

Plaistow in the Future

(2004)

Introduction

The categories of proposed future land use can be translated into zoning or use districts for the purpose of managing the type, location and quality of certain uses. In addition to the existing land use patterns, the following were taken into consideration to determine the location of future land uses:

- Existing zoning;
- Natural/physical development constraints;
- Potential developable acreage both residential and non-residential;
- Roadway corridors;
- Provision of diverse housing; and
- Infrastructure capabilities.

Existing Zoning Districts

At present, the town has seven (7) zoning districts, three of which are residential and two more of which are commercial. **See Zoning Map and Table FLU-1.** The Low Density Residential district comprises the largest land area--over 50.25% of Plaistow. All three residential districts make up over 70 % of the Town. The largest area of Low Density and Medium Density Residential Zoning is in the eastern half of Plaistow between the Integrated Commercial-Residential Zone that is a linear district along Route 108. The commercial districts tend to follow the Route 125 and Main Street Corridors in the central portion of Plaistow. The western portion of the town incorporates all three residential zones including the Residential Conservation District.

Table FLU-1: Areas of Zoning Districts

Zoning District	Acres	%
Commercial I (C-I)	652.22	9.62
Commercial II (C-II)	304.62	4.49
Industrial (I)	496.33	7.32
Integrated Commercial-Residential (ICR)	253.87	3.74
Low Density Residential (LDR)	3407.50	50.26
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	1480.27	21.83
Residential-Conservation (RC)	185.61	2.74
Total	6780.42	100.00

Source: Applied Geographics, Inc. March 2002

Based on these zoning configurations and areas as well as the current distribution of land use, it would appear that Plaistow will continue to have significant land capacity for additional low-to-medium density residential growth.

Development Constraints and Opportunities for Future Land Use

Natural Resource Constraints and Opportunities

In some areas of the community, resources such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, aquifer recharge areas, sensitive species and plant communities, when in combination with “unfragmented” or contiguous woodland/forest areas, become very valuable not only for water resource protection, but also for wildlife preservation and passive recreation. These areas may have inherent environmental value and should be protected because of their long-term value to Plaistow.

Approximately 2,884 acres of land in Plaistow are worthy of protection or limited in terms of type and intensity of use. **See Table FLU-2.** These areas include wetlands, hydric soils, steep slopes and floodplains. There are also approximately 31 acres of surface water features that should also be protected. Other limitations include shallow-to-bedrock soils, hard pan soils and soils with high water tables. Based on USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service), soil maps there are over 4000 acres of moderate or severe limitations to development. The majority of these are shallow to bedrock soils. If approximately 3041 acres are currently developed, there remain approximately 1805 acres within Plaistow with relatively few constraints. When water bodies are removed from this total, there are 1774 acres of land that are available for development. **See Development Constraints Map.**

Table FLU-2: Development Constraints

Development Constraints	
acres	
Wetlands	442
Hydric Soils	1615
Floodplains	452
Steep slopes	334
Total	2884
Developed Land	
acres	
Residential	2132
Commercial	379
Industrial	287
Gov/instit/educ	82
Other	155
Transp/utilities	16
Total	3041

Other Opportunities and Constraints

In addition to the opportunities and constraints inherent in Plaistow's natural resource base, there are a number of other features and characteristics of the town that provide opportunities and constraints for future growth that are consistent with the Master Plan Goals and Objectives.

In order to encourage quality growth, Plaistow will need to address the need to protect its natural, cultural and historic resources. In addition, the town will need to encourage a land use development pattern that are consistent with these inherent qualities.

Plaistow has a number of attributes that provide significant opportunity for promoting desirable growth.

- There is a defined village area of public and private institutions that provides goods and services to townspeople and gives Plaistow a sense of community. This village area is also the historical and cultural center of the town.
- Plaistow is at the crossroads of major highway corridors (Route 125, Route 121A, Route 121 and Route 108) that provide excellent access for movement of people and goods.
- Large tracts of land in public ownership that preserve and protect the town's "small town" character and encourages low intensity recreational and educational activities.
- Scenic views and landscapes that are part of community's identity.

