CHAPTER 9
LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN FEATURES

1. Introduction

This chapter of the master plan examines land uses and community design features within the Town of Conway. Recent changes in New Hampshire statutes dealing with the preparation of master plans expanded the types of sections that could be included in a community's master plan (2002). A key change was the addition of a community design section [RSA 674:2 III(k)]. Under this enabling statute a community design section may be used "…to identify positive physical attributes in a municipality and provide for design goals and policies for planning in specific ways to guide private and public development".

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part of the chapter provides an assessment of the use of land from the perspective of major land use types (including residential, commercial, institutional and undeveloped) that currently exist within Conway. The second part of the chapter presents a build-out analysis, relating to the future development of Conway, based on the town's existing zoning regulations. The third part of the chapter contains an analysis of existing community design attributes and presents alternative design elements and options for various locations throughout Conway. These design features are based on numerous public discussions throughout the master plan update process including a one-day design charrette, entitled *Designing Conway's Future*, which was conducted in June 2002.

The data used to conduct the land use analysis was derived primarily from information in the town's computerized assessment database and geographic information system (GIS), combined with input from local officials and site reconnaissance of the community. The town's property assessment database contains characteristics related to the use and assessed value of each land parcel within the town, including a detailed set of land use codes. By combining the town's assessment data with the GIS parcel base map prepared for this master plan, an Existing Land Use Conditions Map was prepared that provides a current "snapshot" of land utilization within Conway. The data obtained from the assessment records, as well as the GIS base map, were updated through January, 2002.

2. Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The following points summarize existing land use conditions and community design features presented in this chapter. Additionally, various implications associated with existing land use and community design features in Conway are also discussed.

In terms of Conway's existing land use and development patterns, specific findings include:

- Based on property assessment data, Conway's total land area is approximately 42,780 acres. This figure does not include roadways, water bodies and condominium developments. A 2000 land use inventory report indicates that total land area in the town was 46,850.
- The largest use of land in Conway is undeveloped property, representing approximately 57% the total land area in the community.
- Approximately 10,450 acres (24% of the total land area) in Conway are used for residential purposes.
- Commercial land uses account for only about 5% of Conway's land base.

Based on the town's existing development regulations and current development patterns, Conway has a considerable amount of vacant land available for development. Specific findings include:

- Based on Conway's average absorption of approximately twenty single family dwelling units per year, it would take over *700* years to absorb just the *vacant* residential land under the high density level (one acre lots), or over *240* years under the medium density level (3 acre lots), or about *140* years under the low density level (5 acre lots).

In terms of community design features, numerous concepts, issues and ideas have been illustrated. Selected design concepts include:

- Improvement of existing lighting standards under new planning regulations and policies in order to reduce ambient light pollution.
- Preparation of additional regulations to protect ridgeline development at lower elevations.
- Evaluation of current sign regulations and consideration of incorporating basic sign design guidelines in terms of form, siting, scale, materials and color, graphics and lettering, international signs, illumination and signage themes.
- Development of a streetscape master plan to identify opportunities to improve community design.
- Revisions of existing community design guidelines to feature the individual character of the villages and other corridors that the community wishes to preserve and/or enhance through private development and public improvements.
- Considerations of creating plans for the development of a shared civic space (municipal campus) near the Police Station and County Court facility.

Based on the existing land use and design concepts presented throughout the chapter, implications about how Conway could change in the future include:

- Based on the "snapshot" of existing land use conditions in town, it is clear that a substantial amount of Conway's land area still remains largely undeveloped. However, growth trends discussed in the Population and Housing Chapter of this plan indicates that the town will have to make some important decisions about how the remaining land base will be used to support future growth. These decisions will determine whether or not the land is used in the most efficient way possible to accommodate expected growth, while also not detracting from the natural and scenic beauty, and perceived high quality of life associated with this open space.
- In terms of community design issues a variety of conceptual design elements have been discussed for the town as a whole, as well as for respective villages. During the numerous public meetings held during the master plan update, participants have clearly stated that community design elements are becoming increasingly important to the character and attractiveness of Conway. As a tourist and retail destination, the town needs to pay special attention to existing design features throughout the community and provide approaches for considering design related impacts during the review of development proposals. This attention may come in the form of amendments to planning regulations (zoning ordinance, etc.) and policies, devoting additional resources and investment in understanding community design initiatives, and establishing partnerships with local businesses, non-profit agencies and community groups to work through design issues on a local level. Highway and road improvements slated to proceed throughout the town over the next decade present an excellent opportunity to work towards incorporating these design concepts throughout Conway.

3. Existing Land Use

Current land use conditions in Conway are illustrated on Map 9-1, Existing Land Use Conditions. The map divides land use activities into seven major categories including:

- Residential
- Undeveloped Land

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Utilities
- Private Rights-of-Way (ROW)

Additionally, parcels that have conservation or protection mechanisms in place are identified on the map (to the extent possible) as “protected land”. For the purposes of this analysis, these “protected land” parcels are considered undeveloped.

The undeveloped land category includes raw vacant land that may be zoned for various purposes, but is currently undeveloped. Land within this category may also include parcels slated for residential or non-residential development or property that is protected from development through any number of conservation mechanisms. It should be noted that a small number of parcels were not identified within the municipal assessment database as having an existing use. Based on information provided by the Conway’s Assessor, the uses of some of these parcels have been identified. However, a use code was not identified for approximately fifteen parcels. Based on information provided by the Assessor, it is generally assumed that these parcels are undeveloped.

The commercial and industrial categories include all business establishments. These establishments represent banks, offices, gas stations, restaurants, retail stores, light manufacturing, etc.

The institutional category includes public and quasi-public land uses associated with government and quasi-government functions. These include municipal, state and federal land; parks; police and fire buildings; schools; churches; libraries; hospitals; service organizations; and cemeteries.

The utilities category includes electrical power infrastructure and property used for water and sewer infrastructure owned by Conway’s various Districts/Precincts (water, sewer and lighting).

The private rights-of-way category includes privately owned land that provides access to other parcels.

Map 9-1 land use

As shown in Table 9-1, the total land area within the town is estimated at approximately 42,780 acres[1]. This calculation was based on parcel acreage recorded in the town’s assessment records. It should be noted that the total acreage estimate does not represent the total acreage within the town’s municipal boundary since it does not include water bodies, roadways and condominium land. The total area of the town is estimated at approximately 46,900 acres (73 square miles) as reported in a 2000 land use inventory report prepared by the Conway Planning Department.

As noted in the table, the largest amount of Conway’s land area is undeveloped which account for approximately 24,500 acres – representing 57% of the total land area. It should be noted that although the land is categorized as undeveloped, it may be currently used for agricultural purposes and/or have deeded development restrictions which limits development on specific parcels.

Residential properties represent the second largest amount of land area at approximately 10,500 acres or about 24% of the total acreage. It is important to note that a large portion of the properties within this category are single family units on large parcels. These parcels therefore contain a significant land base that has potential for further subdivision and development in the future.

Commercial and industrial properties are shown to be a small portion of the total acreage within the town, representing approximately 3,500 acres or 8% of the total area. The majority of these properties are located along major roadways (Route 16).

