

CHAPTER 1

EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE

EXETER MASTER PLAN 2002 UPDATE



OCTOBER, 2002

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Existing and Future Land Use

PART I: Existing Land Use

1. Introduction

Land use can be thought of as our point of physical interaction with the environment. More than that, though, it plays a vital role in defining the physical, economic, social and cultural development of the community. The consideration of both existing and future land use is, therefore, among the most important subjects to consider in the master planning process.

The first part of this chapter will examine past and present land uses in Exeter and will analyze the trends that are changing the way land is used. It will also examine the results of the Town's build-out analysis which has been updated as part of this master plan revision.

Land Use plays a vital role in defining the physical, economic, social and cultural development of the community.

2. Existing Conditions

As part of the Master Plan update, a new existing land use map (**Map LU-1 2002 Land Use**) was prepared by the Rockingham Planning Commission to serve as an inventory of the present day development patterns in Exeter. The purpose of this map is to provide an understanding of the extent and distribution of the Town's current development. In addition, by comparing the current maps with past land use maps, development trends can be identified.

The Existing Land Use map was prepared using a combination of the 1994 Land Use Map (prepared for the 1994 Master Plan), 1998 U.S.G.S. aerial photography (1:4800 scale), and a "windshield" survey to identify changes that have occurred since 1998. It is important to note that the map is not intended to depict parcel-based land uses. Rather, it is a land-cover based land use map. In other words, the information shown is not based on property boundaries, but rather on how the land use appears from an aerial perspective. The result will differ when compared with the land's parcel classification according to Town Assessor records. Land cover mapping is more useful in understanding the physical extent and impacts of various land uses.

The land use information as originally collected includes 30 separate classifications. For simplicity of discussion and analysis, these have been condensed into 12 categories (plus open water) described as follows:

Residential – Single Family: includes all single family and duplex structures that contain up to two dwelling units;

Residential – Multifamily: includes attached multiunit condominiums, apartments, congregate care units;

Residential – Manufactured Housing: includes mobile home park and mobile home subdivisions.

Commercial: encompasses all retail establishments (including shopping centers), service and professional offices;

Industrial: includes manufacturing and other industrial building and warehousing facilities;

Government/Educational/Institutional: includes town, county and state government facilities, public and private schools, hospitals

Mixed: Exeter downtown with mixed residential, commercial, office and institutional uses

Transportation/Utilities: includes major highway right of way (e.g. 101), railroads, gas and electric utility corridors.

Outdoor Recreation: includes parks, landings, and nature centers regardless of ownership; it excludes recreation facilities associated with the Exeter and PEA schools;

Undeveloped Land: forested, land, regardless of ownership or status of protection;

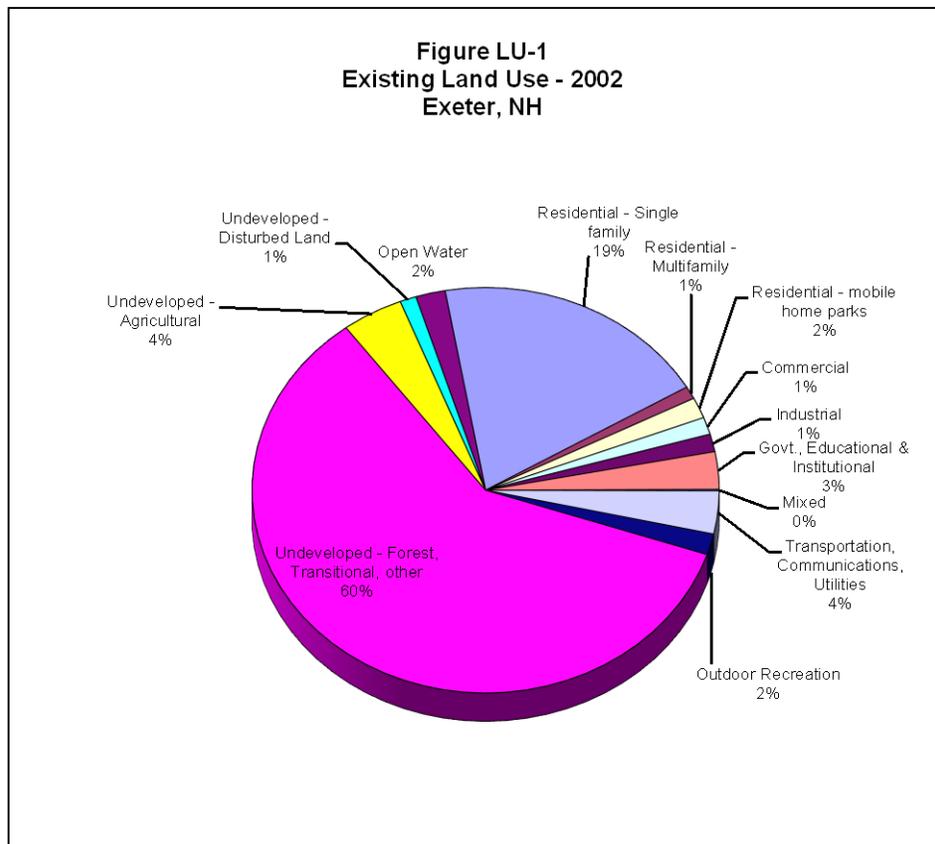
Undeveloped Land: includes active tilled agricultural land, and what appear as pasture and hayfields.

Undeveloped- Disturbed Land: includes active or abandoned gravel pits and land under development.

An estimate of the number acres for each category was calculated for each of these 12 categories based on GIS (geographic information system) acreage computations for each year in which comparable information was available: 1992, 1998 and 2002. The results are shown in the accompanying **Tables L-1 and L-3 and in Figure L-1.**

**Table LU-1
Existing Land Use, 2002
Exeter, NH**

Land Use Category	Acres 2002	% of Total
Residential - Single family	2467.9	19.3%
Residential - Multifamily	128.4	1.0%
Residential - mobile home parks	211.8	1.7%
Commercial	174.9	1.4%
Industrial	180.5	1.4%
Govt., Educational & Institutional	381.7	3.0%
Mixed	14.4	0.1%
Transportation, Communications, Utilities	438.3	3.4%
Outdoor Recreation	214.0	1.7%
Undeveloped - Forest, Transitional, other	7631.8	59.7%
Undeveloped - Agricultural	542.5	4.2%
Undeveloped - Disturbed Land	144.6	1.1%
Open Water	262.3	2.0%
Total	12793.0	100.0%



The largest single category of land use is “undeveloped” land, which accounts for two-thirds of the Town’s land area. The second largest is “residential” which makes up about 22% of the land area.

As is indicated, the largest single category of land use is undeveloped land (including agriculture, excavations, old fields) which together account for two-thirds of the town’s land area. The second largest category is residential, with a combined total (single family, multi-family and mobile home park) of about 22% of the land area. Transportation and utilities account for 3.4%; government/institution/educational make up 3% and commercial and industrial each represent 1.7% of existing land use.

The distribution of land uses, as depicted on the Existing Land Use map shows a comparatively concentrated pattern of development in and around the downtown area, with mixed and commercial uses located in the center, surrounded by residential neighborhoods and institutional uses. This pattern is reinforced by the service area for the sewer and water district. The remainder of the town is dominated by three types of uses: lower density residential use, including roadside homes and outlying residential subdivisions, highway corridor commercial, office and industrial development, and undeveloped forested land.

Compared to many of the surrounding communities which have developed without a well defined downtown center (and without sewer and water systems) Exeter has a significant number of relatively large unfragmented parcels that remain undeveloped.

3. Land Use Trends

The pace of population growth has moderated somewhat since the 70s, however, the amount of land consumed for many residential developments, especially those in outlying areas, has increased.

