

LAND USE

Introduction

Newton is predominantly a rural residential community situated along the Massachusetts border in the geographic center of Rockingham County. It is bisected by route 108 which runs north to south and the Town is located close to interstate 495. The town has experienced significant growth as housing pressures from the Boston suburbs have resonated across the region. This coupled with the high quality of living, proximity to the seacoast and tax-free commercial areas surrounding Newton, have all been factors which have influenced the growth in Town.

The Land Use chapter is a required chapter of a Master Plan, as dictated by RSA 674:2 II(b). While it is a primary chapter, it is integrally connect to other chapters. The RSA specifically states that the purpose is to connect comments made in the Visioning chapter with the physical landscape of the town. The Historical & Cultural Resources, Natural Resources and Water Resource Management & Protection Plan chapters are also all very important to make the connection with how the land has been developed and how they would like to see the land be used in the future.

With the connection between the visioning chapter and the land use chapter established in the NH statutes, it is important to address some of the key sentiments of the Visioning Chapter. Among the chief values addressed in the visioning sessions was the desire for Newton to remain a rural community, protect the natural resources and minimize impacts of development on these core values. The natural resources specifically addressed the importance of water and the surrounding ecosystems which include wetlands and riparian areas. There was also an expressed interest in promoting agriculture and preserving historically significant structures. All of these sentiments should be combined with the data present herein and help to formulate the recommendations at the end of the Land Use chapter.

This chapter begins by analyzing the historical land use trends to identify how the Town has changed over the years. A summary of existing conditions with the most recent data from 1998 will be included. Second, soil data will be reviewed to identify the developed portions of town and the potential for development in undeveloped areas. Third, will be the summarization of the zoning districts in town, their purpose and how they will help dictate future land uses. An analysis of how the 1998 land uses comply with zoning districts will be included. Fourth, a list of tools will be included to provide a structure of ideas to help Newton accomplish some of their goals identified in the Visioning chapter. The conclusion will be recommended actions for the Town to consider.

Review of 1998 Master Plan

The 1998 Master Plan identified eight recommendations in the Land Use Chapter. Table LU-1 is a list of these recommendations and what progress, if any, was taken to achieve the recommendation.

Table LU-1

1998 Master Plan Update

	1998 Land Use Recommendations	Action Taken
1	Update all town maps (computerized version).	Warrant articles for updating/digitizing Town maps have failed for the last several years
2	Board of Selectman delegate some enforcement duties to another town entity (code enforcement officer).	Part-time code enforcement officer passed with budget 3/07 and was hired 6/07
3	Planning Board consideration of an impact fee and/or cluster development to preserve open space.	Residential Open Space/Cluster Development Ordinance passed 3/03.
4	Planning Board adopt ordinance to state non wetland areas must be contiguous to determine minimum lot size.	Added to subdivision regulations.
5	Preserve extensive set of recreation trails.	Town sold off a piece of the Peanut Trail to settle a lawsuit some years ago. Conservation Commission has been instrumental in acquiring land & preserving trail system.
6	Town encouragement of current use lands to be placed in town conservation.	A number of parcels have been preserved including: Bush Property (48.5 acres), Forest Reynolds (20 acres), Marden (33+ acres), Whittier Pinkerton, Wilder's Grove (6 acres)
7	Create easement to combine Peanut Trail with pipeline easement for a trail system.	Pipeline is still individually owned and was determined not to be a viable option for the town to exercise. A trail easement from Pinkerton St to Woodier does exist.
8	Master Plan committee should publicize updated Master Plan	Numerous public meetings/hearings, articles in local paper, distribution of fliers, and notices/documents available on Town website.

Since the 1998 Master Plan, a number of changes have occurred to the ordinances and regulations which have affected the land uses of the Town. Most notably is the residential cluster subdivision ordinance in 2003. This ordinance allows a density bonus to developers who choose to permanently conserve at least 40% of the portion of the site that can be built. It is achieved through a conditional use permit that is issued by the planning board. Also in 2003, the town passed the Elderly Housing Ordinance. Its purpose is to offer affordable housing options

for long time Newton residents who do not want to live in a traditional single family home. Town Meeting in 2007 as a busy year for zoning ordinances. There were four amendments on the warrant and they were all passed. First was an amendment to the Accessory Apartment Ordinance which set a maximum square footage for an accessory apartment at 800 sq. ft. or 1/3 of the gross sq. footage of the primary dwelling, whichever is less. Second was an amendment to the Elderly Housing Ordinance to reduce the threshold of elderly housing in the community. This was done by exempting existing elderly housing into the calculation used to determine the number of elderly housing units permitted on a single development plan. This in effect allowed each development proposal to build elderly housing units up to 10% of the total housing stock of the town. Third, was the adoption of the Access Management Ordinance which set requirements for access ways to parcels. Finally, a Commercial Architecture Ordinance was approved to regulate the façade of buildings and streetscapes in town.