Table 9-1. Total Acres by Land Use Type: 2001
Town of Conway

Land Use	Total Acreage	% of Total Acreage
Residential	10,451	24.4%
Commercial	2,180	5.1%
Industrial	1,367	3.2%
Institutional	3,810	8.9%
Utilities	330	0.8%
Private ROW	123	0.3%
Undeveloped	24,524	57.3%
Total*	42,785	100.0%

*Note: This estimate does not represent the total acreage of the town as it does not include roadways, water bodies and condominium developments. A 2000 land use inventory report prepared by the town reported the town total acreage as 46,850 acres.

Source: Town of Conway Planning Department, Assessment Department and RKG Associates,

Inc.

4. Zoning Build-Out Analysis

This section examines the town's zoning regulations and the potential for future development within Conway. The zoning regulations are the primary determinant of land uses within the community. Currently, Conway's land area is divided into seven zoning districts as illustrated on Map 9-2. These zones are accompanied by a set of development standards that define the size, location and density of permitted uses within various areas of the town. The seven zones are listed in Table 9-2 along with the approximate acreage of land area contained in each zone. In addition to the seven zoning districts listed in Table 9-2, the Town of Conway's Zoning Ordinance lists three additional zoning districts which include the Shoreline Protection District (SP), Wetland and Watershed District (WW), and the Special Highway Corridor District (SHC). For the purposes of this build-out analysis, land in all zoning districts are evaluated, with the exception of the SP, WW, and SHC zoning districts.

Table 9-2. Total Acres by Zoning District - 2001
Town of Conway

Zoning District	# Acres	% of Total
Residential/Agriculture (RA)	30,884	69.5%
Village Residential (VR)	379	0.9%
Village Commercial (VC)	847	1.9%
Highway Commercial (HC)	2,213	5.0%
Industrial (I)	900	2.0%
Mountain Conservation (MC)	7,100	16.0%
Resort/Recreation (RR)	2,100	4.7%
Total[2]	44,424	100.0%

Source: Town of Conway Assessment Records, 2001 and RKG Associates, Inc.

The residential zones include the Residential/Agriculture (RA) and Village Residential (VR) zones. These zones contain about 31,200 acres representing approximately 71% of Conway's land base. It should be noted that this analysis is based on zoning and property data provided by Conway's Assessment Department. The property assessment and zoning data provided by the town is assumed to be reliable and has been verified to the extent possible. However, no warranty is given for its accuracy.

The two commercial zones, Highway Commercial (HC) and Village Commercial (VC) have a combined total of approximately 3,060 acres, or 7% of the town's land base. The HC zone is focused along Conway's busiest highway corridors which includes sections of Route 16 (along "the Strip", north of North Conway Village and west of Conway Village), and a northern section of Route 302 in Redstone. The VC zone incorporates the core commercial areas in each of the three villages.

Conway currently has two industrial zoning districts – the Industrial 1 (I1) and Industrial 2 (I2) zoning districts. The I1 district is located along Hobbs Street in Conway Village, while the I2 district is located along East Conway Road in Redstone. Both industrial zones have a combined total of about 900 acres representing approximately 2% of the town's land base. For the purposes of this build-out analysis, both the I1 and I2 zoning districts will be combined as these areas are designated for similar light industrial and commercial uses.

Map 9-2 Zoning

The Mountain Conservation zone (MC) is located in the northern portion of Conway and incorporates parcels at or above 800 feet in elevation. The MC district contains approximately 7,100 acres representing about 16% of Conway's land area.

The Resort/Recreational zone (RR) is located in North Conway and incorporates the Mount Cranmore Ski Resort as well as some neighboring properties. The RR

zoning district contains roughly 2,100 acres representing approximately 5% of Conway's land base.

Future development potential in Conway can be estimated by identifying the amount of developable land that remains within each zoning district. The geographic information system (GIS), which includes the digital parcel and zoning maps as well as linkage to the computerized assessment database, was used to estimate development potential.

The build-out analysis examined the potential for future development of both residential and non-residentially zoned land in Conway. Within both of these categories the analysis identified the amount of undeveloped and "underdeveloped" land within each zoning district. The term "underdeveloped" refers to those properties that may already be developed, such as with a single family dwelling unit, but also have sufficient acreage to be further subdivided.

The residential build-out analysis, which is summarized in Table 9-3, evaluated development potential based on the number of single family dwelling units that could be constructed at three different levels of density. The first density level is the minimum lot size permitted by zoning. The Conway Zoning Ordinance indicates that the minimum lot size for land serviced by municipal water and sewer is one-half acre for the first dwelling unit developed. Each additional dwelling unit developed on the lot requires only 10,000 square feet (approximately one-quarter of an acre). Lots not serviced by municipal water and sewer must have a minimum of one acre of qualified[3] land per dwelling unit. Lots serviced by either municipal water *or* sewer require a minimum lot size of at least one-half acre of qualified land per dwelling unit. Although Conway's Zoning Ordinance indicates that a minimum lot size for development could be one-half acre, for the purposes of this analysis, the first density level used is assumed to be one acre per dwelling unit. This density level was selected because most potentially developable land is located outside of areas serviced by municipal water and sewer, as well as the fact that most newly subdivided lots are seldom created at the minimum lot size density due to natural constraints and the shape of the parcel being subdivided.

The second density level used to calculate the build-out analysis was three acres per dwelling unit (medium density) which is based on the current average lot size of all improved parcels in Conway. For comparative purposes, the third and final density level used was five acres per dwelling unit (low density).

Part A of Table 9-3 indicates the amount of undeveloped acreage that remains in each residential zoning district, which includes all unimproved land parcels. The total undeveloped land in both residential districts is approximately 19,300 acres. This gross acreage estimate was then reduced by 25% to allow for the construction of roads, utilities, and natural constraints encountered during the subdivision process. This yielded a net developable acreage estimate of approximately 14,500 acres. Dividing this net acreage estimate by the high (1 acre), medium (3 acres) and low (5 acres) density levels within each district suggests that there is the potential for construction of between 2,909 to 14,544 single family homes on undeveloped land in Conway.

A similar analysis was conducted for parcels that have an existing dwelling, but which are considered underdeveloped based on permitted zoning densities. Part B of Table 9-3 shows that there is an additional 7,700 net acres of potentially developable land available in these parcels after allowing for the existing residence[4] and the installation of roads, utilities and allowing for natural constraints. It is estimated that an additional 1,543 to 7,713 single family dwelling units could potentially be constructed on these parcels.

Typically the same type of build-out analysis, applying the GIS mapping and assessment database completed for residential zones, is applied to non-residential zones. In order to measure potential development density for non-residential zones, a floor area ratio (FAR) is used. This is the ratio that exists between the amount of building square footage and the size of the parcel. However, the GIS and assessment data obtained from the Town of Conway does not provide the geographic location (map and lot number) or size (square footage) of buildings within the town. Therefore, due to the lack of building size and location data, developing a build-out analysis based on a FAR is not possible.

Although data is not available to estimate the amount of underdeveloped land, it is possible to estimate the amount of undeveloped non-residential land. Table 9-4 indicates the amount of undeveloped land which remains in each non-residential zoning district. The total undeveloped land in non-residential zoning districts is about 3,000 acres[5]. This gross acreage estimate was then reduced by 25% to allow for the construction of roads, utilities, and natural constraints encountered during the subdivision process. This yielded a net developable acreage estimate of approximately 2,200 acres. Based on average estimated FARs for potential development in each zoning district, it is projected that approximately 4.8 million square feet of non-residential building space could be constructed in the future.

