





CONWAY FORWARD

TOWN OF CONWAY, NH MASTER PLAN

APRIL 2024

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The project team would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many community members and stakeholders who participated in this planning process. Their input has had a profound impact on this Master Plan. The project team would also like to thank former Town Planner Jamel Torres for his assistance and contributions to this plan.

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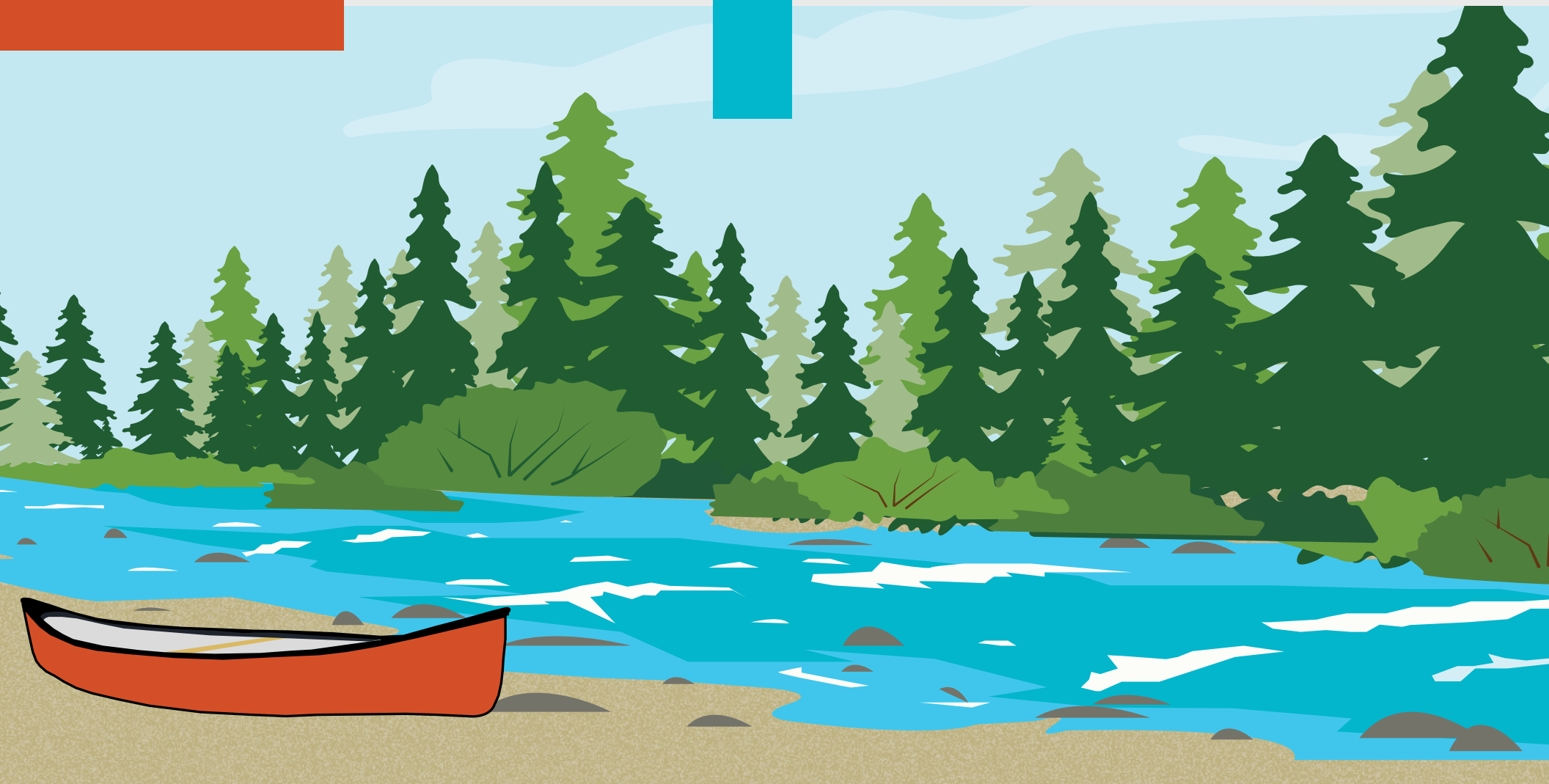
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1. INTRODUCTION



Introduction

The Town of Conway is a community rich in history, charm, and natural beauty. In the 20 years since the Town last updated its Master Plan, the community has seen significant change. There has been a continued shift to a recreational tourism-based economy and away from an economy based on heavy industry. In recent years, housing prices have soared. Many homes that were once available for long-term residents have become short-term rentals for visitors. Most development in Conway over the past 20 years has been commercial in nature; more recently, Conway has seen a marked rise in new hotel development. Climate change has continued to progress, leading to warmer winters that negatively affect the community's culture of winter fun and threaten the health of local ecosystems.

For the most part, Conway is challenged by its successes – people want to live in Conway, and people want to visit. New residents, particularly prospective second homeowners, can typically afford higher home prices than current residents. This squeezes out locals who cannot keep up with rising housing costs. The Town is a primary gateway to the White Mountain National Forest, which sees over 6 million visitors annually. While this high level of visitation helps sustain Conway's economy, it also places additional strain on the Town's infrastructure, including roads, water, and wastewater.

The Town's previous Master Plan, prepared in 2003, identified many similar trends. In the time since, progress has been made on some important community initiatives, while other identified challenges, such as long-term housing and commercial development, remain. This new plan is the product of many conversations with community leaders and residents who care deeply about Conway and want to see their community thrive. The Conway community is prepared to meet its challenges, using this plan as a roadmap toward a healthier and more equitable future.

This is a plan to **MOVE CONWAY FORWARD.**





Housing focus group participants discuss areas of opportunity.

About this Plan

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

A Master Plan informs municipal decision-making related to the character, growth, and development of a community over a period of ten years. The Master Plan considers short-term needs and long-term goals to inform municipal policy, budgeting, and actions related to land use regulations, infrastructure, natural resource conservation, municipal services, and economic development. The document provides a strategic basis for the work of Town staff, board and committee members, and community partner organizations.

While the Master Plan is not a legally binding document, it does provide the legal basis for the Town's zoning code, site plan review regulations, and subdivision regulations (RSA 674:2). In other words, in order for a community to regulate what can be built where, the relevant regulations must be supported by the goals and recommendations of the Master Plan. The Master Plan also provides the basis for long-term capital improvements planning (i.e., planning and budgeting for major road, bridge, building, sidewalk, and water/sewer projects; RSA 674:5).

1. Introduction

ABOUT THIS PROCESS

The process to update Conway's master plan took place between January 2023 and February 2024. The planning process consisted of three primary elements:

- Public Engagement:
  - » Visioning Open House
  - » Action Priorities Survey
  - » Project Website
  - » Steering Committee Engagement
  - » Focus Group Meetings
  - » Final Plan Presentation & Open House
- Analysis:
  - » Data Gathering
  - » Community Demographic Profile
  - » Existing Conditions Analysis
- Policy Development & Plan Drafting:
  - » Draft Future Land Use Map
  - » Draft Recommendations
  - » Draft Plan & Adoption

The process relied heavily on input from the Master Plan Steering Committee, a 16-member group made up of the Conway Planning Board and additional members of the public. Town staff provided instrumental leadership and guidance at all stages of the project.



An attendee provides input at a February 2023 Open House.

PLAN STRUCTURE

This plan is structured as follows:

- Part 1: Vision & Introduction
  - » This section provides a broad overview of the plan vision, the purpose of the plan, state statutes related to master planning in New Hampshire, the planning process, and plan structure.
- Part 2: Catalyst Projects
  - » This section provides an in-depth explanation of two primary projects recommended by this plan: an update to the Town's zoning and land use policies and complementary expansions to water and wastewater infrastructure. This section presents the plan's Future Land Use Map and associated recommendations. This section also includes sample lists of subprojects that can be pursued to implement the Catalyst Projects in smaller pieces.
- Part 3: Key Focus Areas & Strategies
  - » This section includes background information, desired outcomes, policy recommendations, and selected case studies for the following focus areas:

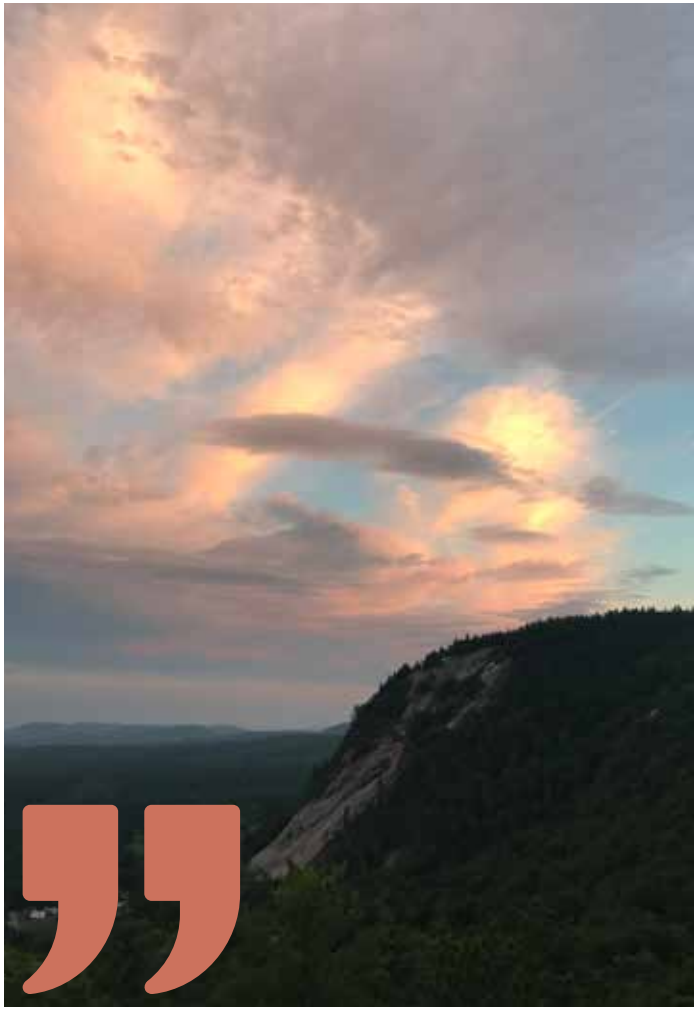
A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability
B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development
C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway
D. Steward Conway's Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces
E. Support Conway's Arts, Culture, & Historic Character
F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places
G. Steward Conway's World-Class Recreation Opportunities
H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future

- Part 4: Appendices
  - » This section includes the following items:
    - Community Profile
    - Visioning Open House Boards Results & Summary Memo
    - Existing Conditions Analysis Memos
    - Focus Groups Summaries
    - Action Priorities Survey Results
    - Final Plan Presentation & Open House Results

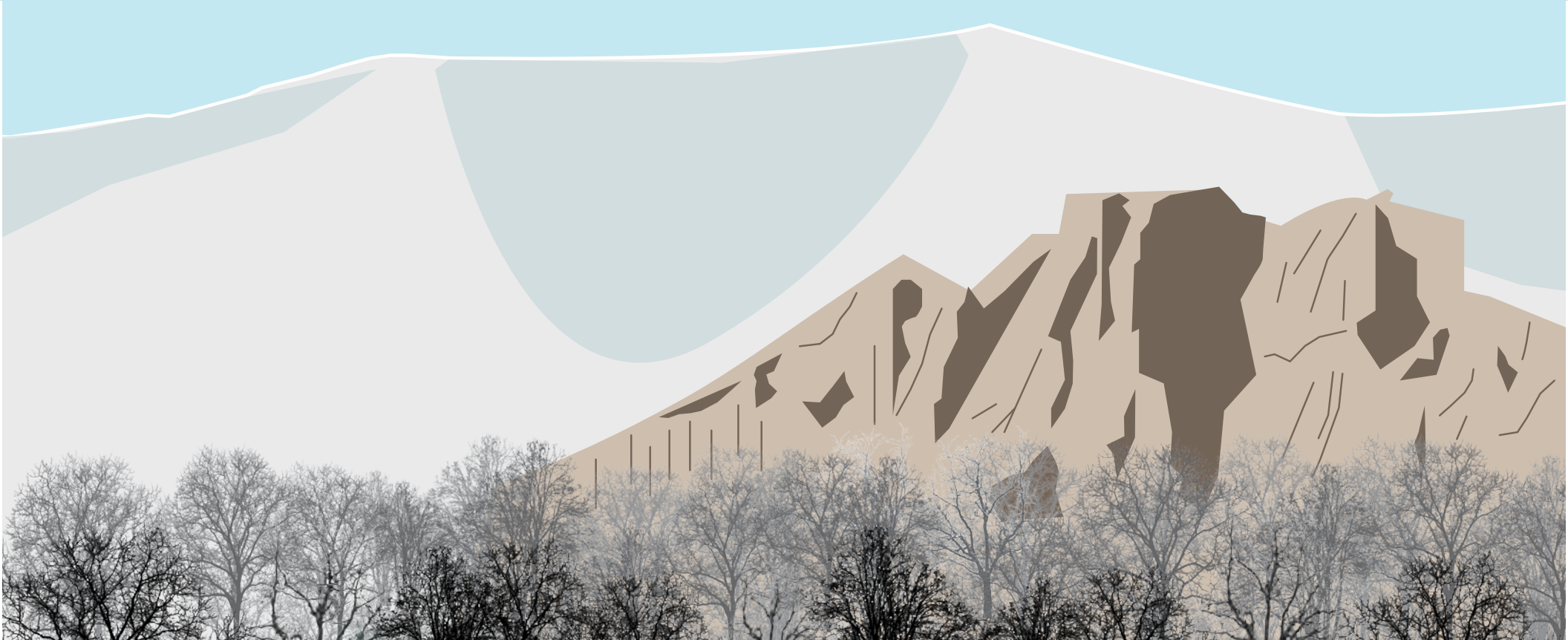
Vision Statement

The Master Plan Vision is a forward-looking, aspirational statement based on extensive input from the public and the Master Plan Steering Committee. The Vision provides a guiding direction for the Master Plan based on shared values of the Conway community.

Located in the scenic Mount Washington Valley, the Town of Conway is a livable, vibrant, and inclusive community that values its industrial history and future as an iconic New England recreation destination. Through carefully revised zoning policies, Conway preserves its beloved village centers, supports small businesses, and sustains a community in which residents and families thrive. The Town is a model for sustainable economic development and land use, balancing tourism and community housing needs with firm commitments to protect the town's natural environment and historic resources. All town initiatives aim to support the well-being of Conway's multi-generational community and live up to the ideals of good governance.



2. CATALYST PROJECTS



Catalyst Projects to Move Conway Forward

THE NEED FOR CATALYST PROJECTS

This Master Plan is made up of multiple sections that address different aspects of the Conway community, including commercial development, housing, transportation, and economic development. It will take several years to implement all of the recommendations in these chapters. Some of the recommendations will only be possible to complete after other recommendations have been implemented.

To kickstart the process, the Master Plan identifies two "catalyst projects" that encompass some of the most foundational changes that need to take place in Conway in order to fulfill the vision of this plan. These catalyst projects represent the most critical action steps that the Town can take in the next five to ten years toward achieving the Master Plan Vision (p. 9).

To achieve the plan vision and move Conway Forward, the two catalyst projects that need to take place are:

- #1: The Town of Conway must update its land use regulations to preserve its village centers, support small businesses, create housing opportunities, foster community, and preserve natural and historic resources.
- #2: The Town of Conway must pursue upgrades to its water and wastewater infrastructure to protect Conway's pristine drinking water resources, encourage the development of housing for the community, and reduce contamination risks associated with wells and septic.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Catalyst Project #1 recommends a process to evaluate and propose multiple changes to town zoning regulations. Warrant articles and votes will eventually be required to enact any zoning changes. It should be noted that zoning changes will not undo any existing development and will apply to future new developments or redevelopments of existing sites.

Catalyst Project #2 identifies a need for the preparation of a long-term plan to guide updates to water and wastewater infrastructure before new infrastructure is constructed.

PROJECT TIMELINES & PROCESS

These are large, complex projects that will take years or decades to complete. The Town will need to dedicate resources to these initiatives in the near future to achieve the goals of the Master Plan. Zoning and infrastructure are each very complex systems, and the Town must proceed with care and thoughtfulness as it makes critical updates to these systems over long periods of time. Sustained public engagement and education on these topics will be essential to ensure that these projects are informed by and supportive of the Conway community.


Photo: Wiseguy Creative

CATALYST PROJECT 1:

UPDATE CONWAY'S ZONING & LAND USE REGULATIONS

This project involves comprehensive updates to Conway's zoning map and land use regulations to reflect the Conway community's vision for land use.

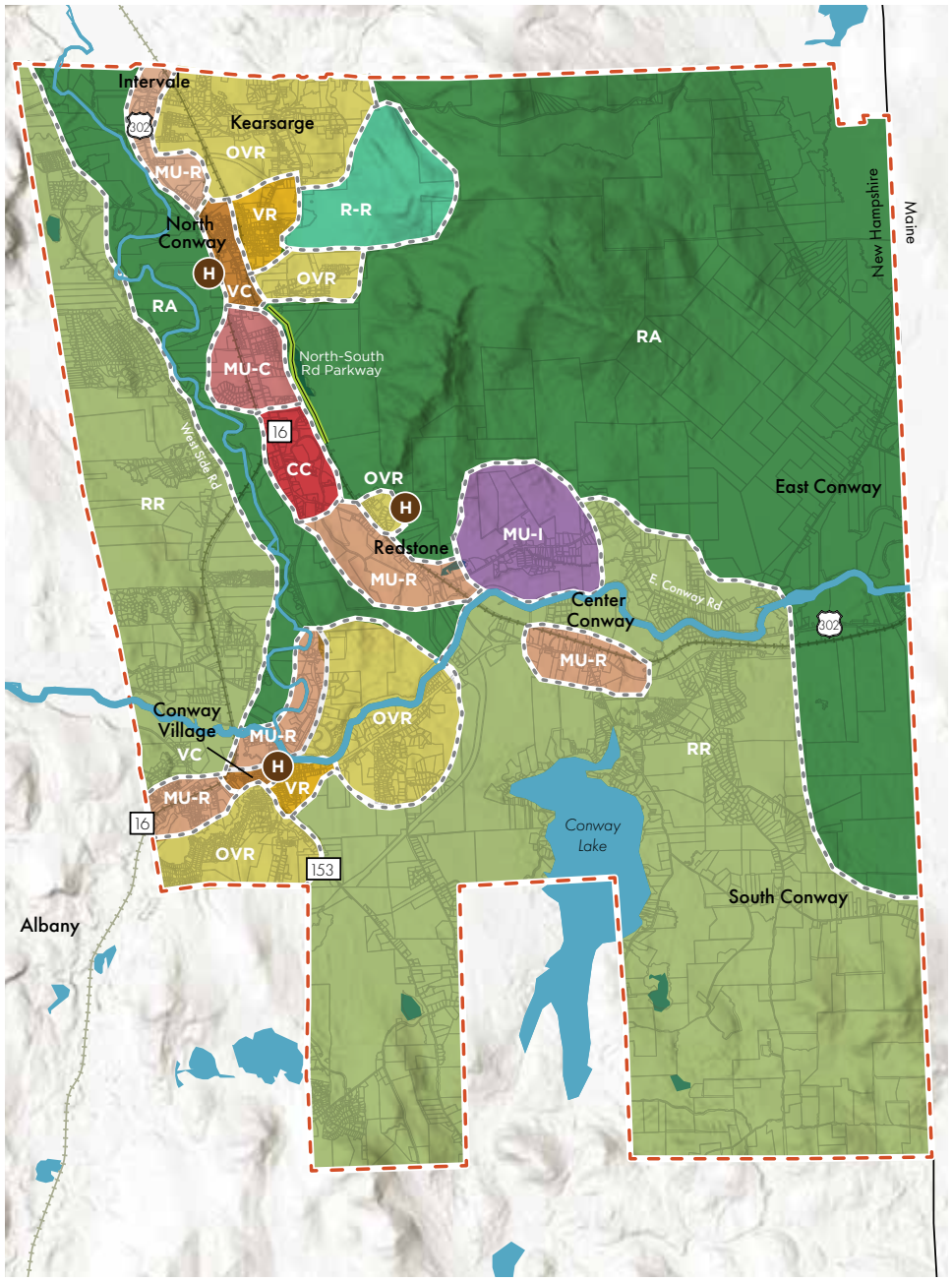
END GOALS: Updated Zoning Ordinance and Map, Updated Site Plan Regulations, Updated Subdivision Regulations

WHY THIS PROJECT?

Zoning is a regulatory tool that determines allowed land uses for different areas in a community. Zoning can restrict certain types of development and can encourage other kinds of development. Conway's current zoning does not align with the community's vision for the future – for example, current zoning for Conway's villages encourages large, big-box style development with large parking areas in locations where it is not desired by residents. Conway's quaint, walkable villages could not be rebuilt in their current form according to the Town's zoning rules. Likewise, Conway's current zoning could provide stronger support for the development of needed housing (including affordable housing) and the preservation of agricultural lands, among other opportunities.

This project moves Conway Forward by:

- Supporting vibrant village centers with a mix of residential and small-scale commercial uses.
- Restricting large-scale commercial development, supporting small business development, and enabling the creation of more long-term housing.
- Encouraging the creation of walkable neighborhoods adjacent to Conway's villages.
- Protecting water quality, natural habitats, and agricultural resources.

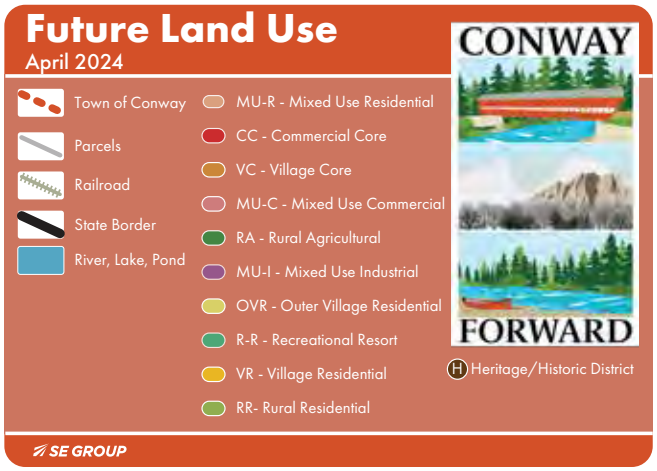


FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The vision for land use in Conway is captured in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). The FLUM is NOT an official zoning ordinance or map; rather, it shows where future development of different types, forms, and intensities is desired in different areas of town.

The FLUM is a guide for how the Town of Conway should regulate future development to achieve community goals, including thoughtful limits on large-scale commercial development and priority areas for the creation of new homes. The identified areas on this map seek to establish an improved balance of housing, commercial development, and natural resource conservation within the Town of Conway. To achieve the vision offered by this FLUM, the Town will need to update zoning, subdivision, and site plan regulations accordingly. This map also highlights areas for consideration as historic/heritage districts, such as Redstone.

The Future Land Use Map is provided as a full page in Appendix A.



MIXED-USE AREAS ON THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Mixed-use areas permit residential, commercial, and light industrial development to varying degrees, depending on the existing character and planning goals for the area. Conway's village areas are present examples of mixed-use areas. Mixed-use areas are priorities for infill development and future water and sewer system enhancements and/or extensions. Performance zoning standards (standards that provide criteria for certain uses, such as decibel levels for noise for light industrial uses) can be considered for these areas to ensure that different uses are compatible with the surrounding area.

VILLAGE CORE (VC) – Village Core areas embrace a compact, walkable development pattern in line with the historical development pattern in North Conway Village and Conway Village. Residential, civic, and small-scale commercial uses are emphasized, including mixed-use development.

COMMERCIAL CORE (CC) – These areas will support larger-scale development, such as multi-family residential developments, mixed-use development, and a variety of commercial uses with a long-term emphasis on creating an improved balance of residential and commercial uses. Infill development supports a more compact, walkable development pattern.

MIXED-USE – RESIDENTIAL (MU-R) – These areas encourage a better balance and integration of residential and commercial uses into a more cohesive neighborhood feel via infill development, with an emphasis on new residential and mixed-use development. Compact residential development and neighborhood-scale commercial uses are supported, as well as locally appropriate light industrial uses. These areas cover existing mixed-use neighborhoods adjacent to village core areas and existing areas of strip-style development. Walkable development patterns are encouraged and enabled by water and sewer infrastructure. Large-scale commercial development is prohibited.

MIXED-USE – COMMERCIAL (MU-C) – These areas encourage a better balance and integration of residential and commercial uses into a more cohesive neighborhood feel via infill development, with an emphasis on new small-scale commercial and mixed-use development. Residential development is also permitted. These areas cover existing mixed-use neighborhoods adjacent to village core areas and existing areas of strip-style development. Walkable development patterns are encouraged and enabled by water and sewer infrastructure. Large-scale commercial development is prohibited.

MIXED-USE – INDUSTRIAL (MU-I) – These areas encourage a mix of uses, with additional permissions for light industrial development. Residential development is also permitted. These areas cover existing residential and light industrial areas. Large-scale commercial development is prohibited.

RECREATIONAL RESORT (R-R) – This area supports ongoing recreational resort operations and enhancement, as well as the creation of resort-oriented housing.

RESIDENTIAL & AGRICULTURAL AREAS ON THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

These areas are primarily for residential development, agriculture, and/or natural resource protection, with varying limits on commercial development.

VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL (VR) – These areas embrace a compact, walkable residential development pattern adjacent to village core areas. Residential development occurs on small lots through single-family homes, duplexes and triplexes, and small multi-unit structures, as well as accessory dwelling units (both attached and detached).

OUTER VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL (OVR) – These areas cover existing, lower-density residential subdivisions adjacent to village centers. These areas would provide more flexibility for creating new homes at a similar scale and density to existing development.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL (RR) – This area balances lower-density residential uses (single-family homes, duplexes and triplexes, accessory dwellings), agricultural uses, and areas of undeveloped forest tracts. The use of conservation subdivision standards supports development of subdivisions with smaller lot sizes with conserved areas, standards regarding minimum road frontage areas, and clearing to help retain rural character. Lots are carefully developed with consideration for steep slopes, soils, water resources, and forest coverage. Agricultural uses are both permitted and encouraged.

RURAL AGRICULTURAL (RA) – This area emphasizes agricultural and natural resource conservation and health in areas of high conservation priority using resource-based standards and limitations on development. Larger-sized lots are carefully developed with consideration for steep slopes, soils, water resources, and forest coverage. Large-scale subdivisions of land and impervious surfaces are both limited.

IMPLEMENTING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

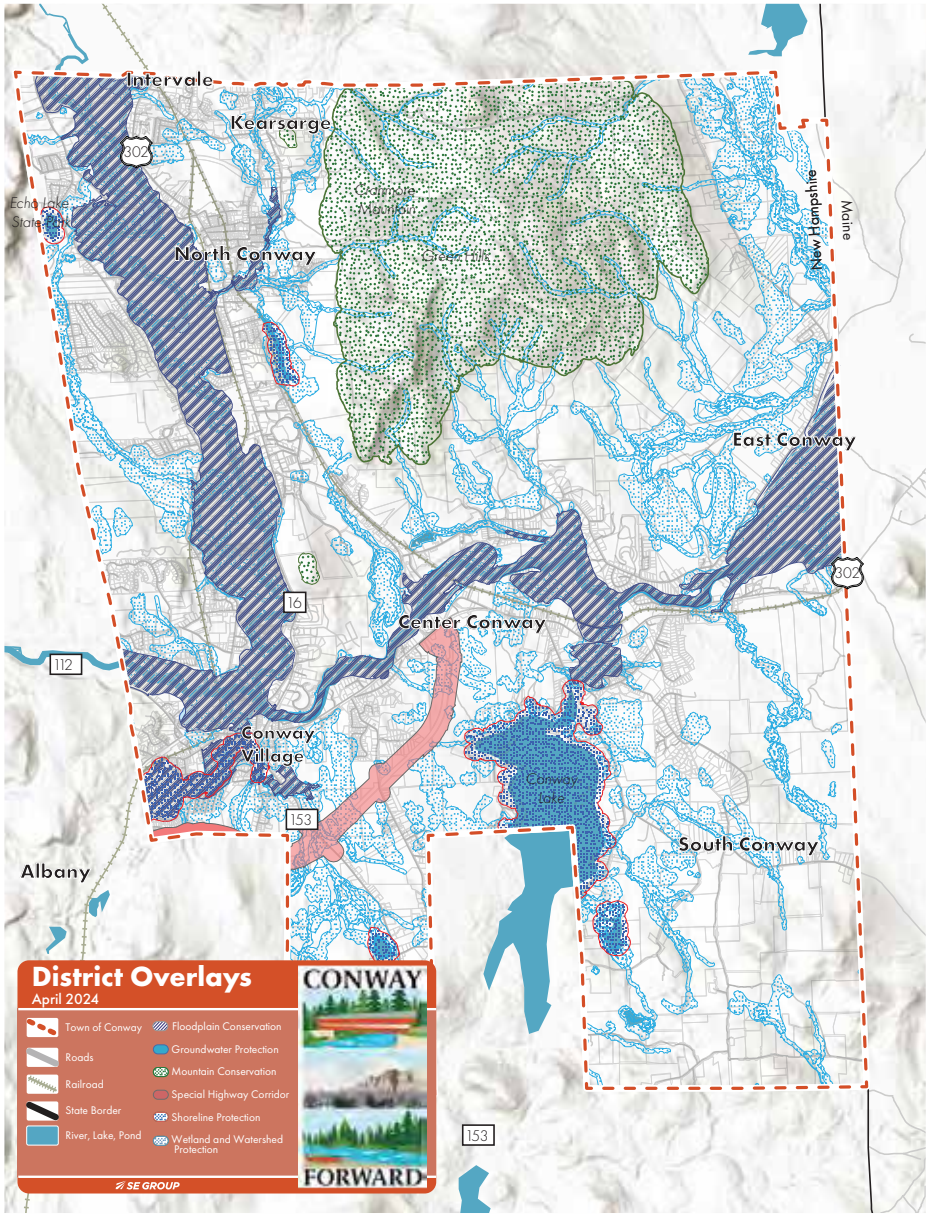
The FLUM is a forward-looking, conceptual map that communicates a future vision for land use in Conway. This section describes what's involved to implement the future land use map:

USING THE FLUM TO INFORM ZONING CHANGES

The FLUM is intended to guide future zoning decisions. Conway could implement the concepts reflected in the FLUM by amending the current map to include new individual zoning districts similar to the areas identified on the map, or adopting an entirely new zoning map based on the FLUM concept. This process should preserve and include the Town's existing overlay districts that promote conservation, including the Floodplain Conservation Overlay District and the Mountain Conservation Overlay District (see map to the left). Updating the zoning map is a foundational step in the process of implementing the Master Plan as a whole.

ACTING ON MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Updates to zoning are an important way to implement the FLUM. However, additional actions will be required to achieve the vision that the FLUM presents. These additional actions are outlined in this plan as Recommendations in Chapters A-H. Recommendations that specifically relate to zoning and land use are summarized on the next page.



Conway has several overlay districts, most of which are districts that protect special environmental resources that exist within the Town's zoning districts.

2. Catalyst Projects

CREATING HISTORIC/HERITAGE DISTRICTS

The FLUM tags three areas for consideration as either historic districts, heritage districts, or a similar overlay district - North Conway Village, Conway Village, and Redstone. If Conway established a district(s) for these areas, these areas would still have an underlying zoning district associated with them, but could be subject to additional protections, design guidelines, or other policies. See Chapter E. Arts, Culture, and Historic Resources for more information.

RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

Land use and zoning are foundational aspects of a community; as such, the FLUM and associated recommendations support all aspects of this plan. The following section summarizes the relevant recommendations related to land use changes and policies in Conway. The implementation of this catalyst project should build on and draw from these recommendations.

PLAN SECTION	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability	A-1.1; A-2.1; A2.2; A-2.3; A-2.4; A-3.2; A-3.4; A-4.2; A-4.3
B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development	B-1.1; B-1.2; B-1.3; B-2.1; B-2.2; B-2.3; B-2.4; B-2.5; B-3.2
C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway	C-1.3
D. Steward Conway's Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces	D-1.1; D-1.2; D-1.4; D-1.5; D1.6; D-1.10; D-1.11; D-1.12; D-1.13; D-1.14; D-1.15; D-1.16; D-1.17; D-1.18; D-1.19
E. Support Conway's Arts, Culture, & Historic Character	E-1.1; E-1.2; E-1.3; E-1.4; E-2.1; E-2.3, E-2.4, E-4.1
F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places	F-1.2; F-2.6; F-2.7; F-2.8; F-2.9; F-2.10; F-2.11; F-3.1; F-3.3; F-4.5; F-6.1
H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future	H-1.5





HOW CONWAY GETS THIS DONE

There are many ways that Conway can approach these zoning updates and changes to land use regulations. The section below summarizes possible "subprojects" that Town staff, Planning Board members, and additional stakeholders could tackle to break up the zoning updates into more manageable pieces. ***All changes to zoning regulations will require approval of warrant articles by Town voters.***

PROJECT OPTIONS

Project #1: Pick The Low-Hanging Fruit

As a first step, the Planning Board and Town staff could choose to tackle more simple updates to the zoning ordinance. For example, the Town could make changes to use tables and definitions in the zoning ordinance that would expand housing opportunity and small-scale commercial development. Possible low-hanging fruit recommendations include defining duplexes separately from multifamily housing (A-2.1), allowing transitional housing (A-3.4), and adding a definition for light industry (B-3.2).

Project #2: Adopt a New Zoning Map

If the Planning Board and Town staff are ready for a more ambitious approach, they could choose to create a new zoning map based on the Future Land Use Map and adopt the map along with all associated districts and changes to the zoning ordinance. This would essentially amount to an "overhaul" of Conway's zoning, with a mostly new set of districts and standards. This approach would involve all areas of Conway, and thus would involve many different stakeholders.

Project #3: Address Zoning for Conway's Villages

The Planning Board and Town staff could choose to draft and adopt zoning changes in phases, starting with zoning changes affecting Conway's villages. This project could involve map changes to Conway's zoning map, the creation of new zoning districts (e.g., Village Core, Outer Village Residential), and new design standards for the villages.

Project #4: Refine Commercial Core Zoning and Site Plan Regulations

One of the new areas identified in the Future Land Use Map is the "Commercial Core" area, encompassing Settlers Green and some adjacent commercial areas. The Planning Board and Town staff could take on a special project to workshop design standards and site plan regulations for this area, which is envisioned to include more housing options in the future. Several recommendations in this plan emphasize the importance of walkability (B-2.4) and mixed-use development (F-2.7) for this area.

Project #5: Pursue Housing-Related Ordinances

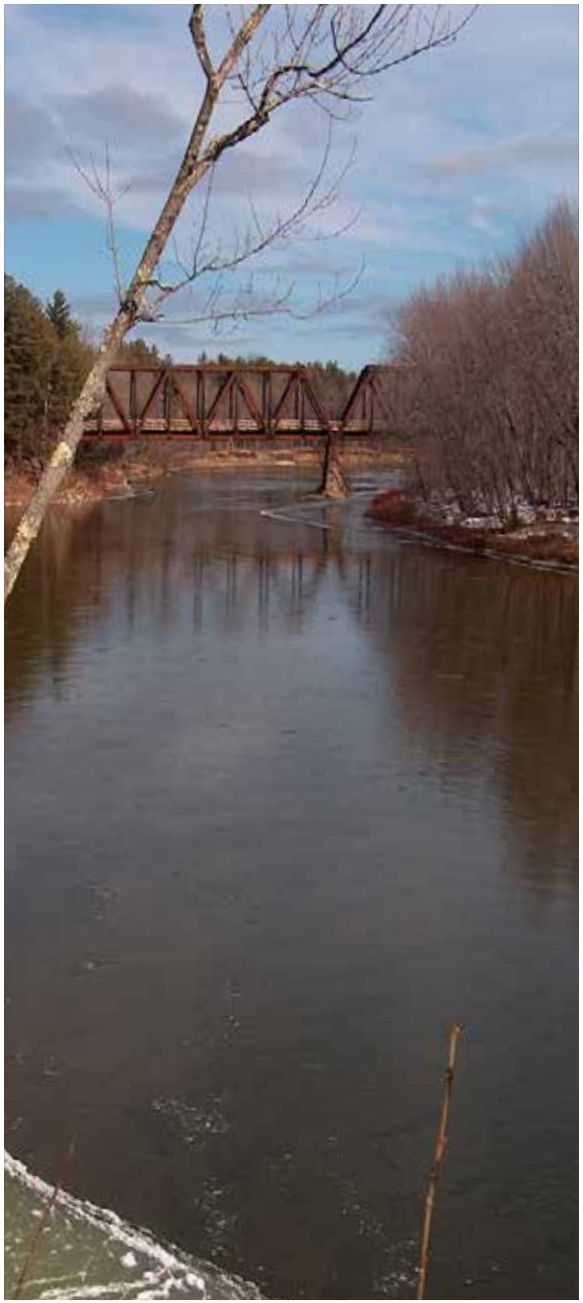
The Planning Board and Town staff may prioritize updates to housing-related ordinances, such as density bonus provisions (A-3.2) and conservation subdivision standards (D-1.12). The upcoming Housing Opportunities Plan will help facilitate these updates.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

There are several intended outcomes of this zoning and land use policy update process:

- Integration with Water/Wastewater Expansions
  - » This zoning and land use policy update process should be coordinated alongside upgrades to water/wastewater services in Conway. See Catalyst Project #2 for more information.
- Coordination with Community Stakeholders
  - » This process should be coordinated alongside relevant stakeholders, including schools, emergency services, community boards and organizations, and agencies.
- Ongoing Community Engagement
  - » Processes to update zoning and land use policies should include robust community engagement to ensure that the changes reflect community feedback.
- Recommended Related Studies
  - » This plan recommends several follow-up studies and plans, such as updates to the Town's Natural Resource Inventory, a new open space plan, and a destination management plan. The findings of these studies should inform updates to the land use code.





CATALYST PROJECT 2:

LONG-TERM WATER & WASTEWATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This project involves the development of a long-term plan to expand and manage public water and wastewater infrastructure in Conway to protect water quality and facilitate residential development in areas where it is desired.

END GOAL: Long-Term Water & Wastewater System Improvement Plan

WHY THIS PROJECT?

Water and wastewater infrastructure is centrally important to Conway's future. Conway is blessed with an abundant groundwater aquifer, sourcing all public drinking water from within municipal boundaries. Conway's surface waters, most notably the Saco River and Conway Lake, provide important natural habitats and support cherished outdoor recreation activities. Centralized water and wastewater services are a critical tool for protecting these essential water resources - filtering out existing contaminants and limiting the introduction of new contaminants. As the Town continues to grow, planning for corresponding enhancements to public water and wastewater systems will be necessary. A detailed, long-term plan will need to address a variety of considerations:

- **Protection of water resources.** Centralized treatment of wastewater and reduced reliance on private wells has significant environmental and public health benefits, including enhanced protection of surface waters and drinking water aquifers from pollutants, such as PFAS.
- **Long-term maintenance of the system.** A long-term plan is an opportunity to consider the need for system expansion alongside maintenance needs and costs. With the dissolution of the Conway Village Fire District in 2025, the Town of Conway will be

absorbing the district's water and wastewater system – a significant maintenance responsibility. A long-term plan can examine proposed capital improvement projects alongside maintenance costs and potential increases in revenues associated with system expansion and enhancement.

- **Addressing failing private community water systems.** Most older residential subdivisions in Conway use private community water systems. As of 2023, there were nearly 30 private community water systems in Conway and most were experiencing issues related to system capacity and infrastructure condition. The costs of overhauling these systems are significant. A long-term plan can consider the benefits and costs of the Town-extended public water service to these subdivisions, including the upfront cost versus potential future revenues.
- **Alignment with land use regulations.** The availability of public water and wastewater system connections in different areas of Conway should be thoughtfully considered alongside land use regulations. In some areas, new water and wastewater connections could enable types or scales of development that are unwanted or inappropriate. In other locations in Conway, these public utility connections may actually be needed to facilitate development that is desired by the community, such as affordable housing.

This project moves Conway Forward by:

- Planning for the protection of surface waters and the Town's pristine drinking water supply.
- Supporting long-term, fiscally responsible maintenance of the system.
- Ensuring alignment between public water and sewer service areas and land use regulations.

RELATED MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section summarizes the relevant Master Plan recommendations related to public water and wastewater infrastructure in Conway. The implementation of this catalyst project should build on and draw from these recommendations.

PLAN SECTION	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability	A-1.1; A-1.2
B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development	B-1.4
D. Steward Conway's Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces	D-1.1; D-1.2; D-1.3
F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places	F-2.3
H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future	H-1.4; H-3.4; H-3.5; H-3.6

HOW CONWAY GETS THIS DONE

This planning process should be a collaborative effort between water and wastewater providers in the Town and region, as well as an ad-hoc steering committee with representation from the Planning Board, Selectboard, School Board, municipal and precinct departments, and Town residents. Prior to engaging a consultant, this committee should identify initial priority areas for water and wastewater system expansion based on the Town Master Plan and public input. Based on these initial priorities, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) should be developed to solicit consultant services, with consultant selection being done by the committee.

This plan should include the following components:

- Desired capital projects for water and wastewater system expansion.
- Exploring different funding and implementation strategies.
- An asset management strategy and financial plan for long-term system maintenance.
- Complementary environmental protection measures.

The planning process should include the following elements:

- A representative steering committee.
- Significant public outreach and education efforts at all stages of the process.
- The involvement of consultants with civil engineering and public engagement expertise.

Infrastructure planning is a long-term initiative. Any identified capital improvement projects will take years or decades to implement. It is critical that the Town take the initial planning steps in this process in the near future in order to move forward.

RELATED INITIATIVES

There are other related initiatives that Conway can take on to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure.

IMPACT FEE POLICY

As recommended in ***Section C. Promote A Local Economy That Works For Conway,*** the Town should consider adopting an impact fee policy that applies impact fees to commercial development to fund water and wastewater system enhancements.

REVISE LAND USE REGULATIONS

As described in Catalyst Project #1, the Town's land use regulations require updates to better guide future development. This update should promote alignment between the Future Land Use Map and water and wastewater service areas.

DEVELOP A TOWN-WIDE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN THAT IS INFORMED BY THE WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEM PLAN

As recommended in ***Section F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places,*** the expansion and maintenance of public water and sewer systems should be considered alongside the Town's other capital improvement needs, such as solid waste facilities, roads, sidewalks, and municipal facilities. This process can also reveal opportunities for alignment with other infrastructure projects, such as roadway reconstruction or sidewalk construction.

3. KEY FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIES





A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



THE VISION:

LIVING IN CONWAY SHOULD BE AFFORDABLE AND ATTAINABLE FOR RESIDENTS OF DIFFERENT INCOME LEVELS; A RELIABLE SUPPLY OF QUALITY HOUSING HELPS SUPPORT AND RETAIN CONWAY'S COMMUNITY.

Introduction

This chapter presents goals and strategies for improving housing options for Conway residents, including strategies for enhancing housing affordability. It also includes strategies pertaining to changes to the Town land use code, as local land use regulations play a central role in determining the types of housing that can be built in a community.

As a regional service center and tourist hub, Conway has a strong demand for housing that far outpaces supply. In 2022, the rental vacancy rate in Carroll County was just 2.3% and the rate was likely even lower for Conway alone. Because of Conway's limited supply of housing, many residents cannot find housing that is affordable to them; according to the 2022 North Country Council Regional Housing Needs Assessment, over half (51%) of renters in Conway are "cost-burdened," meaning that they spend over 30% of their household income on housing. The 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment also projects that there will be a need for hundreds of new rental units and new owner-occupied units in Conway by 2040, assuming that other communities are also building new housing to meet their projected needs.

Through public engagement conducted during the Master Plan process, residents indicated that increasing housing (specifically affordable housing) opportunities was a top priority. In their input, residents noted that a lack of housing supply in Conway has widespread negative effects on the community; for example, a lack of housing for workers makes it increasingly challenging for local businesses to attract and retain staff. To increase the availability of affordable and attainable housing, there is a need for land-efficient housing types, such as small apartment buildings and triplexes. At present, nearly two-thirds of homes in Conway are single-family residences. New housing should also be constructed in village centers and areas where water and wastewater connections are available and/or feasible. Today, nearly 70% of housing units in Conway are within the Agricultural/Residential District, which is an area intended for low-density development and is generally not served by water and wastewater infrastructure.



Defining Affordability

There are a variety of terms that are used to refer to an individual or families' ability to attain and afford their homes.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING – Affordable housing refers to housing that is priced at a level that is affordable to individuals or families earning a specific income level. Housing costs are generally considered affordable if they are less than 30% of a household's income. **For this plan, the term "affordable housing" is used to describe housing where rents are offered at rates that are affordable for individuals and families with low and moderate incomes, including units where some form of subsidy is applied to reduce rents below current market rates as well as "naturally affordable" units where no subsidy is applied.**

WORKFORCE HOUSING – Workforce housing is a term defined by the State of New Hampshire under NH RSA 674:58 to refer to housing that is affordable (i.e., spending no more than 30% of income) for a renter family of three making 60% of the area median income or an owner family of four making 100% of the area median income. For Conway, under the statute, area median income is defined as the median family income for a four-person household in Carroll County as reported by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2023, HUD reported the median family income for Carroll County to be $96,200. This plan does not use the term "workforce housing"; however, it is commonly used by developers and policymakers in New Hampshire.

ATTAINABLE HOUSING – Attainable housing refers to housing that is affordable or generally accessible to residents with moderate incomes. This housing may or may not be fixed in price, like some affordable housing, but it still increases the overall availability of housing in the community.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING – "Missing middle," or "middle" housing is another commonly-used term that refers to housing types that are more dense than single-family homes and less dense than large apartment buildings. Because these housing types (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, small multi-family buildings) have been less commonly built since the early 20th century, they are referred to as "missing."

Current and Planned Housing Projects

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

As of Fall 2023, there were over 150 affordable/workforce housing units and over 60 market rate housing units currently under construction in Conway.

PLANNED

As of Fall 2023, there were over 30 affordable/workforce units and over 550 market rate housing units planned in Conway; because these units are in the planning stages, it is possible that not all of them will have received Planning Board approvals and be developed.



Desired Outcomes

- There are more homes available for rent or purchase that are affordable to residents of different income levels; rates of homelessness decrease.
- Residents can find housing that meets their needs; when residents have more housing options, Conway will have greater workforce stability and a lower cost of living.
- Updates to the zoning code promote village-style development, a historic development pattern that can be seen in Conway today. As a result, there are more housing options available in Conway's village centers; these housing options include "missing middle" housing types (e.g., small multifamily housing, townhomes, etc.)
- There are different housing options available that are suitable to residents of different age groups and abilities.
- There is a healthy balance between the amount of commercial and residential development in Conway; future commercial development occurs at a smaller scale and does not strain or jeopardize the availability of housing in the community.
- New housing development is sensitive to Conway's environmental context and minimizes environmental disturbance.
- Upgrades to municipal infrastructure make it possible to develop and maintain more dense forms of housing and reduce the impacts of development on local water resources.

GOAL A-1: Expand Housing Supply in Water and Wastewater Service Areas

CHALLENGE:

A lack of water/wastewater infrastructure can make housing more expensive or infeasible and can lead to water quality issues. Water and wastewater infrastructure is critical for the development of more dense housing types, which tend to be more affordable and attainable. The Town should work to align zoning with infrastructure capacity; in this way, the allowed density in a given zoning district would correspond directly with the infrastructure capacity of that area.

STRATEGIES:

A-1.1: Align Conway's residential and commercial zoning districts with current and future water/wastewater service areas.

- Create Mixed Use-Residential, Mixed Use-Commercial, and Commercial Core districts that are aligned with water/wastewater service and support higher residential densities (See Future Land Use Map).
- Create Rural-Agricultural and Rural-Residential zones to accommodate low-density residential development in areas without access to water and wastewater service (See Future Land Use Map).
- Continue to use the Town's overlay districts to preserve water resources and direct residential and commercial development out of key resource areas (See Overlay Districts Map).

A-1.2: Evaluate opportunities to provide water/wastewater service to all village areas within Conway.

- Consider extending water/wastewater service to Center Conway to support orderly, compact future development in that area.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, about 15% of private wells in the United States have elevated levels of contaminants, including bacteria, nitrates, and other substances harmful to human health.

GOAL A-2: Reduce Zoning-Related Barriers to Affordable and Attainable Housing in Conway

CHALLENGE:

Conway's current zoning policies are outdated and allow only a limited range of housing types, restricting housing types that are more likely to be affordable to low- and middle-income residents. Conway currently defines "multi-family housing" as residences with greater than 2 units. Conway currently has onerous dimensional requirements that prevent multi-family housing on lots less than 1 acre in size in all districts. This has led to a proliferation of single-family homes on large lots throughout town, particularly in the current Residential/Agricultural district, and an accompanying lack of multi-family housing.

STRATEGIES:

A-2.1: Ensure that multi-family housing and duplexes are allowed and supported in the Town land use code.

- Provide definitions of different types of multi-family housing. At present, the Town code defines multi-family housing as residences with more than 2 units. This definition is ambiguous and may hinder the construction of multi-family housing of different sizes. By providing definitions for small multi-family structures (3-4 units) and larger multi-family structures (5-8 units), Conway will be better positioned to allow multi-family residences of different sizes.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey, the median cost per square foot for single-family homes in the United States was $123.72, while for multi-family units (2 to 4 units in a building), the median cost per square foot was $88.27. This means that, on average, it is less expensive to build or purchase a square foot of housing in multi-family units compared to single-family homes.

9% of residential units in Conway are within the Residential/Agricultural district; 72% of those units are single-family homes.

63% of residential units in Conway are single-family homes, 18% are condominiums, 6% are multi-family residences (>8 units), and 2% are multi-family (5-8 units).

A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability



Detached ADU (Image: VHFA)



Attached ADU (Image: NHHFA)

Detached and attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs), shown above, are a type of infill development. "Infill" refers to further development in already developed lots and areas, as opposed to "greenfield" development, which occurs in previously undeveloped lots.

- Update the Town's subdivision regulations to allow the construction of multi-family structures on small lots served by water and wastewater. At present, the Town code requires that multi-family units be constructed on lots of at least 1.5 acres (1 acre for the first unit and an additional half acre for each additional unit).

A-2.2: Amend cluster housing regulations to include stronger affordable and attainable housing incentives in Conway.

- Add guidance in the Town's land use code that helps applicants incorporate affordable housing into their clustered development applications.
- Update cluster housing standards to reflect the desired development direction and character of different districts as referenced in the Future Land Use map.
- Use cluster housing and subdivision regulations to promote the use of conservation subdivisions where a portion of the land remains undeveloped in exchange for the use of smaller lot sizes.

A-2.3: Allow detached and attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and provide specific direction on where they can be constructed.

- Allowing both attached and detached ADUs provides property owners with additional flexibility for adding dwelling units. The Town's land use code does not currently specify where detached ADUs are allowed, although attached ADUs are allowed in areas where single-family dwellings are permitted statewide. The land use code should identify districts where these types of housing can be constructed in order to provide clarity to property owners and land use boards that ADUs are a permitted use.
- Ensure that dimensional requirements do not preclude ADU development.

A-2.4: Promote adaptive reuse of existing structures for affordable and attainable housing in Conway.

A-2.5: Consider zoning provisions that provide ability for intergenerational living arrangements, such as accessory dwelling units and micro apartments

- Consider incorporating universal design requirements (e.g., no-step entryways, wider hallways) to ensure accessibility of new housing developments.
- Ensure that zoning does not overly limit development of senior living facilities.

GOAL A-3: Increase Affordable Housing in Conway Through a Multi-Faceted Strategy

CHALLENGE #1:

At present, Conway's Town code offers few policies that meaningfully support affordable housing. Conway's land use code contains a section on affordable housing that creates a density bonus program and inclusionary zoning ordinance designed to support the development of small-scale affordable housing in Conway. Local stakeholders have reported that few developers have taken advantage of existing affordable housing incentives in the code.



Conway Pines, an affordable housing development in Conway Village

STRATEGIES:

A-3.1: In collaboration with the Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition and other regional partners, explicitly encourage affordable housing through outreach to affordable housing developers.

- Seek out an affordable housing developer that can maintain a consistent presence in Conway and the Mount Washington Valley and can address the specific needs and challenges of Conway's rural environment.

A-3.2: Make refinements to the density bonus program to reduce the lot size needed to access the incentive.

- Due to large minimum lot size requirements, the current density bonuses offered in the zoning code do not provide a significant incentive for developers to provide affordable housing. Consider matching or exceeding the density allowances for adaptive reuse of existing structures, which allow 11 units per acre. Parcels should have access to public water and wastewater infrastructure.

CHALLENGE #2:

Conway presently lacks administrative and financial support for affordable housing initiatives. At present, there is a well-documented scarcity of housing options for low and middle-income residents in Conway. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for individuals and families to find homes in Conway they can afford. This issue threatens the stability of the local workforce and contributes to a widening wealth gap between owners and renters in Conway. The Town should increase resources dedicated to addressing the local housing challenge, using the housing-related recommendations of the Master Plan as a guide.

STRATEGIES:

A-3.3: Create additional capacity with the Planning and Zoning Department to spearhead local housing initiatives and pursue grant funding.

- Allocate additional operating budget and pursue grant funding to support needed studies, planning efforts, and coordination.
- Consider adding an additional planning staff or coordinator position with a focus on housing and economic development to assist the Town Planning Director with development review and coordination with affordable housing partners regarding funding opportunities for affordable housing.

CHALLENGE #3:

Homelessness and housing insecurity is an ongoing issue in Conway. Carroll County is the only county in New Hampshire without a housing shelter.

STRATEGIES:

A-3.4: Ensure that Conway's land use code supports a spectrum of housing options that can help lift residents out of homelessness and housing insecurity.

- Amend the code to allow transitional and emergency housing in Conway's village centers and commercial core.
- Address housing supply issues that make it more challenging for local buyers to purchase a home or find a property for rent.



Conway Village
Photo: Wiseguy Creative

GOAL A-4: Thoughtfully Manage Short-Term Rentals (STRs) in Conway

CHALLENGE:

While STRs can provide a source of income for homeowners and support the local tourism industry, they can also cause disturbances in residential neighborhoods and contribute to housing scarcity. STRs are a form of transient occupancy; a neighborhood with one or more STRs can sometimes have noise disturbances, traffic issues, and a lack of personal connection between neighbors. STRs tend to be more financially lucrative than long-term rentals, which can make it even more difficult for local residents to find affordable housing. STRs also pose challenges for the town in terms of regulation needs, as it takes resources to effectively manage and oversee STR activity. The Town's main goal should be to strike a balance between the economic benefits of STRs and the need to maintain affordable housing and community-oriented neighborhoods.

In 2021, there were estimated to be at least 500 short-term rentals in Conway, equivalent to about 10% of single-family homes in Conway.

STRs host about 1/3 of overnight visitors in Conway during peak travel times.

STRATEGIES:

A-4.1: Continue to monitor local levels of short-term rentals.

A-4.2: Zone STRs as a specific type of use and consider limiting them to certain zoning districts as a conditional use. Consider instituting requirements for a conditional use permit, including payment of fees for local review and abutter notification, as well as certification that the structure has passed building and fire code inspections. See a summary of Laconia, NH's policies for a similar example.

A-4.3: If conditional use permitting for STRs is adopted, consider grandfathering in existing STRs.



Laconia, NH
(Photo: City of Laconia)



Laconia, NH
(Photo: NASWA)

Laconia, NH's Approach to Short-Term Rentals (STRs)

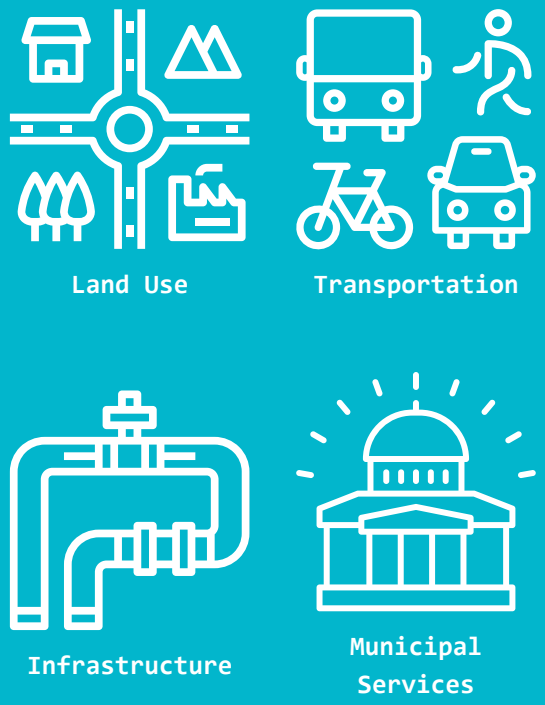
Laconia, NH has employed several tactics to address short-term rentals, including limiting STRs to certain zoning districts and subjecting them to conditional use permitting. STRs are permitted in Commercial Resort and Shorefront Residential zones. STRs are only permitted in a "seasonal dwelling" in residential zones. The permit stipulates that owners are responsible for trash, noise, and other considerations. The permit expires after 2 years and applies to the owner (i.e., if there is a new owner, that owner must acquire a new permit for the property).



Settlers Green (Photo: Wiseguy Creative)

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



CONWAY FINDS AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE BETWEEN COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND OTHER USES. FUTURE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS CONSTRAINED TO EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS AND IS LARGELY LIMITED TO REDEVELOPMENT THAT INCREASES TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND/OR HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES IN THOSE AREAS.

Introduction

This chapter presents goals and strategies related to commercial development in Conway, including recommendations for updates to the Town's land use code.

Though commercial development makes up just 2.1% of Conway's overall land area, it greatly shapes the experience of visiting and living in Conway. Commercial development along Route 16, known as "The Strip," has grown significantly since the adoption of the last Master Plan in 2003. The business mix in this area includes several large-scale commercial uses, including hotels, big-box stores, grocery stores, and chain restaurants. This business mix is very different from that of the village centers, which contain a range of small-scale commercial uses, such as offices, retail shops, and smaller restaurants. Conway also contains several small commercial strips along main roadways, such as commercial strips in the Intervale area and the strip just north of Conway Village. There is currently a moratorium on commercial developments over 50,000 square feet and on hotel development. At the time of writing, Town voters have approved a one-year moratorium set to expire in April 2024 with the possibility of being extended.

Through public engagement conducted during the Master Plan process, residents indicated strong opposition to further large-scale commercial development. They expressed that recent developments (particularly hotel developments) were too large, and in the case of a hotel under construction in the Intervale area, were out of character with the surrounding area. Residents' top priority was housing development and they expressed great concern about a lack of housing supply and the subsequent strain on the local economy. Residents also noted that strengthening the villages was a top priority – residents noted that village areas are primary gathering spaces and the center of community culture in Conway.



Recent And Planned Commercial Development Projects

RECENT PROJECTS:

- An estimated 500 hotel rooms were built in Conway in 2021 and 2022.

PLANNED PROJECTS:

- At the time of this Master Plan update, there were two hotels and one large commercial building currently under construction in Conway. These projects were approved before the Town of Conway placed a moratorium on commercial and hotel development in April 2023. Thus, the scale and number of planned projects is likely lower than it would ordinarily be.

Desired Outcomes

- Conway thoughtfully regulates commercial development with updated land use regulations; new commercial development is largely limited to infill that is compatible with, and scaled appropriately to, the surrounding area.
- Conway's commercial development continues to support the Town's tourism economy, but restrictions on future commercial development; restrict hotels and other large-scale visitor-facing businesses to targeted areas.
- Conway's village centers are vibrant and inviting; visitors and residents alike can find what they need within Conway's villages.
- Conway residents feel that the general direction and slower pace of commercial development in Conway aligns with their vision for the community; commercial development in Conway does not outpace or outcompete needed residential development.



An office building in Conway Village

GOAL B-1:

"Right-size" Commercial Development in Conway to Support Thriving Village Centers, Encourage Orderly Development, and Create a Healthy Balance of Land Uses

CHALLENGE #1:

Conway's current zoning policies allow large-scale commercial development in areas where it is not desired by the community. Current land use regulations around commercial development permit large-scale developments to occur in locations and in forms that are generally unpopular with the community. Conway's land use code currently applies one district – Highway Commercial – to commercial areas of very different sizes and characters. As a result, community members consider some recent and under-construction commercial developments to be out of scale with their immediate surroundings. In particular, a hotel development approved in the Intervale area in North Conway was very unpopular with community members, who considered the area to be scenic and not appropriate for larger scale commercial development.



Commercial development in Settlers Green (Highway Commercial zone)

STRATEGIES:

B-1.1: Create different zones that allow commercial development of different scales in Conway.

- See the Future Land Use Map (p. 13) for further details on this recommendation. The recommended Commercial Core area, which covers the Settler's Green area, should allow the highest density and building intensity of all areas to promote a walkable environment. The recommended Village Core zone, which encompasses North Conway Village and Conway Village, should allow small-scale commercial and mixed-use development along with other uses typical of village areas (e.g., residential and civic uses). The recommended MU-R area includes Center Conway, Intervale, and areas outside Conway Village. This area should incorporate neighborhood-scale commercial uses, as well as some light industrial uses. All areas, except the Commercial Core, would prohibit large-scale commercial development, but would allow infill development to support a walkable pattern of development.

CHALLENGE #2:

Hotel development in Conway has proliferated at a fast pace in recent years; residents have not been supportive of this development. The development of these hotels has generally added to Conway's housing crunch; staff at these new hotels need affordable places to live, placing further demand on the housing market.

STRATEGIES:

B-1.2: Extend the current moratorium on large commercial structures and hotels until zoning changes have been adopted.

- The current moratorium on large commercial structures (over 50,000 square feet) and hotels will expire in April 2024. At the time of writing, the Planning Board is moving to present a warrant article to Conway voters to extend the moratorium an additional year.

B-1.3: Consider amending the land use code to limit new hotel construction to small boutique hotels, or hotels that exist in a mixed-use structure. Hotels should be a conditional use in any district where they are allowed.



The Eastern Slope Inn in North Conway.

CHALLENGE #3:

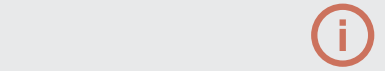
There is no linkage between commercial development and increases to housing supply. Recent commercial developments have created large associated workforce needs amidst a highly constrained local housing supply.

STRATEGIES:

B-1.4: Consider leveraging impact fees on future large-scale commercial developments and hotels to help fund improvements and/or expansion of the Town water and sewer infrastructure and/or other infrastructure improvements needed to enable multifamily housing development.

- Impact fees are fees levied on new developments that account for the increased need for services and infrastructure associated with the development. Impact fees can help communities cover the costs of increased services, including water and sewer upgrades that can protect drinking water quality and enable the development of affordable housing.
- Conway could also require future commercial and hotel developments to provide some sort of community benefit associated with their development, such as a public open space or recreational path or a contribution to affordable housing.
- Previous applications of impact fees in Conway did not have clear direction on how those funds should be spent. The town should develop a prioritized list of needs that impact fees could support and/or identify a specific project or set of projects to be supported by impact fees.

B-1.5: Continue to evaluate creative approaches for linking future commercial development to addressing housing needs.



One of the most common mechanisms used by local governments to fund affordable housing is a linkage fee. Through this type of program, there is a fee "linked" to a certain scale of commercial development that is paid by the developer and supports housing/affordable housing development. The State of New Hampshire does not enable communities to do traditional linkage fees for housing. Communities can use impact fees, but only for specific purposes outlined in the state law. Impact fees are fees levied on developers that aim to fund any necessary improvements that the town must make associated with that development (e.g., upgrades to roads, water treatment and distribution, schools, and more). This plan recommends assigning impact fees to large-scale commercial development to help fund the construction and maintenance of water and sewer infrastructure, which is a necessary step toward the construction of affordable housing in Conway. The state requires that municipalities use the impact funds for 6 years.

GOAL B-2: Support Village-Scale Commercial and Mixed-Use Development & Redevelopment in Conway's Villages

CHALLENGE:

Current development patterns and zoning regulations inhibit village-style development, particularly mixed-use buildings. Conway is a network of village centers – although residents highly value the architectural character and close-knit feel of the Town's village centers, village-style development is effectively illegal in the Town code. Mixed-use buildings, which typically have commercial use on the ground floor and residential units above, are the most limited by the lot size and parking requirements, which require large quantities of parking associated with each different use. For example, the code currently requires new development to occur on larger lots and to provide significant parking areas – a challenging proposition in compact village areas. To build, rebuild, or retrofit traditional village-style buildings in Conway, many developers and property owners have had to rely on zoning variances.



Village-scale mixed use development in Conway Village

According to a 2020 Report developed for the New Hampshire Housing Finance Agency, multi-story buildings with a mix of residential units and ground-floor commercial uses consistently produce the most tax value for municipalities compared to other types of properties in New Hampshire communities. These types of buildings are classic in New England village-style development.