As the Town’s population has grown over the past several decades, land uses have changed to accommodate that growth. **Table LU-2 Land Use Change, 1953-1982**, which was included in the 1994 Master Plan, summarizes the broad change that has occurred in land use patterns from after World War II to the early 1980s. This was the period of greatest recent population growth for the Town. The information shows that during that time the amount of developed area grew more than 200%, while the land in agriculture and forestry declined by 86% and 31% respectively.

The pace of population growth has moderated somewhat since the 70s; however, the amount of land consumed for many residential developments, especially in outlying areas, has increased. **Table LU-3 Land Use Change 1992-2002**, looks at more recent changes, and in much finer detail. It should be noted that data presented in the previous table uses less accurate data and generalizes land uses to a much greater degree. Therefore, the total acreage reported in the major categories do not agree and are not comparable. Nevertheless, the trends shown are clear and useful to understanding the changes that have occurred and continue to occur.

**Table LU-2
Land Use Change, 1953-1982
Exeter, NH
(units in acres)**

LAND USE	1953	1974	1982	% Change
Agriculture	1380	864	195	-85.9%
Forest	8525	7805	5885	-31.0%
Developed	1970	3690	5960	202.5%
Idle	185	55	185	0.0%
Other	135	175	135	0.0%
Water	150	150	150	0.0%

“Idle” land is defined as land which was formerly used in agricultural production but is now unused.

“Other” means all other lands that don't fit in the other classifications, such as gravel pits, exposed ledge, etc.

Source: Land Use Change, Rockingham County, Luloff, University of New Hampshire, 1984
Total acreage according to study: 12,345 acres

**Table LU-3
Land Use Change, 1992-2002
Exeter NH**

Land Use Category	Acres					
	Acres 1992	Acres 1998	Acres 2002	1992-2002	% Change 92-98	% Change 98-02
Residential - Single family	2249.8	2344.4	2467.9	218.1	4.2%	5.3%
Residential - Multifamily	105.1	128.4	128.4	23.3	22.2%	0.0%
Residential - mobile home parks	211.8	211.8	211.8	0.0	0.0%	0.0%
Commercial	184.0	174.4	174.9	-9.1	-5.2%	0.3%
Industrial	145.5	145.5	180.5	35.0	0.0%	24.1%
Govt., Educational & Institutional	338.7	366.1	381.7	43.0	8.1%	4.3%
Mixed	14.4	14.4	14.4	0.0	0.0%	0.0%
Transportation, Communications, Utilities	324.4	437.7	438.3	113.9	34.9%	0.1%
Outdoor Recreation	209.6	214.0	214.0	4.4	2.1%	0.0%
Undeveloped - Forest, Transitional, other	8111.5	7921.5	7631.8	-479.7	-2.3%	-3.7%
Undeveloped - Agricultural	636.0	569.2	542.5	-93.5	-10.5%	-4.7%
Undeveloped - Disturbed Land	0.0	3.6	144.6	144.6	NA	NA
Open Water	262.3	262.3	262.3	0.0	0.0%	0.0%
Total	12793.0	12793.0	12793.0	0.0	NA	NA

(Acreages are based on land cover, not parcel usage)

Since 1992, slightly less than 480 acres has been converted from some form of undeveloped land to some form of developed land. About half (220 acres) of this conversion has resulted from new residential development. Nearly a quarter (114 acres) resulted from NHDOT acquisition and construction of land for NH 101. Total developed area rose from 31% to 35% in that period.

Over the past 10 years, on the average, approximately 50 acres of open/undeveloped land has been converted to developed land each year in Exeter. If that pace continues, the remaining acreage of unprotected and developable land (which equaled approximately 3300 acres in 2002), will be exhausted about 60 years. In all likelihood, available land in most zoning districts will be exhausted well before that. *(See Maps LU-1A Land Use Compared and LU-2 Land Use 2005)*

4. Future Development Potential

Build-out Analysis
The 2002 Buildout Analysis completed for the Master Plan update estimates the land area potentially available for new development in each zoning district. This information can be useful in identifying where future development is likely, and where additional land may be needed to accommodate future land uses.

As part of the 2002 Master Plan Update, the 1996 *Residential Build-out Analysis* was updated and expanded to include all land use categories. This analysis was carried out in a manner that tabulates acreage available for development in each zoning district. Within each district, the acreage of developable land is shown both within and outside the sewer district, and within and outside the Town's flood hazard boundary. This information can be useful in order to assess the potential for future development, both in an aggregated form and in specific zones. As such it can assist the Town in identifying potential need or surplus of land for various uses. It should be noted that the "development potential" as used here refers only to the physical potential for development, not to the desirability for development based on other factors.

The development potential was derived from a subtractive process by which the total land area of the town was reduced according to land availability and development constraints, as follows.

A. Land Not Available for Development

In preparing the build-out analysis, the following land areas were considered **unavailable for development**:

- (1) Land that is already developed (already in use with buildings or structures), and
- (2) Land that cannot be developed due to easements or ownership restrictions (e.g. conservation land, other town owned land, other protected land).

B. Physical Constraints

The following land areas were incrementally subtracted from available land:

- Very poorly drained soils (wetlands with the most severe development limitations)

- Poorly drained soils (wetlands with somewhat less limitations)
- Soil with very low rating for development potential (relevant outside sewer district)

The full results of this analysis, including the results for each zoning district, are included in the Appendices of this chapter. Two summary tables are provided below. **Table LU-4 - Development Potential by Development Constraint** shows the total acreage of the town and for each of the constraint categories described above. **Table LU-5 – Development Potential By Zoning District** shows the acreage of potentially developable land for each zone. Due to accumulated rounding error, the total developable acreage differs.

Table LU-4
Development Potential by Development Constraint
 (units = acres)

	<i>Development Constraint Land which is...</i>	TOTAL Acres	Outside 100 Year Flood Plain			Within 100 Year Flood Plain		
			<i>Sewered</i>	<i>Non-Sewered</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Sewered</i>	<i>Non-Sewered</i>	<i>All</i>
All Zones	All Land (non-water)	12534.8	1907.3	8793.2	10700.5	148.0	1686.3	1834.3
	...Undeveloped	8187.8	229.7	6442.9	6672.6	46.5	1468.6	1515.1
	...and Not Conservation Land	5659.4	194.6	4560.6	4755.2	44.0	860.3	904.3
	...and Not Wetland (Hydric A Soils)	5173.0	187.9	4288.6	4476.5	36.6	659.9	696.5
	...and Not Wetland (Hydric B Soils)	3345.9	113.1	3057.9	3171.0	6.6	168.3	174.9
	...and Not Steep or with Very Low Potential for Septic	3295.4	113.1	3007.4	3120.5	6.6	168.3	174.9
	Total Developable	3295.4	113.1	3007.4	3120.5	6.6	168.3	174.9

**Table LU-5
Development Potential By Zoning District**

(units = acres; acreage totals are based on land cover, not on parcel boundaries)