Table 9-3. Residential Build-Out Analysis by Zoning District: 2001

Town of Conway

	Zoning District: Residential/Agriculture RA	Village Residential VR	Total
Part A. Potential Development on Vacant Land			
Gross Undeveloped Acreage	19,302	91	19,392
Potentially Developable Acreage (1)	14,476	68	14,544
Additional Single Family Units based on 1 Acre Lot Size	14,476	68	14,544
Additional Single Family Units based on 3 Acre Lot Size	4,825	23	4,848
Additional Single Family Units based on 5 Acre Lot Size	2,895	14	2,909
Part B. Potential Housing Development on Subdividable Land with Existing Housing Units			
Subdividable Acreage with Existing Unit (2)	10,228	56	10,284
Potentially Developable Acreage (1)	7,671	42	7,713
Additional Single Family Units based on 1 Acre Lot Size	7,671	42	7,713
Additional Single Family Units based on 3 Acre Lot Size	2,557	14	2,571
Additional Single Family Units based on 5 Acre Lot Size	1,534	8	1,543

(1) Represents the gross undeveloped acreage less 25% for roads, utilities and natural constraints
(2) Represents any parcel over 3 acres with an existing dwelling unit
Source: Town of Conway Assessment Database and RKG Associates, Inc.

Table 9-4. Potential Development on Non-Residential Vacant Land: 2001
Town of Conway

	HC	VC	I	RR (3)	MC (3)	Total
Gross Undeveloped Acreage	1,092	148	394	1,011	347	2,991
Potentially Developable Acreage (1)	819	111	295	758	260	2,243
Average Floor Area Ratio (2)	8%	10%	5%	2%	2%	
Potential Square Footage of New Building Space	2,854,077	481,948	643,305	660,261	226,808	4,866,399

(1) Represents gross undeveloped acreage less 25% for roads, utilities and natural constraints
(2) Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the ratio that exists between the amount of building square footage and the size of the parcel. Calculation of actual average FARs for each zoning district was not possible, therefore, an estimated average FARs was used.
(3) Both the RR and MC zoning districts contain about 6,700 acres of undeveloped land, the acreage values used in this analysis represent only acres that could potentially be developed due to severe development constraints.
Source: Town of Conway assessment database and RKG Associates, Inc.

Summary and Conclusions of Build-Out Analysis

It should noted that the build-out scenarios presented here are based on existing regulations and a specific set of assumptions that are deemed appropriate for existing conditions. If Conway's land use regulations are changed in the future, then potential build-out results would also be altered. None of the scenarios are intended to suggest an absolute potential for development in the town. This analysis offers a "big picture" perspective on the development potential in Conway and should serve as a starting point for a more detailed, site specific analysis.

It should be emphasized that the projected range in the number housing units, which could potentially be developed in Conway, is very broad as it is based on the respective assumptions used within the analysis. The wide range in the number of potentially developable units is not typical and should not be considered realistic. However, what should be highlighted is that Conway has a considerable amount of land available for residential development. Based on Conway's average absorption of approximately twenty single family dwelling units per year, it would take over *700* years to absorb just the *vacant* residential land under the high density level (one acre lots), or over *240* years under the medium density level (3 acre lots), or about *140* years under the low density level (5 acre lots). It should be noted that these estimates are just for existing vacant land and do not account for land available in underdeveloped parcels.

5. Community Design Features, Issues & Ideas

Background

In order to define community design elements and concepts, three public visioning sessions and a one-day public charrette entitled *Designing Conway's Future* was conducted as part of the master plan update process. The purpose of *Designing Conway's Future* was to provide residents with an opportunity to discuss their vision of future development activities and provide public guidance for the planning process. Specifically, residents were encouraged to work with urban planners and landscape architects to help design specific sites and provide conceptual design ideas.

This section provides a summary of the community design issues, opportunities and ideas generated by participants at *Designing Conway's Future*. The section has been divided into six subsections which include: existing policies and regulations related to community design; general aesthetic issues and community design ideas; open space characteristics; transportation issues and design concepts; design concepts for Conway Village, North Conway Village and Center Conway Village; and, other community design concepts, issues and ideas. It should be noted that this section is unique compared to the other respective chapters in this master plan as recommendations relative to community design features have been included accordingly throughout this section. Furthermore, a number of maps and graphics have

been included in order to illustrate the various design concepts.

Existing Policies & Regulations Related to Community Design

Zoning Ordinance – Current regulations in Conway encourage "smart growth" principles; the protection of natural resources, and scenic views; and aesthetic enhancement in several ways. For example, as noted earlier, a reduced lot size requirement is provided for parcels served by municipal water and sewer. For residential lots served by municipal water and sewer, the requirement is ½ acre (vs. one (1) acre) for the first dwelling and 10,000 square feet for each additional dwelling. For lots served by municipal water, the requirement is ½ acre per dwelling. This approach provides greater flexibility in building, lot use and density, particularly in the village areas.

In all districts the minimum frontage requirement is 150 feet, except in the Village Commercial District (VCD), which is 50 feet. Lots on the Saco or Swift Rivers must have a minimum of 150 feet of frontage and setbacks of structures of at least 100 feet. There is a minimum setback of 75 feet for structures from the mean high water mark of all watercourses, except for seasonal streams that require a setback of 25 feet. Height restrictions are designed to keep structures below the tree line, which is typically 60 to 100 feet. Structures cannot exceed 55 feet and buildings 45 feet in height.

Mixed use and village character are protected through the following zoning district regulations:

- **Village Residential District (VRD)** – There are two VRD areas including the residential portions of Conway Village and North Conway Village. Permitted uses include: residential structures including home occupations, lodging houses, tourist homes, boarding homes or rooming houses. Special exceptions are provided for private educational facilities, day care, and post offices.

- **Village Commercial District (VCD)** – There are three VCD areas including the main village areas of Center Conway, North Conway and Conway Village. Several mixed-use opportunities are also permitted in these districts.

Commercial development and design is controlled through the following zoning districts:

- **Highway Commercial District (HCD)** – This district is located along Routes 16 and 302 in Conway and North Conway, and in the Redstone area.

- **Special Highway Corridor District** – This district includes all land within 500 feet of the edge of the right-of-way of the proposed Conway bypass and its intersections. The purpose of this overlay district is to protect and preserve natural features of the Valley's landscape, while allowing for appropriate development that is compatible with the scenic and rural quality of the road corridor. The objectives of the district are to: implement the town's master plan, maintain an attractive gateway to the Valley; prevent adverse environmental impacts, encourage high quality development, prevent uncontrolled commercialization and destruction of scenic vistas; and preserve the traffic moving function of the bypass. In general, the same uses are permitted as allowed for in the underlying zoning district with greater setbacks and buffer strips, extensive landscaping and vegetative preservation in the buffer strips, lighting and density controls, design guidelines, strict sign regulations, and reduced lot coverage. Buildings can be no more than 5,000 square feet in size, 35 feet in height and must be spaced at least 40 feet apart.

Aesthetic quality and scenic views are protected through the following ordinances:

- **Mountain Conservation District (MCD)** - This district includes all lands north and east of the Saco River above 800 feet in elevation. Permitted uses include forestry and conservation uses, and active and passive recreational uses.

- **Shoreline Protection District** – This district includes all land within 300 feet of the following "Great Ponds": Conway Lake, Dolloff Pond, Echo Lake, Labrador Pond, Pequawket Pond, and Pudding Pond. In Conway Village this zone extends to the centerline of Route 16 or 300 feet, whichever is less.

