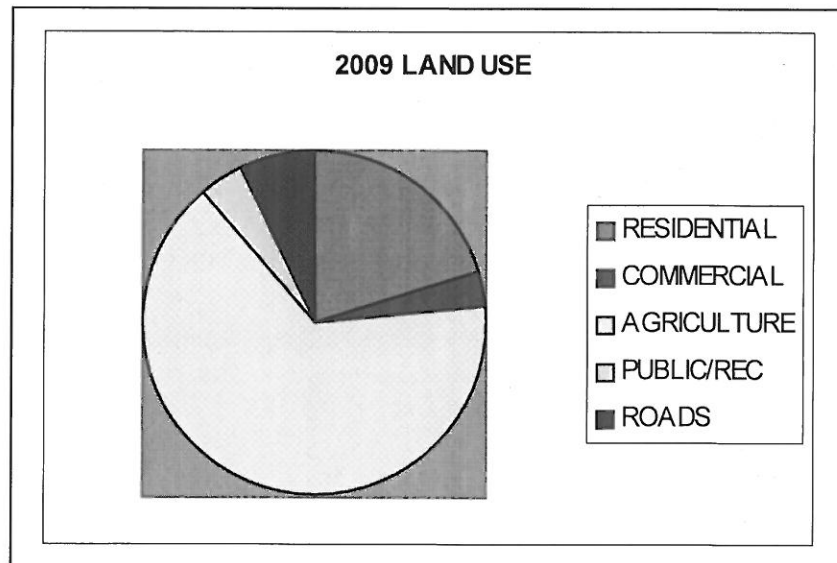
GRAPH # 2



Source: 2009 Walpole Tax Parcel Assessment Data

Graph # 3 below illustrates the Land Uses of 2009 from a different perspective. This information was obtained from GRANIT 2001 SPOT Imagery Derived Land Cover which is consistent with the Walpole parcel data information used in Table # 2. This gives a visual representation of how the land is being used (developed land), but does not show conservation land because it is considered undeveloped land and will be included in Graph # 4.

GRAPH # 3



Source: Granit 2001 SPOT Image Derived Land Cover

THE PRESENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

The Existing Land Use Map shows the amount of and spatial distribution of the various land uses in Walpole. From the map, it is clear that residential uses are the most predominate “active” use in town – as distinguished from the land devoted to farming, which occupies the greatest amount of acreage, and protected lands, which occupy the second largest land area in town. The pattern of land use has not changed appreciably in the years since 1985; the residential uses have merely extended along the road frontages in all sections of town. A significant difference in the land use pattern is in the growth of home occupations and home-based businesses. The greatest concentration and mixture of uses are still to be found in Walpole Village and North Walpole; this has not changed since 1985. A more detailed description of the land use categories follows.

1. **Residential Development** represents the largest “built” use of land in Walpole. From 2000 through 2009, there were 80 building permits issued for single-family dwellings, five for multi-family dwellings, and 18 for mobile homes. This total of 103 building permits averages 10.3 permits per year through the decade. However, during 2007, 2008, and 2009 combined, only four building permits were requested. The 2010 U.S. Census will provide current figures that will be useful for future planning as the national economy recovers and the demand for new homes begins to increase again. These residential units are scattered throughout the town, with concentrations in and around the three villages. Single family homes are the predominant residential type; the multi-family units (25% of the total housing stock) are concentrated in the villages. A more thorough discussion of the town’s housing situation can be found in the Population and Housing section of this Master Plan.
2. **Commercial Development** is, for the most part, concentrated along Route 12, in and around Walpole Village, and in North Walpole. The commercial uses in Walpole Village and North Walpole consist of a broad mix of retail, personal and professional service, medical offices, library, and eating-establishments. The remaining commercial development in town includes:
 - ♦ Hubbard Farms, a large egg farm, which includes a research facility,
 - ♦ Two farm equipment sales and service establishments,
 - ♦ The North Meadow Plaza on Route 12, which has a mix of retail, office, and personal and professional service establishments,
 - ♦ Mixed commercial uses on Route 12 north of the Plaza.
3. **Industrial Development** in Walpole includes the Walpole Industrial Park, several large sand and gravel excavation operations, one of which includes a stationary manufacturing plant, smaller excavation operations, and scattered manufacturing activities, including:

- ♦ A manufacturer of custom-designed commercial wall coverings,
- ♦ A light metal manufacturer,
- ♦ A timber frame home design and manufacturer,
- ♦ A shop for machining and machine assembly,
- ♦ A transportation freight company.

