

**CONWAY PLANNING BOARD
AND MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

JULY 13, 2023

PAGES

1

Work Session

**CONWAY PLANNING BOARD
AND MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

JULY 13, 2023

A meeting of the Conway Planning Board and the Master Plan Steering Committee was held on Thursday, July 13, 2023 beginning at 5:30 pm at the Conway Town Office, Conway, NH. Those present were: Chair, Benjamin Colbath; Vice Chair, Ailie Byers; Secretary, Erik Corbett; Bill Barbin; Eliza Grant; Mark Hounsell; Alternate Ted Phillips; Jac Cuddy; Ben Wilcox; Kate Richardson; Jason Gagnon; Jean Bean; Debra Haynes; Barbara Lyons; Deputy Town Manager/Town Engineer, Paul DegliAngeli; Town Planner, Ryan O'Connor; and Planning Assistant, Holly Whitelaw.

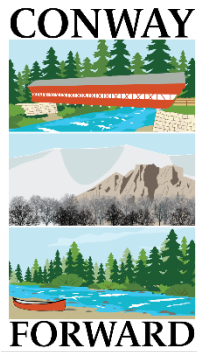
WORK SESSION

The Board and Committee followed the attached Meeting Agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Holly L. Whitelaw
Planning Assistant



MEETING AGENDA

7.13.2023
5:30 – 7:00 PM

CONWAY MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING #4

Conway Town Office
23 Main Street
Conway, NH

MEETING OVERVIEW & PREPARATION

Meeting Purpose

- To review findings from SE Group's analysis of transportation networks, community facilities, and natural resources in Conway.
- To hear reflections from Steering Committee members on analysis results and potential areas of focus for the Master Plan. This will be a high-level discussion on potential focus areas. The feedback received will inform our next steps for discussion, public engagement, analysis, and strategy development on these topics.

Pre-Meeting Preparation

Since we have limited meeting time and many voices to hear from, we are expecting that Steering Committee members will have completed the following tasks prior to the meeting.

- Review the *Transportation & Community Facilities* and *Natural Resources* memos. Each memo contains a high-level summary of key findings and takeaways, as well as detailed analysis.
- Provide your feedback on the findings in memos using this brief survey:
<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7420992/Conway-Master-Plan-Steering-Committee-Transportation-Community-Facilities-and-Natural-Resources-Reflections>
 - Please provide your feedback by **Wednesday, 7/12**.

AGENDA DETAILS

NOTE: This meeting is a work session of the Town of Conway Planning Board and is open to members of the public. Steering Committee members should plan to arrive 5 minutes early to ensure a prompt start.

5:30 – 5:35 pm	Review of Agenda & Meeting Procedures
5:35 – 5:40 pm	Overview of Upcoming Public Engagement
5:40 – 6:05 pm	Transportation Memo Discussion

6:05 – 6:30 pm

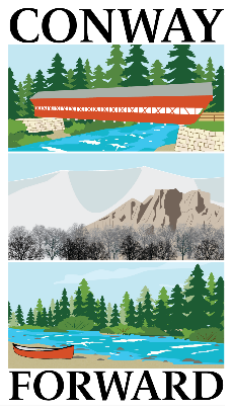
Community Facilities Discussion

6:30 – 6:55 pm

Natural Resources Memo Discussion

6:55 – 7:00 pm

Wrap Up & Next Steps



WATER & WASTEWATER FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY

6.14.2023

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Deputy Town Manager

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

Introduction

To inform potential water and wastewater policy recommendations for the Conway, NH Master Plan, the Town convened a focus group on May 11th, 2023 consisting of local residents, water and sewer precinct staff, and organizational representations.

Participants: Jason Gagnon (North Conway Water Precinct); Gary Chandler (Lower Bartlett Water Precinct); Paul DegliAngeli (Deputy Town Manager); Andrew Smith (Public Works Director); Mark Hounsell (Planning Board); Bruno Vallieres (Conway Village Fire District); Bill Hounsell (resident); Jen Stillwell (MWV Housing Coalition); Deb Haynes (Master Plan Steering Committee)