	Zoning District	All Land	Total Developable	% Remaining	Outside 100 Year Flood Plain			Within 100 Year Flood Plain		
					Sewered	Non-Sewered	All	Sewered	Non-Sewered	All
C-1	Central Area Commercial	65.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C-2	Highway Commercial	173.6	46.5	26.8%	9.8	32.4	42.3	0.1	4.2	4.2
C-3	Epping Rd. Highway Commercial	269.0	112.7	41.9%	0.5	111.4	111.9	0.0	0.8	0.8
NP	Neighborhood Professional	136.7	16.9	12.4%	2.3	13.2	15.6	0.0	1.4	1.4
WC	Waterfront Commercial	9.4	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CT	Corp. Technology Park	145.0	61.9	42.7%	4.4	56.2	60.6	0.0	1.3	1.3
CT-1	Corp. Technology Park 1	333.7	80.6	24.1%	0.0	78.8	78.8	0.0	1.8	1.8
PP	Professional Technology Park	98.4	28.4	28.8%	8.2	19.6	27.8	0.0	0.6	0.6
I	Industrial	488.9	135.6	27.7%	5.2	127.3	132.4	0.0	3.2	3.2
H	Healthcare	44.6	2.2	5.0%	0.0	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
RU	Rural	2836.3	952.6	33.6%	0.0	922.3	922.3	0.0	30.3	30.3
R-1	Single Family	5388.4	1544.1	28.7%	25.8	1413.2	1439.0	1.3	103.8	105.2
R-2	Single Family	2150.2	270.6	12.6%	47.6	179.6	227.2	23.7	19.8	43.4
R-3	Single Family	70.1	2.3	3.3%	1.8	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.5	0.5
R-4	Multi-Family	157.0	25.1	16.0%	5.9	19.2	25.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
R-5	Multi-Family/Elderly	33.7	1.3	3.8%	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.9
R-6	Retirement Planned Community	45.2	32.4	71.5%	0.8	31.5	32.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
M	Mobile Home Park	180.5	1.8	1.0%	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.2	1.1	1.3
MS	Mobile Home Subdivision	19.7	0.2	1.1%	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1
TOTAL	Developable Land	12645.6	3315.4	26.2%	113.1	3007.4	3120.5	26.1	168.8	194.9

The analysis shows that approximately 3300 acres of land are potentially available for future development in Exeter. Of that total...

- 47% is in R-1*
- 29% is in RU*
- 08% is in R-2*

The analysis shows that approximately 3300 acres of land remain that are potentially available for development in Exeter. This represents about 26% of the total land area of the Town. It is unlikely that the full amount would actually be available in any of the zones.

Nearly half of the developable land (47%) is found in the R-1 Single Family district. Most of the rest (29%) are in the RU Rural zone and the R-2 (8%) zones. The zones with the least amount of land remaining on a percentage basis tend to be the smaller zones with a highly specialized purpose: mobile home park and subdivision, healthcare, R-5 Elderly, and waterfront commercial. For all practical purposes, these zones are fully built-out.

The next revision of the land use chapter should incorporate a further analysis of this information to estimate the amount of future development that could result from the full utilization of the remaining land.

PART II: Future Land Use

1. Introduction

The Future Land Use section of the Exeter Master Plan is intended to describe and establish the Town's broad vision for its future land development. Its preparation requires a careful evaluation and synthesis of all other parts of the Master Plan. This evaluation must take into account many factors, including community goals, the capability of the land to support development, existing land use patterns and zoning, expectations of property owners, the location of utilities and public services, and local land use laws and regulations.

The Future Land section is intended to be both general and specific. As a policy document, the Master Plan establishes general policies and goals with which to guide development. As a Plan it must go further and specify the types of uses appropriate for various areas of Town, as well as the specific measures that will help bring about desired future development. Such measures may include changes in zoning and site development regulations, new initiatives in land protection, facility development or changes in Town policy. In addition, the future land use chapter provides guidance to private and public entities in their land use decisions. For example, we hope that private developers as well town government and school officials will reflect upon the needs, values and goals outlined in this chapter in making their land use decisions.

Interim Update for 2002

The Town Planning Board began the process of updating the 1994 Master Plan in 2001 with the intention of updating the document incrementally, revising 2 to 4 Chapters each year. The topic of Future Land Use is ordinarily undertaken up as the final element of the Master Plan, in that it represents the synthesis of much of the other parts of the Plan. However, because of the age of the existing Plan and number of years required to complete the present update cycle, the Board decided to prepare an interim update of the Future Land Use section.

The objectives of the Interim Update are twofold: (1) to verify the land use policies and recommendations of the 1994 Plan and amend them as necessary to reflect current policies and changes in zoning, and (2) to incorporate new elements of the Town's long term vision for future land development that came to light during the 2002 Community Visioning process. The resulting Interim Update shows that some important changes in the Town's development policy have occurred since the drafting of the 1994 Plan. Future Land Use will be reviewed and revised again in 2004 or 2005 when all other Chapters of the Master Plan have been revised.

The Future Land Use section is divided into separate sections:

*Objectives of the
Interim Future Land
Use Update:*

*1. To verify and
update the policies
and recommenda-
tions of the 1994
Plan, and*

*2. To incorporate
policies and rec-
ommendations that
came to light dur-
ing the 2002
Community Vision-
ing process.*

- Goals for Future Land Use;
- Land Suitability for Development;
- Future Land Use by Type;
- Other Future Land Use Issues.

2. Future Land Use Goals

How land is used affects our community in a variety of ways. To truly reflect and protect the aspects of our community that are most valued by our citizens, our decisions about land use need to support not only the provision of “built infrastructure,” but also protect and support Exeter’s “green infrastructure” and “social infrastructure.”

Built Infrastructure: Buildings, roadways, other man-made structures and systems constitute our “built infrastructure.” Considerations about land use must address what is built on the land, such as residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, as well as other ways in which land is used for built infrastructure, including roadways, sidewalks and bike paths, and the provision of communication systems, electrical service, public water and sewer systems, and other services upon which our community depends.

Green infrastructure provides values that we can readily recognize such as opportunities for outdoor recreation, scenic views and a sense of place afforded by the landscape of Exeter.

Green Infrastructure: Less developed and undeveloped areas also have great value to our community. The network of parks, open spaces, natural areas, and protected buffers provides the “green infrastructure” that supports human life as well as many important ecological functions in our community. The Green infrastructure provides values that we can readily recognize such as opportunities for outdoor recreation, scenic views and a sense of place afforded by the landscape of Exeter. More importantly, the green infrastructure provides ecological services which are vital to all life, such as clean water, breathable air and the habitats and natural communities which support a diversity of life.

Social Infrastructure: Finally, in examining future land use, we must keep in mind that the characteristics, pattern and mixture of land use across the community will also affect our community’s character and how people interact within our community. These important aspects of our community represent our “social infrastructure.”

Reflecting on the various ways in which land use affects a community, we offer the following three over-arching goals for future land use in Exeter:

- (1) Ensure that our built infrastructure (i.e., all man-made land uses including buildings, roads, parking areas, and service systems) addresses and balances our existing and future community de-

velopment needs while protecting our historic community character and natural environment.

- (2) Protect and enhance Exeter's natural resources and the ecological services they provide (e.g., clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities) and protect and maintain a connected network of parks, open spaces, natural areas, and undeveloped buffers throughout our community.
- (3) Preserve and enhance our sense of community by supporting an active civic life through the network of human interaction and by maintaining the cultural, historic and other social resources of our community.

The Community Visioning sessions conducted at the start of the Master Plan update strongly reinforced additional goals specific to the Town's land use policies. These included:

- The Town should do more to encourage the development of more affordable housing;
- Future town development should balance the need for additional development with the need to preserve open space to help ensure that large areas of the community will remain open and undeveloped, and that Exeter's "small town" character is retained. Linkages between major conservation areas should be secured.
- Maintain the existing historic and aesthetic integrity of the downtown; and continue redevelopment of the waterfront;
- Future commercial development, especially along the major corridors entering Town, should occur such that it compliments the Town's character, creates attractive gateways to the community, and does not result in the additional "strip" development along these roadways. In other words, it should not look like "anywhere USA".
- Future development of roads and buildings should fully consider the needs of pedestrians in their design, and should connect public spaces with sidewalks and bike paths.
- Greater attention should be placed on architectural standards, landscaping and overall development aesthetics for commercial development.
- Significant planning effort in the short term should be focused on creating a comprehensive zoning and development plan for the Epping Road Corridor. One objective of this plan should be to avoid zoning conditions or incentives that will lead to commercial strip development.

