

IX. EXISTING LAND USE

Chapter IX

EXISTING LAND USE



Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe land use patterns within the Town of Warner. The land inventory and analysis presented here shows a picture of the Town as it currently exists, and is the basis for determining how land will be used in the future. The goals and objectives for the future are set forth in the Future Land Use Chapter.

The Town of Warner is comprised of a small, densely populated central village core situated along the Warner River, surrounded by large tracts of forest and agricultural lands, which have a low population density. Natural amenities abound in Warner, home to Mount Kearsarge, in Rollins State Park, and a host of other State and private reserves, as well as Town-owned forests.

Warner is located in Merrimack County, approximately 18 miles northwest of Concord, 26 miles northwest of Manchester, 34 miles northeast of Keene, and 89 miles northwest of Boston, Massachusetts. The land area of Warner totals approximately 35,390 acres (55.2 square miles).

The Town's present land use patterns mirror the historical uses of land in Town: a dense village district with a church, post office, library, fire and police departments, shops, and the Town Hall; and an out-lying rural district comprised of forests, agricultural fields, private homes and some commercial uses. The most significant commercial development that has occurred in the past

decade is the growth of the Exit-9 area off of I-89, with a fast-food restaurant, gas stations and grocery store. There also has been substantial growth in residential development, especially along Bean Road and Schoodac Roads, which were considered to be “outlying areas” a decade ago.

Land Use Survey

In the Fall of 1998, the Warner Master Plan Committee conducted an existing land use survey of the Town. The most current tax maps were reviewed to determine the use and acreage of each parcel of land in Town. The tax assessment cards were entered into a database to help in the analysis. Each parcel was categorized as one of the following:

1. Residential:
 - Single Family
 - Duplex (two family)
 - Multi-family (three or more)
 - Manufactured Housing
2. Commercial/Industrial (Businesses, Commercial Industries)
3. Private Institutional (colleges, nursing homes)
4. Public/governmental (town hall, land owned by Town or State)
5. Vacant (no building)

Using the information from the data base, the Master Plan Committee conducted a windshield survey to verify the data and to identify features such as the location of residential structures, home businesses and new construction. The acreage figures for residential uses were determined by adding the actual acres of each residential parcel less than 2 acres. For parcels greater than two acres, residential uses were considered to use a maximum of 2 acres, with the remainder being vacant open space. The survey results are found in Table 9-1.

The numbers for the residential areas shows a significant discrepancy between the 1989 and 1998 counts. Because the methodology of the 1989 survey is not clear, it is difficult to make comparisons between these numbers. The numbers in the 1998 column reflect the actual assessed acres per residential parcel. However, it is possible to compare the other categories. There has been an increase in the number of commercial/industrial acres, due mainly to commercial development of the Exit 9 area. The public/governmental acres have also increased due to Town forest acquisitions.

As part of the existing land use survey, the Master Plan Committee prepared an existing land use map, which shows by parcel the development in Town. (See Existing Land Use Map at the end of the chapter) The most densely populated areas are along Main Street in the village area, around Pleasant and Tom Ponds and in the Davisville area. The remaining parts of Town are sparsely populated.

Although it is important to look at numbers of acres devoted to land uses, it is more telling to look at the number of residential and commercial establishments that exist within the Town and compare the growth that has occurred over the past decade. Table 9-2 presents figures for the different types of buildings in Warner.

**Table 9-1
Existing Land Use**

| TYPE | TOTAL ACRES 1989 | TOTAL ACRES 1998 |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Residential | | |
| <i>Single Family</i> | 2,278.2 | 1,179.73 |
| <i>Duplex (two family)</i> | | 22.42 |
| <i>Multi-Family (more than 2)</i> | 27.1 | 35.55 |
| <i>Manufactured Housing</i> | 67.2 | 76.72 |
| Commercial/Industrial | 245.5 | 340.48 |
| Private Institutional (College, Nurs. Home..) | | 143.06 |
| Public/ Governmental | 3,817 | 6,099.9 |
| Vacant | 27,661.3 | 27,563.06 |

Source: Town of Warner Tax Assessment Cards; Windshield Survey

From 1990 to 1997, residential structures increased by only 89 units (12.5%), roughly 15 per year. Manufactured housing had a slight gain of 12 units, and multi-family housing gained 32 units, mostly due to the construction of the Pine Rock facility. Commercial property had the lowest increase over all, gaining 2 only units. In the windshield survey, there were roughly 30 home businesses identified, which are not counted as commercial properties.