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

STRATEGIES:

B-2.1: Through reductions to minimum lot size requirements, allow and encourage small-scale commercial and mixed-use buildings that align with the historical patterns of Conway's villages.

- The Town should align dimensional requirements with current built forms in Conway's villages. There are multiple examples of older buildings in the heart of Conway's villages that do not conform to current zoning requirements.
- Encourage redevelopment of existing structures that promote a walkable, compact pattern of development.

B-2.2: Consider moving to parking maximums and adopting shared parking standards to encourage the efficient use of land, particularly in village and commercial areas.

B-2.3: Revise zoning to allow and promote mixed-use infill development to permit large-scale residential development in and around the Settler's Green area.

B-2.4. Adopt standards to support a walkable, inviting environment in the Commercial Core area.

- Create block perimeter standards for the recommended Mixed-Use Core district. Limiting the perimeter of blocks can limit the distance between destinations and can make a place more inviting to walk.
- Adopt standards that encourage or require parking in the back of buildings.
- Adopt standards that require pedestrian infrastructure or shared-use paths as a part of new developments.
- Require pedestrian connectivity to neighboring developments.
- As noted in the Transportation chapter, this change will require lessening or removing parking requirements, which are often too onerous and can inhibit infill development.

B-2.5. Encourage or require low-impact development (LID) standards for infill developments in Conway's commercial core.

- Use low-impact development (LID) standards to reduce total impervious surfaces, protect sensitive environmental resources, and encourage designs that protect natural features and hydrology.



Village-style development in Conway Village

GOAL B-3: Support Small-Scale Industrial Uses in Conway

CHALLENGE:

Conway has struggled to sustain its industrial districts. One of Conway's Industrial zoning districts, I-2, does not have water and wastewater service, which limits the area's ability to support more intensive development. While Conway used to rely on logging and other heavy industries as a main economic driver, smaller-scale industrial uses are much more appropriate for Conway today. Light industrial uses are an important type of commercial development and can include businesses like artist studios, bespoke manufacturing, breweries and beer production facilities, and metalworking shops. These types of businesses should be thoughtfully incorporated into Conway's revised zoning ordinance as allowed uses in certain areas of town.

STRATEGIES:

B-3.1: Extend water and wastewater service to districts allowing industrial development to enable industrial businesses and uses to connect.

B-3.2: Add a definition of "light industry" in Conway's Town code, and consider adopting performance-based zoning standards that aim to address common complaints and potential issues with light industrial uses. For example, create a condition for conditional use permitting related to noise levels to ensure that noise levels for the associated use are minimized or mitigated.



Brewing equipment at Tuckerman Brewing near Conway Village

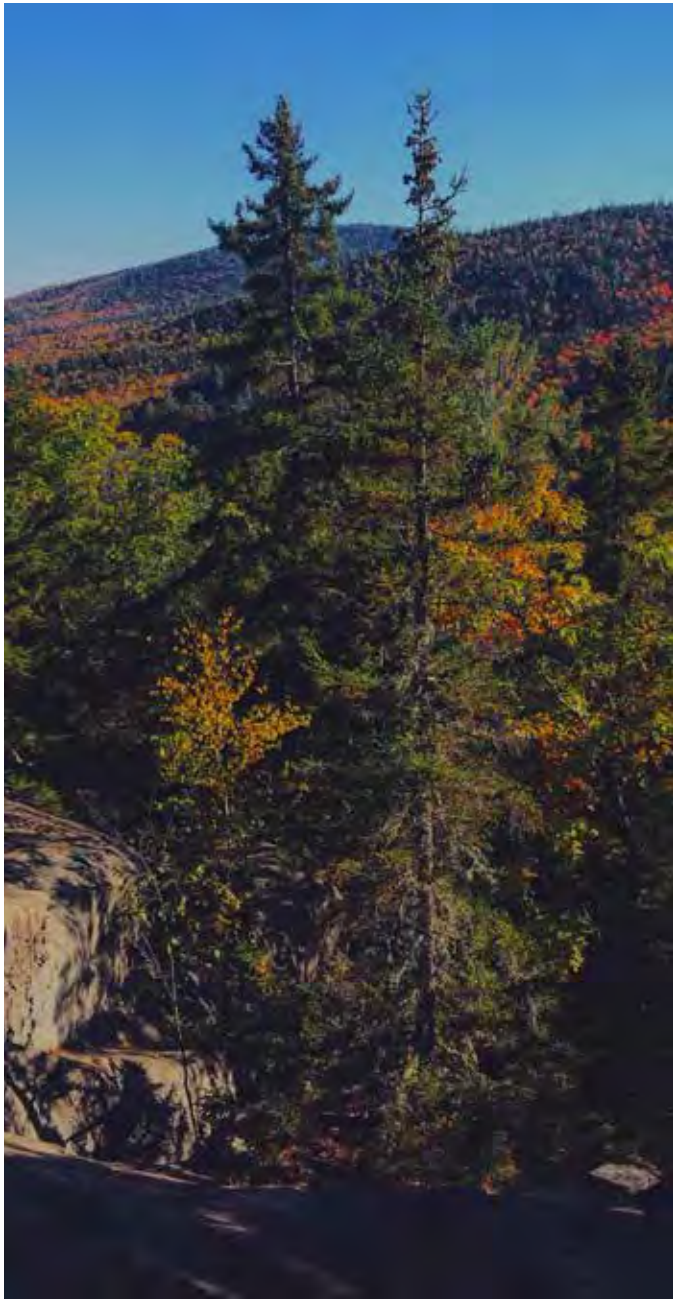


C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway



CONWAY PROMOTES A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY BY CULTIVATING A STRONG COMMUNITY. CONWAY SUPPORTS ITS VILLAGE CENTERS, WHICH CONTAIN AMPLE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES, THRIVING BUSINESSES, AND A VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURAL SCENE. TOWN POLICIES AND ACTIONS SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENCOURAGING TOURISM IN BALANCE WITH OTHER INDUSTRIES AND WITHIN THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE.

Introduction



Economic development is a community-wide project that extends far beyond individual commercial developments. It includes raising incomes, creating jobs, improving infrastructure, providing basic necessities and enhancing quality of life, and building a strong sense of community. This chapter presents goals and strategies related to Conway's comprehensive economic development. Conway's economy, once driven by industrial activities, is now primarily driven by recreational tourism. This shift comes with a new set of challenges and opportunities. For example, as more and more people seek to visit and live in Conway, there is an ongoing need to protect the special qualities that draw people to the area, such as scenic views of the surrounding mountains and access to recreational opportunities. There is also a need to promote the affordability of housing and the overall cost of living for full-time residents. As the community's recreation economy grows, there is also a growing need to provide a variety of workforce development opportunities beyond recreation and tourism-related jobs, which are often low-paying and temporary. Conway functions as a regional economic center for Carroll County and the Mount Washington Valley; although Conway represents 1/5 of the county's population, it supports 1/3 of the businesses and jobs in the county. As such, many of the Town's economic development approaches must be regional in nature.

Through public engagement conducted during the Master Plan process, residents indicated strong concerns regarding the imbalance of the area's workforce needs and housing supply. Residents also shared that some of the Town's recreational amenities, such as the Saco River, were experiencing unsustainable levels of visitation. Because recreational tourism is so central to Conway's economy, crowding issues at trailheads and other recreational areas are economic development concerns, as well as resource management concerns.

Desired Outcomes

- Conway's village centers are hubs of activity and prosperity for the town. Residents and visitors are drawn to Conway's village centers for their community events, businesses, and arts and cultural opportunities.
- The Town of Conway expands housing opportunities, making it easier for residents and workers to find and afford housing in Conway.
- The Town derives more economic benefits from visitation through Rooms and Meals taxes.
- The Town works to increase its revenues associated with property taxes, particularly through the development of land-efficient housing types in village centers (e.g., mixed-use buildings with ground-floor retail and apartments above).
- The Town encourages the development of small businesses and places restrictions on the development of large-scale commercial uses.
- The Town collaborates on economic development goals with regional partners, including the Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition and Mount Washington Valley Economic Council.
- Conway makes continuous improvements to its services that improve the overall quality of life and quality of visitation experiences.
- Through thoughtful land use ordinances and other policies, Conway preserves important landscapes and recreational opportunities and encourages small businesses in Conway's villages and adjacent areas.

Recent Economic Development Projects

- Cranmore Mountain Resort has expanded its offerings to reflect changing market demands for recreational tourism. The mountain has been investing in new condo-style on-mountain residences, a bike trail, and downhill mountain biking, among other projects. The newest condominium accommodations, which are currently under construction, sold out extremely quickly.
- The Mount Washington Valley Economic Council recently created a Technology Village Business Resource Center, which offers commercial office space and coworking spaces along Route 16.

GOAL C-1: Support Conway's Tax Base & Capture Economic Benefits From Commercial Activity Associated with Tourism

CHALLENGE:

Conway is limited in its ability to capture revenues from commercial activities, as New Hampshire does not have sales tax and does not enable communities to levy additional taxes, such as a local option tax. As a result, Conway depends on property tax revenue for its budgets and programs. This creates a unique challenge for Conway: as visitation increases, the town does not necessarily have additional funds to address some of the impacts of visitation (e.g., upgrades to roads and infrastructure). Conway should continue to support the local tourism economy and try to retain revenues locally to the extent possible.

Which generates more tax value for the Town of Conway - a large single-family home, or a small apartment building with a store on the ground level?

According to a report conducted in 2020 by Urban3 and the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority that examined 15 New Hampshire communities, multi-family and mixed-use development consistently generate more tax revenue compared to single-family structures.



Mixed-use development in Rochester
Value per acre: $3.9 M in 2020



Single-family home in Rochester
Value per acre: $0.4 M in 2020

STRATEGIES:

C-1.1: Examine options for capturing additional revenues from the local tourism economy to offset the cost of local services and infrastructure.

- Since traditional sales taxes are not viable in New Hampshire, Conway should consider applying other fees and funding strategies to support necessary upgrades to services. For example, Conway could explore Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) with tourism-focused local businesses to invest in and maintain local infrastructure.



Photo: Wiseguy Creative

C-1.2: Encourage the development of locally owned and operated tourism businesses to help keep tourism revenue within the community.

- The Town of Conway can take steps to reduce barriers for prospective business owners seeking to open a small business in Conway. For example, the Town could consider offering an expedited development review process to businesses that will be locally owned and operated for a certain period of time after opening.

C-1.3: Encourage locally oriented residential, mixed-use, and commercial/retail uses in Conway's village areas; capitalize on opportunities to generate additional property tax value for the town.

- Conway's zoning code should allow a variety of uses that support local business activity and provide housing opportunities. As discussed in the housing chapter, mixed-use development in downtowns yield high property tax values on a per-acre basis, making it a very desirable land use in Conway's village centers.

DERIVING LOCAL BENEFITS FROM TOURISM REVENUE: CASE STUDIES FROM STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, CO AND ANCHORAGE, AK

The New Hampshire Meals and Rooms Tax collects 8.5% of accommodation and meals revenue, a portion of which is later redistributed to municipalities. Conway is a donor community for Rooms and Meals Taxes, generating more revenue from the tax than it receives. Thus, Conway is limited in its ability to derive community benefits from the local tourism economy. **Recreational tourism communities in other states that enable additional taxes have pursued various strategies to use tourism revenue to fund community projects and initiatives.**

For example, in 2023, the City of **Steamboat Springs, CO** began levying a 9% tax on short-term rentals (STRs) that supports affordable and attainable housing projects, including projects carried out by the Yampa Valley Housing Authority. According to the housing authority, Routt County (where Steamboat Springs is located) is currently facing an affordability gap of $762,000; the median single-family home price for Routt County was $1.16 million in 2022, while the household buying power for a family of four earning about 100% AMI was $398,000. The new tax on STRs was estimated to generate $14.3 million in its first year.

Anchorage, AK also levies a bed tax (another name for a lodging tax). First proposed in 1975, the bed tax provides funding for Anchorage's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). As stated on anchorage.net, "the visitor industry chose to tax itself to fund marketing efforts instead of looking to municipal, state, or federal funds." This tax ensures that visitors pay for tourism promotion efforts, not residents. Tourism in Anchorage generates $297 million in annual direct spending and over $45 million in local taxes per year.


Steamboat Springs, CO

GOAL C-2: Balance Tourism with Local Quality of Life

What makes tourism "sustainable"? Following the traditional definition of sustainability, sustainable tourism is tourism that does not degrade the ability of future generations to enjoy the tourism location and amenities. One strategy to promote sustainable tourism is a stewardship pledge, which is a voluntary pledge that visitors can take stating that they will take certain actions to protect natural resources during their visit. The MWV Pledge is one example of a stewardship pledge.

Other strategies include providing clear recreation and trail information and including information about where to park. It can also be helpful to provide multilingual information as applicable.

CHALLENGE:

The popularity of tourism can be a double-edged sword. While tourism is a major economic engine for the community, it can also lead to traffic problems, crowding at local trailheads and recreation areas, and affordability issues. There is a need to balance tourism promotion efforts with actions that aim to preserve quality of life and the quality of recreational amenities for Conway's full-time residents.

STRATEGIES:

C-2.1: Promote sustainable tourism that emphasizes responsible recreation and stewardship of the natural landscape.

- Promote the Mount Washington Valley (MWV) Pledge, which encourages visitors to respect the environment during their visit.

C-2.2: Ensure that investments in local infrastructure support the local community as well as visitors.

- Infrastructure improvements could include transportation improvements, enhancements to parks and public spaces, and water/wastewater service area extensions.

C. Promote a Local Economy That Works For Conway

C-2.3: Create a destination management plan for Conway and Mount Washington Valley in collaboration with the MWV Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders.

- Destination management planning can help a community identify actions that can reduce negative impacts associated with tourism. For example, in the Adirondacks, the Town of North Elba and the Village of Lake Placid recently collaborated with the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) on a Destination Management Plan for the community aimed at "improving the relationships between visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them, and the environment."



Cathedral Ledges (Photo: MWVCC)

GOAL C-3: Support A Diversity of Housing Options for Conway's Residents and Employees

CHALLENGE:

Conway is suffering from a severe housing shortage; workers and families cannot find places to live in Conway, let alone homes they can afford to purchase. The Town should support employee housing to ensure that Conway's workers and families can live affordably within the community. Housing is a critical ingredient to Conway's economic and social health: without enough places to live, Conway's businesses will struggle to retain workers. If most workers are forced to live elsewhere and commute long distances to Conway, then it will become increasingly difficult to build a cohesive, inclusive community in Conway. Long commutes also generate more carbon emissions, which runs counter to the sustainability goals articulated in this plan.

Nearly **20%** of Conway residents commute over 50 miles one-way to their primary job. For workers commuting into Conway, over **25%** travel from over 50 miles away. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau on the Map, 2019)

STRATEGIES:

C-3.1: Support efforts to provide technical assistance to help interested local employers navigate the process of providing housing for employees.

- Connect to existing resources, such as the New Hampshire Housing Employer-Assisted Housing Guide.

C-3.2: As recommended in the Housing chapter, make necessary changes to the land use code to allow for more housing types and encourage affordable housing.

C-3.3: As recommended in the Housing chapter, consider strategies to build Conway's capacity to address housing issues by funding needed plans and studies and/or hiring an additional planning staff or coordinator position with a focus on housing and economic development.

GOAL C-4: Promote a Diverse Economy that Supports Conway's Year-Round Community

CHALLENGE:

Conway's economy is highly dependent on recreational tourism. While some of Conway's major employers, including Memorial Hospital, are not part of the recreational tourism economy, much of Conway's economic activity is associated with recreational tourism and visitation. As Conway's economy continues to evolve, there is a need to ensure that a variety of industries can grow and thrive. This goal is especially important because of Conway's status as a regional economic center; Conway accounts for about 1/5 of Carroll County's population and supports about 1/3 of the businesses and jobs in the county.


(Photo: Wiseguy Creative)

STRATEGIES:

C-4.1: Support the efforts of the Mount Washington Valley Economic Council to diversify the region's economy and encourage new business development.

C-4.2: Update and strengthen the town's Business Guide.

- Consider offering annual or bi-annual workshops for new businesses and prospective business owners to learn about relevant regulations and opportunities for support.

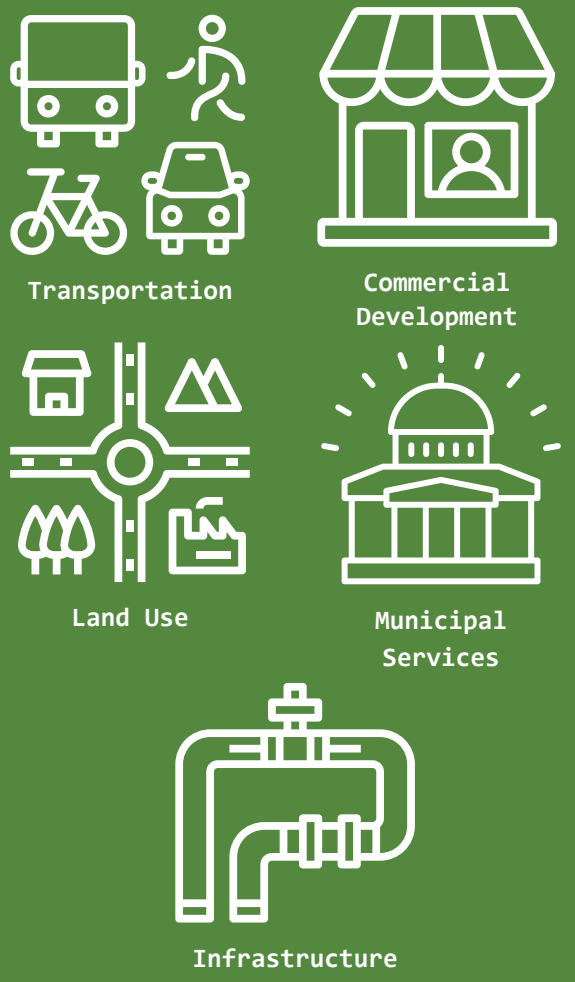
C-4.3: Pursue creative ways to support economic activity in Conway's village centers.

- Community events, festivals, and "shop local" initiatives can all help spur economic activity in Conway's village centers. Create a guide and dedicated webpage for individuals and groups looking to host an event in Conway.



D. Steward Conway's Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



THE SENSITIVE NATURAL RESOURCES UPON WHICH CONWAY RELIES SHOULD BE STEWARDED, PROTECTED, AND ENHANCED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE TOWN AND THE ECOLOGICAL HEALTH OF THE MOUNT WASHINGTON VALLEY.

Introduction



This chapter presents goals and strategies for conserving and enhancing natural resources in Conway, including water resources, critical habitats, and farmland. It also includes strategies related to managing flood risk and balancing future development with environmental considerations.

The Town of Conway is indelibly shaped by its natural resources. Rivers and streams form the valleys where much of the Town resides. Scenic mountain vistas line the major thoroughfares and conserved lands host critical habitats as well as outdoor recreation opportunities that draw many to visit or reside here. Productive local aquifers provide all the Town's drinking water. Throughout the Master Plan process, residents clearly expressed the importance of stewarding these resources for the future health of the community.

Conway is a town with many environmental sensitivities. It is located at the confluence of two major river corridors that form the gateway to a large mountainous region, with elevations ranging from just 400 feet along the Saco River to over 6,000 feet at the summit of Mount Washington. The region's topographic and climactic zones support a variety of ecosystems and habitats that are interconnected through an increasingly fragile series of corridors. The health and connectivity of these habitats are threatened by development as well as changing climatic conditions. Maintaining intact wildlife migration corridors has become a key climate resiliency strategy for conservation organizations with anticipated northward species migrations.

Rivers and streams like the Saco and Swift are dynamic ecosystems, with channels moving and changing over time from continual erosion and periodic flood events. When human development encroaches on these riverine systems, it often negatively impacts both the natural resource and the development. In the Mount Washington Valley, these impacts are compounded by steep and mountainous terrain and by a changing climate



where the frequency and severity of precipitation events are both increasing.

The future of Conway's environmental, social, and economic health will be heavily dependent on the stewardship of natural resources and adaptation to a changing climate. This will necessitate thoughtful land use regulation, careful planning for municipal infrastructure, and coordination with local and regional conservation partners.

Desired Outcomes

- Conway maintains healthy groundwater aquifers and provides a high-quality municipal water supply.
- Surface water quality is protected.
- Future development is resilient to increasing flood risks and minimally impacts natural habitats.
- Areas of ecological significance are conserved.
- Farmland is environmentally healthy and economically viable.
- Conserved wildlife corridors facilitate species migration in the face of a changing climate.

GOAL D-1: Protect & Enhance Conway's Critical Water Resources

CHALLENGE #1:

Conway's drinking water resources face threats to water quality, such as increased impervious surface and over-reliance on private septic systems. All drinking water in Conway comes from local groundwater aquifers within Town boundaries. While there are many benefits to this level of local control, the Town must thoughtfully manage the use and protection of these groundwater resources to ensure that safe drinking water is provided in perpetuity.

There is also an overreliance on private wells and water systems in Conway. Many current residential subdivisions are served by private individual wells or private community water systems. Private individual wells need wellhead buffer areas of a certain size for long-term viability, requiring larger lot sizes for residential subdivisions. Private community water systems can enable a greater density of development; however, most existing private community water systems in Conway have significant issues with substandard capacity or infrastructure condition, and these systems are often cost-prohibitive for new development.

STRATEGIES:

D-1.1: Consider expanding municipal water systems to reduce reliance on private wells and community water systems.

D-1.2: Provide protections for key groundwater recharge areas and consider strategies to limit or reduce the impact of development in these areas.

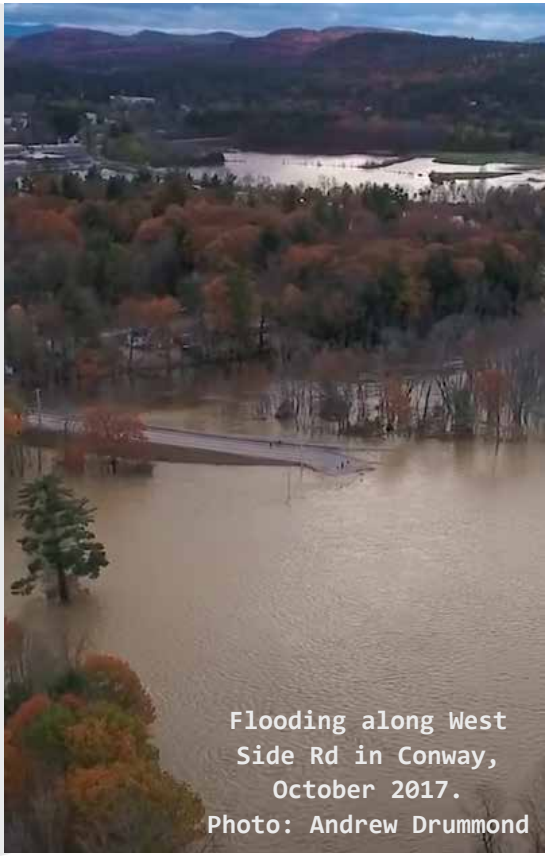
D-1.3: Include future increases in costs for water purification and regulatory compliance into long-term operational and capital planning for water treatment facilities.


Photo: Wiseguy Creative

CHALLENGE #2:

Conway's surface waters face development pressures and increasing flood risks. Development in river and lake shoreland areas in Conway has resulted in an increase in impervious surfaces and a loss of riparian vegetation buffers, which leads to higher levels of runoff and erosion in waterbodies. Along river and stream corridors, there is an added flood risk for buildings and infrastructure – a risk that is increasing with more frequent severe precipitation events.

A 2017 Dartmouth College study identified a 53% increase in the frequency of severe precipitation events in northern New England from 1996 to 2014. A follow-up Dartmouth study completed in 2021 projects an additional 52% increase in severe precipitation events by 2099. Conway has experienced notable flood events in recent years, including 2023.



Flooding along West Side Rd in Conway, October 2017. Photo: Andrew Drummond

STRATEGIES:

D-1.4: Consider low-impact development measures for managing stormwater in new developments, including reduced impervious surface areas and enhanced on-site stormwater retention and detention.

D-1.5: Consider further limiting vegetation clearing in shoreland and river corridor areas.

D.1.6: Revaluate shoreland and floodplain-related overlay district boundaries and standards for river and stream corridors to account for changing flood risks and meandering river and stream channels.

- Consider going beyond FEMA-identified flood hazard areas in designating overlay district boundaries.

D.1.7: Proactively upgrade river and stream crossing infrastructure (culverts and bridges) to increase flood resiliency, minimize impacts on stream health, and provide safe wildlife crossings.

D-1.8: Support efforts to improve riparian buffers and streambank stability through plantings and other natural techniques.

D-1.9: Support efforts to address the goals, priorities, and management issues identified in the 2023 *Saco River and Swift River Corridor Management Plan*.

GOAL D-2: Conserve Open Spaces and Keep Them Connected

CHALLENGE:

Ecologically sensitive areas of Conway face development and climate pressures. While Conway's forested valleys and hills provide valuable habitats and help form its picturesque aesthetic, these areas can also be desirable for future residential development. In recent decades, significant residential development has occurred in previously undeveloped rural areas of the Town. The Town will need to identify an approach to conserving critical wildlife corridors and high-value habitat areas while thoughtfully managing future development.

STRATEGIES:

D-1.9: Update the Town's 1996 Natural Resource Inventory, including providing information on key wildlife corridors. Wildlife corridors provide key linkages between ecological habitat areas and support northward species migration as climates warm.

D-1.10: Consider preparing a Town Open Space and Connectivity Plan that articulates local priorities for conserving lands with high ecological, scenic, and/or recreational value. Such a plan could be informed by existing land conservation priorities of organizations like the Conway Conservation Commission, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, White Mountain National Forest, and the Mount Washington Valley Trails Association.

D-1.11: Encourage and enable infill development in village and commercial areas to reduce development pressure in more ecologically sensitive rural areas.



Source: New Hampshire Fish & Game Wildlife Corridors Map (2021).

Interconnected wildlife corridors are critical for species health. Areas in green on the map represent high priority habitat blocks of 50 or more acres, as identified by NH Fish & Game. Areas in orange and yellow represent potential wildlife corridor connections between habitat blocks. Additional local studies can help verify the on-the-ground location of critical wildlife corridors.

D. Steward Conway's Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces

D-1.12: Consider amending the Town's cluster housing development provisions using "conservation subdivision" standards where a minimum percentage of the subdivided area is set aside for conservation.

- Encourage subdivision design that limits habitat fragmentation, maintains wildlife corridors and connections to recreational lands, and protects water quality.
- Continue to require cluster housing to be connected to municipal water and sewer.
- Consider additional subdivision standards to reduce habitat segmentation, such as limiting driveway length, encouraging shared driveways, and clustering housing units on smaller-sized lots.
- Consider removing standards requiring additional land area for duplexes and removing standards that restrict the types of housing units allowed.
- Consider adopting a subdivision review process that begins with a review of natural resources and proposed conservation set-aside area(s) before further designs are reviewed.

D-1.13: In rural and/or ecologically sensitive areas, consider adopting "minimum developable area" standards to ensure there is a suitable land area for development within a parcel when natural resource factors (e.g., wetlands, steep slopes, flood hazard areas) are considered.

D-1.14: Consider creating a conservation-oriented zoning district or overlay district that can be applied to lands with high ecological sensitivity and importance in partnership with landowners and/or conservation organizations (see Future Land Use Map).

D-1.15: Support efforts to permanently conserve lands with high ecological sensitivity and importance, as well as lands that host important recreational trail connections.



Conservation-oriented subdivision design can promote residential development that is less impactful to natural resources. Source: Better Town Toolkit

GOAL D-3: Sustain Healthy Local Farmland and Working Landscapes

CHALLENGE:

Modern farming operations experience various pressures that can affect their viability. Local farms are beloved in Conway; however, they are not immune from climate impacts and real estate market pressures. High land prices can encourage farmers to sell their lands to residential developers, and increasing severity and frequency of major precipitation events can result in crop loss and the loss of farmland to erosion.



Farmland bordering the Saco River in East Conway and Fryeburg, ME

STRATEGIES:

D-1.16: Support efforts for the long-term preservation of farmland and working lands in Conway, such as agricultural easements.

D-1.17: Support efforts to improve riparian buffers and stream bank stability adjacent to farms through plantings and other natural techniques to reduce runoff and loss of farmland to erosion.

D-1.18: Require appropriate buffers and screening for new residential developments adjacent to existing farms.

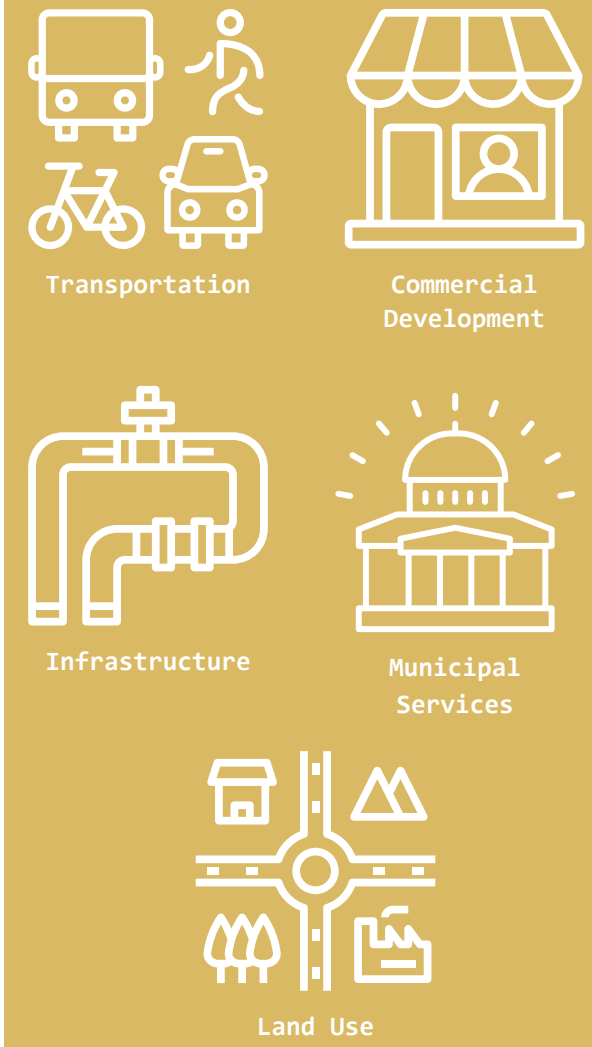
D-1.19: Ensure that land use regulations reflect the unique operations of agricultural businesses.

- For example, road standards should not preclude the development of access roads that are needed for farm operations.



E. Support Conway's Arts, Culture, & Historic Character

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



CONWAY VALUES ITS ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY, WHICH SUPPORT A VIBRANT AND DYNAMIC COMMUNITY AND FOSTER SOCIAL COHESION. NEW POLICIES THAT SUPPORT PUBLIC ART, PLACEMAKING, ARTS/CULTURAL EVENTS, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ALL HELP CONWAY'S VILLAGES THRIVE AS CULTURAL HUBS FOR THE COMMUNITY.

Introduction

This chapter presents goals and strategies related to Conway's arts, culture, and historic character. Artistic and cultural activities play a crucial role in bringing a community together and fostering friendships, dialogue, and cultural exchange. Many community organizations contribute to arts and cultural life in Conway, including the Conway Public Library, local schools, and community centers. Arts events like the Arts Jubilee and community events like Mudbowl help make Conway a more vibrant and exciting place to live and visit. Conway's culture is strongly influenced by its natural environment and excellent access to the outdoors. Conway residents also value the community's historic buildings and neighborhoods and classic New England village feel.

Through public engagement conducted during the Master Plan process, community members have expressed a desire for more cultural events, artistic offerings, and opportunities in Conway, including museums, live music venues, artwalks, and collaborative arts projects. The community has also expressed interest in teen centers and other opportunities that would improve social cohesion. There is an opportunity to support arts, culture, and historic character through a variety of local actions, including amendments to town zoning and site plan regulations that would encourage more pedestrian-friendly environments in Conway's villages. Pedestrian-oriented places help draw people to arts events and installations and create opportunities for cultural exchange.

Potential recommendations to support arts and culture in Conway include creating a Public Art & Placemaking policy, supporting village-style development, encouraging opportunities for artists to live in Conway, promoting local arts events and activities, managing local recreation and sports-oriented events, and encouraging arts uses in industrial areas.





Desired Outcomes

- Conway residents can express themselves and build community through local arts opportunities.
- Conway hosts a variety of cultural and artistic events and opportunities in music, dance, theater, visual art, writing and spoken word, and/or film.
- Cultural events and activities in Conway celebrate different ethnicities, traditions, and histories.
- Conway's village centers serve as inviting venues for arts and cultural events.
- Public art installations add flair and vibrancy to Conway's villages.
- Visitors to Conway are drawn to Conway's arts, culture, and historic character as well as its natural environment and retail businesses.
- Updates to Town ordinances support the adaptive reuse of historic structures and the preservation of historic/heritage areas.
- Town land use policies support thriving, pedestrian-oriented village centers.
- The Town supports community events and organizations.
- The process for organizing an arts or cultural event in Conway is straightforward.

GOAL E-1: Ensure that Conway's Villages & Neighborhoods Support Arts & Cultural Activities and Businesses

CHALLENGE:

Conway's land use policies do not necessarily prevent arts and cultural activities, but they do not currently provide explicit support for these activities in town. The land use code currently prevents village-style development, a type of development that helps sustain artistic economies. In a pedestrian-friendly village environment, residents and visitors can easily walk between destinations, exploring different galleries, museums, studios, and theaters. Residents and visitors are much more likely to notice, appreciate, and stop by these places if they are located in a walkable area. Village-style development can also support vibrant public spaces, such as parks, plazas, and outdoor venues. These spaces can serve as important community gathering areas and artistic venues; they can also contribute to the community's identity and sense of place. Some communities have instituted Arts Districts or Creative Districts to formally encourage artistic life and revitalize downtown areas.

STRATEGIES:

E-1.1: Pursue changes to Conway's land use code that encourage compact, village-style development that supports artistic businesses and uses.

- Update the use tables for applicable zoning districts to ensure that artistic businesses (e.g., studios, galleries, theaters) are allowed in Conway's villages. See the Future Land Use Map for further details on this recommendation.
- Reduce or eliminate onerous parking requirements that allow only sprawling, suburban-style development.





Star Dancers by Dale Rogers, part of the Settlers Green Public Art Walk. Photo: OVP Management

E-1.2: Support artistic uses in Conway's industrial areas and areas zoned for light industry. Support low-intensity artistic uses in Conway's residential areas.

- Update the use tables for applicable zoning districts to ensure that artistic businesses (e.g., studios, galleries, theaters) are allowed in Conway's industrial areas. Encourage larger artist studios and artists using heavy machinery to locate in industrial zones. See the Future Land Use Map for further details on this recommendation.
- Consider allowing low-intensity artistic uses (e.g., artist studios) in residential areas of Conway as a conditional use.

E-1.3: Create a Public Art & Placemaking policy that encourages and regulates the development of murals, sculptures, and other art installations in town.

- Encourage public art as a component of commercial (re)development projects. Consider using a percent-for-art program to devote a portion of capital costs to the provision of public art.

E-1.4: Support vibrant public spaces in Conway.

- Encourage the development of parks, pocket parks, plazas, and other public spaces that provide gathering spaces for the community and potential venues for artistic and cultural events.
- Encourage pop-up events such as block parties that enable residents to use streets and other public spaces for community events.

GOAL E-2: Protect Historic Structures & Neighborhoods in Conway

CHALLENGE:

Conway has many historic structures but currently provides few resources and regulations regarding adaptive reuse. Over time, the community has lost some historic structures to redevelopment. For example, the Homestead Restaurant, which was built in 1792 and was a stop on the Underground Railroad, was demolished and replaced with an AutoZone in 2016.

STRATEGIES:

E-2.1: Create an Adaptive Reuse policy and town guidance that encourages and regulates the conversion of historic structures to new uses that support the Town's goals and needs.

- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures for housing. Consider offering incentives (e.g., expedited review processes or fee waivers) for adaptive reuse projects that would create housing for Conway residents.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of industrial spaces for artists and creative enterprises.
- Ensure that this policy aims to recognize and preserve Conway's many different histories (e.g., Abenaki and indigenous history, early settlement history, the Underground Railroad, and industrial history).
- Capitalize on adaptive reuse grant opportunities.

E-2.2: Support the designation and protection of historic buildings and structures in Conway.

- Encourage property owners to nominate potential historic properties to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources for inclusion in the State Register of Historic Places and/or National Register of Historic Places. See the Architecture & Historic Character memo in Appendix B for a review of existing properties with historic designations in Conway.
- The Town Historic District Commission should resume its inventory of historic structures in Conway to promote their protection.

E-2.3: Institute protections for historic buildings in Conway, such as a demolition delay ordinance.

E-2.4: Consider creating Neighborhood Heritage Districts for distinctive areas of Conway, such as Redstone.

- Engage the public in the process of designating such a district.
- See the Architecture & Historic Character memo in Appendix B for discussion of the distinction between historic districts and heritage districts.

E-2.5: Educate the public on the value of Conway's historic resources to build interest in and appreciation for the Town's unique history.

- Encourage interpretive signage around town explaining Conway's history and the significance of key buildings. Partner with Conway Historical Society to create this signage and any parallel educational efforts.
- Encourage local schools to conduct field trips to historic sites in Conway.
- Support efforts to conduct tours of historic homes and/or neighborhoods.



A small monument marks the entrance to Redstone Village.

A demolition delay ordinance is a regulatory measure designed to protect historically or architecturally significant structures from immediate demolition.

This ordinance typically requires property owners to notify local authorities of their intent to demolish a building, triggering a waiting period or "delay" before the demolition can proceed.

The purpose of this delay is to provide an opportunity for the town to assess the historical or architectural value of the structure and explore alternatives to demolition, such as adaptive reuse or preservation efforts.



Photo of office building in a converted residential home in Conway Village.

Adaptive reuse refers to the practice of repurposing existing buildings or structures for a different use than what they were originally designed for, while retaining their historic features and/or façades. The goal of adaptive reuse is to breathe new life into old buildings, preserving the building's historic features while adapting the interior to accommodate a new function. Adaptive reuse can help prevent demolition or extensive renovation, which may result in the loss of the building's historical character. Adaptive reuse promotes sustainability by reducing the need for new construction and minimizing the environmental impact associated with demolition and disposal of building materials. Some examples of adaptive reuse include converting old factories into apartments, turning warehouses into office spaces, and transforming churches into housing.

GOAL E-3: Support Arts & Cultural Events in Conway

CHALLENGE #1:

Conway does not currently provide clear, accessible information on how to host an event in the community. The Town requires permitting for certain special events, and events held within the North Conway Water Precinct or the Conway Village Fire District require separate written approval from the fire departments within those jurisdictions. It is unclear whether and how this policy will change given the recent dissolution of the Conway Village Fire District.

STRATEGIES:

E-3.1: Ensure that the permitting process for events is fair and simple. Provide a guide or other resources to individuals and groups seeking to organize an artistic and/or cultural event in Conway.

- Communicate that the town is supportive of arts events and activities.
- Provide assistance to community members and organizations seeking to put on a local event.





CHALLENGE #2:

The Conway community generally wants more arts and cultural opportunities. During this Master Plan process, Conway residents have voiced support for more arts and cultural activities and opportunities. For example, at the March 2023 Open House, participants voiced support for more museums, purpose-built live music venues, artwalks, guided tours of old homes, and community arts opportunities for teens.

STRATEGIES:

E-3.2: Encourage local corporate sponsorship of arts events and programs.

E-3.3: Partner with local care facilities, schools, and other institutions to provide transportation to community events.

E-3.4: Support grant applications to the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts (NHSCA) that would increase the frequency and variety of arts opportunities in Conway.

E-3.5: Provide opportunities for Conway residents to participate in community events and activities year-round.

- Employ strategies from the 8 80 Cities Winter Placemaking Guide to make Conway an inviting, inclusive place to live and visit in the winter months.

GOAL E-4:

Encourage Opportunities for Artists, Teachers, and Makers to Live in Conway

CHALLENGE:

Like other members of the workforce, artists and makers need places to live in Conway that they can afford. Artists, makers, and teachers are critical members of the community who contribute to the vibrancy and cohesion of the town.

STRATEGIES:

E-4.1: In addition to the recommendations stated in the Land Use and Housing chapters, consider allowing live-work or cooperative housing types, which are often appealing to artists.



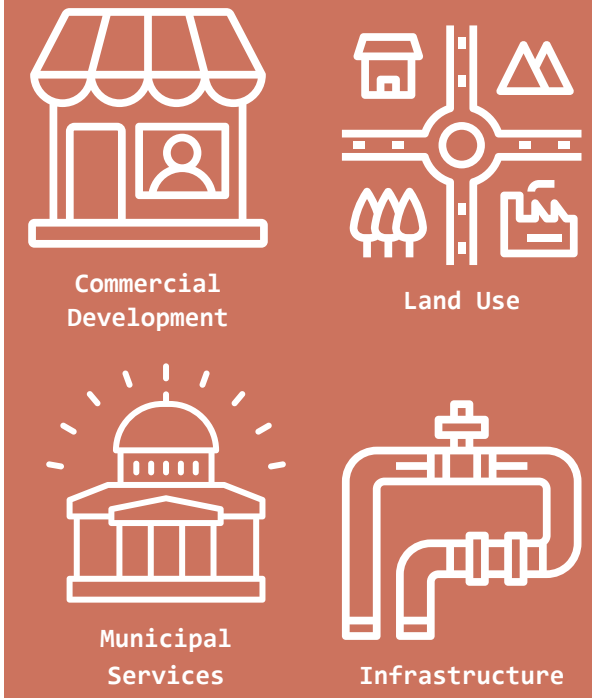
CASE STUDY: ARTIST HOUSING IN BURLINGTON, VT

The Rose Street Artists Cooperative, created in Burlington in 1998, provides 12 designated affordable apartments and a gallery/common space to its members. The co-op is operated by the Champlain Housing Trust and provides dedicated housing for artists in the community. The co-op is located in a former bakery and is also an example of adaptive reuse.



F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



TRAVELING THROUGH CONWAY SHOULD BE SAFE, CONVENIENT, AND COMFORTABLE FOR ALL MODES OF TRANSPORTATION – DRIVING, WALKING, BICYCLING, AND OTHERS.

Introduction

This chapter presents goals and strategies for improving transportation options for Conway residents, including strategies for addressing transportation infrastructure and services. It also includes strategies related to land use regulation, as local development patterns have a significant impact on what transportation options are available and convenient for residents.

Conway's transportation system is reflective of its unique geography, development, and economy. As a gateway to the White Mountains and a regional service hub, Conway experiences significant influxes of workers and visitors, with the slopes of the Mount Washington Valley funneling regional traffic onto a handful of state and federal highways. Unlike most towns of its size that have a single downtown area, Conway has multiple village areas and commercial hubs. Within each of these areas, the Town must contend with how to balance heavy regional traffic with local transportation safety and convenience needs.

Through the Master Plan process, residents clearly articulated a desire for improved pedestrian and bicycle safety in Conway, as well as continued attention towards managing traffic congestion. Improving multi-modal transportation options – walking, bicycling, and public transportation – can help alleviate congestion by providing residents with alternatives to driving for local trips. Given that the primary highways through Conway are managed by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), continued collaboration between the Town and State will be critical to implementing local transportation solutions.





Desired Outcomes

- Conway's villages are more safe and comfortable for pedestrians and wheelchair users.
- Commercial areas are more easily navigated by drivers and pedestrians.
- Bicycling between Conway's villages is safer, more comfortable, and more convenient.
- A wider range of public transportation services are available to residents.
- Traffic congestion is managed and monitored.

Recent And Planned Projects

RECENT PROJECTS:

- The Mount Washington Valley Rec Path, a multi-use path connecting Redstone and North Conway (2023).
- Main Street in Conway Village was reconstructed with improved sidewalks (2022).

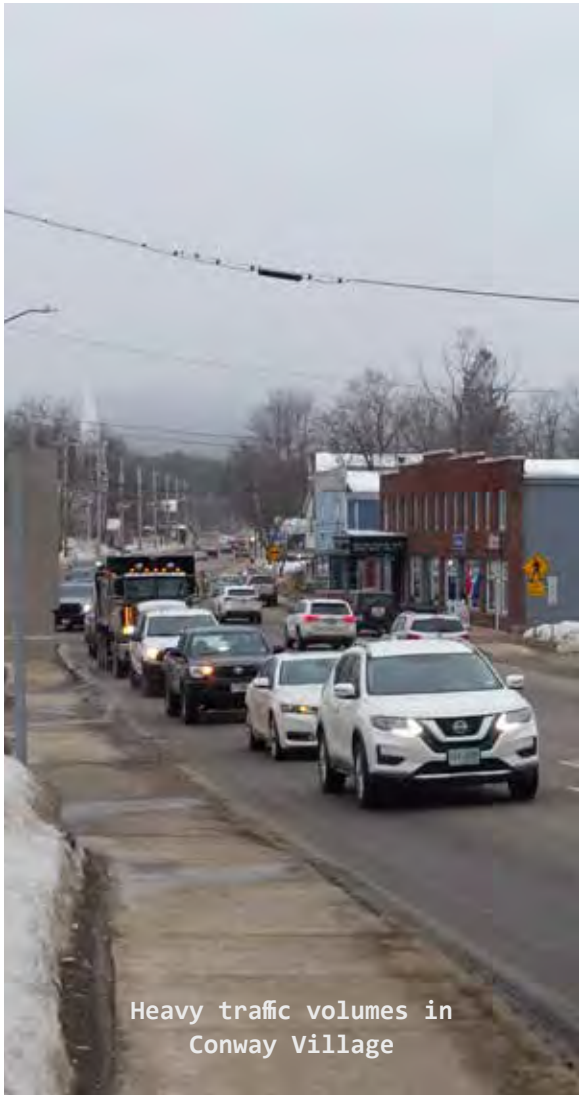
PLANNED PROJECTS:

- Reconstruction of roadway and sidewalks along NH 16 from Washington Street to the NH 113 intersection, upgrading the NH 16/Washington St/Pleasant St traffic signal, and realignment of the NH 16/NH 113 intersection.
- Construction of a roundabout at the intersection of US 302 and East Conway Road.
- The Mount Washington Valley Trails Association secured funding in 2023 to extend the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path to Intervale.

GOAL F-1: Manage Traffic Congestion Following Recent And Planned Transportation Infrastructure Projects

CHALLENGE:

Conway has longstanding traffic congestion issues, particularly in Conway Village. Conway is a regional traffic bottleneck, with multiple key state and federal highways converging in village areas. There have been various attempts to address traffic congestion over the years, including a proposed bypass of NH Route 16 around Conway's villages. Intersection upgrades have been completed at the junction of NH 16, Washington St, and Pleasant St, and upgrades are planned for the intersection of NH 16 and East Main St.



Heavy traffic volumes in Conway Village

STRATEGIES:

F-1.1: Monitor before and after traffic flow following intersection improvements in Conway Village.

- Coordinate with NHDOT and North Country Council to monitor traffic volumes, turning movements, and delays.
- Coordinate with NHDOT regarding traffic signal timing enhancements as needed.

F-1.2: Designate North-South Rd as a parkway and draft an ordinance to limit curb cuts and impervious surfaces along the roadway.

- The North-South Road was constructed as a bypass to "The Strip" (NH 16/US 302); restricting additional access points will help limit potential congestion along this key local road.

GOAL F-2: Improve Walkability In Village Centers And Commercial Areas

CHALLENGE #1:

Heavy regional traffic and wide roadways in villages discourage walking. There needs to be a balance between regional traffic and the safety and comfort of pedestrians in walkable village areas. While North Conway Village and Conway Village feature extensive sidewalks, there are minimal protections for pedestrians crossing busy roadways.



Pedestrians crossing NH 16/US 302 in North Conway Village.

During peak times of the year, traffic along "The Strip" (NH 16/US 302) can exceed 20,000 cars per day, a volume of traffic typically associated with towns with much larger populations.

NH 16/US 302 in North Conway Village has a curb-to-curb width of nearly 80 feet in places. Combined with heavy traffic, this distance discourages people from crossing the road on foot, particularly families with children and residents with limited mobility.

During the process to develop the Master Plan, residents expressed a strong desire to see Conway's village centers become more pedestrian- and wheelchair-friendly.



Water and sewer line infrastructure projects can be an opportunity to upgrade transportation infrastructure as well, as these projects typically involve digging up a roadway to access buried lines. Pictured is Mascoma Street in Lebanon, NH. The City of Lebanon used a water and sewer improvement project as an opportunity to add a sidewalk along this busy residential street.

STRATEGIES:

F-2.1: FIND SHORT-TERM, LOW-COST PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS FOR CONWAY'S VILLAGES.

- Examples of relatively low-cost pedestrian safety improvements include painting high-visibility crosswalks, "yield to pedestrian" signs at crosswalks, temporary curb extensions at crosswalks, and/or rectangular rapid flashing beacons.

F-2.2: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BEAUTIFYING VILLAGE STREETSCAPES.

- This could include lower-cost improvements, such as planter boxes and public art, as well as adding street trees and landscaping as part of larger infrastructure improvement projects.

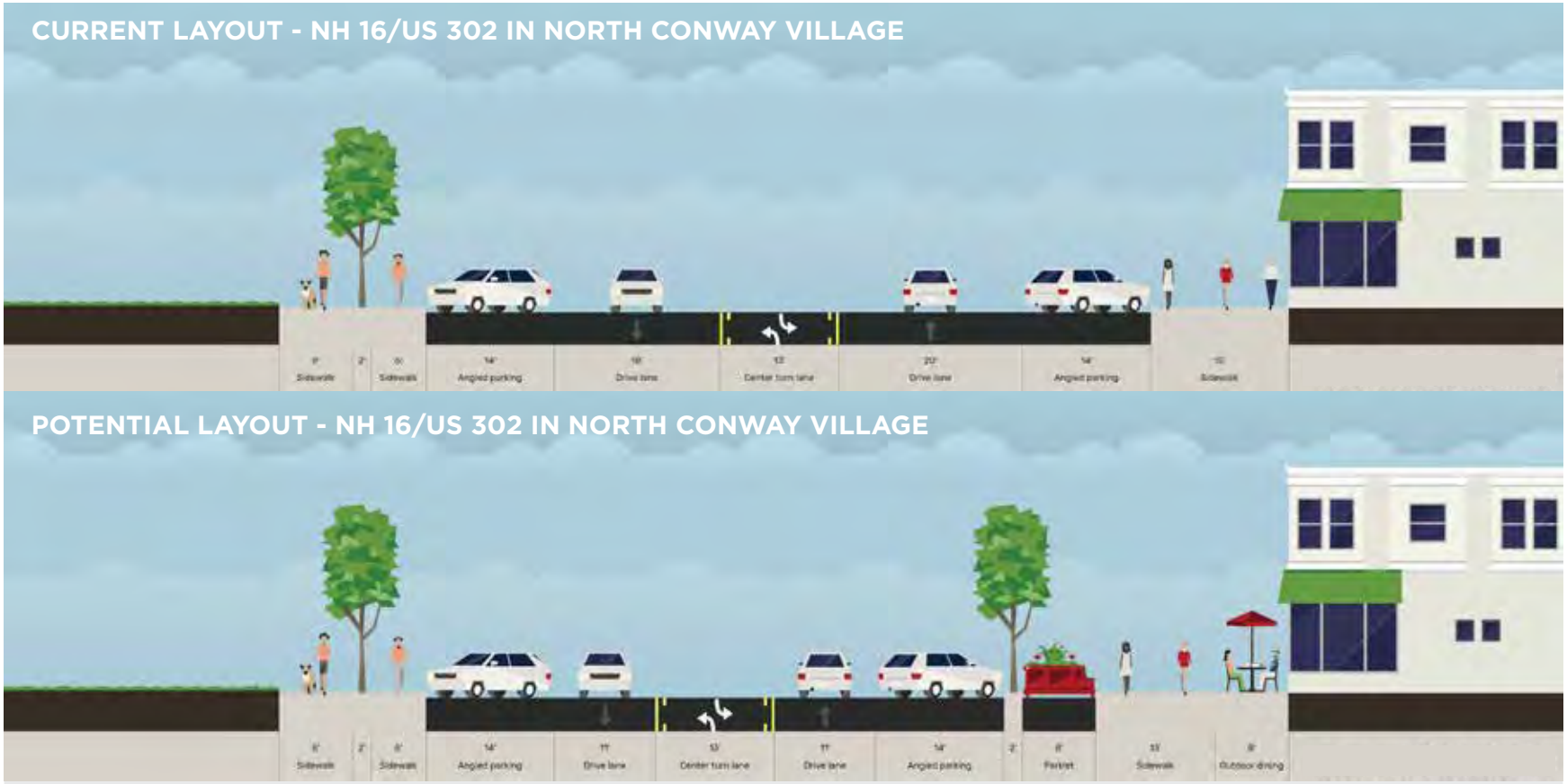
F-2.3: ADDRESS GAPS IN THE SIDEWALK NETWORK.

- There are three significant gaps in the regional sidewalk network in Conway: 1) between the Intervale area and Memorial Hospital, 2) along NH 16 between "The Strip" and Conway Village, and 3) along US 302 in the village area of Center Conway. Some residential streets in village areas lack sidewalks as well.
- Potential funding strategies include federal infrastructure grants, creating a local capital reserve fund, conditions of development approvals, and incorporating sidewalks into other infrastructure improvement projects (e.g., road reconstruction, water/sewer infrastructure expansion).

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

F-2.4: EXPLORE LONG-TERM PEDESTRIAN SAFETY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FOR CONWAY'S VILLAGES.

- Consider spot improvements at key intersections such as curb extensions, pedestrian refuge medians, and/or improved crosswalk lighting.
- In partnership with NHDOT, explore reducing the overall width of NH 16/US 302 in North Conway Village by reducing excessive travel lane widths, calming vehicular traffic, and increasing the width of sidewalks. This could also help create public spaces for outdoor dining, pocket parks, and other public uses.



Current and potential roadway layouts for NH 16/US 302 in North Conway Village. By reducing excessively wide travel lanes, new public spaces could be created that add to the safety, enjoyment, and vibrancy of the village.

F-2.5: CREATE SAFER WALKING ROUTES TO SCHOOL.

- Assess popular walking routes and identify opportunities for spot improvements (e.g., crosswalk enhancements, wayfinding signage) or new pedestrian connections.
- Evaluate crosswalks on Main Street at Conway Elementary School and Kennett Middle School and consider crosswalk enhancements such as additional pedestrian signage or rapid-flashing beacons.



Crosswalk enhancements, such as the centerline YIELD signs and rapid flashing beacons, pictured above, can significantly improve driver awareness of crossing pedestrians. These enhancements are typically used at "mid-block" crosswalks where there are no stop signs or traffic signals to stop vehicular traffic.



CHALLENGE #2:

Current development patterns and zoning regulations contribute to a lack of walkability. Conway's villages provide a mix of homes, businesses, and other uses in relatively close proximity to one another – making these areas more convenient to walk from place to place than other areas of town. When considering potential zoning changes, there should be an emphasis on promoting compact development with a mix of uses in village areas and areas where infill development is desired, such as "The Strip".



An example of pedestrian-friendly building design along Washington Street.

STRATEGIES:

F-2.6: Revise zoning to promote walkable development patterns within and adjacent to village areas.

F-2.7: Revise zoning to promote mixed-use infill development within existing commercial areas.

F-2.8: Include pedestrian-friendly design standards in zoning.

F-2.9: Revise zoning to encourage shared parking and "right-size" minimum parking requirements in different zoning districts to limit excessively large parking lots, which can discourage walking.

F-2.10: Update Town roadway design standards using Complete Street principles.

- "Complete Streets" means considering the needs of all roadway users (drivers, pedestrians, wheelchair users, bicyclists, etc) in roadway design.

F-2.11: Revise subdivision regulations to encourage pedestrian and bicycle connections between adjacent residential subdivisions.

GOAL F-3: Improve Transportation Safety And Access In Commercial Areas

CHALLENGE:

Conway's commercial areas are difficult to navigate. In particular, commercial development along "The Strip" (NH 16/US 302) features disconnected shopping areas, frequent driveway intersections, and inconsistent sidewalks.


An example of a boulevard-style highway in Topsham, ME

STRATEGIES:

F-3.1: Develop a comprehensive corridor study for "The Strip" that develops new streetscape designs that improve vehicular traffic and bike safety, walkability and pedestrian access, and commercial access management along NH 16/US 302.

F-3.2: Consider potential long-term options for a redesign of "The Strip", including "boulevard-ing" NH 16/US 302 with center medians and landscaping.

- This would likely need to be done in partnership with NHDOT through the New Hampshire Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan ("Ten Year Plan") or another federal funding program.

F-3.3: Encourage improved connectivity within and between adjacent shopping areas, commercial developments, and residential areas along "The Strip".

- This could include the construction of new driveways that allow drivers to avoid re-entering NH 16/US 302, as well as new sidewalk connections that allow people to park once and walk to multiple destinations. This can be encouraged through zoning and site plan regulations.
- Explore opportunities for trail connections between residential areas, accomodations, and commercial destinations.

GOAL F-4: Improve Bicycle Connectivity Between Different Areas Of Town

CHALLENGE:

The bicycle routes between Conway's villages are along high-traffic roadways. The Mount Washington Valley Rec Path provides a safe and comfortable bicycle route from Redstone to North Conway Village; however, no equivalent bicycle connections exist between other village areas. Additionally, there is a lack of alternatives to biking along primary highways such as NH 16, US 302, and NH 113 to connect between villages.



Most bicyclists are not comfortable riding along busy highways, such as US 302 in Redstone.

According to research conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, the vast majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable sharing the road with higher traffic volumes unless there is some level of physical separation from traffic (i.e., riding on a separate bike path such as the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path).

During the process of developing the Master Plan, residents expressed a desire for improved bicycle connectivity between Conway's village centers.



Mount Washington Valley Rec Path (courtesy MWVTA)

STRATEGIES:

F-4.1: Extend the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path to Intervale.

F-4.2: Explore opportunities for improving bicycle connections to the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path.

- This could include connections to Settler's Green and other destinations adjacent to the path.

F-4.3: Connect the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path to the planned Mountain Division Rail Trail in Fryeburg.

- This planned rail trail will connect Fryeburg, ME to Portland, ME using the Mountain Division line that currently runs through Center Conway and Redstone. The route would connect Center Conway and Redstone directly to the Rec Path.

F-4.4: Identify other opportunities for alternative bicycle connections between villages and other key destinations.

- Consider the role of the Town in implementing the recommended trail connection projects identified in the Mount Washington Valley Off-Road Trails Plan, prepared by the Mount Washington Valley Trails Association.
- Evaluate other potential path or trail connections between residential areas and recreation destinations.
- Evaluate potential "rail-with-trail" possibilities along the rail line owned by Conway Scenic Railroad between North Conway and Conway Village, which would also create a safe route to Kennett Middle School.

F-4.5: Identify opportunities for improved bicycle parking, including new public bicycle racks and revising zoning to encourage bicycle parking as part of new developments, including covered bicycle parking.

GOAL F-5: Explore Options For Improved Public Transportation Services

CHALLENGE:

Public transportation options are limited in Conway. There is currently no public bus service in the Mount Washington Valley other than the Concord Coach Line, which is not suitable for local or commuter use. There are several low-cost dial-a-ride services (e.g., Tri-County Transit, Gibson Center for Senior Services) that are focused on senior and limited-mobility residents but are also available to the general public in Conway. Tri-County Transit previously operated the Blue Loon commuter bus, which provided service to Conway and adjacent towns, but was unable to sustain the service.

STRATEGIES:

F-5.1: Explore possible microtransit solutions for Conway.

- Microtransit is an emerging transit innovation that involves on-demand bus or shuttle services with highly flexible routing and scheduling. This allows microtransit services to potentially succeed in more rural areas where traditional bus service is not viable. Public/private partnerships with large employers could be examined.

F-5.2: Promote carpooling/ridesharing.

- Encourage participation by employers in CommuteSmartNH programs and explore opportunities for regional employer carpooling and ridesharing programs with organizations such as the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce, Mount Washington Valley Economic Council, and Carroll County Regional Coordination Council.

F-5.3: Explore opportunities for improved school transportation services.

GOAL F-6: Manage Parking Effectively



In 2018, the Town of Littleton, NH completed a comprehensive Downtown Parking Plan. The planning process included an ad-hoc citizen committee, a study of parking occupancy, and a public open house.

The plan includes recommendations for expanding parking facilities, improving signage, encouraging turnover in high-demand parking areas, and strategies for funding ongoing parking management.

CHALLENGE:

The Town lacks a comprehensive strategy for managing parking demand in village areas.

STRATEGIES:

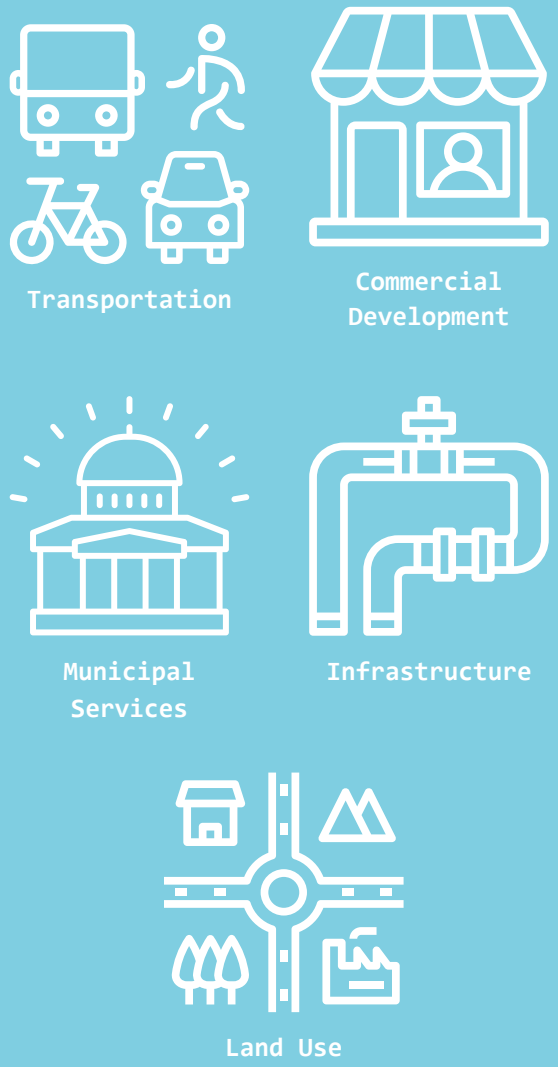
F-6.1: Implement a comprehensive parking management approach for existing public parking in village areas.

- Consider conducting a basic study of parking occupancy of public parking areas at different times of day, days of the week, and/or times of year.
- Informed by a study of parking, consider approaches for parking management that address parking duration, navigation and wayfinding, employee parking, pedestrian access, enforcement, and electric vehicle parking.
- Consider strategies for decreasing parking demand, such as improved pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation connections that allow residents and visitors to reach popular destinations without a car.
- Promote a “park once” experience for visitors to villages and shopping areas.



G. Steward Conway's World-Class Recreational Opportunities

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



CONWAY PROVIDES HIGH-QUALITY, DIVERSE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS THROUGHOUT ALL FOUR SEASONS.

Introduction



This chapter outlines the long-term vision, goals, and guidelines for the development, enhancement, and management of recreational resources within Conway, balancing the diverse needs of both residents and tourists. This serves as a roadmap for the sustainable development and management of recreational resources, facilities, and programs ensuring that they align with community values, promote well-being, and contribute to the overall livability of Conway.

Conway is well-served by municipal recreation facilities & programs. There are no major gaps in the overall availability of recreational facilities. Overall, municipal recreation facilities are in a good state of repair and the town is meeting demand for recreation programs. Programs are available for all ages, from pre-kindergarten to senior residents, and include sports like basketball and pickleball. The recreation department offers a variety of transportation options to ensure access to programs.

Conway also serves as the geographic and cultural gateway to the eastern White Mountains National Forest. While there is a strong local outdoor recreation and tourism industry, Conway and its local and regional partners are also faced with the challenge of balancing residential quality of life and the sustainable use of recreational resources.

Commitment to offering a comprehensive array of recreation experiences tailored to diverse ages and ability levels is paramount for fostering a vibrant and inclusive community. A full spectrum of recreation experiences not only enhances the overall quality of life, but also promotes physical well-being, positive mental health, and social cohesion. Providing activities that cater to various age groups ensures that residents, from children to seniors, can find outlets for leisure and personal development. Moreover, accommodating different ability levels ensures that everyone can participate and derive the benefits of recreation. A town that invests in a full spectrum of recreational opportunities demonstrates a forward-thinking approach, recognizing the diverse



needs of its residents and creating an environment where everyone can thrive and enjoy a well-rounded lifestyle.