- Balance residential, business development and conservation uses to support a stable tax base and fully consider the fiscal impact of various kinds of development.
- Ensure that the water resources and public water supplies of the town are well protected and conserved.

3. Land Suitability and Development

Since at least the 1974 Master Plan, a principal land use policy of Exeter has been that land development should occur in those areas that present the fewest possible constraints and will result in the least harm to the environment.

Since at least the 1974 Master Plan, a principal land use policy of Exeter has been that land development should occur in those areas that present the fewest possible constraints and will result in the least harm to the environment. While most land presents some limitations to development, the use of sound development practices designed to minimize environmental impact can result in acceptable development in many areas. There are other areas, however, which pose such great limitations or which contain such sensitive environmental conditions that development should be severely limited or completely prohibited. It continues to be the policy of Exeter to strongly discourage development in areas that have poor natural development suitability or which have significant resource values which should be protected. In general, these areas include wetlands, steep slopes, flood hazard areas, immediate shoreland environments and aquifer recharge areas. The rationale for limiting or prohibiting development from these areas is well established in other sections of this Plan. In addition, in the portions of the town outside the sewer and water service area in which new development will rely on on-site septic disposal and on-site wells, soil conditions must play a dominant role in determining suitability for development. In these areas especially, natural development suitability forms the basis of the future land use policy.

To help visualize the areas which are generally suitable for future development an analysis map was prepared. **Map FLU-1 “General Development Suitability”** shows degrees of development suitability classified into three general categories:

- 1) Land not **suitable** for development;
- 2) Land with **limited suitability** for development; and
- 3) Land **generally suitable** for development.

In addition, the map also shows existing conservation land and existing development, neither of which are considered in this analysis. The elements of each category are explained below. This map is useful in indicating the general areas where land which is not yet developed can

potentially support development. It is most relevant outside the water and sewer service area. It is important to note that the suitability categories shown on Map FLU-1 are useful for town-wide planning purposes, but are not accurate enough for site specific assessments at the parcel level.¹ It should also be noted that areas which are defined as poorly suited for development may be partially used in achieving a minimum lot size for development. It should be noted that land already developed could be re-developed within existing constraints.

Map FLU-1 General Development Suitability- is useful for town wide planning purposes, but is not accurate enough for site specific assessments at the parcel level.

3.1 Land Not Available for Development

Some land is not available for development, regardless of physical suitability. There are two categories:

- a. **Protected Land:** Existing conservation land which is protected from future development is also included within the area depicted as “not suited for development.” This includes land owned for conservation purposes by the Town as well as land for which development rights have been acquired by the Town or by a conservation organization. This includes common open space land associated with open space developments.
- b. **Existing Developed Land:** Existing developed land is considered in the analysis to be unavailable for development. However, it is possible and even likely in some places that the existing uses on this land may be replaced or “redeveloped” with new and/or different uses as allowed by zoning.

3.2 Land Not Suitable for Development

Land not suited for development includes wetlands, buffer areas around wetlands, shoreland buffer areas and, in those areas not served by sewer and water, with soils which have very low potential for the siting of septic systems (such as poorly and very poorly drained soils and steep slopes). The significance of these areas is described as follows:

- a. **Wetlands:** The importance of preserving and protecting wetlands is well established in the Town of Exeter Water Resources Management Plan (1991). They are generally recognized to contribute vital natural resource and ecological functions.

Land not suited for development: includes wetlands, buffer areas around wetlands, shoreland buffer areas and areas with very low potential for the siting of septic systems

¹ Parcel boundaries shown on Map FLU-1 are intended for orientation purposes and should not be used to infer the development suitability of a specific property.

Functions and Values of Wetlands:

- Providing habitat areas for plants, fish and wildlife;
- Absorbing polluting nutrients from adjoining lake and streams;
- Helping to maintain groundwater levels during dry seasons;
- Storing flood waters during wet seasons; and
- Absorbing and settling out silt and other sediments caused by erosion.

In addition to these benefits, wetlands also have aesthetic value for open space and passive recreation. Future land uses should be directed away from wetland areas to the greatest extent possible. It is equally important to prevent building in such areas because of the potential negative impact on water quality, public health and protection from flood hazards. The Town's existing Wetlands Ordinance will continue to regulate future development with regards to wetlands.

- b. **Buffer Areas around Wetlands:** A wetlands ordinance which prohibits development in wetlands does not necessarily protect wetlands from harmful uses occurring immediately adjacent to them. For those uses permitted within close proximity to wetlands, adequate buffers are necessary in order to insure the protection of the wetland. In 2000, the Town's Zoning Ordinance was amended to include a protective buffer around prime wetlands of 100 feet. In additions, the Town's Subdivision and Site Plan Regulations include a 25 foot "no-cut" setback and a 75 foot setback for structures. Structures that are potentially harmful to wetlands, such as septic systems, waste, and salt storage facilities are excluded from these areas. As much as possible, natural vegetation should be protected or restored in these areas to control erosion and sediment from contaminating wetlands.

Structures that are potentially harmful to wetlands, such as septic systems, waste, and salt storage facilities are excluded from buffer areas.

- c. **Buffer Areas Along River Corridors:** The establishment of buffers along rivers and streams is important for many of the same reasons as for wetlands. Protecting river shorelines helps preserve wetlands, reduces flooding damage, serves to maintain important wildlife travel corridors and preserve scenic beauty of the river. In 1989, (and revised in 1999) the Town established the "Shoreland Protection District" which establishes an overlay protection district prohibiting most structures and land alteration between 150 and 300 feet of the shoreline of major rivers, streams and other surface water bodies. Shorelands need such

protection from development for many of the same reasons that hold for wetlands, including water quality protection, flood storage, and wildlife habitat. In 1991, the Comprehensive Shoreland and Protection Act (RSA 483-B) was adopted by the State Legislature. The law requires that a 150 foot natural woodland buffer be maintained along public waters. The State ordinance is less restrictive than the Town's in some instances, but allows local ordinances to be more restrictive as necessary.

The Town's ordinance appropriately establishes varying levels of protection depending on the environmental sensitivity of the river or stream. Greatest protection is afforded to water bodies providing drinking water supply, and having the highest water quality.

- d. **Areas with Very Low Potential for Septic Systems:** The ability to adequately place a septic system on parcels where sewage disposal will be handled on-site is a critical consideration for determining development suitability. The Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) has developed a system to indicate the relative potential of a soil for siting a septic system. This system objectively and scientifically rates the soil's potential on a five level scale ranging from very high to very low. Any land classified as having *very low potential* is determined to be not suitable for development under any reasonable standard. Area with *low potential* may be unsuitable depending on other factors.

Poorly-suited areas present difficulties in permitting development without causing harm and therefore are best suited for low density development.

3.3 Land with Limited Suitability for Development

Land with limited suitability for development includes the following categories:

- a) Aquifer recharge zones;
- b) 100-year flood hazard zones;
- c) Areas with low potential for septic systems; and
- d) Water supply protection areas.

All of these areas are considered to pose important limitations to development. However, unlike the area classified as *not suited for development*, these limitations are not serious enough to justify a prohibition of all construction. Poorly-suited areas present difficulties in permitting development without causing harm and therefore are best suited for low density development. Carefully developed land use regulations are required to safely guide future development in these areas.

- a. **Aquifer Recharge Zones:** In 1988, the Town created an "Aquifer Protection Overlay District" which regulates the type and intensi-

ty of development within areas that overly aquifers. The Aquifer Protection Overlay District is designed to protect, preserve and maintain potential ground water supplies and related ground water recharge areas associated with a known aquifer identified by the Town. It is vital to protect these resources for potential use as public water supply for the Town.

