

Neighborhood Overlay District

An Introduction to Milford, New Hampshire's
Round 2 Community Planning Grant Project - 2013-2014



Milford's Neighborhood Overlay District as envisioned is to insure that all relevant Master Plan goals are fully integrated into the types of new housing and development that are either currently or proposed to be permitted in each zoning district.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

- Creation of highly functional/desirable neighborhoods
- High standards of open space, public access to open space
- High standards of development and building design
- Development opportunities that are innovative yet affordable for developers
- Variety of housing stock and affordability across all price points
- Low impact on environmental features
- Protection of natural/historic resources
- Creation of quality recreational opportunities
- Livable, walkable community
- Overall Town beautification
- Preservation of neighborhood and community character
- Respect of new development to existing neighborhoods
- Neighborhood comradery
- Adaptive reuse and redevelopment
- Downtown redevelopment
- Mixed-use development opportunities
- Economic development

Introduction

In 2012-2013, the Milford Planning Board completed a comprehensive audit/regulatory review of the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Development Regulations to assess 1) how consistent the existing regulations are with implementing the vision and action program identified in the 2010 Housing Chapter of the Milford Master Plan, and 2) to provide recommendations for regulatory changes for Town consideration in addressing inconsistencies and conflicts between the regulations and achieving housing goals. These housing goals are predicated in the vision statement:

In accordance with the vision statement of Milford's Master Plan and the Community Character Chapter in particular, Milford shall promote and maintain a diverse and sufficient housing stock that meets the needs of a multigenerational community, while creating functional neighborhoods, interconnected with the greater community and natural resources that support and advance our sense of community character and place.

This opportunity was made possible by funding from the Round One of the New Hampshire Planning Grant Program and with assistance from the Town's consultant, the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, and support from the Milford Community Development Office staff.

AUDIT REPORT KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Modify Article 6.04.0 Open Space and Conservation District to allow flexible zoning standards for all types of housing development, by relieving development from rigid zoning requirements in exchange for high standards of open space, building design, etc.
- 2) Perform an overhaul of Article 7.07.0 Senior Housing Development to reflect current housing goals.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED

The audit identified an opportunity that the Planning Board believes bears additional study, analysis and possible implementation. This opportunity is the development of a new comprehensive 'cluster residential zoning overlay,' tentatively called the Neighborhood Overlay District. It is anticipated that the overlay would be developed in tangent with the existing Open Space and Conservation District (OSCD), which is an overlay district that governs development of five or more dwelling units.

The OSCD has been effective in encouraging environmentally sensitive residential development and conservation of critical open space and natural resources valued by the Town, particularly in the low density, more rural zoning districts. However, it is not as effective in Milford's more urbanized and dense core nor does it fully provide the tools to meet housing and transportation goals. With this in mind, the Town of Milford sought and was awarded Round 2 grant funding for the following project:

The development of a comprehensive cluster residential regulation that incorporates Master Plan Housing Chapter Goals for inclusionary and affordable housing choice and site design, tailored to specifically address goals for conservation and open space connections, transportation and mobility needs, multigenerational housing demand, economic development, infrastructure, services, and the neighborhood character and livability intended for, and appropriate in, each of the Town's zoning districts.

MOVING FORWARD

This project will be based on significant stakeholder and community involvement and is anticipated to be placed on the March 2014 warrant. Here are a few immediate ways to get involved:

- Planning Board Work Sessions are open to the Public. Please check the agendas on the Planning Board website to see which meetings will discuss the development and progress of the new Regulation.
- The Planning Board will be holding an Open House in the Milford Town Hall Auditorium, on Tuesday evening, July 23rd to solicit local feedback on the proposed zoning change. Please join us.
- Check the project website at: <http://www.milford.nh.gov/town/boards-committees-and-commissions/planning-and-gis/neighborhood-overlay-district>



OPEN HOUSE

An Analysis of Milford's Current Open Space and Conservation District

PROS

Additional requirements and restrictions to those of the underlying base zoning districts for the purpose of open space and conservation goals such as:

- Preservation of rural character
- Linkages between open spaces
- Recreation opportunities
- Preservation of rural character and enhancement of aesthetic enjoyment
- Smart development that limits adverse impacts on environmental resources
- Flexible development such as lot size, frontage, and setbacks (at the discretion of the Planning Board) in exchange for high standards of open space and well design development

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- Opportunity to provide density bonuses and incentives to developers in exchange for high standards of open space, building design, etc.
- Opportunity to provide and maintain a diverse housing stock while encouraging conservation planning
- Opportunity to encourage wetlands to be placed within the development's open space to the maximum extent practicable instead of across residential property lines
- Opportunity to modify the current OSCD to fix inconsistencies in the language
- Opportunity to advance the goals of the OSCD by 1) physically interconnecting these assets across Town, 2) visually preserving and improving these assets, which will further create connections with the greater community, and by 3) providing opportunities to interconnect community facilities, such as broadband, cable access, and infrastructure.