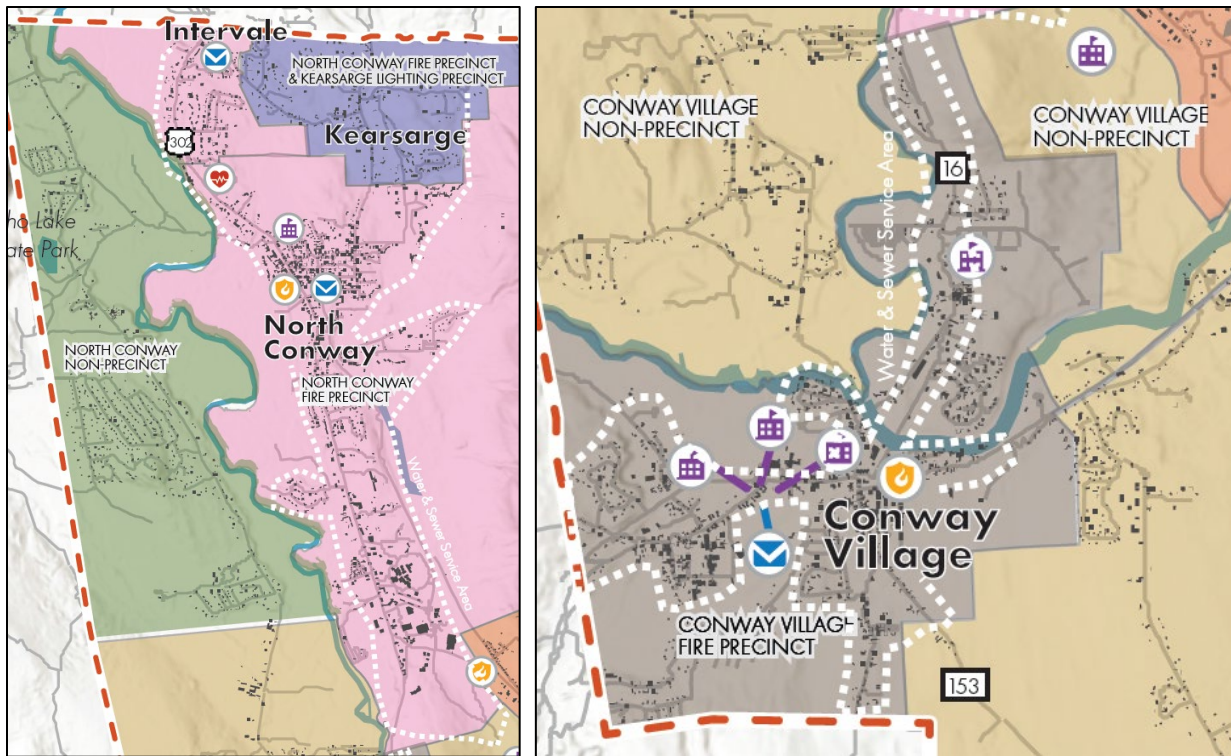
Staff & Consulting Team: Jamel Torres (Town Planner); Julia Randall (SE Group); Alex Belenz (SE Group)

Part 1: Vision for Water & Wastewater

The meeting began with a broad discussion of the history and purpose of water and wastewater infrastructure in Conway. The identified purposes of the municipal water and wastewater systems were:

- Life safety – providing a water source for fire suppression
- Protecting the quality of surface waters and groundwater
- Providing safe drinking water
- Supporting economic development

Next, there was discussion around whether the water and wastewater systems were achieving the intended purposes of those systems. Overall, there was agreement that these were achieving the intended purpose, but that there was room for improvement. These systems could be better utilized and expanded to support further economic development opportunities while protecting water resources.



Combined water and sewer service areas in the Town of Conway

In the subsequent discussion, a number of water and wastewater-related issues and opportunities were discussed:

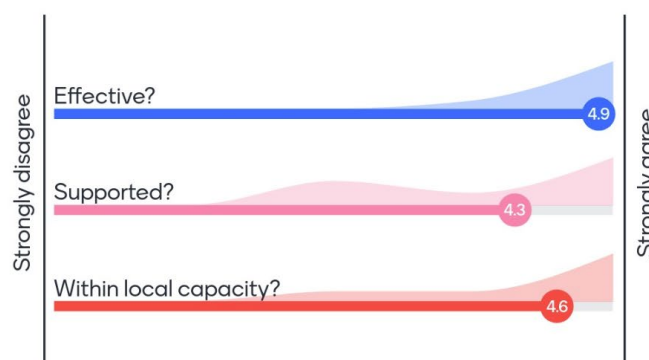
- There are currently 27 private community water systems in Conway that serve various residential developments. The vast majority of these systems were built “on the cheap” before current regulations, and nearly all have problems. These problems include insufficient capacity due to higher water demand, water quality issues (e.g., arsenic, manganese), and substandard infrastructure quality (many undersized pipes made from cheap plastics). The ability for residential associations to raise the capital needed to upgrade these systems is very limited. There was discussion about integration of these residential areas into Town/precinct water systems.
 - Some of these water systems are located on or off of West Side Rd. This area could be a candidate for water system expansion, but wastewater should be avoided given the environmentally-sensitive area (floodplain, wetlands, agricultural lands).
- Similarly, some existing private community septic systems are being overloaded due to new units and/or short-term rental use.
- Despite these challenges with existing private community water and wastewater systems, these systems could be considered for potential future housing growth areas that are not priorities for municipal water and sewer. Conway is fortunate to have sandy soils that can accommodate significant septic loads.
- There was discussion of a future municipal water and sewer service expansion out to Center Conway, East Conway Rd and Redstone, which would create a desirable loop system and support potential housing growth areas.
 - An initial expansion could go from the strip to East Conway Rd through Redstone, then subsequently expand east along East Conway Rd before looping back through Center Conway. There is a need to consider the East Conway and Center Conway expansions somewhat separately since the areas are divided by the Saco River.
 - There was significant concern from residents in Redstone about a previously proposed water and sewer expansion. There was discussion about the need for education and outreach about the goals of the project, as well as aligning zoning