Future Land Use Recommendations

As the **Future Land Use Map** shows, the following are recommended categories of proposed future land use can be translated into zoning or use districts for the purpose of managing the type, location and quality of permitted uses.

Public/Quasi-Public Open Space

These include publicly-owned lands such as town, school and public forest properties as well as lands held by nonprofit conservation groups. Most of these are located to the west and north of the Route 125 Corridor. Two of the largest areas are the Kelly Brook and Old County Road Conservation Areas. Forest management plans have been prepared for both of these areas. To the greatest extent possible all these areas should be retained for public use and to accommodate community needs for open space conservation and protection.

Resource Protection and Conservation Areas

These areas have fragile natural resources or perform essential ecological functions such as flood control and providing wildlife habitat. These areas typically include wetlands, buffers and shorelands adjacent to important fresh water resources. This designation incorporates, to a large extent, those areas covered under the Town of Plaistow Wetland Overlay District and the State of New Hampshire Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Program.

Areas Included

- Freshwater wetlands, wetland buffer zones and shoreland setbacks for septic systems and buildings and other impervious development.
- Areas that contain any of the following: threatened plant or animal species on the Official List of Rare and Threatened Species of the State of New Hampshire and designated high value natural communities of the New Hampshire Natural Areas Program.

Desired Uses

Within the resource protection areas, development or use of the land should be restricted. Only activities that do not adversely impact the ecological or natural resource value of these areas should be allowed. Low intensity recreational, wildlife management and low intensity forestry uses are suitable as long as natural resource qualities are not diminished.

Conservation Residential

The purpose of this area is to protect an identified potential water source for the Town of Plaistow and is geographically defined in an engineering study prepared by Fenton Keyes Engineering.

Area Included

This area is located in the northwest portion of Plaistow within the Kelly Brook Watershed that is encompassed by the 200-foot contour and terminates at its northerly limit at the Hampstead town line and at the southerly end by the site of the proposed reservoir dam.

Desired Uses

Within the Conservation Residential area, development or use of the land should be also be restricted. Very low density residential, recreation, wildlife management and low intensity forestry and agricultural uses are suitable.

Use Guidelines

Any proposed activity should be allowed only by special exception. Residential use should be allowed on very large lots only (not less than 5 acres) with large frontages. Strict environmental and water quality standards need to be adhered to.

Rural/Low-Density

The purpose of this category is to maintain, and where possible, enhance the open, rural character of the remaining open areas of Plaistow.

Areas Included

Low-Density/Rural use areas should include those areas of the town which will not be serviced by public sewerage and water and tend to be northwest of the Route 125 Corridor and east of the NH 108 Corridor. These areas should represent Plaistow's traditional rural or small-town character.

Desired uses

Within the town's rural areas wildlife habitat, limited agriculture, forestry and open space should be encouraged, while allowing for low density or clustered housing. Any non-residential uses or home occupations should be required to meet specific performance standards to minimize impact on the rural character of the area. Small-scale forestry may only be permitted with strict performance standards.

Use Guidelines

Overall residential development should be permitted at approximately one dwelling unit per 80,000 square feet. There shall be no more than one detached dwelling unit on any one lot of record.

Planned residential development should be encouraged based on the existing Planned Residential Development District (PRD) standards in the current Town of Plaistow Zoning Ordinance and recommendations on the Actions for Implementation section of this chapter. Minimum lot size in the PRD should be 5-10,000 SF. There should be at least 50% open space that includes a

significant area for active recreation that is not in a resource protection area. These open space areas shall be preserved as permanent open space for recreational or agricultural use, or to protect significant natural resources for wildlife habitat. There shall be a 100-foot buffer around any such development, including a prohibition on development on the corner lots of any such development.

Medium-Density Residential Areas

The medium-density residential designation should be applied to areas suitable for residential development, including affordable housing and, where appropriate, be served by community sewerage and water systems that are capable of being served by public facilities in the foreseeable future.