**Table 9-2
Residential and Commercial Buildings**

| Type | 1967 | 1990 | 1997 |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Residential | 610 | 712 | 801 |
| Manufactured Housing | 22 | 148 | 160 |
| Multi-family | 1 | 133 | 165 |
| Commercial/Industrial | 43 | 50 | 52 |
| Total | 676 | 819 | 1,095 |

Source: 1967 figures are from the 1989 Master Plan;
 1990 figures are from the US Census;
 1997 Figures are from the Office of State Planning and
 Town of Warner Property Inventory Master List, August 1998

Public and Semi-Public Land

Public and semi-public lands make up approximately 7,126 acres, or 20% of the total land in Warner. This land use category includes land and easements owned by the State, the Town, and by private groups that allow public access to the land.

The figures in this category have almost doubled since 1987. In the 1987 Master Plan, the Town reported a total of 3,817 acres of public and semi-public land, which was 10.9% of the total land area. This increase is due to additions to existing reserves, such as Kearsarge Mountain and Chandler Reservation, and the creation of Carriage Trail Acres and Ashendon State Forest. Table 6-3 provides an inventory of the public and semi-public lands in Warner.

Current Use

The Current Use law allows towns to assess undeveloped land at a lower rate than market value as long as the property remains within an open space classification. Any change in the property's use that does not qualify for the open space assessment will cause a tax to be levied on the property equal to 10% of the "full and true value of the property." Current Use has been an important tool for many individuals who desire to maintain their property as open space without suffering an economic penalty.

**Table 9-3
Public and Semi-Public Land**

| Owner | Acreage |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|
| State of New Hampshire | |
| Ashendon State Forest | 168.3 |
| Carroll State Forest | 29 |
| Davisville State Forest | 18 |
| Gilmore State Forest | 37 |
| Charles F. Goodnow Land (LCIP) | 660 |
| Harriman-Chandler State Forest | 395 |
| Kearsarge Mt. State Forest | 2,852.1 |
| Rollins State Forest | 99 |
| Steven Lowell Land (LCIP) | 316 |
| Town of Warner | |
| Ager-Lakeland Park | 2.5 |
| Carriage Trail Acres | 871.5 |
| Chandler Reservation | 1,467 |
| Riverside Park | 17 |
| Cemeteries | 48 |
| Public Buildings | 48 |
| Conservation Easements | 50 |
| Society for the Protection of NH Forests | 47.5 |
| Total | 7,125.9 |

Source: Town of Warner, Board of Selectmen's Office

The Town of Warner currently has 22,425.2 acres, or 63.36% of the total land area, in current use. Table 9-4 presents a breakdown of land in current use into managed and unmanaged lands, including the number of acres found within each category and the percentage of total land area. Managed forest and unmanaged forest are the two largest current use classes in Warner, with a total of 20,499 acres. Together they account for approximately 58% of the total land area and 91% of all land in Current Use.

So long as property remains in current use it is protected from development. Recent studies have shown that open space has less financial impact on a town than development because it does not require town services. Although it is tempting to think that this land is “protected”, it is only so at the discretion of the land owner. It may be converted from open space simply by development of the property and payment of the current use change penalty. The Master Plan Survey showed that protection of the environment was highly favored. To further that desire, the Town should authorize the Conservation Commission to use the penalty tax to purchase ecologically sensitive lands for permanent protection.

**Table 9-4
Warner Current Use**

| Category | 1989 Acreage | Percent of Land Area in 1998 | 1998 Acreage | Percent of Land Area in 1998 |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Managed Lands | | | | |
| Farmland | 393.55 | 1.12 | 605.12 | 1.71 |
| Forest | 13,604.93 | 38.76 | 15,028.23 | 42.46 |
| Unmanaged Lands | | | | |
| Farm & Forest | 4,713.48 | 13.43 | 199.4 | .56 |
| Forest - Other | | | 5,471.5 | 15.46 |
| Inactive Farm | 121.84 | .35 | 125.68 | .36 |
| Unproductive | 81.37 | .23 | 83.07 | .23 |
| Wetlands | 990.34 | 2.82 | 912.2 | 2.58 |
| Totals | 19,905.51 | 56.71 | 22,425.2 | 63.37 |

Source: 1989 Warner Master plan; Town of Warner Property Inventory Master List, August 1998

Summary

Undeveloped land accounts for roughly 78% of the total land area in Warner. Protected lands include Town and State owned land, as well as private conservation lands. When added to the current use figures, the total figure for undeveloped land in Warner jumps to 95%. Figure 9-1 shows the breakdown of the major land use patterns in Warner.

The majority of the land in Warner consists of unprotected open space, meaning that there are no restrictive easements or covenants ensuring that the property remains undeveloped. Since the Master Plan Survey indicated that protection of the environment is a high priority, an important task that should be done is to identify the open lands in Warner that are environmentally sensitive

and review the zoning ordinance to make sure that these lands are protected from adverse development. Also, property owners with environmentally important lands should continue to be encouraged to donate land or grant conservation easements to the Conservation Commission, nonprofit organizations or to the State of New Hampshire.

**Figure 9-1
Warner Major Land Use Patterns**