- **Wireless Communication Facilities (147-17.3)** – Towers may be allowed only by special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) in the residential/agriculture (R/A), rural residential (RR), industrial (I), and the MCD. Those lower than 55 feet in height are regulated as any other commercial structure in any commercial or industrial district. Those that are taller than 55 feet are not permitted in any village district, Wetland Conservation District (WCD),

Floodplain Conservation District (FCD) or Highway Commercial District (HCD).

Sign Ordinance (147-19) – The intent of these regulations is to prevent private signage from detracting from scenic vistas, or competing with the natural environment, which is a major asset to the town's tourist-based economy. Small A-frame signs (6 s.f.), window signs (less than 50% of window area), directional signs, non-illuminated signs (16 s.f.) are allowed without a permit. This is a fairly restrictive ordinance, but it has not, according to some individuals, been very effective is addressing inappropriate grandfathered signs.

- **Freestanding Signs** – One per lot allowed up to 40 square feet in area, setback 25 feet, 12 feet in width, and not to exceed 15 feet in height. The setback may be reduced to 10 feet if the area is reduced to 30 feet. The town may want to consider reducing the height as well for those signs reduced in size in order to promote signs that have a more pedestrian scale.

- **Projecting Signs** – Not to exceed 20 square feet (s.f.) in HCDs and 6 s.f. in VCDs in lieu of a freestanding sign. Signs must be 10 feet above ground and not higher than 15 feet. Typically, 8 feet from the ground would be an appropriate minimum height in a village setting.

- **Wall Signs** – Height is not to exceed 20 feet and for floor areas of 50,000 square feet or less the formula for sign area is: 20/(total s.f. floor area x 0.0016). This is fairly restrictive with only 6.25 square feet allowed for a 2,000 square foot business, which is typical for small independent stores that exist in the village center.

- **Pedestrian-Oriented Off-Site Commercial Signs (POOC)** – These signs are allowed to encourage pedestrian activity (as opposed to vehicular traffic) in the North Conway Village Commercial District. The signs must be located on private property, have no setback requirements, direct and inform pedestrians, have a maximum area of 4"x18" with no more than 10 per lot, and must be within 400 feet of the lot. These signs are very useful for businesses located on side streets in North Conway Village, which are often difficult to see from Main Street.

- **Design Standards** – Signs may be illuminated by only external light and shielded, neon signs are not permitted, and the structure base and support can be no more than 50% of the sign's message area.

- **Non-Conforming Signs** – These are grandfathered and can be maintained but not improved without bringing them into compliance. Enforcement has been a difficult problem with inappropriate grandfathered signs.

- **Sign Incentives** – To reduce visual clutter and distraction from the natural environment, signs may use up to 20% of this space for changeable copy; the message area can be increased by up to 20 s.f. if the lot has 300 feet of frontage or by 40 s.f. if it has 500 feet; where a freestanding sign is in compliance, wall signage may be increased by up to 50%. This provision has not effectively reduced the grandfathered freestanding signs. The town should reconsider the maximum sign area (up to 80 square feet under this provision) based on the visual impact of the roadway rather than the size of the lot and buildings.

Subdivision Regulations – To address the aesthetic impacts of overhead utility lines, Section 131-48 (Installation of Utilities) requires all utility systems (including electrical) to be placed underground in conformity with the terms and specifications of the utility company involved. The town's road design standards typically require a 50-foot right-of-way (r-o-w) and between 18 and 24 feet of paved area. However, in examining existing local roads, the average in both is somewhat lower (46.5 average r-o-w, and 20.6 pavement width). Many of these roads are very old and predate design requirements made by the town. In most cases, these reduced r-o-w and pavement widths work well and are more in keeping with the rural nature of the community, particularly for local residential access roads.

Site Plan Review Regulations – To enhance site aesthetics and the town in general, Section 123-28 of the regulations requires that all utility systems be placed underground for new development, for new buildings and for expansions greater than 5,000 square feet or 50%, whichever is more restrictive.

- **Landscaping** - Section 123-29A (Buffer Areas) provides an exemption from the Conway Village Commercial Area and North Conway Village Commercial Area districts from the front setback to allow for activities related to the primary building use such as outdoor restaurants or merchandise display. Additional requirements include:

    - Green space shall comprise 25% of the total lot area
    - Trees must be provided at a rate of 1/500 square feet of disturbed area; new 3" caliper trees and 12"+ caliper trees must be preserved within 70 feet of the building; 50% of the trees must be in parking areas; and street trees must be an appropriate species.

- **Parking (123-21)** – Off-street parking is required for commercial uses at the following rate: 1 space per 3 seats for restaurants; 1.1 spaces per unit in hotels, motels and lodges; 1 space per 200 s.f. for retail uses; and 1 space per 250 s.f. for business services, personal services and offices. Public parking lots within 400 feet can be used to reduce up to 20% of the required off-street private parking, but can not be more than 10% of the total spaces in the public parking lot. The public parking lot must also be off-street, in the same zoning district, have documented excess parking, and a recorded parking easement must be in place. On-street public parking cannot be credited for off-street spaces because of the possible re-use of the public right-of-way. These are fairly restrictive requirements and have a significant impact on the village centers in terms of maximizing building and property uses.

- **Historic Sites and Structures (123-33)** – It is requested, but not required, that applicants make every reasonable attempt to preserve, enhance and re-use historic sites and structures. This provision should probably be strengthened, particularly in the village centers.

- **Wheelchair Access (123-36)** – Adequate handicapped access is required unless it can be documented that it is not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). This section covers curb ramps, handicapped parking and adjoining access aisles, and wheelchair accessibility to the main entrance where practical.

- **Temporary Outdoor Display of Goods (123-41)** – This ordinance regulates outdoor merchandise sales, outdoor restaurant seating, and displays of art and merchandise. Site plan approval is required and the maximum area is the lesser of 1,000 square feet or 5% of interior floor area. One sales area is allowed per business, but it is not permitted within a public or private right-of-way. It must also be located within a covered sidewalk area or within five feet of a building and separated from parking by five feet. If public sidewalk space is expanded in the future in Conway Village and North Conway Village, this ordinance should be re-examine to consider the use of public sidewalk space for outdoor dinning.

Architectural Design (Section 123-40 of the Site Plan Regulations) – These guidelines provide design standards for development or renovation of commercial properties in town to compliment the overall "New England-style ambiance" of the community. The objective is to encourage continued economic development, conserve property values, and further enhance the visual appearance of the community. Specific guidelines include the following:

- Avoid monotony or warehouse style of structures. Variation in detail, form, and siting should be used to provide visual interest. Pitched roofs of 3:12 or greater should be used or gabled roofs, where practical.

- Where pitched roofs are not practical and for long commercial buildings (200 feet or more) false building fronts are encouraged to vary horizontal lines along portions of the façade and to create the appearance of multiple attached buildings.

- Rooftop mechanicals should not be visible from street level.

- Exterior surfaces of all buildings should be covered with wood, stone, brick or man-made materials that simulate natural materials. Pitched roofs should be constructed of shingles, metal, or other traditional regional materials.

- Windows should be comprised of no less than 5% of the exterior wall surface of the portion of the building facing the public right-of-way, parking area, or a development area on or off-site.