Areas Included

Medium density residential areas are generally located east of the NH Route 125 Corridor and in an area of Plaistow roughly bounded by Old County Road, North Main Street (NH 121A) and NH 125.

Desired Uses

Within these areas, residential developments of single family homes, either attached or detached and duplexes should be the primary land use. Small-scale multifamily housing with eight or fewer units per building should also be allowed in these areas if part of a Planned Residential Development that would be subject to strict design and siting standards. Nonresidential uses should be limited to public and quasi-public service facilities and home occupations. Low intensity recreational and open space uses should be encouraged.

Use Guidelines

Residential development should be permitted at a density of two units per acre if on a community sewer or water system. Lot size should be at least 40,000 SF if serviced by on-site sewage disposal. The use of clustering (PRD) should be encouraged by creating density incentives which allow slightly higher densities if significant portions of the site are preserved as permanent open space for recreational or agricultural use, or to protect significant natural resources of wildlife habitat.

Village Center

This area should provide for a mixture of medium density residential, commercial and public/institutional services for town residents and visitors. The Center should be a pleasing, pedestrian-oriented environment.

Area Included

The Village Center designation includes the area which serves as a retail and service center of the community including an area of at least 100 acres which centers on the Main Street/Elm

Street intersection and includes the Town Hall, District Court, Fire/Police Station and the Pollard School.

Desired Uses

Within the Village Center, desired uses should include a mixture of multi-family housing, retail shopping and service businesses, entertainment, business and professional offices, nonresidential public and semi-public uses, cultural, institutional uses and small inns and bed and breakfast establishments. The Village Center should feature a large public open space (e.g.: village green) for art shows, public markets, concerts and other civic activities.

Use Guidelines

This area should allow for a relatively intense level of mixed uses on lots ranging from 10,000 to 40,000 square feet. Development on larger lots should be designed to look like small lot development. Single or multi-family housing should be on ¼ or ½ acre lots. The total area of a given site covered by impervious surfaces should be limited to a maximum of 65%. Building height should not exceed two stories with exceptions for structures with steeples, peaks and gables. The Center should be developed consistent with specific architectural design and landscape standards to ensure development reflects a “New England village” town center-type appearance.

Main Street Corridor

The purpose of this area is to provide a mixed-use environment that allows for both residential and small businesses. This corridor provides a transition from the highly commercial NH Route 125 Corridor into the Plaistow Town Center.

Areas Included

This area should include the current NH Route 121A/Main Street Corridor from the southern municipal boundary with Haverhill near the NH Route 125 junction north to the junction with NH Route 125.

Desired Uses

Activities and uses that can accommodate both the automobile and pedestrians including medium density residential and small-scale businesses, business and professional offices, branch banks and bed and breakfast establishments. These uses should be developed according to architectural and design guidelines that achieve a consistent appearance based on the town's historic colonial-styled buildings. This area should incorporate landscaping that reflects the community's small town character. It should also feature increased pedestrian access and circulation that links uses. As there is a desirability by the citizens to preserve the “qualities of the Town Center”, over-zoning would diminish the possibility of retaining the still beautiful Main Street characteristics of Plaistow. Site plan review measures must be adopted that will preserve the small town character of Main Street.

Use Guidelines

This area should permit medium density mixed-use activities on lots ranging from 20,000 to 40,000 square feet. Lot coverage should be no more than 30% for residential and no more than 50% for commercial. Minimum lot sizes and dimensions should generally reflect the current C II districts except that building heights should be no more than 35 feet with exceptions for gable-type structures. Guidelines for commercial building placement should be established in order to maintain the small town-character of Plaistow.

Commercial Corridor

This area should encompass the current NH Route 125 Corridor (the Commercial I Zone) and be the primary auto-oriented commercial center that also provides for large retail services that would define a regional commercial shopping area. Effort should be made to establish architectural and landscape guidelines that would require new development or substantial reconstruction to incorporate design standards that make the development more visually attractive and, to the greatest extent possible, enhance the traditional historic New England character of the community.