Land Use Maps

In 2006, the final Land Use analysis report for the Seacoast area of New Hampshire was submitted by GRANIT, the New Hampshire state GIS Database Center, and CICEET, a research division at the University of New Hampshire¹. The study utilized aerial photographs to classify the land uses for the region across three different years; 1962, 1974 and 1998. The land was classified into 13 categories which include:

Developed Lands:

- **Residential-** Individual houses, subdivisions and "in-town" residential areas
- **Industrial/commercial-** Urban areas dominated by business operations
- **Mixed urban-** Urban areas where commercial enterprise occupies part of a building/block and residential use occurs in another, adjacent part of the building/block. Also, miscellaneous urban uses, e.g. schools, military installations, etc.
- **Transportation/roads-** Paved roadways, travel lane width, airports, or other public transportation features.
- **Railroads-** Railroad beds
- **Auxiliary transportation-** Highway medians, clover leafs, etc.

Undeveloped Lands

- **Playing fields/recreational-** Golf courses, baseball diamonds, football fields, etc.
- **Agriculture-** Includes hay fields, row crops, fruit orchards, etc.
- **Farmsteads-** Any buildings associated with farms
- **Forested-** Land where trees are the dominant cover

¹ Rubin, F., Salas, W., April 2006, *Integrating Technologies to Monitor and Predict Patterns of Urban Growth*, University of New Hampshire.

- **Water-** Open surface water
- **Open wetlands-** Wetlands where the dominant vegetation is less than 20' in height
- **Idle/other open-** Cemeteries, gravel pits, quarries, old fields, etc.

Figure LU-1, Figure LU-2 and Figure LU-3 are the visual representations of the product of this research for the town of Newton. A larger version of Figure LU-3 for the 1998 Land Uses is included as Appendix 1. Common land uses seen in Newton include: Residential (yellow), Forested (dark green), Agriculture (light green), mixed urban (red), and industrial/commercial (orange). The expansive growth of residential units is visible across this temporal period. The direction of the growth followed a common pattern of development which focused the growth on the major road networks of Route 108, Whitter St., Bear Hill Rd. and Highland Rd, to name a few. This pattern of growth has served to compartmentalize large tracts of forested land which is known to have negative impacts on wildlife/plant species.

In the following figures, it is important to note that the land use classifications do not necessarily correspond to parcel boundaries. Instead, visual interpretation was used to determine land use type. For instance if a single family home is located on a 20 acre parcel, only two acres surrounding the house will be shown as developed. On the other hand, agriculture classification does largely follow parcel boundaries due to the heavy reliance this classification has on the land. A full explanation of the study's methodology can be found at CICEET website.²

² The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology, website- www.ciceet.unh.edu