4. **Home Occupations** are an important part of the local economy in this area. In Walpole, many residents operate small commercial businesses out of their homes, for example antique shops or beauty parlors. In other cases, the business is more of a light manufacturing nature, such as wood turning, furniture making, auto body shops, welding, or auto salvage. The other form of home occupations prevalent is the home-based business, for such activities as construction, well drilling, etc., whereby the operator does not actually work at home, but only keeps equipment and possibly some materials stored at the homesite. Of increasing importance in local economies today is the impact telecommuting has had on the ability of people to work unobtrusively in their homes. These are, for the most part, invisible to the outside, thus are not typically identified in a windshield survey. The expansion of broadband services throughout the state are creating more of these economic opportunities. Statewide efforts are currently underway to make this a reality for all communities. Local support for home occupations should be a priority since it promotes economic growth and reduces the dependence on motor vehicles and commuting to work.
5. **Agriculture** continues to play a significant role in Walpole's pattern of land use. In terms of area, land devoted to agriculture comprises the largest single land use in town. There are several large dairy farms in Walpole, along with numerous smaller family farms that raise sheep and beef cattle. Other agricultural activities include the growing of crops, forage, and fodder. It is important to note that agriculture not only contributes to local and regional economies, but in Walpole's case, it also plays an important role in the identity of the Town – visually and culturally. Walpole would not be Walpole without the presence of the farms and the farmlands. Therefore, a significant goal of this master plan is to continue to encourage agriculture in Walpole that is conducted using best agricultural management practices and in accordance with all state and local laws, ordinances, and regulations.
6. **Public/Semi-Public** uses encompass such facilities as the town hall, fire station, transfer center, schools, churches, library, and cemeteries. Such facilities tend to be located in the village areas. These uses tend to be fairly static in a town, and in Walpole's case the only change since 1985 is the addition of the recycling center/transfer station on Route 123 in Drewsville, and the Police Station on Church Street North Walpole.
7. **Recreation** facilities in Walpole consist of the following:

- ♦ Whitcomb Recreation Park – tennis courts, swimming pool, and basketball court, picnic area, and multi-use field,
- ♦ A softball field on Routes 12 and 123,
- ♦ Ball fields at the intersection of Route 12 and Upper Walpole Road,
- ♦ Walpole Village – a ballfield at the school and one in the village,
- ♦ North Walpole – a ballfield, a multi-purpose field, and a basketball court at the school,
- ♦ The Hooper Golf Course and sledding in winter,
- ♦ A Boy Scout camp on Eaton Hill,
- ♦ Fanny Mason Forest,
- ♦ 3 Canoe Launch Sites above the Westminster Bridge, on Route 12 south of the Vilas Bridge, and in North Walpole,
- ♦ The Walpole School – soccer field and gymnasium for basketball,
- ♦ The millpond.

In addition to these public use areas and facilities, there are many other recreational opportunities within the town. Many trails exist through the wooded areas that lend to activities such as hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, hunting and bird watching. Class VI roads throughout Walpole are used for biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. A commercial indoor batting cage also provides activity, training, and birthday parties throughout the year.

8. **Protected Lands** in Walpole comprise 3,264 acres which represents 14.2% of all land in the Town of Walpole. This is the second largest land use in town, second only to agriculture. Most of these lands are owned by the town, many having been acquired through gift rather than purchase. Protected lands include land owned or under conservation easements by the Town of Walpole, the State of New Hampshire, the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, and private land under conservation easement. There are several parcels under conservation easements granted to the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, the NH Fish and Game Department, or the Monadnock Conservancy. Those lands under easement are, for the most part, still in agricultural use; the remaining lands have varied features, such as forest trails, wildlife habitats, campsites, etc.

Protecting at least 25% (or 5,760 acres) of land as conservation land within the town borders was identified as a goal in the Townwide Conservation Plan, created by a broad-based citizens group and facilitated by the Walpole Conservation Commission in 2006. While this master plan does not set a numerical goal of acreage to be protected as conservation land, this master plan reflects the strong interest in land conservation expressed in surveys and other public venues by town residents over many years. The planning board has added the Townwide Conservation Plan as an appendix to this master plan (see Appendix A).

The goal of conserving and protecting land, and town residents' expressed interest in doing so, should continue to be important considerations for the town as development continues.

9. **The Road Network** in Walpole covers a fairly large amount of land (444 acres), given that its length is over 100 miles. While roads do not actually constitute an activity *per se*, they do use land area, and must be factored into the development capability of a town, in terms of how much land is available for future development. This area has only experienced minor changes since 1985.

LAND OWNERSHIP

There are many individual holdings of property in Walpole. However, no single landowner owns a large portion of the town. There are 19 parcels within the town that are greater than 100 acres. The largest parcel is 320 acres and is privately owned. Table # 3 below shows the ten largest parcels according to the latest parcel data.

Walpole's Timberland District is composed of four large areas that are not inhabited nor have any habitable structures within them. If, in the future, the town determines that there is a need for their use for another purpose, a development plan for these areas should be created. Until that time, the uses of this land are limited to recreation, including, but not limited to, hiking, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting. These uses should continue to be encouraged.

TABLE # 3

10 LARGEST PROPERTIES

Rank	Property Owner	Location	Acres	Parcel I.D.
1	Alfred & Mary Britton	Watkins Hill Rd.	372	005-057
2	Paul R. Galloway	Derry Hill Rd.	331.21	006-017
3	Powell M. Cabot	Cabot Ln.	303	007-002
4	Powell M. Cabot	Boggy Meadow Ln.	300.7	007-001
5	Frank Whitcomb Construction	Whitcomb Rd.	229	015-035
6	Alyson's Apple Orchard, Inc	Alyson Ln.	222.66	004-044
7	Galloway Revocable Trust 2004	Rapids Rd.	217	002-012
8	Frank Brown, Jr.	Mountain View Rd.	187	027-011
9	Elizabeth J. Peavey	Ramsay Hill Rd.	182	011-009
10	Roy W. Homan	River Rd.	181.5	004-003-2

Source: 2010 Walpole Tax Parcel Assessment Data

DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITY

The development capability of a town refers to the physical ability of the land to accommodate development. Such an assessment is based upon the amount of land already in use, and the