Area Included

This area includes a corridor along NH Route 125 from the southern municipal boundary with Haverhill to the northeastern municipal boundary with Kingston.

Desired Uses

Activities and uses that normally require the automobile include retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional offices, banks and restaurants, motels and hotels. Also, it should feature coordinated parking and, where possible, increased pedestrian access and circulation that links uses.

Use Guidelines

This area should permit a relatively intense level of non-residential use. Lot coverage should be no more than 75%. However, there should be restrictions on height and building placement in order to maintain the small town-character of Plaistow. These uses should be developed according to architectural and design guidelines that achieve a consistent appearance based on the town's historic colonial-styled buildings. This area should include ample landscaping that enhances the visual and aesthetic quality of the corridor. Strict stormwater management standards should be put in place to protect the wetlands and stream courses in Plaistow.

Mixed Use Corridor

The purpose of this area is to provide a mixed use environment that allows for both residential and small commercial operations. Since this area contains a state highway corridor and is not connected by arterials to other parts of the community, it has evolved to a large extent as a community unto itself.

Areas Included

This area should encompass the current NH Route 108 Corridor (the ICR Zone) from the southern municipal boundary with Haverhill to the northeastern municipal boundary with Newton.

Desired Uses

Activities and uses that can accommodate both the automobile and pedestrians include medium-density residential and small-scale commercial businesses, business and professional offices, banks and restaurants and bed and breakfast establishments. These uses should be developed according to architectural and design guidelines that achieve a consistent appearance based on the town's historic colonial-styled buildings. This area should incorporate landscaping that reflects the community's small town character. It should also feature, to the greatest extent possible, increased pedestrian access and circulation that links uses.

Use Guidelines

This area should permit medium density mixed-use activities. Lot coverage should be no more than 30% for residential and no more than 60% for commercial. Minimum lot sizes and dimensions should generally reflect the MDR and the current C II Districts except that building heights should be no more than 35 feet with exceptions for gable-type structures. Guidelines for commercial building placement should be established in order to maintain the small town-character of Plaistow. Where necessary strict stormwater management standards should be put in place to protect the wetlands and stream courses of Plaistow.

Light Industrial Areas

Areas Included

These areas are suitable for accommodating a wide variety of light industrial uses which are clean, nonpolluting activities. These areas should have good access to the transportation system. Public water and sewer are preferable. Areas should include the existing industrially zoned areas off NH Route 125 and off of the Kingston Road.

Desired Uses

Areas designated as industrial should be used for a wide variety of nonresidential uses including light manufacturing, assembly, research and development facilities, warehousing and distribution and service uses.

Use Guidelines

Within industrial areas the total area of the site covered by impervious surfaces should be limited to a maximum of 75%. Lots should be a minimum of 40,000 square feet. There should be industrial performance standards to ensure environmental quality of the these and adjacent areas.

Implementaion/Action Items

These recommendations and action items are intended to achieve the goals and objectives for the future of the Town of Plaistow and provide a basis for revisions to the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Regulations.

Establish a Village Center District

The village area is the historic and cultural core of Plaistow. In addition to providing goods and services to town's residents, it is also the local government center that includes the Town Hall, Library, and Fire Station. Reinforcing the character of this area is important for maintaining the cultural and historical quality of the community and to attracting new investment that is consistent with this character. See the *Community Design Manual*, May, 1998 prepared by the North Country Council as part of the Route 16 Corridor Protection Study.

1. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to add a mixed-use Village Center District that would encompass the portion of Route 121A from Forrest Street to the Little River. Provisions should include:
 - Residential, home occupations, commercial and civic uses by right; light industry by special exception. Examples include: schools, libraries, churches, civic buildings, inns, restaurants, homes, home occupations, retail, artisan living/working and elderly/assisted living.
 - Public open spaces.
 - Minimum building setbacks (front, side and rear yard) and lot sizes.
 - Requirements for appropriate amenities with uniform standards including sidewalks, street trees and street lighting that encourage pedestrian activity in the village center.
2. Establish a Village Enhancement Program committee that will investigate public and private investment in the village area. Such improvements will help to create a sense of place and contribute to the village center's overall cultural and economic health. Examples of such investment include:
 - Improve the aesthetic appearance of the village through the improvement of lighting, sidewalks, drainage and public signage. Amend the sign regulations to establish a separate set of standards for the Village District.
 - Beautify public green areas through the planting of flowers, shrubs and trees to make them downtown focal points. Initiate Adopt-a-Spot programs whereby civic organizations and businesses agree to plant and maintain particular public spaces over a two-year period.

- Establish a downtown gateway theme through the creation of additional public signage as well as an attractive streetscape at the north and south entrances to the village area on Main Street.
- Link the cluster of town buildings by renovating the Town Hall and Safety Complex with compatible architectural themes, convenient circulation and parking and attractive landscaping.
- Implement a multi-purpose trail system (walking, biking) that links the downtown village with other areas in the community including the public schools and other large town-owned lands such as the recreation area.

Revise the District Standards in the Zoning Ordinance

In addition to adopting a Village Center District Zone, review and amend as appropriate the various sections of the Zoning Ordinance based on the suggested use guidelines of the Future Land Use Section described in a previous section of this chapter.

Consideration should be given to:

- names of the current districts to more accurately reflect the underlying existing and proposed uses;
- density, dimensional, coverage and height standards and
- landscaping and building design standards.

Revise the Planned Residential Development (PRD) Ordinance

Consider revising the PRD ordinance to include the following provisions:

1. Define the term open space as *useable (common) open space* and state that land to be dedicated as open space in a cluster subdivision shall NOT include wetlands and steep slopes in excess of 25%. Developable land or residual land should also be clearly defined. Establish a standard for the amount of land required for useable open space, such as 25% of the total land area exclusive of wetlands and steep slope.
2. Open space or residual land should be owned in common by the owners of the building lots. Homeowners Association should be defined. Use and maintenance guidelines should be established, e.g. location of fields and trails, cutting of open fields, etc.
3. Prohibit further subdivision of the parcel that has been approved for cluster.

Manage the Quality of New Non-Residential Development

New commercial and industrial development should be guided to particular areas of town. In addition, the quality of new development should be managed through Site Plan Review Regulations.

1. Establish sign and Site Plan review standards designed to improve the visual quality of commercial development, including increased landscaping and screening requirements, noise and traffic standards to control negative off-site impacts.
2. Amend the Site Plan Review Regulations to include a provision to allow for architectural review of commercial and industrial structure to encourage designs that are compatible with Plaistow's country-like character.
3. Adopt a regulation for landscaping and buffering particularly for such areas as the Commercial Corridor, the Mixed Used Corridor and the Village Center District.

Manage Stormwater and Water Quality

Amend the stormwater and erosion and sediment control provisions of the Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations Review Regulations as follows:

1. Require that any additional stormwater runoff created by the proposed development be retained on site and that no degradation of water quality shall occur.
2. For projects with impervious surfaces greater than 20,000 square feet require the use of catch basins or other similar devices that trap oil, grease and sediments. In addition, require the submission of a long-term maintenance/monitoring plan for these devices as well as a requirement for reporting the monitoring activities to the town.
3. Ensure that Stormwater Management and Erosion and Sediment Control Plans are consistent with the requirements of RSA 485-A:17 and NH DES rules Env-Ws 415 for Site Specific Permits. Make reference to a guidance document for developers that is consistent with these requirements, such as *Stormwater Management and Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook for Urban and Developing Areas in New Hampshire*, 1992 and *Best Management Practices for Urban Stormwater Runoff*, 1996.
4. Consider the incorporation of the Office of State Planning's *Model Stormwater and Erosion Control Regulation*, 1997 into the town's Land Use Regulations.