Figure LU-1

1962 LAND USES

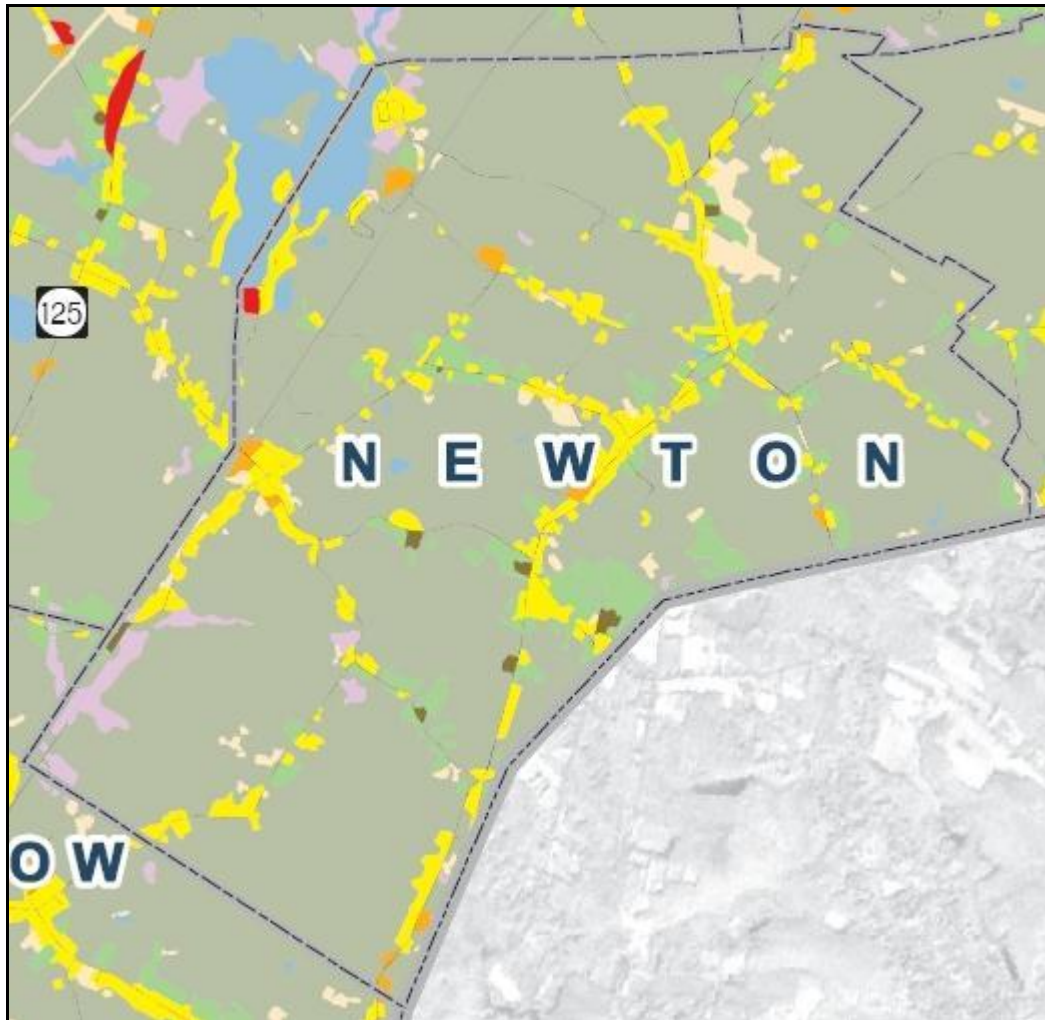
