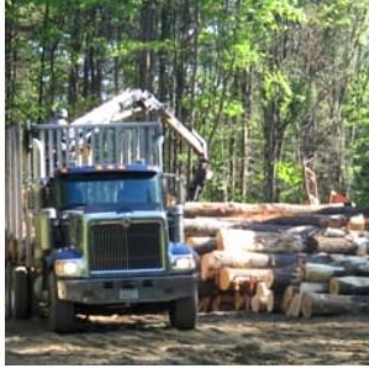


Franeestown

Land Use 2017



Land Use

Introduction

The Land Use Chapter is a core component of the Master Plan and is one of two chapters (the other being the Vision Chapter) required by New Hampshire Statute to be included in any Master Plan. All other chapters in the Master Plan relate to and inform the goals of the Land Use Chapter. This chapter will address existing land use, development trends and future land use



goals. It is important to remember that, while a Master Plan is primarily an advisory tool, it serves a statutory role as it gives legal standing to the town's planning, and zoning, regulations and ordinances, which must reflect the goals and vision of the Master Plan.

Overall, the Land Use Plan is intended to promote a healthy, well-organized, cohesive community that functions efficiently. In designating areas that are suitable for various types of land uses,

consideration is given to natural features, existing land uses, existing and proposed public improvements, growth trends and the transportation infrastructure. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a framework for growth that reinforces and enhances the desired development pattern of Fracesttown. This chapter will identify and evaluate Fracesttown's existing land use patterns; review the town's zoning ordinance; examine development and demographic trends, and establish a future land use plan for the town.

The Existing Land Use section provides a summary of existing land uses and development patterns. This sets the context for the way land in the community is currently being used and sets the foundation for future development. Familiarity with the town's existing land use patterns and historical development trends help public officials and town boards and commissions anticipate future municipal needs and identify areas of the community likely to grow and develop, requiring new services.

Examining growth trends that may impact Fracesttown's development patterns and planning policy is critically important in order to understand and plan for possible changes. Growth trends that may influence development include population and demographics, housing projections, employment trends, transportation, and technology and infrastructure.

The Future Land Use section serves to coordinate public and private decisions that affect the future physical development of the Town. By establishing development goals, this chapter strives to create a desirable pattern of future development to guide present activities toward reaching the goals and supporting the community Vision.

Community Vision

The Vision guides the policy statements and implementation actions articulated in this Master Plan. The intent of this Master Plan is to balance the constraints and opportunities, present and future, with a special focus on maintaining the quality of life that the residents of Fracestoun already enjoy.

Since the 1970's, when the first Master Plan was commissioned, numerous community planning and visioning workshops and surveys have been conducted - most recently in the summer of 2015. With some variations in emphasis over time, the general vision for the community has remained consistent.

Vision Statement:

- We continue to have a strong sense of community and pride in our town.
- We want sustainable growth to support future generations and smart land use planning and zoning regulations that protect the charm and historic characteristics of the town.
- We want to protect the town's natural resources, its forests, water resources, lakes, ponds, and streams.
- We want a community that is a desirable place to live, work and play and maintains its rural residential lifestyle and character.
- We want a vibrant village center and want to encourage new development to occur in areas that have already developed or are best suited for new growth.
- We want a variety of housing options which reflect diversity in age and income of the town's population.
- We want to promote job creation and expand small business and economic opportunities, which will benefit existing Town residents and help retain and attract new residents and businesses.

Goals & Strategies

The following Goals and Strategies are a result of analysis of current and projected data, future trends guided by the community **Vision** established in this Master Plan. While there is an abundance of land available for development in town, the low-growth estimates for the next decade indicate very little development pressure. However, even small increases in growth can have a significant impact on a small town. It is of primary importance to the Town that the natural and cultural resources be protected, therefore this plan seeks to direct new development opportunities to areas where growth will minimize the impact on these resources and preserve the small-town character.

Town - Wide

Preservation of natural resources and open space is a key goal town wide. In order to encourage a land development pattern that emphasizes this goal, while accommodating lifestyle changes and growth, the following goals and strategies are recommended.

Goals:

- Retain rural, small-town nature of the town.
- Encourage less sprawl of residential development
- Preserve natural resources
- Ensure that rural development results in minimal burden on Municipal Services

Strategies:

- Reexamine Open Space Development Ordinance in order to make it a more attractive development option.
- Revisit Back-lot provision in zoning in order to minimize sprawl.
- Investigate tax abatement for property rehabilitation.
- Explore incentives and zoning changes that will encourage agricultural land use and support agritourism.

Village District

Fracesttown Village is a wonderful example of small-town rural New Hampshire village district and is an architectural gem of the Monadnock region. It can be argued that all property owners in town benefit from this resource in increased property values. Creating an economically viable and sustainable village that preserves the unique character and historic integrity of Fracesttown, while adding to the quality of life for residents in town, is an important issue now facing Fracesttown.

The physical character and pedestrian scale of the Town's Village District is a product of a tight, densely-built development pattern with smaller lot sizes, street-oriented building setbacks and building placement on the lots, such as distances from, and alignments with,

other structures. This development 'form' is a familiar New England Village pattern which encourages social interaction and promotes a particular sense of place. Ensuring that this development form is promoted and preserved for future is important to the identity, character and social culture of Franeestown.

Historically, Franeestown Village had been a vibrant, commercially viable center for the Town with retail establishments, taverns, and services. The village has also historically been a mix of residential and commercial/institutional uses. This mix is at the core of vibrant town centers. Several public surveys and forums held in town over the past decade have suggested that there is a public interest in allowing and encouraging more small commercial use in the Village District. Commercial activity and social gathering spaces in the village would promote vitality and provide services and social opportunities for the residents.

There are several factors that influence the economic development of the Village, including:

- Constraints on infrastructure (including septic and parking) necessary to permit commercial enterprises.
- Preservation of Historic Structures and concern over of loss of character.
- Historic resistance to change in the Village area.
- Cost of meeting State and Life-Safety regulations governing commercial and multi-family uses.
- Economic and lifestyle changes and demographic trends that threaten vital village-based facilities such as the school, post office, general store, church.