Throughout the Master Plan process, residents shared how much they value Conway's recreation assets – from Parks & Rec Department, scenic beauty, the river, White Mountain National Forrest (WMNF), and access to hiking trails.

Desired Outcomes

- Continue to provide world-class recreation opportunities.
- Find balance between recreation and conservation.
- Provide recreation opportunities to a diverse range of people.

Additional Context

RECENT PROJECTS/ PLANS:

- Upper Saco Valley Land Trust – 2022 Strategic Conservation Plan
- The Mount Washington Valley Trails Association and the White Mountains Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association jointly developed an Off Road Trails Strategic Plan for the Mount Washington Valley in 2023.
- 2023 NHORID Statewide Outdoor Recreation Inventory

PUBLIC INPUT:

- Some of the concerns from residents surrounding recreation in Conway include:
  - » Trash & waste impact on Saco & Swift River
  - » Wanting more land/opportunities for mountain biking and AT skiing
  - » Establish limits for the use of Saco River
  - » Stainable tourism
  - » More river access
  - » Feeling safe in parks
  - » Recreation opportunities close to home/walkable

STAKEHOLDERS:

- White Mountain National Forest
- New Hampshire State Parks
- The Nature Conservancy
- Upper Saco Valley Land Trust
- Society for the Protection of NH Forests
- Tin Mountain Nature Center
- The Saco-Swift Local River Advisory Committee (LAC)
- The Mount Washington Valley Trails Association
- The White Mountains Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association
- The Mountain Meadow Riders Snowmobile Club
- Granite Outdoor Alliance
- Ski New Hampshire

GOAL G-1: Partner with Local Land Managers to Address Enironmental Impacts from Recreation

CHALLENGE #1:

The Saco and Swift rivers experience significant use, at a detriment to both river corridor health and recreational enjoyment. The river corridor requires management attention due to erosion at river access points and increased litter and pollution.



STRATEGIES:

G-1.1: Support efforts to study recreational impacts on the Saco and Swift rivers.

G-1.2: Back initiatives to emphasize responsible use of the river corridor & promote more sustainable user behavior.

G-1.3: Sustain efforts to improve river access amenities and facilities including parking, bathrooms, trash receptacles, etc.

G-1.4: Promote comparable water activities to diversify where people are recreating to reduce the use of problem areas.

G-1.5: Continue working with partners on preservation efforts.

CHALLENGE #2:

Conway is the geographic and cultural gateway to the eastern White Mountains, one of the most heavily visited National Forests in the country with over 6 million visitors annually. This sustained visitation helps support local outdoor recreation and tourism industry, but also presents challenges for balancing residential quality of life and the sustainable use of recreational resources. At times, **the popularity of Conway's recreation assets negatively impacts both the visitor experience and resident quality of life.** The sheer volume of visitors can strain the local infrastructure leading to congestion, increased traffic, and potential environmental impacts. Overcrowded attractions may diminish the enjoyment for tourists. Additionally, the high visitation rates may impact the quality of life for residents, as they contend with the challenges posed by increased traffic, noise, and other pressures associated with a bustling tourist destination.

STRATEGIES:

G-1.6: Partner with WMNF for more institutional support for the Saco Ranger District.

G-1.7: Embrace actions designed to help address parking at Diana's Bath.

G-1.8: In Partnership with WMNF and the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce, consider developing a destination management plan or strategy for the Mount Washington Valley.



The Saco and Swift Corridor Management Plan notes that "from June to September, there are approximately 1,000 users during the week of the Saco River from Bartlett to Redstone and similar from Redstone to the Maine border. On the weekends, these numbers can increase to 2,000 or more (estimated by Peter Gagne, Saco River Tubing Center/Beach Camping Area)."

GOAL G-2: View Trails as Vital Community Infrastructure

CHALLENGE:

While trails provide immense value to the region and increase quality of life, there are many challenges associated with stewarding a high-class trail system. **Just like any other piece of community infrastructure, trails require careful planning and maintenance.** Maintenance of trails requires significant resources.

STRATEGIES:

G-2.1: Support efforts of the 2023 Mount Washington Valley Trails Association Off Road Trails Plan.

- A trail easement and land acquisition program to permanently protect and ensure public access along key trail corridors. The plan identifies a number of trails on private lands that have no legal status and could have access revoked by private landowners.
- Formal trail maintenance and construction programs to ensure there is long-term planning and fundraising to keep up with needed trail maintenance in addition to funding and constructing desired trail system expansions and improvements.
- A systematic study of trailheads to assess 1) user/neighbor conflicts, 2) traffic safety, 3) parking capacity, 4) amenities, and 5) appropriate design and user experience.
- Explore proposed trail network improvement and connectivity project opportunities.

G-2.2: Diversify trail offerings to meet the needs of diverse users.

- Consider the full spectrum of ability levels, user types, and demographics when planning for trails and trail hub facilities.
- Support programming that invites new users or people in the community who may not typically use trails.

GOAL G-3: Invest in Municipal Recreation Facilities, Programs, and Infrastructure



CHALLENGE

Conway is well-served by municipal recreation facilities and programs but could benefit from a deeper look into how to better serve the community. Municipal recreation facilities and programs offer numerous benefits to both residents and tourists alike. For residents, these facilities promote overall well-being and a sense of community. By prioritizing recreation for residents, Conway can foster a higher quality of life for residents and benefit the entire community.

STRATEGIES:

G-3.1: As part of a longer-term capital improvement program, explore opportunities to provide new recreational experiences through facility enhancements.

G-3.2: Promote the teen center and use programming through a variety of channels.

G-3.3: Explore opportunities for recreational amenities that are walkable from neighborhoods and residential centers.

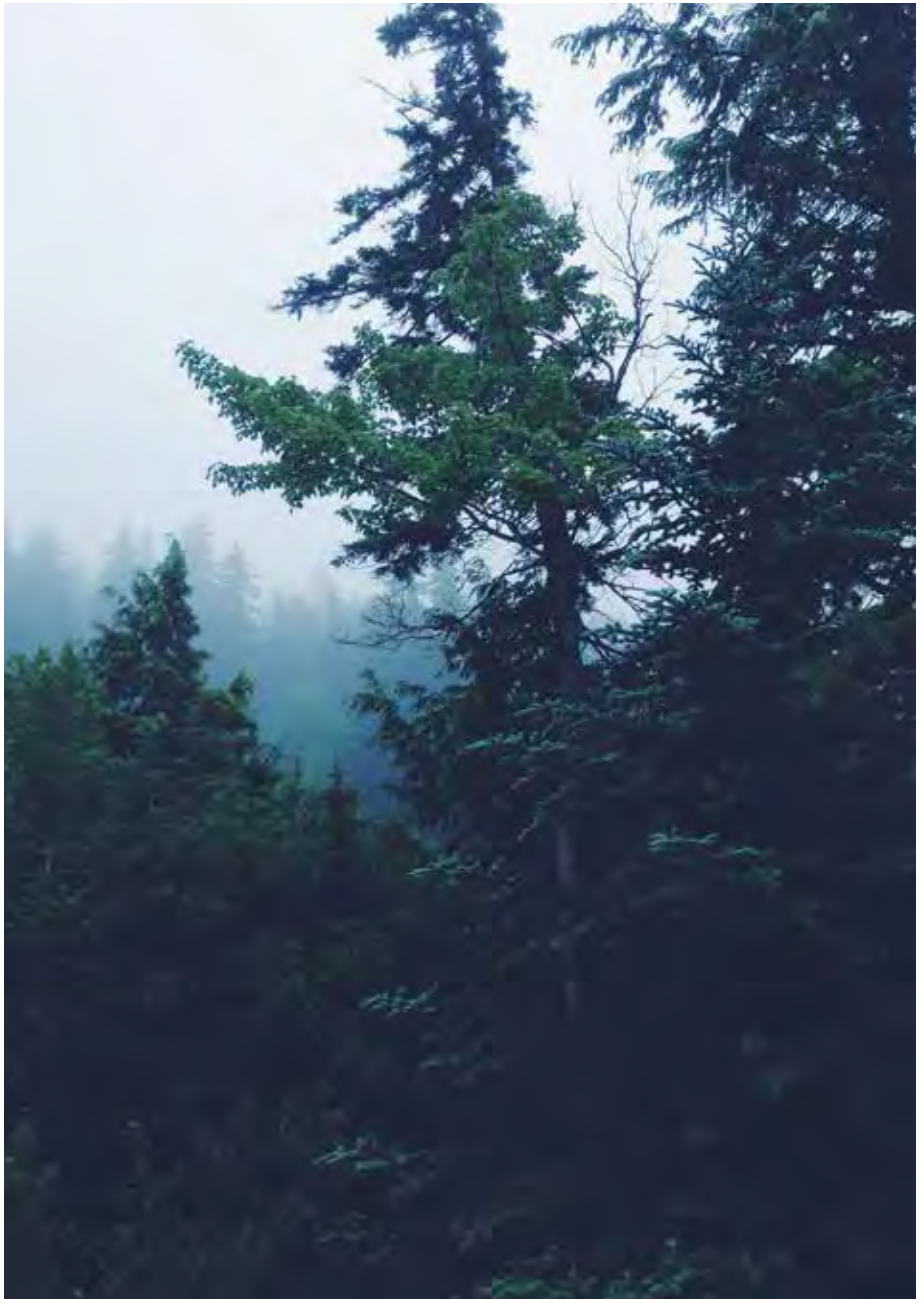
G-3.4: Ensure all recreation facilities and programs are accessible for residents of all physical abilities, genders, races, financial backgrounds, etc.

G-3.5: Continue to explore opportunities for new recreation infrastructure.

- Assess current trends and local desires for activities such as disc golf, pickleball, splash pad play, and dog parks.
- Consider amenities along the new recreation path.
- Continue to support efforts for The Kevin Peare Memorial Skate Park.

G-3.6: Enhance public access to waterbodies.

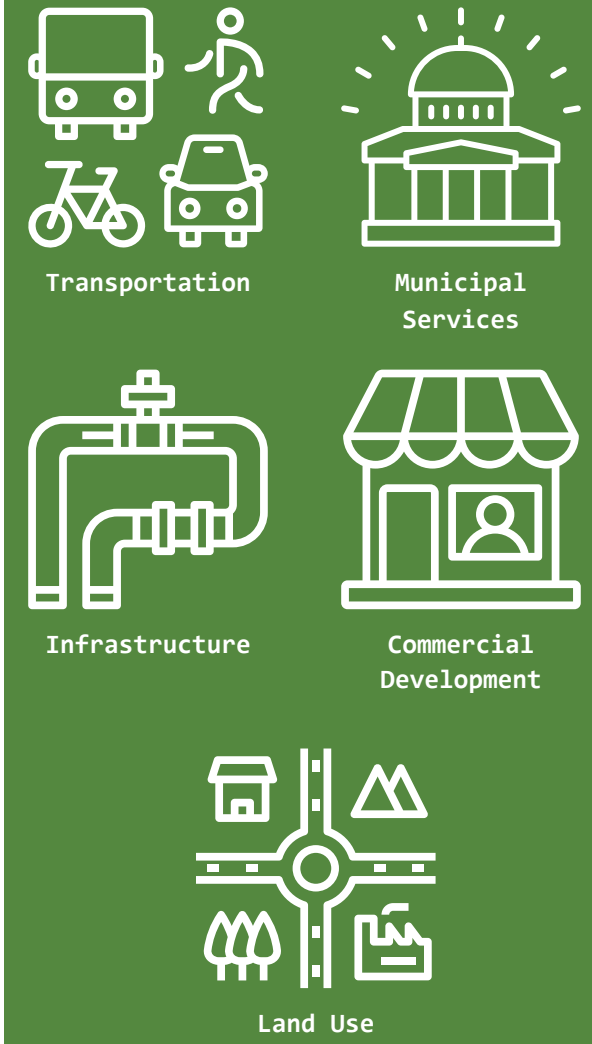
- Despite having significant water recreation opportunities, Conway has relatively few formal access points to public waterbodies in town, including Conway Lake, where there is a single shared beach and boat ramp for the public to use.
- Evaluate opportunities to separate the beach and boat launch at Conway Lake to improve the safety and enjoyment of the lake.
- Evaluate additional opportunities for boat launches along the Saco and Swift Rivers, as well as Conway Lake.





H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



THROUGH PROACTIVE PLANNING AND THOUGHTFUL INVESTMENT IN MUNICIPAL FACILITIES, THE TOWN WILL ENHANCE MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENT KEY STRATEGIES OF THE MASTER PLAN TO MOVE CONWAY FORWARD.

Introduction

This chapter presents goals and strategies for enhancing municipal governance in Conway, including how the Town should approach short-term and long-term planning for the implementation of the Master Plan. This chapter also addresses other governance issues, such as communications and transparency and stewarding key municipal services and facilities.

In the early 2000's, the Town invested significant resources into an update of the Town Master Plan. This process produced a comprehensive and robust planning document; however, the Town was not able to make significant progress towards many of the plan's key recommendations, including changes to land use regulations. The impacts of this missed opportunity are visible in Conway today. With the development of a new Master Plan in 2024, the Town has both an opportunity and a mandate to engage in proactive and effective planning to address land use regulations, municipal infrastructure, affordable and attainable housing, and other planning challenges.

The Master Plan comes at a key inflection point for municipal governance in Conway. During the development of this plan in 2023 and 2024, the Town was also engaged in a process to update the Town Charter – an opportunity to rethink the structure, roles, and responsibilities of municipal boards and committees and other aspects of town government. Also in 2023, voters moved to dissolve the Conway Village Fire District, with the District's services (water, sewer, fire, and ambulance) to be absorbed by the Town. As part of the implementation of the Master Plan, the Town should consider additional strategies for improving municipal governance to complement these initiatives, such as improved municipal communications and transparency. Additionally, the Town will need to consider strategies for needed enhancements of municipal facilities (e.g., library, fire stations) as well as long-term management of all municipal facilities and assets.



Desired Outcomes

- Conway moves forward on addressing key goals and strategies articulated in the Master Plan.
- Municipal governance is efficient, effective, and transparent, and residents have a clear understanding of municipal processes and projects.
- Conway has a strategic framework for short-term and long-term management and enhancement of municipal facilities and infrastructure.



GOAL H-1: Move Forward On Key Goals And Strategies In The Master Plan

CHALLENGE #1:

Conway currently has limited staff capacity to undertake significant planning initiatives. Currently, the Town Planning Department dedicates most of its resources to administrative matters, such as reviewing applications for private developments. There is a need to create additional capacity to move forward on needed planning projects and strategic initiatives to implement the Master Plan.

STRATEGIES:

H-1.1: Create strategic capacity to move forward on specific Master Plan implementation actions.

- Create an annual special projects budget for the Planning Department.
- Identify and engage in strategic partnerships with local and regional organizations, such as the Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, and North Country Council Regional Planning Commission.

H-1.2: Consider creating a new staff position within the Planning Department.

- For building long-term capacity and continuity within the Planning Department, the Town should consider adding an additional paid staff position. Additional staff capacity would allow for dedicated stewardship and spearheading of long-term planning initiatives that will stretch over many years, such as overhauling land use regulations and planning for water and sewer infrastructure enhancements.

CHALLENGE #2:

Conway lacks the type of ongoing planning processes and programs needed for stewarding and implementing the Master Plan. Master Plan implementation is a long-term process that will require dedicated and consistent attention from staff, boards, and committees. Conway should develop processes and programs dedicated to plan implementation to ensure that the Town is able to move forward on the challenges and strategies articulated in the plan.

STRATEGIES:

H-1.3: Develop an ongoing process for stewarding and tracking Master Plan implementation.

- Create a calendar of relevant grant funding opportunities and deadlines.
- Perform public-facing Master Plan implementation tracking.
- Create a Master Plan implementation sub-committee of the Planning Board, or include Master Plan implementation as a regular Planning Board agenda item.
- Perform a five-year Master Plan review to assess progress and any needed minor plan updates.

H-1.4: Develop a 10-Year Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

- A long-range CIP provides a roadmap for completing capital projects identified in the Master Plan, such as water and sewer system expansions or municipal building enhancements. A CIP informs annual and long-term budgeting and is a useful tool for identifying which capital projects should be completed using municipal dollars and bonds versus outside grants and funding programs.
- Create an advisory Capital Improvements Committee with representation from the Selectboard, Planning Board, and municipal departments.
- As a component of capital improvement planning, the Town should develop a strategy for tracking and applying impact fee payments that the Town receives from private developers.

H-1.5: Update the Master Plan by 2034.

- NH RSA 674:3 recommends that towns and cities update their Master Plan every five to ten years. A ten-year window provides ample time for the Town to move forward on plan implementation while recognizing that conditions on the ground will likely change over time. Interim updates to the plan can be done to address emergent issues if needed.

GOAL H-2: Enhance Town Governance and Communications

CHALLENGE #1:

Conway has identified significant changes to town governance that will be adopted in the coming years. The Town has been engaged in a process to update the Town Charter – an opportunity to rethink the structure, roles, and responsibilities of municipal boards and committees and other aspects of town government. In 2023, voters moved to dissolve the Conway Village Fire District, with the District's services (water, sewer, fire, and ambulance) to be absorbed by the Town. As a result, in the coming years, the Town will need to thoughtfully adopt and incorporate a series of changes to municipal governance.



STRATEGIES:

H-2.1: Review the Town Charter every five-to-ten years.

H-2.2: Create clear and transparent public communications about how and when charter changes and new municipal services will be implemented.



CHALLENGE #2:

Conway has underdeveloped communication channels and informational resources for municipal government. As the Town embarks on a period of change for municipal government and tackles key Master Plan implementation strategies, it will be critical to provide clear and informative public communications about the scope, purpose, and impact of these changes. As part of these efforts, the Town should consider additional strategies for fostering civic engagement to help move conversations and projects forward.

STRATEGIES:

H-2.2: Consider overhauling the Town website to become more user-friendly.

- Provide complete board and committee meeting packets and create special project pages, including a page where all pertinent information about Master Plan implementation efforts can be accessed.

H-2.4: Create improved channels for communication of Town news, meetings, and updates, such as increased use of social media platforms and use of email communications.

H-2.5: Consider creating a volunteer or paid Public Information Officer (PIO) position.

- The PIO can serve to standardize and enhance Town communications using consistent methods and well-advertised channels.

H-2.6: Provide alternative venues for public engagement and conversation.

- Create opportunities for community members to engage with Town staff and local officials outside of formal board and committee meetings.

GOAL H-3: Support Capital Project Needs of Municipal Departments

CHALLENGE:



Conway must balance needed municipal facilities investment and enhancement with long-term maintenance needs. Like many towns, Conway's municipal facilities are in need of capital improvements to ensure the delivery of high-quality municipal services. A thoughtful, long-term approach is needed to ensure that these investments are made using practical financial considerations.

STRATEGIES:

H-3.1: Develop a 10-Year Capital Improvements Program (see strategy H-1.4).

H-3.2: Proactively identify and plan for capital improvement needs for facilities and infrastructure previously managed by the Conway Village Fire Precinct.

H-3.3: Limit deferred maintenance of municipal infrastructure and assets to avoid long-term cost increases for maintenance projects.

H-3.4: Plan for future contingencies in municipal facility and infrastructure management costs, such as inflated material and labor costs and increased costs of regulatory compliance.

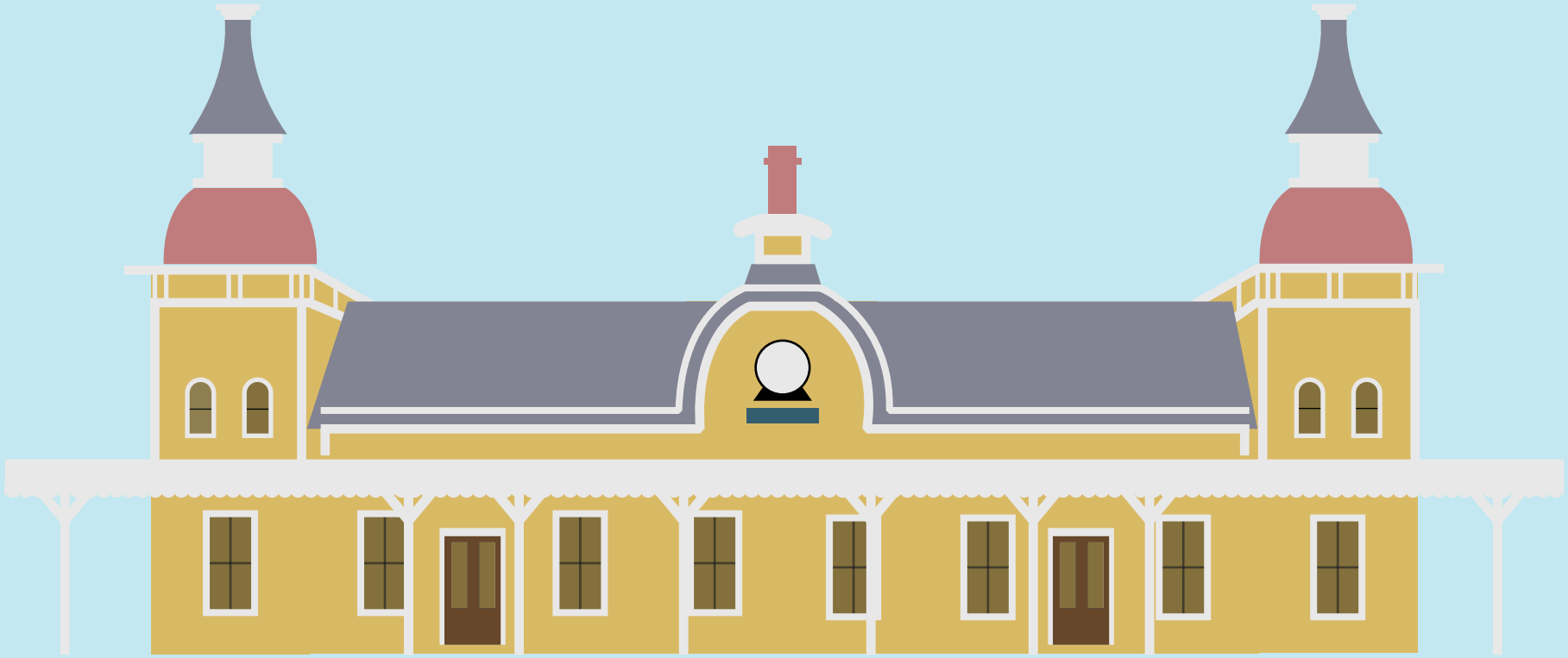
H-3.5: Explore ways for encouraging improved accessibility in Conway, including incorporating accessibility considerations into municipal facility and infrastructure design.

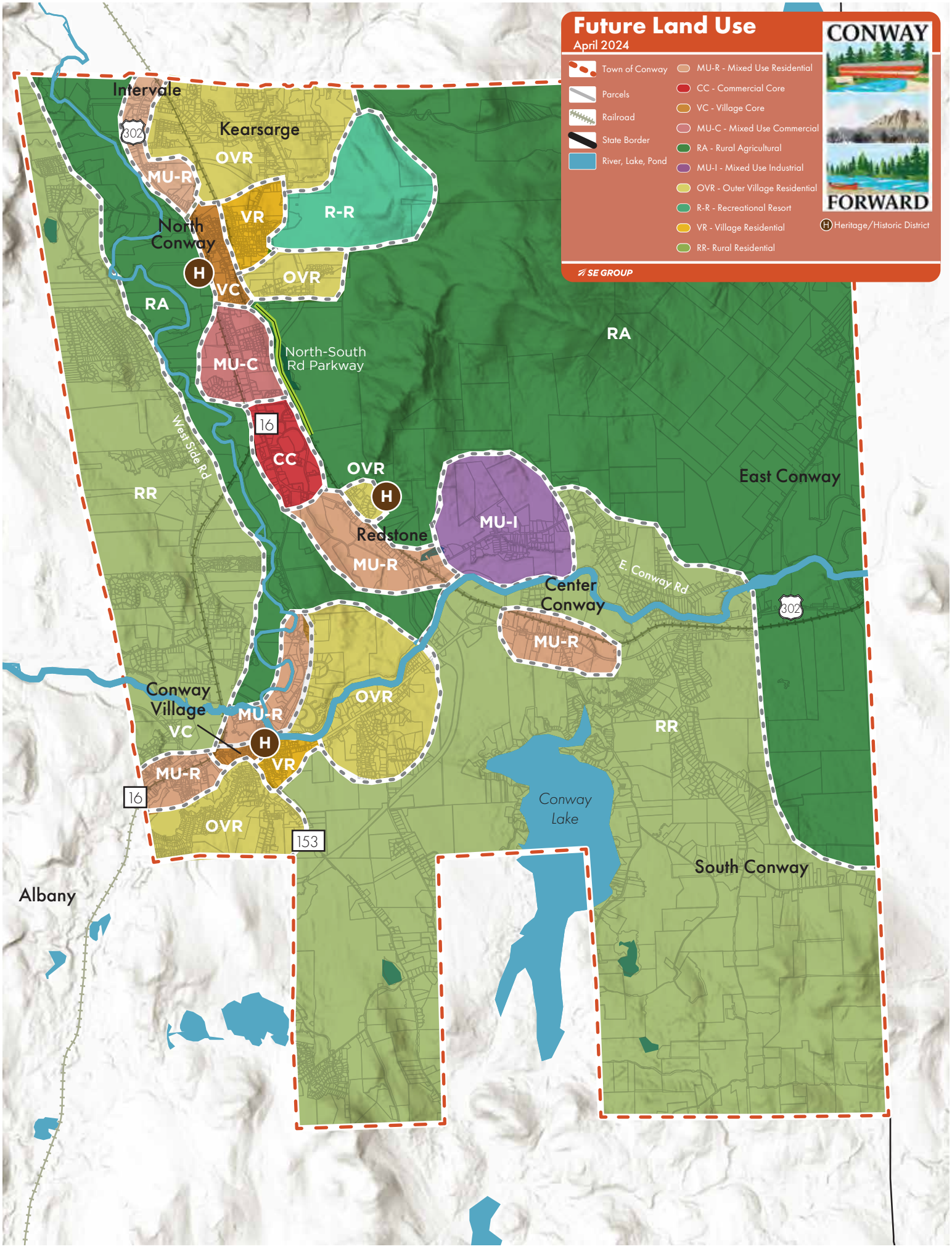
H-3.6: Incorporate energy efficiency considerations into municipal facility design, such as evaluation of rooftop solar.

H-3.7: Evaluate opportunities for developing a Community Power program for municipal procurement of electricity.

APPENDIX A

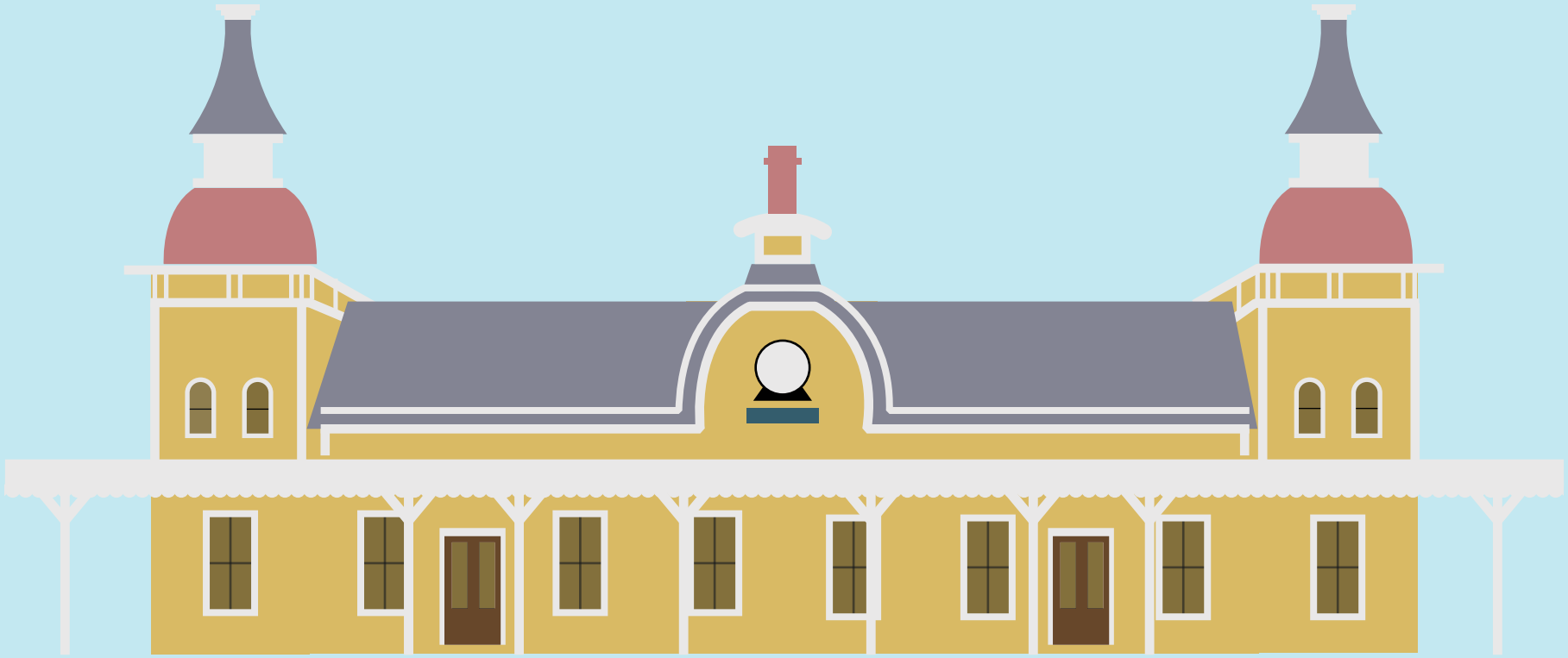
Full-Page Future Land Use Map




Future Land Use
April 2024
Town of Conway
Parcels
Railroad
State Border
River, Lake, Pond
MU-R - Mixed Use Residential
CC - Commercial Core
VC - Village Core
MU-C - Mixed Use Commercial
RA - Rural Agricultural
MU-I - Mixed Use Industrial
OVR - Outer Village Residential
R-R - Recreational Resort
VR - Village Residential
RR- Rural Residential
H Heritage/Historic District
SE GROUP
CONWAY FORWARD
Intervale
Kearsarge
North Conway
East Conway
Redstone
Center Conway
Conway Village
South Conway
Albany
Conway Lake
North-South Rd Parkway
West Side Rd
E. Conway Rd
302
16
153
MU-R
OVR
VR
R-R
VC
RA
MU-C
CC
MU-I
RR
H

APPENDIX B

Existing Conditions Memoranda



CONWAY FORWARD

COMMUNITY PROFILE

2.7.23

About Conway

Conway is a town of about 10,000 nestled in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Located about 30 miles from the summit of Mount Washington and surrounded by the White Mountain National Forest, Conway is a "gateway community" that draws recreation enthusiasts in all seasons.

The land presently known as Conway is the ancestral home of the Pequawket Indians, an Algonquian Abenaki tribe. The tribe's population suffered from the spread of diseases (likely smallpox) from colonists. In 1725, a battle took place between members of the Pequawket and a group of white settlers led by John Lovewell. The Pequawket tribe retreated from the area following this event.

Conway's Redstone area is a former a granite quarry, which was operated by Maine and New Hampshire Granite Co beginning in 1887. The quarry would become one of the largest in New England, employing over 350 men. In 1888, Maine Central added rail service that served Redstone village. In 1901, the Town of Conway purchased a 110-acre area that included Echo Lake and Cathedral Ledges to protect the area from quarry development. Subsequently, the town donated the land to the State of New Hampshire for use as a state park (now Echo Lake State Park). Although many Conway residents and visitors enjoy Echo Lake State Park, Conway is best known for its proximity to the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF), which was formed in 1918. The WMNF was founded in response to public pressure to conserve land in the White Mountains from logging impacts, which had led to forest fires and other disasters after the exponential growth of logging and deforestation in the mid to late 19th century.

For centuries, Conway has drawn visitors seeking to experience the beauty of the White Mountains. Early railroad service in Conway facilitated tourism as well as the shipping of granite, timber and other goods to regional commercial centers. In the 1930s, Conway was a popular destination for "snow trains," which carried passengers from major eastern cities to ski areas and nearby communities. During this time, Cranmore Ski Resort had just begun operations and the number of hotel accommodations in the Town of Conway grew to accommodate the influx of visitors. Passenger train service to Conway ended in 1961; today, car travel is the most common mode of transportation in Conway. Route 16 was widened in 1980 to support additional vehicle travel. The Conway Railroad is still a popular tourist attraction, and the Conway Railway Station is regarded as one of the Town's most iconic buildings.

In the 21st century, Conway has grown as a destination for recreation and shopping, with North Conway Village functioning as the center of tourism activities and accommodations. The town's largest shopping complex, Settler's Green, draws thousands of visitors annually and functions as a regional hub for retail shopping. In recent years, Conway has become a more popular destination for second home living, which has contributed to limitations on the available housing stock for full-time residents.

Conway's History: Fast Facts

- Incorporated as a town in 1765
- Named for Henry Seymour Conway, an English statesmen, soldier, and supporter of the British colonies
- In 1790, at the first census undertaken in Conway, the town had 690 residents

Regional Context

Conway is located within Carroll County along the New Hampshire/Maine border. Conway is bordered by six other municipalities in NH, including Chatham, Bartlett, Hale's Location, Albany, Madison, and Eaton. Conway is the most populous of these municipalities and is a regional hub for retail, commerce, and culture in the NH's north country.

Conway is a popular destination in and of itself, and it serves as gateway to other popular destinations within the White Mountain National Forest and nearby Crawford Notch State Park. Conway is also located in close proximity to several ski areas in NH and ME, including Attitash, Black Mtn, Wildcat, King Pine, Bretton Woods, and Pleasant Mountain.

Conway's Role in the Region: Fast Facts

- Conway's population makes up about 20% of that of Carroll County (American Community Survey)
- Conway has the only hospital in the region – Memorial Hospital, located in North Conway
- Conway is within a few hours' drive of several cities in the Northeast; Conway is 57 miles from Portland, ME; 97 miles from Manchester, NH; and 132 miles from Boston, MA

Landscape & Climate

Conway has several notable and scenic natural features, including the cliffs of Cathedral Ledges and Diana's Baths, a remarkable waterfall and swimming area naturally formed within the rocks. The Saco River winds through town and plays an important role as a recreational resource for the community. Residents and visitors enjoy tubing, fishing, boating and other river activities.

Conway enjoys four seasons and is well-known as a destination for viewing fall foliage. Climate change poses a threat to Conway's winters, which are projected to become shorter and warmer in the coming decades. These changes, along with broader trends of more unpredictable weather patterns and storms, pose a threat to Conway's people, wildlife, and ecosystems. Climate change also has the potential to negatively impact the Town's economy, which relies in part on skiing and other winter recreation activities. In addition, lackluster winters may fundamentally alter Conway's culture as a ski town and destination for winter fun.

Conway's Landscape: Fast Facts

- The Town of Conway contains 69.7 square miles of land area and 2.0 square miles of water resources.
- Developed areas make up 52.7% of the town, while the remaining 47.3% is currently open space.
- The average annual snowfall in North Conway between 1970 and 2012 was 73.5 inches. North Conway has lost an average of 2.7 inches of annual snowfall per decade (Source: Wake, Cameron P.; Keeley, C.; Burakowski, Elizabeth A.; Wilkinson, Peter; Hayhoe, Katharine; Stoner, Anne; and LaBrance, Julie, "Climate Change in Northern New Hampshire: Past, Present and Future" (2014). The Sustainability Institute. 1. https://scholars.unh.edu/sustainability/1)

Population & Demographics

In 2021, Conway's population was measured at 10,079 people. Conway's population has trended upwards over the past 40 years. Carroll County has experienced much higher rates of growth than the Town of Conway over this period, though Conway is still the most populous community in the County. Growth within the county surrounding Conway can be partly attributed to high housing costs in Conway relative to other municipalities. This development pattern has contributed to rural sprawl in areas adjacent to Conway. Conway's population was 7,158 in 1980 and increased to 10,115 in 2010. There was a slight dip in Conway's population between 2010 and 2020. At present, population levels are increasing modestly again.

Conway's Population & Demographics: Fast Facts

- Conway's median age is 48.4 years
- Conway is 95.9% white
- 93% of Conway residents have obtained a high school education, compared to 91.1% nationally and 93.9% statewide
- 37% of Conway residents have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, identical to the national average

Conway's Housing

Conway is a primary residential center in the Mount Washington Valley. According to the ACS 2016-2020 Estimates, Conway has 7,258 total housing units, with 4,276 of those being single-family homes. Residences in buildings with 5 or more units make up 1,557 of the total housing units. 706 units are residences within buildings with 2-4 units, and 719 units are mobile homes.

The housing market in New Hampshire's Mount Washington Valley has been experiencing a strong seller's market with high demand and low inventory. According to local real estate agents, properties often sell quickly and above asking price, with some homes receiving multiple offers. This trend was driven in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted an influx of out-of-state buyers seeking vacation homes or permanent residences in more rural areas. This surge in demand also contributed to rising home prices, which has made it more difficult for some buyers to afford a home in the region. The Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition reports that nearly 40% of units in the Mount Washington Valley are second homes.

According to the Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition, the area's population grew 30% between 1990 and 2010. This growth was much more robust than that of the states of New Hampshire and Maine. While the population has been growing, it has also been aging. The median age of residents in the MWV grew by 6.2 years between 2000 and 2010. As the MWV's recent report, Housing Matters, states: "An aging population will change the pattern of housing needs and preferences, alter the nature of the demand for services, change transportation requirements, and challenge existing planning practices."

The Housing Matters report also summarizes affordability issues facing the region, using 2010 statistics. Those statistics showed a substantial gap between the earning capacity of low to moderate wage earners in the area and the high cost of housing. With the 2010 median hourly wage of $10.86, a retail worker would need to work 67 hours a week to avoid rent-burdened status. Today, a worker earning the NH minimum wage of $7.25 would need to work about 116 hours a week to meet the standard of affordability in Carroll County. According to the business survey conducted as a part of the Housing Matters report, a large majority of respondents indicated that the lack of affordable housing in the region is inhibiting their ability to attract and

retain workers. 100% of municipal respondents (not hospitality or retail respondents) answered this in the affirmative.

Conway's Housing: Fast Facts (unless otherwise stated, data below is from 2017-2021 ACS)

- Conway's average household size is 2.16, according to 2017-2021 estimates (compared to 2.46 statewide)
- 88.8% of Conway's working residents are employed in Conway
- Conway's population per square mile was estimated at 141.4 in 2020 (compared to 153.9 statewide)
- 88% of residents aged 1+ live in the same housing unit they did last year
- 68% of units in Conway are owner-occupied (compared to 71.6% statewide)
- The median value of owner-occupied units in Conway is $207,700 (compared to $288,700 statewide)

Conway's Economy

Conway has a largely tourism and service-based economy. Conway's largest employers are Memorial Hospital, Conway School District, Hannaford Brothers (supermarket), Red Jacket Inn, Wal-Mart, and the North Conway Grand Hotel. As a commercial hub for the broader Mount Washington Valley, Conway's employment sectors are more diversified than neighboring communities. Seasonal employment is common in Conway, as is the case in many communities with recreational tourism economies.

Conway's Population & Demographics: Fast Facts

- Median household income in Conway is $58,371 (2021), compared to $83,449 in NH (2021) and $70,784 nationally (2021)
- 13% of Conway residents live below the poverty line, compared to 7.2% statewide and 11.6% nationwide
- Conway's unemployment rate was 3.7% in 2021, down from 5.4% in 2011
- 68.7% of the Town's population aged 16+ participates in the labor force
- In 2017, $544,185,000 of retail sales were generated in Conway

Community Infrastructure & Transportation

Conway consists of multiple village centers and several development clusters. Conway Village and North Conway Village are the primary village centers, with North Conway Village functioning as the center of tourism activities and amenities in Conway. North Conway Village features the Conway Scenic Railroad, Schouler Park, as well as several shops and restaurants. Conway Village contains fewer retail businesses; in contrast to North Conway Village, most existing businesses in Conway Village are geared towards residents. The town is home to several community organizations, including the Mount Washington Valley Arts Association, which hosts regular exhibitions and events, as well as a number of local theater companies and performing arts groups. Additionally, Conway is known for its annual events and festivals, such as the Fryeburg Fair, the Conway Scenic Railroad's Polar Express, and the Mount Washington Valley Old Car Club Show and Shine.

Conway is located 39 miles from the nearest interstate. US Route 302 and state routes 16, 112, 113, and 153 traverse through Conway. Combined with significant daily and seasonal influxes of population, this convergence has contributed to significant local and regional attention over traffic congestion and alternative transportation access in Conway. Over two-thirds of the Town's

workforce commutes into Conway from other communities. Currently, there is no fixed-route public transit service in Conway, although there are some demand-response and paratransit services available for limited-mobility residents and clients of certain human service organizations. Sidewalks are present along most village streets and in some commercial areas of major highways. At present, there is little dedicated biking infrastructure in Conway, with no designated bike paths or on-road bike lanes. A soon-to-be-completed multi-use path will provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection from Cranmore to the eastern side of Settler's Green, near Walmart. The town also has a small airport, the Eastern Slopes Regional Airport, which offers private and commercial flights. Conway's emergency services consist of a full-time police department, four fire districts (formerly five), and municipal/volunteer Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Conway's local hospital is Memorial Hospital, located in North Conway Village.

Conway's Community Character, Infrastructure, and Assets: Fast Facts

- According to a March 2022 Carroll County study, 99.3% of premises in Conway have access to broadband
- Conway has a mandatory recycling program
- Conway supplies its own water through sources in North Conway and Conway Village
- Conway's electricity is supplied by Eversource Energy and NH Electric Coop
- Conway has four distinct fire districts

Development History, Zoning, & Regulatory Landscape

Conway's current zoning ordinance was last amended in 2013. This ordinance establishes 12 primary zoning districts and 5 overlay districts. The purpose of the overlay districts is to steward Conway's natural resources, including floodplains, shorelines, wetlands, waters, and groundwater. The Town also adopted an Affordable Housing ordinance in 2020. This ordinance provides several incentives for the construction of affordable housing, including density bonuses, provisions for cluster housing, and various standards for affordable units.

The Town has seen substantial commercial development in the past few decades, particularly along the White Mountain Highway corridor. Some structures, such as the AutoZone building, have replaced historic structures along the roadway. Hotel development has also proliferated along the White Mountain Highway corridor, with the ___ and ___ recently opening in Conway. Redevelopment in Conway's village centers has been limited in recent years. A new food hall, which will occupy the current Olympia sports storefront, is the most notable redevelopment scheduled for North Conway Village. Recent construction and development has been largely auto-oriented and has contributed to the proliferation of strip-style development in much of Conway.

Conway's Development History, Zoning & Regulatory Landscape: Fast Facts

- In 2022, Conway issued 442 building permits. The Town has issued an average of 428 building permits a year over the past 5 years.
- In 2022, the town issued 236 permits for residential renovations, more than any other use
- Single-family homes are the most common land use and residence type in Conway

MEMORANDUM

2.6.2023

CONWAY MASTER PLAN: POLICY CONTEXT

TO: Advisory Committee

FROM: SE Group

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a concise summary of existing local and regional plans that are relevant the Master Plan update. This exercise provides important context for the work to update the Town Master Plan for several reasons:

- While the current Master Plan (adopted in 2003) is outdated, it is helpful to understand the planning priorities and strategies that were proposed at the time in order to evaluate their impact and efficacy.

- While the Town of Conway is not an active member of North Country Council Regional Planning Commission (NCC), the regional plans produced by NCC provide important information and context for local and regional conditions. These plans also have certain policy implications regardless of municipal membership status.

MUNICIPAL PLANS

2003 Master Plan

The Town of Conway Planning Board adopted the current Master Plan in 2003. The Town subsequently updated various chapters of the Master Plan to reflect changing local conditions and planning goals:

- Chapter 2 – Implementation Strategy: updated September 2008
- Chapter 6 – Recreation: updated September 2014
- Chapter 6-A – Trails Plan: updated May 2016

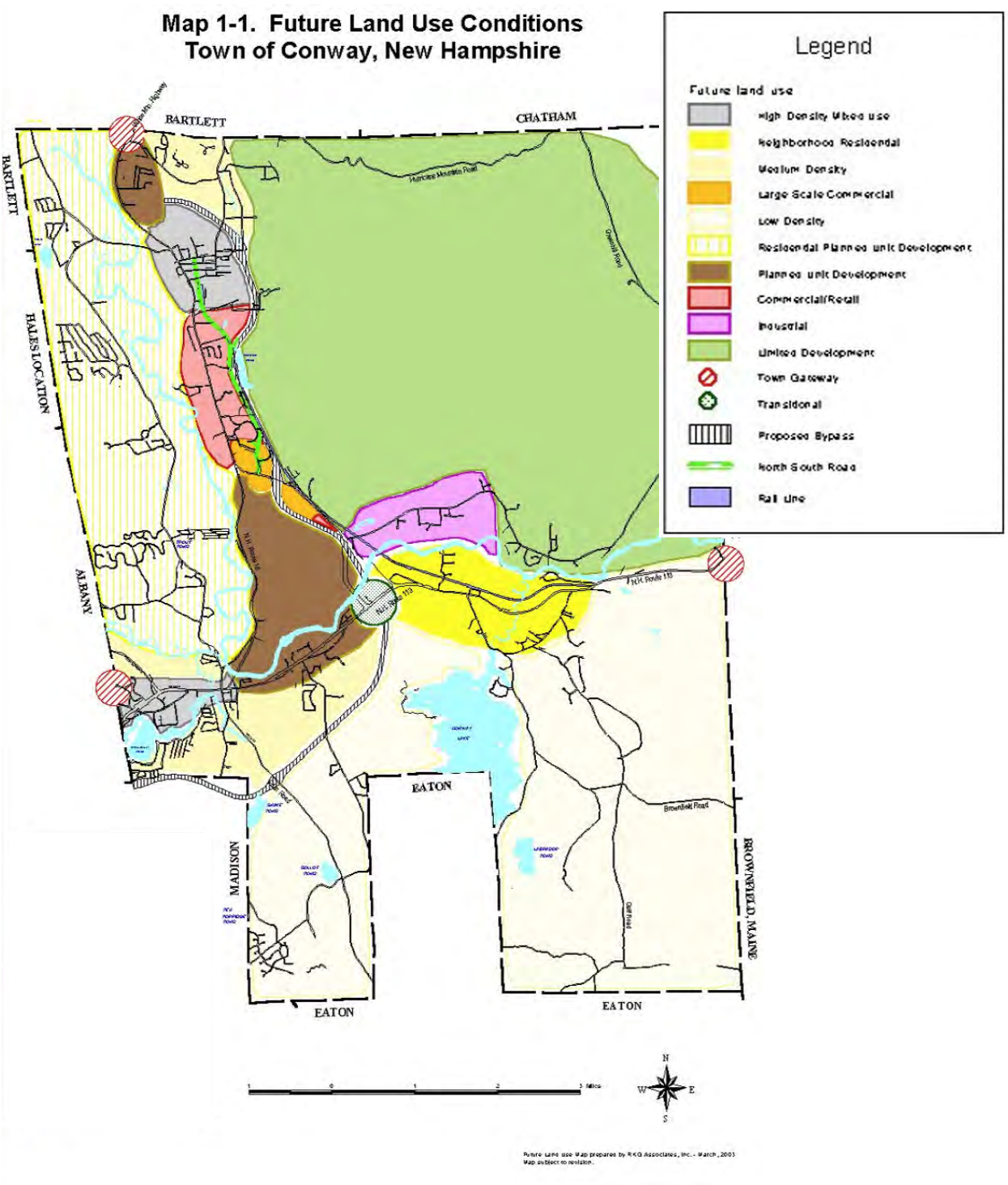
While built on a robust process, the current Master Plan features information and data that are decades old. However, there are relevant insights from the current Plan that may provide useful context for the development of the next iteration of the Master Plan.

Chapter 1: A Vision and Future Land Use Plan for Conway

The Chapter includes the following mission statement for the Master Plan: "*Recognizing that our natural beauty is our greatest asset, our commitment is to balance growth with the needs of the environment and the community.*" The Chapter also includes goals for different planning issues to be addressed by the Master Plan. There are accompanying planning objectives presented for each goal as well:

- Housing: "*Due to increasing demand for housing caused by the centralized location and recreation aspects associated with Conway, coupled with a lack of housing units within lower price ranges, the Town of Conway should support the development of a range of housing choices for all ages and income levels.*"
- Economic Development: "*Recognizing that the key economic character of the community is its tourism-based economy, future economic development initiatives should strive to diversify the employment and business establishment base within Conway.*"
- Municipal Services and Infrastructure: "*Coordinate and harmonize existing municipal services and infrastructure providers in order to provide citizens with a high quality and efficient infrastructure and service network*."
- Roadways and Transportation: "*The town should use roadway improvements to enhance the character of Conway's villages, as well as introduce mechanisms and infrastructure to promote and encourage transportation system use by pedestrians and bicycle users.*"
- Recreation: "*Promote and support a variety of recreational opportunities, including outdoor activities, for Conway residents of all ages and income levels*."
- Sense of Community: "*The Town should preserve and enhance the unique design characteristics, features and identity of each village while at the same time creating locations in Conway which connects and bonds the community.*"
- Land Use: "*Regulations, policies and guidelines used to manage land development in Conway should change. In non-village portions of the town these changes should focus on targeting areas for medium and low density residential development, commercial and light industrial development, and limited development (protected areas). Village areas should be designated for a mix of high density residential, commercial and institutional uses.*"

The Chapter includes a future land use vision and map for the Town as a guide for the orderly development of the community. This includes high-density, mixed-use areas in North Conway Village and Conway Village, large scale commercial development along US 302 from NH 16 into Redstone, and neighborhood-scale residential development in Center Conway Village. The Chapter presents various land use tools for achieving future land use goals, such as zoning district changes and lot size requirements.



Chapter 2: Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy presented in Chapter 2 includes recommended actions for each of the seven goals presented in Chapter 1. The Town updated this chapter in 2008.

Summary of Implementation Strategies

- Housing: Encourage a variety of market-based and affordable housing options in the region through land use policy changes.

- Economic Development: Support the Mount Washington Valley Economic Council; provide water and sewer infrastructure to industrial zones; encourage commercial development on infill sites through land use regulation; establish Business Improvement Districts in Village areas.
- Municipal Services and Infrastructure: Prepare a Capital Improvement Plan for the Conway School District; encourage multi-purpose school and municipal facilities; interconnect the Conway Village Fire District and North Conway Water Precinct infrastructure systems; prepare a comprehensive water and sewer infrastructure plan, including expansions to non-precinct areas; promote coordination amongst fire and emergency service providers; establish a Capital Improvements Program Committee and maintain a six-year capital improvements program.
- Roadways and Transportation: allow for context-specific flexibility in street designs; encourage a more flexible and usable parking system; improve gateways at major entrance points to Conway; implement traffic calming measures in North Conway Village and Conway Village.
- Recreation: create a network of multi-purpose trails connecting athletic, recreation, and open space areas; prepare a bikeway plan that connects public spaces and addresses roadside and off-road bikeway trails; assess feasibility of new community recreation facilities.
- Sense of Community: Prepare village plans for North Conway Village, Conway Village, and Center Conway Village that identify infrastructure and aesthetic improvements and design standards.
- Land Use: Revise land use regulations to support the goals and policies of the Master Plan; consider performance-based zoning; consider zoning incentives such as density bonuses; revise zoning district boundaries; develop regulations specific to distinct areas of the Town (village and non-village areas); promote land conservation.

Chapter 3: Population and Housing

This chapter provides an overview of population trends and housing needs in Conway in the decades leading up to 2003.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- The Chapter presents several anticipated implications of Conway's population and housing trends at the time, including:
    - An aging population and associated changes in demands for municipal services;
    - Providing an increased level of municipal services due to influxes of tourists, seasonal residents and the Town's role as a regional service hub;
    - Increasing demand for housing and a small supply of lower-priced units. The Plan states that "*failure to adopt measures that encourage the future development of affordable housing could constrict the availability of labor that might in turn negatively impact local economic activities*."

Chapter 4: Economic Conditions

This chapter provides an overview of economic trends in Conway in the decades leading up to 2003.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- Despite a strong local economy, there were concerns in the early 2000's over the lack of economic diversification, with 92% of jobs being service- or trade-related.
- In the early 2000's, approximately half of jobs in Conway were filled by residents of other communities, with 35% of workers commuting to Conway from outside the Mount Washington Valley. This reflects Conway's role as a regional service and employment hub,

but also is indicative of a lack of housing options that are affordable for the town's workforce.

- According to the Master Plan, there is a strong tradition of entrepreneurship in the Mount Washington Valley that significantly contributes to economic development in the region.

Chapter 5: Natural Resources

This chapter provides an overview of natural resources in Conway in the decades leading up to 2003.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- There are significant water resources located in Conway, with 71 water bodies, 1,400 acres of surface waters, and 289 mapped wetland areas.
- Protection of water resources is a local priority. The Town's municipal water supply is entirely groundwater using several local aquifers. Surface waters provide important habitat as well as recreational opportunities that support the tourism economy and resident quality of life.
- The steep terrain of the Mountain Washington Valley and high concentration of river and streams results in periodic flooding in Conway. Steep slopes also constrain lands available for development.
- In the early 2000's, there were approximately 8,610 acres of conserved lands in Conway, with most protected land being located in northern Conway within the Mountain Conservation zoning district.
- In the early 2000's, there were 132 sites in Conway there were either contaminated with hazardous materials or tagged for potential contamination monitoring; most of these sites involved underground storage or heating oil tanks.
- The Chapter presents several planning implications of Conway's natural resources, including:
    - Permanent protection of environmentally-significant lands is needed, as the local economy and quality of life is strongly associated with abundant and accessible environmental features.
    - Wetland protection policies are needed, as the abundance of steep slopes in Conway increases development pressure on flat wetland areas.
    - Groundwater resources will need protections from future development pressure.

Chapter 6: Recreation

This chapter provides an overview of recreational resources in Conway in the decades leading up to 2003. The Chapter was updated in 2014.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- Conway is "rich" with recreational resources and programming, which is supported by a number of public, private, and non-profit agencies. There were over 30 managed recreation facilities in Conway in the early 2000's.
- The Town should improve coordination with local schools and other organizations for recreational resources and programs.
- The Town was lacking an integrated greenway and multi-purpose trail system. This was seen as the Town's only major recreation deficiency. In addition to a master plan for trail development, the Town should also consider amending regulations to facilitate trail system development.
    - Note: the Town prepared a Trails Master Plan in 2016 to develop a vision and implementation strategy for an integrated trail system.

Chapter 6-A: Trails Plan

The Town developed a Trails Plan and incorporated it into the Master Plan in 2016. The goal of the Trails Plan is to promote and facilitate the development of trail system that is used for recreation and non-motorized transportation, including snowmobiling in the winter months. The Plan includes a goal of "creating a coordinated trail system linking Conway's housing, shopping, education, medical, recreation, and government resources" by 2025. The Plan also includes objectives around improving pedestrian and bicycle travel on or along roadways.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- The Plan includes recommendations for revising subdivision and site plan regulations to mandate and/or incentivize trail connections in new developments. Recommended provisions include mandating sidewalks along all roads (unless a suitable alternative is identified) as well as trail design standards.
- The Plan includes recommendations for an inventory of pedestrian, cycling, and recreational resources, future public engagement, and additional planning work to designate bike routes on the existing road network.
- The Plan does not include any specific proposed pedestrian and bicycle facilities, trails, or safety improvements.

Chapter 7: Transportation Assessment

This chapter provides an overview of the transportation system in Conway in the decades leading up to 2003. Information on both the local and regional transportation system is provided.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- Multiple state and federal highways converge in Conway (US 302, NH 16, NH 112, NH 113 NH 153). As a result, Conway experiences high daily traffic volumes, as well as additional seasonal peaks associated with tourist traffic.
- In the early 2000's there were minimal public transportation options in Conway, and service levels had recently declined. Public transportation services including daily intercity bus service and independent human service programs.
- There were not major rail operations in Conway in the early 2000's, other than the Conway Scenic Railroad. Both regional rail connections (Maine Central and Boston & Maine) are not in active use. The Eastern Slope Regional Airport in Fryeburg, ME provides limited regional air service.
- The Town maintains a significant local road network (82 miles as of 2003). There 665 total public parking spaces, mostly in North Conway Village, with noted increases in demand at the time.
- Sidewalk networks were mostly confined to North Conway Village and Conway Village.
- In the early 2000's, there were two major road construction projects being considered in Conway: the North-South Rd and the Conway Bypass. The North-South Rd was intended to serve as a local bypass of NH 16 from Redstone to North Conway Village and was constructed in 2007. The Conway Bypass was intended to be an 11-mile re-route of NH 16 around Conway Village and North Conway Village – this project was officially dissolved by the NH Department of Transportation in 2020 primarily due to cost.
    - The Chapter includes several issues related to the construction of the North-South Rd, including careful monitoring of traffic at the northern terminus (Kearsarge Rd/Mechanic St), corridor access management, and use by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The Chapter includes a recommendation to reconsider local road design standards to be more context-specific.
- The Chapter includes a goal to keep regional traffic flowing "slow and steady" to minimize traffic delays while limiting impacts of high-speed traffic on the community.

Chapter 8: Municipal Services and Infrastructure

This chapter provides an overview of municipal services and infrastructure in Conway in the decades leading up to 2003, including the Town Hall, first responder services, libraries, public works, and schools. Information on both the local and regional transportation system is provided.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- This Chapter includes detailed information about the condition of municipal facilities and infrastructure as of the early 2000's, some or all of which may no longer be relevant.
- At the time of Plan writing, the Town Hall was condition but lacking adequate storage and office space. Fire District/Precinct facilities were in good condition with the exception of the East Conway Precinct fire station. All Conway School District schools were at or above enrollment capacity (except for the Pine Tree Elementary School) with many needed renovations and upgrades. The Conway Recreation Center needed upgrades.
- At the time of Plan writing, there were recently completed public water and sewer master plans for the North Conway Water Precinct (NCWP) and Conway Village Fire District (CVFD). Priorities at the time included connecting the CVFD water treatment and distribution system to the NCWP system, which necessitate upgrading existing infrastructure and constructing new pump stations and wastewater collection systems.
- The Chapter presents several planning implications for Conway's municipal facilities and infrastructure, including:
    - The continued growth of the Conway School District and strain on educational facilities;
    - The need for shared service/equipment agreements between various municipal districts and precincts, particularly fire districts;
    - Educating residents on the benefits of the proposed NCWP and CVFD interconnection.

Chapter 9: Land Use and Community Design Features

This chapter examines land uses, potential future build-out, and existing community design features and aesthetics as of 2003.

Key Findings and Implications for the Master Plan Update

- As of 2002, the majority of land in Conway was undeveloped. Undeveloped properties accounted for 57% of land area in the Town. Approximately one-quarter (24%) of land in the Town was used for residential purposes, and commercial land uses accounted for 5% of land area.
- The Chapter includes recommended design improvements, including improved lighting standards to reduce light pollution, protecting ridgeline development at lower elevations, reevaluating current sign regulations, developing a streetscape master plan, revising community design guidelines to reflect the individual character of different village areas and corridors, and considering the development of a municipal campus near the police station.
- The Chapter presents several planning implications for Conway's municipal facilities and infrastructure, including:
    - Balancing anticipated population and commercial growth with preserving undeveloped land;
    - Maintaining community character through future residential and commercial development.

Our Homes: North Country Regional Housing Needs Assessment (Partial Draft, January 2023)

Our Homes is the official Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for northern New Hampshire, prepared by North Country Council Regional Planning Commission (NCC). A draft of the RHNA was released in January 2023, and an updated draft is anticipated in the coming months. New Hampshire regional planning commissions are required by state law to produce an updated RHNA every five years. The geographic scope of the RHNA includes all of Coos County, northern Grafton County, and northern Carroll County, including Conway and the Mount Washington Valley.

While Conway is not currently a member municipality of NCC, the provisions of the RHNA apply to the town in several important ways:

- The RHNA includes pertinent data and recommendations related to housing needs in Conway and the Mount Washington Valley.
- The RHNA provides a legal basis for evaluating compliance with New Hampshire workforce housing law (RSA 674:58-61). The statute requires municipalities to provide reasonable opportunities for the development of workforce housing and contribute its "fair share" of workforce housing towards regional targets.[1]
- The RHNA includes a required Fair Housing Equity Assessment that examines barriers to affordable and equitable housing choices.

Key Findings, Themes, and Recommendations

- Much of the data presented in the plan is for the 50-town NCC planning region. Key findings with implications for Conway include:
    - The population of the region is projected to increase through 2035, and decline back to 2020 levels by 2050, which complicates projections of future housing supply and needs.
    - The population of the region is aging, with implications for household sizes, housing design, labor force availability, and school enrollment numbers.
    - Housing costs are affecting large swaths of the population. The percentage of moderate- and higher-income households that are cost-burdened (paying over 30% of household income towards housing costs) has increased significantly in recent years.
    - There is a significant shortage of rental units that are for very low income households (those making less than 30% of area median income).
- Additional findings specific to Carroll County, the Mount Washington Valley, and Conway include:
    - To achieve a healthy 5% rental vacancy rate and 2% ownership vacancy rate by 2025, there would need to be 336 new rental units and 804 ownership units constructed in Carroll County. This includes 79 new rental units and 163 new owner-occupied units in Conway.
    - To help ensure market stability through 2040, Conway would need to add 191 new rental units and 384 new owner-occupied units.
    - To meet regional needs for workforce housing by 2040 in the greater Conway labor market area, there would need to be 129 units affordable to renters making less than 60% of area median income (AMI) and 441 owner-occupied units affordable to households making less than 100% of AMI. To meet the regional "fair share" target, Conway would need to provide approximately 45% of these units.

[1] *For more information on New Hampshire's workforce housing law, consult the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority's fact sheet: https://www.nhhfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NH_Workforce_Housing_Law_Summary.pdf*

- To meet local and regional needs for housing, municipalities and partner organizations will need employ a variety of strategies and tools, including revising land use regulations, invest in municipal water and sewer infrastructure, building out the region's broadband network, expanding childcare options, address home health issues such as lead paint and radon, ensure accessibility for residents with limited mobility and other disabilities, and address complaints of housing discrimination within the region.
- At the time of writing, the New Hampshire Regional Planning Commissions are working collaboratively to develop a statewide housing needs toolkit that will include additional strategies and recommendations.

Implications for the Master Plan Update

The previous town Master Plan included significant objectives and recommendations for addressing housing needs in Conway. The findings included in the RHNA confirm that housing is still a significant challenge in Conway and the broader region. The final RHNA should serve as a useful reference for defining and quantifying the housing challenge in Conway throughout the master planning process and will eventually present detailed strategies and policy recommendations that the Town can consider incorporating into the Master Plan. In particular, the various housing needs targets included in the RHNA can be used to evaluate the need for, and impact of, various implementation strategies, such as zoning changes and water and wastewater infrastructure expansions. In accordance with state workforce housing law, the planning process should also factor in current and projected workforce housing needs and strategies to meet regional "fair share" targets. Lastly, the RHNA can inform considerations around current workforce commuting patterns, and how housing availability impacts commute times, transportation needs, and traffic impacts in the region.

North Country Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): 2023-2028 (DRAFT)

Conway is included in the North Country Council Economic Development District (EDD), a federal designation that qualifies the region for additional support and funding opportunities from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is developed by EDD staff (in this case, North Country Council) and a regional CEDS Committee to provide a "roadmap for resilient economic development" and identify priorities for (and access to) EDA funding programs. The CEDS vision statement is "*the region values its people, landscape, unique places, and regional collaboration while supporting a resilient, inclusive, and caring economy that can withstand, adapt, innovate, and transform to meet present and future needs*."

Key Findings, Themes, and Recommendations

- The CEDS recommends a "triple bottom line" approach to economic development – balancing People, Planet, and Profit.
- The CEDS focuses on different forms of "community capital" to support long-term and equitable wealth creation in rural communities. This broadens the typical definition of capital (financial) to recognize that there are other economic development assets in the region. Examples include natural capital (i.e., land and water), social capital (i.e., networks and relationships), and cultural capital (i.e., traditions and customs).
- The CEDS highlights a number of themes that cut across different economic sectors and associated economic development strategies. Overall, there is a strong focus on collaboration, leveraging shared community assets, investing in key supporting infrastructure and services (e.g., housing, childcare, transportation, water and wastewater, conservation), promoting a balanced and diversified regional economy, investing in

innovation, education, and workforce development, and emphasizing the region's cultural and quality of life.

