

V. Land Use by SMPDC

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Land Use

Wells continues to become a very diversified community with a strong mix of Commercial development along the Route 1 corridor. Residential development continues to expand at a very rapid pace. There are two types of Residential markets in Wells that needs to be looked at closer in this chapter. There is the year round homeowner and the part-time vacation home ownership development. With all of the development occurring, Wells does find itself with a very strong position with Conservation and Open space land, impart due to the Wells National Estuary Reserve and a large number of acres that exists in the Maine Tree growth program. Further analysis will be discussed in the following pages.

Residential Development

Residential land use in Wells is by far the largest use of developed land - about 10,300 acres on more than 5,000 parcels, representing 29% of Wells' total land area. This includes approximately 400 parcels coded as Waterfront by the Wells Assessor's Office and 33 parcels coded as Hotel Condominium, which were previously considered Commercial development. Waterfront parcels are primarily seasonal, but continue become increasingly populated by year-round residents in the past few years.

The pattern of residential development in Wells is quite similar to the pattern that was noted in the 1990 and 2005 Comprehensive Plan update. In that plan, rural subdivisions and centers with established development patterns were considered as one category. Given the additional rural subdivisions that have occurred in the last decade, it would seem appropriate to distinguish it from the established centers. Thus the land devoted to residential purposes generally falls into five broad categories:

- beach development
- development in the Route One corridor on public water and sewer
- rural subdivisions
- centers with established development patterns
- scattered rural residential uses' along existing roads.

The Land Use Map provides a great visual opportunity to better understand the current patterns of development. The Existing Land Use Map from the 2005 plan and the new map generated for this plan are attached in order to make a comparison to the land use changes between 2005 and now. The data for this information has been generated from the town's assessing data base.

The existing residential development on Drakes Island, Wells Beach, and Moody Beach is relatively high density (more than five units per acre) on small lots. The majority of structures are one and two-family homes. These areas are virtually fully developed, with only a small number of vacant, buildable lots. These neighborhoods are quite stable.

Residential use in the Route 1 corridor varies widely in terms of type and density. Most of these areas are serviced by public sewer and water. The bulk of housing in the area is newer housing built at densities of about two units per acre.

West of US Route 1 and the Maine Turnpike, there is a drastic change in the type of residential development, in general it tends to be at a lower density and much more of a year round style of housing development. There are a number of locations with established residential development areas around the older rural centers. These include such centers as Wells Branch and High Pine. These rural centers contain many historic structures on small lots that were developed as railroad villages. Though they are built at higher densities, they lack public water or sewer and often have concerns about environmental resources (particularly in Wells Branch).

Development in the rural areas of Wells is dependent on on-site water supply and septic disposal, although those closer to Route 1 may have public water and sewer. The predominant housing type in these areas is single-family homes with a small number of two-family or multifamily units

Commercial/Industrial

Commercial use of land in Wells occurs in three principal areas:

- Wells Beach/Wells Harbor
- Route One corridor
- Maine turnpike Interchange location

In addition, there are a small number of commercial uses scattered in other areas of the Town, a number of which are associated with the traditional service centers or arterial state roads such as Routes 9 and 109. Commercial/industrial use as a whole comprises 3,422 acres of Wells or approximately 10% of the Town's land area.

The Wells Beach commercial area consists of tourist-related uses including motels, restaurants, and shops, as well as small retail uses servicing the residents of the beach area. The intensity of use is high, but the overall area of commercial use is small and concentrated around Casino Square.

The Wells Harbor area supports both marine commercial and recreational uses. This area contains a marina and associated facilities, a restaurant and public parking lots to support the uses.

The Route One commercial area runs from the Ogunquit Town line to Cozy Comer (Route 9 intersection to Kennebunk). The commercial character of this area varies from segment to segment. From Cozy Corner to south of Drakes Island Road is an intensely developed stretch with a variety of commercial uses, including motels, campgrounds, and retail uses. To the south of this area is a segment with limited commercial development. Within this area, the historical building character has been maintained, even though many older properties have been converted to commercial use.