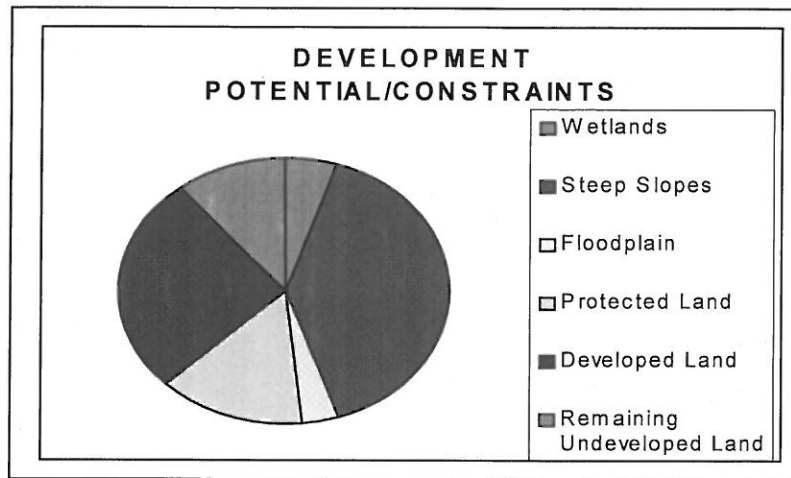
existence of particular features that make land unsuitable for development, such as wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, and lands designated for conservation or preservation. In the table below, acreages are calculated for each of these land features, as well as for the existing land uses, and subtracted from the total land area to arrive at an estimate of how much land is actually available for development in Walpole. Often, however, there is a big difference in the minds of townspeople between capability and desirability. Capability of the land is only one of many factors to consider, as is illustrated below in Table #4.

TABLE #4
POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

TOTAL LAND AREA:		23,040 ACRES
Minus:	Wetlands	1,161 acres
	Steep Slopes (> 15%)	9,127 acres
	Floodplain	837 acres
	Protected Lands	3,264 acres
	Developed Land*	6,129 acres
	Total Undevelopable Land:	20,518 acres
TOTAL UNDEVELOPED LAND:		2,522 ACRES

*See Table #1, Page 8

GRAPH # 4



Source: 2009 Tax Parcel Assessment Data

The figures above indicate that about 67% of Walpole's land area (11,125 acres) are currently considered unsuitable for development due to various physical constraints – wetlands, steep slopes, or floodplains. Another 9,393 acres are either protected from development through easements, or are already developed for a particular use. When all of these unavailable lands are deducted from the total land area, there remain only 2,522 acres that are not yet developed or appear to have no serious constraints; this is less than the area presently developed in town.

Note that the Developed Land category above includes land that is being used for agricultural purposes. It is true, however, that this land (currently accounting for approximately 4,000 acres) could at any time become available for development should the landowners offer the land for such other purposes, which would mean in that sense that Walpole has approximately 6,522 acres that could be developed.

The largest amount of land subject to constraint is in the Steep Slope category; this also happens to be the type that would be the easiest to address of all the unsuitable land features. Through soil erosion and sedimentation control measures, it is possible to have a certain amount of development on steep slopes; development on wetlands and floodplain is, however, much more difficult, in terms of expense and the need for local, state, and possibly federal permits.

Another aspect of the land's potential for development is the type of soil found in town and its ability to accommodate roads, septic systems, and buildings. This information has been developed by the U.S.D.A.'s Soil Conservation Service and the Cheshire County Conservation District, and presented in the form of a Soil Survey for the county. All soils are categorized by type and rated for their development potential. A more detailed description of the soils in Walpole is addressed in the Natural Features Section of the Walpole Master Plan, however, a summary of the soil potential information is presented below.

TABLE #5:
SOIL POTENTIAL RATING FOR DEVELOPMENT

<u>DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>% OF TOTAL LAND</u>
Very High	1,382	6%
High	1,613	7%
Medium	1,152	5%
Low	2,756	12%
Very Low	5,069	22%

=====

The soil survey indicates that a large part of the town has a low - very low potential for development (34% of total land area). These data are consistent with the information presented in Table #3, given that, of the factors used to determine the rating potential, the steepness and wetness of the soils are included.

Examination of the natural features maps shows that these unsuitable areas are scattered all over town, making it unrealistic to designate entire sections as undevelopable. Nevertheless, the knowledge gained from this graphic information does make it possible for the Planning Board and residents of Walpole to recommend areas in town that are more suitable for certain types of development than others.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Land is a town's most basic resource. As such, its use determines the character and quality of community life. The rate of growth, type and location of growth, all directly affect the physical appearance of the Town, the need for certain public services and facilities, and the cost of providing these services. Thus, it is the Future Land Use Plan that is the core of the Master Plan. It is this section that reflects the wishes and desires of the residents of Walpole regarding the direction the Town should take in its development. Certain assumptions are made in anticipating future development, based in part on the information collected in other sections of the Master Plan; for instance:

- ♦ Walpole's population has increased only slightly in past decades. According to state population projections, this trend may continue. However, continued population growth in the Keene and Claremont areas increases pressure for a quicker pace of residential and commercial development in Walpole.
- ♦ Also, given the regional importance of Route 12, Walpole can expect development pressures for commercial activity along Route 12 to increase.
- ♦ Based on national trends, conventional forms of agriculture may decline as a local economic force in Walpole while smaller specialty farms and other forms of agriculture may increase in number and importance.
- ♦ Decentralization of industries and the general economy, and the expected growth in the telecommunications industry, will likely facilitate an increase in the numbers of home occupations and home-based businesses, which could have significant ramifications for the local economy.

| In any planning process, it is inevitable that some goals will conflict with others. Residential and commercial development, for example, invariably conflicts with agricultural use and open space preservation. For these reasons, one of the purposes of this Plan is to set policies and establish clear objectives, where appropriate, that will guide future growth in a manner that best accommodates both protection and development. The adoption of innovative land use techniques provides the town with flexibility in land use decisions that are more consistent with the town's goals and more protective of the community character and natural resources. Ordinances should be adopted that promote these methods of land use planning.

