

# Land Use

## I. What has Hatfield said about this topic in earlier plans?

### *MASTER PLAN, 2001*

- Much land currently zoned for commercial and industrial development is too environmentally sensitive for such development, and business-zoned land is so scattered through the town, which could threaten the character of the town (p4)
  - Community strongly identifies with agricultural heritage and wants to see farming continue as a central part of the town's economy (p5)
  - Acknowledge the connection between provision of infrastructure and how a community grows (p6)
  - External force affecting future land use is regional growth pressure, the internal force is the inadequacy of zoning regulations (p11)
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### *MASTER PLAN LAND USE UPDATE, 2012*

- Since the 2001 Master Plan, there was implementation of many regulatory recommendations (p7):
  - adopting Site Plan Approval for all Commercial and Industrial developments
  - adopting commercial and industrial design guidelines and performance standards
  - developing elderly congregate housing
  - adopting the Community Preservation Act, a Transfer of Development Rights Bylaw, a by-right farmland cluster zoning bylaw and establishing an Agricultural Advisory Committee
  - implementing a stormwater management bylaw
- Identified Growth and Development Issues (p14)
  - Balancing the Need to Expand the Town's Tax Base Through Increased Economic Development While Preserving Hatfield's Rural Character
  - Impact of Development on Open Space and Environmentally Sensitive Areas
  - Mitigating the Impacts of Development
  - Balanced Development on Route 5/10
  - Lack of a Written Municipal Infrastructure Improvement Plan
  - Lack of Permanent Farmland Preservation

- Large Areas of the Town Zoned for Commercial and Industrial Uses are Constrained Environmentally
  - Housing Opportunities for Young Families and Elders are Limited
  - Balancing the Need for Alternative Energy while Maintaining the Rural Character of the Community
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*TOWN CENTER REVITALIZATION STUDY, 2010*

- Community Vision for Properties or Areas of Interest (p7)
    - Hatfield Mill Area: A recreation and leisure destination.
    - Connecticut River Dike Road: A beautiful, accessible and easy to navigate recreational resource.
    - Center School & Grounds: An inhabited building and riverfront park that breathes new life into the center of Town.
    - School Street School: An inhabited building that breathes new life into the center of Town.
    - Town Hall & Town Barn: An energy efficient Town Hall that makes greater use of existing space to the benefit of all town residents.
    - Trustees of Smith Academy Park: An inviting and accessible park capable of hosting small town events.
    - Hatfield Elementary School Property: A large open park with the capacity host large town events.
    - Parcel Behind Town Cemetery: A site for active leisure activity such as ice skating or community gardens until a different municipal purpose is needed.
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*HMP, 2021*

- A project to extend the Town sewer line on West Street is currently being completed, and will allow the building of a mixed-use development that will include a 150,000 square foot industrial building as well as 30-46 condominium units. Other development in the last five years has included the Five Colleges Library Annex at 202 Plain Road, as well as scattered single-family homes. These new developments are located in areas with other development. (p9)
  - There are several provisions within the Subdivision Regulations (amended 2009) that mitigate the potential for, and impact of, flooding. (p79)
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*OSRP, 2023 (P37)*

- Over the last 30 years or so the shift away from smaller lots and subdivisions, and toward larger homes and lots, has added to the developmental pressure on open space in Town and the fragmentation of forests and wildlife habitat. In addition, land in more wooded, steep, and rocky areas that was once thought of as unusable except for certain non-residential uses, such as forestry, is now seen as an ideal location for certain housing. Residential construction on such property brings with it the loss of areas that were formerly considered de facto areas of undevelopable open space. The zoning overhaul package of 2003 provided the town with better site plan review ability to properly manage growth in these areas, however additional regulatory oversight is necessary. According to the 2020 Mass Audubon Losing Ground Report, there were 40 acres of newly developed land in Hatfield between 2012 and 2017, which brought the total developed area to 1,476 acres (13% of total area) and the total of natural and open land to 9,206 acres (83% of the total).
- Market pressures that do not factor in the environmental consequences of development can result in unbalanced development that does not serve the long-term interests of the Town. Education and voluntary compliance with best use practices will need to work hand in hand with improved land use controls and policies. It is incumbent on the Town to empower the land use boards to become the purveyors of best use practices in a well-coordinated process, rather than reactors to inappropriate use. All of Hatfield's land use boards and committees should be charged to cooperatively create language that will be incorporated into the 2023 Hatfield Comprehensive Plan which will protect these above-mentioned long-term interests. Representative members of these boards and committees are already sworn members of the Hatfield Comprehensive Committee.