General Aesthetics Issues & Community Design Ideas

As indicated in Figure 9-1, the following are general aesthetic issues and community design ideas and recommendations for the town as a whole.

Ambient Lighting – In many communities large-scale commercial developments completed over the past several years have longer business hours and extensive, well-lit parking lots. This has often resulted in a cumulative increase in light pollution. Lighting of this type diminishes one's ability to view the night sky, which is so impressive in locations such as the Mount Washington Valley. The town has adopted lighting standards as part of the Zoning Ordinance and Site Plan Review Regulations requiring fixtures to be shielded in order to reduce external light from escaping. However, additional standards should be considered that establish a maximum lighting level (measured in foot-candles) based on actual need. Lighting, especially in commercial districts (such as on Route 16 "The Strip"), is often used

as a means of advertising rather than for security purposes. Lighting levels need to be controlled based on their intended purpose. Reducing foot-candles and the height of fixtures are good methods for limiting ambient light pollution.

Ridgeline Protection and Viewshed - Some of the most beautiful views in New England are in the Mount Washington Valley and along the main streets and back roads of Conway. However, extensive commercial development along major corridors, hillside residential development, and maturing trees have blocked or diminished a number of these views. While difficult to measure, the views of the mountain peaks, ridgelines and valleys are a significant factor in the local economy as tourists and residents alike are drawn in large numbers to the community. The town has adopted ridgeline protection measures into the Zoning Ordinance, which prevents most types of development above the 800-foot elevation level (only forestry and recreational uses are permitted). However, additional regulations should be considered at lower elevations to ensure that hillside residential development is below the existing tree canopy and that vegetative clearing and slope disturbance are minimized. Significant viewsheds from local roads should also be identified and protected through site layout and height restrictions based on foreground characteristics, rather than general dimensional requirements. The careful placement and maintenance of existing vegetation and new landscaping is also important in protecting scenic views.

Public & Private Signage – Public and private signs play an important role in conveying information and ideas to individuals for a variety of purposes. Signs can also contribute positively (or negatively) to a community's perceived character and quality. In Conway there are many examples of signs that portray a poor image of the community. Further, many public and private signs fail to deliver the messages that they were designed for due to their poor visibility or placement, confusing or distracting nature, or attempt to provide too much information. There are several areas along Route 16 in particular where poorly designed signs cumulatively create a cluttered and low quality image of this important commercial district.

The town has adopted strong sign regulations as part of the Zoning Ordinance that limits the placement, size and number of signs for individual sites. In an attempt to amortize poorly designed grandfathered signs, this ordinance also provides size bonuses if all other signs are in compliance with the requirements. However, this has had limited success. The key to facilitating good signage in Conway is establishing criteria based on functional requirements while allowing for a variety of alternatives, innovative designs, individual expression, and harmony with the surrounding environment. Basic sign design guidelines that should be considered (or re-evaluated) are as follows:

- **Form** – Effective signage is both simple and consistent in form allowing intended information to be easily understood.
- **Siting** – Siting should take into account the functional requirements and aesthetic consistency of the surrounding area. They should be grouped together in an orderly fashion where possible and tied in with other site elements. By integrating and clustering, information from multiple signs is communicated more readily.
- **Scale** – The necessary height and size of signs is determined by their location. Larger signs are necessary in auto-oriented districts and smaller ones in pedestrian oriented districts. However, lower scale signage with smaller message boards and lower profile can work well in commercial districts if they are brought closer to the street.
- **Materials and Color** – Encourage consistent use of materials (such as wood, metal and certain types of plastics), as well as creative and expressive use of these materials. Color is an important decision in terms of visual acceptability and neutral colors are typically the best alternative.
- **Graphics and Lettering** – Signage should be legible, using clear, high-contrast letters and symbols, easily read by moving traffic and pedestrians. Lettering should be clear and distinctive. Graphics attract attention more effectively than words. A clearly understood symbol can enhance sign quality. Some high quality signs (i.e. carved wood with gold leaf lettering) are not always clearly presented with high-contrast lettering making them difficult to read.
- **International Signs** – Universally recognized signs convey messages to a broad range of people by using pictures and symbols to aid the quick communication of directions, identification, regulations and other information across language barriers. These are particularly important in Conway because of the tourist orientation of the community.
- **Illumination** – Lighting is necessary for signage that needs to be seen at night. External lighting sources should be directed solely on the necessary information and with minimal brightness and glare. Well-designed fixtures are available that shield light and direct it to intended areas without glare.
- **Signage Themes** – Signage themes help establish an area as a visual unit and create a common character relating to a specific architectural or historic period.

Traditional signage themes are most suitable in areas of historic significance such as the various villages. However, a more contemporary design theme may be applicable to other areas of the community such as the Strip and Intervale.

Street Furnishings – There are minimal street furnishing around Conway except for a few benches and trash receptacles in and around the three Village areas and most of this furniture is privately owned. The town should identify specific locations where street furniture may be best utilized by pedestrians (both local and visiting) including pedestrian-level and overhead streetlights, trash receptacles, and planters. Materials and equipment should be distinctive and each village area should have its own unique character that can be tied together by uniform design.

Increased Residential Density – Traditional development patterns in Conway are higher density mixed use villages surrounded by rural lands including open farmlands, rolling meadows and forested hills. The predominate residential lot size requirement is one acre unless it is served by public water and/or sewer in which case ½ acre is required. These larger lot sizes are more suburban in nature and when residential development is done cumulatively or on a large scale this becomes very apparent. The typical lot size in the three villages is less than a ¼ acre and reducing the existing ½ acre requirement when served by sewer would allow the traditional development pattern to grow in keeping with the character of these areas. Beyond the villages, planned cluster development should be encourages to preserve open spaces, scenic views and rolling terrain.

Backside of Buildings – The rear areas of a number of buildings in Conway are cluttered with debris, trash receptacles, dumpsters, abandoned materials and excess equipment. Poorly maintain rear-building exteriors pose an aesthetic problem when they are visible to the general public. The town should consider developing guidelines to encourage proper maintenance including façade treatments, proper storage, and common screened dumpster areas where the opportunity exists.

Streetscape and Landscape Improvements – Uniform streetscapes along Conway's major corridors and village areas are an important long-term objective. Site Plan Review requirements have lead to well-landscaped private lots. However, there is often little coordination with adjacent sites or relationship to the public frontage space. The first step is to develop a tree inventory and planting plan. The town should consider developing a streetscape master plan, which identifies a range of street furniture, fixtures and trees that can be implemented incrementally through site plan design as well as by the town and state through highway improvement projects.

Public Parks – Local parks should be evaluated to determine if they are meeting the community's active and passive recreational needs. Future improvements in terms of landscaping, equipment, furniture, lighting, and maintenance should be identified and funding sources sought. Potential new park locations should be identified focusing on small neighborhood parks that provide basic recreational needs to surrounding residents.

Community Design Standards – Conway's Site Plan Review regulations contain design guidelines, which provide direction for private development in terms of scale, context, architectural quality, and parking layout in relation to general area where the project is located. The town should consider revising these guidelines to feature the individual character of the villages and other corridors that the community wishes to preserve and/or enhance through private development and public improvements.

Establish a Municipal Campus – In order to provide efficient and convenient municipal services to Conway residents and property owners, a shared civic space should be considered at the location of the Police Department and County Courthouse (East Conway Road) in Redstone. A campus-like setting with administrative, educational, emergency and infrastructure services could potential reduce duplication in services between districts, provide multiple uses of civic buildings and lands, and redevelopment opportunities for existing public facilities for other purposes.