The area in the vicinity of Wells Comer is extensively developed for commercial uses and to a limited extent: functions as the center of the Town. This area includes a mix of retail, restaurant, public, and motel uses.

The area of Route One north and south of the Mile Road is the most intensely developed portion of the corridor. This area includes the Town's major shopping facilities, fast food establishments, retail uses, restaurants, and motels. The southernmost section of the corridor is

centered on the Moody area and is only moderately developed for commercial use. Uses include motels, campgrounds, offices, and scattered retail uses.

There are a number of commercial activities west of the Maine Turnpike. Although they are not concentrated in any specific area, there are commercial uses at the intersection of Routes 9 and 109, along Route 9B in the High Pine area and in Perkinstown. These uses are predominantly local businesses serving local markets.

Industrial uses of land may be found in two locations:

- Maine Turnpike Exit 19
- Pike Mining Operation Rout 9 @ the North Berwick Town line

The use of land for industrial establishments is limited to the Spencer Industrial Park between Route 1 and the Burnt Mill Road east of the Maine Turnpike. The site is also adjacent to the Pan Am Rail line and has a service spur into the Industrial park for direct rail access. The area is also served by Unitil gas, while this is a limited area in scope and size, the uses currently existing in the park include:

- Wasco and Village Candle**
- Shaw’s Supermarket Warehouse facility**
- UPS Distribution Center**

Comprising approximately 600,000 square feet in one location of town on approximately 50 acres of land, there are a few contractors and similar uses in other areas of the Town which help in rounding out the local Industrial sector. Route 9 also has Light Industrial land as needed.

There are several active gravel pits in Wells, mostly in the western portion of the Town. These facilities are a major source of sand and gravel for the York County area. A major facility for the processing and handling of earth materials (sand, gravel and quarry stone) currently operated by Pike Industries is located off Route 9 and the Boyd Road near the North Berwick border.

The town has added large value to the community since 2005. Below is a table showing the number of Commercial permits issued, and the estimated value of growth the town has seen:

Fiscal Year Ended June 30,	Commercial	
	Permits	Estimated Value
2012	221	14,673,592.18
2011	130	6,338,040.00
2010	175	16,817,325.39
2009	111	5,280,208.00
2008	98	8,728,967.00
2007	103	9,611,674.00
2006	403	23,865,555.60
2005	291	23,709,963.00

Open Space, Recreation & Natural Resource Land Uses

The Town of Wells owns several parcels of land dedicated to open space and recreational use, including the multipurpose fields on Route 9A (68 acres), the Fenderson Wildlife Commons along the Sanford line and land near Ell Pond (over 400 acres) and the Wells Heath property (500 acres). In addition, the Town is a major landholder (245 acres) within the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, which is approximately 1,600 acres in total.

The state and federal governments are also major owners of open space in the Town. The State owns an approximately 200 acre parcel of land adjacent to Laudholm Farm. This land was acquired with the intention of developing a state park. It is now being used as part of the Wells Reserve, although there is public beach associated with this parcel. The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge is also a major owner of land within the community. The Reserve has acquired approximately 865 acres of coastal wetlands and adjacent upland in Wells and continues to acquire upland fringe areas adjacent to the wetland in an effort to protect wildlife habitat. These lands are also included in the Wells Reserve. The Reserve has a lease and easement agreement with the town which allows the Reserve to manage and preserve 245 acres on the town behalf.

There are a number of other dedicated open spaces within Wells. There are more than 200 acres of open space land that qualify for state's Farm and Open Space Tax Act under 36 MRSA Sec. 1101. These are public-private partnerships between the York Land Trust, the Great Works.

There are a number of Natural Resources in the town of Wells that should be considered in making Land Use decisions in the future when it comes to the planning considerations for future development areas. This discussion occurs in a more focused setting within the Natural Resources chapter

Land Use & the Transportation Connection

Land uses occur based on the transportation network. After all transportation networks were originally established due to trade routes. In modern times, transportation and land use work hand-in-hand due to an ever evolving demand by both categories. Transportation will be discussed at length in its' own chapter, however this link is important to understand so that future land use decisions can be made based on the transportation issues that the community has.