In small towns such as Walpole, it is sometimes more appropriate to base future land use decisions on development policies, rather than specific objectives. In such towns, where future growth is not anticipated in large numbers, the form in which most growth takes place is the development of individual properties. The Plan, then, is expressive of a general concept of development and is considered to be a realistic means of managing future growth.

In an effort to capture these expressions of the public will, the Master Plan Subcommittee conducted a survey in 2007. Survey forms were mailed to all Walpole homes and collection

boxes were left at six locations around Walpole, Drewsville, and North Walpole to receive the responses. More than 225 completed surveys were returned. The survey questions and the responses are listed below. The overall consensus of those responding to the survey was that Walpole is still very much a rural community and should remain so, although survey respondents also rated economic development and the strengthening of the tax base as important priorities .

TOWN SURVEY FOR MASTER LAND-USE PLAN REVISION

FINAL RESULTS OF LAND-USE SURVEY, 12-22-07

1. How long have you lived in Walpole?

- a. less than 1 year: 6
- b. 1-5 years: 51
- c. 5-20 years: 89
- d. more than 20 years: 149

2. In which part of Walpole do you live?

- a. Drewsville: 17
- b. North Walpole: 24
- c. South Walpole: 254

3. Do you own or rent your home?

- own: 276
- rent: 21

4. Please indicate the work status of those in your home. (Check more than one if applicable.)

- a. work in Walpole: 101
- b. work outside of Walpole: 131
- c. retired: 133
- d. not employed: 8

5. Please rate the importance to you of protecting and promoting these features of Walpole.

	very	somewhat	less	no importance
rural agricultural setting	215	56	11	2
small-town atmosphere	231	54	6	5
historic New England village character	223	54	13	6
forests, streams, and undeveloped space	198	90	12	6
natural habitat for wildlife	220	58	14	2
scenic views	174	74	31	8
working farms and land available to farm	210	58	16	9
lack of congestion and sprawl	202	58	17	7
availability of shopping and stores	77	99	86	21
light industry	91	101	65	30
locally-owned businesses	186	73	12	3
cottage industry and home-based businesses	152	98	27	10

6. There are flexible approaches to zoning that allow for protection of features of the town that the community has cited as important while also allowing for appropriate development. These approaches permit higher-density

development in some parts of a land parcel to preserve special features in the rest of the land being developed. Please indicate your view as to the importance of each of the following.

A. A "conservation subdivision" allows for building houses closer together in that part of the land being developed in order to put at least 50% of the entire land area into conservation.

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
116	98	34	23

B. "Feature-based density" allows greater concentration of buildings in some areas of the land being developed so that development will not occur on or near specific natural features to be protected.

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
142	91	24	14

C. Steep slopes and ridgeline protection can be done by designating these areas as special zoning districts or can be done in a way similar to feature-based density. Do you prefer one over the other?

- a. special zoning districts: 79
- b. individual site planning protecting specific features: 153
- c. no preference: 2
- d. don't understand: 2

D. A village plan would allow for village-like development of larger land tracts, including small-scale commercial buildings and compact housing units with recreational and conservation areas surrounding the built areas. How important is it to permit village-plan residential developments in Walpole?

very important: 75	somewhat important: 88	less important: 46	not important: 60
--------------------	------------------------	--------------------	-------------------

7. How important is the protection of historic buildings and features of Walpole?

very important: 191	somewhat important: 64	less important: 18	not important: 5
---------------------	------------------------	--------------------	------------------

For this purpose which of the following would you favor (please check only one):

A specific historic district? 78
Zoning that protects specific buildings or historic features instead of all the buildings in a particular area of the town? 192

8. Some towns use protective zoning for specific features. Please let us know if you would be in favor of protective zoning for:

Scenic views

yes: 179	no: 90
----------	--------

Ridgelines and hilltops

yes: 186	no: 86
----------	--------

Wildlife habitat

yes: 235	no: 44
----------	--------

Streams and waterways

yes: 246	no: 36
----------	--------

Unfragmented forests

yes: 213	no: 59
----------	--------

9. How important is it to ensure lower-price housing for young families and others?

very important: 133	somewhat important: 101	less important: 41	not important: 14
---------------------	-------------------------	--------------------	-------------------

Would you prefer that lower-priced housing be available only in specific areas of town or should all new major residential developments be given incentives to include lower-price housing, such as permission to build more houses on the same amount of land?

specific areas: 136	all developments: 134
---------------------	-----------------------

10. How important do you consider affordable retirement housing within our community?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
161	87	26	12

11. How important is future development of our commercial district?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
111	90	60	34

12. How important is future industrial development in Walpole?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
89	81	62	53

13. What guidelines would you favor for commercial and industrial development, if any?

A. Design review to keep such development consistent with the character of our small historic town?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
210	46	26	11

B. Open areas separating commercial or industrial buildings along the same roadway?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
117	85	57	25

C. Encouragement of cottage industries and home-based businesses?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
118	114	39	16

D. Appropriate buffering of commercial and industrial sites from homes, roadways, and other public areas?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
187	71	11	10

E. Appropriate landscaping?

very important	somewhat important	less important: 19	not important: 5
203	62	19	5

14. How important are our farmlands and especially our working farms?

very important	somewhat important	less important	not important
236	43	6	6

Would you favor community help to try to keep farming feasible in Walpole?

yes: 234	no: 50
----------	--------

If so, what kind?