Examples of New Hampshire Conservation Subdivisions



Nubanusit—Peterborough, NH

Peterborough—In 2004, voters in the Town of Peterborough approved a special zoning district designed to provide the planning board greater flexibility in preserving and enhancing the character of the West Peterborough Village area. The West Peterborough District was adopted with the goals of: 1.) concentrating development; 2.) allowing and encouraging a vibrant mix of land uses; 3.) encouraging infill development; and 4.) providing for a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The Nubanusit Co-Housing Development, a 113-acre residential development centered around a pond and a farm, was constructed in Peterborough following passage of the zoning ordinance. The development embodies a number of best practices including the preservation of significant conservation land (including a working farm), the clustering of residential structures in one primary area, environmentally sensitive construction and siting techniques, condominiums designed to mimic the appearance of single-family homes, and the minimal use of hardscaping for roads and parking as most residences are located along pedestrian ways.

Amherst—Peacock Brook development includes 18 detached condominium units, each on .13 acre lots, and serviced by public water and a community sewer system. The units are dispersed around a loop drive, which contains common open space. The project was developed under Section 4.14—Affordable Housing of the Zoning Ordinance which allows for increased density in exchange for restrictions on unit size (1300SF) and income limits (to be included in the deeds for twenty years).

Exeter—With a total of 90 units on 112 acres, the Watson Road Subdivision also includes 153 acres of open space that links to other protected parcels in the area and preserve an existing trail network. Twenty starter homes are included in multi-family structures along with some market rate multi-family units, duplex units and single family residences. The development uses a community well and relies on individual and community septic fields.



Peacock Brook—Amherst, NH

Applying a Local Example, for Discussion's Sake



Over the course of developing the Neighborhood Overlay District Regulation, specific strategies and outcomes will naturally unfold through detailed research, effort and a lot of community input. Below is a local example for your consideration.

Local Example: Vacant Parcel on West Street

The following apply to the parcel under the current Zoning Ordinance:

Existing conditions:

Location: 25 acre vacant parcel on West Street. The parcel is located across the Street from the Milford High School and Middle School and is located just over one mile from the Milford Oval and Downtown.

Possible outcomes under current Zoning:

By observing the conditions of the surrounding neighborhoods, it is possible that more than 60-70 single family homes could be potentially built at this location under the current zoning district. If 5 or more units were developed, the requirements of the Open Space and Conservation District would apply.

Existing zoning criteria:

Zoning District: Residence A

Minimum Lot size: 15,000SF, Density: 2.9 dwelling units/acre

Minimum frontage: 100' (assuming extension of nearby municipal water and sewer).

Acceptable Uses: Single-family homes

Uses allowed by Special Exception: Reduced setbacks, senior housing developments and accessory dwelling units

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HERE?

If you had the opportunity to develop this parcel, what strategies would you use? What would you like to see happen here? Would you implement conservation goals and what would they be?

What development types would you like to see here?

- Single-family
- Two-family
- Multi-family
- Town homes
- Corner store
- Mixed-Use (mixed use refers to any development that blends a combination of residential, commercial, cultural, institutional or industrial uses, which are typically found in a building or complex of buildings.)
- Recreation
- Others?

What reasonable incentives would you consider giving to a developer to help create a well planned neighborhood?

- Density Bonus
- Flexibility of residential unit types
- Streamlined approval process
- Others?
- Reduction of required pavement widths and other infrastructure requirements
- Flexible dimensional criteria (frontage, yard setbacks, etc.)

What would you like in exchange for the incentive(s) that you chose above?

- High percentage of open space
- Pocket parks and recreation
- Infrastructure improvements on West Street
- Improve walkability to the Oval
- Improvements associated with the high school
- "Green" Development
- Expand open space network by linking to Spaulding Farm (already classified as Open Space)
- Preservation of community character through a particular housing development type
- Require building design standards and/or height limitations
- Others?

Note: The strategies and ideas that are generated from this discussion do not imply that they will be implemented and are not guaranteed. Feedback received will be used only to inform the Planning Board of the public's interests and to aid in the planning process. Thank you for your input.