Stratified drift aquifers are recharged from precipitation and runoff that infiltrates from land directly above the aquifer. They are therefore not suited for any type of development that carries a high risk of contamination. Stratified drift aquifers are especially vulnerable to contamination from the land above due to the high permeability of the associated sandy soils. Once they have leaked into the ground, contaminants can spread rapidly through an aquifer and destroy it as a water supply. Several of the aquifer's within the Town feed the Exeter River, the Town's principal water supply. Numerous private wells in Town also depend on these aquifers. Therefore it is vital that they continue to receive protection from uses which carry a high risk of contaminating groundwater. In general, development that involves the use of chemicals or materials that could contaminate the groundwater if spilled or discharged, or which creates large areas of impermeable surface should be prohibited from locating in these areas.

- b. **100-Year Flood Hazard Zones:** Floodplains are undesirable locations for development because the associated risks to life and property. In addition, construction in the floodplains worsens flood hazards downstream and the inundation of subsurface sewage disposal systems can cause water pollution and a public health hazard. As part of its Zoning Ordinance, the Town of Exeter has adopted specific regulations for development in special flood hazard areas, as prescribed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA has prepared "Flood Insurance Rate Maps" for the Town which depict, among other things, the location of flood hazard areas for the 100-year flood. Development should be limited within these flood hazard areas to those land uses compatible with areas prone to flooding and in conformance to the regulations imposed by FEMA.
- c. **Areas With Low Potential for Septic Systems:** These areas contain soils that have low potential for the successful siting of septic systems. The soils are limited due to one or more of the following factors: slope, shallow depth to bedrock, depth to seasonal high water table or slow percolation rate. In most instances, these natural limitations can be overcome by modifying the site to comply with minimum state and local septic system regulations, but only at high cost. These areas are suited for low density development only, with densities determined by the soil type lot size requirements.

- d. **Public Water Supply Protection Areas:** Areas immediately adjacent to the Town’s public water supply wells and surface water intake sources should remain free of development to reduce the potential threat of water supply contamination. This includes the state-mandated 400 ft. “sanitary well radii” around municipal wells within which all development is prohibited. In addition, the Town should consider defining broader wellhead protection for active groundwater wells, surface water withdrawals, and for the Dearborn reservoir watershed in which development is limited.

3.4 Areas Generally Suited for Development

All other areas not specifically identified are likely to pose no unusual natural resource-related limitation to development. This does not mean that all land is equally suitable. The source maps do not have sufficient detail to show the location of all physical limitations described above. Other factors not related to land capability should also be considered in determining the overall suitability for development. These include factors such as highway access, compatibility with surrounding uses, the need for municipal services, conservation and open space objectives, existing zoning regulations and the Town’s overall vision for the location of future development of various types.

Other factors should also be considered in determining the overall suitability for development such as highway access, compatibility with surrounding uses, the need for municipal services, conservation and open space objectives, existing zoning regulations and the Town’s overall vision for the location of future development of various types.

4. Future Land Use by Type

In this section, future land use findings and recommendations are presented for major categories of land use. These include: Residential; Commercial/Retail; Industrial; Corporate and High Technology; Government/Institutional; Downtown; and Open Space/Conservation. In addition a “general” category is included which presents additional recommendations which affect multiple land use types. Refer to **Map FLU-2 “Future Landuse”** regarding specific zoning district recommendations.

4.1 Residential

FINDINGS

Residential land use in Exeter can be classified in one of the five following categories:

- Older single and two family homes located along older Town roads and the center of Town;
- Newer single family homes in planned subdivisions;

It is evident from regional and state comparisons that Exeter has among the most diverse housing supplies in the region.

A close look at the table and graph shown as Table LU-6 reveals a discernable gap between the time when subdivision lots are created and when building commences on those lots.

- Multi-family housing served by Town water and sewer;
- Mobile home parks, and
- Senior or age-restricted multifamily housing.

It is evident from regional and state comparisons that Exeter has among the most diverse housing supplies in the region, having a far higher percentage of both multi-family and mobile homes than any other town in the surrounding area.

Currently, there are eight (8) residentially zoned districts in Exeter as follows:

- RU**, Rural;
- R-1**, Low Density Residential;
- R-2**, Single Family Residential;
- R-3**, Single Family Residential;
- R-4** Multi-Family Residential;
- R-5**, Multi-Family;
- M**, Mobile Home; and
- MH**, Mobile Home Subdivision.

Year	Building Permits	Conventional Lots	Open Space Lots	Total New Lots
1992	36	1	0	1
1993	21	6	0	6
1994	15	24	0	24
1995	15	5	45	50
1996	36	30	56	86
1997	50	22	0	22
1998	63	4	11	15
1999	86	14	29	43
2000	37	32	49	81
2001	27	12	0	12
TOTAL	386	150	190	340

The majority of land area zoned residential is either RU or R-1. These districts require a minimum lot size of two (2) acres and 40,000 square feet, respectively (on Town water and sewer). In areas without Town water and sewer services, both of these districts require a minimum lot

size of two (2) acres. In looking at future development potential by zoning district as shown in **Table LU-5**, it is apparent that there is a scarcity of land area zoned for smaller single family lots, relative to the less densely zoned areas of Town, as well as for multi-family uses. Residential growth in Exeter over the past decade was driven by several key factors, including the reputation of the school system, the beauty of the town and surrounding area, proximity and accessibility to both the Boston metropolitan area and major recreational attractions. In short, the Town offers its residents a high quality of life.

While residential growth slowed considerably in the early 1990's (in the aftermath of a national recession) it has increased in the later years of the decade. Of the 386 new homes built in the 10 year period between 1992 and 2001, only 123 were constructed in the first five years. Since mid-decade, an average of just over 50 new homes have been added to the Town each year. Recent development of single family residential units has been a mixture of both conventional and open space (cluster) subdivisions. Of the 34 new lots created over these ten years, 190 or 55% were created in open space subdivisions. While most Seacoast towns saw little construction of multifamily units, Exeter saw significant growth over the last 10 years, totaling 242 units (including accessory dwellings and conversions). The large majority of these (201), however are attributed to a single development – the Riverwoods retirement community. Data regarding recent residential development activity is summarized in **Table LU 6**. Not included in these data are an additional 128 age-restricted units at the Sterling Hill development now under construction.

Significant additional growth is not anticipated for mobile home parks or mobile home subdivisions due to high land cost and a real estate market which is unfavorable to this type of development. From the standpoint of the Town's zoning, ample opportunity exists for the construction of manufactured housing subdivisions which are a principal permitted use in the R-1 district -- the largest residential district.

Additional multi-family development, except for elderly/congregate care and age-restricted development is also unlikely to expand significantly under existing market conditions. An exception to this may be in-fill, redevelopment and conversion of large single family homes. Multi-family development is a permitted principle use only in the R-4, R-5 and R-6 zones; however, when all forms of multi-family housing are considered (including conversions, multi-family open space development, elderly, congregate care and residential health care facilities) multi-family uses are allowed either as principal use or by special exception in nearly all residential zones. Except for age-restricted development, very few multi-family units have been added to the Town's housing stock over the past decade. Slow growth of these housing types is primarily due to the market conditions which strongly favor high-end single development. The past decade has seen a dramatic decline in the production of

To address concerns about impacts on traffic from new residential development, new subdivisions and roadways also should be designed to increase connections within our local road network to minimize impacts on major roadways and better support alternative modes of travel (e.g., biking and walking).

multi-family housing for the entire region. This trend has further exacerbated the lack of affordable housing.