## **II. What have been key findings and recommended actions?**

*MASTER PLAN, 2001*

- Review and amend zoning and subdivision regulations to manage development and require (p5)
- Develop zoning regulations to promote diversity in housing (p5)
- Adopt design and performance guidelines and standards for commercial and industrial development (p5)
- Infill development in the Town Center (p5)
- Adopt TDR bylaw (p5)
- Create industrial and business zoning districts (p5)
- Ensure town's bylaws and regulations reflect "farmer-friendly" approaches (p6)
- Add performance standards for watershed and critical natural areas (p6)

- Implement Stormwater Management bylaw (p6)
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*MASTER PLAN – LU UPDATE, 2012*

- The following recommendations were identified in zoning (beginning p16):
  - Zoning Map Improvements
  - Educate younger generations about the need to preserve the rural character of Hatfield.
  - Encourage development that preserves environmentally sensitive areas.
    - encourage adequate undisturbed vegetated buffer strips between developed areas and wetland areas which will help maintain healthy wetlands and waterways by preventing soil disturbance, serving as a natural erosion control devices, limiting application of herbicides and pesticides near sensitive areas, and preventing the incidental encroachment of human activity into wetland areas
    - promote more creative developments and preserve environmentally sensitive areas extend the Open Space Development method to include multi-family developments
    - Green Development Performance Standards
  - Assess the extent of the Rte 5 & 10 Corridor aquifer and its potential as a drinking water supply
  - Actively encourage farmland preservation and participation in the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program.
  - Increase use of the Chapter 61 program while assuring that Chapter 61 conversions of land are reviewed by the town.
  - Rezoning – In the interest of preserving Hatfield's prime agricultural lands and agricultural community the following rezoning proposals should be considered to avoid the development of incompatible land uses:
    - the former Pilgrim Airport site on Main St. at the Whately town line should be rezoned from its current Rural Residential District to the Agricultural District to discourage the residential development of this prime farmland
    - the Kellogg Hill Rd. area should be rezoned from its current Industrial District to the Agricultural District to better reflect, be compatible with and reduce potential negative off-site development impacts on the uses of the surrounding Agricultural, Town Center and Rural Residential Districts
  - Improved municipal infrastructure planning
  - New development – Hatfield continues to be fortunate that it has not yet experienced a major influx of new residential development experienced by

other communities in the area. Regional growth trends, however, suggest such growth pressures are inevitable. While Hatfield has taken measures since the last Master Plan to help manage and direct where and how residential development occurs, additional efforts should be taken to develop regulations which:

- favor compact village center and cluster development over sprawling development in rural areas
- limit extensions of roads, sewer, and water lines into rural and agricultural areas
- continue efforts to matching lot size and frontage requirements to surrounding neighborhoods to promote infill development which replicates and compliments the character of existing neighborhoods.
- improve the appearance of new larger commercial and multi-family townhouse style developments and make them more compatible with the character of existing neighborhoods by adopting design standards to guide and control their exterior appearance
- Develop zoning regulations to promote a diversity of housing opportunities in Hatfield.
  - Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND)
  - inclusionary zoning, and
  - accessory apartment/accessory building bylaws, especially to encourage the retention and attraction of young families and seniors.
- Zoning compatibility
  - There are many small, isolated Business Districts on individual lots or small clusters surrounded by the Rural Residential District. Many of these isolated Business Districts are no longer used or suitable for business uses, are vacant, or have already been converted to Rural Residential District uses. Consideration should be given to rezoning these parcels to Rural Residential to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses. Even where some of these individual parcels may continue to be used for business purposes, rezoning to Rural Residential should be considered to allow such uses to continue as pre-existing nonconforming, but will ensure a transition to more compatible uses in the future.
  - The existing residential properties on Valley and South Streets should be rezoned from the Agricultural District to the Town Center District as the present uses are non-agricultural in nature and some of the current regulations of the Agricultural District make renovations difficult.

- Route 5/10 and encroachment of development pressures. The town could consider:
  - adopting Mixed Use Zoning along Rte 5/10 – avoid trend towards commercial strip development by preserving existing residential neighborhoods and clustering commercial development in mixed use nodes at strategic locations
  - requiring street trees along both sides of the street, even where business and light industrial uses exist. The appearance of business and light industrial uses could be softened by screening with plantings and trees
- Rezoning North Hatfield Road
- Commercial solar facility zoning

### **III. What are best practices for consideration on this chapter topic?**

**What should Hatfield be thinking about that might best help plan for the future, ensure greater resilience?**

- Consider site plan approval for smaller solar developments (large vs medium)
- Zoning compatibility, review map for areas seeming like they are spot zoned
- Inclusionary zoning (housing element)
- Review site plan approval standards for landscaping
- Explore permitting mechanism to develop more housing (multi-family, senior) by looking at special permit vs site plan approval
- Review standards and incentives for town center development

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