- Retaining skilled workers, improved communications infrastructure, and an adequate supply of homes that are affordable are economic development needs that cut across all top regional industries.
- Natural assets (lakes, mountains, trails, etc) are one of the region's strongest assets, but could be at risk of being "overcapitalized" from high use levels and development.
- Socioeconomic challenges include a decline in the working age population and increasing senior population (most notably in Carroll County), poverty rates that exceed the rest of New Hampshire, and housing cost burden.
- There are notable regional industry clusters in Carroll County for hospitality, leather products, and metalworking.
- The CEDS includes a detailed SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis for the region's finances, markets, people, places, and land uses.

Implications for the Master Plan Update

The CEDS provides a useful blueprint for considering the next era of economic development in Conway. By considering the different forms of "community capital" and shared economic assets in Conway, the Master Plan process can help identify economic development objectives and strategies that promote long-term and equitable wealth creation in a way that builds community strength. This can help the Town establish priorities for future commercial development, as well as community facilities, programs, and partnerships. Additionally, the Town should consider how local economic development priorities align with the CEDS, which could have implications for eligibility for future EDA grant programs.

North Country Council Regional Transportation Plan (2023)

North Country Council Regional Planning Commission prepares and maintains a *Regional Transportation Plan*, an advisory plan that documents regional transportation conditions, needs, and priorities for maintenance and improvement projects. The *Regional Transportation Plan* informs which transportation infrastructure projects in the region are prioritized the state *Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan* ("Ten-Year Plan") and other federal grant funding sources. The current *Regional Transportation Plan* is from 2015; an updated plan is anticipated in winter 2023. This memorandum will be revised to include a summary of the update once it is released.

ZONING & LAND USE ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

3.17.23

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ZONING

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Jamel Torres, Town of Conway Planning Director

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for zoning and land use in the Town of Conway. This analysis will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan. This memo complements the *Housing Analysis Memorandum* that covers housing development in Conway.

This memo references several maps, which are included in a separate packet (**Conway Existing Conditions Maps**). Please refer to these maps as you review this memo.

Key Takeaways

- Conway's zoning ordinance supports a variety of residential, commercial, civic, and other uses in various locations throughout town. Residential uses account for 31% of overall land use, while agricultural/vacant land accounts for about half of land use in Conway.
- Conway's multiple overlay districts (areas with special standards that overlay on top of existing districts) help conserve water resources and ecologically important lands in Conway. There is no underlying zoning district specifically dedicated to conservation and/or open space.
- Single-family dwellings are the most common land use town-wide, and they are the most common residential unit type in nearly every district. In addition, the median number of residential units per lot is 1 unit in all zoning districts.
- There is an ongoing need to align denser development with areas with infrastructure capacity, which can support such development. At present, 69% of residential units fall within the Agricultural/Residential District, which is intended for low-density development.
- There is relatively little mixed-use development in Conway, even in village centers. Mixed-use development, while not appropriate for every area, is a land-efficient method of providing housing units and small-scale commercial spaces.
- The 2003 Master Plan identified some similar issues associated with land use, such as the lack of clearly organized distinctions between village and non-village centers. The "Areas of Focus" section of this plan highlights some of the same recommendations that the 2003

Master Plan did, including performance-based zoning and increasing density allowances in village areas.

- Land use and zoning are tools that can help maintain and increase the supply of housing. The Master Plan land use policy strategies should support a variety of housing types and opportunities to suit residents of all ages and incomes.
- There is a need to align the land use policies of the community with the broader goals of the community. At the Plan Open House, there was broad agreement that there is a shortage of affordable and market-rate homes in Conway. There was also broad consensus that Conway's land use strategy should be more "thoughtful" by limiting hotels and other large-scale development.

Background

Summary of Zoning Districts

The Town of Conway has eleven zoning districts, which are listed as follows:

- Residential/Agricultural (RA) District
- Center Conway Village Residential (CCVR) District
- Center Conway Village Commercial (CCVR) District
- Conway Village Residential (CVR) District
- Conway Village Commercial (CVC) District
- North Conway Village Residential (NCVR) District
- North Conway Village Commercial (NCVC) District
- Highway Commercial (HC) District
- Industrial-1 (I1) District
- Industrial-2 (I2) District
- Recreational Resort (RR) District

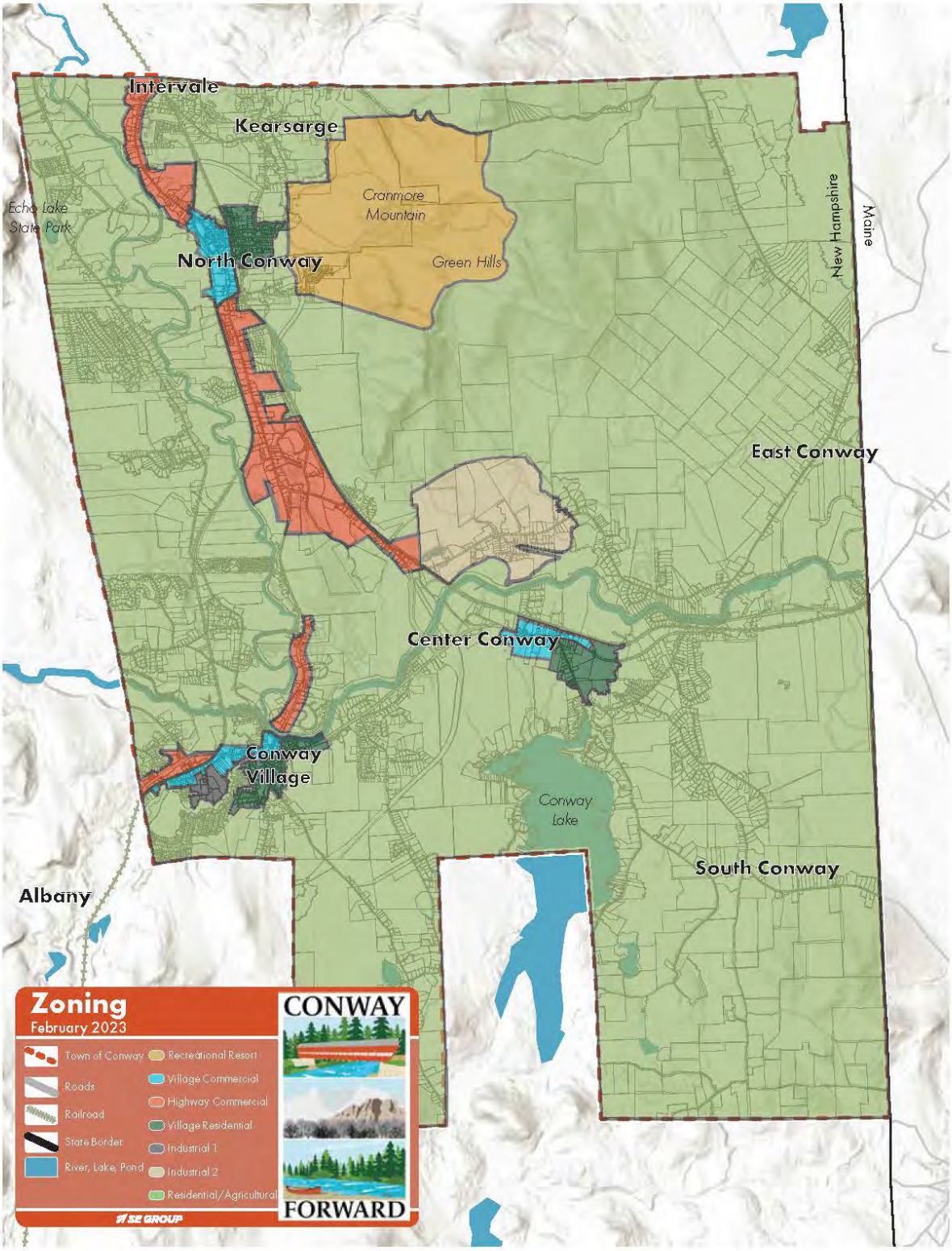


Figure 1: Current zoning in Conway.

The Town also has five overlay districts, listed as follows:

- Mountain Conservation Overlay (MCO) District
- Floodplain Conservation Overlay (FCO) District

- Shoreline Protection Overlay (SPO) District
- Wetland and Watershed Protection Overlay (WWPO) District
- Groundwater Protection Overlay (GWPO) District

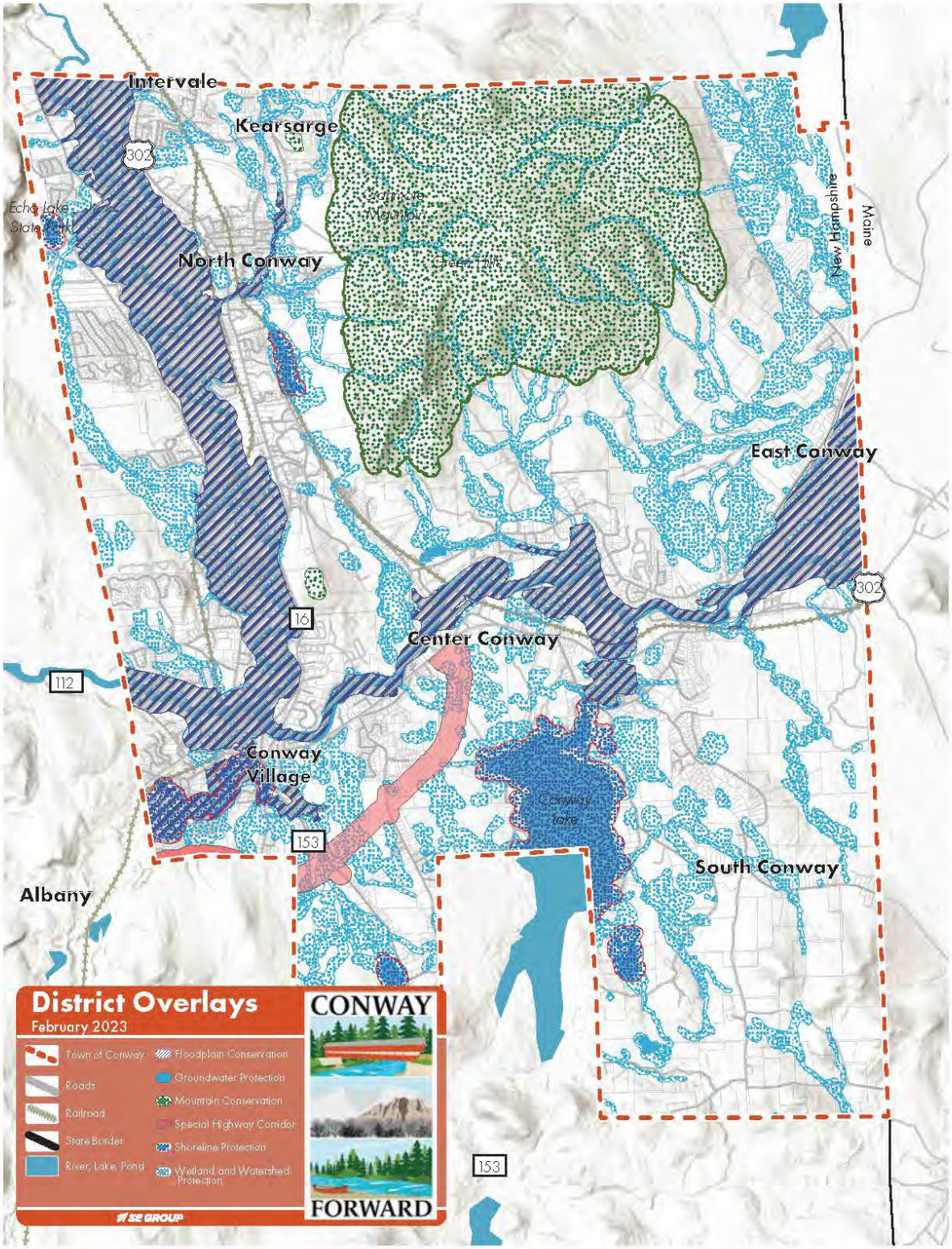


Figure 2: Overlay Districts in Conway

Unincorporated and Adjoining Areas

Conway is bordered by seven municipalities and one unincorporated area (Hale's Location). The eastern boundary of the town also functions as the border with Maine. Several of Conway's roadways cross into Maine, including Route 302.

Districts Summary

Conway's zoning districts are largely organized around the Town's three primary village centers. Each village center has a residential and commercial district associated with it. Other districts include a Highway Commercial district, which is organized along portions of the Route 113 and Route 16/302 corridors. The town also includes two industrial districts, one located adjacent to Conway Village and the other in the Redstone area. The town's largest district, the Residential/Agricultural District, includes all other areas of town.

A more detailed breakdown of the districts is included as a separate attachment.

The Town also has five overlay districts, which are summarized below:

The **Mountain Conservation Overlay (MCO) District** is intended to promote the conservation and undeveloped character of mountainous areas of Conway, particularly those adjacent to Cranmore Mountain. The district contains all areas north and east of the Saco River that are over 800 ft in elevation. The district permits ski lifts and other associated infrastructure in areas that the MCO overlaps with the **Resort Recreation District**.

The **Floodplain Conservation Overlay (FCO) District** is intended to limit development in Conway's floodplain areas along the Saco River. This district conforms to special flood hazard management areas as designated by FEMA. The district allows some civic uses, such as schools and civic buildings, and other uses (e.g., storage facilities) within the floodplain, but not the floodway. The ZBA may allow these uses to occur in the floodway by special exception. The district allows certain additional developments by special exception.

The **Shoreline Protection Overlay (SPO) District** is intended to limit development along shorelines of waterbodies in Conway, including Conway Lake, Echo Lake, Pudding Pond, and Pequawket Pond. This district sets standards for setbacks, vegetative buffers, water frontage, and impervious surfaces in order to preserve water quality and place sensible limits on shoreline development in Conway. The SPO contains no provisions requiring public access to waterbodies.

The **Wetland and Watershed Protection Overlay (WWPO) District** is intended to protect wetland areas from development and harmful fill. The district is generally intended to protect water quality and wildlife habitat in Conway. This district applies to the area within 100 ft of wetlands of various categories, excluding certain woodland wetlands. Nearly all uses in this district are "Pur/S," or "permitted if allowed in the underlying district" and subject to special exceptions.

The **Groundwater Protection Overlay (GWPO) District** is intended to protect water quality and water resources in Conway. This district sets a 400-ft radius around wells that serve the North Conway Village Water Precinct and the Conway Village Fire District. All uses are prohibited in this district except open space, gravel driveways, and structures relating to the well and water distribution system.

Overview of Current Zoning Tactics

This section summarizes the general tactics and structure of the current zoning code:

- Each village center has a residential and commercial district associated with it. Village Commercial districts allow residential and commercial uses, while Village Residential districts allow residential uses and a very limited set of commercial uses.
- Single-family homes are permitted in all districts except I1. Single-family homes are permitted with restrictions in I2.
- Agricultural uses are permitted in all districts. There are some restrictions on domestic farm animals and other certain agricultural uses.
- The five overlay districts apply further limitations on uses. Some overlay districts permit certain uses if those uses are permitted in the underlying district.
- Some uses have certain restrictions as specified by the code. Special exceptions are required for some uses, such as heliports and accessory dwelling units, in certain areas.
- The density of residential development is tied to infrastructure capacity. In areas with infrastructure capacity (water and sewer), more density of residential units is allowed. In areas without infrastructure capacity (water and sewer), less density of residential units is allowed. In general, the standards require a certain minimum lot size depending on infrastructure status. The standards then require an additional amount of square footage for each additional unit on the same lot.
- Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are not listed in the use table and there is no section of the zoning code specifically dedicated to PUD standards. Though the standard is not specified, PUDs appear to be allowed in all areas where multifamily housing (>2 units/lot) is allowed.
- Short-term rentals are not listed in the permitted use table.
- Accessory buildings are listed in the use table. The use table does not distinguish between accessory buildings and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), but the standards for several chapters support ADUs in the form of mobile homes, subject to certain conditions.
- Multifamily housing is defined as housing with >2 units.

Land Use Existing Conditions

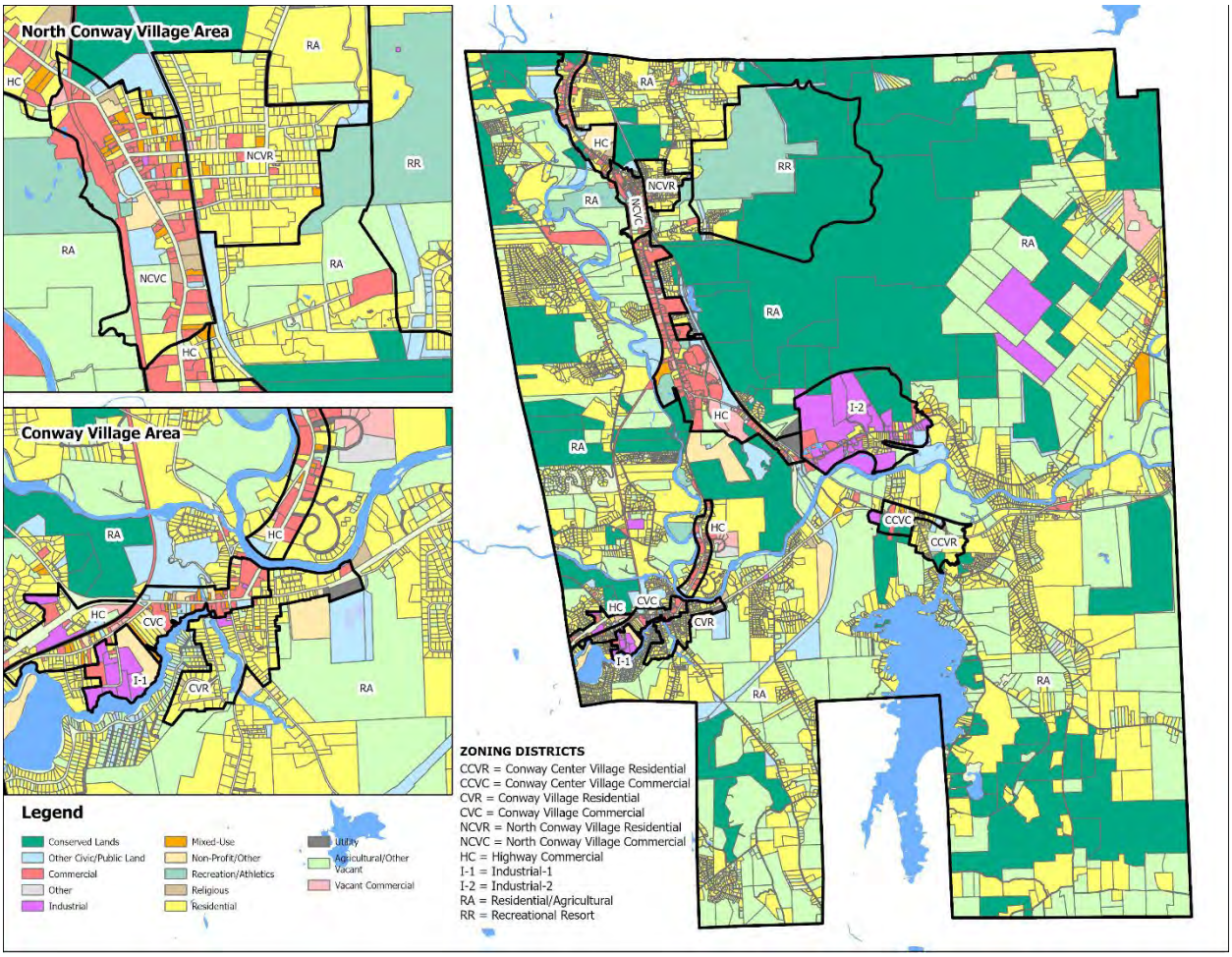


Figure 3: Existing Land Use Map

- As shown in the **Existing Land Use** map, Conway's development pattern is highly segmented. Commercial development is congregated around Conway's Village Centers, with the majority of commercial development located along the Route 116 strip. There are very few mixed-use parcels, and there is no particular pattern to their location. Some, but not all, residential areas are contiguous to village centers. In the northwestern corner of town and southern/eastern portions of town, there are substantial subdivisions located at a distance (>1 mile) from village centers.
- Some conserved lands in Conway are intact and contiguous; the Mountain Conservation Overlay area is the largest intact area. Other conserved lands in town are more segmented and sporadically located throughout town. In the southeastern portion of town, for example, large blocks of conserved land are interspersed and surrounded by residential parcels and vacant/agricultural parcels.
- The town has two intact industrial areas, along with a few isolated industrial parcels. Some industrial parcels are contiguous with several different land uses, including residential uses, commercial uses, and conserved lands.

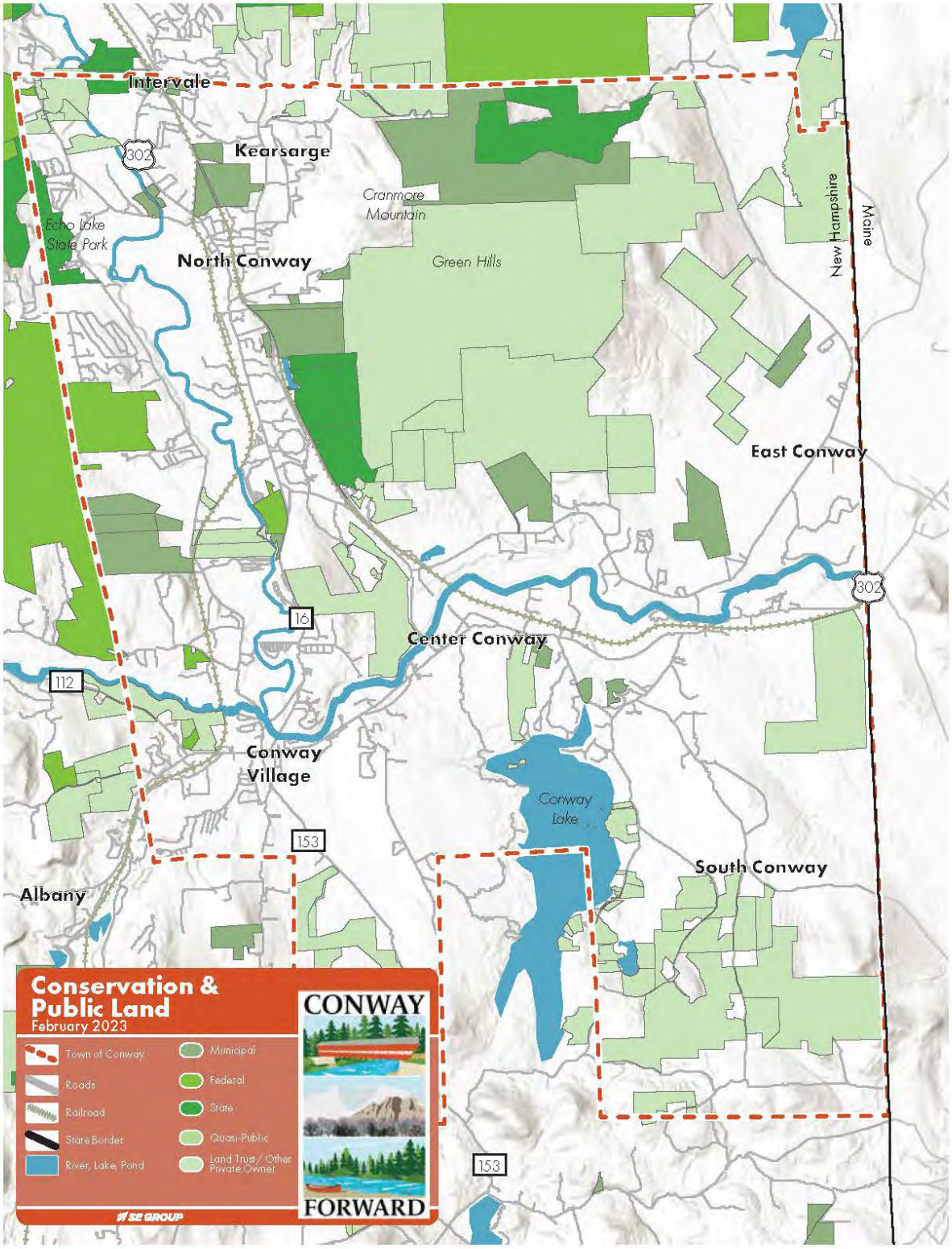


Figure 4: Conservation & Public Land map.

- As shown in the **Conservation & Public Land** map, there are several categories of public and conserved land in Conway, including land trusts, state land and town-owned land.

Public land and conserved lands are dispersed throughout town, with prominent clusters in South Conway and in the Green Hills area adjacent to Cranmore Mountain.

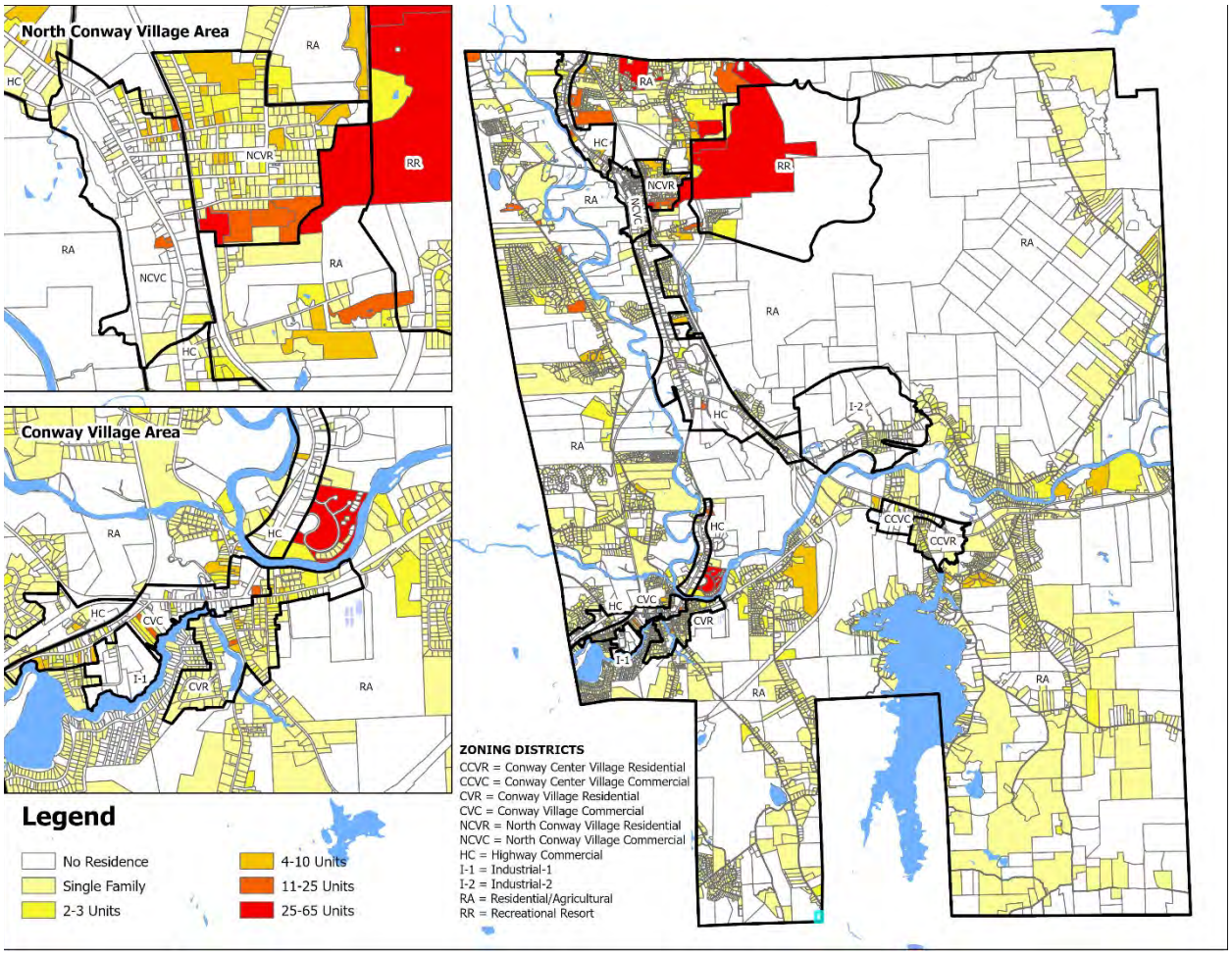


Figure 5: Residential units per parcel. Source: Town of Conway Tax Assessment Data.

- As shown in the Unit Density map, the majority of residential parcels in Conway contain single-family dwellings. A few isolated parcels contain an excess of 25 units: these parcels are large PUD developments. These developments are adjacent to Village Centers but are not necessarily a walkable distance from those centers.

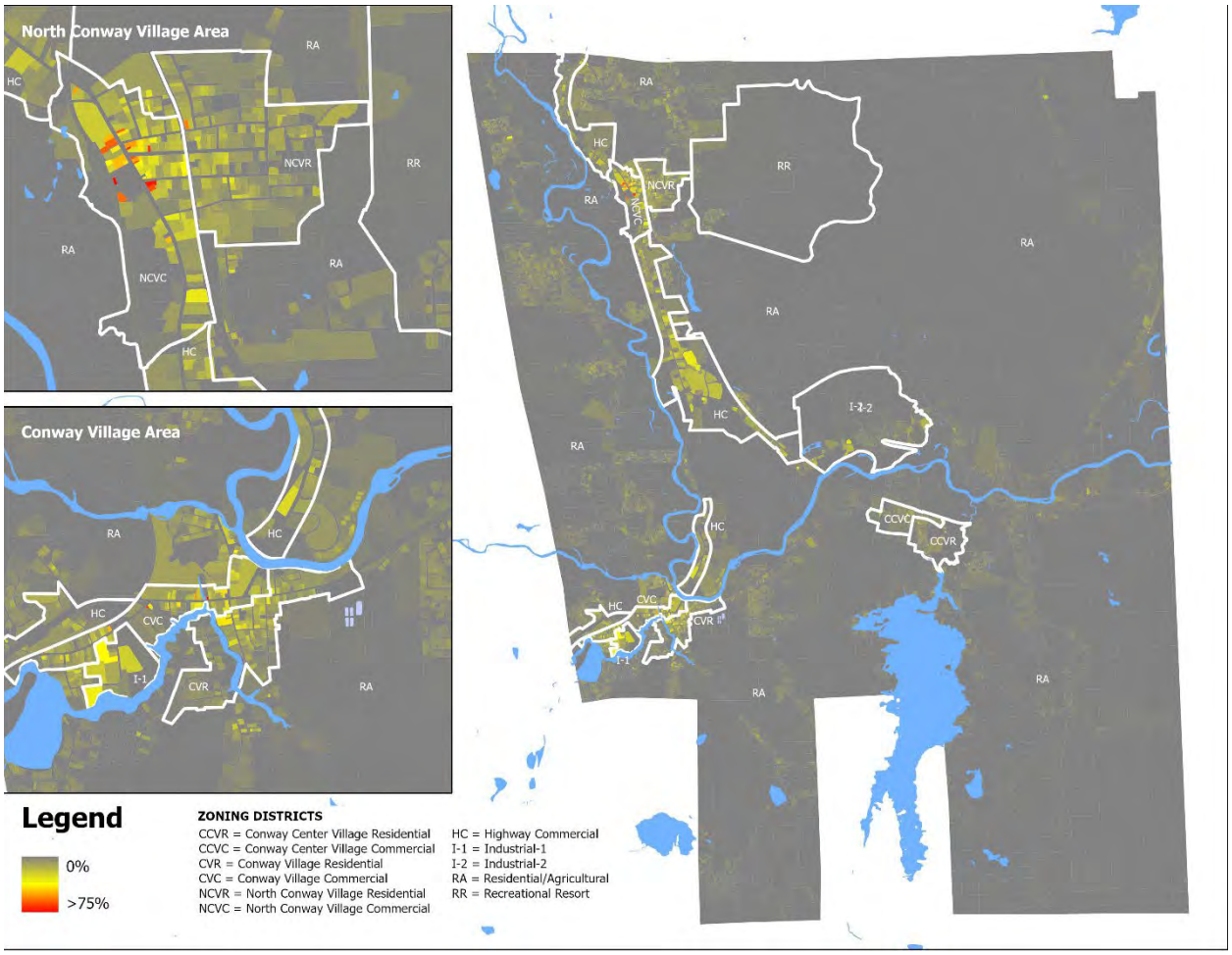


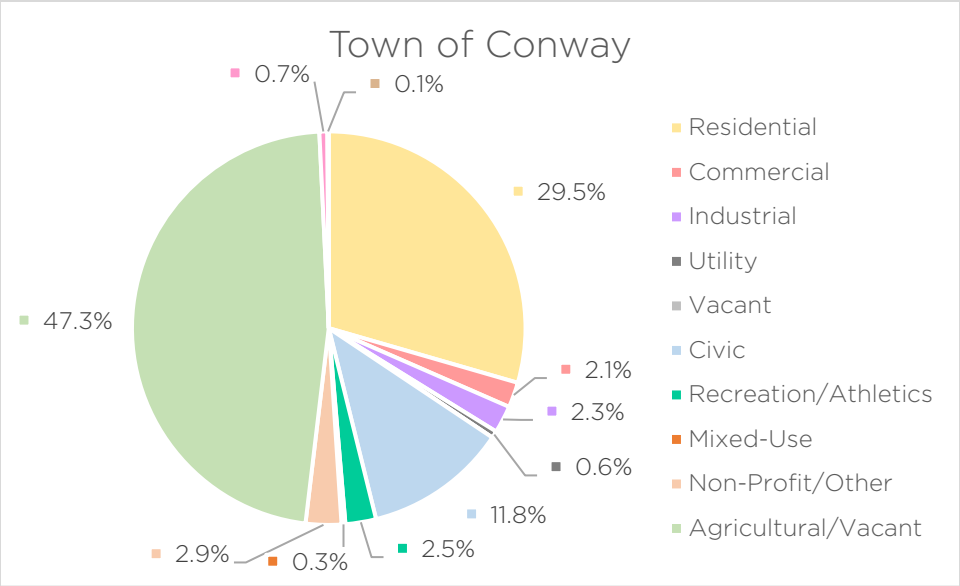
Figure 6: Building coverage on lots in Conway.

- As shown in the **Lot Coverage** map, very few parcels in Conway exceed 50% lot coverage. Lot coverage is the proportion of a lot that is covered by buildings. It is distinct from impervious surface, which is the area of a lot that is covered by buildings, pavement, and other structures that limit drainage. Lower lot coverage is expected in areas with conservation value, industrial areas, and low-density residential development.
- The areas with greatest residential density generally do not overlap with areas with highest lot coverage. In other words, units are not occupying a large proportion of the lot, even when there are many residential units on the same lot. This trend of low lot coverage may be driven by the substantial greenspace and parking requirements in the town's Site Plan requirements.

Land Use Breakdown

The following calculations and assessments of land use in Conway were created using the New Hampshire State Tax Codes. The tax codes record different categories of parcels; however, these categories do not necessarily align with traditional categories of land use (e.g., agricultural land, residential land, vacant land, open space). To support this analysis, our team manipulated the tax codes and grouped certain categories to provide a more functional understanding of land use in Conway.

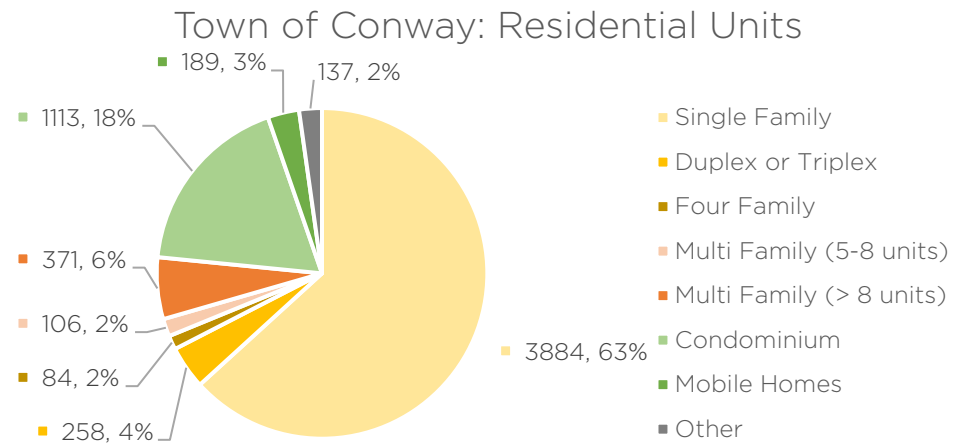
Town-wide



Land Use Analysis

- As shown in the chart above, agricultural uses and vacant land account for nearly half of overall land use in Conway, while residential uses account for nearly one third of land use. Civic uses are the third-most common land use category. Industrial and commercial uses account for a small percentage of overall land use.

Note: Because the New Hampshire tax codes do not distinguish between active and inactive agricultural lands, they are grouped here.



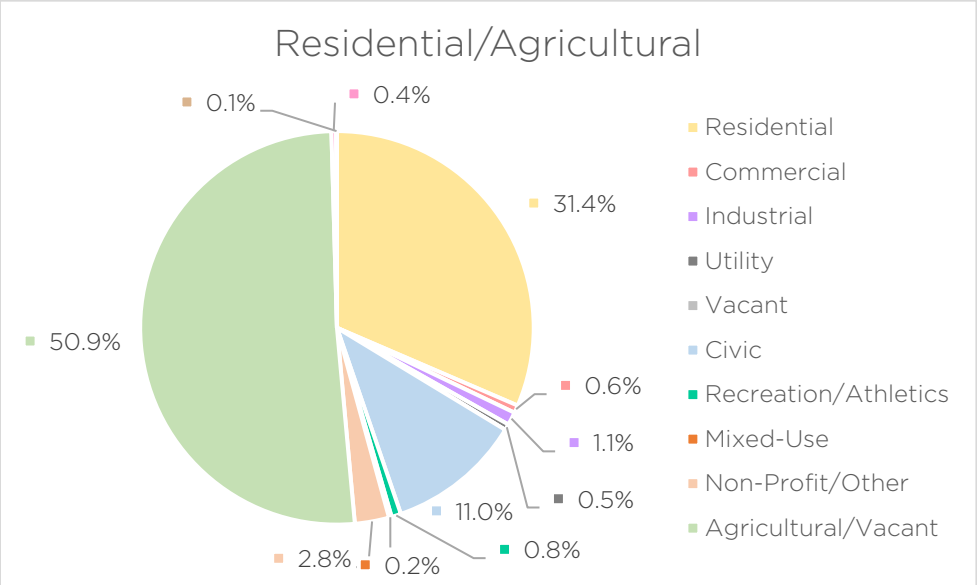
Unit Breakdown Analysis

- As shown in the chart above, single family dwellings account for 63% of residential units in Conway. Condominium-style units are the second-most common residential unit type in

Conway, accounting for 18% of all units. Multi-family buildings of over 8 units account for 6% of residential units in Conway.

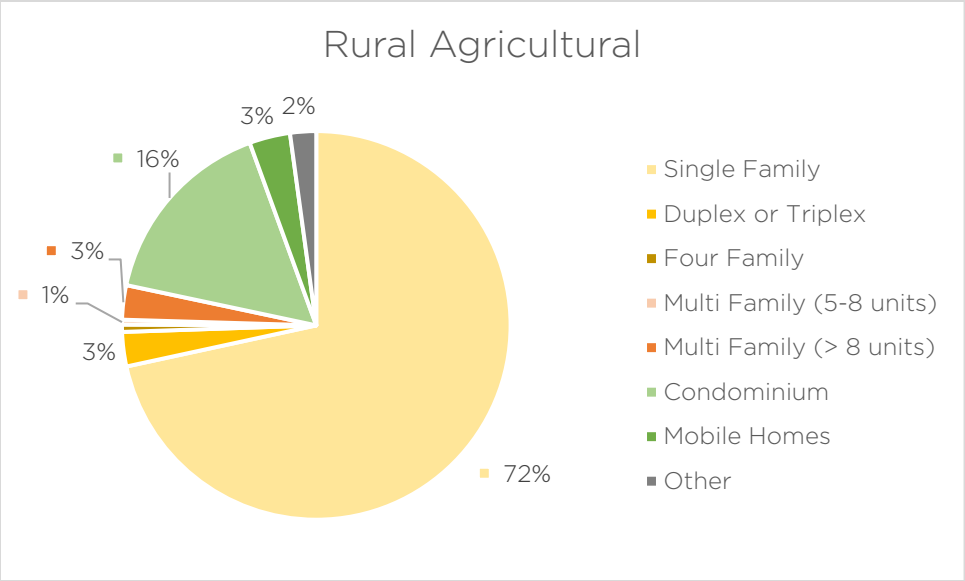
- As noted in Conway, there is a lack of "missing middle" housing types in Conway. Missing middle housing types refer to duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and other multifamily housing. In scale and density, this type of housing is in the middle between single-family housing and large apartment-style housing.

Residential/Agricultural (RA) District



Land Use Analysis

- The land use breakdown for the RA district mirrors that of Conway as a whole. This is likely because the RA district accounts for a vast majority (86%) of the town's land area.
- The RA district accounts for 69% of all residential units in Conway. The district functions more as a residential district than a quasi-conservation district.

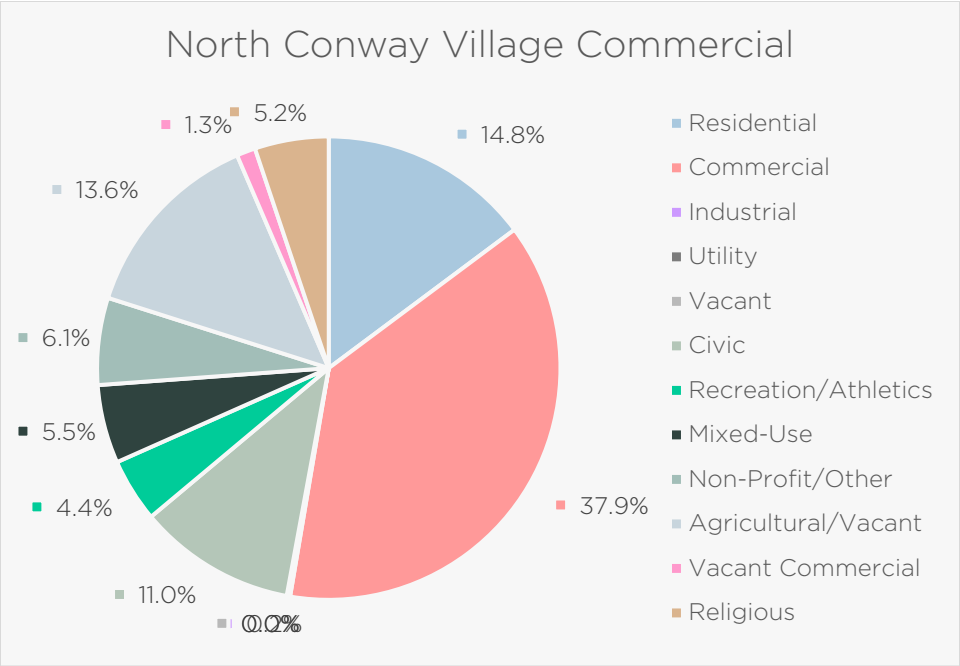


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The RA district largely supports the development of single-family homes. Single-family homes account for nearly 75% of residential uses in the district.
- Although mobile homes are permitted in this district, they account for just 3% of all residential units in the district. Condominium units account for 16% of all residential units in the district.
- At present, the AR district does not contain a balance of residential unit types. Single-family homes are over-represented in this district.

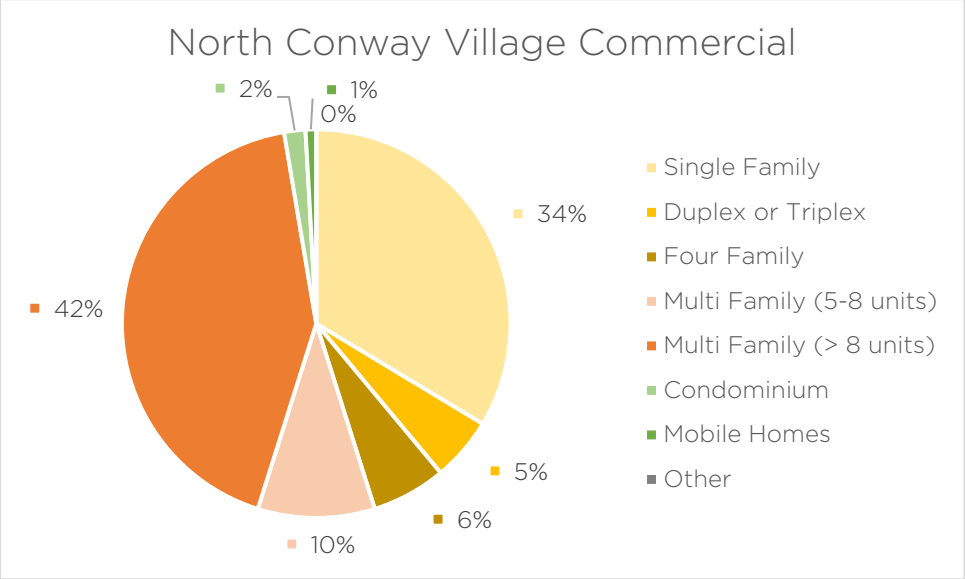
Lot Density Analysis (AR)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.20
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	3696.00

North Conway Village Commercial (NCVC) District



Land Use Analysis

- The NCVR district has a diverse mix of land uses, which is appropriate for a village center. However, these uses are segmented on separate lots; Mixed-Use lots account for just 5.5% of land uses in the district.

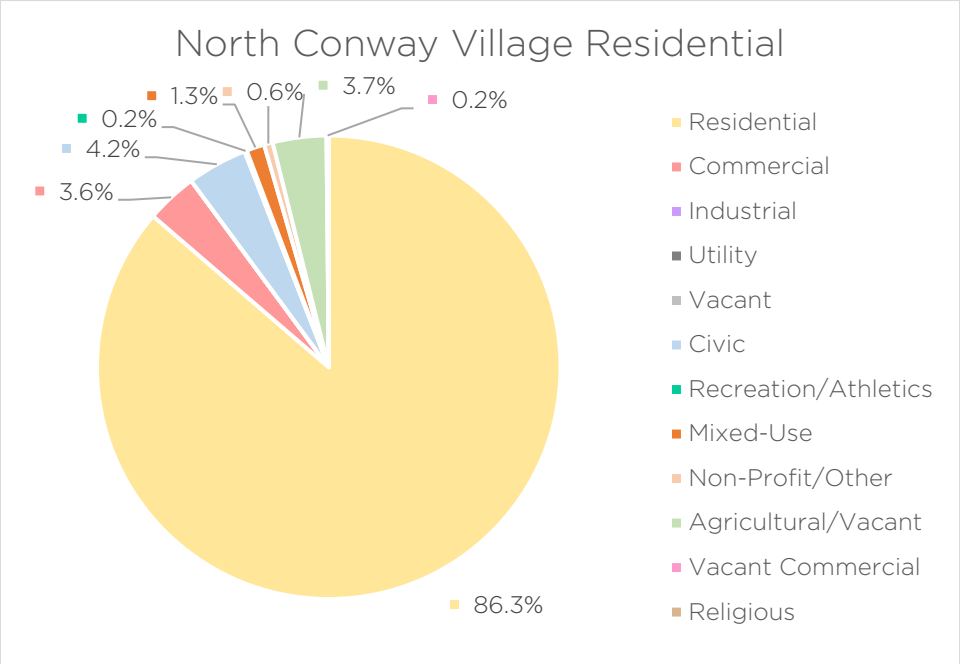


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The NCVC district contains the largest percentage of multifamily units of any district in Conway. However, the NCVC district provides just 2% of residential units in Conway.
- Although mobile homes are permitted in this district, they account for just 1% of all residential units in the district. Condominium units account for 2% of all residential units in the district.

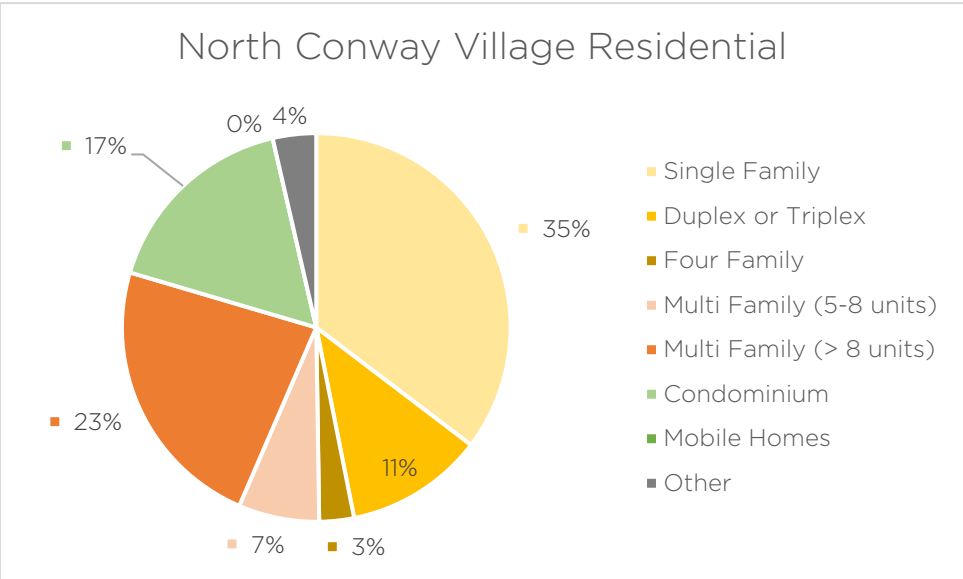
Lot Density Analysis (NCVC)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	2.21
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	52.00

North Conway Village Residential (NCVR) District



Land Use Analysis

- 86.3% of uses in the NCVR are residential. The remaining uses consist of low-impact commercial and civic uses. Mixed uses account for 1.3% of units in the NCVR.

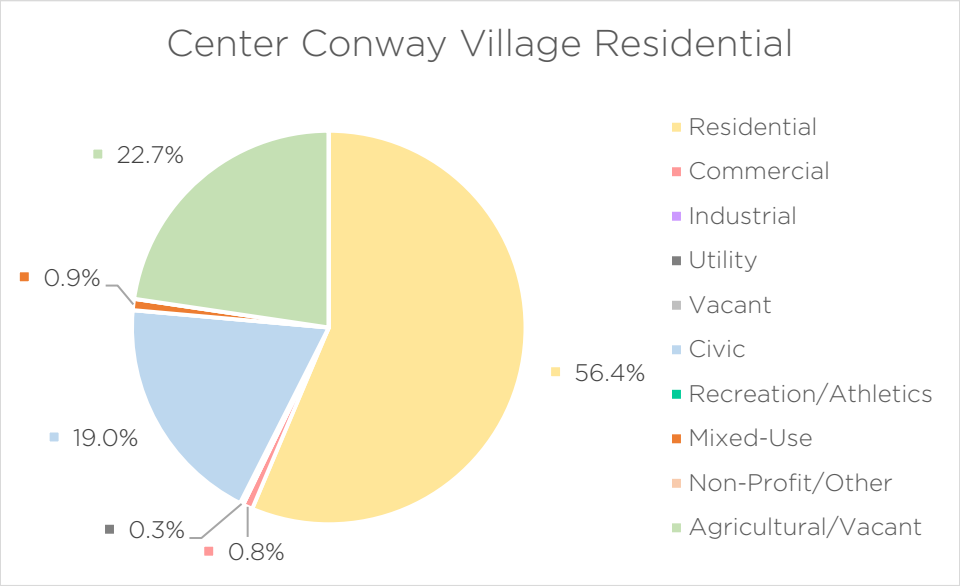


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The NCVR contains a balance of residential unit types. This district contains the highest proportion of high-density multifamily (>8 units/lot) and condominium units of any Village Residential district.

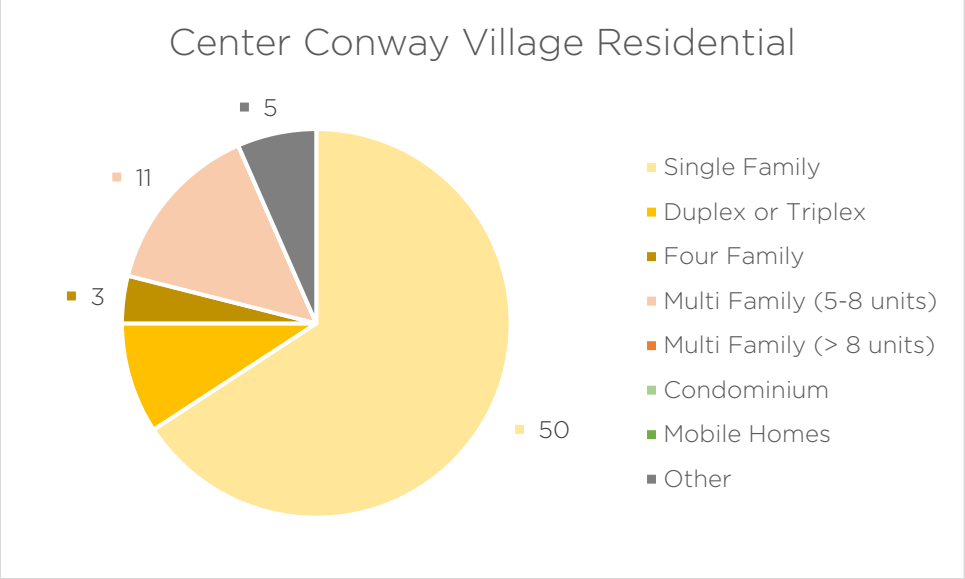
Lot Density Analysis (NCVR)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.99
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	192.00

Center Conway Village Residential (CCVR) District



Land Use Analysis

- Non-residential uses make up 43.6% of the CCVR, substantially more than other Village Residential districts. The CCVR contains the largest proportion of civic uses of any Village Residential district.
- 22.7% of the district is Agricultural/Vacant land. The district is largely surrounded by the RA district.

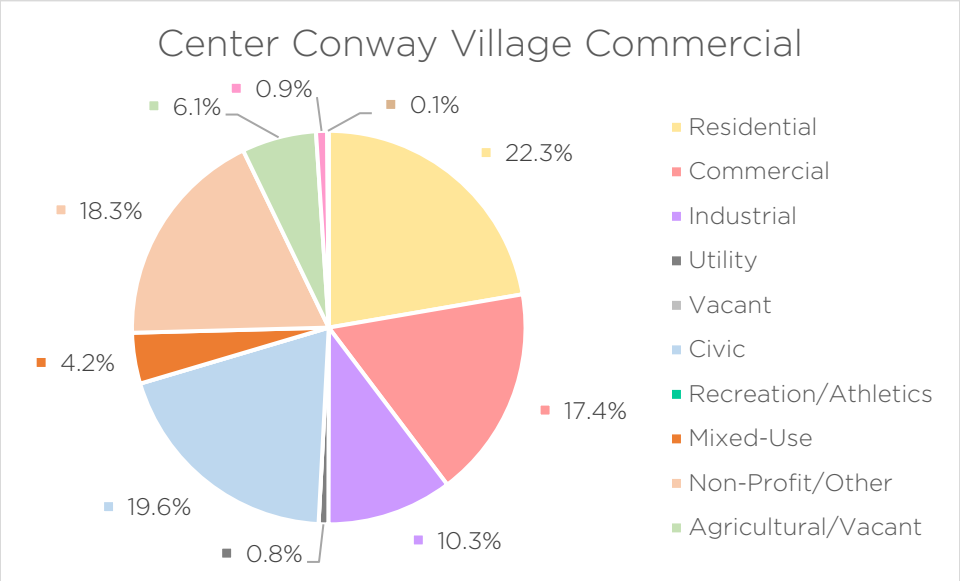


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The CCVR contains no large multifamily residential uses, condominium development, or mobile homes.

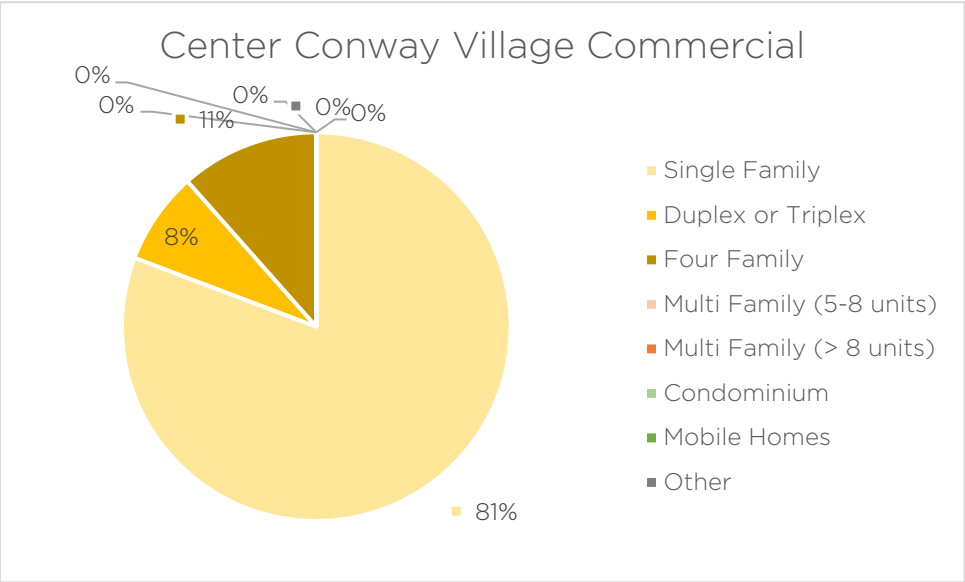
Lot Density Analysis (CCVR)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.26
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	61.00

Center Conway Village Commercial (CCVC) District



Land Use Analysis

- Like NCVC, CCVC contains a diverse mix of land uses. However, just 17.4% of uses are commercial in the CCVC.
- 10.3% of the district is Industrial uses, the largest proportion of any Village Commercial district.

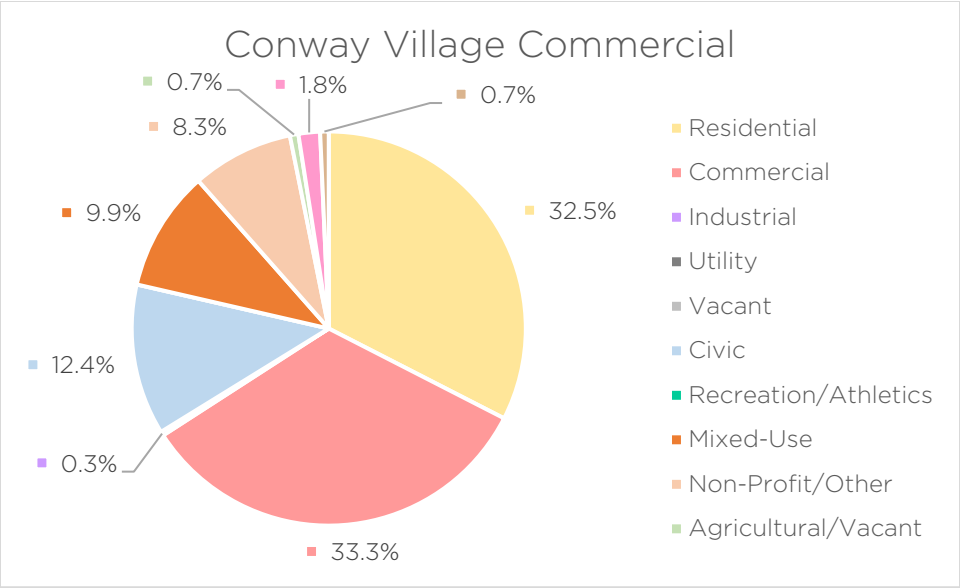


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The CCVR consists largely of single-family homes and contains no large multifamily residential uses, condominium development, or mobile homes.

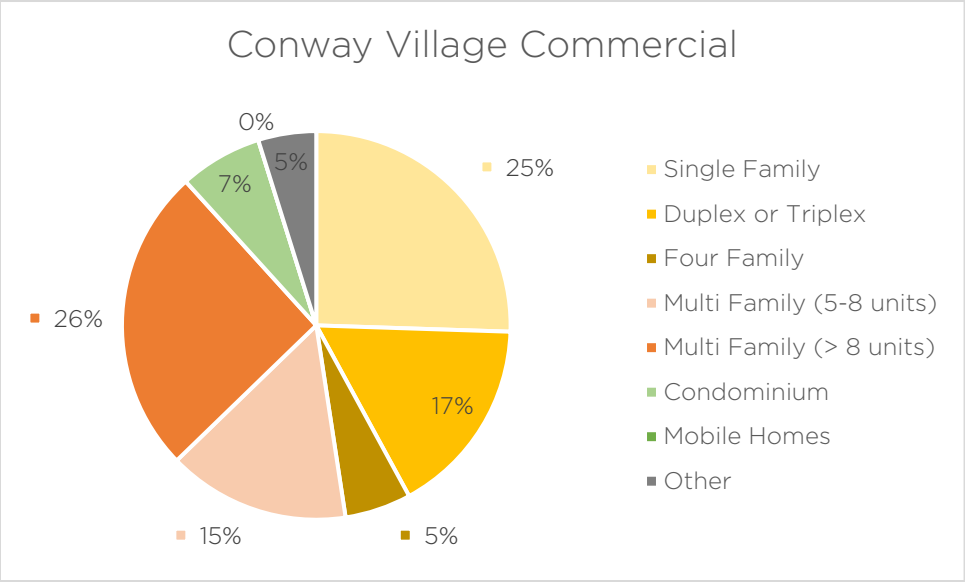
Lot Density Analysis (CCVR)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.22
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	23.00

Conway Village Commercial (CVC)



Land Use Analysis

- The CVC contains the greatest share of residential uses of any Village Commercial district, with 32.5% of units being residential and 9.9% being mixed-use.

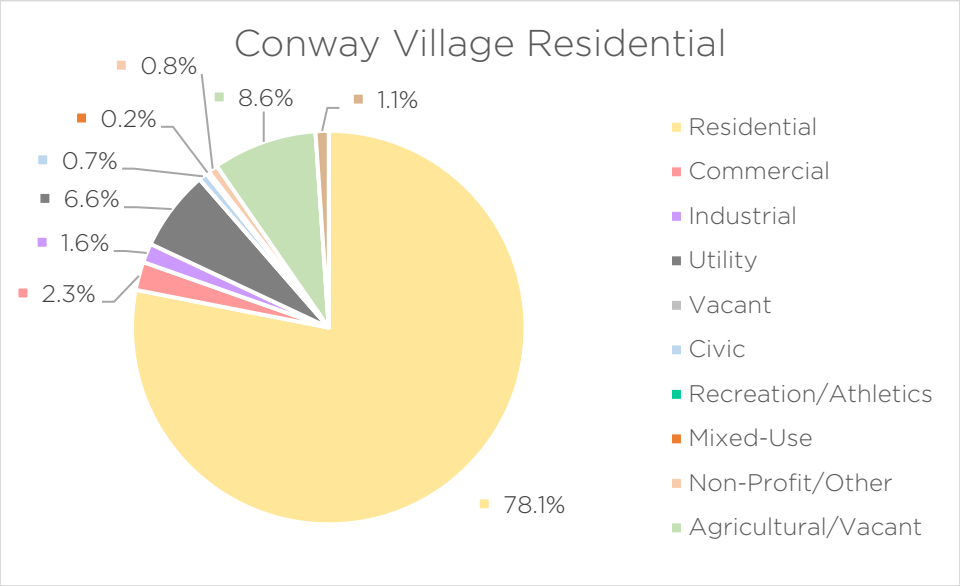


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The CVC contains the broadest mix of unit types of the three Village Commercial districts. This district contains the highest proportion of duplexes of any district.

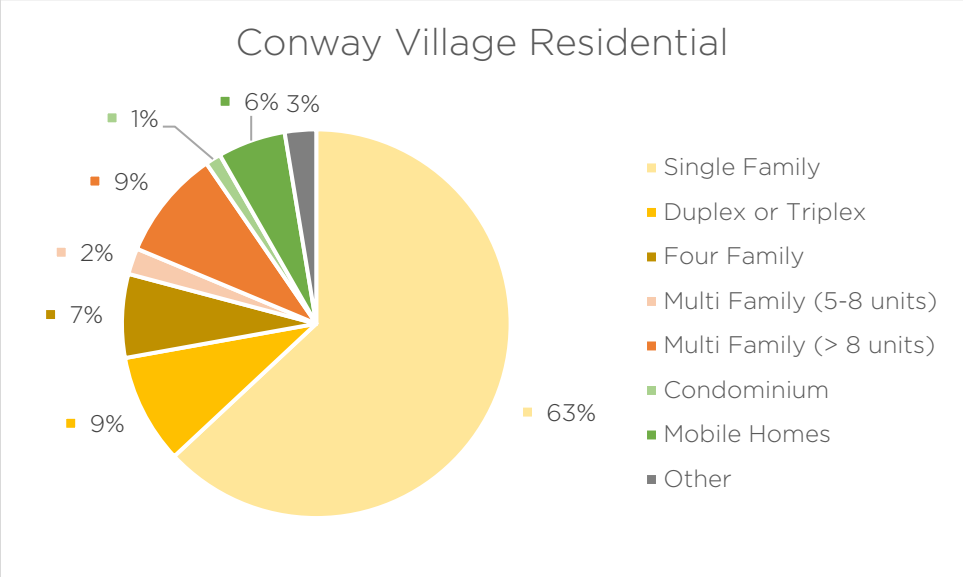
Lot Density Analysis (CVC)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	2.51
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	59.00

Conway Village Residential



Land Use Analysis

- The CVR district is overwhelmingly residential. There are few other meaningful uses; the other most common uses include Agricultural/Vacant (8.6%) and Utility (6.6%).