Regionally, there is a significant need to expand the supply of affordable and moderate-priced housing. Local residents confirmed this need at the 2002 visioning session. Housing prices for both rental and owned homes have risen dramatically over the past five years. This appears largely to be the result of an expanding employment base in the region without a corresponding increase in housing supply. In general, Exeter residential zoning is highly flexible and provides ample opportunities for a diverse mix of new housing development and redevelopment. Despite historically low mortgage rates, other market conditions, especially high land costs and a strong demand for high end homes, have proven unfavorable toward the creation of lower cost single and multi-family housing. In recognition of this the Town has recently taken steps to make the inclusion of below market rate housing units more attractive to developers. More steps may need to be taken, along with actions in other communities, to make the construction of lower cost housing units more attractive to developers.

Participants at Exeter's 2002 visioning session expressed general concerns about the impact residential growth can have on the community. These concerns included loss of community character, loss of open space, increased traffic and congestion, impact on the tax base and the risk of undermining the community's quality of life. To address some of these concerns, participants recommended encouraging more cluster/conservation development and requiring subdivisions to provide adequate facilities to support walking and biking as alternatives to driving.

To address concerns about impacts on traffic from new residential development, new subdivisions and roadways also should be designed to increase connections within our local road network to minimize impacts on major roadways and better support alternative modes of travel (e.g., biking and walking). To address the growing need for recreational options, the Town should continue to require new residential developments to provide for local recreation opportunities for residents or otherwise support the provision of such facilities by the town (e.g., through the payment of impact fees). Finally, every development project should employ minimum impact development practices to reduce run-off, increase energy efficiency, protect important habitat, and generally minimize potential impacts on environmental quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations of the 1994 Master Plan are affirmed, with the following additions, modifications or exceptions:

1. Expand one or more of existing multi-family zones and/or designate additional areas as multi-family to accommodate the need for additional moderate priced housing.
2. Include additional incentives within the zoning ordinance to encourage development of more moderately priced housing, both single and multi-family units.
3. Rezone the existing Industrial Zone located to the west of Epping Road and south of the Conner Farm to RU designation; rezone the adjoining R-1 District south to Brentwood Road to RU.
4. Rescind the recommendation made in the 1994 Master Plan to rezone the land along NH 27 (Old 101) west of Beech Hill Rd. from R-1 to "limited commercial."
5. Amend the permitted use definitions in the "NP" (Neighborhood Professional) zone to allow multi-family residential use by special exception.
6. Clarify or define residential uses allowed by special exception in the WC and C-1 Districts.
7. Make open space/conservation design residential development mandatory in certain areas where the existence of important natural resources or proximity to conservation lands warrants this requirement.

4.2 Commercial/Retail

FINDINGS

There are four (4) commercial zoning districts in Exeter at this time. These districts are: C-1, Central Area Commercial; C-2, Highway Commercial; C-3, Epping Road Commercial and WC, Waterfront Commercial. As previously noted, Exeter's commercial development is located in the downtown, along Lincoln Street, outer Front Street and on the Portsmouth Avenue and Epping Road. The Town's downtown, including its retail development is one of the community's greatest assets. Maintaining the integrity of the historic downtown and the vitality of its retail businesses was strongly voiced at the Community Visioning Sessions.

The completion of NH 101 as a 4 lane limited access highway has brought renewed commercial development pressure at the highway interchanges in Exeter, especially at the Epping Road and Portsmouth Avenue interchanges (the Portsmouth Avenue interchange itself is located in Stratham, but is immediately adjacent to the Town line). In the case of Portsmouth Avenue, this new pressure will most likely come in the form of re-development of previously developed land. This presents the Town with a significant and rare opportunity to implement im-

proved development standards in this area to address landscaping, architectural and access management standards as properties are redeveloped. In the case of Epping Road, the existing zoning (C-3) combined with the availability of vacant land in proximity to the interchange is likely to result in proposals for large scale or mixed use commercial development in this location. Prior studies and community input regarding Epping Road have suggested that -

- (1) A substantial build-out of the available land in the Epping Road corridor under existing zoning will overwhelm the capacity of the road to carry the resulting traffic without a major widening and related roadway improvements;
- (2) Access management principles and provisions to maintain good traffic flow should be employed in all new development;
- (3) Consistent landscaping and architectural standards should be an integral part of the commercial site plan review process to help establish attractive “gateway” roads into and out of the community; and
- (4) Alternative zoning and site design requirements should be researched and implemented where feasible to discourage continuous “strip commercial” development.

Participants at the 2002 visioning session also expressed concern about the extension and nature of commercial activities along other major corridors beyond Epping Road. Additionally, participants wanted to improve Portsmouth Avenue and Lincoln Street, along with Epping Road, to create attractive gateways to town (e.g., by adding more street trees and green space) and provide stronger connections between these “gateways” and downtown (e.g., through consistent land uses, and the provision of walking and biking connections).

Overall, existing commercial zoning districts appear to be adequate to serve the current needs of Exeter residents as well as those of surrounding communities; therefore, no expansion is proposed in the geographic extent of the existing commercial zoning districts. Instead, efforts should be placed on preventing the linear extension of commercial development on the major roadways leading into the town center.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. As soon as practical, the Planning Board should sponsor a community visioning / design “charette” session to help develop community consensus on the desired future land use and corridor plan for Epping Road. It is recommended that this process specifically consider: the potential mixed use development; encouraging development to occur in clusters or “nodes” rather than as continuous commercial develop-

ment; site and building design and aesthetics; comparative traffic impacts of future development; and related issues.

2. Review zoning along the remaining highway corridors (Hampton Rd. (NH 27); Kingston Rd (NH 111); and Court St. (NH 108) to ensure that adequate measures are in place to discourage any further linear extension of highway/retail-commercial development. To the extent additional commercial development is needed within these corridors, the zoning ordinance should be amended to encourage development to occur in a second tier behind existing development to be accessed by secondary service roads.
3. Rezone the "C-2" section of Epping Rd. into a new zone which allows mixed uses compatible with residential, limited commercial and neighborhood services. The intention is to promote a better transition of land uses from the highway-commercial uses on Epping Road to the mixed commercial/professional/residential uses which become more common closer to the town center.
4. Rezone the C-2 section of Portsmouth Ave. south of Green Hill Rd. to C-1 to promote a better transition of land uses from the highway-commercial uses on Portsmouth Ave. to the mixed commercial/ residential uses which become more common closer to the town center.
5. The Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, and others should continue steps to improve Lincoln Street and the train station to provide an attractive gateway to town.
6. Consider developing provisions in the zoning ordinance to permit limited neighborhood commercial uses.

Participants in the 2002 Visioning Sessions suggested providing allowances in the Zoning Ordinances for smaller "Mom and Pop" style grocery stores.

4.3 Industrial, Corporate and High Technology, Office

FINDINGS

At the present time, Exeter has a strong but small industrial base, comprised primarily of light manufacturing and assembly operations such as OSRAM Sylvania (electrical and lighting components); Celestica (computer electronics manufacturing); Continental Microwave (electronics manufacturing); Sigarms (handgun assembly); Wall Industries (assembly of power supply units for mainframe computers); and several other smaller manufacturers. With the exception of OSRAM and Celestica, these operations are located off Epping Rd. (Exeter Corporate Park and the REDC Industrial Park) and along Holland Way (Old Spur Rd.). OSRAM is located off Portsmouth Avenue and Celestica is off Route 111 at 101 Exit 12. Exeter is also home to several corporate headquarters such as Tyco, Shafmaster Company and Exeter Health Resources.