Goals:

- Creating and allowing opportunities for mixed-use and a variety of housing-types.
- Encourage new investment, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use in keeping with the architectural and historic character of the Village District.
- Consider a separate Main Street District where regulations for small business creation could be relaxed or streamlined.

Strategies:

- Explore community septic system options in the village.
- Tax incentives for building rehabilitation and preservation.
- Develop Form-based* development regulations that ensure the preservation of the village character.
- Hold a public workshop to create a Village District Plan.
- Public education programming re: planning/development options.

**A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law.*

Existing Land Use

A Brief History of Growth in Francetown

From its beginning, Francetown has accommodated a diversity of land uses. The geography of the area, with many streams, rivers and ponds, was the impetus for initial settlement in the area. Once teaming with beaver that dammed up the rivers to create ponds, the area was valued for hunting during the beaver fur trade in the 1600-1700's. As the beaver was hunted to near extinction, the beaver dams were left to collapse, draining these ponds. This left many fertile open meadows perfect for grazing and hay for subsistence farmers in the area. Slowly settlers and hunters began to set up seasonal camps that eventually became permanent housing, leading to the establishment of Francetown in the late 1700's.



During this period of the late 1600's and early 1700's New Hampshire and Massachusetts were locked in bitter disputes over the colony boundaries. This dispute was settled in 1741 when New Hampshire finally became a chartered colony. Once the state lines were drawn, the determination of land ownership and town boundaries in the Francetown

area began. The settlement pattern originated at the town line with New Boston and for many decades Francetown was referred to as the "New Boston Addition". Finally, in 1772, the Town of Francetown was established and named after the wife of the first NH Governor, Frances Deering Wentworth.

The growth of Francetown mirrored the rapid expansion of the surrounding communities during the 1700's through to the mid-1800's. The Town's location on the Second New Hampshire Turnpike, the only route between Boston and Vermont in the early/mid-1800's, brought business to town; the village center at various times supported banks, a hat shop, a hotel, taverns, and bars. The town's rivers and streams provided good sites for a water-powered saw and grist mills. Perhaps Francetown's best-known industry was the quarrying of soapstone in the 1800's. During the 1800's through early 1900's Francetown was home to a respected high school academy. Agriculture has also been an important part of the land use patterns in town. In addition to several gentlemen farms, self-sufficient families farmed in several areas in town for many years.

The historic timeline shows a dynamic, young, growing town reaching maturity during the 1830's which sustained a population that closely matches the most recent (New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning 2015) population estimate of approximately 1560 people. After this peak, during the Industrial Revolution, the population declined for the next century until reaching a low of around 340 residents in 1940. Following the trend for the State and the Country, the town experienced a resurgence of growth after World War II. Since that

time, the increase in population has continued at an overall low average rate of around 1%, with periods of higher growth rates during the 1980's.

Fracestoun Today

Today Fracestoun's 30.7 square miles support approximately 1562 residents. As indicated in the **Population and Housing Chapter**, in 2015 there were 756 housing units, 89% of which were single-family houses. This indicates a very low density of approximately 2.04 persons per unit and an average of 51 persons per square mile. Since the first divisions and claims of land began, the land use pattern in town has continued in favor of large lots; the average lot size is currently 18 acres. This spread-out, low-density nature of development, on one hand, promotes the feeling of rural living but also puts pressure on the natural resources that are so valued as part of the town's character, as well as town services and local tax burden.

Land Use regulations in the Fracestoun Zoning Ordinance (see: http://www.fracestoun-nh.gov/Pages/FracestounNH_Planning/2016%20ZO.pdf) define two basic zones; The Village District and the Rural District. All land areas not within the Village District are in the Rural District. The Village District encompasses land parcels in and around the town center as described in the Zoning Ordinance Article II. In addition, several conservation overlay districts have been established with the purpose of protecting natural resources and habitats. These overlay districts occur throughout town wherever the protection resource exists and include:

- Wetlands and Vernal Pool Conservation District
- Steep Slope District
- Flood Plain District
- Aquifer Protection District
- Shoreland District

Fracestoun's egalitarian ordinance specifies similar basic dimensional requirements and permitted uses throughout the town. Most non-residential uses are regulated by special exception, requiring approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) and, often, Site Plan Review by the Planning Board.

Three different methodologies for determining how much of Fracestoun's land is dedicated to residential use have been used. The first, based on the tax assessor's database, is to consider the total acreage of a lot upon which there is a home as acreage under residential use, regardless of the lot size or the amount of land actually used for residential purposes (i.e. for a house, driveways, septic, outbuildings). This method results in a calculation of about 13,000 acres of land under residential use in Fracestoun (see Table 1 Summary Land Use - Method A). A map of Existing Land Use based on this method of calculation is included at the end of this section.

Table 1 - Summary Land Use – Method A

| Land Use Type | # of Lots | Total Acres | % Town Land Area ¹ |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Single Family Residence | 887 | 12,833 | 67.7% |
| 2-Family Residential | 12 | 133 | 0.7% |
| Multi-Family Residential | 1 | 12 | 0.1% |
| Commercial/Industrial | 15 | 748 | 3.9% |
| Municipal | 58 | 2,542 | 13.4% |
| Vacant | 78 | 2,132 | 11.2% |
| Roads | 0 | 562 | 3.0% |
| TOTALS | 1051 | 18,967 | |

A second, and probably more detailed method of calculating actual land use, is based on aerial imagery and includes only the footprint of actual residential use (built area) in its calculations. Using this method, total land under residential use in Francestown is approximately 660 acres.

A third way, reflected below in **Table 2 – Summary Land Use – Method B**, takes information from both sources but calculates residential acreage using actual acreage for lots less than 6 acres, and multi-family; 4 acres for 2 family and an allowance of 3 acres for houses on lots greater than 3 acres in size. The numbers should be viewed as rough estimates adequate for the intended purpose.