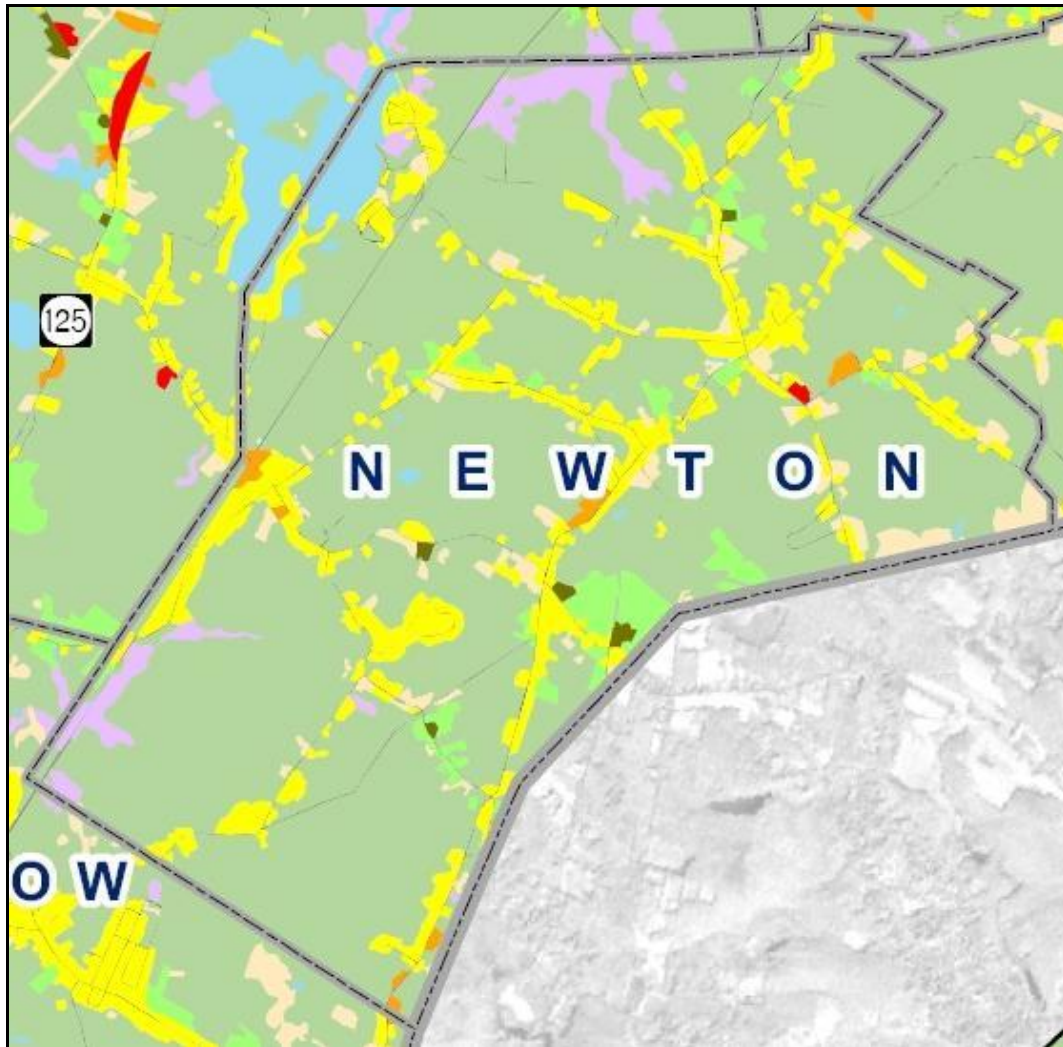
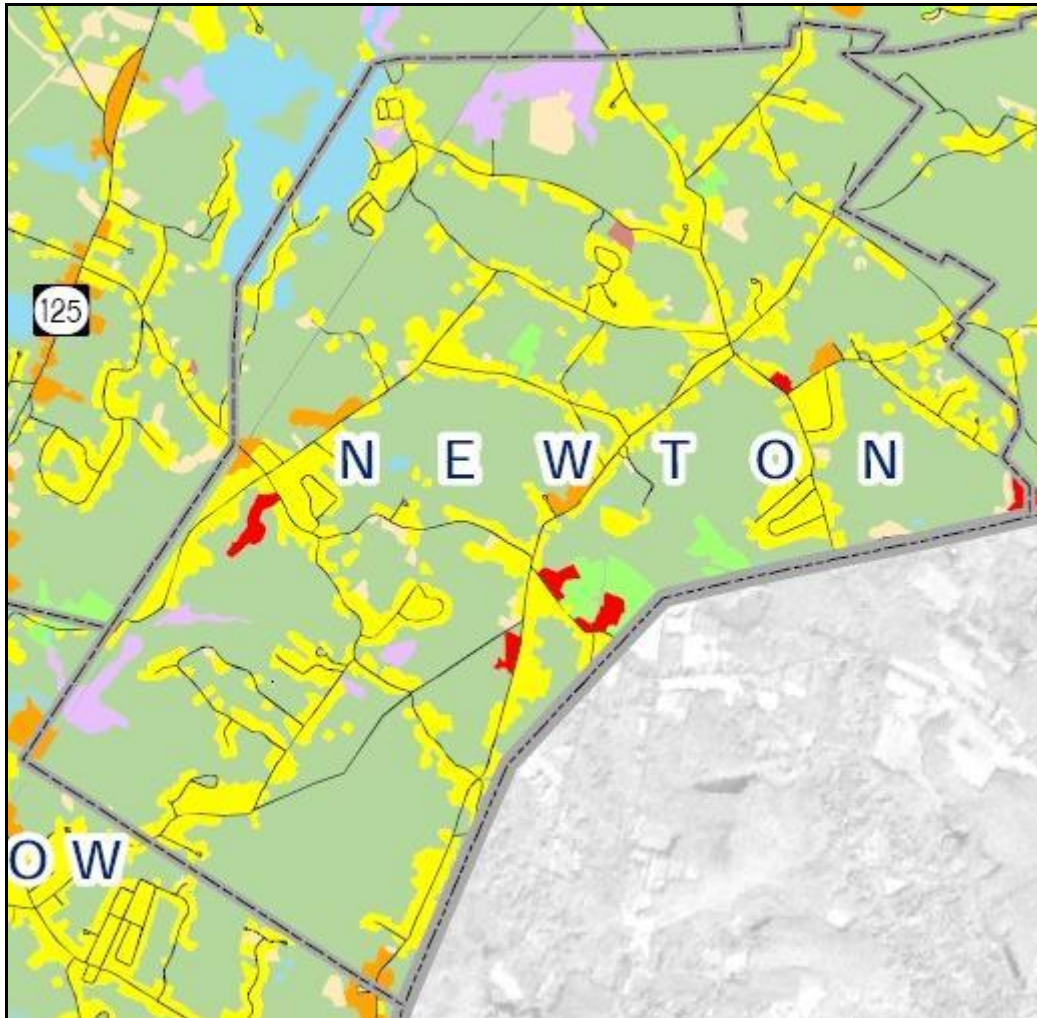