There is currently one conventional industrial district in Town, designated as "I", Industrial. The I district permits traditional industrial type uses such as manufacturing, assembly, research and development and truck terminals as well as those uses permitted in the CT-1 district. Within the I district, there are a number of manufacturing and assembly operations, including several startup companies. Existing industrial development is principally located in the Industrial Park off of Epping Road, with several facilities in non-industrial zones. A large portion of the I zone was effectively removed from market circulation in 1992 when the State purchased approximately 300 acres of land in conjunction with the Route 101/51 expansion project. Although this had the effect of greatly reducing the amount of available industrially zoned land, much of the area was of poor quality and unsuitable for development. In recognition of this, the 1994 Master Plan recommended that "I" Zone on the west side of Epping Road be rezoned to residential use. That recommendation has not yet been carried out but is reiterated in the 2002 Interim Update. Within the remaining land zoned Industrial, there are approximately 80 acres that could be developed, located on the east side of Epping Road. While this is not an abundant supply, it is adequate for the near term, particularly given the fact that over 300 acres were re-zoned from residential to corporate/high technology use in 1993. This rezoning is a reflection of the desire by the Town to redirect development away from heavy industry and toward light industry, high technology and corporate office uses.

The Town has seen a significant expansion of Professional / Office space development over the past decade, including the redevelopment of the old Rockingham County Courthouse and development of new medical office building at the site of the Exeter Hospital. The market for such development has been somewhat limited by the rapid expansion of the Pease International Trade port over the past half dozen years. However, the greater access to the more affordable housing in interior Rockingham County provided by easy access to NH 101 may create additional demand to this type of development in Exeter due to a more favorable location.

Currently, there are three (3) corporate and high technology zoning districts in Exeter: CT, Corporate Technology Park; CT-1 Corporate Technology Park – 1; PP, Professional/Technology Park. The addition of the CT and CT-1 districts in 1993 served to significantly increase the amount of land area zoned for corporate/high technology uses. At this time, there are no recommendations regarding the rezoning of additional land areas for corporate/technology uses. However, the Town should continue to monitor the need for any additional rezoning in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

No specific recommendations to these land use categories in the 1994 Master Plan, except to rezone the "I" Zone on the west side of Epping

Road be to residential use and to monitor the need for rezoning. The following recommendations are made in the interim update (2002):

1. Rezone the existing Industrial Zone located to the west of Epping Road and south of the Conner Farm to RU designation; rezone the adjoining R-1 District south to Brentwood Road to RU. (*From Residential*).
2. Amend the permitted use definitions in the “NP” (Neighborhood Professional) zone to allow multi-family residential use by special exception.

4.4 Government/Institutional

FINDINGS

Government, education, healthcare and other institutional land uses make up a significant portion of the Town's total land area. Governmental/institutional facilities are expected to continue to represent a significant portion of land use within the Town for the foreseeable future. As the community grows and existing community facilities are stressed beyond capacity, additional land will be required to accommodate new facilities. In seeking sites for government and other public facilities, it should be the goal of the Town to locate them close to where people live. Doing so will maximize opportunities to access these facilities without using a car, will reinforce Exeter as a compact town center, will avoid unnecessary conversion of undeveloped land and discourage development sprawl.

Finding suitable property for public facilities has become increasingly difficult and therefore it is advisable for the Town and School Districts to acquire suitable property in anticipation of future needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Encourage that the proposed community center be located within reasonable walking distance of the downtown.
2. Encourage that the development of new or rehabilitated elementary schools and school facilities be located close to the existing town center.

4.5 Downtown

FINDINGS

Exeter's Downtown is one of the Town's greatest assets. It creates and provides commercial, retail and visitor services, adds to the tax base, is the Town center for social and civic interaction and helps establish and

reinforces the “sense of place” of the Town. Its importance has been well recognized by the town government and its citizens, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, American Independence Museum and other organizations. As a result, many important improvements and investments to the downtown have been made in recent years, including:

- The creation of two waterfront parks, waterfront boardwalk and boat ramp;
- Creation of two downtown “pocket parks” including the Town House Common and Founder’s Park;
- Landscaping and drainage improvements behind Water Street;
- Upgrading and separating the sewer and stormwater infrastructure;
- Major repairs to the Town hall;
- Reconstruction of the Swasey Park seawall; and
- Drainage improvements and installation of traffic calming elements to Swasey Parkway;
- Reconstruction of numerous sidewalks leading into the downtown.

There was particularly strong interest expressed at the 2002 visioning session in maintaining and strengthening Exeter’s downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Participants at the visioning session offered the following recommendations:

- Ensure that the downtown is pedestrian-friendly by providing adequate sidewalks and pedestrian facilities;
- Designing buildings and other structures at a human-scale;
- Providing alternatives to driving for people to access downtown (e.g., trolley);
- Maintain the historic character of downtown;
- Provide more green space and street trees throughout downtown, especially around the bandstand;
- Improve parking options;
- Encourage more night use of downtown; and
- Continue to develop the waterfront area, especially the area behind the Water Street buildings.

Presently, one special committee lead by the Chamber of Commerce has been established to recommend solutions to downtown parking limitations; a second committee was established at Town Meeting to study improvements to the historic downtown.

Although much has been done to ensure the continued health of Exeter's downtown, significant challenges remain. Building vacancy rates and business turnover rates are higher than optimum and few businesses remain which sell staple goods. Like many downtowns, Exeter's is increasingly catering to visitors and leisure shopping – a logical and perhaps appropriate response to competing with mega-scale retail establishments.

An important step to address building vacancy was taken in 2000 when the Waterfront Commercial zone was amended to allow residential use in upper floors of downtown buildings. This allows an appropriate mixing of complementary uses which should improve the economic value of downtown properties, while adding customers for downtown business without adding their cars.

A second concern regarding the downtown involves traffic congestion, as well as the mixing of motor vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. Located at the confluence of three major state highways (111, 108 and 27), downtown Exeter will never be free of traffic congestion. Although the elimination of congestion is not a realistic goal, the Town should continue to investigate alternative traffic patterns, traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian facilities design.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Support mixed residential, commercial and office uses in the downtown, with specific allowance for residential uses on upper floors of downtown buildings.
2. Review existing building standards in the WC district, including parking, setback and building height to determine their adequacy to support, and not discourage appropriate development density in the downtown.
3. Evaluate future participation of the Town in the New Hampshire Main Street Program, to further support the social, cultural and economic health of the downtown
4. Develop a green space and street tree plan for downtown.
5. Develop recommendations for ensuring a pedestrian-friendly environment, including developing a standard pedestrian crossing design to enhance visibility and safety, and instituting traffic calming measures that do not create unreasonable maintenance burdens. Evaluate specific conflict areas for possible re-design, including the Bandstand and Spring St./Main St. /Water St.

6. Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to develop further recommendations for continued improvement of the waterfront area behind the Water Street buildings.
7. Consider acquisition of additional land for providing more downtown parking, possibly including a portion of The Mill parking lot.
8. Conduct a feasibility study for the transition/conversion to underground utilities in the downtown area.

4.6 Open Space and Conservation

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Town's undeveloped lands, or its "green infrastructure" provides important benefits and values to the community – ones which are often difficult to measure in monetary terms. These benefits include flood storage and control, maintenance of water and air quality, wildlife habitat and ecological diversity, as well as recreational opportunities and scenic enjoyment.

Participants at the 2002 visioning session ranked as a high priority the support for expanded conservation efforts in town, the establishment of connections or "greenways" between existing blocks of conserved land, the management of open lands and conservation areas for natural resource protection, and the inclusion recreational activities where appropriate. Participants also expressed a need to provide sufficient land to support some specific open space recreation needs, including hiking/biking trails, sports fields and dog parks.

The Town of Exeter has made a substantial effort to protect vital natural resources and preserve open space through innovative zoning. Ordinances such as wetland setbacks, aquifer protection zones and shoreland districts have helped to minimize impacts from potentially harmful development in sensitive environmental land areas.

