

CHAPTER IX

CURRENT AND FUTURE LAND USE

A. INTRODUCTION

The Land Use chapter is a critical component of the Hollis Master Plan. Decisions regarding how Hollis uses its land impact everything from its transportation network and community design to its natural resources and economic vitality. The landscape of Hollis has changed dramatically during its history, but the inception of zoning in the 1940s began guiding changes to the landscape through the development of a future land use plan and the subsequent adoption of ordinances, regulations, and policies designed to implement the plan. This chapter examines the existing uses of land in Hollis by type and analyzes patterns of development. The key issue for Hollis' future land use is to balance future development opportunities with the preservation of Hollis' natural resources, rural character, and sense of community.

B. VISION

Hollis' reputation as an active farming community gives the Town a strong sense of identity to guide decisions in the future. Staying the course in order to preserve this image for its residents is critical to Hollis' future. Appropriate land use regulations should guide new development at a rate and in locations that will maintain the look and feel of the Town. All commercial and industrial developments must be carefully designed, in order to harmonize and be consistent with the scale and character of Hollis. Furthermore, the protection of Hollis' water resources and aquifers is critical to meeting the current and future needs for residents' water supply. By addressing emerging issues related to growth, Hollis will preserve its rural character for current and future residents.

C. CURRENT CONDITIONS AND EXISTING LAND USES

1. Existing Land Uses

Land use simply describes the type of activity that occurs on a parcel of land. Existing land use is influenced by natural resource constraints and opportunities, accessibility, and zoning. The land uses described and mapped in this chapter were derived by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission using a combination of assessing data interpretation, field surveys, parcel-based data, and input from the Hollis Planning Board. They are meant to be general in nature. Calculated acreages are based on Town assessing data from September 2017. There are a variety of land uses, which fall into the following general categories. For the purposes of this Master Plan, land uses in Hollis fall into the following general categories:

- Residential – this category includes single family, two family, three family, and multi-family dwelling units. In Hollis, residential development primarily consists of single-family homes. Residential land can be found throughout town.
- Commercial – Hollis has very limited commercial land use. The highest concentration of commercial activity is located along Ash Street, with additional development near Route 111.
- Industrial – in addition to industrial development, this land use category includes utilities and mining and waste disposal. Industrial activity does not comprise a substantial portion of land use in Hollis, although there are several large industrial parcels. Commercial printing, metalworking, and automotive repair operations make up many of the industrial land uses, occupying the southeast portion of Hollis along Route 111 and areas on Route 130 near the Brookline Town border.
- Natural Resources – this land use category includes agriculture, open space, recreation, and surface water. Natural resources are an essential component of Hollis' rural character and

quality of life. According to the Town of Hollis’ Assessing data, over 6,400 acres or 31.4% of Hollis’ land is permanently protected. **See also Map IX-1: Conservation Parcels**, which highlights conserved parcels and delineates ownership.

- Municipal/Government/Institutional – this category includes municipal government facilities, such as Town Hall, Police Department, and Fire/ Ambulance Service; the library; public and private schools (not including daycare centers); and churches. This category does not include town-owned recreation lands, which are included under natural resources. Hollis’ municipal facilities are primarily located near the Town Center.
- Vacant – vacant land is located throughout town and is defined as any parcel that does not have a structure or specific use assigned to it.

See Map IX-2: Land Use

Table IX-1 shows the proportions of land use classifications in Hollis in 2017. The three largest land uses: single family residential, open space, and vacant land demonstrates Hollis’ rural character. **Confirm with Connie these %**,

Table IX-1. Land Uses in Hollis

Use	Acreage	Percentage
Single Family Residential	8,341	40.4%
Two Family Residential	669	3.2%
Three Family Residential	36	0.2%
Four Family Residential	13	0.1%
Multi-Family Residential	129	0.6%
Commercial	148	0.7%
Industrial	135	0.7%
Mixed Use	262	1.3%
Municipal Facility	239	1.2%
School	142	0.7%
Institutional	11	0.1%
Other Government	12	0.1%
Recreation	150	0.7%
Open Space	5,410	26.2%
Agricultural	1,280	6.2%
Vacant	2,749	13.3%
Road/Right-of-Way	595	2.9%
Utility	14	0.1%
Water	315	1.5%

Since it was noted in 1998 Master Plan that there was a lack of current and accurate land use data at the time, direct comparisons to specific land uses cannot be made in this update. However, certain trends can be seen for some broad categories. For example, Hollis has seen a reduction in over 1,000 acres of agricultural land with an increase of 4,000 acres of residential land. This correlates with a population increase of over 2,000 people from 1990 to 2016. Commercial and industrial acreages have increased but still remain very small percentages of Hollis’ total land area.