Figure LU-2
1974 LAND USES



**Figure LU-3
1998 LAND USES**



Newton encompasses an area of 6,365 acres which is approximately 9.9 square miles. Table LU-2 is a quantitative look at the land use types for these three time periods. The key findings from this analysis revealed the following:

- Developed land areas rose from 611 acres (9.6%) to 1,627 acres (25.6%).
- The 1,016 acre rise of developed lands represents 16.0% of the Town's total land area.
- Residential land use more than doubled, from 482 acres to 1,413 acres, occupying 22.2% of the Town's total land area.
- The developed lands consumed approximately 762 acres of forested area and represents 12% of the total land area of the Town.
- Approximately 260 acres of agricultural land was converted to developed lands from 1962-1998. This represents approximately 4.0% of the total land area of the Town.

Table LU-2

NEWTON LAND USES (1962-1998)

Land Use Category	1962		1974		1998	
	acres (#)	(%)	acres (#)	(%)	acres (#)	(%)
Residential	482.0	7.6%	777.2	12.2%	1,413.4	22.2%
Industrial/Commercial	37.8	0.6%	31	0.5%	55.4	0.9%
Mixed Urban	5.9	0.1%	3.3	0.1%	52.4	0.8%
Transportation/Roads	67.5	1.1%	80	1.3%	95.5	1.5%
Railroads	18.2	0.3%	10.8	0.2%	10.9	0.2%
Auxiliary Transportation	0.2	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Playing Fields/Recreation	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6.2	0.1%
Agriculture	355.0	5.6%	187.7	2.9%	94.5	1.5%
Farmsteads	20.2	0.3%	14.9	0.2%	0	0.0%
Forested	5,066.2	79.6%	4,785.6	75.2%	4,304.2	67.6%
Water	111.6	1.8%	112.8	1.8%	110.8	1.7%
Open Wetlands	84.5	1.3%	159	2.5%	135.6	2.1%
Idle/Other Open	115.9	1.8%	202.5	3.2%	86.1	1.4%
Total	6,365.0					

The trend of forested and agricultural areas being converted to residential land uses is not unique to Newton. Rubin & Salas' study from the University of New Hampshire identified that Rockingham County saw approximately 43,000 acres (9.2%) of forested areas converted to developed land uses. Agricultural lands also declined from 39,347 acres (5.0%) in 1962 to 16,288 (3.5%). This trend is also commonly reported across much of New Hampshire, specifically in the southern and central portions of the state.

Land Use Changes (1998- 2006)

Newton is similar to many northern New England towns in that it has a relatively rural feel, wood areas with a mix of wetlands and ponds dispersed across the land. Since the 1998 Master Plan, there have been a number of development changes. As outlined in Table LU-2, a majority of the growth has been residential development. Over time, the residential units have spread across the Town with no real form. They have been focused on single access roadways constructed to provide the required frontage for new lots, and these new units have had minimal connection to focal areas of the community.

Since the 1998 master plan was written, there has been unprecedented growth of residential properties in Newton. Notable properties included Kenwood Subdivision (32 units), Willamy Subdivision (50 units), Brennar Subdivision (22 Units), Zoe Lane (8 units) and Sarah's Way (8 units). After the passage of the Elderly Housing Ordinance, two developments, Sargent Wood (80 units) and Jacob's Way (INPUT UNITS) were built, adding more options for the aging populace in Newton. The additions of the two elderly housing developments have helped to preserve land through a conservation easement and they have created a nature trail network to be enjoyed by its residents. A third project elderly housing project, Fitz Estates, has been approved and is in the process of being constructed.

For Commercial and Industrial zones, there has been limited changes since 1998. Puzzle Lane Commercial Development, is the largest commercial parcel with 215.8 acres. This property has had some growth with the addition of commercial condos, a warehouse district, and the expansion of Continental Biomass. The Coleman site also has approximately 200 acres and is zoned light industrial. There has been no changes in development on the Coleman site. Home based business have increased and will be an area the town should closely monitor to prevent any conflicts from occurring between landowners and their abutters.

Residents of Newton have fond thoughts of the town remaining in a rural character and preservation of its natural resources. The development pressure facing the region is working against these sentiments. However, there has been a concerted effort to counteract these pressures and maintain open spaces in their natural state. In 1998 there were 170.13 acres of conservation land owned by the Town. By 2007, Town owned conservation lands increased by 66.9 acres, representing a 39% increase in preserved lands. The most recent additions have included two properties which were added in 2006. The larger of the two is a 33+ acres of land located between Peanut Trail off Whittier Street and Old Lower Road. This site was named the John Marden Conservation Land and has added valuable land which will protect wildlife habitat and watershed resources. The second site is a smaller parcel located on Wilder's Grove Cottage Association and is situated on a shoreline area important to the area's aquifer.

The land of Newton is rich in History, something its residents pride itself on. There are historic buildings, gravesites, and farms located throughout the community. The biggest accomplishment since the 1998 master plan has been the preservation of the Forest Reynolds- Hidden Acres Farm Property on Thornell Rd. The land has roots dating back to 1780. It is the oldest farm in New Hampshire that has been in continuous operation. Originally a dairy farm, the land is now used predominately for hay but still rears chickens and pigs. In 2004 the town applied and received funding from the states Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) to preserve the land and its buildings. By preserving the land, it has not only saved the historic aspects of the land, but it has also preserved the natural features, creating an interconnected network to abutting conservation lands.