Table 2 - Summary Land Use - Method B

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Total Town Acreage | 19,442 |
| Lakes and Ponds | 475 |
| Land Area | 18,967 |
| Developed Areas | |
| Residential | 2,300 |
| Agriculture | 802 |
| Commercial Recreation | 481 |
| Other Commercial | 171 |
| Industrial (gravel pit) | 47 |
| Municipal (excl. open space) | 41 |
| Total Developed Land Area | 3,842 |
| Remaining Undeveloped Land Acreage | 15,600 |

Table 3 – Summary of Lot Size 1996-2016 below indicates the number and size of parcels in town. Since the last 1996 Master Plan (1994 data was collected for the adopted 1996 Master Plan). Sixty-two new buildable lots were created, most of these are between the minimum allowable lot size of 3 acres, to approximately 20 acres. This rate of subdivision is lower than in the prior 15 years. The fact that the number of houses built (130 according to Avitar data) was twice the number of new lots suggests a large inventory of undeveloped lots in 1994 and an aggressive pre-1994 rate of subdivision.

During that same time period, 38 lots were lost due to consolidation with other existing lots. the majority as a result of the creation of core conservation areas in the vicinity of Crotched Mountain, Shattuck Pond, Rand Brook and Dinsmore Brook. Lots were also added or consolidated to reduce taxes, to reflect changes in assessing methodology and to adjust for boundary line disputes and other miscellaneous factors; these lots were typically not suited for development.

Change in the number of lots since 1994 reflects the two primary land development trends in Francetown: residential housing and conservation.

Table 3 - Summary of Lot Size 1996 - 2016¹

| | YE 1994 | | YE 2016 | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Lot Size | # Lots | Total Ac. | # Lots | Total Ac. |
| 100 ac or > | 32 | 5,757 | 27 | 5,863 |
| 50-99.9 ac or > | 64 | 4,516 | 59 | 4,084 |
| 20-49.9 ac or > | 127 | 4,013 | 126 | 3,979 |
| 10-19.9 ac or > | 159 | 2,080 | 178 | 2,385 |
| 3-9.9 ac or > | 369 | 2,002 | 393 | 2,112 |
| 0-2.9 ac or > | 273 | 320 | 264 | 305 |
| Total | 1,024.00 | 18,688.00 | 1,047.00 | 18,728.00 |
| Average Lot Size | | 18.2 | | 17.9 |

Residential Development

As is the case with most towns, the majority of the Francetown's land area is occupied by residential land use. However, the relatively low estimate of 51 persons per square mile indicates low-density development. The most densely populated residential areas are the

¹ See Appendix __, Explanatory Notes for Land Use Change Chapter.

village area, East Road condominium development and certain stretches of shorefront along the town's two largest great ponds². The Development Trends Map on the following pages illustrates the housing development pattern since 1960.

Residential housing, which has increased by an estimated 130 units³ since the 1996 Master Plan, accounts for the largest share of developed acreage. As discussed in the **Population and Housing Chapter**, this development is predominantly single-family detached, owner-occupied, year-round residences. The small number of two- or multi-family units are primarily located at the Crotched Mountain condominiums. In addition, some two-family residences and residences with in-home or attached rental units are scattered throughout town.

The condominiums located near the former Crotched Mountain East ski area were originally seasonal units. However, with the closing of the ski area in Fracesttown several years ago, the condominiums are now mostly year-round residences. Fracesttown's seasonal dwellings are primarily camps located on Pleasant and Scoby Ponds. There are no open-space, cluster developments in town at this time. Although an open-space (cluster) housing provision in the Zoning Ordinance was adopted by the Town in 1993, it has yet to be exercised, in large part due to demand.

Agriculture & Silviculture



Although popular interest in local agriculture has increased, this has yet to be reflected in any sustained increase in activity in Fracesttown. Overall, agricultural land use has decreased in the past 20 years. Prime agricultural soils total 682 acres, and are limited and scattered throughout the town. Much of this resource has been lost to residential housing⁴ development. Most of the commercial farming

operations and producers that have existed in town within the last decade have closed or relocated. Currently, there are two farms specializing in raising beef in Fracesttown, one of them is recorded with NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food. Other small home operations exist, and home gardens remain popular.

Haying of fields accounts for about 500 of the 1,532 acres of open land and is an important economic factor in keeping Fracesttown's remaining fields open. The boarding, raising and or training of horses is considered an agricultural activity, according to the NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Food. The visual effects of these equestrian farms on the landscape are similar to other agricultural operations and contribute to the rural character in town. Many Fracesttown residents have pleasure horses, which consequently

² Further information on residential density may be found in the Transportation Section of the Master Plan.

³ As of the end of the year 2016.

⁴ The town also as 431 acres of agricultural soils of statewide importance as well as 6,029 acres of soils of local importance. See Conservation section of the master plan.



contributes to maintaining open fields for grazing and hay production.

Forested land is also important to the local economy; it generates revenue for the town, supports a diversity of wildlife, and contributes to the rural character. There are several silviculture and forestry related

businesses in town. Several small logging operations exist. Silviculture is also important to the maple syrup industry. The number of small maple sugar operations has increased. The Town has 12,392 acres of fertile Group I forest soils widely distributed throughout. Currently, over 3,000 acres are reported to be managed as certified tree farms, this is a substantial increase compared to 822 acres reported in 1996⁵. Part of the increase is accounted for by over 1,100 acres of Town Forest (managed by the Conservation Commission) participating in the Tree Farm Program.



Industrial Development

Light industry, sawmills and sand pits are permitted by special exception in the rural district. However, despite a history of milling and quarrying in Francestown, industrial development is currently limited to two little-used sawmills located in the vicinity of Crotched Mountain, and one active gravel pit (down from five in 1996).