2. Town Facilities

The type and adequacy of facilities and services a town provides often affects just how well a town functions. Added levels of service required by residential, commercial, and industrial growth places greater demands on existing facilities and services. Many of Hollis' town facilities are located near its historical Town Center.

See Map IX-3: Street Index and Town Facilities

3. Land Use Constraints

Developable land can be thought of as vacant or partially developed parcels with no significant natural, legal, or practical constraints on their development. For the purposes of this Master Plan, constraints on future development in Hollis include:

1. Water Bodies and Wetlands—water bodies and wetlands can be found throughout Hollis. According to the NRPC GIS database, 1.5% (315 acres) of Hollis' total land area is surface water (lakes, ponds, rivers). National Wetlands Inventory data was used to map these features.
2. Conserved Land—as of the 2018 Conserved Tracts Inventory, more than 6,6168.37 acres or roughly 33.4% of Hollis' land area is permanently protected. These lands can be found throughout town, with the largest concentrations in the southwestern and central part. NH Granit Conserved Lands Type 1 data, along with Town assessing data was used to map these features.
3. Steep Slopes—this includes parcels with slopes greater than 25%. Steep slopes limit development potential due to site grading and erosion considerations. Portions of Hollis have a hilly topography, with steep slopes found primarily in the western half of the Town. The NH Granit SSURGO database was used to map these features.
4. Municipal Properties—in some cases, current land use is unlikely to change and therefore precludes future development., current land use constraints include roads and road right of ways, municipal/government facilities, and schools. There are a limited number of parcels that fall under this category in Hollis. The Nashua Regional Planning Commission GIS database was used to map these features.
5. Poorly and Very Poorly Drained Soils—these soils result from repeated, prolonged periods of saturation or inundation. They pose significant challenges to development and their active use for development purposes is prohibited under the Wetlands Conservation Overlay Zone. The NH Granit SSURGO database was used to map these features.

Hollis' constraints map illustrates that a significant portion of town has limitations on its development potential. Poorly drained soils can be found throughout town, steep slopes are prevalent in the western half and many parcels have some level of conservation protection.

See Map IX-4: Development Constraints

D. HOLLIS' ZONING DISTRICTS

Zoning ordinances segregates the municipality into special districts and establish regulations concerning the use, placement, spacing, and size of land and buildings within the respective district. Zoning is intended to avoid disruptive land use patterns by preventing activities on one property from having detrimental effects on other properties.

Zoning is an essential tool for implementing Master Plan goals, protecting community resources, and guiding new development. In turn, the Master Plan can be used to guide future zoning. There should be a clear link between zoning ordinance requirements and the goals of the master plan.

All land in Hollis is located in one of the following primary zoning districts: Agricultural and Business, Commercial, Industrial, Mobile Home-1, Mobile Home-2, Recreational, Residential and Agricultural, Rural Lands, Town Center, and Water Supply Conservation. Table IX-2 shows the proportions each zone is of the Town's total land area. In addition, Hollis utilizes the following overlay zones: Aquifer Protection, Flood Plain, Wetland Conservation, and Multi-Family.

See Map IX-4: Zoning

Table IX-2. Zoning Districts in Hollis

<i>Zone</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Agricultural and Business	204.7	0.99%
Commercial	21.9	0.11%
Industrial	217.5	1.05%
Mobile Home-1	46.8	0.23%
Mobile Home-2	85.9	0.42%
Recreational	1,482.0	7.17%
Residential and Agricultural	13,838.0	66.97%
Rural Lands	4,048.8	19.59%
Town Center	488.4	2.36%
Water Supply Conservation	229.3	1.11%