Practice Best Management of Potential Contamination Uses or Facilities

Amend the Plaistow Site Plan Regulations by adopting the current state standards in Env-Ws 421, rules for Best Management Practices, prepared by NH DES in 1996. These requirements are aimed at facilities that may generate hazardous or petroleum/chemical products or spills to mitigate threats to groundwater.

Designate Prime Wetlands

Initiate a process for designation of prime wetlands as provided for in RSA 483--A:7 that is based upon the *Guide to the Designation of Prime Wetlands in New Hampshire*, 1983. Such a

designation will provide added protection for particularly valuable wetlands over and above the proposed Conservation Overlay District Regulation.

Enhance Soil Mapping and Wastewater Management

1. Amend the town's Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations to incorporate a reference to *Data Requirements for Site Review* that provides guidance for planning boards as the appropriate level of wetland and soil mapping submissions for land developers. These data requirements will ensure consistency in the use of soil and wetland data with state and federal agencies. These data requirements can replace HSS mapping requirements and soil based lot size requirements in the current regulations. The basis for this change is the use of *Site Specific Soil Maps for New Hampshire and Vermont*, SSSNNE Special Publication No. 3, June, 1997. This provision will provide consistency to the NH DES Site Specific and septic system rules for design and permitting. This provision would supercede the current provision for HISS mapping that is inconsistent with current NRCS standards.
2. Require that maps prepared by field examination shall be prepared and stamped by a Certified Soil Scientist.
3. Adopt the language of the New Hampshire Office of State Planning's model health ordinance in accordance with RSA 147:1, L. This ordinance will be consistent with and make reference to appropriate state programs and regulations for septic systems, for example Env-Ws - 1000 - *Subdivision and Individual Sewage Disposal Design Rules*, sludge, biosolids, etc.

Acquire/Enhance Land Use Management Tools

Implement a Geographic Information System in Plaistow that is geographically referenced and based upon accurate aerial photography as follows:

- Acquire accurate aerial photography in digital format for the whole town that is referenced in the State Plan Coordinate System.
- Prepare an accurate base map of the town that includes existing features and a parcel based overlay.
- Coordinate the geographic data with the town's property records into a unified database.
- With each change to a property or land record, the parcel map can be revised appropriately.
- Require that all subdivision plans include an accurate, geographically referenced digital copy of the plan that can be used to revise the town's parcel database and map.
- Engage the services of an individual who can implement and maintain the town's digital data base.

- Prepare a map inventory of town resources that would be consistent with the town's revised base map.

Preserve Town Character Through Citizen Education

1. Educate the residents of Plaistow about the importance of protecting and managing the town's natural and cultural resources through curriculum and programs in the schools, public workshops and the community newsletter.
2. Explore the possibility of cooperative use of the town's public lands with the school department, recreation department and conservation commission for mutual education, recreation and sustainable resource management programs and activities.
3. Prepare information brochures and a town web site that promotes natural and cultural resource management and protection.

Utilize Community Development Strategies

Apply for Community Development Block Grant funds from the New Hampshire Office of State Planning for public facility improvements and associated housing construction and rehabilitation in the downtown area. In preparation for the applications, ensure that the town continues to list a warrant article for the acceptance of federal funds and update the Housing and Community Development Plan.

Revise the Parking Standards

Review the current parking standards in the Site Review Regulations and consider the following changes:

1. Amending the Site Plan Review Regulations to provide for flexible parking standards in the downtown village area.
2. Considering the use of such alternatives as shared parking or proximity to public parking as incentives to reduce overall parking requirements.

Examine Local Capital Expenditures

- Ensure a consistent and ongoing Capital Improvement Planning process.

A capital improvement plan can play an important role in small towns by prioritizing and scheduling expenditures over a six year period for capital items such as sidewalk and road projects. Capital improvement plans are adopted pursuant to RSA 674:5 that requires town department heads to continually evaluate capital projects. The plan should be prepared by the Planning Board and adopted by the Board of Selectmen.