Commercial Development

While there is no specific commercial district in town, certain types of commercial development are permitted by special exception throughout town. Typically, the hub of commercial activity can be found within the village or 'downtown' area of small rural towns. Francestown village, once home to many commercial businesses, as well as the school and post office, has not been able to attract or sustain viable commercial enterprises in recent decades. The elementary school and the post office have relocated out of the village area.

The Francestown Village Store, once the oldest continually operating General Store in New Hampshire, closed due to economic difficulties in July 2017. The former General



⁵ According to the Society for Protection of NH Forests: To be certified, property owners must have at least 10 acres of land and must develop a written land management plan. Tree farms are recertified every five years based on on-site inspections.

Store building and property is now owned by the Francetown Improvement and Historical Society (FIHS). The property was purchased and donated to FIHS in September of 2017 for community use. FIHS is now working on developing a viable management strategy for the property, including reinstating the store business. This decline of the village core is due to several influences: lack of infrastructure, topography, small lot size, state building codes, and special exception zoning, combined with the challenge of 'Nimbyism', and effects of larger out-of-town retail markets and modern internet shopping habits.

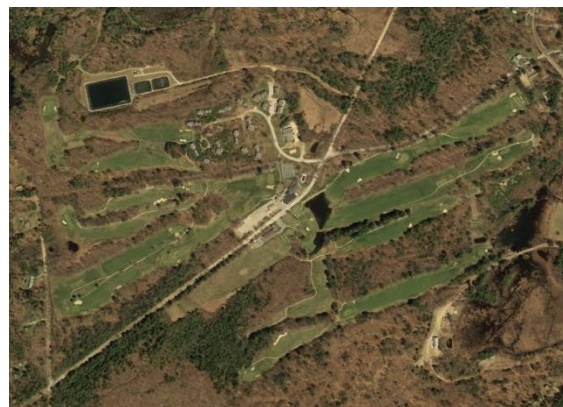


The largest commercial operations in Francetown are tourism-related ski and golf recreational businesses, with little economic spillover on other local commercial operations. These businesses are located in the north-west area of town, in proximity to Crotched Mountain. Francetown has supported a downhill ski industry on and off since 1964. Since then, the downhill ski operations in town experienced a

number of starts and closures, changing ownership several times. The current owners reopened trails on the "west" side of the mountain in 2003 after over a decade-long closure. Although the current ski trails are almost entirely located in Francetown, the base of operation at Crotched Mountain is now located in the town of Bennington. The original base lodge in Francetown was demolished, and parking lots, other buildings and some of the ski trails located in Francetown were abandoned. However, the Town, which now owns and has conserved the land where some of the former ski trails were located, has provided that the land could be used again in the future for ski-related activities if expansion was shown to be viable.

Also located in this area of town is the Inn at Crotched Mountain, once a part of a large farm, the Inn has been providing accommodations, wedding and function space and light fare for several decades. The operations at the Inn at Crotched Mountain, however, have declined in the past few years and the property is now on the market.

The Crotched Mountain Resort (formerly Tory Pines Resort) has been divided between two commercial operators: SVA Northeast, LP which operates twenty-four, 1 & 2 bedroom hospitality units, and the 18-hole golf course, pro shop, and restaurant, operated by Crotched Mountain Country Club. An adjacent 220-acre undeveloped lot previously used for cross-country skiing as part of their commercial operation was sold to the Town in 2007 and is now part of the Dinsmore Brook Conservation Area. Trails on the property are popular for cross-country skiing as well as hiking and snowshoeing, and in 2016 a snowmobile trail was opened up through it,



providing for access to the Country Club's restaurant & pub. A more comprehensive discussion of the Crotched Mountain recreation area can be found in the Community Facilities section of this Master Plan.

Although a number of small business have closed and relocated to other towns, in-home and home-based businesses continue to thrive. For the most part, they are typical small town, rural enterprises: building trades, logging, property maintenance, hair care, health and fitness, car repair, and the arts.

Infrastructure

Transportation

The road network in Fracestown consists of three main routes linking neighboring towns, as well as many local roads. The three major roads all converge in the Village Center, these include:

- NH State Route 47 (Main Street and Bennington Road) begins in the Village center and heads north-west to Bennington. This is the main corridor, and major collector, that connects to Route 202 in Bennington and is the main access to the Crotched Mountain Ski area.
- NH State Route 136 originates in the neighboring Town of New Boston, to the east, and travels through the Village Center, and on to Greenfield, the bordering town to the southwest. This is a major collector.
- The Second New Hampshire Turnpike South, (a Town road) connects Fracestown from the Village Center to Mont Vernon to the southeast. This road is part of the original route that ran from Boston to Vermont.



Based on the roads layer created by SNHPC for the NH DOT and updated by the Fracestown Board of Selectmen, there are roughly 81 miles of roads in Fracestown. 10 of these are maintained by the State, 51 by the town and 5.3 by private landowners; 14 miles are not maintained. Of the 67 total maintained miles, 32 are paved.

In recent history, there has been an overall loss of road mileage in town; more total miles of roads (public and private) have ceased to be maintained, or have been abandoned than have been created. Since 1960, excluding upgrades of existing roads, the only newly constructed roads have been private ways serving new subdivisions, including: East Road, Marino Road, Hiram Patch Lane and Davis Lane, and short segments of roads into the condos on



Crotched Mountain. Using the calculation method of the typical road width of 3 rods (49.5 feet) times length of mileage, roads account for approximately 500 total acres of land. Table 5 illustrates the land area covered by roadways.