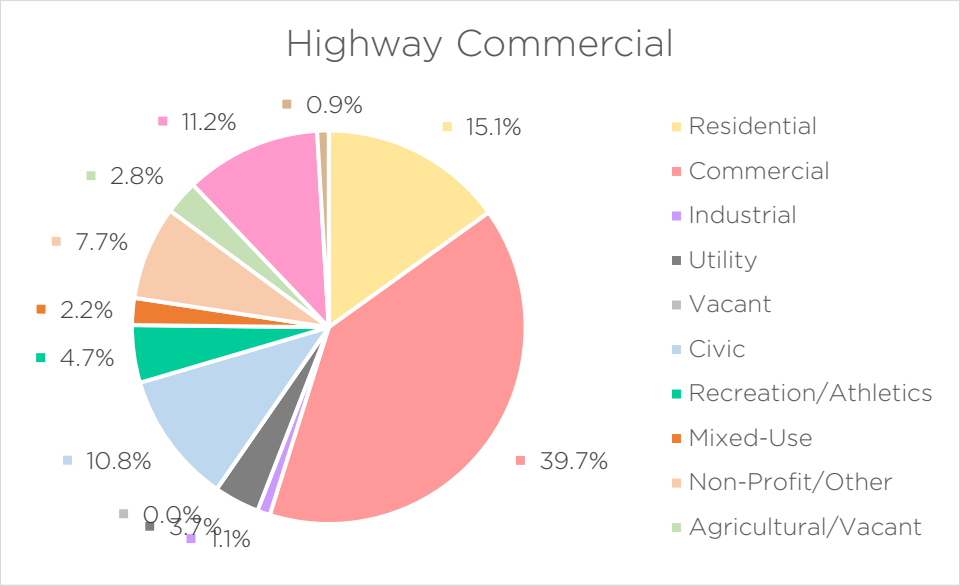
Unit Breakdown Analysis

- Just over 60% of units in the CVR are single-family units.
- The CVR contains the largest proportion of mobile homes of the three Village Residential districts.

Lot Density Analysis (CVR)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.34

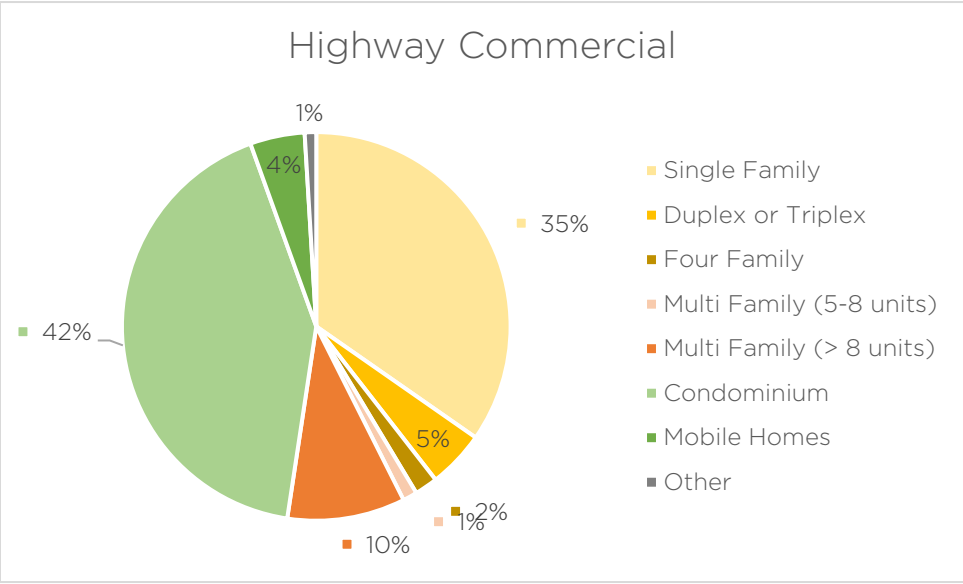
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	172.00

Highway Commercial (HC) District



Land Use Analysis

- The HC district is 39.7% Commercial and 11.2% Vacant Commercial. 15.1% of the district is residential.
- Several land uses make up a small share of the overall district (e.g., Mixed-Use, Civic, Industrial, Utility).

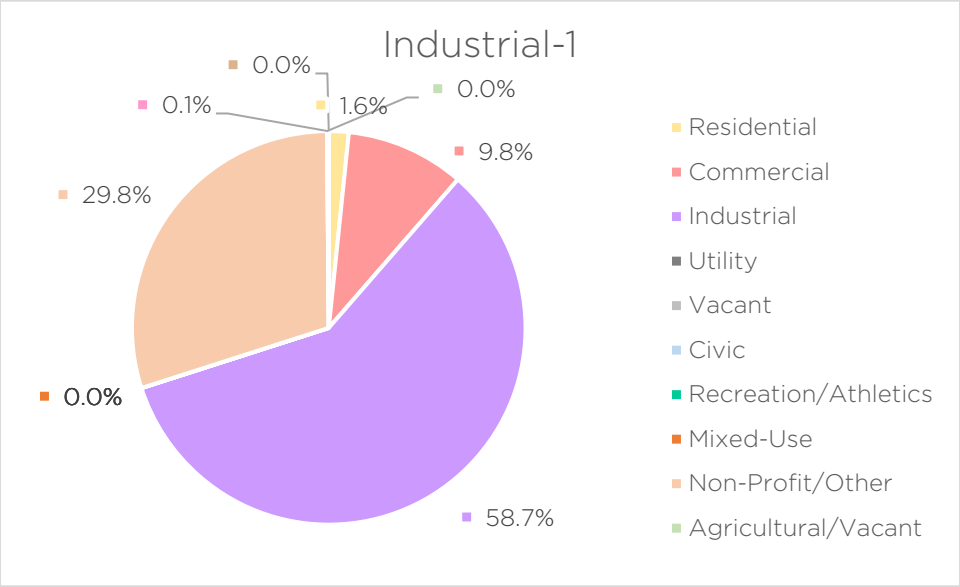


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The two most common housing types in this district are single-family homes and condominiums. There is a lack of mid-density housing types in the HC district.

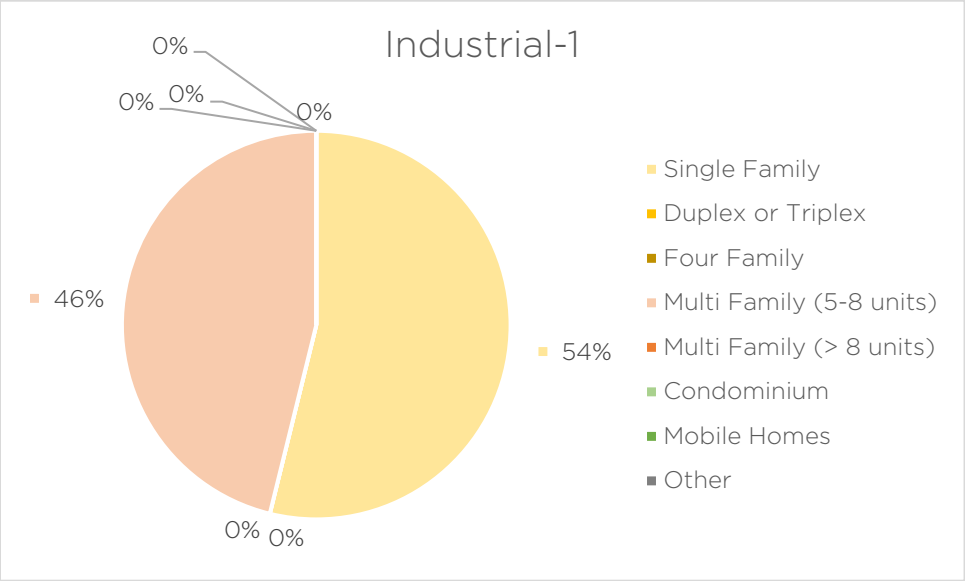
Lot Density Analysis (HC)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.91
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	220.00

Industrial-1 (I1) District



Land Use Analysis

- The I-1 district is largely industrial (58.7%). Non-Profit/Other uses account for nearly 30% of uses in the district. Residential uses are very limited within this district.

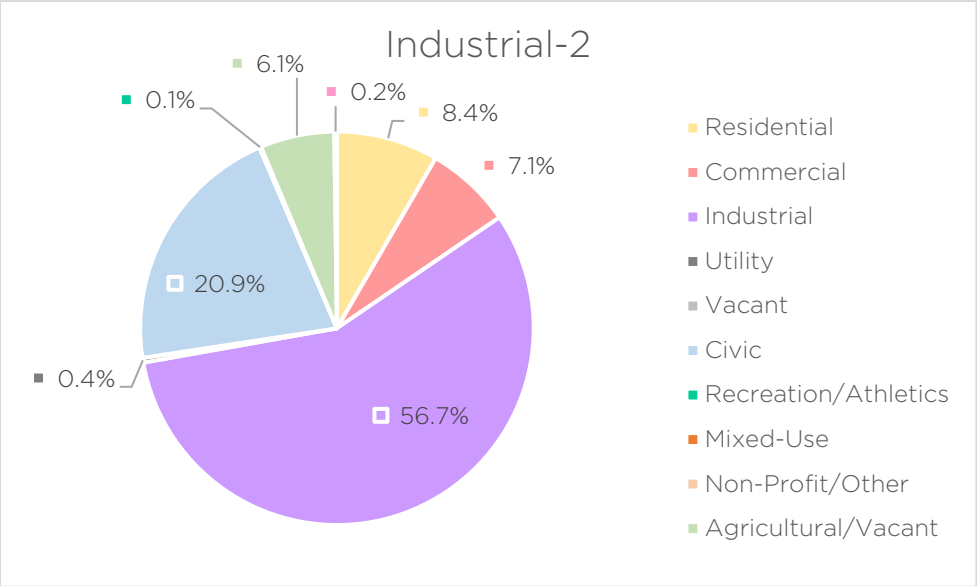


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The I-1 district contains a small number of single-family and multi-family units.

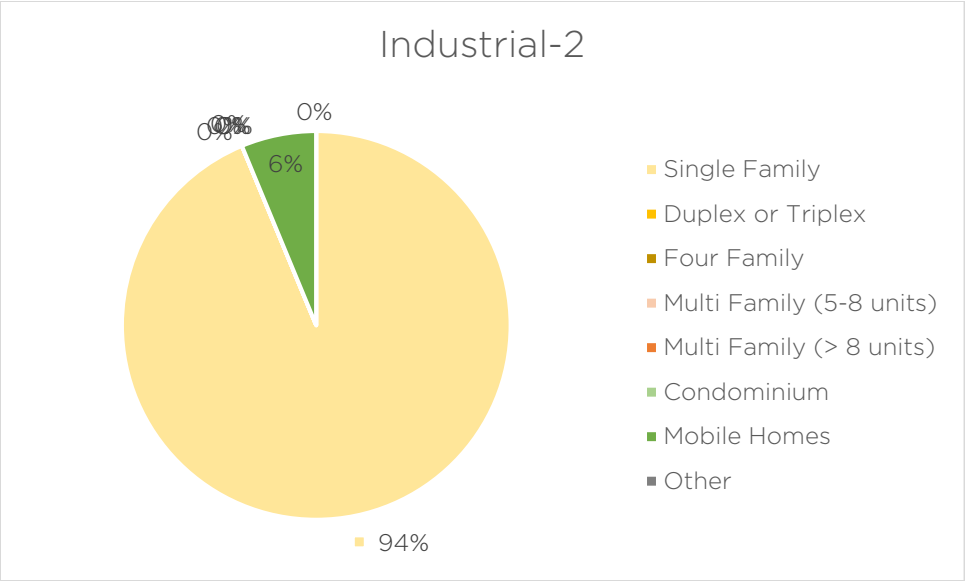
Lot Density Analysis (I-1)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.63
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	8.00

Industrial-2 (I2) District



Land Use Analysis

- The I-2 district contains nearly exactly the same proportion of industrial uses as I-1. However, the other uses have greater variety, with 20% Civic uses and roughly equivalent segments of Agricultural/Vacant land, Residential uses, and Commercial uses.

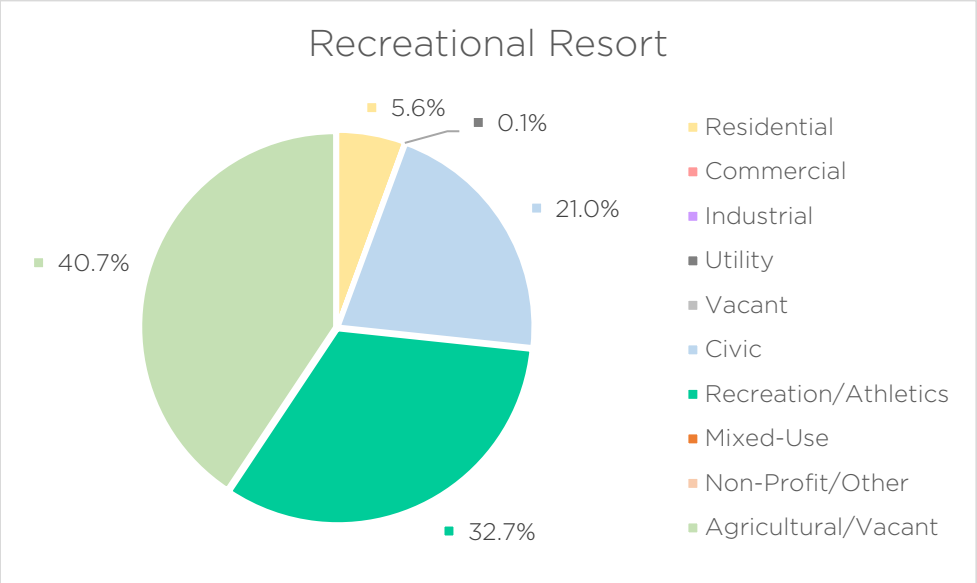


Unit Breakdown Analysis

- The I-2 district contains largely single-family homes along with a small amount of mobile homes. This unit mix corresponds to the lack of infrastructure capacity in this area.

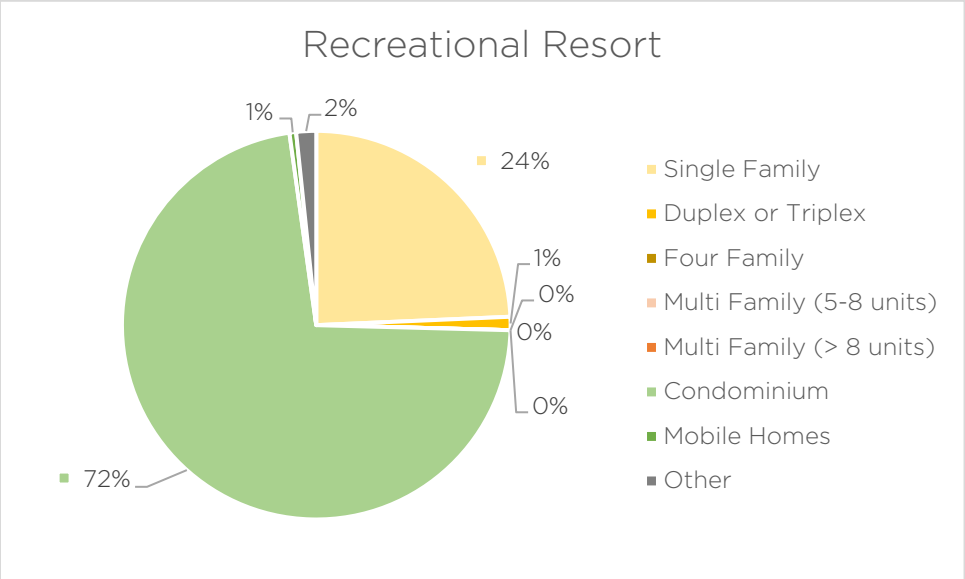
Lot Density Analysis (I-2)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	48.00

Recreational Resort (RR) District



Land Use Analysis

- The Recreational Resort district, which contains Cranmore Mountain Resort, offers a mix of recreation, civic, and residential uses. 40.7% of land in the district is classified as vacant, which is likely the portion of RR that is conserved by the Mountain Conservation Overlay District.



Unit Breakdown Analysis

- Condominium-style development is makes up about 75% of units in the RR district, while single-family homes make up most of the other 25%. This supports the intent of the RR district, which is to support mountain recreation and tourism in addition to conservation goals.

Lot Density Analysis (RR)	
Average # Residential Units/Residential Lot	2.92
Median # Residential Units/Residential Lot	1.00
Number of Residential Lots	50.00

Policy Context

This section provides an overview of Conway's governing structure and recent policy changes pertaining to land use in Conway.

Jurisdictional Context & Government Structure

Land use and zoning in Conway is primarily governed by two bodies: the Planning Board (PB) and the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). The PB is responsible for certain non-regulatory responsibilities, such as updating and monitoring the Town Master Plan and adopting Capital Improvement Plans (CIP). The PB is also responsible for some regulatory functions, including amendments to the site plan review ordinance and subdivision regulations.

The ZBA is a quasi-judicial body that reviews special exceptions as included in the zoning ordinance. The ZBA also hears appeals to zoning decisions and interprets unclear sections of the zoning ordinance. The ZBA has the authority to issue variances that deviate from the requirements

of the zoning ordinance. In general, the PB is responsible for long-range planning decisions and site plan/subdivision reviews in Conway, and the ZBA is responsible for ongoing review of current development proposals, such as variance and special exception requests. The Selectboard also has the authority to initiate zoning changes; however, these changes must be reviewed by the Planning Board and approved by the residents of Conway.

In addition to these governmental bodies, Conway also has four (formerly five) fire precincts, as shown on the **Area Context** map. These precincts do not line up with the boundaries of the Town zoning districts. The North Conway Village Water Precinct provides water services to the North Conway Village, Intervale, and the Route 16 strip areas.

Chapter 195 Affordable Housing

The Town of Conway has a section of its code dedicated to the provision of affordable housing. This purpose of this section is stated as follows: "The purpose of this chapter is to provide a mechanism to encourage the development of affordable units for moderate and lower-income households to meet the needs of the Town of Conway, to foster economic and social stability within the larger community by providing opportunities for home ownership and long-term rental units and provide for the sustainability of affordable units in the future through the use of deed restrictions and other legal mechanisms and to further the intent of the Town of Conway to meet the requirements described under New Hampshire RSA 674." RSA 674:58-61 has been in effect since 2010 and requires municipalities to provide "reasonable" and "realistic" opportunities for workforce housing in their zoning regulations. This includes rental multi-family housing.

The chapter applies to 7 of Conway's 11 zoning districts: RA, CVR, NCVR, CCVC, CVC, NCVC, and HC. Section 195-4, entitled "Density Bonus and Other Development Incentives,' sets minimum lot sizes for residential units served by water and sewer. The section sets a ¼-acre minimum lot size (5000 sf for additional units on a lot) for areas served by sewer and a 1/2-acre minimum lot size for areas served by water. The statute defines workforce housing as having 5 or more units. In order to provide 5 units, this ordinance requires a lot size of 0.73 acres. This requirement may limit the overall potential of this ordinance to provide small and large multifamily units.

Further in this section, there is a standard setting the minimum percentage of units classified as affordable in AH development: "At least 25% of dwelling units within the affordable housing development must meet the definition of "affordable units." When the number of affordable units is calculated to a fractional number, any fraction of less than 1/2 shall be rounded down to the next whole number; any fraction of 1/2 or greater shall be rounded up to the next whole number and treated as a whole inclusionary unit. For example, a three-unit development would be calculated as 3 x 25% = 0.75, which would be rounded up to one affordable unit. Mobile homes or manufactured housing as defined in RSA 674:31 are not permitted; however pre-site built units as defined in RSA 674:31-a shall be permitted."

The code stipulates that an "affordable unit" must meet the following specification: "the monthly rent shall be no greater than estimated maximum affordable monthly rent for Carroll County as most recently published by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority." The chapter provides that affordable units should be "comparable" in size and amenities to the market-rate units.

Provisions in the chapter related to cluster housing include the following items:

- Cluster housing must take the form of SF or duplex structures and shall not include manufactured or mobile homes
- Must be served by municipal water and sewer
- Floor area of units must be between 400-1200 sf
- All units must be used for long-term residency
- Minimum lot frontage for any lot shall be 50 ft

- Unclear policy on ADUs

State Policy Context

New Hampshire has few statewide requirements for zoning. Municipalities must allow agricultural uses throughout town and allow opportunities for workforce housing (RSA 674:58-61) and ADUs (RSA 674:71-73). A recent proposal to establish a statewide minimum lot size of ¼ acre or allow 4 units per lot was unsuccessful in the state legislature.

Considerations For Master Plan Process

How Town Zoning Interacts with Other Topics & Goals

- **Housing:** Land use ordinances help determine the type and location of housing that is provided in Conway. The zoning ordinance can help cultivate development patterns that promote health, affordable housing, and economic development. Zoning can also help align housing with other community assets and infrastructure.
- **Economic Development**: Zoning is an important economic development tool. Zoning ordinances can help ensure that a community has an appropriate balance of commercial and residential opportunities. Zoning can also support a community's core industries and values through the creation of special districts and standards.
- **Transportation**: A community's land use pattern determines how easily people can travel between destinations. In communities that are highly spread out, travel by car is frequently the only transportation option. In communities with more compact development, residents and visitors may be able to get around by walking, biking, or taking transit. Reducing dependence on car travel has climate benefits as well.
- **Infrastructure:** The availability of community water and wastewater infrastructure has a significant impact on the location, type, and density of development. Water and wastewater infrastructure are particularly important for housing development and affordable housing. Infrastructure capacity can support larger housing developments on smaller lots, where localized water and septic systems are infeasible or are cost-prohibitive to create.
- **Conservation & Sustainability:** A community's land use strategy should aim to encourage development in some places and prevent it in others. Zoning ordinances can establish districts and standards that support local conservation priorities to preserve forests, habitats, and wildlife corridors.

Community Goals & Public Input

The 2003 Plan provides the following goal statement related to land use: "*Regulations, policies and guidelines used to manage land development in Conway should change. In non-village portions of the town these changes should focus on targeting areas for medium and low density residential development, commercial and light industrial development, and limited development (protected areas). Village areas should be designated for a mix of high density residential, commercial and institutional uses.*" These goals are still highly relevant for Conway.

The last future land use map recommended large areas for PUD development in between Conway Village, Center Conway, and Settler's Green. PUDs have not been deployed this way, and this recommendation is no longer relevant. However, other recommendations from the 2003 map remain relevant: for instance, the map designates large portions of the current RA district as "low-density residential development." This is still an appropriate designation for much of this area, as it is not served by sufficient infrastructure to support additional density.

At the February Open House, participants shared that they wanted a more "thoughtful" land use strategy in Conway. They also wanted limitations on large-scale commercial development, such as hotels. Participants indicated that this type of commercial development was not serving the Conway community. Housing was a top priority at the Open House. Participants unanimously agreed that Conway is facing a shortage of units that are affordable to low-income residents. Participants also wanted the plan to address the role of STRs in the community. Some participants suggested disallowing STRs in residential areas. When asked about their favorite things about Conway, respondents frequently highlighted the community's scenic beauty, natural environment, and recreational opportunities. At the meeting, participants were also asked to note areas they thought would be suitable for additional housing development and/or conservation. The results of that exercise, along with the full summary of feedback, is available in the **Open House #1 Summary Memo**.

Zoning & Land Use Issues & Areas of Focus

This section summarizes the primary issues related to land use and zoning in Conway. The Areas of Focus are potential recommendations that the updated Master Plan could make. Each of these potential ideas will need further analysis. The Steering Committee is encouraged to provide feedback on these potential recommendation areas.

Overall Lack of Support for Community Goals in Zoning Ordinance

Conway's current zoning ordinance does not offer explicit support for some of the things that are most important to Conway residents, including recreation, scenic qualities, small-scale businesses, new housing opportunities, and historic preservation. The ordinance could benefit from specific standards and/or districts that support these community goals and values.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus: See below.

Lack of Conservation/Recreation/Open Space District

The Town of Conway currently has no zone district specific to open space/recreation outside of the Recreational Resort district. Some of the Town's overlay districts fulfill some of the functions of a traditional Open Space zone district by preventing development and/or certain kinds of intensive development. "Conservation areas" is included in the Use Table and is permitted in all districts.

The Town's **RA** district does not currently contain standards that strongly support the provision of agricultural open space. The district limits the general density of residential development at one unit per acre (with exceptions for certain accessory units), which preserves the percentage of open space provided on individual parcels. However, the district does not contain additional standards designed to mitigate the fragmentation of farmland and/or habitat.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider creating an additional zone district dedicated to open/space recreation. This district would primarily take lands out of the RA district that are presently used as recreation or Open Space.
- Consider adopting additional standards to prevent the fragmentation of farmland and habitat in the RA District.

Lack of Guardrails in RA District

The RA is currently over-providing residential units. The district is intended for low-density residential and agricultural uses, but it provides 69% of the town's residential units. The

development pattern in this area is highly diffuse, with residences scattered across most areas of the district. However, it is still possible to create large-scale residential development in this district through a PUD. Subdivided areas within the district do not align with the purpose and intent of the district.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider formalizing intensively developed areas in a separate district(s) or adding them to existing village residential districts.
- Consider limiting commercial and residential uses in the RA district to discourage development that is not compatible with the scale and infrastructural capacity of the district.
- What aboutConsider adding provisions for a conservation subdivision standard applicable in the RA District?that prioritizes sustainable development practices.

Need to Align Development Standards with Infrastructure Capacity

There is an ongoing need to align denser development with areas with infrastructure capacity, which can support such development. As discussed, 69% of residential units fall within the Agricultural/Residential District, which is intended for low-density development.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider organizing zoning districts around infrastructure capacity (and forecasted capacity) instead of managing two sets of standards for most zoning districts (a set for lots served by infrastructure and lots that are not served by infrastructure).

Lack of Historic Preservation Protections

As noted in the *Housing Existing Conditions Memo*, roughly 1/5 of homes in Conway are at least 80 years old. Historic buildings are an important feature of Conway's character and identity, and the town has lost key buildings to commercial development in recent years. Without standards for the preservation of historic buildings, Conway is at risk of losing additional historic structures.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider adopting a demolition delay ordinance that applies to historic buildings and structures
- Consider adopting a Town-wide historic preservation ordinance aimed at identifying and protecting historic buildings and structures
- Consider allowing adaptive reuse of historic structures to encourage new residential units and disincentivize tear-downs
- Consider a density bonus for utilizing an historic structure
- Consider instituting reductions in parking requirements for historic structures

Lack of Differentiation Between Commercial Uses by Size

The current zoning code and use table does not differentiate between large-scale and small-scale commercial uses. This creates challenges in limiting large-scale commercial development (e.g., a hotel or big box store) in places where small-scale commercial development (e.g., a boutique or cafe) might be appropriate.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider differentiating between different scales of commercial uses in the use table

- Consider restricting large-scale commercial development to the Settler's Green area
- Consider adopting a commercial linkage fee program, in which commercial developments of a certain size must provide a certain number of workforce housing units or a fee-in-lieu of those units. This type of program can help ensure that large-scale commercial development does not place undue strain on the local housing market.
- To ensure that new developments do not cause new transportation challenges, consider adopting new orderly development standards that encourage walkability and interconnectedness between new mixed-use developments and

Misalignment of Highway Commercial District

The Highway Commercial district currently applies to areas with vastly different development characters. The scale of development in the Settler's Green area is much more intensive than the spirit of a typical "Highway Commercial" district. The Intervale area's current designation, Highway Commercial, is not appropriate for the area.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider breaking up the HC district into multiple districts of different intensities
- Consider allowing larger mixed-use development in the Settler's Green area; ensure that shared parking is available for development of this type

Lack of Multi-Family Units & Opportunities for Affordable Housing

Multi-family housing is defined as residences with greater than 2 units. This definition is limiting; there are areas where triplex or quadplex housing might be appropriate, but a larger apartment building is not. This flattening of multi-family housing types has likely contributed to the overall lack of "missing middle" housing types. See the *Housing Existing Conditions Memo* for a discussion of missing middle housing.

In addition, Conway may not be providing adequate support for multi-family housing under RSA 674:58-61. The statute has been in effect since 2010 and requires municipalities to provide "reasonable" and "realistic" opportunities for workforce housing in their zoning regulations. This includes rental multi-family (MF) housing. The dimensional standards required for multifamily housing are extremely onerous and prevent multifamily development on all but very large lots. For example, in the North Conway Village Residential district, lots with municipal water or water and sewer are required to have at least ½ acre for the 1st unit and 10,000 sf for each additional unit on the same lot. Although MF is allowed in the district, these standards functionally allow a maximum density of 3 units/acre, but MF housing is allowed in the district.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider itemizing different types of multi-family housing in the use table
- Consider amending dimensional allowances to functionally allow multifamily housing

Lack of Specificity Regarding ADUs and STRs

The current zoning ordinance does not provide specific standards regulating the districts where ADUs and STRs are allowed.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider limiting STRs to certain districts or with certain site standards
- Consider providing a density bonus for ADUs

Lack of Village-Style Development Standards

At present, Conway's village areas are limited by the Town's onerous parking requirements and dimensional standards. As a result, variances are required for most traditional village uses.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider amending lot size requirements in village centers to promote more compact development and complement existing development patterns
- Consider amending the unique village standards for the Town's village areas to better align with existing land uses and suitable mixed-use building types
- Consider performance-based zoning standards for village districts. Performance-based zoning is a more flexible form of zoning that focuses on the impacts of a development instead of the specific uses permitted. This kind of zoning can be especially impactful in downtown areas, where the performance standards can be tailored to goals for village-style development.
- Consider a standard allowing for the utilization of on-street parking utilization for parking space standards within the village areas?

Address the Needs of Industrial Areas

The I-2 district is currently not served by water and sewer, which limits its capabilities as an industrial center. In addition, Conway's two industrial areas have some degree of residential development associated with them.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider adopting performance-based zoning standards for the industrial district that aim to concentrate industrial activities in areas with water and sewer and separate residential uses from nuisances associated with some types of industrial activities (e.g., noise)

Onerous Site Plan Requirements

Conway's site plan requirements frequently conflict with town goals and the spirit of Town ordinances. As examples, the variable greenspace requirements have proved challenging for the village districts, since the small lots in that area often can't meet the requirement for greenspace. At times, developments cannot meet the greenspace requirement because of significant parking requirements.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider adopting shared parking standards to encourage the efficient use of land, particularly in village and commercial areas
- Consider creating parking standards for all districts (not all districts currently have parking standards, creating discrepancies with the use table)

Next Steps

Takeaways

At present, Conway's land use ordinance does not adequately support community goals. The town's land use pattern is highly dispersed and segmented, making it highly challenging to walk and bike around Conway. The lack of standards differentiating large-scale and small-scale commercial uses has led to an excess in large-scale commercial opportunities.

Potential Areas of Focus: Analysis

Before the project team drafts the goals and recommendations of the plan, the team will conduct additional analysis tasks. The items below are suggestions for further analysis. Given available budgets, it will not be possible to complete all of these analyses.

- Identify areas for specific infrastructure extensions & formalized zone districts
- Conduct an analysis of the general suitability for housing & other types of development in different areas of Conway
- Quantify the taxable value per acre of certain types of development in Conway
- Quantify the public works costs of different styles of development
- Conduct a unit attrition analysis in select locations in town (how many units would be lost over time if density provisions stayed the same or changed?)
- Further analysis of land use and existing development in the RA district
- Assessments of parking in village and commercial areas

ARCHITECTURE & HISTORIC CHARACTER ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

8.7.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ARCHITECTURE & HISTORIC CHARACTER

TO: Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Assistant Town Manager

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for architecture and historic character in the Town of Conway. This analysis will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan.

Key Takeaways

- The Town of Conway contains various architectural styles, such as Russian and Victorian, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Greek Revival, false-front commercial-style, barn-style residential/lodging, and Early American and Federalist styles.
- Village-style development in Conway is compact and walkable, but current ordinances hinder its preservation and rebuilding in case of substantial changes (e.g., fire).
- Feedback from participants in the Master Plan Open House indicated a desire to limit big box development, sustain villages, and promote additional arts and cultural opportunities related to history and architecture.
- There is a need for a local inventory of historic buildings and sites; this memo also discusses the potential benefits of creating a neighborhood heritage district.
- Potential recommendations for the updated Master Plan include requiring preservation and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures, continuing the inventory of historic structures, creating a neighborhood heritage district, and prioritizing public education on the value of historic resources.

About Architecture & Historic Character

Architecture and historic character are important aspects of a community's identity. A community's architectural style helps foster a distinctive look and feel for that community. Historic character

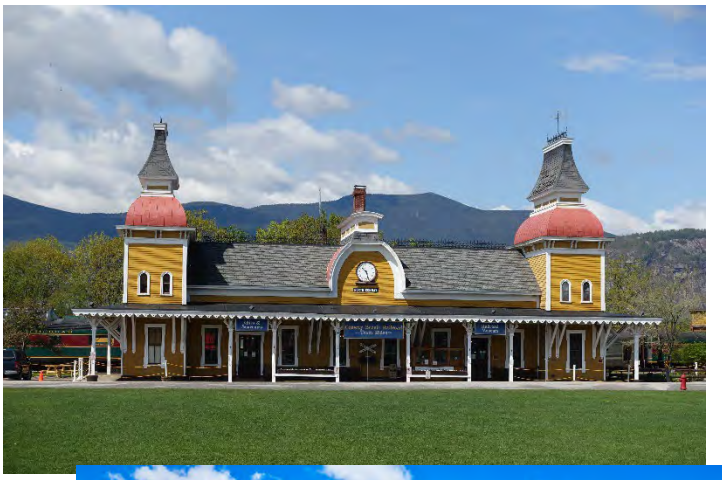
helps a community remain connected to its past. Historic districts often function as the centerpiece of a community, drawing residents and visitors alike.

Conway's Architecture & Historic Character

- Conway has five structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places. One is in Conway Village, one is in the Intervale area, and three are in North Conway Village.
- Conway has 20 Historical Markers, representing almost half of the markers in Carroll County

Conway's Architectural Styles

As shown in inset image, Conway has several iconic buildings and distinct architectural styles. The North Conway Train Station, which is perhaps the most recognizable building in Conway, has a unique façade that is reminiscent of Russian and Victorian architecture. The building was constructed in 1874 by Boston architect Nathaniel J. Bradlee (The Railroad Station Historical Marker (hmdb.org)). As shown below, this architectural style has inspired the design of several other buildings in Conway, including recently constructed commercial buildings in Settlers' Green and along the White Mountain Highway.









Other prominent architectural styles in Conway include the Colonial Revival-style Eastern Slope Inn, former boarding houses in a Dutch Colonial revival style, and Sears Roebuck "kit" homes.

Greek Revival buildings, which typically feature columns, white exteriors, dark shutters, and porches are common throughout Conway.

Conway also contains several false-front commercial-style buildings; these buildings are most commonly found in North Conway Village, but there is a prime example in Conway Village as well. In North Conway Village, the false-front commercial buildings are brightly colored, making them especially distinctive.





Conway also has several examples of barn-style residential/lodging development as shown below.



Some of Conway's oldest buildings are in the Early American and Federalist styles built in the late 1700s and early 1800s. These buildings are primarily homes, with the earliest documented home located near Conway Lake.




Images: Town of Conway Historic District Commission

Overall, Conway has an eclectic mix of architectural styles that add to the town's quintessential New England charm.

Village-Style Development

Conway's villages were first developed in a pre-automobile era, which made them compact and walkable. Village-style development in Conway is typically 2-4 stories in height and oriented close to the street. As discussed in the **Zoning & Land Use** memo, village-style development is effectively prohibited in the town's current ordinances through onerous parking and dimensional requirements for buildings. As a result, Conway's village areas are non-conforming, meaning that the area could not be rebuilt with the same look, feel, and density in the event of a fire or substantial renovation.

Community Goals & Public Input

At the February 2023 Master Plan Open House, participants shared that they wanted the plan to address the following **goals related to architecture & historic character**:

- Limit big box development, keeping the town's quaintness
- Sustain and enhance villages

Participants indicated that the following architecture-related **arts and cultural opportunities related to history and architecture are missing** in Conway:

- More museums, including the old kids museum
- Monthly art walks around town
- Guided tours of old homes

Although the Open House boards did not explicitly ask about **historic buildings**, the project team has heard throughout the process that historic buildings and facades are important cultural fixtures in the Conway community.

The full summary of feedback is available in the **Open House #1 Summary Memo**.

Policy Context & Ongoing Initiatives

This section provides an overview of Conway's policy context related to architecture & historic character in Conway.

Town Policies

Town zoning and site plan regulations have an important impact on architecture and historic character in Conway. The town's current Site Plan Review requirements contain the following Design Standard related to historic sites and structures: "It is requested, though not required, that applicants make every reasonable attempt to preserve, enhance and reuse historic sites and structures" (Section 110-33). The town defines historic structures as follows:

> *HISTORIC STRUCTURE*
>
> *Any structure that is:*
>
> *A.*
>
> *Listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places (a listing maintained by the Department of Interior) or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as meeting the requirements for individual listing on the National Register;*

B.

Certified or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as contributing to the historical significance of a registered historic district or a district preliminarily determined by the Secretary to qualify as a registered historic district;

C.

Individually listed on a state inventory of historic places in states with historic preservation programs which have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior; or

D.

Individually listed on a local inventory of historic places in communities with historic preservation programs that have been certified either:

(1)

By an approved state program as determined by the Secretary of the Interior; or

(2)

Directly by the Secretary of the Interior in states without approved programs.

This definition essentially requires that historic structures be inventoried and listed on a designated inventory. The Town's Historic District Commission undertook steps to inventory historic homes in Conway in 2022, culminating in this report. However, the town currently lacks a formal local inventory of historic buildings and sites and lacks any historic districts. Like arts districts or tourism districts, historic districts help preserve essential qualities of a given area and help direct grant and/or municipal funding.

State Policy Context

New Hampshire has several policies and programs related to architecture and historic character. There is a state register of historic places which is maintained by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. Conway has two entries in the register – the Abenaki Indian Shop and Camp in the Intervale area and the Bolduc Block in Conway Village. The State Historic Resources Council reviews nominations to the state and national historic registers.

How Architecture & Historic Character Interact with Other Topics & Goals

- **Zoning**: Zoning ordinances can help support historic resources by offering an official definition of historic structures/sites and establishing historic districts.
- **Economic Development:** Architecture and historic character are important to a community's economic health and development by helping to attract and retain residents within a community and drawing visitors.
- **Housing:** Many of the historic structures in Conway are residential. Historic structures such as mills and barns can be renovated into residential uses.
- **Transportation**: Transportation is related to architecture and historic character in a key way: historic patterns of development, such as the village-style development in Conway, were designed to be walkable. In more recent decades, patterns of development have favored ease of car travel over walkability.
- **Arts, Culture & Community:** As previously discussed, architecture can be a defining element of a community. Preserving the community's historic architecture can also support the preservation of the cultural heritage of that community.

Architecture & Historic Character Issues & Areas of Focus

This section summarizes the primary issues related to Architecture & Historic Character in Conway. The Areas of Focus are potential recommendations that the updated Master Plan could make. Each of these potential ideas will need further analysis. The Steering Committee is encouraged to provide feedback on these potential recommendation areas.

Consider Requiring Preservation and/or Adaptive Reuse of Historic Structures

At present, the Town Site Plan Review requirements encourage but do not require that applicants preserve and/or reuse historic structures. This has led to the loss of important historic structures, such as the former Homestead Restaurant, which was built in 1792 and was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider requiring the preservation and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures in the town's Site Plan Review requirements (note: this requirement could just apply to registered historic structures, or it could apply to buildings over a certain age)
- Specifically mention the different types of history that the Town of Conway aims to preserve with this requirement (Abenaki and indigenous history, early settlement history, the Underground Railroad, etc.)
- Offer guidance on adaptive reuse of historic structures in the form of an official Town guide or checklist
- Consider incentivizing the provision of affordable housing through adaptive reuse of historic structures by offering expedited site plan review or another incentive

Continue Inventory of Historic Structures in Conway

At present, relatively few of Conway's older buildings are recognized on any historic register. This leaves them potentially vulnerable to substantial change, disrepair, or demolition.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- The Town Historic District Commission should resume its work to inventory historic structures in Conway to promote their protection.
- Nominate additional buildings to be on the NH State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places
- Consider creating a local register of historic places if other registration processes prove onerous

Consider Creating a Neighborhood Heritage District

While Conway's historic buildings are spread out throughout town, there may be an opportunity to create a neighborhood heritage district for one or more of Conway's village areas, particularly North Conway Village. This type of district can help organize funding and maintain an historic look and feel to the area. The concept is similar to an "historic district" and is specifically recognized in New Hampshire as a policy approach for municipalities seeking to preserve historic resources. The Neighborhood Heritage Districts Handbook for New Hampshire Municipalities offers the following description of the differences between neighborhood heritage districts and historic districts:

> *Neighborhood heritage districts have more flexible, less stringent standards than do local historic districts. They typically do not regulate minor alterations, such as replacement of window sash or doors, removal of cornice brackets, or application of new siding. They do*

review major alterations, such as demolition of structures, most new construction or additions, removal of significant landscape features, and major site work, such as increasing a parking area. They often also review major architectural alterations, such as removal of a porch or bay window that is visible from the street, altering the size of window openings that are visible from the street, and new or replacement signs. Ultimately, it is up to the municipality to determine the extent of review.

Unlike local historic districts, neighborhood heritage districts do not have to be particularly historically significant. Nor do they have to consist of buildings that are individually distinctive or possess a high level of architectural integrity. Instead, it is heritage and character that are showcased, rather than extraordinary history and architecture. Neighborhood heritage districts are administered differently. Instead of a separate commission charged with overseeing the district, neighborhood heritage districts are administered by the Planning Board, with major input from an advisory committee comprised of neighborhood residents and business proprietors, historians, design professionals, and others who may have a specific knowledge of the area.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider creating an historic district or neighborhood heritage district for North Conway Village and/or additional village areas
- Engage the public in the process of designating such a district

Educate the Public on the Value of Historic Resources

Without consistent attention and education, a community's historic resources can lose some significance to the community. To support the long-term preservation of these resources, the Town should prioritize educational efforts that help communicate the history of value of these buildings to residents and visitors.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Add interpretive signage around town explaining Conway's history and the significance of key buildings. Partner with Conway Historical Society to create this signage and any parallel educational efforts.
- Encourage local schools to conduct field trips to historic sites in Conway.

Selected Zoning & Land Use Areas of Focus

The following areas of focus were recommended for the zoning & land use section but are equally relevant to arts and culture.

Lack of Village-Style Development Standards

At present, Conway's village areas are limited by the Town's onerous parking requirements and dimensional standards. As a result, variances are required for most traditional village uses. This also threatens the villages as they are currently built – since the built forms in Conway's village are mostly non-conforming in the Town's code, they could not be legally rebuilt in their current form in the event of a fire or other major event.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider amending lot size requirements in village centers to promote more compact development and complement existing development patterns

- Consider amending the unique village standards for the Town's village areas to better align with existing land uses and suitable mixed-use building types
- Consider performance-based zoning standards for village districts. Performance-based zoning is a more flexible form of zoning that focuses on the impacts of a development instead of the specific uses permitted. This kind of zoning can be especially impactful in downtown areas, where the performance standards can be tailored to goals for village-style development

Conclusion

- The Town should aim to preserve and celebrate the historic character of Conway while promoting thoughtful and sustainable development in the village areas
- The Town should codify protections for historic resources to ensure their longevity
- The Town should promote educational opportunities about historic resources to build interest in and appreciation for the Town's unique history

CULTURE, ARTS & COMMUNITY ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

6.14.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: CULTURE, ARTS & COMMUNITY

TO: Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Assistant Town Manager

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for culture, arts, and community in the Town of Conway. This analysis will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan.

Key Takeaways

- Artistic and cultural activities play a crucial role in bringing the community together and fostering friendships, dialogue, and cultural exchange.
- Arts and cultural events in Conway make the community more vibrant and exciting for both residents and visitors.
- Outdoor recreation, sports, and the town's natural environment are strongly linked to events and social life in Conway.
- Conway is home to various schools, educational programs, and libraries that contribute to the cultural landscape.
- The community values the Conway Public Library and the town's natural setting as special resources. Historic buildings and facades are important cultural fixtures in the Conway community.
- The community has expressed a desire for more cultural events, artistic offerings, and opportunities in Conway, including museums, live music venues, artwalks, and collaborative arts projects. The community has also expressed interest in teen centers and other opportunities that would increase social cohesion
- Town zoning and site plan regulations impact arts and cultural activities.
- Potential recommendations to support arts and culture in Conway include creating a Public Art & Placemaking policy, supporting village-style development encouraging opportunities for artists to live in Conway, promoting local arts events and activities, managing local recreation and sports-oriented events, and encouraging arts uses in industrial areas.

About Culture, Arts & Community

Artistic and cultural activities are the glue that brings a community together. Many different activities, events, and groups fall under the category of "arts and culture." Arts events and activities can include music, dance, theater, visual art, writing and spoken word, and film. Cultural events and activities can include celebrations of different ethnicities, traditions, and historical events.

Arts and cultural institutions and activities in Conway make the community a more vibrant, exciting place to live and visit. Like many rural communities, Conway's community is deeply rooted in and connected to its school system. Conway's schools help forge and reinforce the community's social bonds. Events and social life in Conway are also strongly linked to outdoor recreation, sports, and the town's natural environment.

Arts, Culture & Quality of Life

Arts opportunities and cultural activities are an important dimension of quality of life. Arts and culture enrich a community by encouraging social connections, self-expression, collaboration, and cultural understanding. Numerous studies have shown that involvement in the arts is beneficial for emotional and mental wellbeing and social development. In addition, art makes a place interesting and stimulating – art-oriented events, businesses, and organizations all contribute to a community's sense of place.

Cultural & Artistic Organizations & Events

Businesses & Organizations

Several businesses and organizations support artistic life and entertainment in Conway. Most of these businesses (listed below) are concentrated in North Conway, and several are oriented towards visitors.

Business or Organization Name	Location	Offering/Focus
New England Ski Museum	North Conway	Museum, Ski History
Mt Washington Valley Art Association	North Conway	Visual Art, Galleries, Arts Programming
North Conway Model Railroad Club	North Conway	Community Organization, Railroad History
Luna Gallery	North Conway	Visual Art, Gallery
Arts In Motion Theater Co.	North Conway	Theater, Performances, Youth Activities
M&D Playhouse	North Conway	Theater, Performances
Believe in Books	North Conway	Journey to the North Pole event, Literacy Programs
Mountain Valley Mall Cinema	North Conway	Films, Entertainment

Conway Historical Society	Conway	Museum, Community Organization
North Conway Community Center	North Conway	Community Organization, Youth Sports and Programming, Adult Sports and Programming

Schools, Educational Programs, & Libraries

Name	Location
Kennett High School	North Conway
Mt Washington Valley Career & Technical Center	North Conway
Advanced Life Support Institute	Center Conway
White Mountains Community College	Conway
Robert Frost Charter School	North Conway
Project SUCCEED	Conway
Head Start	Conway
Kennett Middle School	Conway
Conway Elementary School	Conway
Pine Tree Elementary School	Center Conway
SOLO School	Conway
Lilliputian Montessori School	North Conway
International Mountain Climbing School	North Conway
John H Fuller Elementary School	North Conway
Mountain View Montessori School and Childcare	North Conway

Events & Celebrations

The Town of Conway is home to several popular community events and celebrations that attract both residents and visitors:

- Conway Scenic Railroad events, including the Journey to the North Pole, Murder Mystery Dinner Trains, and the Pumpkin Patch Express
- Mount Washington Valley Old Home Week
- North Conway Farmers Market
- Fourth of July Celebrations
- Mount Washington Valley Ice Festival
- Conway Fall Festival
- Outdoor concerts and musical performances

Compared to some other communities, Conway does not have as many events and programming that celebrate different cultures and identities. The Town also does not have as many large events focused on the arts compared to other communities.

Community Goals & Public Input

At the February 2023 Master Plan Open House, participants shared that they wanted the plan to address the following **goals related to community culture**:

- Keep young families in town
- Reduce divisions between primary & second-homeowners
- Limit big box development, keeping the town's quaintness
- Support the elderly, retiring population
- Address tourism pressures
- Generate affordable housing
- Sustain villages

When asked what makes Conway special, participants indicated that they value the Conway Public Library and the town's natural setting. Participants indicated that they wanted to see the following **resources and opportunities** in town:

- Teen center
- Resources for the elderly
- Fewer tourism impacts
- Affordable housing & opportunities – "young people who want to stay are looking elsewhere" "we really need affordable housing – we've lost our community"

When asked about their **favorite cultural events and artistic offerings in Conway**, participants listed the following celebrations and community programs:

- Events at Schouler Park & the Conway Public Library
- Mountaintop Music
- Conway Historical Society
- Church concerts
- Majestic Theater events
- Arts Jubilee
- M&D Playhouse
- Art in the Park
- Conway Library History Room
- Events at Kennett High School, including drumline, drama club, Movin on Fusion
- Arts in Motion Theater
- Live Music at Tuckerman's
- MW Valley Community Band
- White Mountain Pride Festival
- Veterans' Day & 9/11 ceremonies
- 4th of July Parade
- Mud bowl

Participants indicated that the following **arts and cultural opportunities are missing** in Conway:

- More museums, including the old kids museum
- Purpose-built live music venues (not just bars)
- Teen center/arts center for teens
- Monthly artwalks around town
- First Night
- Guided tours of old homes
- Murals
- Non-juried art opportunities (opportunities to showcase art that do not require an application)
- Community projects with teens
- Collaborative arts

Participants specifically indicated that they wanted to bring back the Arts Jubilee and the old kids museum. As of summer 2023, the Arts Jubilee is back on in North Conway.

Participants indicated that the following areas were their **favorite places to gather and socialize** in town:

- Cranmore Mountain
- Schouler Park
- North Conway Golf Course
- North Conway Community Center
- Shore of Saco River by the Saco River Covered Bridge
- The Station Bistro
- Tuckerman Brewing

Although the Open House boards did not explicitly ask about **historic buildings**, the project team has heard throughout the process that historic buildings and facades are important cultural fixtures in the Conway community.

The full summary of feedback is available in the **Open House #1 Summary Memo**.

Policy Context & Ongoing Initiatives

This section provides an overview of Conway's policy context related to culture, arts & community in Conway.

Town Policies

Town zoning and site plan regulations have an important influence on culture and artistic activities in Conway. The Town zoning currently regulates the following items related to arts and culture:

- Fireworks
- Amusements
- Parks & Town Property
- Special Events
- Street and Sidewalks

The Town requires permitting for certain special events. A state permit is required for fireworks displays. Events held within the North Conway Water Precinct or the Conway Village Fire District require separate written approval from the fire departments within those jurisdictions. It is unclear

whether and how this policy will change given the recent dissolution of the Conway Village Fire District.

State Policy Context

New Hampshire has several policies and programs related to arts and culture. The New Hampshire State Council on the Arts (NHSCA) is housed within the NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Council supports artists and artistic opportunities through grants, technical assistance, and training opportunities for arts and arts organizations. The state Department of Education has developed guidelines and standards related to arts education to ensure that students throughout the state have opportunities to learn about and participate in the arts.

How Arts, Culture & Community Interact with Other Topics & Goals

- **Zoning**: Zoning ordinances can help support arts and culture by allowing special events and uses related to the arts. Zoning can also support artistic life through the creation of special districts and standards, such as an Arts District or Creative District.
- **Economic Development:** Arts and culture are important to a community's economic health and development. Arts and cultural activities can help attract and retain residents within a community and can bring visitors.
- **Housing:** Housing is important for all industries and initiatives in Conway, including arts and culture. Artists, makers, and community leaders need places to live in Conway. Access to housing is critical to the longevity of arts in Conway.
- **Transportation**: Transportation is related to arts and culture in that people need to move around efficiently and safely to access arts events, businesses, and educational opportunities. Walkability and bikeability are important considerations for events like arts festivals, First Night, etc.
- **Infrastructure:** The availability of community water and wastewater infrastructure has a significant impact on business offerings, including arts-oriented businesses. Water and wastewater infrastructure is also important for housing development.
- **Conservation & Sustainability:** Conway's scenic environment and natural beauty have been sources of inspiration for many artists. Landscape-level conservation goals that help preserve water quality, intact forests, and wildlife also help support artistic and creative life in Conway.

Arts, Culture & Community Issues & Areas of Focus

This section summarizes the primary issues related to arts, culture & community in Conway. The Areas of Focus are potential recommendations that the updated Master Plan could make. Each of these potential ideas will need further analysis. The Steering Committee is encouraged to provide feedback on these potential recommendation areas.

Ensure that the Town Code Supports Arts & Cultural Activities and Assets

Conway's land use policies do not necessarily prevent arts and cultural activities, but they could provide additional, explicit support for these activities in town. Some communities have instituted Arts Districts or Creative Districts to formally encourage artistic life and revitalize downtown areas. While this solution may not be appropriate for Conway, the Master Plan can certainly emphasize some of the same basic principles (promoting public access to the arts, creating a walkable environment, encouraging arts-oriented businesses).

Village-style development is very important to artistic economies. In a pedestrian-friendly village environment, residents and visitors can easily walk between destinations, exploring different galleries, museums, studios, and theaters. Residents and visitors are much more likely to notice, appreciate, and stop by these places if they are located in a walkable area. Village-style development can also support vibrant public spaces, such as parks, plazas, and outdoor venues. These spaces can serve as important community gathering areas and artistic venues; they can also contribute to the community's identity and sense of place.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Create a Public Art & Placemaking policy that encourages and regulates the development of murals, sculptures, and other art installations in town
- Institute protections for historic buildings in Conway, such as a demolition delay ordinance
- Ensure that the dimensional standards and land use requirements for the town's village centers support village-style development, providing opportunities for small-scale commercial development and housing
- Legalize the existing land use pattern and form (village-style development) in the Town code

Encourage Opportunities for Artists and Makers to Live in Conway

Like other members of the workforce, artists and makers need places to live in Conway that they can afford. Artists, makers, and teachers are critical members of the community who contribute to the vibrancy and cohesion of the town.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- In addition to the recommendations stated in the Land Use and Housing memos, consider allowing live-work or cooperative housing types, which are often appealing to artists

Encourage Local Arts Events and Activities for All Ages

The Conway community enjoys several community events and activities centered around the arts. The Town should more explicitly encourage and promote such events and activities.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Encourage local corporate sponsorship of arts events
- Ensure that the permitting process for events is fair and simple
- Communicate that the town is supportive of arts events and activities
- Provide assistance to community members and organizations seeking to put on a local event
- Ensure that the range of arts and cultural events in Conway cater to multiple age groups
- Partner with local care facilities, schools, and other institutions to provide transportation to community events
- Support grant applications to the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts (NHSCA) that would increase the frequency and variety of arts opportunities in Conway

Encourage and Manage Local Recreation and Sports-Oriented Events

The Conway community has a long history of supporting recreation and sporting events and organizations, from the ski school at Cranmore Mountain to elite mountaineering and climbing at nearby Tuckerman's Ravine.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Encourage inclusive recreation and sports-oriented events that cater to participants of all ages and abilities
- Ensure that local infrastructure and parks amenities are scaled appropriately to accommodate anticipated visitation
- Promote sustainable tourism that emphasizes responsible recreation and stewardship of the natural landscape
- Highlight locally-owned and operated recreation businesses in conjunction with recreation and sporting events

Encourage Arts Uses in Industrial Areas

Industrial areas across New England and the US have become increasingly popular as artistic hubs. Thanks to the infusion of new artistic energy and business interest, these areas have undergone remarkable economic and aesthetic transformations.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Encourage adaptive reuse of industrial spaces for artists and creative enterprises
- Encourage larger artist studios and artists using heavy machinery to locate in industrial zones

Selected Zoning & Land Use Areas of Focus

The following areas of focus were recommended for the zoning & land use section but are equally relevant to arts and culture.

Lack of Multi-Family Units & Opportunities for Affordable Housing

Multi-family housing is defined as residences with greater than 2 units. This definition is limiting; there are areas where triplex or quadplex housing might be appropriate, but a larger apartment building is not. This flattening of multi-family housing types has likely contributed to the overall lack of "missing middle" housing types. See the *Housing Existing Conditions Memo* for a discussion of missing middle housing.

The dimensional standards required for multifamily housing are extremely onerous and prevent multifamily development on all but very large lots. For example, in the North Conway Village Residential district, lots with municipal water or water and sewer are required to have at least ½ acre for the 1st unit and 10,000 sf for each additional unit on the same lot. Although MF is allowed in the district, these standards functionally allow a maximum density of 3 units/acre, but MF housing is allowed in the district.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider itemizing different types of multi-family housing in the use table
- Consider amending dimensional allowances to functionally allow multifamily housing

Lack of Village-Style Development Standards

At present, Conway's village areas are limited by the Town's onerous parking requirements and dimensional standards. As a result, variances are required for most traditional village uses.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider amending lot size requirements in village centers to promote more compact development and complement existing development patterns
- Consider amending the unique village standards for the Town's village areas to better align with existing land uses and suitable mixed-use building types
- Consider performance-based zoning standards for village districts. Performance-based zoning is a more flexible form of zoning that focuses on the impacts of a development instead of the specific uses permitted. This kind of zoning can be especially impactful in downtown areas, where the performance standards can be tailored to goals for village-style development

Conclusion

- The Town of Conway should support its existing cultural and artistic assets, including arts organizations, schools, and libraries
- The Town could further support the development and growth of the arts in Conway by encouraging arts events, enabling village-style development, and allowing arts uses in industrial areas

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

4.21.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TO: Steering Committee

CC: Jamel Torres, Town of Conway Planning Director

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for economic development in the Town of Conway. This analysis will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan. This memo complements the *Housing Analysis Memorandum* and *Zoning & Land Use Memorandum* that covered housing and land use conditions and issues in Conway.

Key Takeaways

- Conway is the primary economic center of Carroll County and the Mount Washington Valley.
- While there are many organizations involved in economic development in Conway and the Mount Washington Valley, the Town currently lacks a clear, overarching vision for future economic development that can guide local policy decisions and investments.
- At present, Conway lacks some level of local control over some of the largest determinants of its economic development, such as tourism promotion (largely managed by state and regional entities) and large-scale hotel development (limited controls in local zoning regulations). Current land use regulations around commercial development permit large-scale developments to occur in locations and forms that are generally unpopular with the community.
- Conway's long-term economic development depends on the community's ability to house a diversity of residents making a variety of incomes, including seasonal workers, families, and older residents.
- Conway's village centers are critical to Conway's community character and economic success. At the same time, current land use regulations may also limit the viability of smaller-scale, village-style commercial and mixed-use development, and there are no protections for historic buildings.
- Recreation, public lands, historic resources and scenic values are all important drivers of Conway's visitor-based economy and the development & retention of other local businesses.
- New Hampshire municipalities are limited in their ability to collect tax revenue from visitors and tourists, which could help offset the costs of local services and infrastructure and

support investments in economic development strategies and projects. Creative approaches are needed if the Town wishes to generate additional revenues from its tourism economy.

What is Economic Development?

The U.S. Economic Development Administration defines economic development as "creating the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, businesses, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, job creation, and private investment."

This definition reflects the idea that economic development is a community-wide project that extends far beyond individual commercial developments. Community economic development also involves:

- Raising incomes (including disposable income)
- Creating jobs
- Improving infrastructure
- Providing basic necessities and enhancing quality of life (access to transportation, housing, and recreation)
- Building a strong sense of community

Community Health & Economic Development

Community health and economic development in Conway, NH are closely linked. A strong economy can support community health by providing job opportunities and increasing access to resources such as healthcare, education, and housing. Community health is also a necessary ingredient for a strong economy – Conway's local economy is supported by the health and wellbeing of its workforce and residents. In a healthy community, residents have access to jobs, transportation, housing, medical care, education, parks, and recreation.

Background

Conway is part of the larger economic region of the White Mountains and the Mount Washington Valley. As a small town with premier recreational access, Conway's economy is primarily based on tourism and small business activity.

Tourism is a major driver of the local economy, particularly in the summer and winter seasons. Visitors come to Conway to enjoy the scenic beauty of the surrounding White Mountains, which offer hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, and other outdoor recreational activities. There are also several popular tourist attractions in the area, such as the Conway Scenic Railroad, Mount Washington Observatory, and the outlet shopping centers. According to the Mount Washington Observatory and Conway Scenic Railroad, Conway sees high visitation annually.

Conway contains a substantial amount of large-scale commercial development. Most large-scale retail development is concentrated along the White Mountain Highway corridor. Shopping centers in this area include Settler's Green, Saco Crossing, Northway Plaza Shopping Center, and Mountain Valley Mall. Settler's Green consists of mostly outlet clothing stores. The other shopping complexes contain a mix of big box stores, such as T.J. Maxx, Christmas Tree Shops, REI, L.L. Bean, Lowe's, and Hannaford. There are several large hotels and restaurants in this area. There is also general strip commercial development along the White Mountain Highway corridors and other primary highway corridors in Conway. The demand for these large-scale commercial businesses is likely driven by Conway's role as a regional employment and service hub.



Much of Conway's commercial development conforms to design standards that reinforce the historic character of the area. As shown in this image, the Saco Crossing complex mimics the colors and architectural features of the Conway Scenic Railroad Station.

Small businesses are another important facet of the economy in Conway. North Conway is a vibrant downtown area with shops, restaurants, and other services that cater to locals and visitors alike. Many of these businesses are family-owned and operated, and they contribute to the town's unique character and charm. Many of these businesses rely on tourism to maintain their operations.

In 2001, Memorial Hospital opened in North Conway. This created new job opportunities and helped to diversify the local economy. However, Conway's economy remains highly reliant on tourism and retail businesses.

Economic Assets & Trends

Assets

In addition to its labor force, Conway's primary economic assets include:

- Scenic & natural environment
- Wide array of quality recreation opportunities in Conway and close by, including Cranmore Mountain Resort, Attitash, Wildcat, the Saco River, & the White Mountain National Forest
- Historic architecture & cultural attractions, such as the Conway Scenic Railroad
- Retail businesses, including outlet stores, restaurants
- Visitor-facing businesses, such as hotels
- Agricultural lands
- Municipal water and wastewater systems
- Location at the confluence of multiple state and federal highways

Trends

- There have been recent increases in the number of large hotels in Conway. According to local estimates, 500 hotel rooms were built in Conway in the last two years. As permitted under current land use regulations, recent hotel development has been scattered across different areas of town. In response, a one-year moratorium on hotels and commercial buildings greater than 50,000 square feet has been approved by voters at Town Meeting 2023.
- Big box retail is generally considered to be increasing, with a large grocery store currently under construction in the Settler's Green area.
- Some businesses have closed recently. Recent businesses that have been lost include tech companies, such as ECHO, Rapidinsight, Animetrics and Online Assistance.
- Businesses have been struggling to retain employees because employees cannot find or afford housing nearby. Anecdotally, a local bank branch closed because they could not keep tellers. Most employers cannot offer housing to their employees, but some do,

including Flatbread Company, Cranmore Mountain Resort, Moat Mountain Brewing Company, and Delaney's Hole in the Wall.