Figure 9-1 Design Issues

Open Space Characteristics

The Trail System – Conway has an extensive network of trails serving a variety of purposes including hiking, biking, walking, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, mountain biking and horseback riding[6]. Many of these trails are not well documented for public use, yet they provide a significant recreational resource to local residents as well as tourists. They may also provide the spine for transportation alternatives to the automobile. A key design consideration for trail development is to provide strong terminuses such as connecting the three villages and other points of interest. Some potential new trail corridors include the Saco River, Swift River, the North-South Local Road, the Conway bypass, Routes 16 and 302, and West River Road. Other key design issues for existing and potential new

trails are the following:

- All trails should be well documented in terms of their location, purpose and relation to other community assets and points of interest. This information should be readily available to the public and considered an economic development tool for local businesses;
- Multi-use trails should be separate from traffic along major corridors. Where trails have to cross local roadways they should be designed to enhance safety. (i.e. the snowmobile crossing at Routes 16/302 and across the North-South Road);
- Trailheads should provide convenient opportunities for use as an alternative to the automobile by providing ample parking areas, attractive signage, and other amenities desired by the intended user;
- Trails should be well marked with locational maps and directional signage;
- Local trails should be connected to state and national trail systems in the region; and
- The various villages in Conway should be connected through a series of multi-purpose trails.

Figure 9-2 shows existing bikeways and large protected land parcels throughout Conway.

Preservation of Farmland and Open Space – Existing farmlands and open spaces in Conway represent some of the key aesthetic elements of the community together with the villages and ridgelines. Most of the remaining farms are located in the western section of town along West Side Road, as well as the eastern section of town along East Conway Road. A number of these farms and other open space areas may be subject to residential development over the next 10 years as the agricultural economy continues to change in the region and the demand for housing grows. In order to protect these important resources the town should consider the following:

- Provide information to property owners on agricultural tax and preservation programs available through the town, state and private foundations;
- Obtain easements to provide new trail corridors;
- Seek “right of first refusal” agreements giving the town an option to buy the property if it’s put up for sale;
- Establish or utilize an existing local land trust (such as the recently established Upper Saco Valley Land Trust) to create a funding mechanism for key farmland and open space acquisitions;
- Provide incentives for cluster/open space residential design to preserve as much of the farmland and open space as possible while allowing limited housing develop in less significant portions of the property; and
- Consider a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, which would allow property owners to sell the development rights to be used in a different area of town where growth is targeted.

River Corridor Protection – The Swift River and Saco River provide a significant natural resource and recreational opportunity for Conway, which should be protected and enhanced. Providing well-designed watercraft access points that connect to recreational facilities (i.e. parks and picnic areas), other means of transportation, and various point of interest in the community (i.e. the villages) are important design elements to be considered in river corridor planning.

Define Village Boundaries – The edges of the Conway and North Conway Village areas are dominated by scattered developed. An important design element that needs to be considered is strengthening the greenbelts or “gateways” to enhance the sense of arrival and distinction of these villages.

Establish Priorities for Infill & Redevelopment –There are many opportunities, based on the principles of smart growth, to increase density in built-up areas throughout Conway as an alternative to continuously expanding into undeveloped areas in a sprawling pattern of land use. There are particularly good opportunities in the three village areas for redeveloping vacant or underutilized buildings and parcels, expanding the mix of commercial and residential uses, and encouraging a gradual extension of the village core by contiguous new development. The Route 16 strip also provides ample opportunities for infill development where buildings have deep setbacks and excess parking. Infill in this corridor should be designed in architectural styles consistent with the rural nature of the community and utilize existing parking where possible.

Figure 9-2 Bikeways and major protected parcels

Transportation Issues and Design Concepts

Alternative Transportation – Well-designed alternative transportation systems, such as seasonal trolleys and multi-use paths, should be considered in Conway.

Transit systems have not been effective in previous attempts in the Mount Washington Valley region. However, a seasonal trolley could be viable if the stops are strategically located and connected to significant points of interest (i.e. retail shopping along the strip and the villages), integrated with other modes of travel and recreation such as multi-use trail systems, contain adequate parking, and provide other amenities desired by visitors such as bike and canoe rentals, storage areas, and tourist information.

Improve Directional Signage – A town-wide "wayfinding" sign system is needed to assist visitors find various points of interest throughout the Mount Washington Valley. A well-designed uniform directional sign system using similar dimensions, materials and colors would also portray a positive image of Conway to residents and visitors alike. Within this system, each village should have a variation in color and graphics signaling to visitors their arrival in distinct areas of the community. The directional signage system should also replace existing signage where possible and contain internationally recognized symbols for travelers.

Improve Parking Areas – Public and private parking areas throughout the community should be evaluated to determine if the existing requirements may need to be modified based on seasonal parking occupancy rates. Flexible parking standards can also produce better design and shared parking, satellite parking and internal connections between parking lots should also be encouraged throughout the community where possible.

Preserve Scenic Roads - There are eight (8) designated scenic roads in Conway, most of which are dirt roads in the southern portion of town. State law restricts the cutting of trees and the removal of stonewalls along scenic roads. The general intent of this legislative organization is the preservation of these corridors as attractive rural roads. There are potentially other local and state roads in Conway that could benefit from this scenic road designation in terms of preserving significant visual elements and community character. In terms of design issues, proposed developments on these corridors should be evaluated for consistent building setbacks and architectural character in context with the surrounding area, and the opportunity to extend important scenic elements such as stonewalls, fences or street trees.

Future Development Along the North-South Road – Regulations have been adopted in the Zoning Ordinance controlling future development along this new corridor as well as the proposed Conway bypass. Included in these regulations are strict controls over access, land uses, architectural design and building scale, signage, lighting, and vegetative buffer zones. The town must adhere strictly to these regulations and provide proper enforcement to ensure that the aesthetic quality of this corridor is maintained.

Route 16 Improvement Plan – The town should work closely with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to ensure that adequate pedestrian safety and uniform streetscape improvements are implemented as part of the corridor improvement plan. This should include a separated sidewalk with an adequate green strip on each side, uniform tree plantings and lighting within the green strip. The plan should also include intermittent center landscaped islands, where possible, to provide separation of traffic, visual attraction and a pedestrian refuge for those crossing the road.

Pedestrian Crosswalk Improvements – The town should develop uniform design standards for pedestrian crosswalks throughout the community that provide a clear indication to motorists to slow down and yield to pedestrians. These standards should provide for consistent paint colors, lettering and signage. They should also provide for a maximum crosswalk distance (i.e. 40 feet) without the use of additional safety devices such as curb extensions, center islands, or signals. New crosswalk locations should be identified and existing ones reconditioned under the new design standards. All crosswalks should be properly maintained.

Center Conway Village – Design Concepts

Center Conway Village is a traditional rural hamlet with a limited mix of older homes, civic buildings (i.e. the Town Hall and elementary school), places of worship, and small businesses. Growth potential is limited due to the lack of public water and sewer service, as well as the residents' interest in maintaining the rural character. Some residential development is likely to occur over the next 10 years, but primarily on the outskirts of the village center. Commercial growth potential is limited based on relatively low traffic volumes and population. Specific design issues, concepts and recommendations are as follows:

Streetscape Enhancements – Small improvements such as defining curb-cuts, planting new street trees, directional and welcome signs, and extending a bikepath connection to the other village areas would enhance the overall image of the village and create a sense of arrival in Center Conway. There are many beautiful street trees along Route 302 that should be preserved and maintained. At some locations new street trees could be planted to compliment the immediate vicinity and overall village character. There are also several shoulder areas along Route 302 that are open and unattractive. Limiting curb cuts and providing a more defined street edge (such as with concrete or granite curbing) would create a more orderly and attractive setting that provides separation between vehicles and pedestrians.