- with any proposed expansion to promote desired growth and limit undesired growth stemming from the water/sewer expansion.
 - This flowed into a discussion about the need to educate residents on water and wastewater systems more broadly.
- There was discussion about balancing maintenance of the current system versus expansion. Conway Village has made progress towards replacement of existing pipe but is still somewhat behind after many decades of deferred maintenance. There was discussion about improving management of current assets before expansion is undertaken.
- For future expansions, the Town should proactively pursue state/federal grants and financing programs (e.g., State Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund), as well as seek contributions from larger private developers. There was discussion about how larger expansion projects should be originated at the Town level instead of the precinct level in order to be successful, especially given that North Conway Water Precinct is mostly built-out within its jurisdiction.
- There was discussion about additional aquifer protections to ensure drinking water quality.
- Rising costs of water system compliance are anticipated as new contaminants are identified and new regulations come online (PFAS is one recent example, likely to be others in the future).
- It was noted that the timing of the Master Plan is ideal for considering the future of water and wastewater systems. The Town is absorbing the Conway Village system, there is a new selectboard, and a Town charter commission is being formed. These new governmental structures will give the Town some experience in administering local services on a Town-wide scale.

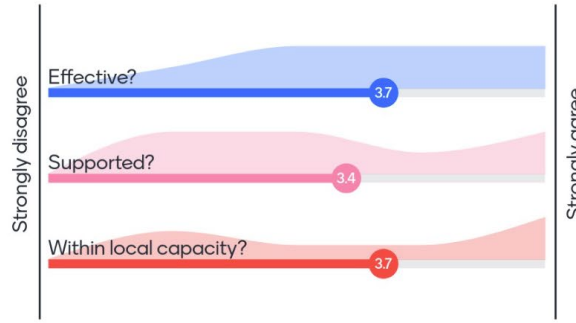
Part 2: Policy and Strategy Exercise

Participants engaged in a live polling exercise for specific policies and strategies around water and wastewater infrastructure. The goal of the exercise was to gauge potential strategies based on three criteria:

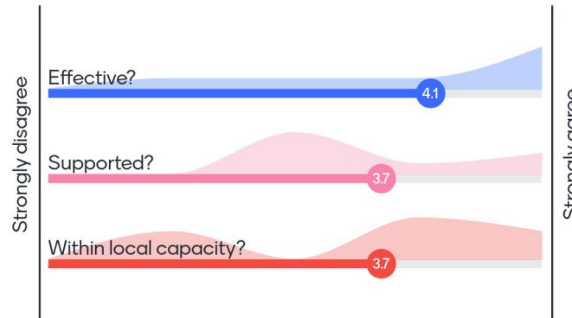
- **Effectiveness:** Would this strategy be effective in Conway? (1 = very ineffective; 5 = very effective)
 - **Support:** How likely would the community be to support this strategy? (1 = very unlikely; 5 = very likely)
 - **Capacity:** Do you feel that the Town of Conway and its partners currently have the capacity and resources to implement this strategy? (1 = capacity/resources are significantly lacking; 5 = could be easily implemented using existing resources and capacity)
1. **Increase protections around local aquifers, such as further limiting development through land use regulation and/or permanently protecting groundwater recharge areas.**



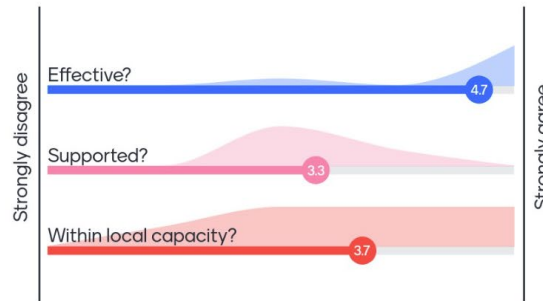
- Through land use regulation, incentivize denser development within areas already served by water and sewer infrastructure.



