

SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

Population and Growth Trends

New Hampshire has seen a continuous and at times rapid population growth over the last 40 years. The state grew more in the 1960s than it did in the 40s and 50s combined. In each decade between 1960 and 1990 NH experience over a 20% change in its population, with the largest jump coming between 1970 and 1980 with a 24.8% change. Every community has seen impacts to natural resources, open space, and public services as a result of this growth.

Growth Gone Awry

Most communities welcome growth that makes them vibrant, sustainable, livable places to reside and work, but strongly oppose cookie-cutter, one-size fits all development that erodes community character. Undesirable attributes of haphazard or un-coordinated growth include:

- Dependence on the automobile for basic necessities and routine trips
- Increased pollution and degradation of water quality due to runoff from impervious surfaces
- Loss of open space for wildlife habitat and traditional agricultural uses
- High rates of per capita land consumption
- Homogenization of design resulting in loss of unique community character
- Traditional patterns of development suppressed or prohibited by land use regulations

In order to harness the positive growth that leads to livable, distinctly unique NH communities, it is imperative to examine underlying land use policies that result in sprawl and transportation processes that are at odds with the community's vision.

Shaping Growth in Your Community

Future development can be beneficial in enhancing community character and fostering a sense of place. Communities can choose to minimize the impacts of growth by taking a proactive approach to development. One way to do this is to examine land use regulations and policies to see if they are inadvertently permitting inefficient, sprawling growth and to determine if there are ways to encourage desired growth.

One of the strongest regulatory tools that New Hampshire Communities have to proactively shape growth is found in NH RSA 674:21, Innovative Land Use Controls. These controls allow communities to develop ordinances that protect and enhance their character and environment.

Innovative land use controls include but are not limited to:

- Performance Standards
- Village Plan Alternative
- Intensity and Use Incentives
- Open Space / Conservation Subdivisions
- Environmental Characteristics Zoning



Photo: Wikipedia

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- **Maintain Traditional Compact Settlement Patterns** to efficiently use land, resources, and investments in infrastructure.
- **Foster the Traditional Character of New Hampshire** downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods by encouraging a human scale of development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life.



- **Incorporate a Mix of Uses** to provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services, and social opportunities for all members of the community.
- **Provide Choices and Safety in Transportation** to create livable, walkable communities that increase accessibility for people of all ages, whether on foot, bicycle, or in motor vehicles.

- **Preserve New Hampshire's Working Landscape** by sustaining farm and forest land and other rural resource lands to maintain contiguous tracts of open land and to minimize land use conflicts.
- **Protect Environmental Quality** by minimizing impacts from human activities and planning for and maintaining natural areas that contribute to the health and quality of life in communities and people in New Hampshire.



- **Involve the Community** in planning and implementation to ensure that development retains and enhances the sense of place, traditions, goals, and values of the local community.
- **Manage Growth Locally** in the NH tradition, but work with neighboring towns to achieve common goals and address common problems more effectively.