- As a recreational tourism destination, Conway's economy is elastic to changes and trends in recreation and tourism. Increased interest in winter sports (particularly backcountry skiing) and downhill mountain biking have likely led to increased participation in those activities in Conway.
- Cranmore Mountain Resort has expanded its offerings to reflect changing market demands for recreational tourism. The mountain has been investing in new condo-style on-mountain residences, a bike trail, downhill mountain biking, among other projects. The newest condominium accommodations, which are currently under construction, sold out extremely quickly.
- Climate change threatens several aspects of Conway's tourism industry. Warming associated with climate change threatens to reduce the number of ski days each winter. A loss of 10-20% of ski days in NH represents a loss of $42 million in direct spending and $84 in indirect spending. Warming also threatens sugar maples and the vibrancy of fall foliage, which would jeopardize the nearly $300 million impact of visitor spending associated with fall foliage. Recent research has documented the impacts of reduced snowpacks, increased drought, and increase severe precipitation events on stream flow and flooding in northern New England, with a host of potential impacts to water-based sports and community infrastructure.[1]

Current Economic Development Organizations & Strategies

While there are numerous organizations that play some role in economic development in Conway, there are several with significant involvement:

- **Mount Washington Valley Economic Council:** The Mount Washington Valley Economic Council is a non-profit organization that promotes economic development in the Mount Washington Valley. The council offers a range of services to businesses, including technical assistance, a revolving loan fund, a business incubator program, and business visibility assistance. The organization manages the Technology Village Business Resource Center, which offers commercial office space and coworking spaces along Route 16.
- **Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce:** The MWVCOC is a non-profit organization that promotes economic development and tourism in the Mount Washington Valley region, including Conway. The Chamber promotes the region as a year-round tourism destination through advertising, social media, and other marketing efforts. They also provide marketing and promotion opportunities for local businesses, such as advertising in their publications and on their website. The Chamber also provides support to local businesses by offering networking opportunities, educational programs, and resources. In addition, the Chamber operates a visitor center in North Conway, where they provide information to tourists on local attractions, events, and lodging options.
- **White Mountains Community College:** White Mountains Community College offers a range of workforce development programs and training opportunities to support economic development in the region. WMCC offers two primary forms of training: Business & Talent Development Training and customized business training. The college works closely with local businesses to identify their workforce needs and develop training programs and identify funding mechanisms to meet those needs.
- **Mount Washington Valley Career & Technical Center:** MWVCTC promotes workforce development by assisting students in developing technical knowledge, real-world

[1] Sources: Climate Change in Northern New Hampshire: Past, Present, and Future; Wake, Burakowski, Wilkinson, et al; The Sustainability Institute, UNH, 2014. Global Climate Change and Its Impact on New Hampshire, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, 2008, https://home.dartmouth.edu/news/2023/04/warming-climate-affect-streamflow-northeast

experience, and soft skills to prepare for high-wage, in-demand careers. The Center currently offers 12 programs ranging from manufacturing technology to outdoor recreation.

- **Town of Conway:** The Town of Conway does not have specific staff or committees dedicated to economic development. However, town staff and local representatives frequently work on initiatives related to economic development. The Town also offers a business guide on the Town website that helps businesses understand local requirements. The Town does not have a formal economic development strategy and has few specific economic development policies.
- **North Country Council**: North Country Council (NCC) is the regional planning commission serving 50 towns and cities in northern New Hampshire, including Conway. The Town of Conway is not a member of NCC and does not receive most of its services. However, NCC is also a federally-designated Economic Development District, and administers the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), both of which influence how federal economic development programs and dollars are spent in the region.

Policy Context

This section provides an overview of Conway's policy context related to economic development in Conway.

Town Policies

Town zoning and site plan regulations play a critical role in Conway's short and long-term economic development. Regulations on land use development in Conway directly control the building forms and businesses that can be built in Conway. The town's non-regulatory activities also influence economic development. For example, this master planning process will influence the town's future economic development strategy and initiatives.

The Town code includes provisions on the impacts of commercial amusements[2] in certain zoning districts, but no other language related to impact: "Because the Town wishes to maintain a character which protects the long-term, high-quality environment, which will ultimately protect tourism in the valley, commercial amusements are hereby regulated to prevent adverse impacts on the Town's character and environment." The Planning Board is currently pursuing a moratorium on hotels and commercial development over 50,000 square feet, along with reductions to height allowances in the Highway Commercial (HC) district.

State Policy Context

New Hampshire's tax structure is an important dimension of local economic development. New Hampshire has no sales tax and nearly no income tax. Property taxes are the primary source of public funding. Because of limitations on taxation, New Hampshire towns with high visitation have limited opportunities to collect revenues from those visitors in the form of taxes. Municipalities typically receive 20-30% of rooms and meals tax (RMT) revenue. Recent legislation has set this rate at 30%, and any surplus revenue can be shared with towns. According to state law, the rate should be 40%.[3] Importantly, distribution of RMT revenue to towns is based on municipal

[2] Defined in the Town Code as follows: "Any commercial use which offers for hire or to the general public access to structures, vehicles, mechanical or electrical contrivances, or other facilities which are intended primarily to provide entertainment, amusement or recreation, and in which the patron is engaged on the premises as an active participant rather than as a spectator. This shall not include volleyball, tennis or basketball courts, baseball, football or soccer fields, other similar sporting fields, or commercial golf facilities as regulated in the underlying district, and shall exclude special events as permitted by the Board of Selectmen."

[3] https://www.nhmunicipal.org/sites/default/files/uploads/workshop-materials/state_aid_2022.pdf (p. 17).

population, not the amount of rooms and meals tax collected by the municipality. In effect, Conway is likely a "donor town" when it comes to rooms and meals tax revenue sharing.

The state of New Hampshire determines the legality of business types, such as cannabis-related businesses. Cannabis is not legal for retail sale in NH, and as a result there are no cannabis retail or manufacturing establishments in Conway.

Conditions, Benefits & Challenges Overview

Housing & Demographics

Condition	Benefits	Challenges
Lack of housing resources, lack of employer control over housing resources		• Difficulty attracting and maintaining workforce due to high living costs, high commute times from surrounding areas, • Increased traffic congestion and carbon emissions associated with additional in-commuting • Difficulty filling job vacancies, high employee turnover rates and general inefficiency • General constraints on economic growth and quality of life
Population dynamics (aging population, limited projected growth)		• Threatens the long-term economic success of the community • Lack of housing and other resources to support aging populations • Lack of families and younger residents reduces the vibrancy of the town and causes attrition in the town's schools and other programs

Tourism, Recreation & Public Lands

Condition	Benefits	Challenges
High levels of tourism demand; tourism-based economy	• Revenue for local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions • Creates job opportunities for the local community in hospitality, tourism, and retail sectors • Supports local history and legacy as an outdoor recreation destination, helps cultivate a local brand	• High tourism demand can lead to high visitation at peak times, which can affect the quality of life for the local community • Seasonal fluctuations: can result in uneven job opportunities and employment instability throughout the year • Service-level jobs tend to be low-wage • Tourism demand drives up demand for housing and other services and can lead to higher living costs for local residents • Issues with littering and crowding at trailheads and other recreation locations
High demand and supply for hotels and lodging	• Rooms and meals tax generation • Enables visitation and potentially reduces pressure on STR market	• Community opposition to further hotel development due to housing pressures, scenic values, among other concerns
Upwards of 800 STRs in Conway	• Strong demand for lodging and visitation in Conway	• Difficulty determining where STRs are appropriate in town • Potential volatility of the STR market • Potential for STRs to take away from long-term rental opportunities

Land Area Characteristics

Condition	Benefits	Challenges
Bordered by public lands (WMNF)	• Provides residents and visitors with opportunities for outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, fishing, skiing, and snowboarding • Offers stunning natural scenery, enhancing quality of life for local residents and attracting visitors to the area • Draws tourism, which generates revenue for local businesses and creates job opportunities • Provides vital ecosystem services for maintaining water quality, and habitat for wildlife; can help to mitigate climate change by storing carbon and regulating water cycles • Supports a regional forest products industry	• The popularity of some areas of the WMNF creates destination management challenges (i.e., crowding at trailheads, parking management issues, trail degradation and litter) • Lack of local control and input regarding land management and recreation programs
Lack of adequate infrastructure support for industrial (manufacturing, agricultural, processing) uses		• May contribute to lack of construction businesses • Limits the capacity & productivity of industrial businesses in Conway

Development Patterns & Local Economic Characteristics

Condition	Benefits	Challenges
Strong emphasis on retail and service in local business mix	• Creates a variety of job opportunities for area residents • Provides amenities, services, and experiences for residents and visitors	• Lack of diversity in the local economy can reduce resiliency (i.e., the ability to recover from a negative economic change) • Service-level jobs tend to be low-wage
Some areas of Conway command high property values	• Generates property taxes to fund municipal operations • In theory, creates an opportunity for local investment in property	• High property values can make housing unaffordable to local renters and buyers
Substantial large-scale commercial development & strip development	• Attracts visitors to Conway for outlet shopping • Provides regional hub for shopping and services • Creates job opportunities for area residents	• Community opposition to further hotel development due to housing pressures, scenic values, among other concerns • Community ambivalence and/or opposition to further large-scale commercial development • Large-scale commercial businesses can preclude opportunities for small-scale, locally-owned businesses
Established village centers with different economic niches and development patterns	• Provides spaces that are suitable for small businesses • High taxable value per acre • Constitute the town's most walkable and accessible areas	• Creates small, difficult-to-manage jurisdictions with the Town that make it challenging to pursue town-wide strategies related to land use and economic development • Zoning regs make it difficult to further develop village-style development

What Does Success Look Like in Conway?

In 10 to 15 years, how will we know if economic development initiatives in Conway have been successful? It will be possible to tell by tracking key indicators of success, which can be determined by the community.

Possible indicators of success include:

- Overall increases in income, particularly for lower-income residents, and increases in residents' financial health
- Incomes aligned with housing costs (workers in the area can generally afford housing in the area)
- A healthy proportion of businesses in town are locally-owned
- Village-style development continues to thrive and receive support
- There are adequate community supports for residents of all ages (e.g., senior services, childcare, youth programming)
- Transportation in Conway is safe, accessible, and reliable
- Health indicators (e.g., obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol rates, food insecurity)
- Other metrics for community health – fewer residents who are delinquent on paying taxes, fewer human services requests, fewer individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity

Critically, some of these indicators of economic success can be influenced by local control and some cannot. The Town of Conway does not have exclusive control over wage stagnation and housing affordability. These factors are subject to regional and national trends.

How Economic Development Interacts with Other Topics & Goals

- **Zoning:** Zoning is an important economic development tool. Zoning ordinances can help ensure that a community has an appropriate balance of commercial and residential opportunities. Zoning can also support a community's core industries and values through the creation of special districts and standards.
- **Housing:** Housing is the backbone of any community's economy. Businesses need workers, and workers need places to live close to where they work. In this way, generating adequate levels of housing is a critical economic development strategy.
- **Transportation**: Transportation enables the movement of goods, services, and people. Effective and equitable transportation systems can help employees and customers get to businesses safely and efficiently. Inadequate transportation infrastructure can make it harder for customers to access businesses and for businesses to access resources, limiting economic development potential.
- **Infrastructure:** The availability of community water and wastewater infrastructure has a significant impact on business offerings. Water and wastewater infrastructure is also important for housing development.
- **Conservation & Sustainability:** Conway's tourism industry greatly depends on the scenic and natural qualities of the area. The health and prosperity of Conway community also depends on clean water, air, and soils. In these ways, conservation and sustainability are critical to the success of Conway's economy.

Community Goals & Public Input

The 2003 Plan provides the following objective statement related to economic development: *"Recognizing that the key economic character of the community is its tourism-based economy,*

future economic development initiatives should strive to diversify the employment and business establishment base within Conway."

The 2003 Master Plan for Conway placed a strong emphasis on supporting the tourism industry, but it also includes several recommendations for promoting economic development and supporting the growth of other industries in the area. The last plan notes that tourism is a major economic driver for Conway and identifies the need to support and promote the tourism industry. It recommends developing new attractions and enhancing existing ones, as well as improving marketing efforts. The plan also identifies several areas for potential commercial development, including along the Route 16 corridor and in the town center. Generally, the plan recommends creating a business-friendly environment that encourages new companies and organizations to locate in the area. The plan also emphasizes the need to provide training and education opportunities for workers in key industries, as well as the need to attract and retain skilled workers in the area. Additionally, the Master Plan identifies several infrastructure improvements that could support economic development, including improvements to transportation infrastructure, water and sewer systems, and broadband internet access. Finally, the plan recommends creating partnerships among local businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to support economic development. It notes that partnerships can help to leverage resources and coordinate efforts to achieve common goals.

At the February 2023 Master Plan Open House, participants shared that they wanted limitations on large-scale commercial development, such as hotels. Participants indicated that this type of commercial development was not serving the Conway community. Housing was a top priority at the Open House. Participants unanimously agreed that Conway is facing a shortage of units that are affordable to low-income residents. Participants also seemed to recognize the acute effects of the regional housing shortage on economic development; without a supply of affordable and attainable housing, current and prospective employees in Conway are forced to live elsewhere.

Participants also wanted the plan to address the role of STRs in the community. Some participants suggested disallowing STRs in residential areas. When asked about their favorite things about Conway, respondents frequently highlighted the community's scenic beauty, natural environment, and recreational opportunities. At the meeting, participants were also asked to note areas they thought would be suitable for additional housing development and/or conservation. The results of that exercise, along with the full summary of feedback, is available in the **Open House #1 Summary Memo**.

Economic Development Issues & Areas of Focus

This section summarizes the primary issues related to economic development in Conway. The Areas of Focus are potential recommendations that the updated Master Plan could make. Each of these potential ideas will need further analysis. The Steering Committee is encouraged to provide feedback on these potential recommendation areas.

Align Land Use Policies with Local Vision for Economic Development

Conway's current zoning ordinance does not adequately support some of the most important drivers of Conway's economy, such as conservation, historic character, small-scale commercial development, and affordable/attainable housing. The ordinance should specifically support these land uses and features.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Create a conservation/recreational tourism district (as opposed to relying on current overlay districts)

- Institute protections for historic buildings in Conway, such as a demolition delay ordinance
- Ensure that the dimensional standards and land use requirements for the town's village centers support village-style development, providing opportunities for small-scale commercial development and housing
- Expand the variety of housing types allowed in Conway and align density standards with infrastructure capacity to promote affordable housing opportunities for residents
- Legalize the existing land use pattern and form (village-style development) in the Town code
- Promote village-style development that has a high taxable value per acre, such as mixed-use development with ground-level commercial uses and upper-story residences.

Support Employee Housing in Conway

Conway is suffering from a housing shortage; workers cannot find places to live in Conway, let alone homes they can afford. The Town should support employee housing to ensure that the workforce can live affordably within the community and businesses can remain open.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider adopting a commercial linkage fee program, in which commercial developments of a certain size must provide a certain number of workforce housing units or a fee-in-lieu of those units, with collected fees used to support future workforce housing development. This type of program can help ensure that large-scale commercial development does not place undue strain on the local housing market.
- Partner with regional organizations offering technical assistance to help local employers navigate the process of providing housing for employees.

Right-Size and Control Hotel Development in Conway

There has been substantial pushback from the community on new hotel developments in Conway. In general, the community is uncomfortable with the pace and scale of hotel development and is interested in creating guardrails around this type of development.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Adjust design standards and identify the areas in town that are appropriate for new large-scale hotel development to align with community priorities
- Legalize the adaptive reuse of hotel buildings for residential or mixed-use development

Right-Size Commercial Development in Conway

As with hotel development, there is a need to right-size and place thoughtful limitations on commercial development in Conway. At present, certain kinds of large-scale commercial development can be built throughout town; this does not align with community goals to preserve the village centers and reduce landscape fragmentation.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Reduce the size of Highway Commercial district so that it no longer includes the Intervale area
- Limit large-scale commercial development and hotel development to a discrete area, such as an overlay district
- Do not allow large-scale hotel development in village centers

Balance Tourism with Local Quality of Life and Capture Economic Benefits of Tourism

As outlined in the table above (Conditions, Benefits, and Challenges), the popularity of tourism can be a double-edged sword for a community. Conway should continue to support the local tourism economy while making concerted efforts to mitigate negative effects of tourism and preserve quality of life for residents.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Promote sustainable tourism that emphasizes responsible recreation and stewardship of the natural landscape
- Encourage and promote locally-owned and operated tourism businesses to help keep tourism revenue within the community
- Ensure that investments in local infrastructure support the local community as well as visitors. Infrastructure improvements could include transportation improvements, enhancements to parks and public spaces, and water/wastewater service area extensions.
- Promote land use policies that maximize the taxable value per acre of tourism-oriented businesses, such as encouraging village-style, mixed-use development with ground floor commercial uses and upper story residences.
- Examine options for capturing additional revenues from the local tourism economy to offset the cost of local services and infrastructure in a way that does not discourage visitation.

Selected Zoning & Land Use Areas of Focus

The following areas of focus were recommended for the zoning & land use section but are equally relevant to economic development:

Lack of Differentiation Between Commercial Uses by Size

The current zoning code and use table does not differentiate between large-scale and small-scale commercial uses. This creates challenges in limiting large-scale commercial development (e.g., a hotel or large restaurant) in places where small-scale commercial development (e.g., a boutique or cafe) might be appropriate.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider differentiating between different scales of commercial uses in the use table
- Consider restricting large-scale commercial development to the Settler's Green area
- Consider adopting a commercial linkage fee program, in which commercial developments of a certain size must provide a certain number of workforce housing units or a fee-in-lieu of those units. This type of program can help ensure that large-scale commercial development does not place undue strain on the local housing market.
- To ensure that new developments do not cause new transportation challenges, consider adopting new orderly development standards that encourage walkability and interconnectedness between new mixed-use developments

Misalignment of Highway Commercial District

The Highway Commercial district currently applies to areas with vastly different development characters. The scale of development in the Settler's Green area is much more intensive than the spirit of a typical "Highway Commercial" district. The Intervale area's current designation, Highway Commercial, is not appropriate for the area.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider breaking up the HC district into multiple districts of different intensities
- Consider allowing larger mixed-use development in the Settler's Green area; ensure that shared parking is available for development of this type

Lack of Multi-Family Units & Opportunities for Affordable Housing

Multi-family housing is defined as residences with greater than 2 units. This definition is limiting; there are areas where triplex or quadplex housing might be appropriate, but a larger apartment building is not. This flattening of multi-family housing types has likely contributed to the overall lack of "missing middle" housing types. See the *Housing Existing Conditions Memo* for a discussion of missing middle housing.

The dimensional standards required for multifamily housing are extremely onerous and prevent multifamily development on all but very large lots. For example, in the North Conway Village Residential district, lots with municipal water or water and sewer are required to have at least ½ acre for the 1st unit and 10,000 sf for each additional unit on the same lot. Although MF is allowed in the district, these standards functionally allow a maximum density of 3 units/acre, but MF housing is allowed in the district.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider itemizing different types of multi-family housing in the use table
- Consider amending dimensional allowances to functionally allow multifamily housing

Lack of Clarity Regarding STRs

Need a clear policy regulating and tracking STRs

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider limiting STRs to certain districts or with certain site standards

Lack of Village-Style Development Standards

At present, Conway's village areas are limited by the Town's onerous parking requirements and dimensional standards. As a result, variances are required for most traditional village uses.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider amending lot size requirements in village centers to promote more compact development and complement existing development patterns
- Consider amending the unique village standards for the Town's village areas to better align with existing land uses and suitable mixed-use building types
- Consider performance-based zoning standards for village districts. Performance-based zoning is a more flexible form of zoning that focuses on the impacts of a development instead of the specific uses permitted. This kind of zoning can be especially impactful in downtown areas, where the performance standards can be tailored to goals for village-style development.

Address the Needs of Industrial Areas

The I-2 district is currently not served by water and sewer, which limits its capabilities as an industrial center. In addition, Conway's two industrial areas have some degree of residential development associated with them.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider adopting performance-based zoning standards for the industrial district that aim to concentrate industrial activities in areas with water and sewer and separate residential uses from nuisances associated with some types of industrial activities (e.g., noise)

Onerous Site Plan Requirements

Conway's site plan requirements frequently conflict with town goals and the spirit of Town ordinances. As examples, the variable greenspace requirements have proved challenging for the village districts, since the small lots in that area often can't meet the requirement for greenspace. At times, developments cannot meet the greenspace requirement because of significant parking requirements.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Consider adopting shared parking standards to encourage the efficient use of land, particularly in village and commercial areas
- Consider creating parking standards for all districts (not all districts currently have parking standards, creating discrepancies with the use table)

Conclusion

- At present, Conway's commercial development trends are at odds with the community's desired outcomes for economic development. As noted in the Zoning & Land Use memo, the community's lack of standards differentiating large-scale and small-scale commercial uses has led to an excess in large-scale commercial uses, including hotels.
- The Town should identify and pursue ways to capture local benefits from the tourism industry and act within its authority to support the needs of the local workforce

Addendum: Regional Socioeconomic Context, Demographics, & Industry Information

Regional Socioeconomic Context

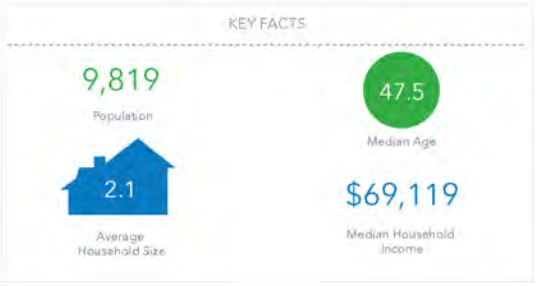
The profiles below compare general socioeconomic conditions in the Town of Conway and Carroll County, NH.

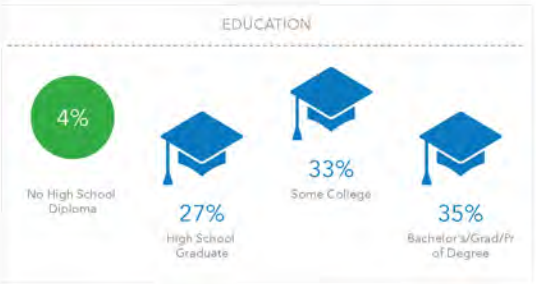
Takeaways:

- As shown, socioeconomic conditions in Conway largely mirror those of Carroll County. Some metrics, such as median household size, median income, and education attainment, are roughly equivalent.
- Although Conway accounts for about 1/5 of the County's population, it supports about 1/3 of the businesses and jobs in the county.
- Median net worth is over 30% higher in Carroll County than in Conway.

- Conway has slightly (2%) more households earning less $15,000 per year compared to Carroll County.
- Households earning $75,000-$99,999 per year make up a substantial share of Conway (23.7%) and the County as a whole (22.1%). Carroll County has 8.2% more households in this income bracket relative to the State of New Hampshire as a whole.

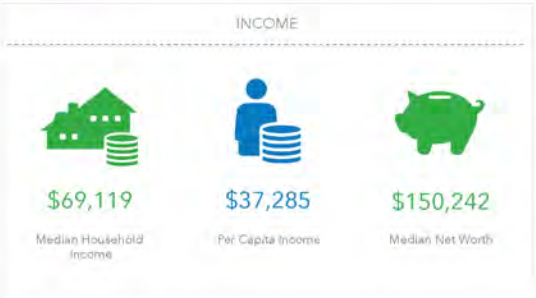
Town of Conway, NH











Households By Income

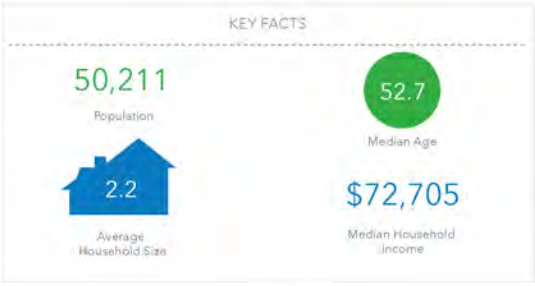
The largest group: $75,000 - $99,999 (23.7%)

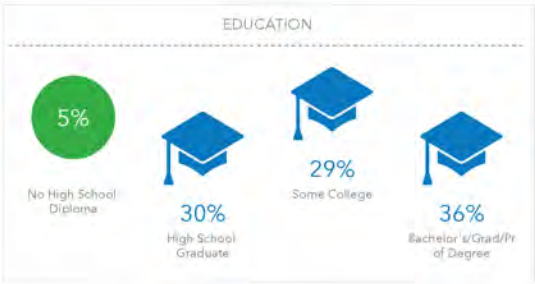
The smallest group: $200,000+ (3.1%)

Indicator ▲	Value	Diff
<$15,000	11.4%	+2.0%
$15,000 - $24,999	8.0%	-1.2%
$25,000 - $34,999	5.7%	+0.3%
$35,000 - $49,999	9.7%	-0.6%
$50,000 - $74,999	18.5%	+1.8%
$75,000 - $99,999	23.7%	+1.6%
$100,000 - $149,999	16.5%	+0.2%
$150,000 - $199,999	3.5%	-1.1%
$200,000+	3.1%	-2.8%

Bars show deviation from Carroll County

Carroll County, NH











Households By Income

The largest group: $75,000 - $99,999 (22.1%)

The smallest group: $150,000 - $199,999 (4.6%)

Indicator ▲	Value	Diff
<$15,000	9.4%	+2.9%
$15,000 - $24,999	9.2%	+3.4%
$25,000 - $34,999	5.4%	-0.5%
$35,000 - $49,999	10.3%	+0.2%
$50,000 - $74,999	16.7%	+0.5%
$75,000 - $99,999	22.1%	+8.2%
$100,000 - $149,999	16.3%	-3.4%
$150,000 - $199,999	4.6%	-6.0%
$200,000+	5.9%	-5.3%

Bars show deviation from New Hampshire

Demographics & Income in Conway

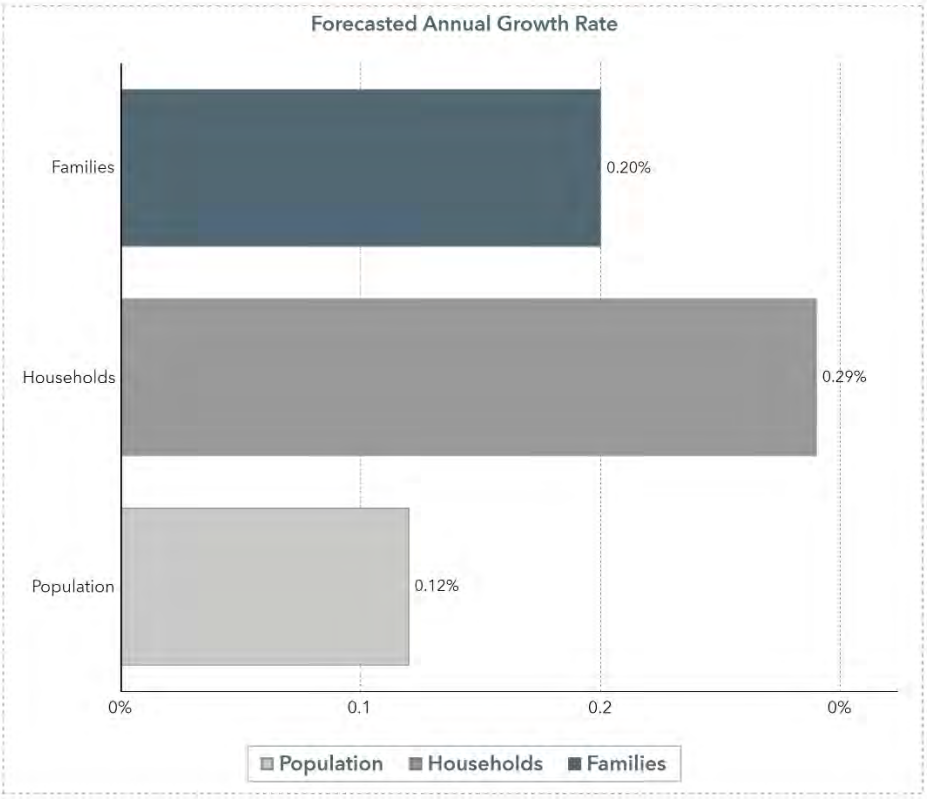
The following charts provide a snapshot of Conway's population demographics.

Takeaways:

- In general, Conway's population is aging. According to current NH population projections, Conway's population is expected to increase to a peak of 10,775 in 2035 before leveling off.
- Most residents are part of the workforce, and there is very little unemployment.
- Educational attainment is high in Conway.
- The largest share of households in Conway earn between $75,000 and $99,999 per year.
- This chart reflects full-time residents in Conway and may not reflect the true volume of service workers who live and work in Conway for a portion of the year.

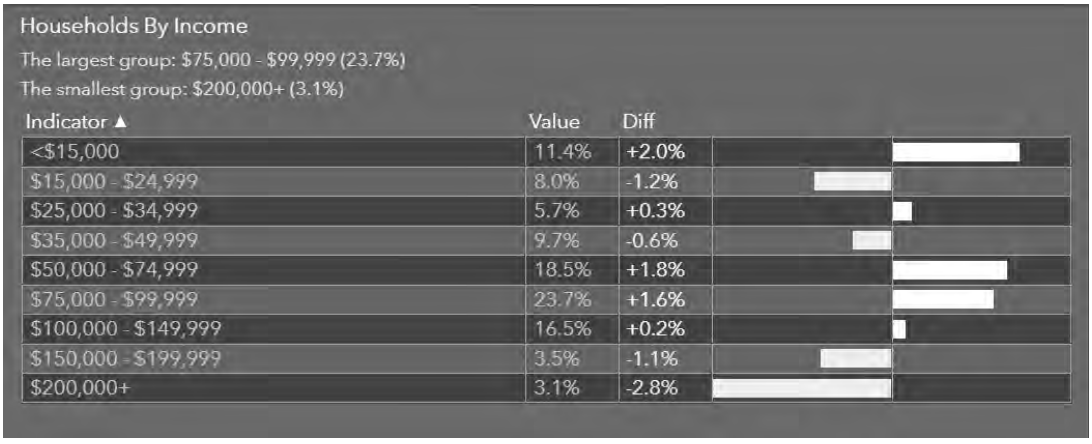


As shown in the chart below, Conway's forecasted annual growth rate in 2027 is 0.20% for families and 0.29% for households. This slightly higher projected growth rate for households reflects a broader national trend towards single-person households and households without children, which include empty nesters as well as younger couples electing not to have children. US Census population projections are generated based on an analysis of the current population's age ranges, birth rate, and in-migration patterns.



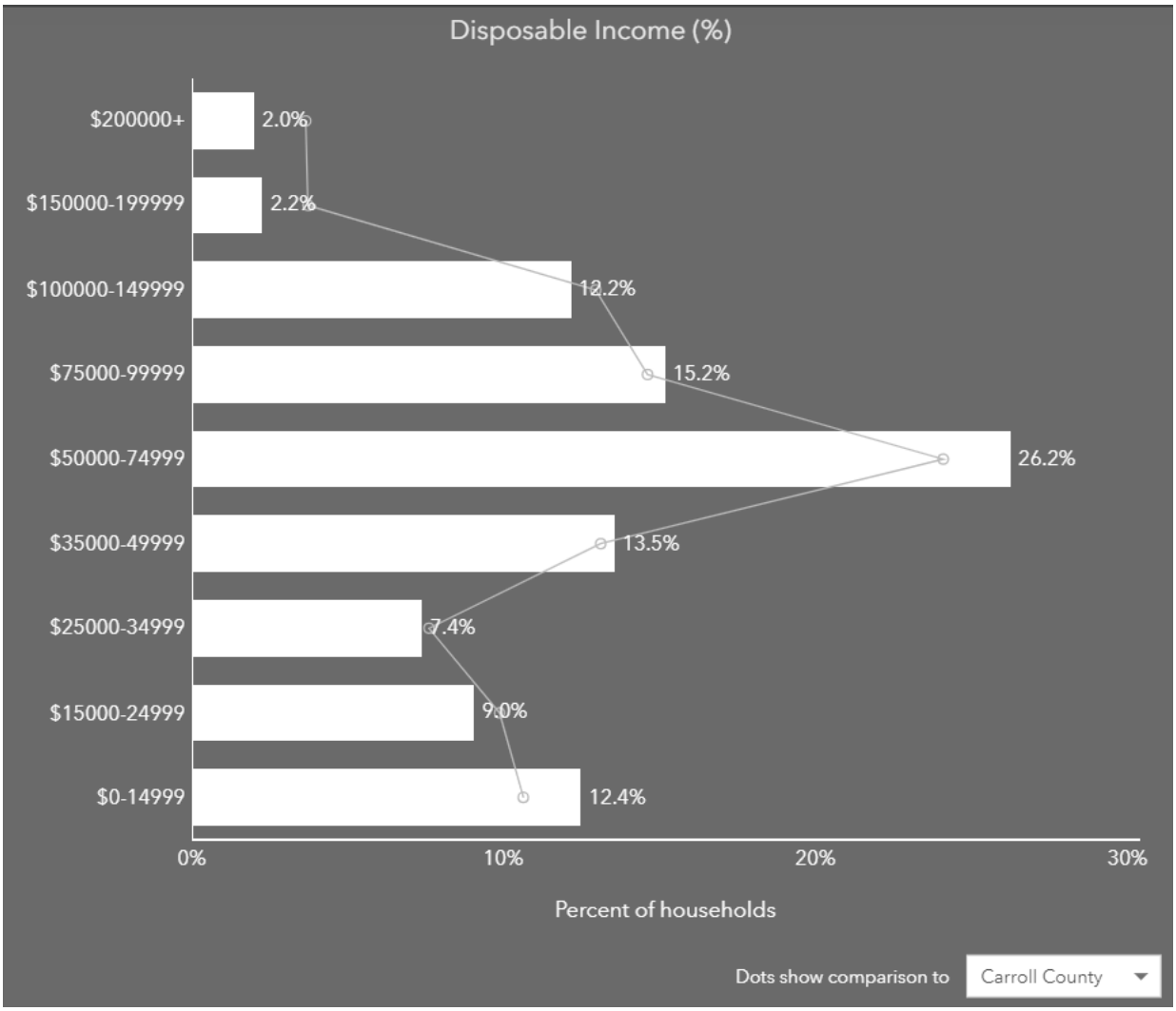
Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri. The vintage of the data is 2027.

The chart below shows the distribution of income in Conway. As shown, close to half of households in Conway make between $50,000-100,000 per year. The bars, which show deviation from Carroll County, show that Conway has a slightly larger share of the lowest earners (households earning less than $15,000 a year) and a slightly smaller share of the highest earners (households earning more than $200,000 a year).



Indicator ▲	Value	Diff
<$15,000	11.4%	+2.0%
$15,000 - $24,999	8.0%	-1.2%
$25,000 - $34,999	5.7%	+0.3%
$35,000 - $49,999	9.7%	-0.6%
$50,000 - $74,999	18.5%	+1.8%
$75,000 - $99,999	23.7%	+1.6%
$100,000 - $149,999	16.5%	+0.2%
$150,000 - $199,999	3.5%	-1.1%
$200,000+	3.1%	-2.8%

As shown in the chart below, just over a quarter of households in Conway have disposable income between $50,000-74,999. Disposable income is defined as the amount of money a person is free to spend after taxes. Because New Hampshire levies very little income tax, residents have a higher proportion of disposable income relative to communities in neighboring states.



As shown in the chart below, 747 households (about 17%) in Conway are below the poverty line. Impoverished households are most likely to be single householders, specifically single men. For context, 7.9% of the overall population of Conway is below the poverty line. This is compared to 7.9% in Carroll County at large and 8.1% in rural New Hampshire.

Household Poverty Levels (ACS)	Below	At or Above	Total
Total	747	3,762	4,509
Married Couple Families	12	1,678	1,690
Other Families w/Male Householder	0	204	204
Other Families w/Female Householder	165	327	492
Nonfamilies w/Male Householder	377	546	923
Nonfamilies w/Female Householder	193	1,007	1,200

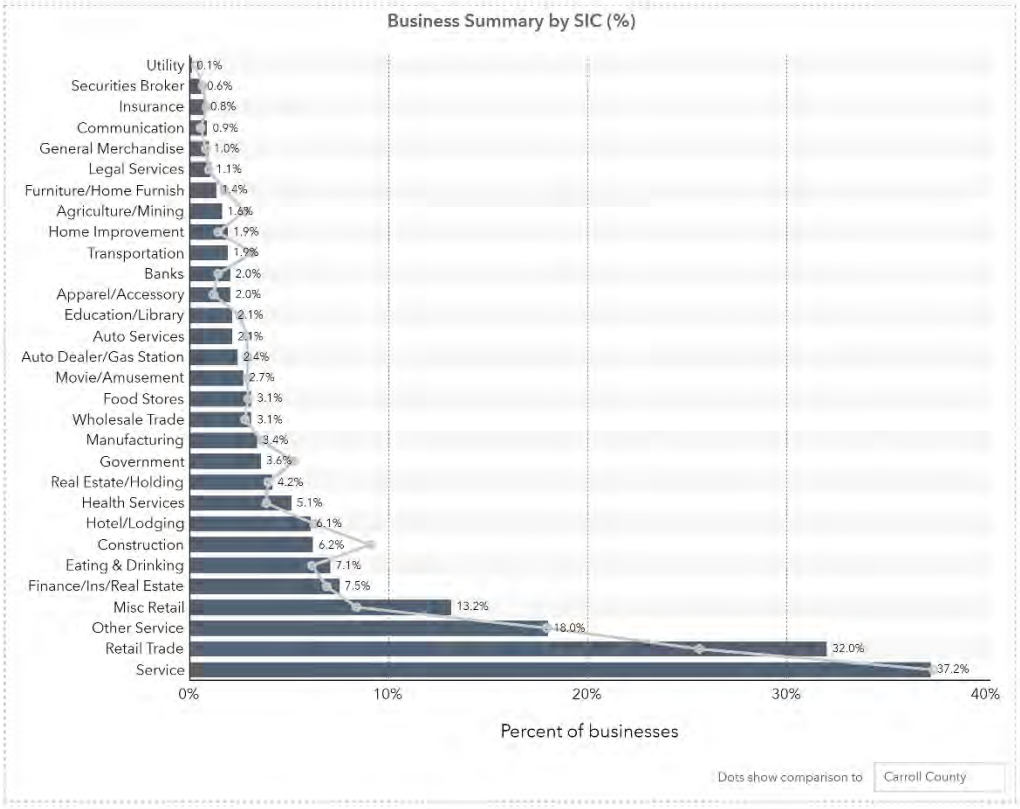
Source: This infographic contains data provided by ACS. The vintage of the data is 2017-2021.

Industry & Employment Breakdown

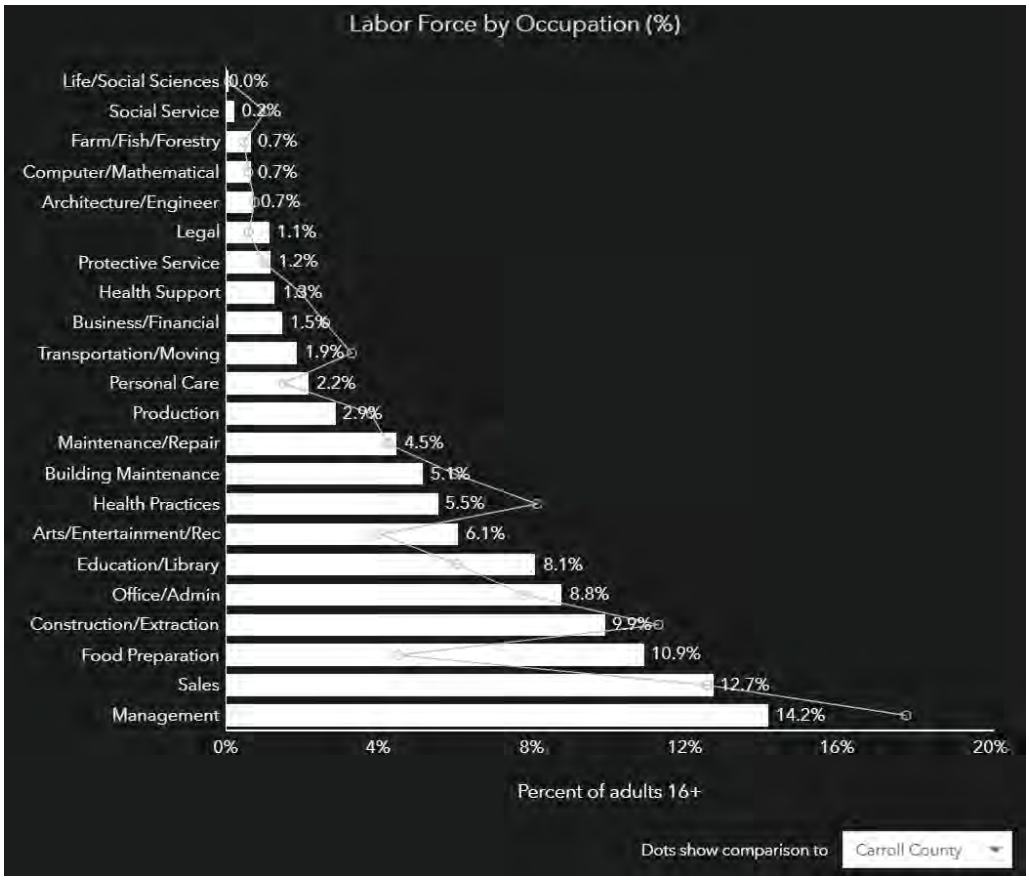
There are 1,034 businesses in Conway and 11,341 employees as of 2022. The following charts show a breakdown of industries and employment in Conway using Standard Industrial Classification codes (SIC).

Takeaways:

- In general, Conway's economy relies heavily on the service industry and retail businesses – nearly all businesses in Conway can be classified as service or retail businesses.
- Conway's distribution of business types mostly tracks with that of Carroll County.
- Conway is home to more retail businesses and fewer construction businesses compared to the County at large; Conway is home to more food preparation jobs than the County at large.
- Given the prevalence of public lands and agricultural lands in Conway and the surrounding, there are relatively few jobs in forestry and agriculture.
- In general, Conway's industries and employment reflect a service-oriented, visitor-facing economy relative to Carroll County.



Source: This infographic contains data provided by Esri-Data Axle. The vintage of the data is 2022.



HOUSING ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

3.17.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: HOUSING

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Jamel Torres, Town of Conway Planning Director

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for housing in the Town of Conway and will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan. This memo complements the *Land Use and Zoning Memorandum* that covers relevant land use policy for housing development in Conway.

Overview

Housing in Conway – Key Takeaways

- Conway has a longstanding housing challenge as identified by residents and confirmed by data. Housing challenges are most pronounced for lower-income renters and residents experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity; there are limited opportunities for homeownership at multiple income levels as well. Overall, the costs of renting and purchasing housing in Conway are high compared to resident's incomes. It is unlikely that high demand for housing in Conway will subside in coming years.

- Per the draft North Country Council *Regional Housing Needs Assessment*, there is a defined shortage of workforce housing in greater Conway labor market area. Workforce housing is defined in state law as housing that is affordable to a rental household making 60% of area median income or an owner household making 100% of area median income.

- There is estimated to be a relatively high percentage of housing units in Conway that are seasonal homes or vacation/short-term rentals, which provides a complication for addressing long-term housing needs. The balance of available long-term rentals and homeownership options and STRs and seasonal homes is a key consideration as strategies for addressing housing needs are addressed.

- The 2003 Master Plan identifies some similar housing challenges for Conway in the early 2000's; however, there was not significant follow-up from the Master Plan around recommended land use strategies. The Master Plan did not recommend additional strategies for addressing housing needs beyond land use regulation.

- A variety of land use policy strategies around housing should be considered. These strategies should consider the connection to other Master Plan goals around natural resources, transportation, infrastructure, and housing development.

- There could also be consideration of complementary approaches to housing development beyond land use policy changes, including strategies for funding the development of new housing that meets local needs and programmatic support for residents in need of assistance.

Housing Stock and Development Policies

Total Housing Units

- Housing unit data from the Census Bureau indicates a high percentage of seasonal homes and vacation/short-term rental units in Conway (Table 1). The Census tracks occupied versus "vacant" units – a unit is considered "vacant" if no one is residing there at the time of visit by the Census worker. Therefore, "vacant units" will include both temporary vacancies as well as some seasonal homes and vacation/short-term rental units.

- For the 2020 Decennial Census, just over 30% of housing units in Conway were "vacant", while the New Hampshire statewide average is 12.9%.

- As of 2022, the actual rental unit vacancy rate in Carroll County was 2.3%, which suggests that the vast majority of "vacancies" reported by the Census are indeed seasonal and vacation homes.[1]

Table 1. Total Housing Units in Conway, 2020

	Units	%
Occupied Units	4,552	69.7%
Vacant Units (including seasonal homes and vacation/short-term rental units)*	1,979	30.3%
Total Units	*6,531*	*100%*

Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census
**A unit is considered vacant if no one is residing there at the time of visit by the Census worker; therefore, vacant unit data will include both temporary vacancies as well as seasonal homes and vacation rentals.*

Types of Housing Units

- At nearly two-thirds (63%) of all units (Figure 1), the predominant type of housing in Conway is single family residences.

- Just under one-in-five (18%) of all units are condominiums, while multi-family apartments (those in buildings with five or more units) represent 8% of all units.

[1] https://www.nhhfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NHHousing-2022-Rental-Cost-Report.pdf

- Small multi-unit structures (duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes) represent just 5% of all units.

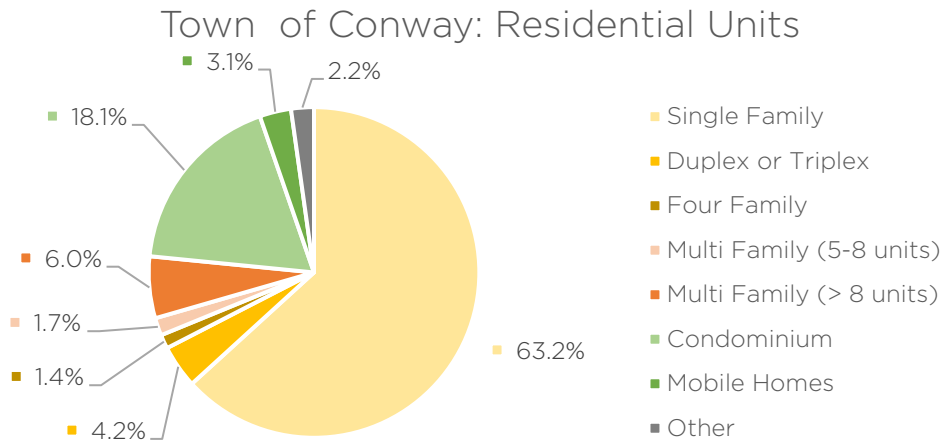


Figure 1: Residential unit types. Source: Town of Conway tax parcel assessment data

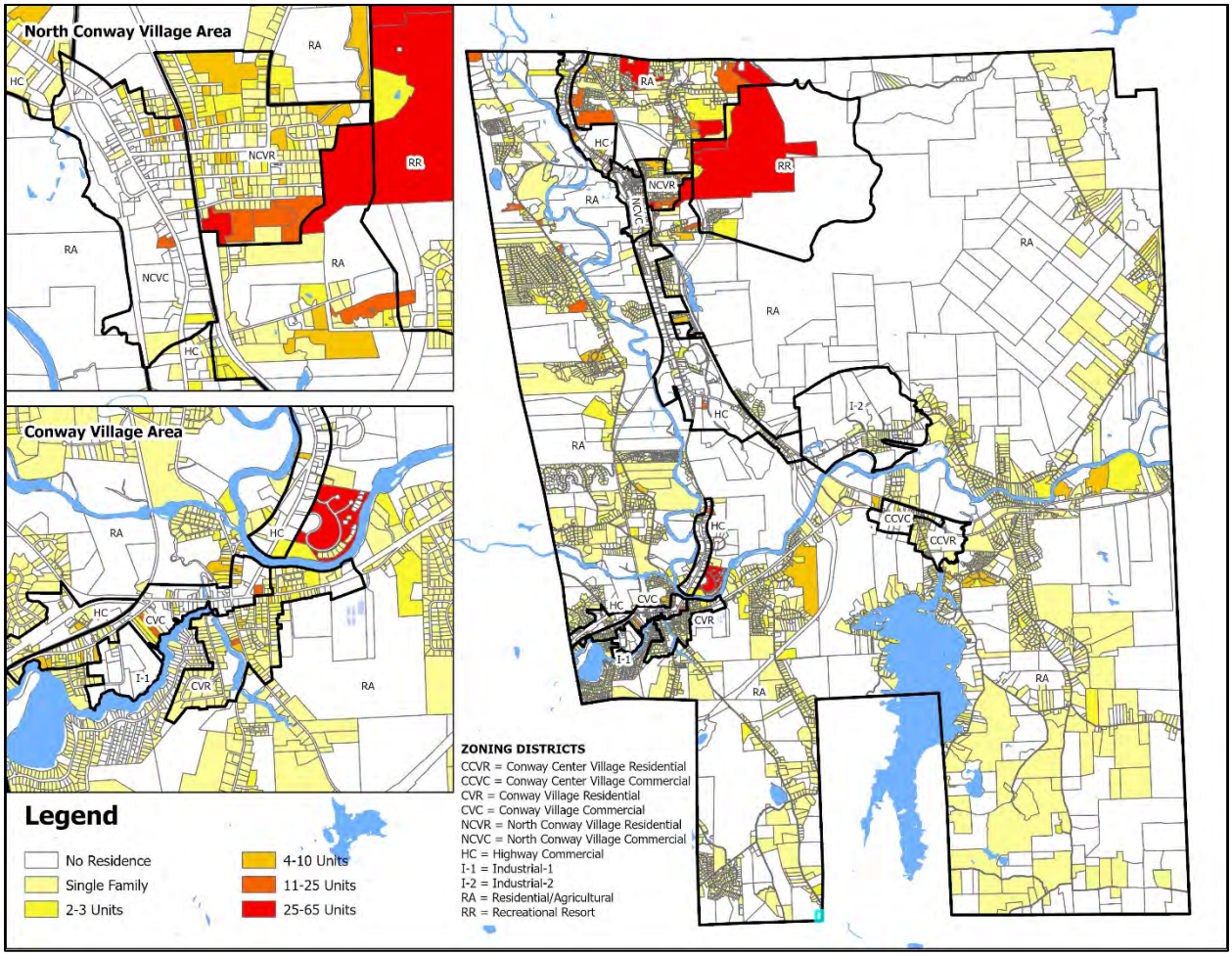


Figure 2: Residential units per parcel. Source: Town of Conway tax parcel assessment data.

Location of Housing in Conway

- Single-family residences account for the majority of housing units in Conway (63%) and are located in most areas of town. This includes single homes on large lots, various suburban subdivisions, and those within historic village centers.
- Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes are primarily found in North Conway Village and Conway Village.
- Multi-family residences (5+ units) are primarily found in the commercial core areas of North Conway Village and Conway Village.

Housing Unit Types by Zoning District

Refer the Zoning and Land Use Analysis Memorandum for a breakdown of housing units by zoning district.

Age of Housing Units

The age of residential units in Conway follows a similar pattern to the State of New Hampshire overall, with a steady period of residential unit development from the 1970's through the 2000's and a subsequent slowdown in the 2010's. Just under one-in-five (18.9%) of residential units in Conway were built in 1939 or earlier.

Table 2. Number of Housing Units by Decade Built

Decade Built	# of Units, Conway	%	# of Units, State of New Hampshire	%
Built 2020 or later	0	0.00%	691	0.10%
Built 2010 to 2019	233	3.50%	31,709	5.00%
Built 2000 to 2009	776	11.50%	73,390	11.50%
Built 1990 to 1999	703	10.40%	66,653	10.50%
Built 1980 to 1989	1,524	22.60%	123,115	19.30%
Built 1970 to 1979	1,145	17.00%	95,004	14.90%
Built 1960 to 1969	316	4.70%	54,907	8.60%
Built 1950 to 1959	515	7.60%	43,168	6.80%
Built 1940 to 1949	248	3.70%	22,789	3.60%
Built 1939 or earlier	1,275	18.90%	125,054	19.60%
Total	6,735	100.00%	636,480	100.00%

Source: US Census Bureau American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Low-Income Housing Units

Certain properties in Conway provide discounted rents to low-income residents using different federal programs (e.g., Low-Income Housing Tax Credits).

Name	Number of Units	Notes
Apple Tree Village	22	Low-income senior apartments (rent capped at 30% of income)
Conway Pines	32	Low-income family and senior apartments
Pond View Apartments	12	Low-income senior apartments (rent capped at 30% of income)

Name	Number of Units	Notes
Brookside	20	Low-income family apartments (rent capped at 30% of income)
Millbrook Village	24	Low-income family apartments
Whitman Woods	24	Low-income senior apartments
Washington St Apartments	24	Low-income senior apartments

Short-Term Rentals

- The Town of Conway defines short-term rentals (STRs) as follows:
    - The rental of a dwelling unit for periods of less than thirty (30) days, rented or offered for rent for 15 or more days in a calendar year and where the dwelling unit is not associated with commercial activities such as a hotel, motel or bed-and-breakfast.
- A recent internal review of current STRs in Conway found a total of 730 STR units, which likely represents an undercount of the total number of units. For comparison purposes, 730 units is equivalent to approximately 11% of the total number of residential units in Conway.
- The Town of Conway has been engaged in significant and ongoing litigation regarding the regulation of STRs. The outcomes of this legal process will have implications for the regulatory approaches the Town may consider moving forward.

Residential Zoning & Land Use Policy – Key Takeaways

A full breakdown of residential zoning and land use policies is provided in the *Zoning & Land Use Analysis* memorandum. Some key takeaways related to land use regulation and housing include:

- The Town's Residential Agricultural District is intended for low-density residential and agricultural uses, but it contains 69% of the town's residential units. The development pattern in this area is highly diffuse, with residences scattered across most areas of the district. However, it is still possible to create large-scale residential development in this district through a PUD. Subdivided areas within the district do not align with the purpose and intent of the district.
- There is an ongoing need to align denser development with areas with infrastructure capacity, which can support such development. As discussed, 69% of residential units fall within the Agricultural/Residential District, which is intended for low-density development.
- Multi-family housing is defined in ordinances as residences with greater than 2 units. This definition is limiting; there are areas where triplex or quadplex housing might be appropriate, but a larger apartment building is not. This flattening of multi-family housing types has likely contributed to the overall lack of "missing middle" housing types.
- Conway may not be providing adequate support for multi-family housing under RSA 674:58-61. The statute has been in effect since 2010 and requires municipalities to provide "reasonable" and "realistic" opportunities for workforce housing in their zoning regulations. This includes rental multi-family (MF) housing. The dimensional standards required for multifamily housing are extremely onerous and prevent multifamily development on all but very large lots. Lack of Specificity Regarding ADUs and STRs

- The current zoning ordinance does not provide specific standards regulating the districts where ADUs and STRs are allowed.

- Dimensional and minimum parking standards limit ability for new residential development in and around village areas.

Households in Conway

Household Income & Housing Costs

- Relative to household incomes, housing costs in Conway are high compared to the surrounding region and state. Over half (51%) of renters in Conway are considered cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of household income towards housing costs.

- Median monthly housing costs for renters in Conway ($978) are higher than costs for homeowners ($932), which is unusual. While median monthly housing costs for renters in Conway are nearly identical to renters in Carroll County overall (and well below the statewide median), renters in Conway have significantly lower household incomes.

- Rental households in Conway making under $50,000 per year are particularly cost-burdened; four-in-five (81%) of these households pay over 30% of annual household income towards housing costs.

Table 3. Housing Cost Estimates 2017-2021

	Town of Conway		Carroll County		State of NH	
	Owner-Occupied Units	Renter-Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied Units	Renter-Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied Units	Renter-Occupied Units
Median Household Income	$77,686	$35,424	$78,144	$42,615	$101,686	$48,480
Median Monthly Housing Costs	$943	$978	$1,129	$979	$1,603	$1,212
% of Households that are Cost-Burdened*	32.0%	50.6%	27.4%	41.7%	24.8%	43.9%

Source: US Census Bureau American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

- The median sale price for homes in Conway has approximately doubled since 2013, mirroring statewide trends (Figure 3). Median home sale prices currently hover around $350,000, up from approximately $170,000 in 2013. By comparison, there was a 30% increase in median household income in Conway between 2013 and 2021 ($44,331 to $57,363, respectively).[2]

[2] US Census Bureau, American Communities Survey

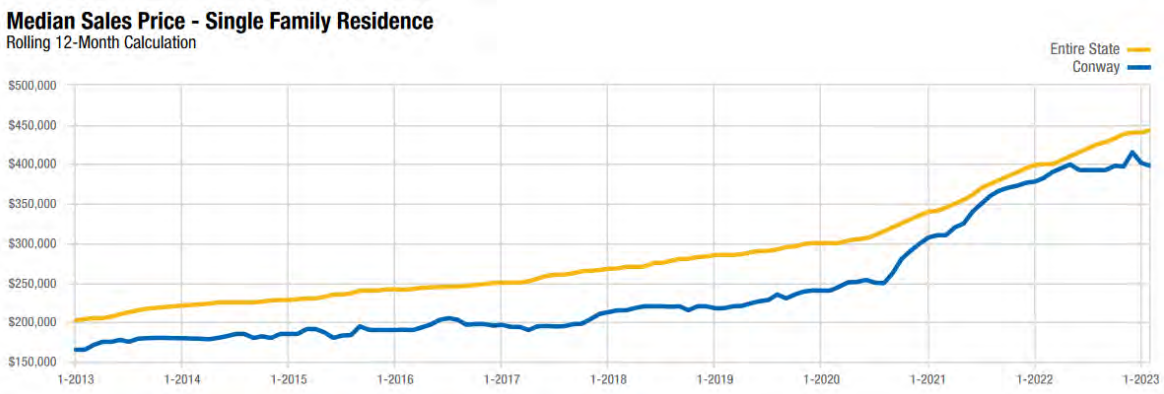


Figure 3: Median Sales Price for Single Family Residences, 2013 – 2023. Source: NH Association of Realtors

Changes in Population and Households

- The State of New Hampshire Office of Planning and Development projects that the Town of Conway will add nearly 1,000 new residents between 2020 and 2035. Projections for the year 2050 show a slight decline in population from the peak in 2035, but an overall net increase of over 500 residents from 2020.

- These projections reflect an aging population, low birth rate, and steady in-migration, and are similar to population projections for the broader region. It should be noted that these projections assume some level of housing availability for potential new residents.

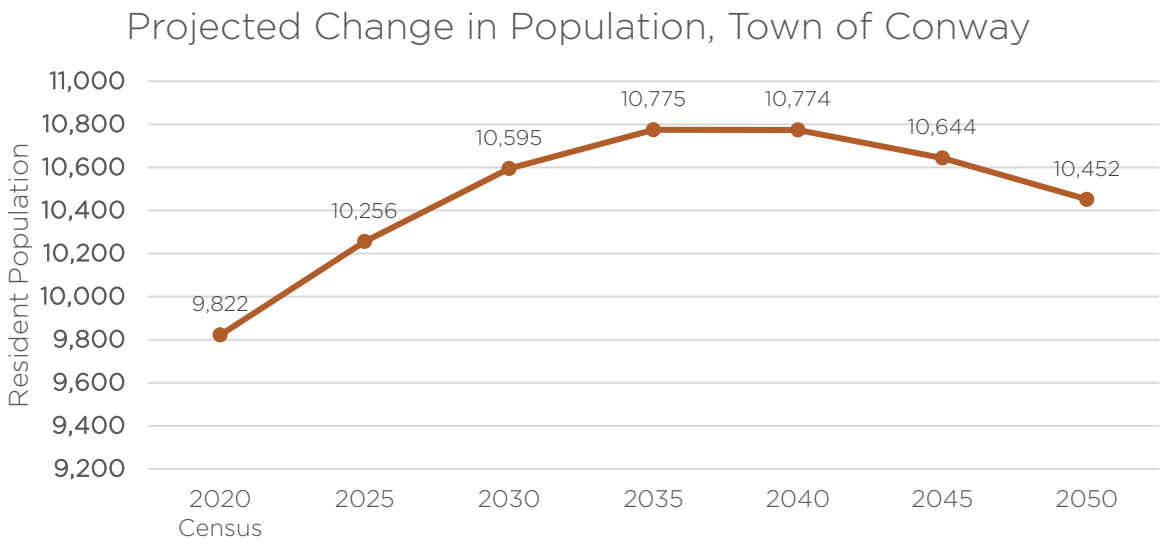


Figure 4: Population projections, 2025 – 2050. Source: NH Office of Planning and Development, 2022.

- There has been a decline in the median size of households in Conway since 2000, most notably for owner-occupied units (Table 4). The rate of decline in household size in Conway is significantly greater than what is occurring statewide.

- A decline in household size is often related to an aging population (older residents are less likely to have children or additional household members living with them) as well as lower birth rates (smaller family sizes). The median age in 2020 in Conway was 48.4 years, an increase from 39.9 years in 2000 and above the state median age of 43.0 years.

- When a population trends towards smaller household sizes, it means that a larger number of housing units are needed to house that same overall population. The trend towards smaller household sizes and projected increases in population through 2035 suggest that housing demand will remain strong in Conway over the next few decades.

Table 4. Change in Median Household Size, 2000 - 2020

	Median Household Size (# people)		
Household Type	**Town of Conway**	**Carroll County**	**New Hampshire**
Owner occupied, 2020	2.09	2.2	2.58
Owner occupied, 2010	2.42	2.41	2.7
Owner occupied, 2000	2.46	2.47	2.62
% Change, 2000 - 2020	*-15.0%*	*-10.9%*	*-1.5%*
Renter occupied, 2020	1.84	1.98	2.09
Renter occupied, 2010	1.95	1.97	2.11
Renter occupied, 2000	1.99	2.15	2.14
% Change, 2000 - 2020	*-7.5%*	*-7.9%*	*-2.3%*

Source: US Decennial Census, US Census Bureau American Communities Survey 5-Year Estimates

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

- Tracking the number of individuals experiencing homeless is a challenging task. The most recent point-in-time homelessness count data available for Carroll County is from January 2020. It is typically assumed that regional point-in-time counts represent an undercount of the total number of individuals experiencing homeless. It is usually not possible to identify and contact all residents who are experiencing homelessness, and residents who experience temporary homelessness for several weeks or months due to housing insecurity are often not captured in these counts.

- As of January 2020, there were at least 94 individuals experiencing homelessness in Carroll County.[3] Of the 94 individuals counted, 30 were sheltered in temporary housing, 25 were unsheltered, and 39 were temporarily "doubled-up" with friends or family. A follow up count in January 2022 confirmed a similar number of overall number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

- While these counts are for Carroll County overall, individuals experiencing homelessness are often located in or near communities that have human services organizations and other forms of support. It is likely that a sizeable percentage of these individuals are located in or near Conway given its status as a regional service hub and lack of human service organizations in surrounding communities.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

- In January 2023, North Country Council Regional Planning Commission (NCC) released a draft *Regional Housing Needs Assessment* (RHNA), which is required to be updated every five years by state law. The geographic scope of the RHNA includes all of Coos County,

[3] https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt476/files/documents/2021-11/dehs-bhs-2020-point-in-time-counts.pdf

northern Grafton County, and northern Carroll County, including Conway and the Mount Washington Valley.

- In addition to providing data and information on housing needs, the RHNA provides a basis for evaluating compliance with **New Hampshire workforce housing law** (RSA 674:58-61). The statute requires municipalities to provide "reasonable and realistic opportunities" for the development of multi-family workforce housing unless existing workforce housing stock in the municipality is "sufficient to accommodate its fair share of the current and reasonably foreseeable regional need for such housing." Workforce housing is defined in state law as the following:

    - A renter family of 3 making 60% of the area median household income pays no more than 30% of their household income toward housing costs;
    - A owner family of 4 making 100% of the area median income pays no more than 30% of their household income towards housing costs.

- RHNA findings specific to Carroll County, the Mount Washington Valley, and Conway include:

    - RHNA projections estimate that to achieve a healthy 5% rental vacancy rate and 2% ownership vacancy rate by 2025, there would need to be 336 new long-term rental units and 804 owner-occupied units added in Carroll County. This includes 79 new long-term rental units and 163 new owner-occupied units in Conway (Table 5).

    - To help ensure market stability through 2040, Conway would need to add a total of 191 new rental units and 384 new owner-occupied units (this includes the units described in the previous bullet, and assumes new housing units are being added in nearby communities as well).

    - To meet regional needs for workforce housing by 2040 in the greater Conway labor market area, there would need to be 129 units affordable to renters making less than 60% of area median income (AMI) and 441 owner-occupied units affordable to households making less than 100% of AMI. To meet the regional "fair share" target, Conway would need to provide approximately 45% of these units.

Table 5. Town of Conway Housing Needs Projections

Timeframe	Total Units	Owner-Occupied Units			Long-Term Rental Units		
		Total	Below 100% Area Median Income	Above 100% Area Median Income	Total	Below 60% Area Median Income	Above 60% Area Median Income
Short-Term (by 2025)*	238	163	83	79	79	25	51
Long-Term (by 2040)**	575	384	196	188	191	58	134

Source: 2023 Draft Regional Housing Needs Assessment
**Projected number of housing units needed to achieve healthy vacancy rate by 2025*
***Projected number of housing unit needed to ensure long-term market stability*

- The RHNA lays out a variety of strategies for meeting local and regional housing needs. Municipalities and partner organizations will need employ a variety of strategies and tools, including revising land use regulations, investing in municipal water and sewer infrastructure, building out the region's broadband network, expanding childcare options, address home health issues such as lead paint and radon, ensure accessibility for residents with limited mobility and other disabilities, and address complaints of housing discrimination within the region.