Table 4- Road Data: Fracesttown, NH (Source: SNHPC & NH DOT⁶, edited 2016 by Fracesttown Board of Selectmen)

| Legislative Class | Surface Type | Road Miles |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Private | Paved | 0.30 |
| Private | Unpaved | 5.00 |
| II State | Paved | 10.20 |
| V | Paved | 20.90 |
| V Municipal | Unpaved | 30.30 |
| VI/Class A Muni | Unpaved | 13.70 |
| VI | Paved | .02 |
| Total Miles | | 80.42 |

Communication Technology

The town now has 5 unmanned communication towers – three on Crotched Mountain, one on Bible Hill and one just below Kingsbury Hill. Although AT&T indicated the need for another tower on Oak Hill in order to achieve adequate coverage for vehicles along major routes in town, no application has been filed. The towers are on small plots or portions of plots and do not have a large impact on land use in town. With a few exceptions, lines running over private land and several junction boxes, most utility transmission lines are in the town and state rights-of-way and do not absorb additional land.

The impact that communication technology availability will have on future development will be significant. State-of-the-art, available, and reliable technology is critical to today's lifestyles and commercial activity. It is estimated that around 40% of today's workforce telecommutes part or full time, a four-fold increase since 1995 (Gallup Poll Study). The **Fracesttown Broadband** report outlines the current state of this resource throughout town. Decisions made to increase the scope and quality of this infrastructure will have significant implications for future opportunities and growth in town.

Water and Sewer

Fracesttown has no municipal water or sewage. Most properties in town are serviced by on-site private wells and septic systems. There are 3 known exceptions:

- The Main Street area is supplied by well water through the Village Water Company, a private company. Information on the Village Water Company can be found in the Community Facilities section of this Master Plan. (hyperlink)

⁶ DOT now includes traveled ways that are on the E11 map, such as fire lanes and common drives. They are not included in this table.

- 90 condominium units on the mountain share a community water and sewage system provided by Mountain Maintenance Corporation.
- Nearby, the golf club shares water and sewage with 16 recreational time share units owned by SVA.

Natural and Cultural Resources

The influence of natural and public resources on land use is critical to recognize in any future planning. Fracestoun has significant natural resources and important cultural and historic resources that contribute to the special qualities of the Town. Ensuring that these resources are intact and available for future generations requires that they are considered in the Future Land Use Plan.

Ecosystem Services

Although Fracestoun's natural systems and habitats are highly valued by the community, the specific benefits of these resources are complex and difficult to describe and quantify. The concept of *Ecosystem Services* was developed to help define these benefits in order to better understand the impacts of human activity on the ecosystems and the importance of natural resources to our survival and quality of life. In short, Ecosystem Services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human well-being.



Ecosystems function on many different levels to serve our everyday lives: providing food, raw materials, water, medicines; regulating our air, water quality, climate, and floodwaters; enhancing our cultural identities, recreational activities and sense of place; supporting the underlying functions that make our very existence possible such as photosynthesis, creation of soils, and the water cycle.

Fracestoun's natural systems are rich and complex, ranging from mountain environments to riparian and wetland ecosystems. As part of sustainable land use planning that ensures a high quality of life for our citizens, it is critical to understand our natural systems and provide for the conservation and protection of these resources.

Public and Quasi-Public Facilities

Public facilities⁷ include all buildings, land and/or structures owned by the town, Fracestoun Improvement and Historical Society(FIHS), Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), Fracestoun Land Trust (FLT) and Piscataquog Land Conservancy (PLC). Public land has increased significantly since 1994, primarily as a result of land conservation efforts. Outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, cross-

⁷ The Land Use map, which is computer generated,

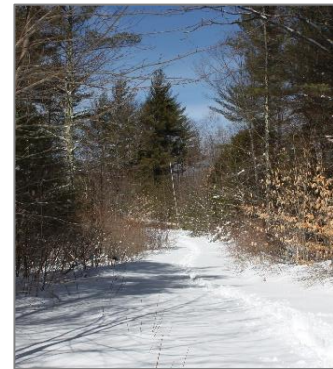
country skiing, snowmobiling and hiking, is important to Fracesttown residents, complements the ski and golf commercial enterprises, and supports the town's image as a recreational destination. Land conservation protects the natural resources that support these activities. Table 5 below indicates the acreage change in Public Facilities since the 1996 Master Plan

Table 5 - Public and Quasi-Public Facilities

| Land and Facilities | 1996 | 2016 |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Town-Owned/Leased | | |
| Governmental Buildings | 13.8 | 13.80 |
| Transfer Station | 11.8 | 11.80 |
| Cemeteries | 18.5 | 26.40 |
| Town Forest/Conservation | 721.1 | 2,121.67 |
| Other Recreation | 13.5 | 13.50 |
| Other Public Land | 15.3 | 51.50 |
| Quasi-Public | | |
| Fracesttown Imp. & Hist. Society | 0.2 | 1.48 |
| Old Meeting House | .17 | .17 |
| Fracesttown Community Church | 1.21 | 1.21 |
| Fee-Owned Conservation Land | | |
| Piscataquog Land Conservancy | 0.0 | 75.0 |
| Fracesttown Land Trust | 0.0 | 924.2 |
| Society Protection NH Forests | 23.8 | 23.8 |
| Total Public/Quasi-Public | 819.1 | 3,264.53 |

Conservation Land

Conservation land, both privately held and public, makes up a significant part of Fracesttown's land use. Currently, there are approximately 5,900 acres of land conserved making up 30% of the total land area in town. Of that, 3144.67 acres are owned in fee by the Town of Fracesttown, Fracesttown Land Trust, Piscataquog Land Conservancy and SPNHF and are open to the public for passive recreation. The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) in their New Hampshire Everlasting proposal recommends that in order to sustain our quality-of-life each municipality in New Hampshire conserve a minimum of 25 percent of their total land area. See Fracesttown Conservation Plan http://www.fracesttown-nh.gov/Pages/FracesttownNH_ConCom/Index



Backland and Conservation Efforts

Although Francetown has about 81 miles of roads, the transportation network is limited relative to the amount of land. Large pockets of unfragmented backland areas lie between roads and behind developed frontage along roads. There are five particularly sizable such areas forming a fairly contiguous arc around the town from the southwest to the northeast. These unfragmented areas, which are part of even larger and environmentally important blocks extending into other towns, are relatively remote, sparsely populated and characterized by limited access⁸ These areas and lands linking them or those containing important natural resources were the target of the highly successful “2010 by 2010” campaign to protect a targeted 2010 acres of land in Francetown by the year 2010.⁹ More than 900 additional acres have been protected since.