Soil Classes

The Natural Resources Conservation Service delineates soil types into five classes which depict the potential for development. The soil classes are rated Very High, High, Medium, Low, and Very Low. In addition to these five classes, a sixth class, Other, is included to encapsulate soil types such as open water which did not receive a rating. The soil type classification utilized methodologies that incorporated several variables including: depth to water table, flooding, slope, depth to bedrock, stone cover, permeability, and shrink-swell potential.

TABLE LU-3

SOIL TYPE AND LAND USE

SOILS	Undeveloped		Developed	
	(acres)	(%)	(acres)	(%)
Very High	806.2	17%	439.2	27%
High	1,104.0	23%	493.1	30%
Medium	829.4	18%	330.4	20%
Low	275.7	6%	125.6	8%
Very Low	1,564.7	33%	208.7	13%
Other	157.4	3%	30.5	2%
Grand Total	4,737.3	100%	1,627.5	100%

Table LU-3 classifies the developed and undeveloped land uses from the 1998 land use classification in Table LU-1 into these six classes. Most important in the analysis of land use with soil classes is to look at the potential for development on the undeveloped portions of land. More than half of the undeveloped lands have a classification suitable for development. Approximately 2,740 acres (58%) are rated as very high, high or medium potential for development. The remaining 1,840 acres (39%) of undeveloped lands are rated as low or very low potential for development. It should not be construed that 58% of the town is open and available for development. This analysis doesn't take into consideration parcel configuration,

conservation easement and other restrictive factors. What is important to extract from this analysis is the large availability of good soil for development in Newton.

A map is included as Appendix 2 to visualizing the relationship between soil classifications and undeveloped lands. The darker colors depict areas of higher potential for development while the lighter colors respectively show the lower potential for development. Developed portions of Newton are represented in white, and are excluded from the soil classification in this map.

Table LU-3 also compares developed lands with soil classes for potential development. Out of the 1,627 acres of developed land in town, 1,263 acres (77%) are situated in soil types deemed acceptable for buildings. The remaining 334 acres (21%) of developed lands are areas with soil types rated as low or very low for potential for development. The 30 acres of developed land in the soil type “Other” were soils that did not receive a rating. Most likely the developments in low or very low soil types occurred because they were built prior to the regulations which controlled development on these lands. It is also possible that some of the developments received a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment or were a result of a loophole in the regulations.

Zoning Maps

Present day zoning practices began with the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act that was created through an advisory committee at the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1921. The purpose of zoning land is to site development at suitable areas which will optimize the societal benefits. For instance it behooves towns to located industrial development away from residential areas and to establish setbacks from natural features to protect the groundwater.

The first zoning in Newton occurred in March 1971. Zoning done at that time was spot zoning; which allowed the existing development patterns to coincide with the zones. Zoning was not used to help direct the desired growth to certain areas within town. The result created an island of commercial and industrial uses surrounded by residential dwellings. This zoning has largely remained intact since it was first adopted. There have been additions such as the Senior Citizens Housing zone and realignment of light Industrial and Commercial zones. A map of the current zones in 1999 are included in Appendix 3.

One of the primary purposes in including a land use chapter in the master plan is to analyze the relationship between land uses and current zoning practices. ArcGIS software was used to overlay the land use data from 1998 with the zoning data from 1999 to examine the degree that land uses comply with zoning regulations. Table LU-4 is a cross table comparing developed lands in Newton and whether they comply with the zoning regulations.

Table LU-4**LAND USE COMPLIANCE WITH ZONING**

ZONES	LAND USES- DEVELOPED LANDS							
	Residential		Com. & Ind.		Transportation		Total	
	(acres)	(%)	(acres)	(%)	(acres)	(%)	(acres)	(%)
Commercial	24.5	2%	33.6	31%	4.2	4%	62.4	4%
Light Industrial/Commercial	6.1	0%	11.9	11%	2.3	2%	20.3	1%
Residential A	1,350.9	96%	62.2	58%	97.8	92%	1,511.0	93%
Residential B	19.1	1%	0.0	0%	1.6	1%	20.6	1%
Residential C	4.3	0%	0.0	0%	0.5	0%	4.8	0%
Senior Citizens	5.9	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	5.9	0%
Other	2.4	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	2.5	0%
Grand Total	1,413.4	100%	107.8	100%	106.4	100%	1,627.6	100%

The developed land uses were broken down into three categories; Residential, Commercial/Industrial and Transportation. The six zones in Newton are listed and a seventh category (Other) is included to encompass areas which are not assigned a zone class (ex. open water). The largest category of developed lands is Residential. Residential development accounts for 86% of the 1,627 total acres of developed land in Newton. Out of the 1,413 acres of residential development in town, 97% of it is in a residential zone. This is largely due to the fact that residential zones make up the majority of the town and a significant portion of the development boom occurred after the zoning was enacted in 1973. Commercial and Industrial land uses are a smaller percentage of development in town and they are less compliant with the zoning. Commercial and Industrial land uses were 7% of the total developed area of town and 42% occurred in areas deemed appropriate for this type of use. The remaining 58% of commercial and industrial use occurred in residentially zoned areas. Some of the discrepancy can be attributed to variances by the Zoning Board of Adjustment, pre-existing non-conforming uses, and loopholes in the zoning regulations. Transportation networks account for 106 acres (6.5%) of the developed portion of the town, most of which occurs in Residential A zone. The anomaly of 2.4 acres of residential land occurring in the zoning classification "Other" is due to error in the spatial data, possibly around the residential area of Country pond. The error is minimal and the accuracy of the data is acceptable.