Local financial assistance and/or tax breaks?

yes: 173	no: 64
----------	--------

Forming an agricultural commission to advise all town boards about ways to encourage farming? (The state recommends that every town with working farms form such a commission.)

yes: 227	no: 33
----------	--------

Review all zoning regulations for possible changes that could enhance the economic survival of farms?

yes: 230	no: 37
----------	--------

Some communities use "density transfer" arrangements whereby a farmer can sell the development rights to his farmland to a developer who transfers the right to a third entity, such as a town or a land trust. In return for doing so, the developer is granted the right to build a development with greater density than usual in some less sensitive area of town. Would you favor a similar arrangement in Walpole?

yes: 78	no: 167	don't know/don't understand: 4
---------	---------	--------------------------------

One means of financing density-transfer arrangements is to charge a fee for permitting high-density development in some areas and depositing the fees collected into a fund used for buying development rights to farmland the community wants preserved. (There are other arrangements possible as well.) Would you favor this or some similar kind of arrangement?

yes: 119	no: 107	don't know/don't understand: 5
----------	---------	--------------------------------

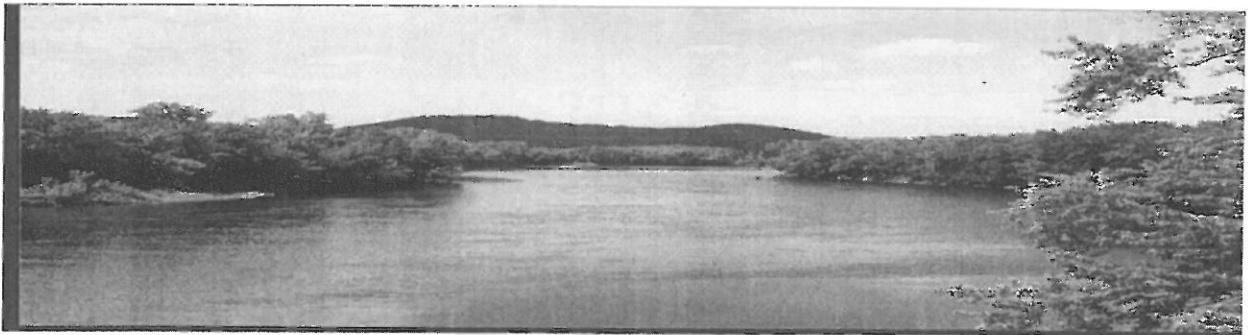
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL #1: TO PRESERVE THE SCENIC ELEMENTS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECT WALPOLE'S LAND.

The natural beauty of Walpole has been identified in this plan as being of great value to the residents of the town. It is acknowledged that the natural environment not only plays a role in the physical wellbeing of people, but also contributes in a significant way to the identity of Walpole; in essence, Walpole is known for its beauty. Prominent natural features include the rivers and their views, hilltops, and open spaces. Many objectives associated with this goal are already set forth in the Natural Resources section of this Master Plan. Those that are included here are more related to specific land uses than those - which address a range of environmental issues.

OBJECTIVES:**1. Consider the adoption of a River Corridor Protection Overlay District.**

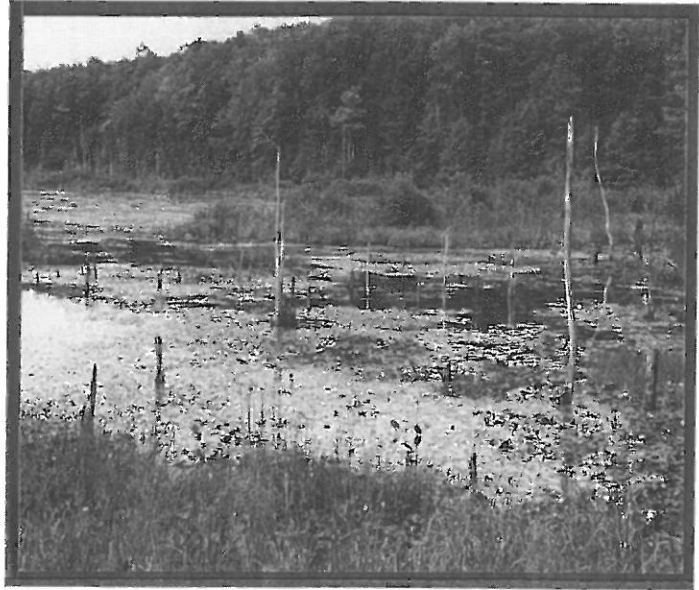
Such a district could be implemented to regulate uses along the shorelines of both the Connecticut and Cold Rivers that would both protect the quality of the rivers and ensure that the natural beauty is not compromised. A statewide shoreland protection act is already in place that addresses building and septic setbacks from the waterline and tree clearing, but the law allows towns to be stricter than the state standards. This act applies to the Cold River, but does not apply to the Connecticut River. Both rivers, however, have been adopted into the state Rivers Management and Protection Program, which only addresses activity on the river itself, not on the abutting land.