For example, the evolution of the industrial park happens to be adjacent to both the rail line as well as the Maine Turnpike. This is by no coincidence, while the commercial area is along the Route 1 corridor, long cherished as the shore route traveled by many tourists visiting the region, hence all of the retail clustering that has occurred. Route(s) 9 and 109 are major commuting routes from inland, both utilized as commuting routes as well as the major carriers for those inland seeking the recreational opportunities along the coast.

Wells is a Transportation hub for the region. It serves as a Turnpike Interchange location across the street it has a large parking lot that hosts an AMTRAK station as well as a transfer facility for a local bus (trolley) service for the route 1 Corridor. The transportation section of the plan provides additional detail regarding this. From a land use prospective, this area is a logical

growth area to attract new development which does not rely heavily on the Automobile to get around..

Land Use and Sea Level Rise

Being a coastal community, Wells has a great deal of residential development located along the Wells Harbor Coastline. The town has been committed to addressing Sea Level Rise and Climate change issues in general. The community is one on the forefront of addressing these matters. In March of 2104, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology Science Impact Collaborative Consensus Building Institute and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve System completed a 2-year Risk Assessment on these impacts for the town of Wells.* This document should be referred to for a full reading of this matter for the town.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for documenting and tracking all flood related activities within each community. Since 2013 FEMA has been developing a new Mapping process to document flood prone areas of the community. The town of Wells has been appealing the proposed mapping because of its concern with the accuracy of the information. If the information is inaccurate, it will affect a number of households when trying to obtain the proper Insurance for the home.

It is important to note that Sea Level Rise and Flood Plain information do not impact each other for regulatory purposes.

Future Land Use

The future Land Use Planning document and map is the visual document for all of the recommended long term changes to the community based on the zoning that should be established over time in order to continue in assisting the community to grow, prosper and develop in a way that the citizens suggested through the planning process.

The future land use chapter and the resulting map should also be periodically reviewed. Strategies found throughout the plan should be looked at to determine if they are doing what they were intended to do. Are they too weak? to restrictive? Do they cost too much for the benefit that they bring? Have things changed so that the strategies need to be changed? Continually reviewing the Comprehensive Plan should be part of a continuous planning process.

For the purposes of breaking the community into manageable areas for future land use discussions, the attached map illustrates the areas of the community with the corresponding regions:

1) Coastal Zone from the Atlantic to Route 1

2) Route 1 to the Maine Turnpike bounded by Kennebunk to the north and Ogunquit to the south

2A) Route 109 south to Littlefield Road

3) South side of town, bounded by the Maine Turnpike, Route 9 and the town of Ogunquit

4) **West side of town bounded by Route 9, the City of Sanford and Route 109**

5) **North side of town bounded by Route 109, the town of Kennebunk and Route 1**

1) **Coastal Zone from the Atlantic to Route 1** This region will be the most impacted in the community for years to come. The main reason is Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge attributed to Climate Change events. Sea Level rise slowly creeps up on us. The increase in water levels is not noticeable at this time however looking to the future, the increase in water levels is expected to be 3.3 feet by the year 2100. The horizon date of this plan is 2025 and will not have any direct impact on the SLR however; planning for this should begin now. Storm Surge on the other hand has impacted the coastline greatly, in more recent times storm severity has increased and the slight increase in SLR has wrecked havoc on the coast line. A majority of the area in this region is marsh and wetlands preserved through various methods including: the Rachel Carson Refuge and Wells Reserve

Currently there are a number of uses in this area, most of the uses along the Route 1 corridor are commercial in nature and relate directly to the tourism and local resident shopping needs. A majority of uses found down on the waterfront are supporting marine related uses, some commercial in nature and a great deal of Residential.