The analysis between the relationship of land uses and zoning can also be used to show the percent of the Town that is developed and undeveloped within each of the six zones in Newton. Table LU-5 depicts these results.

Table LU-5**LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN ZONES**

ZONES	LAND USES					
	Developed		Undeveloped		Total	
	(acres)	(%)	(acres)	(%)	(acres)	(%)
Commercial	62.4	33%	125.6	67%	187.9	100%
Light Industrial/Commercial	20.3	7%	279.3	93%	299.6	100%
Residential A	1,511.0	26%	4,213.9	74%	5,724.9	100%
Residential B	20.6	49%	21.2	51%	41.8	100%
Residential C	4.8	78%	1.4	22%	6.2	100%
Senior Citizens	5.9	67%	2.9	33%	8.9	100%
Other	2.5	3%	93.1	97%	95.6	100%
Grand Total	1,627.6	26%	4,737.4	74%	6,364.9	100%

Residential A was visually depicted in Appendix 3 as the largest zone and it is quantifiably shown here. The 5,725 acres in Residential A zone represents 90% of the total 6,365 acres of land in Newton. Out of the 5,725 acres in Residential A zone, 1,511 acres or 26% of the zone is developed with the remaining 74% being undeveloped. The Light Industrial/Commercial zone is significantly smaller than Residential A, but is the second largest zone. There are 300 acres in Light Industrial/Commercial zone which is 5% of the total area of the Town. Within this zone, 20 acres or 7% of it has been developed, and 93% of this zone in an undeveloped state. The third largest zone, Commercial accounts for 187 acres or 3% of the total area of the Town. This section has a relatively higher percent of development with 62 acres or 33% of the area being developed. The smaller zones including Residential B, Residential C and Senior Citizen's Housing take up a smaller percentage of the total town area, but they do have a larger portion of the area developed. It is important to note that the undeveloped portions of land shouldn't be construed as having a potential for development. It is simply affirming the current state of the land. Several factors such as soil type, conservation protection, transportation corridors and topography of the land must be factored into the analysis to show the full potential of future development in town.

With increasing pressure of development on the limited land resources, there have been discussions on how the town should handle the demand. Smart growth is a principle that has been discussed extensively. The ideas of smart growth include concentrating development into central districts and permitting a mixed uses within these districts. These mixed uses would include examples such as commercial/retail uses on first floor of buildings and allowing residential use to occur on the 2nd floor of the building. This concentrated growth will help to preserve natural areas, reduce traffic on roads, improve social capital of the community and reduce energy use. It also creates a development pattern that is more conducive to public transportation infrastructure.

Land Use Tools

The Town has used a variety of tools that have helped to preserve the land and the natural resources it values. Some of the tools mentioned below are currently being used by the Town; others are new ideas to fulfill the desires of residents to keep the area's rural character.

Current Use Tax: The premise of the current use tax is to tax property for the current use of the land. Lands that are undeveloped have a lower tax rate than developed lands. Property owners can choose to participate in the current use taxation program and for participating they can receive the benefit of lower taxes. The stipulation is that the land needs to remain in its current state to receive the benefit. If the land use changes, say to develop a subdivision, a change of use tax will be assessed. The money collected through this tax is then earmarked to the Town's conservation fund for future acquisitions of land for preservation. The downfall of this tool is that the land is not conserved in perpetuity. In 1998 there were 2,031 acres underneath current use and by 2006 this had fallen to 1,691 acres, representing a decrease of 340 acres (5.3%) of the total acreage of the Town.

Conservation Easement: Another method of conservation is through a conservation easement. In addition to the physical land the landowner owns on a parcel, they also have a variety of rights which include the right to benefit from the land (natural resources), right to exclude people, and the right to develop. These development rights can be purchased/donated through a conservation easement and restrict all development potential of the parcel. Typically the conservation easement is purchased by a land trust or through a municipal bond, approved through town meeting. Development rights can also be donated to one of these entities. In 1998, there were 170.13 acres of conservation land owned by the Town. In 2007, that number rose to 237.03 acres. It should be noted that current use lands and conservation lands are not mutually exclusive. In many cases, the lands that are in current use, also have a conservation easement placed on them.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): Similar to conservation easements, a transfer of development rights allows a land owner to sell their right to develop their land. The difference is that the right is usually purchased by developers and can be utilized to increase development density in other parts of the town. This tool allows helps to preserve high valued natural areas, while still allowing development to occur in areas acceptable to the town.