- **Area 1:** Approximately 2,800 acres of unfragmented land lies within the Crotched Mountain area, of which 1,600 acres in this area are now protected. This area is defined by Mountain Road, Campbell Hill Road, Greenfield Road and the westerly town line.
- **Area 2:** Approximately 1,000 acres of backland are in the area defined by Wilson Hill Road, the Second NH Turnpike North, Old County Road and the northerly town line. Approximately half this acreage is now protected land – 304 acres as the town-owned Dinsmore Brook Conservation area, most of the rest is private land under conservation easement. The state’s **2015 Wildlife Action Plan** identifies the northernmost tier of this area, with its wetland complex, brooks and vernal pools, as being ‘highest ranked habitat’ in NH.
- **Area 3:** This ‘highest ranked habitat’ area continues across Old County Road North to another 1,100 acres or so defined by Old County Road North, Pleasant Pond Road, and the northerly town line. Approximately half this area is conserved, most of it the town-owned Shattuck Pond Conservation Area/town forest. Separating this area from the next unfragmented area is Pleasant Pond and the development surrounding it
- **Area 4:** The northeast corner of town, the area between Pleasant Pond and Dennison Pond has approximately 1,200 acres of backland. Approximately 450 acres of this is conserved.
- **Area 5:** An area in the lower southwest corner of town lies within a larger unfragmented block extending into adjacent towns, within and extending out from this area, almost 1,000 acres are now conserved along Rand Brook, Brennan Brook and the south branch of the Piscataquog River.

⁸ See the Conservation section of the Master Plan for more detail on areas now under conservation as well as targeted for conservation.

⁹ The campaign was a 2005 to 2010 land protection initiative based on the Society for Protection of NH Forest’s “NH Everlasting” recommendation that all towns conserve a minimum of 25% of their area to preserve quality-of-life.

Current Use

Current Use, which was initiated by the state legislature in 1974, is the cornerstone of the state's land conservation efforts to preserve open space, provide a healthy and outdoor environment and maintain the character of the state's landscape, land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources. The 2016 MS1 Summary of Inventory of Valuation reports 12,349 acres, or 66% of Franeestown's acreage, is in Current Use. Since approximately 1,380 acres of current use land was acquired by the town and removed from the current use program, about 400 net acres of new land went into current use over the 22-year period of time. More landowners now participate in the program. Although current use is a temporary non-development restriction, it appears to continue to play an important role in Franeestown's land use patterns.

Table 6 - Current Use Acreage & Percent Change 1994 - 2016¹⁰

| Current Use | Years | | Percent Change |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------|
| | 1994 | 2016 | 1994-2014 |
| Total Acres | 13,291 | 12,349 | -7.1% |
| Current Use as % of Total Land Area | 68% | 66% | N/A |
| Current Use as % of Taxable Land | 73% | 77% | N/A |
| # of Owners | 254 | 299 | +17% |
| # of Parcels | N/A | 449 | N/A |

Water Resources¹¹

The natural water resources in Franeestown include surface waters, wetlands and aquifers, and floodplains. Some of these resources overlap within the same land area (e.g. a wetland may also be in a floodplain). In total these water resource areas represent about 25.1% of the town's total acreage. Given the amount and wide distribution of these resource areas, as well as the community's dependence on private, on-site wells and septic systems, maintaining water quality throughout the town is essential.

¹⁰ Data taken from Summary Inventory Valuation and Current Use Report in town Annual Reports. Note that the total assessable acreages reported in 1994 and 2016 differ. If the 2016 total taxable, tax-exempt and nontaxable acreage is used as the base for the 1994 calculation, 71% of the total land area would have been in current use.

¹¹ See Water Resource Management and Conservation sections of the master plan for more information on water resources. Also the Piscataquog River management plan.

Table 7 – Summary of Water Resources

| Type | Total Area (Ac) | % of Total Town Area ¹ |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lakes and Ponds | 475 | 2.4% |
| Aquifer Recharge Area ² | 2,821 | 14.5% |
| Floodplain | 593 | 3.1% |
| Wetlands | 2,509 | 12.9% |
| All Types Total Area³ | 4,876 | 25.1% |

1. Total Area of Fracestown = 19,442 Acres

2. Total Aquifer Area. Higher transmissivity aquifer = 98 acres, or 0.5% of town area.

3. Resource feature overlaps removed.

Two of the town's four great ponds (water bodies over 10 acres in size) are wild, undeveloped water bodies. The longest watercourse, the south branch of the Piscataquog River, flows along the entire length of the town from north to south (7.7 miles). This river is protected under RSA 483, the River Management and Protection Program. The town's many cold-water headwater streams, on which the Piscataquog's water quality depends, have no formal protection.

The aquifers in Fracestown are protected through the Aquifer Protection District in the Zoning Regulations. This overlay district limits development that would pose harm or degradation of the water quality within the aquifers.

Cultural and Historic Resources



Historical resources in Fracestown include many buildings, sites, and objects. One of Fracestown's defining features and valuable assets is its classic New England architecture. While the style of architecture does not directly affect Land Use, the preservation of these resources is important to the community and should be considered in any land use planning decisions or proposed zoning ordinance changes.

A complete survey of all structures, sites, objects, burying grounds and cellars, based on criteria developed by the NH Division of Historical Resources and the National Park Service, was done in 1991¹². Five areas were identified as warranting historic district protection: Main Street, Mill Village, Clark Village,

¹² The original documents, authored and compiled by Greg Thulander are on file with the Fracestown Improvement and Historical Society. Copies are available in the Planning Board files.