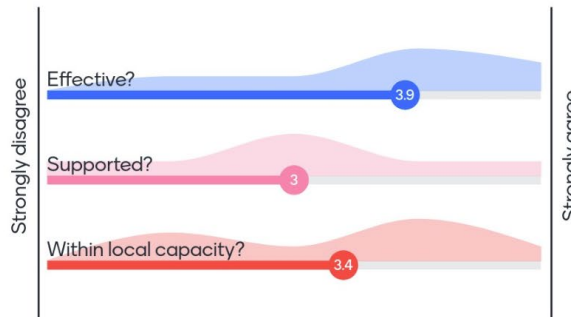
- Extend water and sewer to the Industrial-2 zoning district along East Conway Rd to support further industrial development.



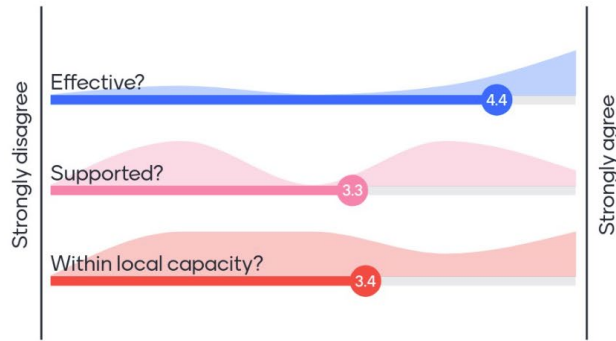
- Extend water and wastewater infrastructure to Center Conway Village.



- Extend municipal water service to underperforming private community water systems, such as Hales Estates.



6. As part of a larger redevelopment planning initiative, proactively extend water and sewer infrastructure to future growth areas.





COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY 6.14.2023

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Jamel Torres, Town of Conway Planning Director

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

Introduction

To inform potential land use policy recommendations for the Conway, NH Master Plan, the Town convened a focus group on May 10th, 2023 consisting of local residents, businesses owners, and organizational representations.

Participants: Nik Stanciu (Tuckerman Brewing Company); Michael Mitchrone (OVP Management); Steve Porter (Selectman/Planning Board), Kate Richardson (Bergeron Technical Services); Erik Corbett (Planning Board); Jac Cuddy (MWV Economic Council); Michelle Cruz (MWV Chamber of Commerce); Ben Colbath (Planning Board); Alec Tarberry (Berry Companies)

Staff & Consulting Team: Jamel Torres (Town Planner); Julia Randall (SE Group); Alex Belenz (SE Group)

Part 1: Discussion of Commercial Development in Conway

The meeting began with an open-ended discussion on commercial development in Conway. The following were key themes that emerged from the discussion:

Misalignment of Commercial Development Policies and Community Goals

- The Town's land use regulations around commercial development are currently "one size fits all" and need to be "right sized" for different scales of development. In attempting to regulate large-scale commercial development in Conway (e.g., big box stores), the Town has created a review and approval process that is very difficult and expensive for smaller businesses and developers to navigate. Site plan review was noted as being particularly costly onerous for small businesses, but something that a larger developer can more easily absorb the costs of. This has enabled the proliferation of chain businesses and made it more difficult for locally owned businesses to gain necessary approvals in Conway.
- This also impacts the viability of small-scale commercial development in village centers. Additionally, the current land use regulations (especially site plan requirements) don't

adequately recognize and enable mixed-use development (e.g., ground-level retail with apartments above), which is desired in villages. There was concern amongst the group that the land use regulations will prevent future redevelopment of North Conway Village.

- The Town’s land use districts function as “catch all” districts. In particular, the Highway Commercial District is seen as too broad, with undesired development occurring in places like Intervale. There was discussion about limiting large-scale commercial development to the area around Settler’s Green, as well as managing building heights to preserve existing viewsheds.
- There was agreement that large-scale commercial development is outstripping housing availability, and that there needs to be a linkage between the two.
- There was agreement about managing future large hotel development, with the distinction that redevelopment of existing hotels and motels should handled differently than new construction.