**2. Consider adopting by reference the Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan, Volume VI Wantastiquet Region, prepared by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions.**

Following the designation of the Connecticut into the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program in 1992, the Joint Commissions established local advisory river subcommittees. These groups, representing the various segments along the river, compiled this document, which inventories the various aspects of river habitat and activity. The plan offers guidance and a wide range of recommendations specific to the various segments of the river, and includes a number of useful tools that towns can use to protect the river.

3. Consider the adoption of Natural Resource Protection Overlay Districts.

These districts would be comprised of those lands identified as having steep slopes, aquifers, or wetlands. Typical examples of such ordinances address permitted uses and setbacks from the applicable resources. These lands are identified in "Comparative Land Values and Natural Resources", a study published by the Walpole Conservation Commission.



4. Consider the adoption of a Scenic Viewshed ordinance.

Certain views are deemed integral to the natural beauty of Walpole. Views can, however, be compromised by the placement of structures on ridgetops or other locations that either block or degrade a special view. For example, the identification of special views is the first step in protecting them, which may require restrictions on building height and location.

5. Consider the establishment of a Scenic Gateway Overlay District

A Scenic Gateway Overlay District could be employed to minimize visual impacts along the approaches to the villages in order to preserve the rural character of each of Walpole's villages, protect quality of residential life in these areas, and further emphasize the boundaries of the village areas.



5. Support efforts to protect land in Walpole.

Land can be important to protect for a variety of reasons, not only for scenic value. However, not all protection efforts have to mean no development - but rather, development in careful ways that are in harmony with the natural environment.

6. Explore ways to fund land protection

The town should support the state's Citizen's for New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Program for land preservation. Consideration should be given to the economic benefits of the town owning land versus the cost of services to support new residents. Nevertheless, private property rights must be protected even though the results of development might harm Walpole's quality of life.

7. Support Walpole's agricultural activity.

There is a strong connection between open space, rural character, and agriculture, as noted in the town-wide natural resources inventory conducted by the Walpole Conservation Commission. In essence, open spaces are a critical element of most people's perception of what constitutes rural character; and prominent open spaces would not be possible without a healthy and diverse agricultural base. In addition, farm and forestlands contribute to a healthy economy by protecting



water quality and providing wildlife habitat and corridors.

GOAL #2: TO ENSURE THAT WALPOLE HAS A DIVERSE MIX OF COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES.



A healthy economy is based on diversity. Walpole currently supports retail activity, industry and agriculture. In the survey conducted in 2007 as part of this revision of the master plan's land-use section, residents expressed interest in continued economic development in Walpole and noted businesses serving the needs of local residents, rather than a regional population, are highly desirable. Walpole should continue to support the types of businesses the scale of which is consistent with the rural and historic character of the town and whose services meet the needs of local residents.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Manage the type and intensity of commercial activity along Route 12.

The future development of Route 12 is critical to maintaining the integrity and efficiency of the highway. Further, such planning is needed in order to avoid creating an unsightly commercial strip. This could entail developing use and lot standards for Route 12 that are different from the commercial standards for the two villages.

2. Investigate options for nodal commercial development along Route 12.

Creating pockets of commercial development on Route 12 is one alternative to allowing commercial uses to line both sides of the entire roadway. Aside from the possible visual advantage to not having a strip of commercial activity, nodal development reduces the number of curb cuts, thereby reducing potentially dangerous turning movements. In Walpole's case, another positive

aspect would be the preservation of the agricultural lands that abut Route 12 and are currently zoned for commercial development. Nodal development also provides an alternative to sprawl development.

3. Rely on performance standards to affect the impact of commercial uses.

In small towns such as Walpole, it is often not reasonable or feasible to designate separate areas for non-residential uses. Thus, it is common to find these uses being permitted by special exceptions virtually anywhere in town. Performance standards can make all the difference in how a business fits into its neighborhood. Such issues as landscaping, location of structures, buffering, parking, rubbish removal, noise, lighting and signage can have tremendous impact - positive or negative. Done well, a business can be virtually unnoticed, or at the very least, not obtrusive or obnoxious.

4. Support home occupations and home-based businesses

The existing land use survey illustrates the extent of home business in Walpole. There is general recognition that working at home has taken on an entirely new meaning, given the advent of telecommunications.

GOAL #3: TO SUPPORT A MODERATE LEVEL OF TOURISM

Tourism can contribute much to a community's economic base. Walpole has much to offer in the way of natural beauty and historic structures that appeal to tourists today. Ecotourism and now also agritourism represent significant elements in the industry, these being people who want to spend their time outdoors and on farms. Bicycling and hiking have become major elements of their recreational activities.