Statewide and National Trends in Housing

Trends in New Hampshire

- The housing challenges present in Conway are felt by many other communities statewide. As of November 2022, there were only 1.2 months of housing supply inventory available in New Hampshire, meaning that if no new homes were sold, the state would run out of homes for sale in just over one month.[4]

- In 2022, the statewide vacancy rate was 0.5% for all apartment rentals (4-5% is considered a healthy housing market). Median monthly gross rents increased by 32% from 2013 to 2023.

- As of 2022, a household needed to have $63,000 in annual income to be able to afford the median two-bedroom rent in New Hampshire (i.e., pay less than 30% of total income towards housing costs). The median rental household income was just $48,480 as of 2021.

Nationwide Trends

- Interest rates for mortgages have a significant impact on the ability of low- and moderate-income households to purchase homes. As of March 2023, the average national interest rate for 30-year mortgages was 6.7%, up from a low of 2.7% in December 2020. A $250,000 mortgage at 6.7% interest would require a monthly payment of $1,613, while that same mortgage would cost $1,014 per month at 2.7% interest rates.

Considerations For Master Plan Process

Housing and Other Master Plan Goals

- **Zoning & Land Use Policy**: land use ordinances greatly influence the type and location of housing that is built in Conway. Zoning and land use regulations are an important tool for guiding housing development patterns and promoting alignment with other community planning goals (e.g., land conservation, transportation access, water and wastewater infrastructure).

- **Economic Development**: the availability and cost of housing options in Conway has significant implications for economic development goals, most notably the ability to sustain a local workforce. It will be important to examine this linkage through the lens of potential economic and commercial development strategies.

[4] New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority – November 2022 Housing Market Snapshot

- **Transportation**: transportation and housing are inherently linked – the home is the origination of most transportation trips. Therefore, the location of housing relative to different destinations has significant implications for travel modes (i.e., driving versus walking or rolling), transportation costs for households, and the provision of transportation infrastructure (e.g., new road and sidewalk construction for new housing developments). Discussions of housing strategy should consider the how potential focus areas for housing are served by existing transportation infrastructure and their location relative to frequent destinations.

- **Infrastructure**: the availability of community water and wastewater infrastructure has a significant impact on the location, type, and density of housing that can be built. Water and wastewater infrastructure can allow for larger housing developments to be built on smaller lots where local water systems and septic systems are not feasible or are cost-prohibitive to create.

- **Conservation & Sustainability**: a focused housing development strategy can be informed by local conservation priorities around preserving forests, habitats, and wildlife corridors. Potential land use policy and conservation strategies can be examined hand-in-hand to identify a balance between future housing development and conservation of natural resources.

What the 2003 Master Plan Says About Housing

- The 2003 Master Plan includes the following vision statement on housing: Due to increasing demand for housing caused by the centralized location and recreation aspects associated with Conway, coupled with a lack of housing units within lower price ranges, the Town of Conway should support the development of a range of housing choices for all ages and income levels.

- The Plan discusses an increasing demand for housing and a small supply of lower-priced units. The Plan states that "failure to adopt measures that encourage the future development of affordable housing could constrict the availability of labor that might in turn negatively impact local economic activities."

- The Plan includes a broad implementation strategy for addressing housing needs: encourage a variety of market-based and affordable housing options in the region through land use policy changes. The Plan does not propose any complementary strategies for addressing housing needs other than modifications to land use policy.

- The Plan includes a Future Land Use Map that is intended to inform land use policy changes. The map identifies several proposed districts that could accommodate increased housing development or Planned Unit Developments. Few of the proposed changes were implemented.

Housing-related Feedback from the February 2023 Open House

- Housing (specifically affordable housing) generation is a top priority. Responses indicated widespread concern about a lack of housing in Conway and the broader region. Respondents indicated that this lack of supply is contributing to affordability pressures and negative effects on businesses, as employees cannot find housing. Responses to the map exercises indicate openness to housing development in a variety of areas throughout town, mostly contiguous to existing village centers.

- Responses indicate high interest in more walkable and bikeable village centers. Respondents were interested in bike connectivity between Conway Village and North Conway Village. This has implications for the location of future housing units, their proximity to village centers, and access to sidewalk networks.

- Responses indicate high interest in a more thoughtful development and land use strategy for the town. Respondents indicated discomfort with the pace and character of recent hotel and commercial development.

- Responses do not indicate consensus on a specific area or areas that should be designated for housing development. Future engagement opportunities should assess public interest in different types of housing in different locations in Town. Research efforts should focus on the water, sewer, and transportation capacity to support additional residential density in different areas of town.

- Respondents disagree on the impact of STRs and second homes on the broader housing market. Respondents disagree on the idea that STRs are contributing to affordability pressures. Respondents did not show agreement on a particular regulatory approach to STRs.

- When asked to provide a story of how the regional housing market has affected them or someone close to them, respondents shared the following anecdotes:
    - "Employees are leaving the area because they can't find rent or buy. Young people who want to stay are looking elsewhere."
    - "Neither of our sons can afford to live here, 1 is seeking a home, the other an apartment"
    - "As a small business owner working in hospitality, I have seen a stark rise in homelessness. Also, by providing work/stay options we are able to hire. However, there is a huge hiring shortage for businesses who cannot offer this."

Takeaways & Next Steps

Key Takeaways

- Conway has a longstanding housing challenge as identified by residents and confirmed by data. Overall, the costs of renting and purchasing housing in Conway are high compared to resident's incomes. Housing challenges are most pronounced for lower-income renters and residents experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

- Per the draft North Country Council *Regional Housing Needs Assessment*, there is a defined shortage of workforce housing in the greater Conway labor market area and in Conway proper.

- Projected increases in population in the coming decades and a decline in household sizes suggest that demand for housing in Conway will not subside in coming years.

- There is particular lack of "missing middle" housing in Conway – duplexes, triplexes, and other small, multi-unit buildings. This is a common challenge in communities across the country. These types of housing units are often compatible with existing community character and can add meaningful amounts of housing supply.

- The 2003 Master Plan identifies similar housing challenges for Conway in the early 2000's; however, there was not significant follow-up from the Master Plan around recommended land use strategies.

- There is estimated to be a relatively high percentage of housing units in Conway that are seasonal homes or vacation/short-term rentals, which provides a complication for addressing long-term housing needs. The balance of available long-term rentals and homeownership options and STRs and seasonal homes is a key consideration as strategies for addressing housing needs are developed.

Potential Areas of Focus for the Master Plan

- A variety of land use policy strategies around housing should be considered. These strategies should consider the connection to other Master Plan goals around natural resources, transportation, infrastructure, and housing development. Some potential approaches include:

    - Identifying zoning districts, or areas within zoning districts, that should be the focus of future housing development, including modification of district boundaries or the creation of new districts or overlays.

    - Considering increased housing density in areas served by water and wastewater infrastructure, as well as incentives for developing in water and sewer service areas.

    - Addressing regulatory barriers to ensure "reasonable and realistic opportunities" for multi-family workforce housing development in accordance with state workforce housing law.

    - Considering requirements and incentives around mixed-use development, including requirements for housing as part of commercial development or redevelopment.

    - Considering potential inclusionary zoning measures that could incentivize or require the inclusion of more affordable units within new housing developments.

    - Considering appropriate subdivision, dimensional, and site plan standards for new housing located in village areas (e.g., setback and lot coverage requirements, minimum lot sizes, minimum parking requirements), as well as density bonuses and other incentives that can help encourage the development of "missing middle" housing types (e.g, duplexes and triplexes) and multi-family buildings.

    - Considering going beyond state law requirements for permitting accessory dwelling units in various residential districts.

    - Considering further limitations on housing development on undeveloped or environmentally-sensitive lands, and/or lands that are not connected to public water and sewer.

- There could also be consideration of complementary approaches to housing development beyond land use policy changes. This could include a variety of strategies including the development of a housing trust fund, creating regional capital pools for investment in workforce housing, and creating a local housing authority.

- There could be consideration of different programmatic strategies around housing needs for various populations, including support for individuals experiencing homelessness, homeshare programs for single senior residents, promoting accessible design for limited-mobility residents, and housing with in-house supportive services for residents in need.

- With the understanding that there is active litigation occurring around the regulation of STRs in Conway, there could be further consideration of how to balance local long-term housing needs with the needs of individual property owners.

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

6.26.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Assistant Town Manager

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for the environment and natural resources in the Town of Conway and will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan.

Overview

Environment and Natural Resources in Conway – Key Takeaways

- Climate change poses a significant threat to Conway's ecosystems and ways of life
- Public lands and natural landscapes are highly important to Conway's economy, health, and culture
- The Town of Conway has an important responsibility to use local land use regulations to further goals for conservation and natural resource protection. The Town should prioritize collaborations with other stakeholders in the local conservation space, including the White Mountain National Forest, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, and the Saco Headwaters Alliance
- The Town of Conway needs a comprehensive, Town-wide approach to conservation (as opposed to current regulations, which focus on singular resources or site-specific goals). This approach will assist the Town in balancing two very important goals: providing housing for residents and protecting local landscapes/resources

Context and Key Resources

Climate and Weather Monitoring

North Conway is home to a Global Historical Climatology Network-Daily (GHCN) station. This station has recorded climate data since 1960. The Mount Washington Observatory also records key weather data. Much of the climate data referenced in this memo has been collected from these stations.

Key Resources & Habitat Areas

Forest Type

The State of New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan contains detailed information regarding Conway's forest composition and habitat types. As shown in the Wildlife Action Plan map below, the two predominant terrestrial habitat types in Conway are Hemlock-hardwood-pine and Northern Hardwood-Conifer. More than half the town's acreage is Hemlock-hardwood-pine forest. 284.2 acres of the town are cliff and talus slopes. 724.4 acres are marsh and shrub wetland.[1] Other habitat types include swamps, floodplain forest, rocky ridge, and grassland.

Northern hardwood forests consist of sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, red maple, white ash, and conifers. Wildlife in this forest type include gray fox, flying squirrel, red-eyed vireo, white-breasted nuthatch, ovenbird, and more. Hemlock forests are similar to spruce-fir forests and support black-throated green warblers, hermit thrushes, blue-headed vireos, porcupine, deer, and more.[2]

[1] Wildlife Action Plan conway_PotentialWAPspecies_byRange.xlsx (live.com)

[2] Roberge, Steven. New Hampshire's Forest Types & Ecology (ForestEcology_Roberge (unh.edu))

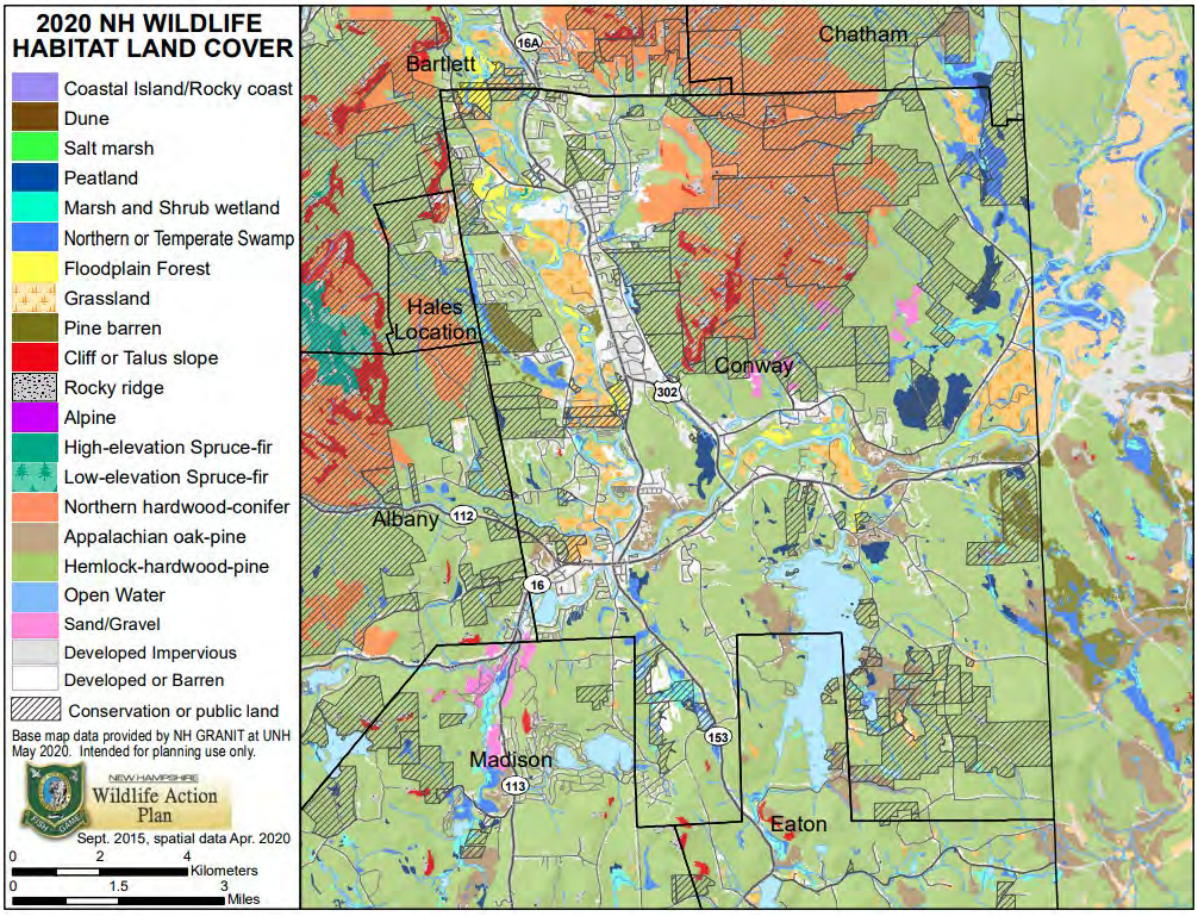


Figure 1. *Habitat types in Conway. The predominant habitat types in Conway include Hemlock-hardwood-pine and Northern hardwood-conifer. Source: 2020 New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.*

High-Ranking Habitat

The Wildlife Action Plan also records high-ranking habitat areas in New Hampshire and Conway. As shown in the map below, Conway contains several large blocks of Highest Ranked Habitat in New Hampshire and Highest Ranked Habitat in the Biological Region. As noted in the legend of the map, "biological regions" refer to certain subsets of habitat types. These high-ranking areas include the Saco and Swift River corridors and floodplain, the Cranmore Mountain and Green Hills area, and portions of South Conway. As shown on the map, substantial portions of high-quality habitat in Conway have been designated as Conservation lands or are public lands. The Saco floodplain area in North Conway is not designated as a conservation area, but it does fall within the Floodplain Conservation Overlay District.

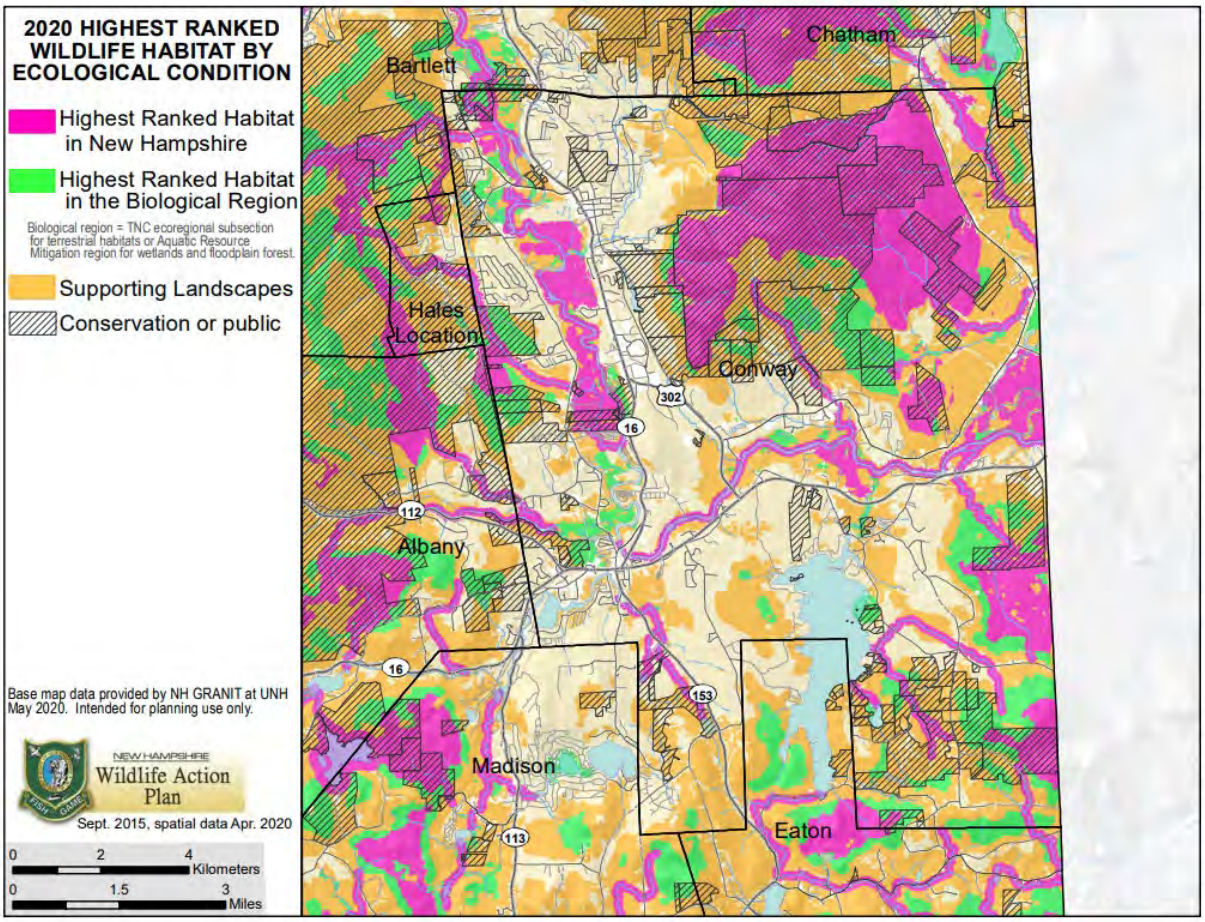


Figure 2. *Habitat ranking in Conway. The town contains several large blocks of high-ranking habitat. Source: 2020 New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.*

Endangered and Threatened Species

Conway is home to a variety of special wildlife. The following wildlife have been identified has threatened or endangered in Conway:

- Canada Lynx (federally threatened, state endangered)
- Northern long-earned bat (federally threatened, state endangered, species of greatest conservation need)
- Peregrine falcon (state threatened)
- Purple Martin (state threatened)
- Rusty-patched bumblebee (federally endangered, state endangered, species of greatest conservation need)
- Spotted turtle (state-threatened)
- Tricolored bat (state endangered)

In total, 63 species in Conway are identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in the Wildlife Action Plan.

Rivers and Watershed

Conway has over 1,400 acres of surface water, which includes rivers, lakes, and several ponds. Conway's water resources include the Saco River and the Swift River, which feeds into the Saco. The town is located within the Saco and Swift watersheds. The town's other major water resource is Conway Lake. The shore of Conway Lake is primarily privately owned. The town's municipal water supply is exclusively groundwater, the primary source of which is the Saco River Valley Glacial Aquifer.

Water Quality

Water quality is an important concern for the Town of Conway's rivers, wetlands, and bodies of water. The New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP) was established by the Rivers Management and Protection Act of 1988 (RSA 483) and has designated the Saco and Swift rivers as significant rivers with unique resources. The two rivers have their confluence in Conway.

The Saco-Swift Corridor Management Plan, which was prepared for the Town of Hart's Location and is currently in draft form, highlights several threats to the health of the corridor, including flooding, development, riverbank erosion, water quality degradation, and recreational overuse. The plan outlines the following key goals to manage and protect the corridor: "(1) manage the resources of the Saco-Swift Corridor, with a particular focus to manage flooding, recreational resources, and natural habitats, and (2) to protect the resources of the Saco-Swift Corridor, with a particular focus on protecting natural habitats, water quality, in-stream flow, and building climate resiliency."

The plan highlights the following concerns regarding development and water quality: "In recent decades, forested land, forested wetlands, and row crops have been steadily cleared and replaced by open fields and residential development. Though these land use changes are slight, they indicate the larger trend of low-density urban sprawl and increased development in the region. This highlights the importance of land use planning and regulation within the river corridors in order to protect valuable riparian resources into the future."

Viewsheds and Scenic Resources

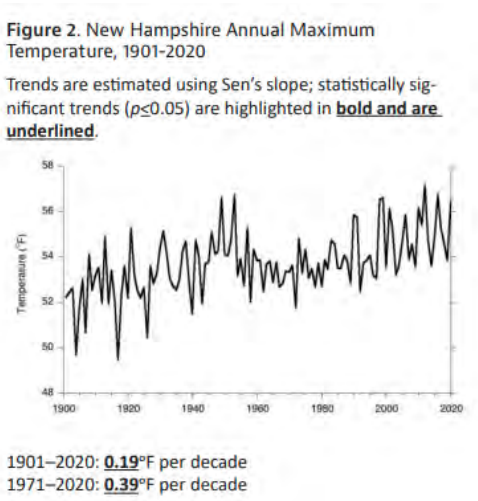
Important viewsheds in Conway primarily include views towards the surrounding mountains. Views north towards Mount Washington from Artists' Hill and views west towards the Moats are some of the most iconic views in town. Residents have expressed concern about potential building heights blocking portions of these views.

Climate Change Impacts in Conway

According to the most recent New Hampshire Climate Assessment, which was conducted by the University of New Hampshire, New Hampshire's annual maximum temperature increased an average of 0.19 degrees Fahrenheit per decade between 1901 and 2020.[3] There was an average increase of 0.39 degrees Fahrenheit per decade between 1971 and 2020. Maximum temperatures have increased more in the winter months compared to other seasons. Precipitation has also been increasing in this time period, at the rate of 0.67 inches per decade between 1901 and 2020 and 0.74 inches per decade between 1971 and 2020.

[3] Lemcke-Stampone, Mary D.; Wake, Cameron P.; and Burakowski, Elizabeth, "New Hampshire Climate Assessment 2021" (2022). The Sustainability Institute. 71. https://scholars.unh.edu/sustainability/71

As noted in the 2014 Climate Assessment for Northern New Hampshire, the increases in precipitation are expected to occur as part of more intense rain events. In general, climate change is understood to increase overall temperatures, which in turn increases the overall variability and intensity of certain weather events.

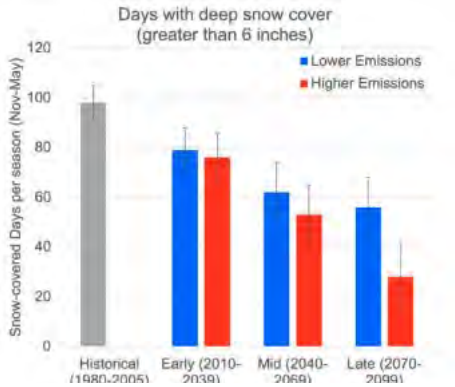


Temperature increases in New Hampshire between 1901 and 2020. Source: 2022 New Hampshire Climate Assessment.

Snowpack

Snowpack in Conway is expected to decline in the coming decades. According to the current New Hampshire Climate Assessment, "New Hampshire skier visitation is strongly correlated to the number of days per season with natural snow cover, a pattern that is robust across all New England states." The report projects that days with deep snow cover will dramatically decrease in the coming decades. The historical pattern (1980-2005) has nearly reached 100 days with deep snow cover. As climate change worsens, this number is projected to decrease to under 60 days in a lower emissions scenario and under 30 days in a higher emissions scenario.

The 2014 Climate Assessment for Northern New Hampshire notes that there was an average loss of 2.7 inches of annual mean snowfall in Conway between 1970 and 2012. According to a 2019 report, the New Hampshire ski industry brought about 3 million visitors to NH ski areas, generating over $500 million in economic impact."[4] Climate change threatens this important segment of the economy of the Mount Washington Valley.



Projected days with deep snow cover compared to historical levels. Source: 2022 New Hampshire Climate Assessment.

Hotter Summers

Although the winter season is expected to experience the greatest temperature increase, higher temperatures are also predicted for the summer months. Higher temperatures can heighten the risk of heat stroke, particularly for older residents. As such, higher temperatures increase the need for shade, air conditioning, hydration, and other accommodations. Higher temperatures can threaten wildlife, including species of freshwater fish that thrive in cold water. The 2014 Climate Assessment for Northern New Hampshire notes that in as early as fifty years under a higher-emissions scenario, North Conway would have nearly sixty days with temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit each summer.

Weaker Foliage

Fall foliage is a major tourism draw for the Conway area. Warmer temperatures have been delaying the start of winter, and the start of leaf-off conditions. With climate change, brilliant fall colors may become more dull over time. This is because stressed trees may not be able to complete their normal nutrient cycles. In addition, one Columbia scientist has observed the peak foliage period in an area of upstate New York getting shorter, since colder temperature drops are arriving later, but

[4] Lee, D.S., 2019: Economic Contribution of the Ski Industry in New Hampshire. Prepared for Ski New Hampshire, Plymouth State University, Plymouth, NH, 26

levels of sunlight have already decreased, causing trees to shed their leaves before or amidst color change.[5]

Cultural Change

As the viability of winter sports decreases and the vibrancy of fall foliage is threatened, Conway's community identity may be threatened as well. Events like the Journey to the North Pole and businesses like Cranmore Mountain depend on a snowy, cold Conway, and the thousands of visitors who come to visit Conway during peak foliage expect to see bright fall colors. These changes would result in cultural as well as economic costs – warmer seasons mean that certain traditions and ways of life in Conway (skiing, skating, fishing, trapping) may be disrupted and irreparably changed.

Increased Risk of Disaster

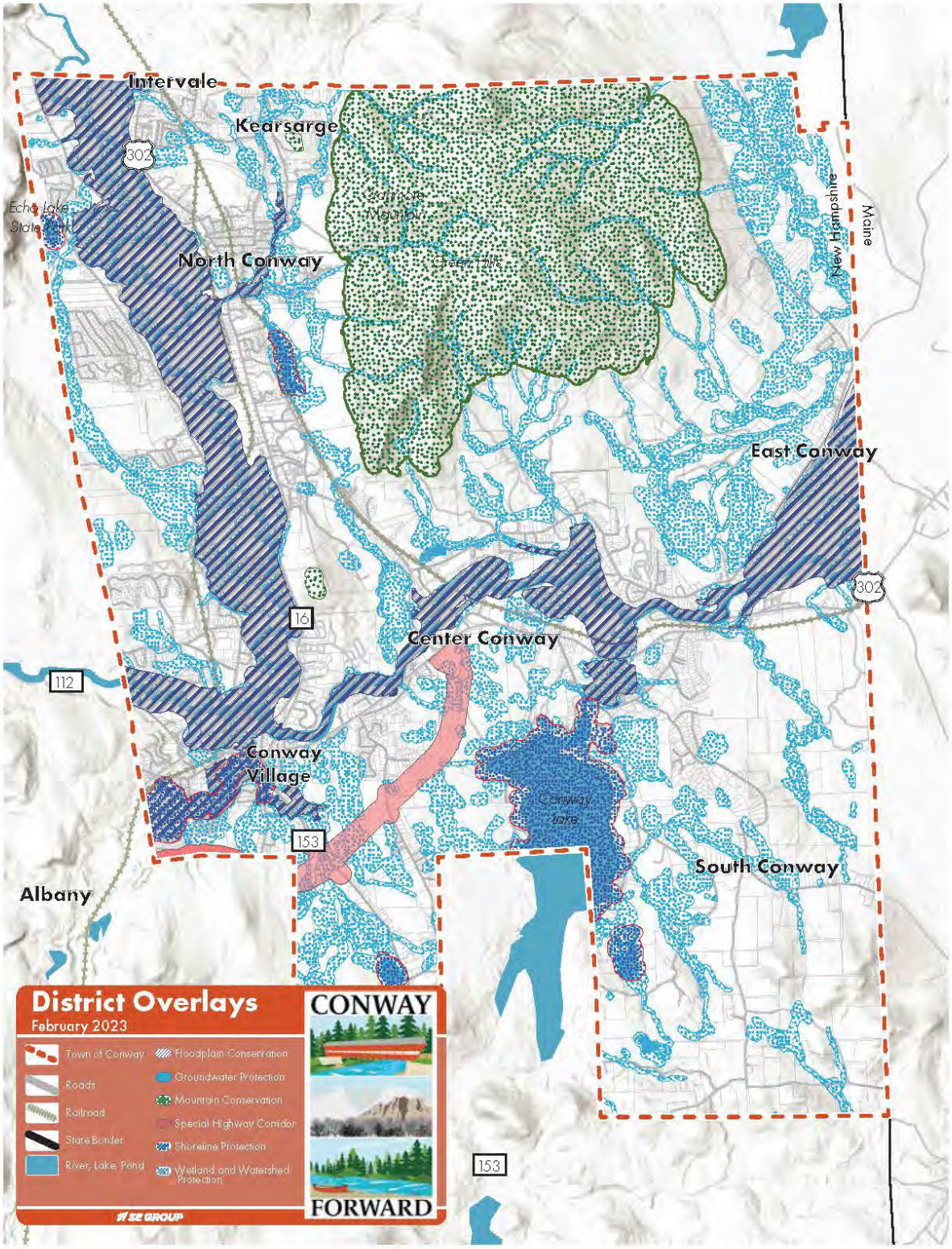
Climate change can increase the risk and intensity of various disasters, including wildfires, hurricanes, and floods. Drier conditions associated with hotter weather can heighten the risk of wildfires. This is a particular concern for the nearby White Mountain National Forest. The forest contains some fire-dependent species. However, if not properly contained, a wildfire could be devastating to the forest. Warmer temperatures can also facilitate the spread of pests and insects that attack trees and weaken forest health, making forests more susceptible to wildfire.

Climate change is also warming ocean surface temperatures, which leads to stronger and more intense hurricane events. Likewise, climate change is expected to cause more rainfall as well as more intense rain events, which can lead to flooding events and can negatively impact river systems. A recent Dartmouth study projects that extreme precipitation events (at least 1.5 inches of heavy rainfall or melted snowfall) in the Northeast will increase by 52% by 2099. These extreme events can cause substantial damage to life and property; in 2011, Hurricane Irene caused damage to over 100 homes, as well as businesses, bridges, and trails in the region (Conway Daily Sun, 2017). In addition, changes to snowmelt patterns can also affect water quality in a given area.

Natural Resources Policy & Partners

The Town of Conway has a citizen Conservation Commission responsible for supporting conservation goals and initiatives in the town. The Town of Conway has several overlay districts that support conservation goals. These districts include the Floodplain Conservation Overlay, the Groundwater Protection Overlay, the Mountain Conservation Overlay, the Shoreline Protection Overlay, and the Wetland and Watershed Protection Overlay.

[5] How Climate Change Impacts Fall Foliage (columbia.edu)



A full breakdown of land use policies is provided in the *Zoning & Land Use Analysis* memorandum.

Some key takeaways related to land use regulation and natural resources include:

- The Town's Residential Agricultural District is intended for low-density residential and agricultural uses, but it contains 69% of the town's residential units. The development pattern in this area is highly diffuse, with residences scattered across most areas of the district. However, it is still possible to create large-scale residential development in this district through a PUD. Subdivided areas within the district do not align with the purpose and intent of the district.

- Dimensional and minimum parking standards limit ability for new residential development in and around village areas, which has the effect of pushing new development to outlying districts.

- Although the town has multiple overlay districts with an environmental focus, there is no "Conservation zone" that is specifically targeted to conserve sensitive natural landscapes in Conway.

Partners

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT)

The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT) is a local land trust with a mission to "preserve the ecological systems and cultural values of the Upper Saco River Valley. We will provide for the continued well-being and availability of land for farming, forestry, recreation, and education, as well as for land remaining in its natural state, benefiting natural and human communities." USVLT works in 11 towns, including Conway.

USVLT owns and manages several preserves in Conway:

- Gerson/Margolis Preserve (139 acres)
- Kearsarge Brook Preserve (17 acres)
- Leita Monroe Lucas Preserve (63 acres)
- Long Island Preserve
- Pequawket Pond Preserve (24 acres, partially in Albany)
- Pine Hill Community Forest (539 acres)
- Redstone Preserve (94 acres)

USVLT also manages several conservation easements in Conway:

- Charles Thorne Conservation Easement (1 acre)
- Cobbs Conservation Easement (2 acres)
- Cranmore Conservation Easement (53 acres)
- Deans Conservation Easement (16 acres)
- Dickinson Family Easements (743 acres, partially in Eaton)
- Earle Family Farm Easement (128 acres)
- Faraway Conservation Easement (6 acres)
- Fisher Conservation Easement (28 acres)
- Gross Conservation Easement (2 acres)
- Hatches' Orchard Easement (50 acres)
- Hussey Farmland Easement (75 acres)
- Kennett Farmland Easement (62 acres)
- Lucy Brook Farm Easement (42.5 acres)
- Lucy Family Farm Easement (45 acres)
- Sandy Beach Easement (13 acres)
- Thaddeus Thorne Family Easement (786 acres)
- Thorne/Whalen Family Conservation Easement (6 acres)
- Tin Mountain's Bear Paw Conservation Easement (1180 acres)

The USVLT's conservation lands and other priority conservation areas (aquifers, wellhead protection areas) are identified on a webmap. The USVLT has a Conservation Plan that was released in 2022. This plan identifies conservation priorities based on a ranking system and identifies steps for implementation. The resources identified are grouped into four categories (Water Resources, Ecological Integrity, Farmland Protection, and Public Access & Scenic Value). The plan also asked local conservation boards for input on natural resources conservation priorities. Conway

respondents rated water-related resources very highly, with aquifers, flood storage, and wellhead protection areas receiving the highest scores.

White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)

A small portion of the western portion of Conway near Birch Hill is in the WMNF boundary. The WMNF also makes up most of the northern and western boundaries of town. Following the passage of the Weeks Act in Congress, the WMNF was formed in 1918. The WMNF manages public lands "to provide healthy ecosystems, clean water and air, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and a sustainable yield of high-quality forest products." The WMNF upholds the goals of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, which declared that all uses and benefits of National Forest lands would be treated equally. The WMNF is a major driver of tourism to town; many visitors are drawn to the area seeking to visit Mount Washington, Crawford Notch, and nearby ski areas within the National Forest.

The WMNF collaborates with Conway on a variety of initiatives, including the management of Diana's Baths. The Forest has no cooperative law enforcement agreement with Conway, but they do have one Carroll County. Importantly, WMNF has worked with local fire precincts on fire prevention in Conway around Birch Hill and the Cedar Creek/Dandi View neighborhood. Droughts in the forest have increased fire risk, and the Forest does contain some fire-dependent tree species, such as red pine and pitch pine. The Forest considers anything within 0.5 of the Forest boundary to be in an "interface" area – in Conway, this area includes several residential subdivisions and forested areas.

80% of the Saco River is within WMNF boundaries. As such, the Forest supports the health of the Saco and Swift Rivers and Saco watershed. Although the WMNF is not leading the effort, there is a corridor management plan currently underway for the Saco and Swift Rivers. A central initiative of this planning effort is to protect and maintain the floodplain by preventing development in that area.

The WMNF is also working to improve stewardship and visitor education. The Forest partners with the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce to promote stewardship measures, such as the MWV pledge. Tin Mountain Conservation Center also provides several conservation education programs with similar goals.

Saco Headwaters Alliance

The Saco Headwaters Alliance is an organization that aims to increase the health and resiliency of the Saco River & watershed area. The organization helps connect municipalities in the watershed with funding for watershed protection projects. The organization also educates municipalities and facilitates policy changes that support water quality. The Saco Headwaters Alliance has identified several threats to the Saco headwaters, including stormwater pollution, agricultural runoff, drought, septic failure, road salt, human development, invasive species, and more.

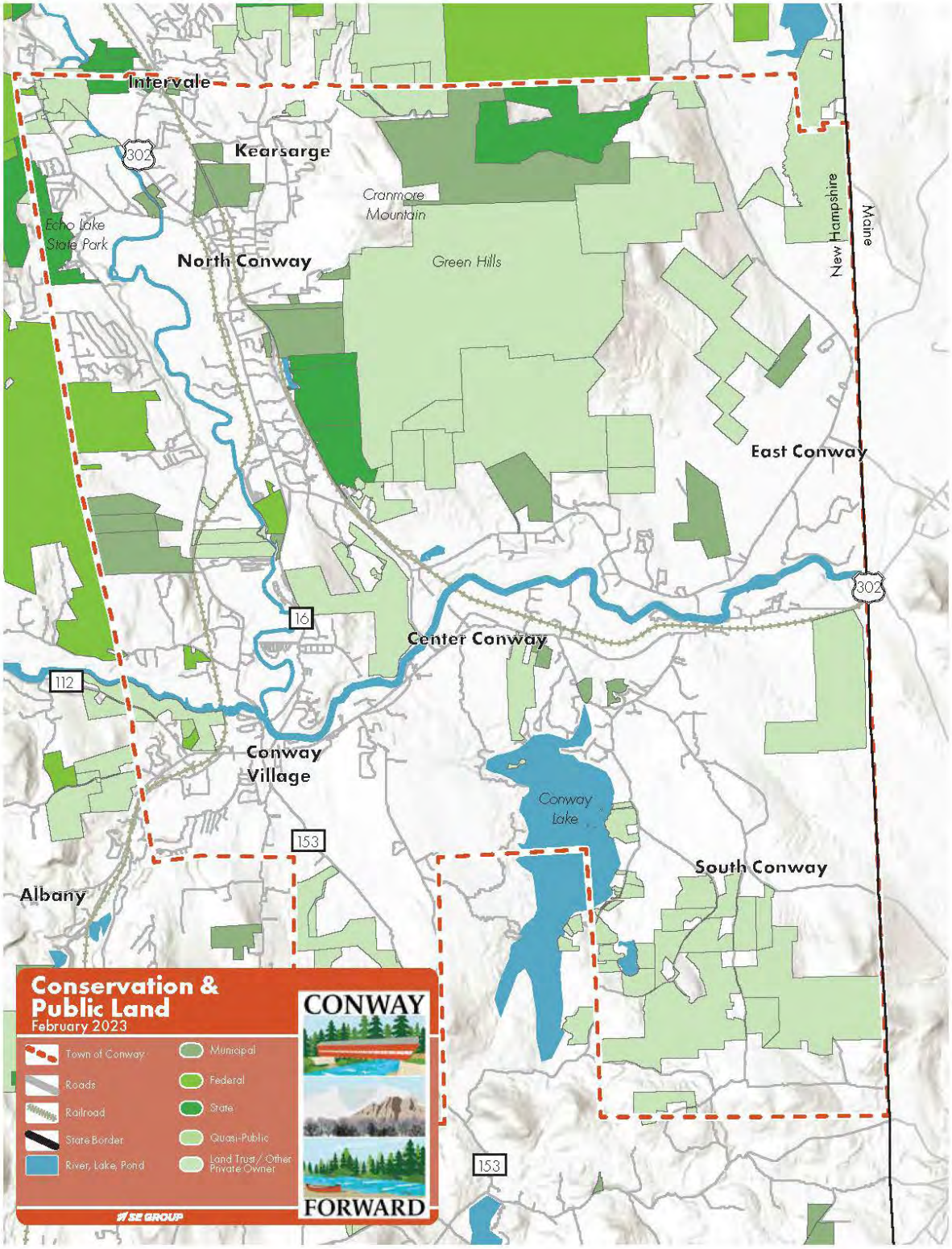
Conway Lake Conservation Association

The Conway Lake Conservation Association (CLCA) has a mission "to preserve the water quality of Conway Lake, its tributaries and estuaries, and to protect the habitat for loons, bald eagles, and other wildlife indigenous to the lake's environment." The CLCA administers a Lake Host Program that is responsible for inspecting boats coming through the public boat launch. This complies with NH state law (NH REA 487:16-d), which mandates inspecting boats entering NH lakes for aquatic invasive species (AIS). The CLCA also engages in several other initiatives focused on lake health, including water quality monitoring of the lake and the 14 streams that feed it. The UNH Lake

Monitoring program has assessed recent data for Conway Lake and has deemed it an "oligotrophic" lake, meaning that the lake is clear and has high oxygen levels.

Conway's Conserved Lands

The following map shows various conserved lands in Conway, which are managed by the National Forest, the State of New Hampshire, and private owners/land trusts.


Intervale
Kearsarge
302
Cranmore Mountain
Echo Lake State Park
North Conway
Green Hills
New Hampshire
Maine
East Conway
302
16
Center Conway
112
Conway Village
Conway Lake
153
South Conway
Albany
153
Conservation & Public Land
February 2023
Town of Conway
Roads
Railroad
State Border
River, Lake, Pond
Municipal
Federal
State
Quasi-Public
Land Trust / Other Private Owner
SE GROUP
CONWAY
FORWARD

Climate Goals

The State of New Hampshire is the only New England state that has not yet adopted legislation aimed at transitioning away from fossil fuels toward more climate-friendly energy sources. The State's Climate Action Plan, which was created in 2009, set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) 25% by 2025. It is unclear if the State will meet this target. The State recently updated its 10-year Energy Strategy, but the document did not specifically prioritize renewable energy sources. The plan emphasized the importance of cost-effective energy but did not expressly encourage renewable sources over others.

Environmental Records and Monitoring

The NH Department of Environmental Services maintains an Environmental Monitoring Database (EMD) containing of a range of environmental data, including key facilities and structures, sites for monitoring and protection, and various natural features. The map indicates that Conway has two national pollutant discharge elimination systems (NPDES), a location at which point-source pollution is regulated. The two NPDES sites are along the Saco River. The map also shows dozens of underground storage tanks sites, dams, environmental remediation sites, multiple air facility systems permit locations, hazardous waste-generating locations, and solid waste facilities. The map also shows local potential contamination sources.

Housing & Conservation

The State of New Hampshire Housing Toolbox, which was developed by the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, offers several zoning strategies aimed at improving conservation outcomes. These strategies include cluster housing, the Village-Plan Alternative, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).

How the Environment & Natural Resources Interact with Other Plan Goals

- **Zoning & Land Use Policy**: Zoning is an important tool that determines whether something can be built and where. Zoning relates to environmental and natural resource considerations because zoning policy can establish conservation areas, buffers, or other protection zones around key natural resources and landscapes. Without these restrictions on development enacted through land use policies, natural resources may be under threat by development.

- **Housing:** Zoning and land use determines what kind of housing can be built and where. Housing subdivisions can break up habitat, disrupting the normal health and functioning of wildlife and broader ecosystems. Without careful planning, housing that is located close to sensitive natural resources can threaten those resources. In addition, housing located in floodplains and fire-prone areas poses a risk to life and property.

- **Economic Development**: Economic development and the environment are closely related. Economic development sometimes relies on extractive industries, such as mining and logging. However, the health of local economies also depends on the health of the environment. Communities rely on clean air, water, and soil to thrive.

- **Transportation**: The transportation sector is one of the major contributors to climate change – carbon-intensive modes of travel, such as car and air travel, contribute to air pollution in the form of CO2 emissions. These emissions, which are a type of greenhouse gas, contribute to the warming of the planet, which is an overall threat to environmental health. With more options

for walking, biking, and transit, a community can reduce its carbon impacts associated with transportation. In New Hampshire, many roads cross over streams or lie adjacent to streams. Updates to culverts and efforts to prevent washouts are important for road safety and ecological health.

- **Infrastructure**: Infrastructure is important for environmental health in several ways: water and wastewater infrastructure can help enable compact, village-style development, which lessens the likelihood of land-intensive, sprawling development. Adequate, up-to-date infrastructure is necessary to ensure that the systems are protecting, not polluting, local resources. Likewise, septic systems, propane tanks, and other facilities must be responsibly sited and managed to protect local ecosystems.

What the 2003 Master Plan Says About Environment & Natural Resources

The 2003 Master Plan specified the following initiatives for natural resources:

- Permanent protection of environmentally-significant lands to support the local economy and quality of life
- Wetland protection policies, given the abundance of steep slopes in Conway and increased development pressure on flat wetland areas
- Protections for groundwater resources from future development pressure

The plan also notes that in the early 2000's, there were 132 sites in Conway there were either contaminated with hazardous materials or tagged for potential contamination monitoring; most of these sites involved underground storage or heating oil tanks.

The Plan includes a Future Land Use Map that is intended to inform land use policy changes. The map identifies a large district for "limited development" that encompasses Cranmore, the Green Hills, and part of East Conway. The map identifies all of South Conway, including Conway Lake, as a "Low Density" area. The map identifies almost all of the area west of the Route 16 corridor as a "Residential Planned Unit Development" area. This runs contrary to the other goals of the plan, which suggest that flood areas (i.e., along the Saco and Swift) should be given special protection and consideration.

Public Input

Feedback from February Open House

The major feedback on natural resources in Conway included the following priorities:

- **Conservation of open spaces, natural beauty, and recreational resources:** Respondents expressed a high interest in conserving Conway's open spaces, preserving its natural beauty, and protecting its recreational resources.
- **Thoughtful development and land use strategy:** Respondents indicated a desire for a more thoughtful approach to development and land use in the town. They expressed discomfort with the pace and character of recent hotel development and emphasized the need for a strategy that aligns with the town's vision.
- **Interest in stewardship efforts and sustainable tourism:** There was interest in promoting stewardship efforts and sustainable tourism in Conway. However, further engagement was deemed necessary to determine the specific meaning of "sustainable tourism" to the community. Research tasks were recommended to address the use capacity of key recreation destinations within Conway.

- **Preservation of village centers and neighborhoods:** Respondents expressed interest in cultivating and preserving Conway's village centers and neighborhoods, highlighting their importance to the community.
- **Disinterest in large-scale commercial development along Route 16:** There was a strong disinterest in further large-scale commercial development along the Route 16 Corridor. Respondents preferred a more thoughtful and slow-paced commercial development strategy that benefits the year-round community.

Overall, the feedback emphasized the importance of preserving natural resources, promoting sustainable development, and maintaining the unique character of Conway while addressing workforce housing needs.

Potential Areas of Focus

Weave Natural Resource Protections into Town-wide Land Use Policy

Unplanned, incremental development can have a cumulative negative impact on natural resources. By writing natural resource protections directly into local land use policy, the Town of Conway can more effectively balance development with land conservation and focus development only in suitable areas. Currently, the Town's policies related to open space largely relate to greenspace requirements in site plan review. This approach is insufficient to protect the Town's water resources, habitat, and forest health on a Town-wide and landscape scale.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Create a formal Conservation and Open Space zoning district (beyond overlay districts) that encompasses steep mountain slopes, intact forests, water resources and floodplain areas, and historic farmland. Ensure that the provisions of this district support the long-term health of Conway's water resources, ecosystems, and historic relationships with the land
- Use USVLT conservation assessments to inform Town-wide conservation planning priorities Use the assessments to identify priority conservation areas and appropriate growth receiving areas
- Amend open space requirements to allow shared open space in village areas; encourage site plans to provide gathering spaces and ecosystem services. Require applicants to state how their project conforms to Town-wide goals for conservation

Invest in Infrastructure to Promote Environmental Health

Infrastructure investments are an important component of watershed planning and protection. Effective water and wastewater systems promote human health and protect local resources by preventing pollution and contamination.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Provide appropriately scaled water and wastewater infrastructure to serve current and future development
- Identify problem septic tanks and other waste facilities; develop a transition plan to address aging and failing septic systems

Prioritize Water Protection & Climate Resiliency

Water is an essential resource to the Town of Conway. As climate change worsens, the Town should increase protections for water resources and work to remain resilient against climate change-fueled floods and other events.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

Note: The following recommendations were also recommended by the Saco-Swift Corridor Management Plan (2022)

- Require homes to be built at least 2 feet above projected flood levels
- On-site retention of stormwater
- Require or encourage Low-Impact Development (LID) principles
- Limit and prevent clearing along river corridors

Improve Forest Health and Support the White Mountain National Forest

In addition to the Town-wide conservation strategy recommended above, the Town should also implement specific protections aimed at reducing forest fragmentation and supporting forest health. Given the importance of the White Mountain National Forest to Conway's identity, ecology, and economy, this action is especially important.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Continue to collaborate with the White Mountain National Forest Saco Ranger District on fire management of the Conway section of the WMNF and adjacent areas
- Ensure that the WMNF has opportunities to comment on land use policies and guidance that affect the Forest
- Ensure that Conway residents are informed of fire risks and the fire-dependent nature of some forest systems in the WMNF
- Work with the WMNF to improve resilience to forest pests such as gypsy moth, hemlock wooly adelgid, emerald ash borer, and Asian longhorned beetle[6]

Promote Stewardship Principles to Encourage Safe, Responsible Outdoor Recreation in Conway

Conway attracts visitors looking to enjoy a variety of outdoor activities. The Town of Conway should display a strong commitment to stewardship of the natural environment to encourage visitors to do the same.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Encourage visitors to take the MWV Pledge to respect the local environment while recreating
- Partner with recreation land managers and local outdoor education providers to display appropriate signage and information at key recreation destinations
- Use temporary closures, trail reroutes, site remediation efforts as necessary to deal with stewardship issues

Provide quality greenspace areas in Conway's villages

Greenspaces do a lot of good for a community – they can absorb carbon and improve air quality, provide inviting gathering spaces, and contribute to the overall visual appeal of a place. Conway

[6] NH Wildlife Action Plan, Appendix B: Habitats. Northern Hardwood-Conifer Forest. Draft Report (state.nh.us)

should encourage the provision of accessible greenspaces throughout town (beyond Schouler Park in North Conway).

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Set a goal of providing an accessible public park, plaza, or greenspace in each village center in Conway
- Ensure that these spaces provide ecosystem services in the form of carbon absorption, pollinator habitat, and more. Lawns alone are not fully functioning greenspaces.

Protect Conway's Agricultural Lands and Farming Opportunities

The State of New Hampshire has a right-to-farm law that is intended to protect farming opportunities across the state. The law was established in 1985; since that time, the state has lost 20% of its farmland (in acres), but the number of farms has increased 20%.[7] Given this trend, the Town of Conway should help support farm operations, particularly smaller farms.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Ensure that zoning regulations support and do not effectively prevent farming uses
- Allow farming uses to count as acceptable open space for PUDs
- Provide guidance on the use of land for solar farms; ensure that the use of land for solar farms does not inhibit opportunities for traditional farming on a Town-wide scale
- Support community gardening in Conway; provide resources to local gardeners looking to host community gardening events

Identify and Protect Key Viewsheds in Conway

Conway residents and visitors value views of the surrounding mountains. In its land use policies, the Town should specifically identify priority viewsheds and provide parameters for development in these viewshed areas.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Identify priority viewsheds in Conway on a map and incorporate viewshed protections into site plan review
- Encourage context-sensitive development throughout Town

Conclusion

- Conway's current land use and development standards do not adequately address the Town's natural resource conservation needs
- The Town must update its land use regulations and related policies to both mitigate and adapt to climate change
- The Town should prioritize policy changes that promote the health and safety of residents; these provisions and changes should address water quality, pollution, fire management and risk, and safety while recreating
- Conway's natural environment is a major component of the Town's identity and should be strongly prioritized in all Town policymaking

[7] New Hampshire's Right-to-Farm Summary | One Rural (uky.edu)

OPEN SPACE, TRAILS & RECREATION MEMORANDUM

8.7.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: OPEN SPACE, TRAILS & RECREATION

TO: Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Assistant Town Manager, Ryan O'Connor, Planning Director

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About This Memo

This memo summarizes existing conditions for open space, trails, and recreation in the Town of Conway. This analysis will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan. Notably, there has been a significant amount of regional planning for trails and open space in the Mount Washington Valley in recent years. This memo synthesizes and presents key findings and themes from these recent planning efforts, in addition to presenting additional data and analysis.

Key Takeaways

- Approximately one-third of lands in Conway are conserved. Focus areas for future conservation efforts include areas east of the Green Hills Preserve and along the Saco River.
- Conway is the geographic and cultural gateway to the eastern White Mountains, one of the most heavily visited National Forests in the country with over 6 million visitors annually. This sustained visitation helps support the local outdoor recreation and tourism industry, but also presents challenges for balancing residential quality of life and the sustainable use of recreational resources.
- Conway is served by a large non-motorized trail network offering a variety of trail activities and experiences. The *2023 Off Road Trails Plan* prepared by local community trails partners lists a variety of strategies for enhancing and stewarding this network of trails into the future.
- Despite having significant water recreation opportunities, there are relatively few formal access points to public waterbodies in Conway, including Conway Lake, where there is a single shared beach and boat ramp for the public to use.
- Conway is well-served by municipal recreation facilities and programs.

As of 2022, there were 14,544 acres of conserved land Conway, accounting for one-third of the total land area in town. The largest preserved area is the Green Hills Preserve (4,257 acres), owned by the Nature Conservancy. Tables 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of the entities involved in land conservation in Conway.

TABLE 1. CONSERVATION LAND OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT IN CONWAY

Ownership	Acres	%
Municipal	2,310.2	15.9%
Federal	462.2	3.2%
State	1,255.5	8.6%
Other Public/Quasi-Public Entity	13.5	0.1%
Private*	10,502.6	72.2%
Total	*14,544.1*	*100.0%*

Source: NH GRANIT GIS Clearinghouse, 2023

TABLE 2. OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT* OF PRIVATELY-CONSERVED LANDS IN CONWAY

Land Owner	Acres	%
Upper Saco Valley Land Trust	4,353.6	41.5%
Society for the Protection of NH Forests	905.1	8.6%
The Nature Conservancy	4,867.3	46.3%
Tin Mountain Nature Center	6.9	0.1%
Other	369.6	3.5%
Total	*10,502.6*	*100.0%*

Source: NH GRANIT GIS Clearinghouse, 2023

**Privately-conserved lands include fee ownership lands (lands that have been acquired by a conservation organization) and conservation easement lands (lands that are privately-owned with a conservation easement that is managed by a conservation organization).*

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust – 2022 Strategic Conservation Plan

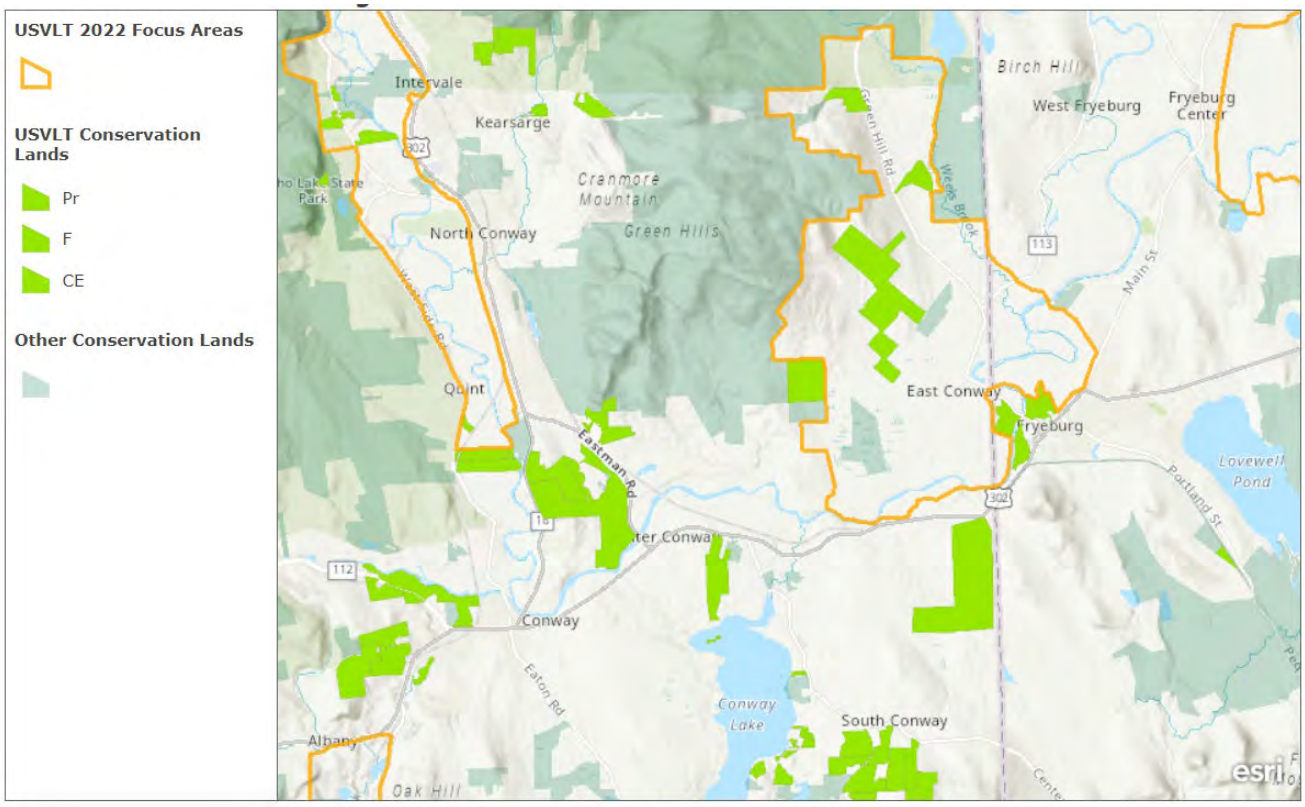
The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT) performs land conservation and stewardship over an 11-town area, including Conway. USVLT is responsible for 4,534 acres of conserved land within Conway. In 2022, USVLT completed a Strategic Conservation Plan[1]. Through a process of outreach and data analysis, USVLT identified a series of focus areas for future conservation, including two in Conway. These focus areas are based on four USVLT conservation priorities: Water Resources, Ecological Integrity, Farmland Protection, and Public Access/Scenic Value. These include the area surrounding the Saco River between US 302/NH 16 and West Side Rd in Intervale and North Conway, and the area east of the Green Hills Preserve in East Conway (extending into Fryeburg).

[1] https://www.usvlt.org/uploads/ConservationPlan_2022_SummaryReport%20(1).pdf

In addition to the Strategic Conservation Plan, USVLT has also prepared Conservation Planning Map[2] showing these conservation focus areas as well as a variety of other environmental data to inform conservation planning priorities.

Figure 1: USVLT conservation lands and future conservation focus areas. Source: USVLT Conservation Planning Map

2023 Saco Swift River Corridor Management Plan[3]



The Saco and Swift Rivers are both Designated Rivers within the state's Rivers Management and Protection Program, as established by RSA 483. All Designated Rivers are required to have a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) developed and administered by a Local River Advisory Committee (LAC) consisting of representatives of all riverfront towns. The Saco-Swift LAC finalized the Saco and Swift River Corridor Management Plan in 2023.

The Saco and Swift River CMP covers a variety of topics related to river health and management that can help inform future open space priorities in Conway. The CMP identifies a variety of threats to river health, including:

- Increasing impervious surface in river corridors
- Excessive floodplain development and clearing of shoreline vegetation
- Riverbank erosion

The Land Use Assessment chapter of the CMP notes that, while the river corridors are primarily forested, "it appears that over the past 15 years forested land, forested wetlands, and row crops have been steadily cleared and replaced by open fields and residential development."

The CMP presents goals, priorities, and management actions in its Chapter IX, many of which pertain to open space conservation. Amongst other actions, the CMP includes an action to

[2] https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=5de49f01b8d74c95bae03ace5caaacc5
[3] https://www.sacoswift.org/

"encourage permanent protection of flood storage areas abutting the rivers and their tributaries through land use protection tools such as conservation easements." Through land conservation and/or land use regulations, the CMP also calls for the protection of riparian areas and aquifer recharge areas and the limiting of impervious surfaces to improve water quality and limit flood impacts.

Regional Recreation Context

Conway is the geographic and cultural gateway to the eastern White Mountains, one of the most heavily-visited National Forests in the country with over 6 million visitors annually. This heavy visitation reflects a convergence of factors:

- Its proximity to major metropolitan areas and population centers (e.g., Boston Metro, Seacoast, Portland, ME)
- Major diversity of recreational offerings and experiences for people of all ability levels and experience, from scenic driving and tourist railroads to world-class rock climbing and ski mountaineering opportunities.
- Long-term and consistent marketing of the region's assets.

This sustained visitation helps support a local outdoor recreation and tourism industry, but also presents challenges for balancing residential quality of life and the sustainable use of recreational resources. Specific areas in Conway where recreational overuse concerns have been articulated include Diana's Baths and tubing down the Saco River.

Recreational Trails in Conway

2023 Off Road Trails Strategic Plan

The Mount Washington Valley Trails Association and the White Mountains Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association jointly developed an *Off Road Trails Strategic Plan*[4] for the Mount Washington Valley in 2023. The plan focuses on existing and desired non-motorized trails for mountain biking, trail running, winter fat biking, and backcountry (non-groomed) cross-country skiing. The map of trails from this plan are shown in Figure 2. The stated goals of the plan are to:

- Improve the overall Valley Trail System
- Ensure and expand legal access to recreational trails
- Create a sustainable trail system through proper maintenance and trail design
- Minimize environmental impact through sustainable trail design and construction
- Minimize potential conflicts between trail users and land managers
- Provide a high quality recreational experience for local users and visitors alike

The Off Road Trails Plan includes recommendations for programs and projects. Programmatic recommendations include:

- A trail easement and land acquisition program to permanently protect and ensure public access along key trail corridors. The plan identifies a number of trails on private lands that have no legal status and could have access revoked by private landowners.
- Formal trail maintenance and construction programs to ensure there is long-term planning and fundraising to keep up with needed trail maintenance in addition to funding and constructing desired trail system expansions and improvements.

[4] https://mwvrecpath.org/uploads/GBFilePickerThumbs/Off%20Road%20Trails%20Plan%20Final%206-5-23pdf.pdf

- A systematic study of trailheads to assess 1) user/neighbor conflicts, 2) traffic safety, 3) parking capacity, 4) amenities 5) appropriate design and user experience.

The *Off Road Trails Plan* also includes a variety of proposed trail network improvement and connectivity projects (Figure 3). Network improvement projects seek to enhance the trail experiences offered within a network, while trail connectivity projects seek to connect networks to one-another or to nearby destinations (schools, neighborhoods, etc).