In the Future Based on the predictions found in the *New England Climate Adaptation Project* report for the town of Wells, it is important that the municipal government start meeting with the property owners on the beach head locations and having discussions regarding the future of the properties in this area. The town should consider placing money into a future purchase fund program to buy storm damaged properties as they occur and rezone on a parcel by parcel basis into a Resource Protection zone. The town should also consider at a minimum the establishment of a 3' freeboard for properties being repaired or improved and that meet the definitions under the FEMA flood plain program. Properties along the Route 1 Corridor are stable in use and location that not a lot of change is required however the community may want to enter into discussions with the Maine Department of Transportation engaged in a discussion regarding a transformation of a complete street program would make a great deal of difference of the feel with development along this corridor.

Zoning should discourage future development along the waterfront region and encourage higher density of residential development off the waterfront in higher elevations to compensate for the slowing of development seaside.

2) **Route 1 to the Maine Turnpike bounded by Kennebunk to the north and Ogunquit to the south** This location takes in to consideration the properties fronting on the west side of Route 1 which works in conjunction with Route 1 properties discussed in area 1 above.

Currently This region with the exception of the property in area 2A discussed below, is primarily of a commercial and Industrial nature along the entire Route 1 corridor and in the vicinity of the Industrial Park abutting the Maine Turnpike at Exit 19. There is a great deal of property currently located in the Residential A zone and in the Rural zone. Much of the area can

be serviced by Sewer with extensions to the system and more easily to the South of Route 109. These areas seem to make the most sense for future mixed use development of Commercial, Industrial or High density residential development due to the utility access. The same holds true with access to the existing water supply.

In the Future The community really needs to focus a great deal of attention in this region as it is the most visible to the tourists stopping as well as passing through. This is also the highest concentration of development in the community both from a residential stand point as well as a commercial stand point.

Zoning The creation of a higher density residential/mixed use zone should be established to consolidate a great deal of development in this area. It is serviced by all utilities; the access to the Route 1 corridor makes this region available to bikers and walkers. The community should focus its' attention on the creation of a Design Review process for building façades in order to replicate a New England Feel and design of the area which will help to restore the New England Coastal Community appeal to the local citizens and tourism population.

This area is considered a Growth Zone

2A) Route 109 south to Littlefield Road This region of town is being separated out from other areas because there has been a great deal of analysis completed here over the past several years. That work includes a Center of Opportunity analysis completed by the Sustain Southern Maine project, A Housing analysis conducted by the Workforce Housing Coalition in Southern New Hampshire and a future analysis is being considered to look at a Route 1 By-Pass connector between Littlefield Road and Chapel Road.

Currently there is an interesting mix of uses to expand upon and new ideas to consider for the future. This area consists of a Train Station serving the Amtrak line located opposite the Maine Turnpike Authority Exit 32, there is a several large Industrial and Warehousing type facilities adjacent to the Turnpike and Rail line, mixed housing, Civic/Academic core with Town Hall, the School system and several ball fields and York Hospital. Directly across Route 1 from this area along Route 9 are the Police and Fire Stations. South of Chapel Road there is 2 large seasonal RV parks and the York County Community College.

In the Future consideration should be given to utilizing the Sustain Southern Maine Future Land Use Plan for the development of a zoning scheme in order to start attracting commercial and higher density residential development to this are of the community. In doing so, there are several advantages to this recommendation. **First**, the community can start to focus its energy on the creation of a mixed use Downtown area that is not very well defined in town. **Second**, the tax base will grow much quicker for the community if there is a well defined downtown area that encourages mixed use developments in a compact and densely developed area. **Third**, this concept will take a lot of vehicle trips off the route 1 corridor and **Fourth**, with the Amtrak station in the immediate area a mixed use development allows for people to visit the community by train from away without worrying about bringing an Automobile to vacation in the region, especially if a hotel or bed & breakfast is available to accommodate those visitors within easy walking distances.

As Part of the development of this area, the Southern New Hampshire Workforce Housing Coalition also provided analysis that encouraged affordable workforce housing be considered in this region. Consideration should be given to working with the YCCC to provide housing that can serve the college as well as summer workforce employment.