OBJECTIVES:

1. Support the maintenance of the Cheshire Line Rail-Trail.

The presence of the former railroad line, now a multi-use recreational trail that runs the entire length of Walpole, not only provides recreational opportunities

for Walpole residents, but also can make Walpole a destination for the trail users. This line offers 42 miles of trail within Cheshire County from Walpole to the Massachusetts border. Additionally, there are two connections in Keene: (1) one to the Ashuelot Line that runs 21 miles to Hinsdale, from where a connection can be made to the Fort Hill line that crosses the Connecticut into Vermont; and (2) a connection to the old Chesham Line that runs east to Bennington. This network provides multiple opportunities for snowmobilers, hikers, and bicyclists, as well as horseback riders.

2. Explore the implications of Route 12's designation as a Scenic Byway for tourism, conservation, and economic development.

The Connecticut River valley has been recognized by both New Hampshire and Vermont as having great potential as a tourist destination. A Connecticut River Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan was developed in 1998. The plan contains an exhaustive inventory of the natural, historic, and cultural features of the Byway Corridor, and recommendations from the various towns within the corridor relative to the particular resources. Specific recommendations included the desire for walking and biking trails that connect to other towns, more and better access to the Connecticut River, and better links to Vermont. At the same time, concern was expressed regarding possible negative impacts of increasing tourism in the area.

As a result of this effort, the roadways in both states that adjoin the river have been identified as meeting the criteria for a Scenic Byway designation. These roads are identified on state scenic byway maps and consistent signage will be provided to identify the particular roads as belonging to this network. Route 12 from Westmoreland to Claremont is one of these roads. Formal designation of Route 12 as a Scenic Byway allows the opportunity for the town to participate in federal funding applications to support such tourist-related services as bike path enhancements, scenic view pull-outs along the roadway, establishment of information kiosks, etc. The program is set up in such a way as to allow each town to participate at a level of its own choosing.

GOAL #4: TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND AND SUPPORT FARMING ACTIVITIES.

Preservation of farmland is an important element to Walpole's identity and local economy, yet one over which the Planning Board and the Master Plan have only minimal effect. Farmers must deal with economic issues that are national in scope; nevertheless, it is important for the town to acknowledge the value of agriculture and support these efforts in meaningful ways. **THE VISUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF FARM ACTIVITIES ACCRUE TO EVERYONE, BUT IT IS THE**

FARMERS WHO PAY TO MAINTAIN THE FARMS. It is also very much to the town's benefit to support agriculture, given that more than half of all occupied land in Walpole is devoted to agriculture. Should this acreage become developed in some other fashion, the impact on the town would be tremendous. Several objectives aimed at preserving farmland are presented below, but it is acknowledged here that the only certain way of preserving important lands that might no longer be economical to farm is through outright purchase – of either the land or of the development rights.



OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure that local regulations are not overly burdensome to farming.

Land use regulations can at least support and encourage agricultural uses so that farming is not made more difficult by local regulations. The Walpole zoning ordinance currently permits “usual and ordinary farming activities”, as well as roadside stands and plant nurseries and greenhouses, in the Rural and Agricultural District, which comprises most of the land area in town. Conflicts can arise when new development locates next to a farm. Buffer areas can be required of new developments to minimize common friction points.

2. Support local efforts to preserve important farmlands.

The Town can support the land transfer taxes going to the Conservation Commission for the purpose of acquiring and protecting agricultural lands.

3. Support non-profit efforts to preserve important farmlands.

There are several state, as well as national, public non-profit organizations

active in New Hampshire whose purpose is to protect and preserve agricultural as well as other lands deemed important to the public for various reasons. Land trusts, such as The Monadnock Conservancy and the Trust for Public Lands, are involved in such efforts.

4. Investigate the value of backlot development.

The use of a backlot development technique could provide a method for preserving farmland. For example, by permitting the creation of building lots behind farmland along roadways, an agricultural parcel could be preserved for farming, rather than serving as the road frontage to meet a zoning requirement.

5. Consider the adoption of a prime farmland overlay protection district.

The identification of the prime farmland soils in town is a good first step in understanding how these lands might be preserved for their agricultural value. An overlay zoning district might set these lands aside for only farming activities.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION

This document outlines a general program designed to direct the anticipated growth of Walpole in an orderly and efficient manner, based on the goals and objectives expressed by the residents of the Town. However, under the terms of New Hampshire enabling legislation for Master Plans (RSA 674:2), the Master Plan is only an advisory document that must rely on action by the Town to effectively implement the recommendations. Implementation of the goals and objectives can be accomplished in a number of ways; some items would require no more than official endorsement by the Selectmen. Others, however, would require amendments to the zoning ordinance and/or site plan review regulations in order to be realized. Several options are described below. In carrying out the intent, goals, and objectives of this master plan, the planning board may use innovative planning and land-use techniques, such as (but not limited to) those described in the book *Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques: A Handbook for Sustainable Development*, published in October 2008 by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

♦ **NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICTS**

Public input and recent information indicate the desirability of five separate overlay zoning districts. Each would have permitted uses and lot standards particular to the resource intended to be protected. Boundaries would be based on the best available scientific information, as well as on local concerns.

1. Connecticut and Cold River Corridors

The boundaries of this district would extend a specified distance, often 250 to 500 feet, back from the mean high water mark. The purpose of a River Corridor district would be to ensure that activity along the shoreland does not contribute to erosion or degrade the water quality.