Town Center District: Development patterns in the United States have largely followed the expansion of road systems and the dependence on the automobile. Prior to these patterns, traditional New England development was nodal in nature and focused on a town center. Town centers were an area of mixed uses including community services, residential and commercial

needs. By centralizing development in these areas, development is constricted and periphery areas are preserved.

Agricultural Inventory: An Agriculture Inventory entails assess two dimensions pertinent to the farming community. First is an inventory of the working farms. Information would include name of farm, crop/livestock and number of acres. The second inventory identifies the prime agricultural soils in town. By knowing which lands are suited better for farming, steps can be taken to preserve these areas for agriculture.

Wildlife Action Plan: In 2002, Congress passed a law which earmarked \$80 million in State Wildlife Grants to states who wrote a wildlife conservation plan. This was the impetus that helped the Wildlife Action Plan be created. Since its submittal in 2005, the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan has been regard as one of the best plans in the nation. A component of the plan includes Geographic Information System (GIS) data that outlines important habitat to preserve. The data are very useful in analyzing existing conservation lands importance to wildlife as well as to prioritize future areas for conservation. It is a great resource for municipalities to identify the level of importance of current conservation areas and priorities future areas to acquire.

GIS Land Use Data: In 2007, CICEET and GRANIT, both based at the University of New Hampshire, acquired funding to update the regional land uses from the 1998 data. Aerial photos were acquired in 2005 to classify the land uses, similar to the methodology that was used for figures LU-1, LU-2, and LU-3. Once available this data can provide a more up to date look at the current land uses for the region.

Wetlands Ordinance: Wetlands are areas which serve a variety of functions including wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge, flood control and filtration of pollutants. Wetland ordinances provide regulatory authority over developments impacts to these important ecosystems. In March 1980 Newton created their wetland ordinance to regulate the impacts on the Town's wetland areas.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the Town to consider in preserving the natural areas of Newton from developmental pressures.

1. **Wildlife Action Plan:** As mentioned in the tools, this data is extensive and very useful in prioritizing habitat areas important to preserve. Town officials in conjunction with the Land Use boards should work with the Rockingham Planning Commission to analyze how the currently preserved lands importance to wildlife and prioritize future areas worth conserving.
2. **Update Wetland Ordinance:** The wetland ordinance should be reviewed to see what areas should be updated to ensure that they are adequately protected. A buffer management ordinance to protect shoreland areas should be considered.
3. **Update Zoning Maps:** The most recent zoning map was created by the Rockingham Planning Commission in 2006 and used the best available data dating to 1999. The data should be updated to a GIS format to improve its accuracy and expand its usefulness.
4. **2005 Land Use Data:** By the end of 2007, the 2005 land use data should be finished. Further analysis should be conducted to analyze the changes in land uses between 1998 and 2005.
5. **Connect Natural Areas:** The land use data from 1998 suggest large tracts of open forested areas which are fragmented by development from adjacent forested areas. Work should be done preserve what corridors currently exist and consider how corridors can be created to connect these natural communities. In addition, corridors should be considered to connect with greenways in neighboring communities.
6. **Develop a Conservation Overlay District Ordinance:** The town of Newton has expressed their interest to protect natural resources by minimizing the impact of development on the natural environment. A Conservation Overlay District Ordinance will create a 4 step process used to protect natural areas with prime ecological functioning capacity, historical importance and use the topography of the land to dictate where development should be located.
7. **Build Out Analysis:** A build out analysis is recommended to study the potential effects of development in Newton. This is accomplished by utilizing multiple variables such as transportation corridors, zoning regulations and soil conditions to create scenarios of potential outcomes of development. These variables can be adjusted to reflect regulatory

changes being considered and to see their effectiveness at preserving Newton's rural character.

8. **Update Natural Resource, Wetlands, Cultural and Historical Master Plans:** Through the updating procedures of the Vision chapter and the Land Use Chapter, several discussions revolved around the importance of preserving the natural and historical resources. The Planning Board should focus on updating chapters in the Master Plan that are pertinent to these topics and identify actions to preserve these resources.
9. **Conduct a Town Service Study:** The town has expressed a concern about the effects sprawling development have on the environment and social structure of the community. A town service district which focuses residential and commercial development to be zoned within a mixed use area helps to solve these problems. The town should conduct a study to identify the possibilities of creating a town service district within Newton.
10. **Plan for Recreation Areas:** As Newton continues to grow, it is important to ensure recreational services are available to the growing populace. The town should inventory existing recreational areas and services. Furthermore, the town is encourage to identify potential sites to expand and improve the recreation services.