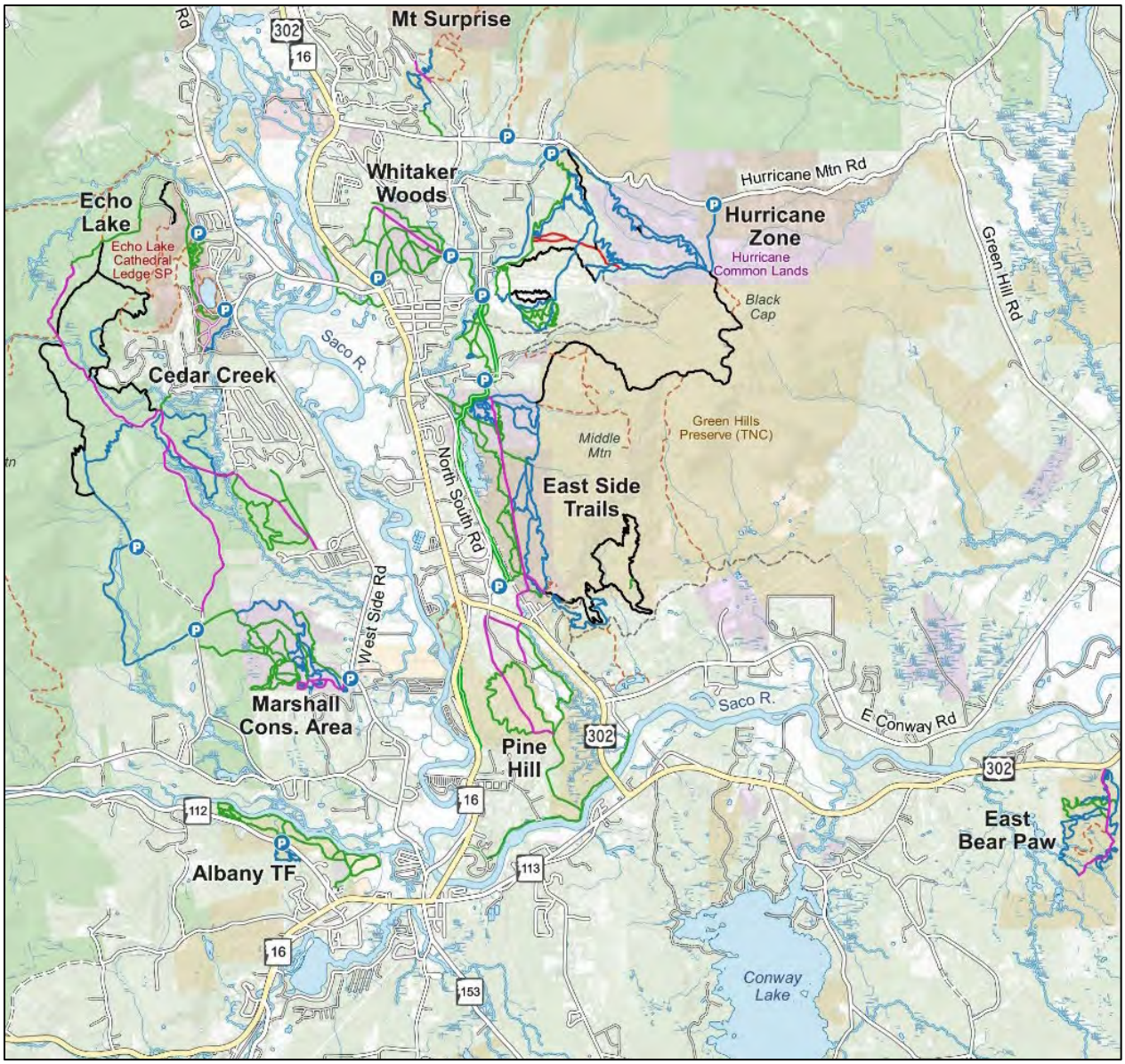


Figure 2: Non-motorized trails in the Conway area. Source: Off Road Trails Plan

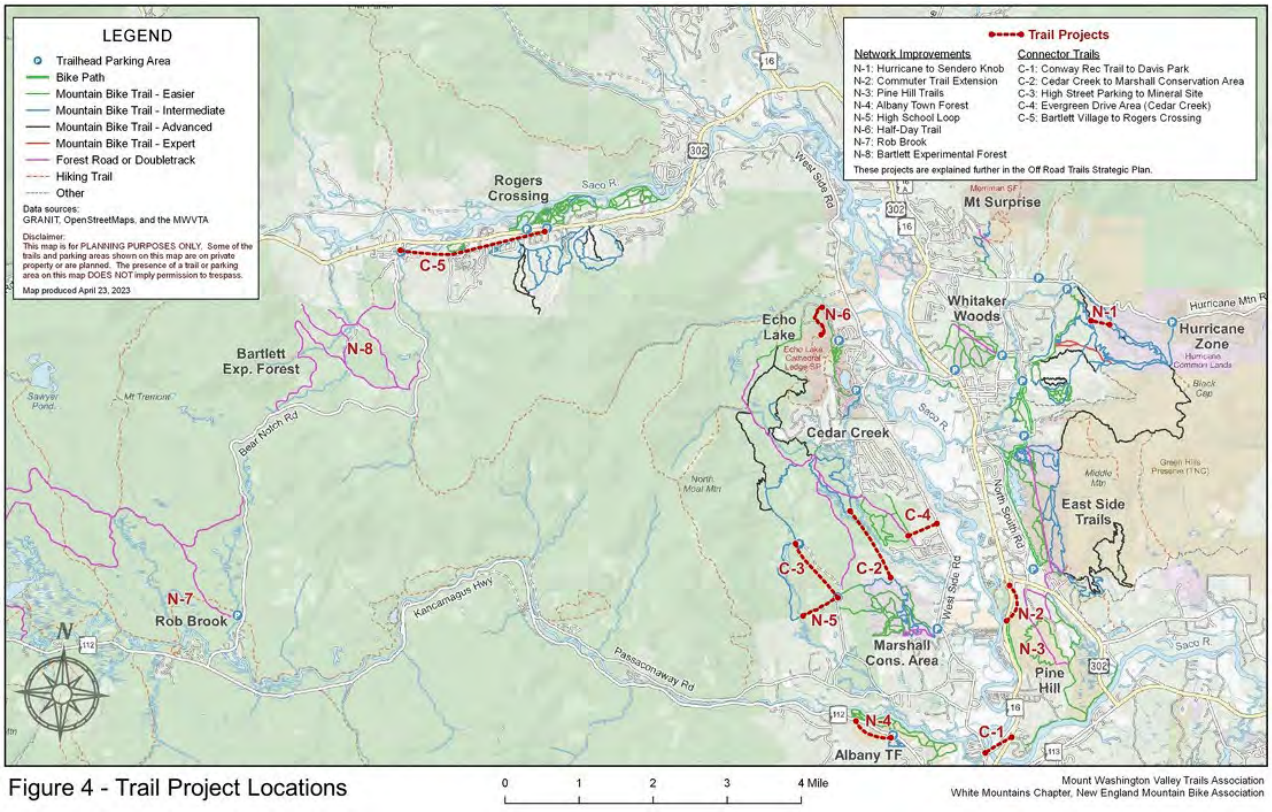


Figure 4 - Trail Project Locations

Figure 3: Off Road Trails Plan – Proposed Trail Project Locations

Motorized Trails

In addition to non-motorized trails, there are also some opportunities for motorized trail recreation in Conway, primarily snowmobiling. Currently, there are no trails in Conway for summer motorized trail uses, such as OHVs and trailbikes.

The Corridor 19 snowmobile trail passes through Center Conway and East Conway. This state trail is the only regional snowmobile trail connection on the east side of the White Mountains and is therefore a critical trail connection for the statewide snowmobile trail network. The Mountain Meadow Riders Snowmobile Club is based in Conway and maintains additional snowmobile trails branching off of Corridor 19.

Water-Based Recreation in Conway

Public Access Points to Waterbodies

Under New Hampshire state law, it is required there be public access to all waterbodies over 10 acres in size. The State of New Hampshire maintains a database of all public access points (Figure 4). Key takeaways from a review of public access points in Conway:

- Despite the popularity of paddle sports along the Saco River, there are relatively few formal public access points.
- There is only one formal public access point to Conway Lake, despite it being over 1,300 acres in size.



Figure 4: Public access points to waterbodies in Conway

River Recreation

The Saco and Swift Rivers and their tributaries offer a variety of recreational experiences, from trout fishing to swimming, tubing, kayaking, and rafting. Paddle sport experiences can range from mellow river floats to advanced whitewater runs during certain times of year, although the stretch of water through Conway tends to be more mellow.

Tubing is particularly popular in the summer months. The *Saco and Swift CMP* notes that "from June to September, there are approximately 1,000 users during the week of the Saco River from Bartlett to Redstone and similar from Redstone to the Maine border. On the weekends, these numbers can increase to 2,000 or more (estimated by Peter Gagne, Saco River Tubing Center/Beach Camping Area)." The *CMP* notes that this level of usage requires management attention due to erosion at river access points, increased litter and pollution, and lack of publicly-accessible restrooms along the river.

Municipal Recreation Facilities

Table 3 presents a matrix of recreation facilities managed by the Town of Conway and its partners. Key takeaways from this mix of recreational facilities and associated activity offerings:

- The Town is well-served by its current mix of recreational facilities. There are no major gaps in the overall availability of recreational facilities. Recreation department programs are

available for all ages, from pre-kindergarten to senior residents. The recreation department offers a variety of transportation options to ensure access to programs.

- Overall, the Town is meeting demand for recreational programming. Pickleball has increased in popularity, with indoor pickleball classes selling out in minutes. It is currently not possible to increase pickleball class offerings without adding more gym space.
- Overall, municipal recreational facilities are in a good state of repair.
- The Conway Lake Beach is currently the only public beach on Conway Lake and shares the space with a public boat launch. Ideally, there would be a separate beach and boat launch, both for safety and purposes and for the improvement enjoyment and relaxation of beach users.

TABLE 3: MUNICIPAL RECREATION FACILITIES IN CONWAY

Facility	Ownership	Arts and Crafts	Baseball Diamond	Conference Room	Wild Preserve	Green Space/ View	Indoor Basketball Court	Indoor Programming Space	Outdoor Basketball Court	Outdoor Event Space	Outdoor Skating Rink	Pickleball Courts	Playground	Rec Sports Field	Stage	Teen Center	Tennis Courts	Track	Trails	Water Access
Conway Lake/ Boat Launch	Town																			x
Conway Rec Facility	Town	x		x			x						x	x	x					
Davis Park	Town								x			x					x			x
First Bridge	Town																			x
Hussey Field	Town									x										x
Redstone Quarry Memorial Park	Town																		x	
Rotary Park	Town					x														
Schouler Park	Town		x							x	x									
Shedd Woods	Town																		x	x
Whitaker Homesite	Town		x					x					x						x	
Johnny Eastman Park	Town											x	x							
Conway Lake Beach	Town																			x
Pine Tree School	School		x				x						x							
Mill Street Park	Town					x														
Conway Recreation Center	Town	x					x		x					x						
Smith-Eastman Park	Town																			x
Nasby-King Field*	Private		x										x							
Conway Library Park	Town					x														
Washington Street Park	Town					x														
Davis Park	Town								x								x			x
Swift River Bridge Park	Town																			x
Kennett Fields	School		x				x		x				x					x		
Conway Village Park	CVFD					x				x	x								x	
Saco Valley Overlook	Town					x														
Redstone Park	Town					x														
Pudding Pond	Town																		x	x
North Conway Community Center	Non-Profit	x					x	x	x							x				
Schouler Park	Town									x	x		x							
Whitaker Homesite/ Woods	Town							x					x						x	
John Fuller School	School		x				x					x								
Hussey Field	Town		x							x			x							
First River Bridge Park	Town																			x
Shedd Woods	Town																		x	
Artist Falls Park	State					x														
Depot Street Park	Town					x														
Walker's Pond	Town				x														x	x
Town Common Lands	Town				x															
	TOTAL	3	7	1	2	9	6	3	5	5	3	2	2	10	1	2	2	1	8	12

*Parks and Recreation Department maintains and schedules the use of the field.

Outdoor Recreation Businesses

Outdoor recreation contributes strongly to the business mix in Conway. An inventory of outdoor recreation businesses in Conway yielded the following results:

- 32 retail and service businesses (e.g., bike shops, ski shops, outdoor clothing retailers)
- 23 of these businesses were local businesses
- 12 fee-based recreation providers (e.g., guide services, tubing outfitters, campgrounds)
- 10 non-profit organizations involved in outdoor recreation, land conservation, and environmental education:
    - Ski New Hampshire
    - Granite Outdoor Alliance
    - Granite Backcountry Alliance
    - Tin Mountain Conservation Center
    - White Mountains NEMBA
    - Mount Washington Valley Trails Association
    - Upper Saco Valley Land Trust
    - Mountain Meadow Riders
    - Makusue Ski Club
    - Stoneheart Open Learning Opportunities

TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

7.3.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

TO: Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Deputy Town Manager

FROM: SE Group Planning Team (Gabby Voeller, Alex Belensz, Julia Randall)

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for transportation and community facilities (i.e., water & wastewater infrastructure) in the Town of Conway and will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan.

Background

Transportation – Key Takeaways

- Conway experiences traffic volumes that are typical of much larger communities as a result of multiple factors, including the convergence of multiple state and US highways, the Town's role as a regional service and employment hub, and seasonal tourism. There are major intersection improvement projects planned aimed at addressing traffic backups in Conway Village.

- Within Conway's villages, many homes, workplaces, and businesses are in relatively close proximity – close enough for many residents and visitors to comfortably walk to and from destinations. However, "walkability" in the villages is challenged by high traffic volumes and long pedestrian crossing distances along main roads, despite the presence of sidewalks. In addition to being a barrier for resident mobility, this may also contribute to negative experiences for visitors to Conway's villages.

- Conway's culvert and bridge infrastructure is generally in a state of good repair. However, there are many culverts that may be vulnerable to damage or washouts during heavy precipitation events or that may be significantly impacting the natural operation of stream channels.

- Given the high traffic volumes along the main thoroughfares in Conway, it is likely that the majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable bicycling between Conway's villages and residential hubs unless they are able to do so using bike paths, trails, or low-traffic

side roads. The completion of the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path in 2023 will provide both recreational and transportation benefits to the community, as it will provide a safe and comfortable bicycle connection from Redstone to North Conway.

- There are relatively few public transit options in Conway. "Dial-a-ride" services are available, but there are no fixed-route public transit services.

- While some Conway residents have relatively short commutes, nearly one-in-five commute over 50 miles one-way to their primary job. For workers commuting into Conway, over one-quarter travel from over 50 miles away.

Community Facilities – Key Takeaways

- Conway's water and wastewater systems benefit significantly from local natural assets. All drinking water in the Town comes from local aquifers within Town boundaries, and the sandy, well-drained soils provide significant septic loading capacity. As a result, Conway has a significant amount of water and wastewater capacity and retains significant local control over these systems. Protection of the local water supply is a clear public priority.

- Water and wastewater systems are a critical component of future economic development in Conway. With the merger of the CVFD and the Town, and the significant available capacity at the NCWP treatment facility, the Town is well-positioned to consider expanding water and wastewater infrastructure to areas that are desired for future growth, as well as accommodate infill development within existing water and sewer service areas.

- Inflationary costs and identification of new contaminants are key long-term financial considerations for the management of water and wastewater systems.

- There are a significant number of private community water systems that could benefit from being connected to Town water. This could be an opportunity to increase the number of rate payers and improve the financial health of the system, although there may be mixed community support for the upfront capital cost of providing these water connections.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION

Road & Bridge Infrastructure

Road Network

Conway is well-served by the local, regional, and statewide highway network. There are 122 miles of maintained public road in Conway, including 82.1 miles of locally-maintained road and 39.5 miles of state and federal highway (Table 1). The Town is located at the convergence of multiple US and state highways (US 302, NH 16, NH 112, NH 113, NH 153), but is a significant distance from any Interstate highways – I-93 in Lincoln is the closest Interstate and is at least a 30-mile drive.

Table 1. Roadway Mileage in Conway by Legislation Classification

Road Classification	Maintenance Responsibility	Mileage
Class I – Primary Highways (e.g., US 302, NH 16)	State	16.0
Class II – Secondary Highways	State	23.5

Road Classification	Maintenance Responsibility	Mileage
(e.g., NH 112, East Conway Rd)		
Class III – Recreation	State	0.47
Class IV – Urban Compact	Municipality	0.0
Class V – Local	Municipality	82.1
Class VI – Local Unmaintained	n/a	6.4
Class 0 – Private	Private	65.8

Source : New Hampshire Department of Transportation

Vehicular Traffic Volumes

As a regional highway bottleneck, service center, and tourist destination, Conway experiences high traffic volumes, particularly along NH 16 and US 302. "The Strip" (NH 16/US 302) is one of the most-trafficked roads in northern New Hampshire, with over 17,000 vehicles on an average day. This volume of traffic is typically associated with municipalities with much larger populations. Daily traffic volumes during peak tourism seasons are likely significantly higher than the annual daily averages shown in Table 2; for example, traffic counts performed in July 2017 recorded traffic volumes over 20,000 vehicles per day along the Strip.

Table 2. Estimated Daily Traffic Volumes (AADT) at Selected Locations Conway

Traffic Count Location	Legislative Class / Owner	AADT*
NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of East Side Rd	Class I / NHDOT	12,000
NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of NH 113 at Saco River Br	Class I / NHDOT	12,000
NH 16/NH 113 (Main St) West of NH 153	Class I / NHDOT	13,000
NH 16/NH 113 (White Mt Hwy) at Albany TL	Class I / NHDOT	13,000
US 302 (Main St) at Maine SL	Class I / NHDOT	8,000
US 302 (Main St) East of US 302/NH 113	Class I / NHDOT	11,000
US 302 (Theodore Roosevelt Rd) East of NH 16	Class I / NHDOT	13,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of Echo Acres Rd	Class I / NHDOT	17,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of Ledgewood Rd	Class I / NHDOT	11,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of River Rd	Class I / NHDOT	15,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) South of Grove St	Class I / NHDOT	15,000
East Conway Rd East of Dump Rd	Class II / NHDOT	4,100
East Conway Rd East of US 302	Class II / NHDOT	3,500
East Conway Rd East of US 302	Class II / NHDOT	4,500
East Conway Rd Over White Lot Brook	Class II / NHDOT	2,400
NH 112 (Kancamagus Hwy) at Conway TL	Class II / NHDOT	2,000
NH 113 (East Main St) East of NH 16	Class II / NHDOT	11,000
NH 113 (East Main St) South of US 302	Class II / NHDOT	7,500
River Rd Over Lucy Brook	Class II / NHDOT	3,200
River Rd Over Saco River	Class II / NHDOT	4,500
Artist Falls Rd Over Artist Brook	Class V / Town	620
Cranmore Rd South of Skimobile Rd	Class V / Town	330
East Side Rd North of Saco River Bridge	Class V / Town	3,400
Mill St Over Conway Lake Outlet	Class V / Town	1,600
North-South Rd South of Artist Falls Rd	Class V / Town	9,100
North-South Rd South of Kearsarge St	Class V / Town	8,800
Old Bartlett Rd Over Kearsarge Brook	Class V / Town	350
West Side Rd South of River Rd	Class V / Town	4,700

Source: New Hampshire Department of Transportation

**AADT = Annual Average Daily Traffic. AADT is an estimate of daily traffic volumes based on several days of recorded traffic counts and seasonal adjustment factors.*

Highway Freight Traffic

- Conway is located at a critical freight access point to New Hampshire, with US 302 being the primary connection to the Portland, Maine metro area. The 2018 New Hampshire *Statewide Freight Plan* identifies US 302 through Center Conway as having one of the highest percentages of truck traffic in the entire state (Figure 1).

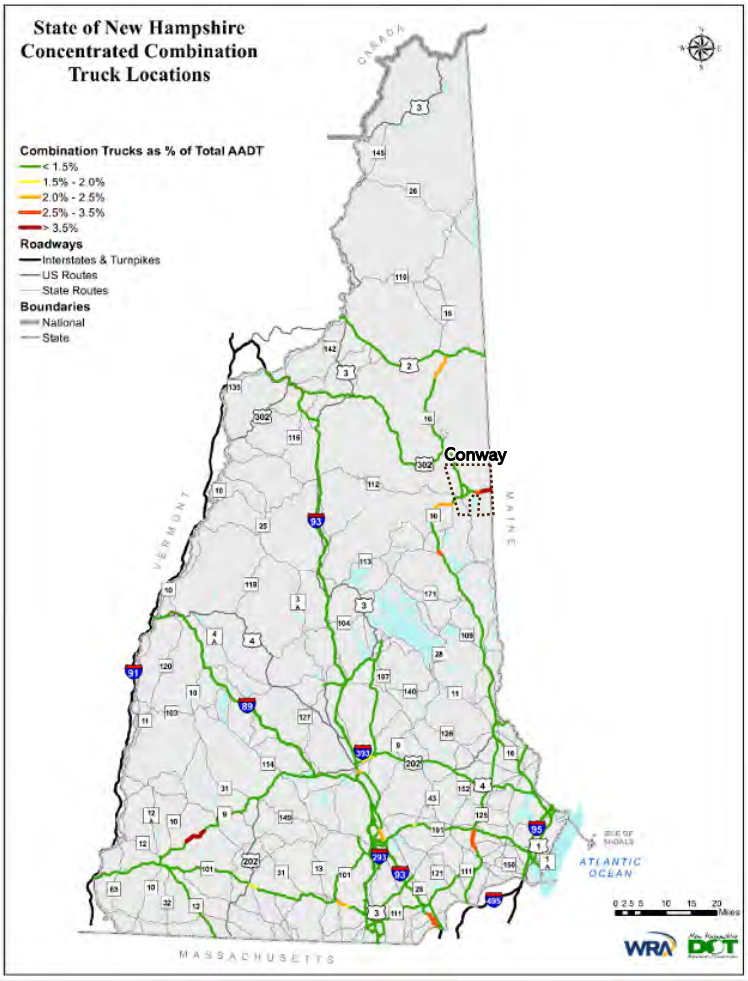


Figure 1: *Truck traffic as a percentage of overall traffic in New Hampshire, 2018. Source: NHDOT*

State Highway Pavement Condition

- According to 2021 data from NHDOT, the condition of state-maintained roads in Conway varies significantly (Figure 2). Class I highways (NH 16, US 302) and numbered Class II highways (NH 112, NH 113, NH 153) are generally in good to fair condition, whereas non-numbered Class II highways (e.g., Eastman Hill Rd) are largely in fair to poor condition, with Hurricane Mountain Road being in very poor condition.

- This is consistent with trends around New Hampshire, with NHDOT increasingly focusing limited resources on maintaining major routes with higher traffic volumes. NHDOT projects that the mileage of state-maintained highway that is in good or fair condition will continue to decline over the next decade.

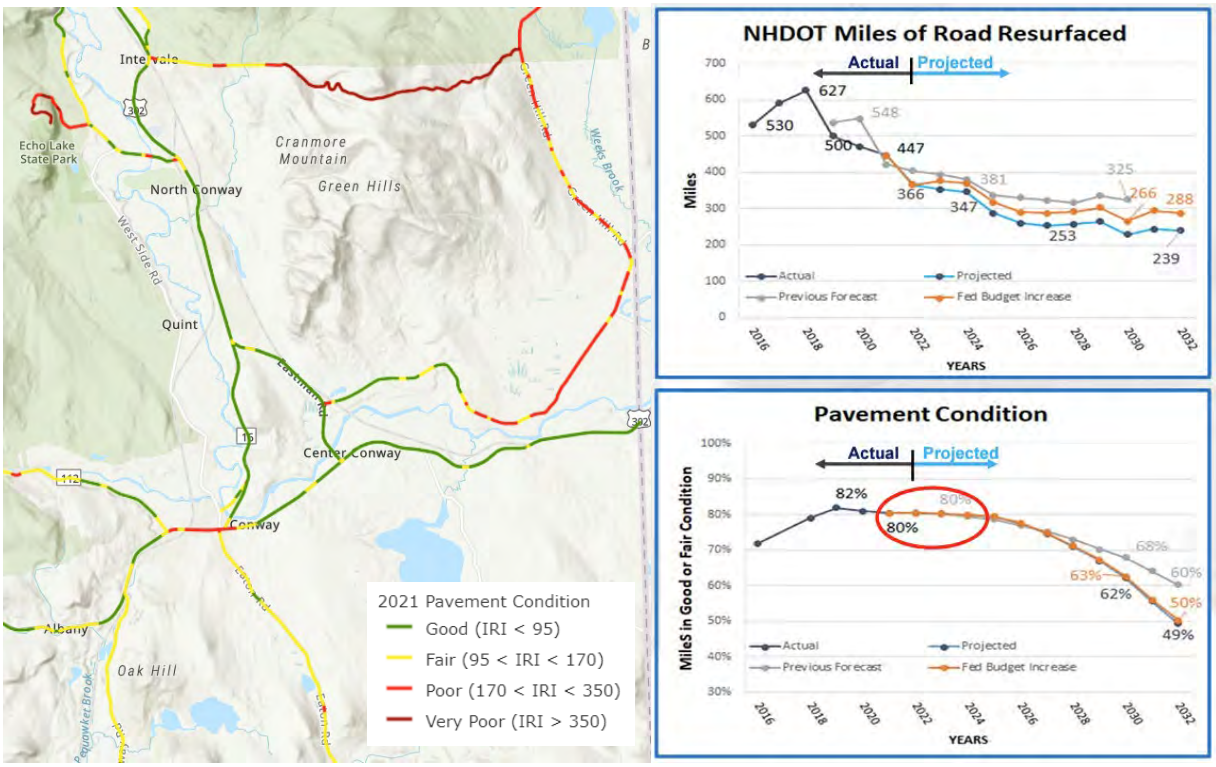


Figure 2: *NHDOT pavement condition ratings for state-maintained roads in Conway + statewide projections for pavement conditions through 2032 (Source: NHDOT).*

Bridge Infrastructure

- There are 24 public roadway bridges in Conway, eight of which are maintained by the Town. Public bridges are inspected yearly by NHDOT, as well as large box culverts (Table 2).
- If a bridge is deemed to be structurally deficient during inspection, NHDOT will add it to the Municipal Bridge Red List, which triggers additional inspections and potential weight postings or closures, depending on the severity of the deficiencies. Currently, there are no Red List roadway bridges in Conway.
- Nearly all municipally-maintained bridges are in good or very good condition overall; the Washington Street bridge over the Saco River was rated as being in "fair/satisfactory" condition during the most recent inspection.

Table 2. Bridge Ownership and Condition

Bridge Location	Maintenance Responsibility	Deck Rating	Superstructure Rating	Substructure Rating	Culvert Rating	Scour Critical Rating
**CONWAY SCENIC RR over RIVER ROAD	Conway Scenic Railroad	5 – Fair	5 – Fair	4 – Poor	n/a	n/a
EAST CONWAY RD over WHITE LOT BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 – Satisfactory	Stable

Bridge Location	Maintenance Responsibility	Deck Rating	Superstructure Rating	Substructure Rating	Culvert Rating	Scour Critical Rating
EAST SIDE ROAD over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
HURRICANE MT ROAD over KEARSARGE BROOK	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	8 – Very Good	7 - Good	n/a	Stable
NH 153 over PAGE RANDALL BROOK	NHDOT	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
NH 16 over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
NH 16/NH113 over PEQUAWKET POND	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	8 – Very Good	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Stable
NHRR over ARTIST FALLS ROAD	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	8 – Very Good	7 – Good	n/a	n/a
RIVER ROAD over LOVEJOY BROOK	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	6 – Satisfactory	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Stable
RIVER ROAD over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	5 – Fair	6 – Satisfactory	5 – Fair	n/a	Stable
RIVER ROAD over SACO RIVER OVERFLOW	NHDOT	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
US 302 over BLACKCAT BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 – Satisfactory	Stable
US 302 over BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 – Satisfactory	Stable
US 302 over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	7 – Good	6 – Satisfactory	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
US 302/NH 113 over CONWAY LAKE OUTLET	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	9 – Excellent	8 – Very Good	n/a	Stable
US 302/NH 16 over ARTIST FALLS BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	7 – Good	Stable
WEST SIDE ROAD over LUCY BROOK	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	7 – Good	8 – Very Good	n/a	Stable
ARTIST FALLS ROAD over ARTIST BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Stable
MILL STREET over CONWAY LAKE OUTLET	Town	8 – Very Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable

Bridge Location	Maintenance Responsibility	Deck Rating	Superstructure Rating	Substructure Rating	Culvert Rating	Scour Critical Rating
NORTH/SOUTH ROAD over ARTIST FALLS BROOK	Town	n/a	n/a	n/a	7 - Good	Stable
OLD BARTLETT ROAD over KEARSARGE BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	8 - Stable
SKIMOBILE ROAD over KEARSARGE BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good		
TASKER HILL ROAD over PEQUAWKET POND	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
WASHINGTON STREET over SWIFT RIVER	Town	5 – Fair	6 – Satisfactory	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Unstable
WHITAKER LANE over KEARSARGE BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	8 – Very Good	n/a	

***Bridge included on Red List*

Planned NHDOT Road and Bridge Infrastructure Improvement Projects

- NHDOT tracks major capital improvement projects for roads and bridges through the State Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (also known as the "Ten-Year Plan"). Projects in the Ten-Year Plan are typically funded 100% using federal and state dollars. The following capital projects in Conway are identified in the current Ten-Year Plan, which covers fiscal years 2023 through 2032.

Table 3: Planned NHDOT Road and Bridge Infrastructure Improvement Projects

Location	Project Scope	Phase & Timeline*	Budget*
Conway Village	Intersection improvements at NH 16/NH 153 and NH 16/113	Construction (FY 2023)	$3,296,237
US 302/East Conway Rd	Construct roundabout at intersection	Construction (FY 2023)	$2,701,600

**Timeline and budget are presented as listed in NH Ten-Year Plan; may not reflect most current project schedule or cost.*

Stream Culverts

Through the *New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative*, all stream culverts located on public roadways in Conway have received an assessment in 2021. The assessment covered four primary metrics:

- **Aquatic Organism Passage:** how much does the culvert interfere with the upstream migration of fish and other aquatic organisms
- **Structural Condition:** does the culvert show evidence of structural deterioration or failure
- **10-Year Storm Hydraulic Vulnerability:** how likely is the culvert to overtop or wash out during a ten-year rainfall event.
- **Geomorphic Compatibility:** how much does the culvert interfere with the natural flow and movement of the stream.

Figures 3 – 6 display the results of these assessments. In general, road-stream culverts in Conway are in good or fair structural condition; however, there are many culverts that may be vulnerable to damage or washouts during heavy precipitation events or that may be significantly impacting the natural operation of stream channels. Increased heavy precipitation events are one the primary forecasted changes for New Hampshire as a result of climate change.[1]

In interactive map of the stream crossing assessment scores can be accessed via the NH Aquatic Restoration Mapper: https://nhdes.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=21173c9556be4c52bc20ea706e1c9f5a.

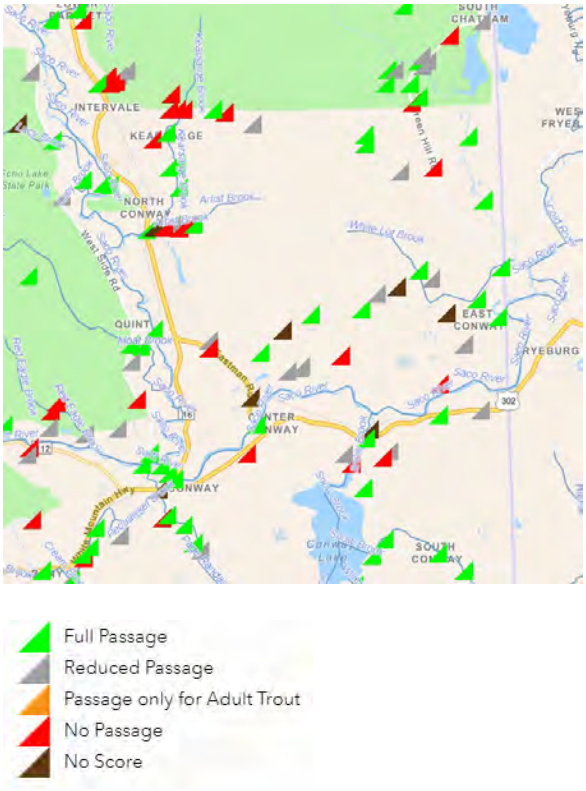


Figure 3: *Aquatic organism passage scores for road-stream culverts in Conway (Source: NHDES)*

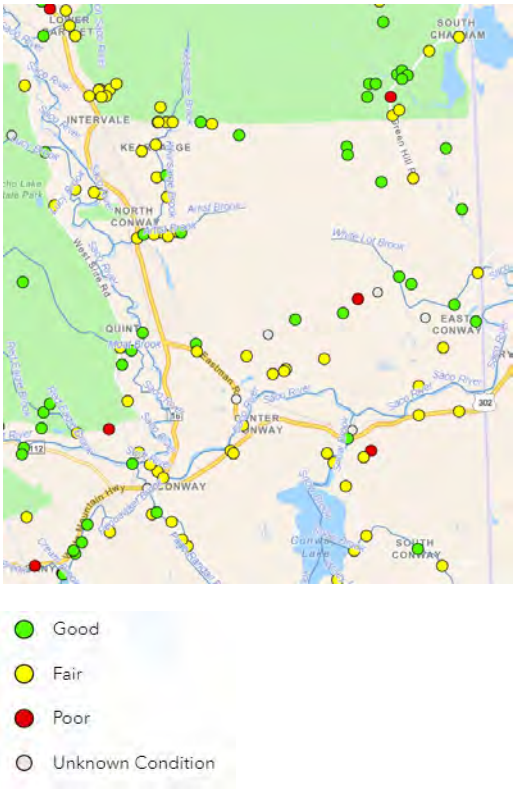
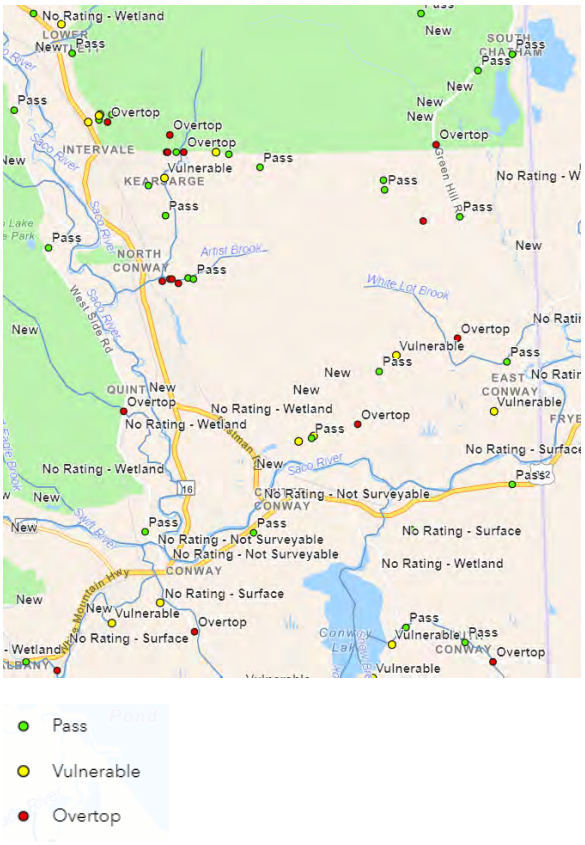


Figure 4: *Structural condition ratings for road-stream culverts in Conway (Source: NHDES)*

[1] https://home.dartmouth.edu/news/2023/06/extreme-precipitation-northeast-increase-52-2099



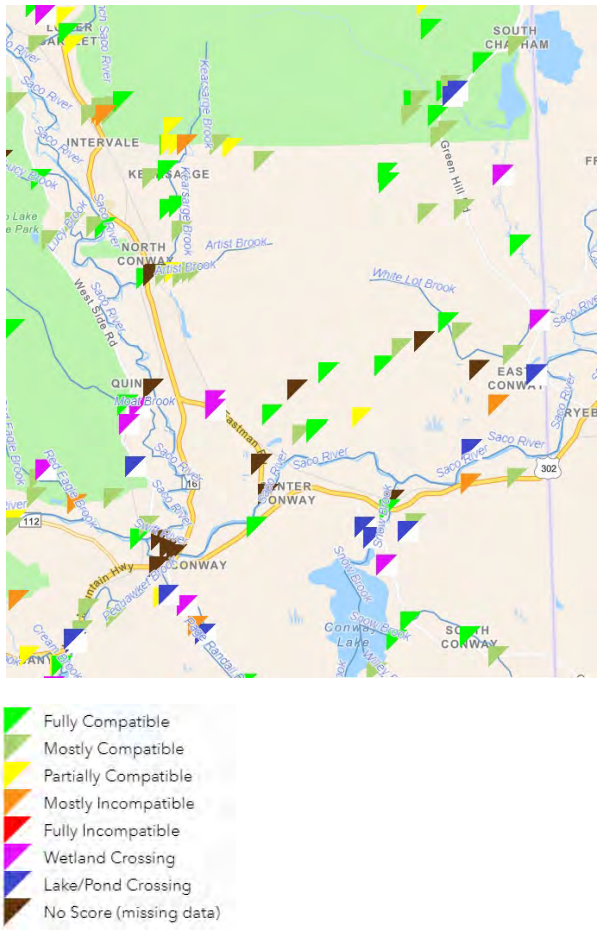


Figure 5: *10-year storm hydraulic vulnerability scores for road-stream culverts in Conway (NHDES)*

Figure 6: *Geomorphic compatibility scores for road-stream culverts in Conway (Source: NHDES)*

Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure

Walkability in Conway

- When defining the "walkability" of a place, planners typically look at concentrations of trip origin and destination points (e.g., homes, workplaces, businesses, services) within a 5-minute walk (approximately ¼ mile). Beyond this distance, most people will opt to drive to their destination. This is not universally true but is a useful standard for planning purposes.

- Broadly speaking, North Conway Village and Conway Village are "walkable" areas based on the concentration of residences, businesses, and services. However, there are barriers to walkability in these areas:

    - **Traffic Volumes**: the main thoroughfares through North Conway and Conway Village are heavily-trafficked (Table 2), which likely discourages some from crossing these streets on foot.

    - **Crossing Distances along Major Roads:** North Conway Village and Conway Village are both well-served by the sidewalk network. However, pedestrian crossings across NH 16 are nearly 80 feet long curb-to-curb, an unusually long distance which discourages limited-mobility residents and families with children from walking across the street to destinations that otherwise could be within easy walking distance (Figure 7). Vehicular travel lanes along NH 16 in North Conway are as wide

as 20 feet (10 – 12 feet is considered a standard travel lane width for downtown and village areas). The wide, straight roadway likely also encourages higher vehicular speeds, with additional safety implications for pedestrians.

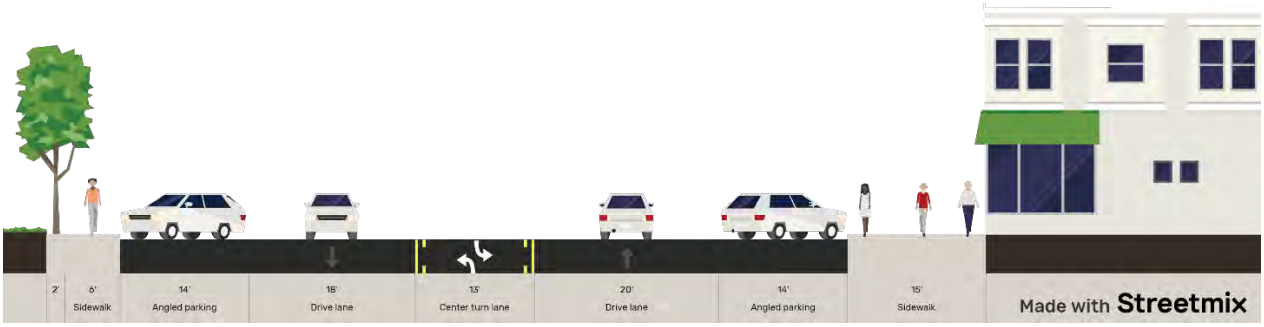


Figure 7: *Cross-section of NH 16 in North Conway Village (approximate widths derived from aerial imagery).*

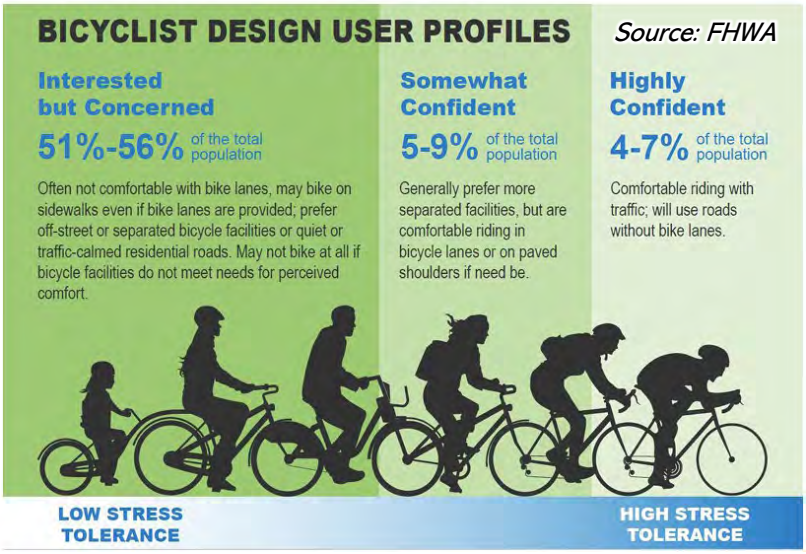


Figure 8: *Pedestrian crossing along NH 16 in North Conway*

On this winter day in February 2023, it was easy to observe which parts of the NH 16 streetscape in North Conway are regularly used by cars and trucks (Figure 8). Vehicular travel mostly occurs in the central travel lanes. Areas of roadway closer to the curb are not used by through traffic and could be considered for pedestrian crossing safety improvements such as curb extensions. Curb extensions along NH 16 in North Conway could reduce pedestrian crossing distances by nearly 30 feet.

Biking around Conway

- High traffic volumes along major roadways in Conway are likely a deterrent for many bicyclists. According to research conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, the vast majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable sharing the road with higher traffic volumes unless there is some level of physical separation from traffic (i.e., riding on a separate bike path such as the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path). If riding on the road, these bicyclists will tend to ride in areas with lower levels of "traffic stress" (i.e., roads with slower speeds, lower traffic volumes, better sightlines/ lighting, etc). A smaller percentage of the general population (estimated at 9-17%) is



estimated to be comfortable using painted bike lanes along roads with higher traffic volumes.

- Given the high traffic volumes along the main thoroughfares in Conway, it is likely that the majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable bicycling between Conway's villages and residential hubs unless they are able to do so using bike paths, trails, or low-traffic side roads. More confident and experienced cyclists will be more comfortable using on-road facilities on busier roads, such as the striped shoulder on North-South Rd.

- The completion of the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path in 2023 will provide both recreational and transportation benefits to the community, as it will provide a safe and comfortable bicycle connection from Redstone to North Conway.

Public Transportation Services

- **Fixed-Route Bus Service:** Currently, there are no fixed-route public transportation services in Conway or the Mount Washington Valley. Tri-County Transit previously operated the Blue Loon commuter route, which provided service to Conway and adjacent towns, but was unable to sustain the service.

    - The 2020 NHDOT *Statewide Strategic Transit Assessment* noted the Conway area as having a "significant need" for local public transit service, but with the potential for significant fluctuations in demand based on the time of year. The *Assessment* included a conceptual service plan for a seasonal, fixed-route bus service operating between Memorial Hospital and Conway Village from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The estimated cost to run this service would be $150,000 per year. To-date, there has not been an effort to implement this service.

- **Intercity Bus Service:** Concord Coach Lines provides daily intercity bus service between Berlin, NH and Boston Logan International Airport, with stops in Conway and a dozen other municipalities, including Concord. This is a paid service with subsidy from NHDOT. Given the schedule and fares, it is generally not suitable as a commuter or local bus service.

- **Demand-Response Bus Service:** Tri-County Transit provides low-cost demand-response bus services (i.e., door-to-door) that are focused on senior and limited-mobility residents but are also available to the general public in Conway. This service is offered Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, although Medicaid-insured riders can request weekend service.

    - There are other demand-response bus service options in Conway; however, they are typically only available to clients or residents of specific organizations. For example, the Gibson Center for Senior Services provides door-to-door service for their clientele.

Rail Infrastructure and Service

- Currently, there is no freight or passenger rail service to Conway. There are two active rail lines - Conway Scenic Railroad owns 7.2 miles of the Conway Branch line from the Albany town boundary to the intersection with the state-owned Mountain Division line in North Conway. Conway Scenic Railroad uses both rail lines for scenic tourist train excursions from North Conway Village into Crawford Notch.

- South of North Conway Village, the Mountain Division line is not currently used and is overgrown in places. The line is considered "active" rail in that there has not been a move to formally discontinue or abandon the rail corridor.

- A 2007 Maine DOT study examined the possibility of implementing passenger and/or freight rail along the Mountain Division line from Portland, ME into Conway, concluding that there was insufficient demand to warrant passenger rail service. However, there has continued to be interest from advocates for reexamining potential high-speed or overnight train service through the region, such as passenger service from Boston to Montreal.

Commuting To Work

- In 2019, there were approximately 4,699 workers commuting into Conway from other municipalities, 1,999 workers commuting within Conway, and 2,271 workers commuting from Conway to other communities (Figure 9).[2] This resulted in a net influx of approximately 2,400 workers on a daily basis.

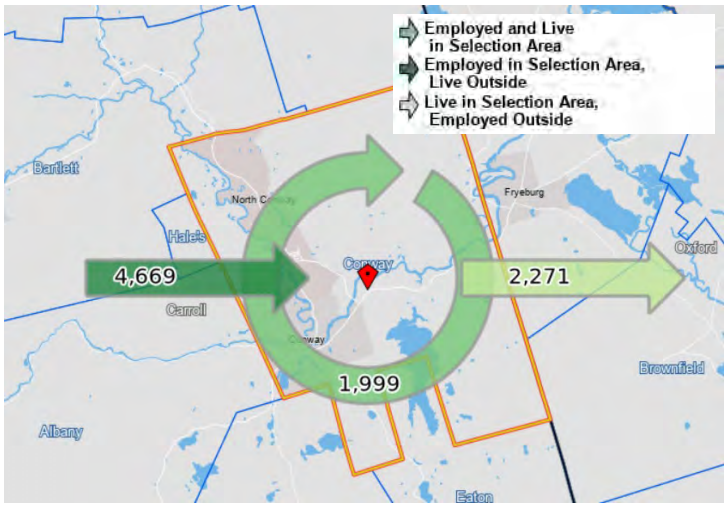


Figure 9: *Daily inflow and outflow of workers in Conway (2019). Source: US Census Bureau On-The-Map*

- For jobs located in Conway, workers tended to either have relatively short commutes or very long commutes. Over half (57%) of workers commuted less than 10 miles one-way, while over one-quarter (25.9%) of workers commuted over 50 miles one-way (Table 4). This could be partially due to the distance between Conway and regional population centers (e.g., Rochester, Portland, ME), as well as the limited housing options in the Mount Washington Valley.

Table 4. Commute Distance to Jobs Located in Conway (2019)

Commute Distance to Primary Job	Number of Workers	%
Less than 10 miles	2,445	57.3%
10 to 24 miles	379	8.9%
25 to 50 miles	338	7.9%
Greater than 50 miles	1,108	25.9%
Total	***4,270***	***100.0%***

Source: US Census Bureau On-The-Map

[2] The most recent inflow-outflow commute data from the US Census Bureau is from the year 2020. It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in some changes to commuting patterns in the region; however, given the service-based economy in Conway, these shifts are likely not as dramatic as in other regions.

- Nearly half (44%) of Conway residents commuted under 10 miles to work in 2019, while nearly one-in-five (19.3%) commuted over 50 miles to work (Table 5). The vast majority of residents commute using personal automobiles (86.5%, including 10.5% that carpool as their primary transportation to work and 76.0% who drive alone). Approximately 10% of residents work from home. Just 2.6% of residents walk to work and less than 1% use public transportation services.

Table 5. Commute Distance to Jobs for Conway Residents (2019)*

Commute Distance to Primary Job	Number of Workers	%
Less than 10 miles	2,957	44.3%
10 to 24 miles	1,386	20.8%
25 to 50 miles	1,039	15.6%
Greater than 50 miles	1,286	19.3%
Total	***6,668***	***100.0%***

*Source: US Census Bureau On-The-Map. *Includes jobs located outside of Conway that are held by Conway residents.*

Considerations For Master Plan Process

Transportation-related Feedback from the February 2023 Open House

- Respondents cited biking safety concerns along Route 16 in North Conway
- Respondents indicated interest in bike lanes and improved sidewalks in North Conway Village
- Respondents indicated interest in a bike/walk bypass from Washington St and Kennett Middle School
- Respondents indicated interest in bike connection between Conway Village and North Conway
- Respondents **unanimously agreed** with the following statement: "I wish Conway's village centers were more pedestrian- and wheelchair-friendly"
- Respondents **agreed** with the following statement: "I wish Conway's village centers were more bike-friendly"
- Respondents **disagreed** with the following statement: "I wish Conway's village centers were more car-friendly"
- Respondents **agreed** with the following statement: "I wish there was better pedestrian/bike connectivity between Conway's village centers"
- Respondents **mostly agreed** with the following statement: "I wish Conway would invest in public transportation to serve its village centers"
- Respondents **mostly agreed** with the following statement: "I am concerned about vehicular traffic safety in Conway's village centers"
- Respondents **did not agree** on the following statement: "Regional automobile traffic through Conway has a negative impact on village centers"
- Map exercise:
  - There was a lack of yellow and green dots in North Conway village compared to the other village centers, indicating that people generally feel safer walking and biking in that area compared to other village centers
  - Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe biking along Route 16

- Respondents indicated that they did not feel safe walking at the intersection of Grove St and the North-South Rd, near the train tracks and the US Post Office
- Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe driving at the intersection of Route 302 and Eagle's Way
- Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe walking around the perimeter of Settler's Green (Route 302 corridor and North-South Rd)
- Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe walking, biking, and driving throughout Conway Village. In particular, respondents indicated that the intersections of Route 113 and Washington St and Route 113 and E Main St were unsafe.

- Discussion:

  One attendee who resides in North Conway described how they typically drove their car to bring their children across NH 16 in North Conway instead of walking out of safety concerns.

Next Steps

Key Takeaways

- Conway experiences traffic volumes that are typical of much larger communities due to multiple factors, including the convergence of multiple state and US highways, the Town's role as a regional service and employment hub, and seasonal tourism. There are major intersection improvement projects planned aimed at addressing traffic backups in Conway Village.

- Within Conway's villages, homes, workplaces, and businesses are in relatively close proximity – close enough for many residents and visitors to comfortably walk to and from destinations. However, "walkability" in the villages is challenged by high traffic volumes and long pedestrian crossing distances along main roads, despite the presence of sidewalks. In addition to being a barrier for resident mobility, this may also contribute to negative experiences for visitors to Conway's villages.

- Conway's culvert and bridge infrastructure is generally in a state of good repair. However, there are many culverts that may be vulnerable to damage or washouts during heavy precipitation events or that may be significantly impacting the natural operation of stream channels.

- Given the high traffic volumes along the main thoroughfares in Conway, it is likely that the majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable bicycling between Conway's villages and residential hubs unless they are able to do so using bike paths, trails, or low-traffic side roads. The completion of the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path in 2023 will provide both recreational and transportation benefits to the community, as it will provide a safe and comfortable bicycle connection from Redstone to North Conway.

- There are relatively few public transit options in Conway. "Dial-a-ride" services are available, but there are no fixed-route public transit services.

- While some Conway residents have relatively short commutes, nearly one-in-five commute over 50 miles one-way to their primary job. For workers commuting into Conway, over one-quarter travel over 50 miles one-way.

Potential Areas of Focus for the Master Plan

- Consider coordinated transportation and land use strategies. Transportation "mode choice" (i.e., the choice to walk or drive) is heavily influenced by land use (i.e., the proximity of destinations to one another). For areas where walkability desired, such as village areas, the following land use strategies could be considered:
  - Promoting a dense mix of uses (residential, commercial, and recreational) in and around Conway's village areas.
  - Considering pedestrian-oriented building design in village areas, such as requiring a minimum amount of transparent glass on street-level storefront.
  - Considering "right-sizing" parking standards and/or promoting shared parking arrangements in walkable areas.

- Strategies for improving the safety and comfort of pedestrians in village areas should be considered. More specifically, strategies for improving the safety of pedestrian crossings of major roadways in village areas should examined:
  - Considering locations where curb extensions could be installed to reduce pedestrian crossing distances and improve driver awareness of crossing pedestrians.
  - Considering locations where pedestrian refuge islands (i.e., central medians) could be installed to provide additional protection for pedestrians.
  - Considering locations where crosswalk lighting improvements are needed.
  - Considering other "traffic calming" strategies that improve driver awareness and moderate traffic speeds in areas with high pedestrian traffic.
  - Considering the opportunities and limitations for making alterations to state-owned roadways.

- Consider multi-modal transportation strategies for areas targeted for infill and mixed-use development, such as "The Strip" and the area around Settler's Green. Comprehensive transportation strategies that include walkability, vehicular access, and parking will aid in the orderly redevelopment of these areas. For NH 16 along "The Strip", consider complementary transportation improvement and beautification strategies, such as converting the roadway into a boulevard with central medians and landscaped areas.

- Consider coordinated capital improvement projects that address transportation needs as well as other infrastructure needs. For example, a proposed water and sewer expansion project that will require digging up a roadway could be an opportunity to reconstruct the roadway, improve drainage systems, and/or add sidewalks.

- Consider opportunities for proactively upgrading stream culverts that may be undersized, vulnerable to flood impacts, or otherwise impacting the natural movement of stream channels or aquatic organisms.

- Considering future bicycle path connections that provide safe alternatives to riding along main roads between different areas of Town.

- Considering opportunities for the potential conversation of the Mountain Division rail line to a rail trail or "rail with trail" between Center Conway and Redstone, where it could connect with the Rec Path.

- Consider opportunities for providing additional public electric vehicle charging stations in Conway.

- Consider potential pathways for re-establishing fixed route bus service in Conway.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

The Town is currently served by two water and wastewater precincts: Conway Village Fire District and North Conway Water Precinct. The Town is also well-served by natural assets related to water and sewer: all drinking water in the Town comes from local aquifers within Town boundaries, and the sandy, well-drained soils provide significant septic loading capacity. As a result, Conway has a significant amount of water and wastewater capacity and retains significant local control over these systems.

Conway Village Fire District

- Conway Village Fire District (CVFD) currently operates water and wastewater systems that serve the Conway Village area. In 2023, Conway Village residents voted to dissolve the CVFD in 2025, which would involve the Town absorbing the CFVD water and sewer department (along with other services).

- The CVFD water system includes approximately 21 miles of water mains, two wells, two storage tanks (located in Albany), and an on-site water treatment facility. Average daily demand for the system is approximately 180,000 gallons.

- The CVFD wastewater system includes approximately XX miles of transmission mains, a primary pump station and five neighborhood area pump stations, a gravity interceptor, and a remote monitoring system. Wastewater is collected by CVFD and sent to the North Conway Water Precinct for treatment per a 2013 Intermunicipal Agreement. Average daily wastewater production for the system is approximately 27,000 gallons per day.

- The CVFD manages multiple reserve funds to support future equipment purchases and capital improvements and maintenance.

    - Currently planned capital projects for the water system include the Pump House 1 Building in 2025, Well 1 Casing and Screen in 2025, replacement of the 12" Cross Country main in 2027, and replacements of the River Rd-VFW 12" main in 2031.

    - The Sewer Projects and Maintenance Expendable Trust fund includes dozens of anticipated projects ranging from $10,000 to $180,000 based on projected replacement dates for different facilities and pieces of equipment. Some of the larger projects include replacement of the screen compactor and grit system in the Headworks facility, anticipated in 2031.

North Conway Water Precinct

- North Conway Water Precinct (NCWP) operates water and sewer systems serving North Conway, Intervale, Kearsarge, and lower Bartlett. The NCWP treatment facility was designed and built to have capacity to serve all of Conway as well as surrounding areas. Currently, the facility operates well under capacity.

- The NCWP water system produced 269 million gallons of water in 2022. Water system product and revenues have remained steady in recent years, within minor annual fluctuations largely driven by weather patterns and irrigation use. Water system is expected to remain steady due to a combination of new development and more efficient water usage.

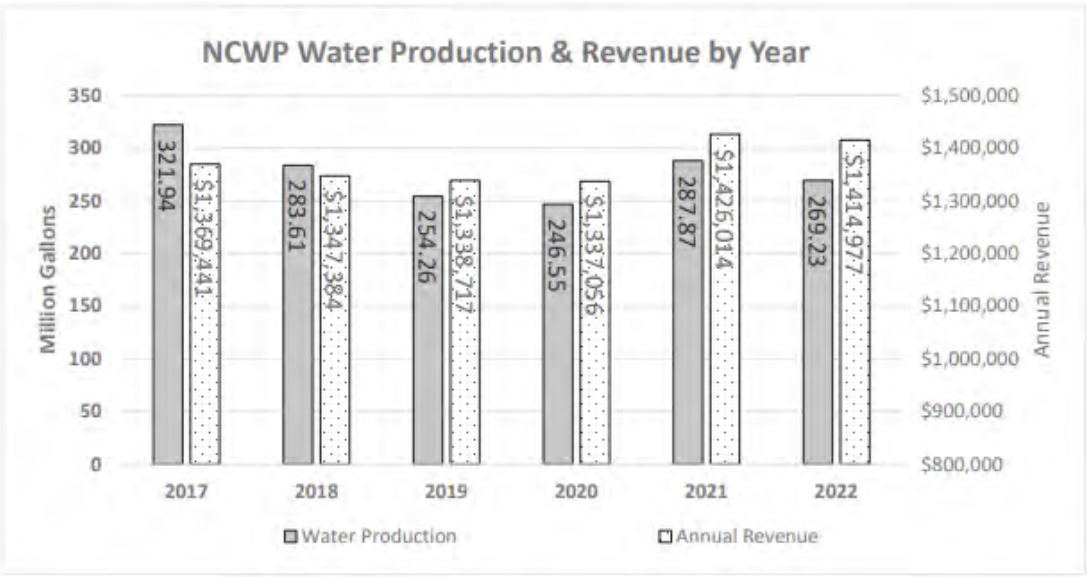


Figure 10: *NCWP water production and revenue by year.*

- The NCWP wastewater system treated 252 million gallons of effluent in 2022. Approximately 34% of this effluent is received from CVFD per a 2013 Intermunicipal Agreement. There have been annual fluctuations in sewer flows received by NCWP, whereas revenues have been increasing due to an increase in septage receiving following upgrades that were approved by precinct voters in 2016. As a result, septage receiving has increased to 7 million gallons in 2022 from 1.5 million gallons in 2018, resulting in approximately $500,000 of additional annual revenue. This increase in revenue has allowed NCWP to absorb recent inflationary increases in costs without raising rates.

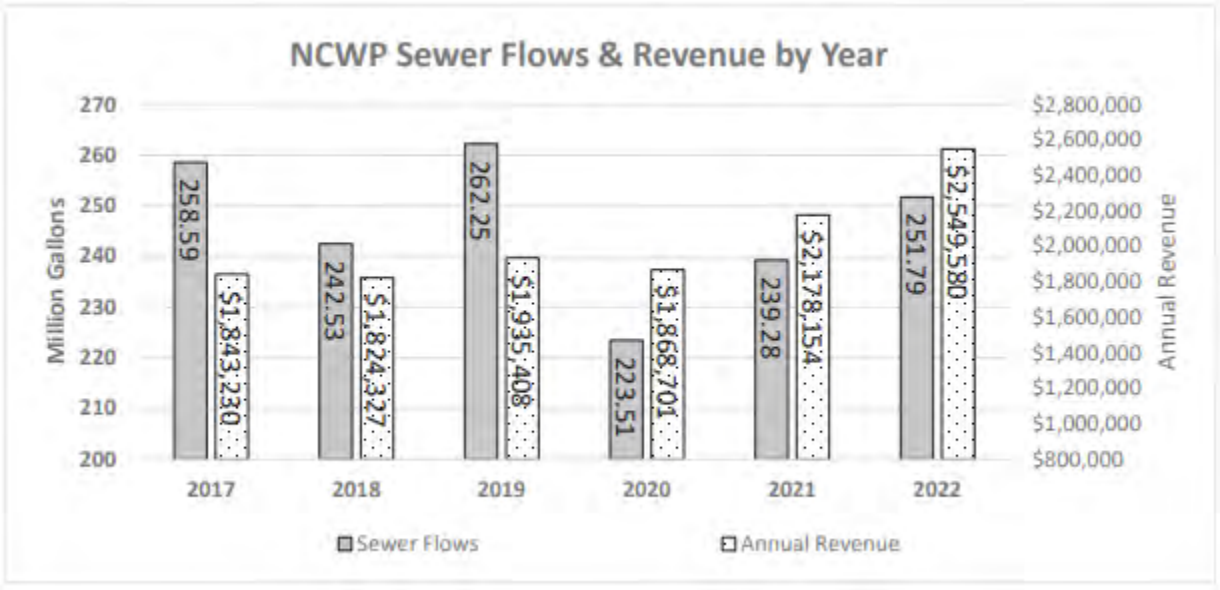


Figure 11: *NCWP sewer flows and revenues by year.*

- NCWP is currently engaged in several capital improvement projects:
    - **Saco River Erosion Mitigation**: the Saco River channel has migrated over 600 feet towards the NCWP treatment facility since 1940. NCWP is working to develop a project to mitigate further erosion and protect this facility, with design and permitting work scheduled for 2023.

- **Aeration Upgrades** are being design for the east carousel of the treatment facility, with final design scheduled for 2023.
- **Sludge Dryer**: as a result of receiving increased septage, NCWP has needed to pay for the disposal of treated sludge. Drying sludge will make it more economical to dispose of. NCWP is currently evaluating different technologies and funding partnerships.
- **Country Road Sewer Upgrades** are planned for 2023 following meetings with neighborhood residents.
- **Water Pressure Zones Connection:** final design work is planned for 2023 on a new water main that will run from Skimobile Rd to Artists Falls Rd and provide a redundant connection between NCWP's two water pressure zones.

May 2023 Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Focus Group

In May 2023, the Master Plan project team convened a focus group of residents, staff, and experts to discuss the future of water and wastewater infrastructure in Conway. Key themes from the discussion included:

- Support for expansion of water and wastewater systems to desired future growth areas, such as East Conway Rd and/or Center Conway.
- Consideration of the increasing costs of maintaining existing water and wastewater assets and compliance with new regulations. CVFD has made progress towards replacement of existing pipe after many years of deferred maintenance. The discovery of new contaminants such as PFAS has resulted in increased water treatment costs; it is likely that new contaminants will be discovered in the future as well.
- Exploring additional aquifer protections to protect local drinking water supplies.
- Challenges with failing private community water systems in Conway, many of which were built decades ago with insufficient capacity and substandard materials. There are currently 27 residential areas with private water systems, most of which are aging and have insufficient capacity.
- A need to educate residents about the role and purpose of water and wastewater systems, particularly in the context of any future proposed system expansions.

Considerations For Master Plan Process – Water & Wastewater

Related Feedback from the February 2023 Open House

- Respondents **strongly supported** a focus on protecting groundwater aquifers in the Master Plan.

2003 Master Plan

- The 2003 Master Plan included the following implementation strategies related to water and wastewater infrastructure:
  - Interconnect the Conway Village Fire District and North Conway Water Precinct infrastructure systems *(accomplished in 2016)* .

- Prepare a comprehensive water and sewer infrastructure plan, including expansions to non-precinct areas.
- Establish a Capital Improvements Program Committee and maintain a six-year capital improvements program.

Next Steps – Water & Wastewater

Key Takeaways

- Conway's water and wastewater systems benefit significantly from local natural assets. All drinking water in the Town comes from local aquifers within Town boundaries, and the sandy, well-drained soils provide significant septic loading capacity. As a result, Conway has a significant amount of water and wastewater capacity and retains significant local control over these systems. Protection of the local water supply is a clear public priority.
- Water and wastewater systems are a critical component of future economic development in Conway. With the merger of the CVFD and the Town, and the significant available capacity at the NCWP treatment facility, the Town is well-positioned to consider expanding water and wastewater infrastructure to areas that are desired for future growth, as well as accommodate infill development within existing water and sewer service areas.
- Inflationary costs and identification of new contaminants are key long-term financial considerations for the management of water and wastewater systems.
- There are a significant number of private community water systems that could benefit from being connected to Town water. This could be an opportunity to increase the number of rate payers and improve the financial health of the system, although there may be mixed community support for the upfront capital cost of providing these water connections.

Potential Areas of Focus for the Master Plan

- Consider the development of an integrated Town-wide water and wastewater expansion strategy. This strategy would incorporate desired future growth and infill development areas, requisite land use regulation strategies, and complementary infrastructure improvement projects (e.g., road reconstruction, sidewalk construction, other buried utilities).
  - Such an approach would also support public outreach and education on the topic of water and wastewater expansion, which was identified as a critical need during the focus group.

- In line with the above strategy, the Master Plan could identify potential complementary capital improvement projects that address water and wastewater, other buried utilities, transportation infrastructure, and other community facilities (e.g., a potential expansion of the Police Department facility).

- Consider strategies for addressing failing private community water systems in a way that strengthens the financial health of public water systems.

- Identify alignment between potential zoning, land conservation, and groundwater protection strategies to develop approaches for water quality protection that benefit many stakeholders.

Police Department Facility

The Conway Police Department is located at the corner of US 302 and East Conway Rd in Center Conway. In May 2023, the Conway Selectboard approved the use of $35,000 in ARPA funds for a feasibility study for upgrades to Police Department facilities. The current 8,000 square foot facilities was completed in 1989 and provides insufficient space for the current size and scope of the Department. Other Police Department facility needs include:

- Insufficient climate control for the storage documents and evidence
- Insufficient office space for the number of employees, with closets being used as offices
- Insufficient garage space for parking cruisers
- Safety concerns in the holding cell area
- Other standard facility maintenance needs, such as window replacements
- Lack of a basement

Libraries

Conway is served by two libraries. Both libraries offer a variety of public services in addition to traditional library offerings. This includes community meeting rooms, internet access, programming for seniors, and science programs.

- Conway Public Library: located in Conway Village. The building is an architecturally-significant Classical Revival built in 1900; it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. The Library's Strategic Plan includes the goals and objectives related to library facilities:
    - Address ongoing storage challenges, including creating off-site storage
    - Improve how space is utilized within the library
    - Address parking issues

- Pope Memorial Library: located on Main Street in North Conway. While free and open to the public, the Pope Library is operated as a private 501(c)3 non-profit and does not receive dedicated funding from the Town of Conway operating budget. Voters in the North Conway Water Precinct typically appropriate $10,000 per year to the library via warrant article.

Town Hall

In 2018, voters approved the Board of Selectmen to lease the former Bank of New Hampshire building in Conway Village to be the new town hall. The former Town Hall in Center Conway remains owned by the Town and is used for various Town and precinct purposes. The new Town Hall location offers expanded office and meeting space in a more convenient location for Town residents.

Fire Stations

Conway is served by three fire stations:

- North Conway Fire Station: located on Norcross Circle, the $6.7 million station was finished in 2021.
- Conway Village Fire Station: the station is currently operated by the Conway Village Fire District and will be turned over to the Town of Conway starting January 2024.
- Center Conway Fire Station

Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities will be covered in a separate memo.