County Road South/Birdsall and an Agricultural district of multiple historic structures throughout town. Despite widespread support for the preservation of historic sites and resources, an attempt to create a Main Street Historic District met with insurmountable opposition by district residents and was abandoned.

In 2002, two studies were prepared detailing the historic resources in town: the “Francestown Barn Survey” and “A Walking Tour of the Public Buildings of the Village” (updated in 2005). Both studies were published under the auspices of the Francestown Improvement and Historical Society.

In 2016, The Town Common, Town Hall, horse sheds, Fairbanks scale, and neighboring ‘Beehive’ joined the adjacent Old Meeting House and Woodbury Homestead on the National Register of Historic Buildings. The only nationally registered historic district in town is located in the area of Old County Road South and Birdsall Road.



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Exitsing Land Use Map**

Growth Trends

This slow, incremental growth and changes in the landscape over time have shaped Fracestown's existing land use pattern and character. The town's geography and relatively remote rural location have helped to maintain its rural character and beauty. State and local trends in population and housing suggest that development pressure will be low in the next few decades and the slow development pattern will continue. Although Hillsborough County saw the greatest number of new housing units developed during the 5-year period from 2010 to 2015 (compared with other NH counties), Fracestown recorded a 1.4% change in number of units with a total of 16 new housing units, all but one of which were single-family houses.

New Hampshire as a whole is aging and is now one of the oldest states in the nation. Data shows that the entire New England region is losing younger sectors of the population who are choosing to relocate to southern and western areas of the country. As of 2014, the median age in Fracestown was 47.4 years old, higher than the State's median age of 41.1.

Since 1960, the largest population increase in Fracestown occurred during the period from 1970 to 1990. Recent trends from 2000 to 2014 show small but steady annual increases. It is anticipated that slow but steady, continuous growth will continue with a new population peak of 1,654 people projected for 2040.

With continued advancements in transportation and mobility, communications, and new and evolving forms of local renewable energy, small rural towns such as Fracestown could offer existing and new residents and families a high quality of life. The many positive attributes, such as an abundance of open space and privacy, good schools, recreation opportunities, charming village center and a relatively low tax rate combined with new technologies may attract new residents and young families who desire a small town and rural lifestyle.

At a state, and at a national level, urban lifestyle with public transportation and a diversity of amenities is becoming increasingly attractive. New Hampshire has been experiencing difficulty in retaining graduates of its institutions of higher education, which in turn makes it more difficult to attract business that need a critical mass of highly skilled workers. At the same time, safety and environmental concerns have caused some to leave crowded urban and suburban areas in favor of smaller towns with more pristine environments. Communities with unspoiled environments, elbow room and privacy, locally produced food and renewable energy, and good schools and recreation provide attractive alternatives. How residents in Fracestown choose to influence the coming changes can have a significant impact on how the town will grow in the future and how attractive the town will be for new residents and businesses. Resiliency will be a critical element in Fracestown's future and it will help enable town residents to make informed decisions about the town's land use policies and regulations.

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Development Trends Map**

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Future Land Use

The primary purpose of the Future Land Use Plan is to encourage growth in Francetown that preserves its character and ensures a high quality of life for its citizens. This plan seeks to direct development and redevelopment opportunities to areas where growth will reinforce the sense of community, preserve natural resources, minimize the burden on infrastructure and municipal resources, and provide housing options for all citizens.

While Francetown remains a desirable place to live and has successfully preserved the historic character and beauty of the natural surroundings, growth is inevitable. This Plan presents a framework which will provide the Town with guidance for future growth that will reflect the Community Vision.

Future Zoning

General Zoning and Regulatory Framework

Given Francetown's demographic projections, development trends and historical development patterns, broad changes to the town's basic zoning framework are not recommended at this time. The existing scattered pattern of residential development along with little, or no, demand for commercial or light industrial use making supplemental special use zoning districts unnecessary. There has been general support for the Special Exception method of zoning and permitted use in town, this allows the case-by-case review of each development proposal.

Village District

Certain additional restrictive zoning and Special Use Districts, such as a Historic District, have been met with heavy opposition by the citizenry. However, there is some support for minor zoning changes to allow for more flexible uses. Given these constraints, the optimal way to try to address citizen interest in improving commercial opportunities is to focus on the introduction of 'form-based' and mixed-use zoning to a newly created Main Street district (i.e. a more circumscribed Village district) This approach is focused on the physical built elements, rather than separation of uses, as the organizing principle for the regulations. The purpose of this zoning tool would be to preserve and encourage the development or redevelopment within the Village District that preserves its character and sense of place.

Development Capability

The development capability of a town refers to the ability of the land to accommodate future development. Such an assessment is based on the amount of land already in use and the development constraints that limit the suitability of undeveloped land for intensive use. Development constraints include steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains and permanent conservation easements and other protections.

Estimates of development capability should be used carefully and viewed as imprecise estimates due to methodological limitations and the potential for double counting land with

slopes, wetlands and protection measures. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to conclude that Fracesttown has sufficient buildable land to meet population needs for the foreseeable future. According to current GIS data analysis and land uses approximately 50% of the land area in town could be considered developable. (see Developable Lands Map xxx) However large areas of land included in this analysis do not currently have road access.

