

Chapter 7

Future Land Use



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1.0 FUTURE LAND USE

A Future Land Use Plan is a plan for how to guide land use changes in Gorham over time. It establishes land use policy, and can then be implemented by regulatory and non-regulatory means. The framework of open space, the natural constraints (soils, wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes), the pattern of existing development, the location of infrastructure and services, and the amount and type of growth anticipated or desired suggest the basic options open to the community. Within these opportunities and limitations, alternative patterns and policies for future growth are considered. The Future Land Use Plan consists of two major components – the future land use map and the future land use policies.

Land use policies should be based on the conditions identified during the development of the master plan, and on community goals and objectives. These policies should encourage development in areas that can accommodate it, and have been designated for preferred growth. The ability of future development to protect and enhance Gorham's community character is an issue of both location and design.

The following proposed Future Land Use Plan for Gorham has been developed by the Gorham Planning Board using the following information:

- * The recently completed Community Attitude Survey.
- * Feedback from the public visioning session held in February of 2004
- * The inventory information, land use implications, and policy actions compiled in this Master Plan.

The plan is intended to achieve the following:

- * Protect Gorham's valuable natural resources areas by basing future growth on the land's ability to accommodate it.
- * Provide adequate areas for industrial, commercial, residential, and public service growth for the next 5 - 10 years.
- * Provide areas for the continuation of recreational activities, such as hiking, canoeing, fishing, etc.
- * Protect Gorham's aesthetic values to insure its continued natural beauty which is important to its residents and its tourist-based economy.

- * Protect Gorham's working landscape while providing adequate opportunities for continued forest-based and agriculture-based operations.
- * Provide for a wide variety of housing types - apartments, multi-family, mobile homes, seasonal homes, single family homes, etc.
- * Target most growth to the existing "urban" areas in order to minimize future costs for expanding public services and to minimize energy usage by locating residences, shops, and town services in close proximity to one another.

2.0 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN – KEY THEMES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Gorham's desired future land use pattern should be driven by all of the previous elements. It should reflect the vision statement, which speaks of a stronger economy, and of a more vibrant downtown while preserving the friendly, small town feeling and the beauty of the natural surroundings. The future land use pattern should be driven by the content of this Master Plan, and by the need to reflect the likely development pressure that Gorham will experience, and respond to it realistically, providing opportunities on a level that are consistent with those market forces.

The nature of that anticipated growth and development, and its placement on the landscape, will be driven by market forces, by individual landowner's preferences, and by Gorham's land use policies and ordinances: its zoning ordinance, its site plan and subdivision regulations, its capital improvement plan, and others. Map K outlines how the Gorham Planning Board would like to see all of these forces brought together. What follows is a written summary of those desired future outcomes.

As envisioned by the Gorham Planning Board, after a review of the extensive community surveying and interviewing undertaken by the Zoning and Master Plan Committee, and so as to achieve the Vision outlined in the beginning of this master plan, this **new growth could best be accommodated while retaining the essential community character, while meeting market forces, and while protecting the community's natural resources, as follows:**

By identifying the Village District as a location for smaller scale development:

The commercial development here needs to be of a nature and scale that is consistent with the village environment. On both in-fill and on redevelopment sites in the village core new commercial development should reflect the character of the Main Street area. This would also hold true for new residential structures within the village. The village is pedestrian oriented, and should reinforce its role as the heart of the community for a variety of uses and social

interactions. Gorham is at an advantage having its municipal offices and schools within the village core, and the community should work to keep these uses in the downtown area.

Other initiatives that were identified for the village area include:

- Connecting side streets to each other where possible to improve the transportation system;
- Building the emergency bypass on the south side of the downtown;
- Reaching consensus on the future use of the property known as “The Jungle” (housing, commercial, etc.).

By identifying an area along Route 16, north of Route 2, as the location for larger scale highway commercial development:

This area of the community has the advantage of the state roadway, existing large scale commercial development, views and access to the scenic river and hillsides. Development along the west side of Route 16 is envisioned as being somewhat limited to the immediate highway corridor itself, and not spreading further west. Development along the eastside of Route 16 in this area needs to be of a slightly smaller scale due to its location along the river.

By concentrating industrial development at the northern end of Route 16 near the Berlin town line

An area has been identified at the northern edge of the community along Route 16 for industrial activity. This is currently the site of the mill facility.

By concentrating rural residential development in the following areas:

- In a node of rural land south of the village on the east side of Route 16 near the Stoney Brook/Clay Brook residential development.
- In two areas on either side of Route 2 on Gorham Hill.
- In an area west of Cascade Village and north of the highway commercial area along Route 16.

By protecting the community’s natural resource base and rural character

Although the community is fortunate to have a high percentage of protected land within the White Mountain National Forest, and the town forest, there are still areas that are not as appropriate for development because of the range of resources they include. Timber and

agricultural zones have been identified with the goal of preserving the working landscapes in Gorham for farm and forest operations, and to discourage sprawling development patterns that will strain the community economically. Residential and commercial activity is not permitted in these portions of the community.

The community should also continue to work to protect the most sensitive of natural resources in the region in cooperation with neighboring towns.

By requiring a higher quality of non-residential development

There is a concern that some non-residential development, particularly along Route 16 where the traveling public gets its primary view of Gorham, has not always been of the highest caliber. Not only does this create a poor image of Gorham, but it uses up valuable land resources in a manner that does not contribute as much as it might to the local tax base. The standards for such development will differ somewhat depending on the character and scale of the district (Village vs. Highway).

Reasonable improvements to the community's site plan review regulations could establish improved standards for the quality of design, construction, landscaping, and parking lot configuration for non-residential properties. The creation of a design manual and design guidelines for non-residential uses would also help foster higher quality design.