Public Water and Sewer Connection – The village is a significant distance from both the Conway Village Fire District (CVFD) and the North Conway Water Precinct (NCWP) water and sewer systems. However, over the next several years, water and sewer connection to Center Conway may be possible. Although this connection will create additional development potential and pressure on the village, it also provides opportunities to protect natural resources, public health, and facilitate quality development of an appropriate density and scale that contribute positively to the village.

Future Land Use - New development should be carefully sited in the village center to maintain and compliment existing key design features including existing setbacks and frontage, architectural styles and scale, landscaping, fencing and limited mixed use. In particular, commercial development must be designed to fit the small scale and rural character of Center Conway.

North Conway Village – Design Concepts

North Conway is the largest of Conway's three villages. It is a traditional mixed use district serving local and visitor needs. Businesses and homes in the village center have a distinct and modest architectural character and scale. This should be emphasized through the town's design standards as renovations and reuse take place in order to maintain the village's character.

Northern Gateway to the Village – For those entering Conway from the north, the Intervale area is the first impression they have of North Conway. There are a number of scenic views of Mount Washington, the Ledges, farmlands, and the Saco River as well as the approaching village. While there are a variety of businesses and architectural styles, the scale of buildings is generally consistent. Future development should maintain this scale with a particular emphasis on building setbacks and heights in order not to obstruct scenic views.

Southern Gateway to the Village – The approach into the village from Depot Street to Grove Street is a transition area from highway oriented strip development along Route 16 to the south and pedestrian orientation in the village to the north. This gateway can be enhanced by providing a uniform streetscape system with attractive street trees, directional signage and sidewalks, which would strengthen the arrival into the village.

Traffic and Circulation – With the addition of the North-South Road residents have an opportunity to get around the village center without entering Main Street as several streets will be connected providing improved internal circulation. Visitors also have the opportunity to bypass most of the village center, which should reduce congestion during peak hours. However, careful attention must be paid to the impact of this new roadway on the residential areas of the village, particularly Kearsarge Street. Left-turn movements to and from Main Street is also a concern.

Parking – While there is a significant amount of parking throughout the village center it is not always identified by visitors and needs to be managed. On-street parking on Main Street should be short-term spaces, with medium-term on side streets such as Norcross Circle, Kearsarge Street and Seavey Street. Off-street parking lots, such as behind the Chamber of Commerce, and new lots being developed off Depot Street and behind the Eastern Slope Inn should be designed as long-term parking for employees and customers. Additional parking can be added in certain areas of the village center. For example, parking around Norcross Circle can be re-organized and coordinated with adjacent private parking to provide several more spaces. In combination with better parking management and more efficient use of existing parking areas, parking requirements should be reduced to increase opportunities for infill development, rehabilitation and mixed-use buildings within the center, which is a key to the long-term economic and financial viability of the village area.

Signage – Public signage is generally poor in the village center. Many of the directional signs are unattractive and not visible to the intended user. A uniform wayfinding sign system is needed to direct visitors to public parking areas, local businesses (particularly on the side streets), and other points of interest. These should be strategically placed at the entrance points to and within North Conway so that both drivers and pedestrians can read them. They should be attractively designed and unique (including street signs) to North Conway with high quality materials and appropriate size and color.

Private business signage in the village center is generally attractive and scaled to fit the character of the area. General coordination of new business signage is necessary to highlight North Conway Village as an integrated and identifiable center of activity.

Streetscape Improvements – The existing streetscape of the village center is generally attractive and complimentary to adjacent buildings and uses. However, there are several improvements that would enhance the character of the area, improve the pedestrian environment, and define it as a center of commerce and activity.

Widening sidewalks, shortening crosswalks and providing street furnishings can improve pedestrian conditions in the village center. A potential opportunity to improve the pedestrian environment is through the planned NHDOT roadway reconstruction program for Route 16. Sidewalks on the east side of Main Street are fairly narrow (an average of 7 feet in width) with little landscaping. Reconfiguring the public right-of-way would provide the opportunity to expand the sidewalks (possibly to 15 feet) which would provide further possibilities to add more street trees, pedestrian-level lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and outdoor sidewalk dining that would greatly enhance the pedestrian as well as the business climate.

The crosswalks on Main Street and several of the sidestreets in the village center are very long (averaging 50 to 70 feet) and potentially dangerous. Providing curb extensions at these locations would shorten the crossing distance, reduce vehicle speed, and create an attractive streetscape element with landscaping opportunities. Creating a landscaped center median in portions of the village center would also provide a refuge for pedestrians crossing Main Street, as well as an attractive streetscape element that would further define the sense of arrival to North Conway as a place of activity.

Several sidestreets, including Kearsarge Street and Seavey Street, have no streetscape at all with asphalt paving across the entire length of the public right-of-way. In order to draw visitors off Main Street and provide a better businesses climate improvements are needed. There is enough width on these streets to maintain two-way traffic flow and parallel parking on each side while providing, curbing, greenstrips with street trees and a concrete sidewalks. This would create an attractive extension off Main Street and separate pedestrians from moving vehicles.

Placing overhead utilities underground or behind Main Street buildings would significantly enhance the village character and image. However, because these are distribution wires it may be difficult and expensive. The possibility of coupling this work with planned roadway improvements by NHDOT should be explored.

Schouler Park – The park is the main public gathering place in North Conway Village and provides a very attractive setting which compliments the built environment of the center as well as the scenic views of Mount Washington Valley. A number of enhancements could be made to the front portion of the park including redesigning the sidewalk to create a more attractive pedestrian setting by using a mix of surfaces (such as brick, stone and concrete), adding period lighting, sitting areas, and landscaping to separate pedestrians from the roadway and other park activities. This could also be the setting for new park activities such as a farmers market and art displays.

Future Land and Building Uses – Infill development on vacant or underutilized lots, rehabilitation of existing buildings, and expanding the types of mixed uses are critical to maintaining and enhancing the vitality of North Conway Village. The focus of future land uses should be on expanding both tourist opportunities and improving the quality of life for year-round residents. Side street mixed use (business and residential) is probably the best opportunity for improving the village center. However, streetscape improvements and a reduction in parking requirements combined with better parking management is necessary to facilitate this vision. Increased residential density (i.e. second floor apartments) is also important to providing year-round economic support in terms of employment and reasonably priced housing. However, building rehabilitation and renovation must be carried out in a compatible architectural style and scale to maintain the village center's character. The town should consider establishing a sign and façade improvement program, which would provide matching funds for private rehabilitation to ensure that they are designed a manner that complements the existing architectural character of the village.

