

NORTH YARMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE SUMMARY FOR STATE PLANNING OFFICE SUBMISSION

Overview

This Comprehensive Plan is an update of the Town's 1991 Plan. Since 1991 the community has experienced considerable growth and development, and has enacted a building cap on the number of residential permits allowed. This has slowed the pace of residential development, but growth has continued to occur primarily in outlying areas of the community along rural roads, and increasingly off private roads extending into undeveloped backlands. Besides a building cap, the town's other tools for managing growth are zoning and impact fees.

The Process for Updating the Comprehensive Plan

The 14-member Comprehensive Plan Update Committee, appointed January 2002, has been working on the Plan for nearly two years. Public input has been a priority, and the following opportunities were provided:

- Public Opinion Survey (467 surveys returned, 39% response rate) – January 2003
- Visioning Sessions (5 sessions, approximately 70 participants) – February 2003
- Open Space Workshops (2 sessions, approximately 45 participants) – June 2003
- Large Landowners (50+ acres) Meeting (15 participants) – September 2003
- Workshop with Representatives of the State Planning Office and Community Leaders (20 participants) – September 2003
- Public Forum (50+ participants) – November 2003

The Most Significant Findings

- Over the next decade development pressure will increase as a result of a sprawling regional pattern with people looking to more rural areas such as North Yarmouth to call home. The population will increase from about 3,500 to 4,300 people by the year 2014. The demand for new housing is projected to be from 300 to 360 new units over the next ten years.
- The lack of public sewer limits higher density development, particularly in the portion of the village that is underlain by the aquifer for the public water supply.
- The aquifers that serve the public water supply are crucial to the future well being of North Yarmouth and Yarmouth residents, and the zoning must be modified to provide adequate protection. Public sewer would provide considerable protection, as well.
- Preservation of open space is a high priority, particularly the Royal River Corridor, public water supplies, the Knight's Pond and Deer Brook areas, and Pratt's Brook. Much progress has been made in preserving open space in subdivisions and in purchasing land for parks.
- Growth and development will increase the cost of waste disposal, road construction and maintenance, administrative staffing, police protection and fire and rescue services.
- Traffic volumes and speeds on the town's roads are major safety concern.
- Over the past 5 years education costs have risen 59% as compared to 26% for all town expenses combined. Education accounts for 64% of municipal expenses.
- The Town is in sound fiscal condition, due to increasing property values, a limited amount of long-term debt and use of a capital budgeting process.
- Existing zoning is encouraging a sprawling development pattern, including strip development along public roads. Over 90% of the buildings are located in the Farm and Forest, and Rural Districts.

Significant Goals, Policies and Strategies

The Comprehensive Plan Update recommends the implementation of a growth management program consisting of the coordinated use of a number of tools designed to guide growth, including:

- Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations
- Implementation of an Open Space Plan to include land acquisition and other protection techniques
- Municipal Facilities and Services, and Transportation planning and policies that support the goals for directing growth, preserving open space and protecting critical natural resource areas
- Financial planning and programming consistent with overall growth management goals

Two significant goals of the growth management program are:

- Attain a goal of at least 60% to 70% of new residential uses to be located within the Village Center, Village Residential or Transitional Residential Districts areas over the next ten years. Attain a goal of no more than 30% to 40% of new residential uses to be located in Farm and Forest District over the next ten years.
- Permanently preserve 10% or 1,370 acres of the town in open space by the year 2015. As a long-range goal, permanently preserve 20% to 25% of the town in open space (2,700 to 3,400 acres).

The **Future Land Use Plan** establishes a Village Center District and village and residential neighborhood districts in areas adjacent to existing built-up areas and in areas where water and sewer are or might be available in the future (growth areas). Preservation of open space and natural resources is the primary goal of the Farm and Forest District and the Resource Protection District (rural areas and critical resource areas). The Groundwater Overlay District is designed to provide a high level of protection to existing and future public water supplies. A differential building cap is proposed to limit building in the rural districts. A less restrictive cap, or no cap, is proposed for the growth districts. Conservation subdivisions that preserve at least 50% to 60% of open space are required in the rural districts.

The **Open Space Plan** is a very high priority that recommends the establishment of a Royal River Greenway and land conservation in the largest unfragmented wildlife habitat block in the area. The Plan recommends further inventories and the development of a Map of Conservation Lands to guide future land development.

The **Affordable Housing Plan** recommends locations for higher density housing, that accessory apartments be allowed throughout the town, and other incentives for the creation of affordable housing.

The **Transportation Plan, Public Services and Facilities, and Capital Investment Plan** focus on providing adequate services and facilities to all of the community, but with a higher level of service to growth areas. The most significant initiatives include:

- Policies to allow Town acceptance of private roads in growth areas and to discourage acceptance in rural areas
- Establishment of a driveway permitting system and road standards to address access management and road construction
- Enhancement of the Village Center District to encourage civic, cultural and business activity
- A sewer feasibility study and a cooperative effort with Yarmouth to protect the public water supply
- Development of a master plan for the placement of future roads, sidewalks, bikeways, etc. in growth areas.