1. Residential Zones

Residential development in Hollis has occurred throughout the community, comprising nearly 45% of Hollis' land area (check with Connie). The Hollis Zoning Ordinance provides for eight different residential districts: Agricultural and Business, Residential and Agricultural, Rural Lands, Town Center, Recreational, Water Supply Conservation, Mobile Home-1, and Mobile Home-2. With the exception of the Agricultural and Business and Mobile Home-1 Zones, these residential districts do not generally provide for differing uses, lot sizes, frontage or setback requirements. This has resulted in single family homes being the primary type of housing stock in Hollis. Homes built along scenic roads, however, must meet a 100-foot front setback requirement (twice the standard setback). As a result of these regulations, Hollis has been able to preserve its historic Town Center while dispersing new development throughout, so the Town can maintain its rural character. However, the westernmost extreme of Hollis (the Rural Zone) remains less developed and includes extensive conservation lands, as well as land that has more development constraints. Hollis should review its provisions for the Rural District and consider lowering density requirements since that area of Town is further away from services and many of the roads are dirt or gravel.

Hollis adopted a Multi-Family overlay zone to provide the opportunity to construct multi-family housing with a waiver from the otherwise applicable density requirements. The overlay zone is located in the Residence and Agricultural Zone east of the Nashua River. This district permits the construction of workforce housing developments while also creating design standards that maintain the character of the Hollis. Similarly, Hollis amended the Housing for Older Persons Ordinance in 2017 to further encourage the construction of housing for elderly people by waiving applicable density requirements. The Town should monitor the effectiveness of these regulations and adjust depending on the need for Hollis' future populations.

2. Commercial Zones

Commercial land uses comprise about 1% of the zoning districts in Hollis and 0.7% of the total land area of the Town. Commercial development of all types encompasses less than 200 acres of land in Hollis, which is almost a 100% increase from 1998. Most commercial uses are concentrated in the Town's central Agricultural and Business Zone (A&B Zone) in the vicinity of the junction of NH Routes 122 and 130 along Main and Ash Streets and Proctor Hill Road. This district contains a shopping center, a scattering of small retail and service establishments, restaurants, and professional offices. The District also includes existing residences, the Police and Fire Stations, the Post Office, and some agricultural uses. Most establishments in the Agricultural and Business zone serve local residents.

Due to the restricted nature of allowable uses within the Agricultural and Business Zone, Hollis has avoided the pattern of strip commercial development that characterizes commercial areas in most communities. The mixture of commercial, residential, institutional and recreational land uses within the District as well as its proximity to Monument Square enhances the function of the area as the Town's center. Furthermore, the location of the Zone within the Historic District provides for the review of building design and appearance.

A second, far smaller A&B Zone is located in the northern extreme of Town along NH Route 122 at the Amherst town line. This District's existing commercial uses are limited to a seasonal flea market. The remainder of the District includes residences and undeveloped land. Unlike the central Agricultural and Business District, this district is relatively shallow and is located along a single road. Much of this District is also made up of non-conforming uses. An additional problem results from the shallow depth of the Zone and the split zoning of most parcels in the District.

In addition to the two Agricultural and Business Districts, there is also a Commercial District located on Route 111 in the southeast corner of the Town. This district was created by the Town in 1996 for the purpose of providing a space in the Town that was devoted to general commercial uses, rather than the more restrictive Agricultural and Business Districts. To date, the parcels within the Commercial District are still primarily single-family residences.

Scattered commercial uses exist outside these two districts, which are primarily associated with agricultural or animal care practices. These types of commercial operations are either nonconforming uses, allowed by right or with a special exception in most residential zones.

Seasonal farm stands are a traditional part of the New England landscape. In Hollis, some such uses have grown beyond traditional bounds to become significant commercial enterprises. The Brookdale and Lull farm stands along Broad Street near Town Center attract many non-resident patrons to Hollis. These two businesses, along with two additional agricultural/commercial and non-agricultural businesses are situated in the central Agricultural and Business District and near the institutions around Monument Square. Visually, the whole area appears to be a part of a single central district. Other nurseries, garden centers, and farm stands operate throughout the Town, adding to the agricultural and rural character of Hollis.

The results of the 2016 Master Plan Survey indicated a desire for limited expansion of commercial development within existing commercial areas only. The majority of respondents felt there was adequate supply of most retail and medical services. However, a majority cited the desire for increased restaurant and entertainment uses in Hollis. Restaurant development in Hollis is limited by the lack of municipal water and sewer, more so than zoning restrictions. The Town should continue to research technological advances in septic and well water systems, which may help with the establishment of these services.