Zoning in this region currently exists of **Residential A, Residential C, General Business and Rural**. Consideration should be given to the development of a High Density Residential and Commercial Mixed use zone to encourage the development of a Downtown Core for the community while keeping the design to meet the needs of the current property owners and the New England style structures.

This area is considered a Growth Zone

3) South side of town, bounded by the Maine Turnpike, Route 9 and the town of Ogunquit
This region is somewhat rural with several Resource protected environmental features including Chick Brook which feeds the Ogunquit River. Many of the parcels in this area are large in nature and do not have any major transportation routes other than Route 9B. A large quarry operation is located Northwesterly quadrant of the area adjacent to Route 9.

Currently As noted earlier, there are a number of large lots in this region as well as valuable resources, also found in this region is a very large quarry operation, a significant amount of Light Industrial area adjacent to Route 9 and the Rail line, also found in the northeast corner of this defined area is the Transportation Center serving as a hub for Amtrak service to the region. Continued expansion of conservation lands in this area should be expanded throughout the region. The purchase or further conservation of lands should be focused around the already conserved areas as well as the resource protected areas in order to expand unfragmented blocks of property.

In the Future This area should be considered to be a Transitional zone with a small area of Growth in the Route 9B corridor and the rest of the region continuing to be rural in nature with the exceptions of the Quarry and the small area currently in Light Industrial.

Zoning Currently the zoning in the area is Residential A, Light Industrial, Quarry Manufacturing, and Rural. The Residential A area should be extended up Route 9B to the Route 9 corridor in order to accommodate the residential development occurring along that road. The light Industrial should be extended as demand requires as well as the Quarry zone if additional land is acquired for the mining operation. The remainder of this region should continue to be preserved as a Rural zone discouraging any additional density from residential development occurring or increased business activity.

This is a Transitional area with a mix of Growth and Rural areas

4) West side of town bounded by Route 9, the City of Sanford and Route 109 This portion of town has a significant amount of newer subdivision lots located near the North Berwick and Sanford town lines. There is a significant amount of resource protected lands along with West

Brook and the Marrilands River. There are also 2 major utility corridors running in a Northeast to Southwest direction through this area.

Currently This region has the most Resource Protected lands in the community and some newer residential development near the town line.

In the Future Continued expansion of conservation lands in this area should be expanded throughout the region. The town owns large tracts of land adjacent to the town line and other lands are in conservation ownership. The purchase or further conservation of lands should be focused around the already conserved areas as well as the resource protected areas in order to expand unfragmented blocks of property.

Zoning This region is primarily Rural with a little Residential A along the Route 109 corridor and a great deal of resource protected land throughout. The resource and rural areas should continue to be preserved without allowing any additional densities from occurring

This area is a rural area and should stay as such

5) North side of town bounded by Route 109, the town of Kennebunk and Route 1 This area also hosts a portion of 2 major utility lines as well as the Marrilands River corridor. Probably the most significant part of this region is that it borders with the town of Kennebunk and the Branch Brook which is the aquifer region serving the Drinking supply to a three town water district and is a vital resource to those communities.

Currently This region has more traditional older settlement patterns except for several small areas adjacent to the Route 109 corridor. A resource protection area just south of route 9A the Marrilands River and Hobbs pond are critical resource that must be protected in the future but most importantly to the region of town is the Branch Brook and the protection of the Aquifer.

In the Future A majority of the land in this region is Rural with a small amount of land in Residential development along the Route 109 corridor. Future development should be contained to this corridor since Branch Brook is located nearby to the North of the town. Further protection of Branch Brook needs to be considered in order to further protect the water supply which services the community.

Zoning This area only has a small amount of Residential A along the Route 109 corridor which should not be extended in the future due to the location near the Aquifer. A majority of the area is in the Rural zone and should stay in a low density rural zone while the AP zone should be expanded from 800feet in width to 1000 feet in order to add further protection to the Branch Brook Aquifer.

This area is currently rural in nature and should stay rural in to the future