2. Natural Resources - Wetlands, Aquifers, Steep Slopes

The boundaries of these three separate districts would consist of all designated wetlands, aquifers, and steep slopes. Within each district, permitted uses would be based on accepted science relative to the sensitive nature of the particular feature. For example, the concern regarding wetlands is maintaining their ability to serve as overflow in flood events, process pollutants, and provide wildlife habitat. Certain industrial uses over an aquifer are not appropriate, due to the potential for groundwater contamination. With steep slopes, care must be taken that unsound construction practices do not result in soil erosion and sedimentation of downhill streams and waterbodies.

3. Scenic Viewsheds

These viewsheds would be designated on a map, and the area within the viewshed would be subject to particular restrictions on placement and location of structures.

♦ DISCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF WALPOLE INTO AN ECONOMIC CENTER DESIGNED TO DRAW SHOPPERS FROM BEYOND WALPOLE'S CLOSE ENVIRONS.

There are several techniques of zoning legislation that can affect the scale and type of commercial development in town. Walpole already has employed some of these techniques, such as having restricted the size of commercial buildings - for instance not permit any building area to be larger than to a maximum of 40,000 square feet and requiring at least 30% of the .

Limit the amount of lot coverage - for instance, not allow more than 50% of the lot to be free of human-built structures or impervious materials.

♦ MANAGE THE TYPE AND INTENSITY OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY ALONG ROUTE 12.

Route 12 would have a separate zoning classification (for instance, the Highway Business District), and as such would allow those uses that are

primarily dependent on traffic. Intensity is addressed through lot sizes and frontage requirements, among other steps.

♦ **INVESTIGATE OPTIONS FOR NODAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG ROUTE 12.**

As an alternative to having an entire length of Route 12 be developed commercially, it might be feasible to designate specific "pockets" or nodes along the highway for these uses - for instance, at an existing intersection or other areas where commerce already has located.

♦ **SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

1. Agriculture can be supported through land use regulations by ensuring that agricultural uses are expressly permitted in appropriate districts with appropriate lot sizes.
2. Flexible standards can be included in the site plan review regulations to accommodate the unique characteristics and needs of farming activities – for example, needing expanded parking for only a few weeks out of the year; or needing to fertilize at very specific times. Farming typically different from other retail or industrial businesses, and good regulations can support the farm and protect neighbors' rights.
3. Backlot development regulations can set standards for the size of and distance from the road of lots that would not require the prerequisite number of feet of frontage along a road – thereby saving the frontage for farming activities.
4. A Prime Farmland Overlay Protection District can be adopted as part of the zoning ordinance. The technique works by identifying prime farmland soils using the Cheshire County Soil Survey, and designating the land area as significant. Accompanying regulations can prescribe lot sizes, permitted uses, etc. that are aimed at protecting and encouraging agricultural uses.

♦ **PRESERVE THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER AND IDENTITY OF THE VILLAGES.**

1. In order to ensure that the edges of the villages do not meld into the surrounding landscape, Village Districts could be created in the zoning ordinance, within which the permitted uses and lot standards would reflect the existing conditions.

2. Another way to facilitate the preservation of the villages is through the adoption of an Historic District Ordinance. Such an ordinance could be tailored to the specific wishes of the populace, meaning it can be as stringent or flexible as is locally desired. It might mean no more than the simple placement of signs indicating that the villages are historic.
3. The establishment of a scenic gateway overlay district can help to offset the visual development "spread" out from the villages by setting certain standards, such as buffering of new development; increased setbacks from the road; size of signs, etc. A scenic gateway overlay can also be used at the entrances to the Town itself, as well as the villages.

♦ **RELY ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS TO AFFECT THE IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL USES.**

Performance standards refer to provisions that may be found in Site Plan Review Regulations applying to non-residential development, or as special exception criteria in the zoning ordinance. Such standards typically regulate how a particular use is to be conducted, not whether it may or may not occur. The kinds of issues generally addressed by performance standards are listed below, with a few examples of the types of techniques available.

- Lighting - should not leave the property and should be the minimum amount necessary to serve the purpose.
- Signage - should not be excessive and should be restricted to a certain square footage, regardless of where the signs are placed.
- Lot size - a maximum lot coverage could be established, for example 50%, which includes all impervious surfaces.
- Buffering - a buffer area can be established between commercial uses and residential uses or between commercial buildings and streets or highways. The buffers may be vegetative or structural.
- Parking - parking can be located at the side or rear of a building, thereby reducing the visual impact of asphalt and cars from the road.
- Noise - may not be excessive (based on established decibel levels)
- Environmental Impacts - applicants may be required to submit impact statements, demonstrating that the proposal does no harm to the environment.
- Visual Impacts - the planning board may make a determinations as to the visual impact of certain size or style of buildings, within reason.
- Traffic - the Board may address traffic volume and circulation patterns.

- Hours of Operation - the Board may set hours of operation, particularly when the location of the operation is in a residential area.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the Planning Board will need to periodically evaluate the subdivisions and site plan review regulations to ensure that they are effective in accomplishing the various recommendations of this plan. Selectmen and other town boards, committees and officials can also play a part in the realization the Master Plan goals and objectives. Through the annual development of the Town budget, for example, certain projects or activities can be prioritized.

While future development beyond a five- or ten-year period is difficult to project with accuracy, it can be assumed that change of some type will occur in Walpole. For this reason, it is important to continually monitor population growth and the non-residential development occurring in the town. It is only by being aware of these changes, as well as the demands being placed on town government, that the recommendations of this plan can be carried out in a timely and efficient manner.