Conway Village – Design Concepts

Conway Village is a small mixed-use center with commercial, recreational, educational, and civic uses. It is surrounded by a well-established neighborhood of predominantly year-round residents. Where North Conway Village is oriented to the tourist economy, Conway Village primarily services local residents. It is the first impression visitors have of the community as they travel from the south. Maintaining and enhancing the village as an attractive local center of activity is of primary interest and concern. Key design concepts and future land use goals for Conway Village include:

- Improve recreation opportunities by developing the new Conway Village Park (behind the Conway Village Fire Department), extend bike paths and trail systems that connect the park to other areas of town and the region, and expand active recreational uses at the Kennett Public High School.

- Development of a plan for the reuse of the Kearsarge Metallurgical brownfield site for passive recreational uses and improve the connection of this site to the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Preservation of the character of the Kennett Street neighborhood and enhance the use of Pequawket Pond through improved access, recreational facilities, and pathways. Improve connections to the village center with a bridge over the pond.

- Improve water quality and recreational opportunities at Pequawket Pond by working with NHDOT on proposed wetlands mitigation and possible public park development as part of the Conway bypass project.

- Expand public parking in the village center by increasing space and usage of the Kennett High School parking lot and working with local businesses to encourage employees to use off-street spaces.

- Use design standards to ensure that new development, building renovations, and accessories (i.e. signs, awnings, canopies) complement existing businesses and are in keeping with the scale and architectural character of the village center.

- Encourage mixed use of existing buildings with retail, restaurant and entertainment uses primarily on the ground floor and office and residential uses above.

- Maximize use and connection of Pequawket Pond to the Swift River in the village center by encouraging recreational uses such as small craft access, trails and rentals, as well as supporting types of businesses (i.e. viewing decks and outdoor dining), and trails.

- Make streetscape improvements within the village center to improve the sense of arrival and perception of the village as a place of activity. This can be accomplished with sidewalk planters, street banners, pedestrian-level lighting, "Welcome" and directional signage to points of interest and public parking, and center landscaped islands in selected locations.

Figure 9-3 illustrates design options for both Conway Village and North Conway Village.

Figure 9-3 design concepts Town of Conway

The Route 16 Strip – Design Concepts

This corridor provides a dramatic approach to Conway from the south with several spectacular scenic views of Mount Washington, rock ledges, rolling hills, and open valleys. The corridor is also an important commercial district. However, there are several areas where buildings are obstructing views and poorly designed sites, with expansive parking and signage, detract from the corridor's natural beauty, especially along the west side of the corridor where most of the scenic vistas of Mount Washington Valley are located. The narrow strip of land between the roadway and the Saco River limits flexibility in terms of commercial site design and layout that would fit more naturally into the foreground of the scenic vistas in the distance. Even commercial landscaping and natural vegetative growth can obstruct scenic views to the west. The result of decades of uncoordinated commercial growth has been several unattractive buildings, short setbacks that block scenic views, expansive parking area with limited landscaping, and poorly designed and oversized signage.

Roadway Reconstruction & Design: Planned reconstruction of Route 16 by NHDOT provides an important opportunity to redesign the corridor as an attractive yet commercially viable approach to the northern portion of the Mount Washington Valley. However, significant design changes will be difficult without the cooperation of adjacent property owners in terms of consolidating curb cuts in numerous locations, redesigning and downsizing several business signs, and providing internal connection and compatibility between adjacent developments. If these changes can be coordinated between property owners, better opportunities could be created to provide landscaped center islands and greenstrip extensions where right and left-turn lanes are no longer needed. Provided this can be achieved, the business community and town should work with NHDOT to maintain the existing 3-lane cross section with additional width to provide: right turn lanes (only where there are particularly heavy volumes); a separate and well-marked bike lane on each side; landscaped planting strips; and separated sidewalks on each side.

Future Commercial Development - Future commercial development should emphasize preserving (or re-establishing) scenic views. Building height and setbacks from the roadway should be based on this objective rather than meeting set requirements, particularly on the west side of the corridor. Architectural styles and materials should enhance community character particularly for commercial developments located directly on the roadway.

The edge of the right-of-way can be strengthened through a tree and shrub-planting program. Access points and screening of parking areas is also important. Placing overhead wires underground (possibly as part of the NHDOT reconstruction program) would also improve the overall aesthetic character of the corridor as well as scenic views of the Mount Washington Valley.

The town should consider an overlay district for areas directly abutting the roadway (similar to the ordinance for the North-South Road) that would provide new opportunities for quality infill development. Emphasis should be on architectural style, scale and material of buildings, internal connections with adjacent developments to consolidate curb cuts and improve internal access, landscaping, and positioning of buildings to preserve or enhance scenic vistas.

Other Community Design Issues, Concepts and Ideas

Several other land use issues where identified during the master planning process that were further considered during public meetings conducted during the *Designing Conway's Future* workshops. These issues include:

- Mobile home parks offer an important option for providing affordable housing option. However, mobile home parks should be properly sited and designed so as not to compete with other town aesthetic and economic planning objectives, as well as minimize impacts on the natural environment.
- Establishing a permanent location for a farmer's market, which would provide economic opportunities for regional farmers, as well as create vitality and community gathering opportunities, that features important public spaces.
- Expanding the pubic water and sewer systems throughout Conway provides more opportunities to facilitate creative design, infill development and preserve open spaces.
- Obtaining a "Main Street" designation for Conway Village and North Conway Village under the New Hampshire Main Street Program in order to utilize their services, resources, and funding for organizational, design, economic, and promotional activities.

6. Implications for the Future

Based on the "snapshot" of existing land use conditions in town, it is clear that a substantial amount of Conway's land area still remains largely undeveloped. However, growth trends discussed in the Population and Housing Chapter of this plan indicates that the town will have to make some important decisions about how the remaining land base will be used to support future growth. These decisions will determine whether or not land in Conway is used in the most efficient manner possible to accommodate expected growth, while not detracting from the natural and scenic beauty, and perceived high quality of life associated with this open space.

In terms of community design issues a variety of conceptual design elements have been discussed throughout this chapter for the town as a whole, as well as for each respective village. During the numerous public meetings held for this master plan update, participants have clearly stated that community design elements are becoming increasingly important to the character and attractiveness of Conway. As a tourist and retail destination, the town needs to pay special attention to existing design features throughout the community and provide approaches for considering design related impacts during the review of development proposals. This type of action will require changes to existing planning regulations (zoning ordinance, etc.) and policies, the allocation of additional resources and investment to improve community design features, and the creation of partnerships with local business establishments, non-profit agencies and community groups to work through design issues on a local level. Highway and road improvements slated to proceed throughout the town over the next decade offer an excellent opportunity to work towards incorporating these design concepts throughout Conway.

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[1] This estimate is similar to the total land area estimate presented in a 2000 land use inventory report prepared by the Conway Planning Department.

[2] It should be noted that the MC district is an overlay zone and therefore overlaps a considerable portion of the neighboring RR district. As such, the acreage estimate within the MC district incorporates acres within both the MC and RR districts. Therefore, the aggregated acreage total for all of the town's zoning districts is overstated as compared to Table 9-1 (Total Acres by Land Use Type).

[3] Qualified land is defined as land that is suitable for development based on an analysis of topography, slopes and soil suitability.

[4] Existing residence with a minimum of a three acre parcel of land.

[5] Due to severe topographical features, development restrictions and other constraints, the gross acreage estimates used for the RR and MC zoning districts represent acres that potentially *could* be developed and not the aggregate acreage for each zoning district.

[6] Additional information on Conway's trails and bicycle routes is available in Chapter 6 (Recreation) and Chapter 7 (Transportation Assessment).