3. Industrial Zone

Industrial land uses encompass only 217 acres of land in Hollis, which is a significant increase from 81 acres in 1998. As industrial land represents only 1% of Hollis' land area, significant future expansion is unlikely unless additional areas are zoned for industrial uses.

Hollis has two industrial areas; the largest district is located on either side of Proctor Hill Road (NH Route 130) at the Brookline Town line. In the southeastern corner of Town, a second industrial area is located on Clinton Drive adjacent to NH Route 111. This district is almost completely developed with light industrial and support uses. Some industrial uses lie outside these zones, including Diamond Castings, an industrial use located on Proctor Hill Road in the Water Supply Conservation District.

Industrial development in Hollis is limited, as is the potential for increased development within the two industrial districts. A balance must be struck between the need to allow for viable uses of property within the industrial zones and the need to provide sufficient room for the expansion of existing industries and the development of new industries.

It is important to note that the existence of each of the two industrial areas results in land use and environmental protection conflicts for the Town. The Clinton Drive industrial area has been developed over a major aquifer. As a result of passage of the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, many uses in the Clinton Drive area are now non-conforming.

Because there is no compelling tax base reason to expand industrial areas, little demand for additional space, and little public support for the creation of new industrial districts, only minor modifications to existing regulations may be considered.

E. FUTURE LAND USE

The preservation of Hollis' historic rural character is the overriding goal of the Master Plan. As has been described in this chapter, Hollis' character is defined by its rich and varied landscape and the diversity of interspersed land uses. Central to this landscape is the presence and wide distribution of extensive conservation lands, active agricultural uses, numerous historic sites and structures, and low and moderate density residential development patterns. Much of what has contributed to this character is the direct result of the natural conditions of the land, such as the terrain and the extent of prime farmland soils. Given its natural resources, the second major contributor to Hollis' character is the pattern of land use development that has been influenced by local land use regulations.

The low-density development in Hollis is largely a function of its landscape, the allowance of back lots and economics, with home prices being some of the highest in the State. Density and development is now controlled through minimum lot size requirements, setbacks, the existence of a Wetlands Conservation Overlay Zone, septic system standards that exceed minimum State requirements, and other regulatory factors. The designation of scenic roads has been another method of preserving local character as has been the creation of a Historic District.

Future land use should be based on the Town's expressed desire to preserve its historic rural character. This should include balancing residential, commercial, and clean industrial development with protecting the town's natural resources, rural character, small town feel, and the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods without burdening Town facilities. Valuable agricultural land and productive soils should be protected through conservation easements, Town acquisitions, and appropriate land use regulations. Furthermore, land use regulations should address the needs of the current and future populations, including the elderly and younger workforce. At this time and for the foreseeable future, no major land use changes are necessary or recommended.

F. CONCLUSION

Over many years, Hollis has created a carefully crafted set of regulations to ensure that the rural character of the community is maintained for current and future residents. Hollis has a wealth of natural assets, including water resources, scenic views, open space, agricultural lands, forestlands, and cultural features. Future development should be balanced to ensure that these resources are protected.

G. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Time Frame
The Town should continue to make strategic land purchases to maintain the rural character of the community, while also providing areas for environmental protection, amenities for Town services, and recreational features.	Ongoing
The Planning Board should consider amending the minimum lot size requirement for the Rural District from 2 acres to 3 acres to restrict development the western side of Hollis.	3 – 5 Years
Future conservation and recreational land acquisitions by the Town may be targeted to sites that would provide links for a greenway. Where land acquisitions are not possible or desirable, the acquisition of easements should be pursued.	Ongoing
The Planning Board should review the effectiveness of the Multi-Family and Housing for Older Persons Zones and update as necessary to ensure ordinance maintain the character of the community while also serving the Town’s needs.	5+ Years
The Town should continue to monitor the number of building permits that are issued each year to track rates of development in Hollis.	Ongoing
The Town should continue to monitor non-conforming uses and make adjustments, when necessary, to the regulations in an attempt to bring these uses into greater conformity.	Ongoing
The Planning Board should continue to research innovative and progressive drinking water and wastewater treatment systems that may allow the development of restaurants and other entertainment uses, but would also conform to State requirements.	1 – 2 Years