The importance of preserving larger blocks of conservation land, as well as providing natural greenways or corridors between them, is recognized and having been a major consideration in recent land protection efforts by the Conservation Commission. Further, widespread development in the Town will incrementally diminish the ecological value of the green infrastructure. The acquisition of land (either through purchase or easement) can be an important tool in protecting that natural resources infrastructure as well as providing open space for its citizens. Future open space land use should build on the following principles:

- Protect the natural resources that support wildlife and important ecological functions;
- Protect waterways, especially those that contribute to the public drinking water supply;

- Preserve parcels of land that add to large contiguous parcels of open space;
- Develop green ways to connect open space lands; and
- Develop passive recreational uses within certain open space areas where they are compatible with conservation objectives.

The Conservation Commission proposes that the above-mentioned principles be accomplished primarily by two methods. The first method is to continue to review zoning and sub-division regulations in order to provide maximum protection of the “green infrastructure”. The second method is through the protection of important conservation areas which can occur through a variety of land protection techniques, including conservation easements, fee simple acquisition, partial development or other land protection measures. Both will require a well financed Conservation Fund. The town should look at ways to augment the fund or consider a bond for the purpose of open space acquisitions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Expand the land conservation fund to allow for the acquisition or other protection of high priority conservation properties.
2. In land protection efforts, emphasize the preservation of large blocks of undeveloped land, and the preservation of “greenway” linkages between them.
3. The Planning Board should make open space development mandatory in certain areas where warranted due to the existence of important natural resources, the proximity to existing conservation lands, or where significant efficiencies in the delivery of their services can be gained.
4. Consider the establishment of a water supply protection overlay zone in proximity to public water supply wellheads, intake areas, as well as the Dearborn Reservoir Watershed to prohibit land uses which carry unreasonable risk to public water supplies.
5. Evaluate and implement appropriate land use recommendations of the forthcoming Dearborn Brook Watershed Management plan being prepared by the Town to ensure the integrity of the water supply.
6. The Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Recreation Department should work together to identify appropriate areas of land to support the open space recreational needs and desires of the community (e.g., dog parks, sports fields, hiking/biking/cross country ski trails).
7. The Conservation Commission in concert with recreation interest groups, should identify a range of uses that are suitable

for the lands they manage. This may include both high and low impact uses and active or passive recreation, as appropriate to each parcel.

4.7 General

The following recommendations are made which have general applicability to future land use in Exeter.

- As part of the next update of the Future Land Use Chapter, the Planning Board should undertake a complete review and evaluation of existing zones, especially regarding permitted uses and uses allowed by special exception.
- Through appropriate zoning and development approval, the Planning Board should act to discourage the linear extension of existing water and sewer service lines but encourage the in-filling of the service area between existing extensions.
- Where appropriate, the Town should allow mixed uses (residential, limited retail, office/professional) as special exceptions within zoning districts, especially where they can lead to the creation of neighborhood-oriented business and services.
- Implement impact fees as determined to be appropriate and cost effective to address the need to supplement facility expansion costs that are associated with growth.

APPENDIX A
VISIONING SESSION RESULTS

Master Plan Visioning Session, January 2002
Land Use – Condensed Summary of Comments

Votes	Comments
	Growth Related
14	Impact of development: Fully consider the impact of resident development on schools, concern of over-crowding, sufficient space/land/services. Other development impacts: traffic congestion and noise. Keep small town feel: limit development
6	Build-out analysis – what is Exeter’s capacity
-	Regional approach to growth management
-	Phase development (certain # of homes per year)
-	Impact fees
	Residential Land use
25	<i>Affordable housing: Promote affordable housing development (middle and low income) with 2, 3, and 4 family units (See CF)</i>
13	Concerns over single family home development: over building, large lot (wasted land), need more cluster development, avoid cookie cutter approach
3	Enforce property upkeep
2	<i>Expand opportunities for senior (55+) housing development: change ordinance to ease congregate living. (Possibly on Epping) (See CF)</i>
1	Restrict expansion of mobile homes
	Commercial Land use
27	<i>Supermarket/grocery store in town (See CF)</i>
23	Commercial/retail should not look like “Anywhere USA” (no strip malls/big box stores), develop architectural design standards for commercial buildings.
11	Epping Road Development: No strip malls, encourage office complexes, commercial or light industry not to compete with downtown, extend sewer.
5	Industrial development: Encourage industrial development in appropriate zones (don’t extend zone) and attract low impact businesses.
2	<i>Hotel/conference center on Epping Road (See CF)</i>
-	Ensure strip development is segregated from downtown
	Downtown Vitality and Business
18	<i>Downtown: Keep historic character of Exeter, maintain downtown area, encourage reuse/redevelopment of existing commercial/retail areas, more night use. (See CF)</i>
15	<i>Waterfront: Develop waterfront like Portsmouth (back of Water St.) Further develop and maintain the harbor area (behind Water Street) (See CF and P&R)</i>
1	Increase Tourism
?	<i>Train Station: Town should acquire all or part of Gerry’s Variety, need more parking, better connection with Water Street (transportation such as trolley and with land use)(See CF)</i>
	Access / Traffic
11	Create alternate roads to avoid downtown congestion: third span over river, southern connection between Hampton Road and Front St.
5	<i>Trolley: connection between train station and Water Street (See CF)</i>
	Non Motorized Access
20	<i>Bicycles: More bike paths and sidewalks connecting public spaces, build more on-road bike shoulders, separated bike paths, and signage marking routes, encourage use of bicycles. (See CF and P&R)</i>
17	<i>Pedestrian travel: Preserve existing sidewalks and build more to create a pedestrian friendly</i>

Land Use: Summary of Participant Comments

	<i>environment, make downtown walkable with option to not drive – in-town trolley service including Portsmouth Avenue. (See CF and P&R)</i>
	Parking
15	<i>Downtown parking: improve parking options (too limited), build a parking garage downtown, expand parking downtown, create sufficient convenient parking. (See CF)</i>
	Environment (Water protection)
13	<i>Water Supply: concern regarding quality/safety (impact of gun club), town must ensure water quality and quantity, acquire land/easements at waterworks pond and Dearborn Brook, restrict development around Dearborn Reservoir (Holloway) (See CF and P&R)</i>
9	Water resource protection throughout town
	Environment (other)
1	Consider pollution impacts of new development
1	Enforce wetlands regulations
1	Light pollution
-	Contaminated lands need to be cleaned up
	Open Space
30	Conservation land/open space: need more land, more town funds to acquire land, link existing lands to create green belt, maintain existing open space, allow some recreational uses ie, hiking, create more mechanisms for putting land into conservation, continue getting easements, publicize public open space and make more accessible (maps, trails, information distribution).
9	Require developers to keep a minimum area of every lot in natural condition
2	Conservation commission needs land management plan
-	Incorporate open space plan in Master Plan and reflect in zoning ordinance
	Parks and Recreation
18	Create attractive gateways to town along Portsmouth Ave. & Epping Rd. & Lincoln St. Plant more street trees and green space (Portsmouth Ave, Lincoln Street)
8	<i>Downtown green space and gardens: need more green space and gardens, more street trees, green space (round-about at bandstand") (See CF and P&R)</i>
3	<i>Build dog parks (See P&R)</i>
3	<i>Make greater use of Connor Farm (See P&R)</i>
1	Parking areas for bike trail access
-	More benches
-	Dispersed small recreational areas
-	<i>More recreation areas in town (See P&R)</i>
	Policy
13	Balance residential and business development to support the tax base
3	Need to have a process for cooperation with Academy on land use issues
2	Allow mixed-use development in industrial zones (residential in unused industrial land)
2	Update zoning ordinance to support mixed use, compact development
1	Mix housing and retail (traditional small town model)
1	Loss of streetlights is a security issues
1	Town should not own land solely to prevent development

Note: *Italicized font indicates the topic was mentioned in one or other topic session.*