Table 8 - Developable Land

| Estimate of Developable Land in Fracesttown | |
|--|---------------|
| 12/31/2016 | |
| Total Town Acreage | 19,442 |
| Less Lakes and Ponds | 475 |
| Net Land Area | 18,967 |
| Developed Areas | |
| Residential | 2,300 |
| Agriculture | 802 |
| Commercial Recreation | 481 |
| Other Commercial | 171 |
| Industrial (gravel pit) | 47 |
| Municipal (excl. open space) | 41 |
| Total Developed Land Area | 3,842 |
| Remaining Undeveloped Land Acreage | 15,600 |
| Development Constrained Land | |
| Floodplains | 961 |
| Wetlands | 2,509 |
| Slopes 15-25% | 3,042 |
| Slopes > 25% | 1,007 |
| Conservation Land (not Included in other categories) | 2,700 |
| Total Constrained Land | 10,219 |
| Total Land Available for Development | 5,381 |

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Developable Lands Map**

The future of development pressure in Fracestown is low according to current demographic and economic data. The preservation of the rural landscape and small-town rural New Hampshire character, and the high quality of life in Fracestown is at the center of the Community Vision. Town leaders are obliged to encourage development patterns that meet these expectations of the Community. Measures that would help attain the Vision may include:

- Reexamine Open Space Development Ordinance in order to make it a more attractive development option.
- Revisit Back-lot provision in zoning in order to minimize sprawl.
- Investigate tax abatement and incentives for property rehabilitation to help encourage historic structure preservation.
- Explore incentives and zoning changes that will encourage agricultural land use and support agritourism.
- Explore community septic system options in village to encourage commercial uses.
- Development of Form-based development regulations in the Village District to preserve the character.
- Create a Village District Master Plan to help guide future development decisions and assist in grant acquisition.
- Conduct an audit of the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations and Site Development Regulations to address requirements to ensure compliance with the current Town Master Plan.

Appendix A:

Citizen Perspectives

Since the 1980 community survey for the original Master Plan when data first became available, the views of citizens do not appear to have changed dramatically in regard to community character. In both 1980 and 1994, 65% of responding residents favored the status quo – ‘as it is now’ and 54% refined that as ‘rural’ as opposed to ‘resort’, ‘suburban’, ‘retirement’, ‘industrial’, ‘commercial’ or ‘other. In 1994 80% of respondents said ‘rural lifestyle’ was ‘very important’ in the decision to live here compared with 72% in 1980. The second most highly ranked response was ‘low crime rate’, 46% in 1980 and 65% in 1994. By 2014, as the town moved even further away from its rural heritage, still more respondents – 90% - rated ‘rural lifestyle’ as the most important factor; crime remained the second most important factor (56%). In 2014, respondents were also asked to identify qualities that contributed to the town's unique character and quality of life; ‘clean water’ was ranked of the greatest importance by 81% of responses, followed by ‘scenic qualities related to forest, farm’ (69%), ‘peace and quiet from open spaces’ (68%), and ‘land/water for recreation’ (65%); ‘local economic base’ received the fewest votes at 26%.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1994 and in 2014 a little less than half of the respondents – 44% - felt the zoning ordinance was ‘just about right’ with 18% and 20%, respectively, feeling it was ‘too restrictive’. The ‘too restrictive’ responses may reflect a dissatisfaction with non-residential aspects of the ordinance. For example, 64% of respondents in 1994 favored keeping the 3-acre zoning minimum throughout town. 20 years later 66% of respondents felt the current dimensional residential requirements (lot size, frontage, and setbacks) are ‘just about right and 54% opposed creating residential districts with different lot size requirements. However, 59% of respondents did favor relaxing setbacks in the Village district; the same question about the Rural district was not posed.

Opposition to the creations of a ‘residential only’ district remained high – 64% in 1994 and 59% in 2014. If lot sizes were to be changed it appears that increasing size is slightly more popular than decreasing size –with respondents fairly evenly divided on either side of both directions.

NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

When it comes to non-residential development, however, there appears to be a greater shift in attitude. In 1994 63% of respondents opposed the creation of a separate commercial or light industrial district. In 2014, opposition to ‘special use’ districts was at 46%. And the fact that 64% of respondents also supported the idea of creating a "Recreational" district in the northwest corner of town near the mountain and golf course suggests that they favor making more uses permitted by right, rather than by special exception.

Similarly, 64% favored ‘establishing a Commercial District, possibly on Main Street, where zoning regulations would be relaxed to encourage retail and small business development.’ The

same question was not posed directly in regard to regulations in the Rural District. The survey subsequently asked respondents if they would like to see additional business/commercial in Fracestoun and, if so, where; 75% said yes. The structure of the question makes it difficult to be conclusive about location, but half of the responses favored the 'Main Street/Village District only', 41% favored 'anywhere in town', and 11% 'Rural District'.

When it came to more light industrial uses, only 50% of respondents responded favorably; 44% of responses felt 'anywhere in town' was appropriate, 41% favored 'Rural' while 15% favored 'Main Street/Village District only'. Compared to the earlier survey, the town is much more open to non-residential development. In 1994, 50% of respondents opposed 'additional commercial and/or light industrial development' 'anywhere'; consistently, 49% opposed such development in the 'Rural District', 47% in the 'Village District' and 45% on 'Main Street only'.

This openness to non-residential development was reflected in the 2016 Master Plan workshops held with the assistance of the Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC)¹³. At the first session, attended by approximately ____, topics of discussion included streamlining the development review process, opportunities for affordable and elderly housing and allowing a greater variety of uses in the Village while protecting its charm and historic integrity.

At the second public workshop with ____ in attendance, the Planning Board also hoped to obtain public feedback on: the special exception versus special use district approach to zoning; the location of any additional commercial/business uses; desirability of similar uses having different dimensional requirements in different districts,

Discussion focused heavily on the Village. While there was not consensus on any topic, many of the workshop attendees supported allowing mixed use within the Village District on a lot or within an existing building in appropriate locations and in keeping with the charm and historic character of the Village. Many also supported Conditional Use Permits for mixed use and allowable commercial/business uses along Main Street and in areas designated or zoned for future commercial/business use. They also supported changes to the Village District's lot size and building setback requirements. There was not clear identification of the variety and types of commercial uses and businesses that should be allowed within the Village District. One of the major problems currently working against commercial/business use in the Village District is the lack of space for adequate on-site septic disposal or parking, limited on-street parking and a precipitous drop off on the east side of the street.

Both the 2014 survey and the 2016 workshops suggest that public support is strongest for zoning changes in the Village/Main Street area.

¹³ An attempt to capture the input from the workshops, prepared by SNHRPC, may be found in Appendix ____.