Prioritize, Protect, and Reinvest in Conway’s Villages

- North Conway Village is well-established a tourist destination. The current identity and future of Conway Village and Center Conway is somewhat less clear. These villages should be the focus of locally-oriented commercial development in the future.
- Future commercial development efforts and policies in Conway Village and Center Conway could focus on the development of local, small-scale commerce and industry (as well as housing) with adequate wages so that locals can live and work in village centers. In addition to changes in land use regulations, this would also entail needed investments in infrastructure (water/wastewater, sidewalks, park facilities, etc).

Part 2: Visioning Exercise – Future of Commercial Development in Conway

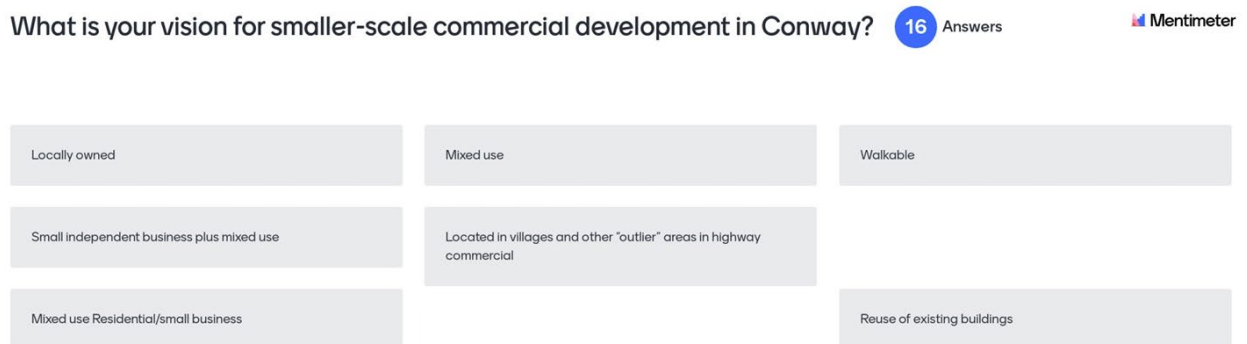
Participants engaged in a live polling exercise and discussion aimed at establishing a vision for future commercial development in Conway. The exercise was broken out into three categories: small-scale commercial development, large-scale commercial development, and overnight accommodations.

What is your vision for smaller-scale commercial development in Conway?

Discussion:

- Participants agreed that smaller-scale commercial development (e.g., village-style, mixed-use) should be prioritized in the Master Plan, particularly in villages and adjacent areas.

Polling Results:



-welcoming facades/colors-no AC units, mishmashed blinds-an obvious uniformity in design-local businesses only-patios. Lots of patios-seasonal flowers-obvious pedestrian pathways	Brick walk ways	Flat roofs?
Art district-Museums-Art/Science music venues-cafes	Bring in more small business space that fits our vision and style concept from years ago	Cost of site plan review is cost prohibitive
Town needs to be more involved with commercial development from a conceptual basis before site plan application		

How should the Town of Conway address smaller-scale commercial development in its land use regulations?

Discussion:

- There was agreement that current land use regulations, particularly site plan review requirements, are daunting and costly for small businesses and need to be “right sized” for different scales of development.

Polling Results:

How should the Town of Conway address small-scale commercial development in its land use regulations?

11 Answers

-fast track it	Make application process more accommodating to smaller scale businesses	Varied requirements based on zoning districts
Find the magic number for square footage that is enticing for small businesses but not feasible for box stores	Lower hurdles for smaller and/or locally owned business	Treat village areas similar to malls regarding parking.
Incentivize via thresholds of staying in business long term	No/limited taxes/fees upfront for REDEVELOPMENT vs NEW development	Reduce bonding/surety requirements
Design the land use regulations to ensure that the development footprint doesn't infringe on the visual aesthetic. Require green space-trees, plants that are native to the area.	Spread the opportunity across the valley...Create mixed use options across all districts...but design regulations that fit the vision of that district.	

What is your vision for larger-scale commercial development in Conway?

Discussion:

- Large-scale commercial development should be limited to targeted areas with limited impacts to viewsheds.
- Large-scale commercial development should be linked to housing development.

Polling Results:

What is your vision for larger-scale commercial development in Conway?

13 Answers

Limit it to 'The Strip'	Using existing large scale lots as the only areas to continue that size development	Would like to limit the size of larger scale building with more green space and less asphalt parking
Limit large scale projects to between bowling alley hill and artist falls road	Charge extra \$ psf to go into a housing or similar local fund. Is that legal?	Require housing units on a per SF basis
Larger frontage set backs	Less parking necessary for big box traditional retail	Help bare the burden of housing needs
Review rear building facades with same detail of front facades	To create change needed stop large scale for period of years, "put hold" on large scale development.	Architectural standards need to be more clear
How much more do we really need?		

How should the Town of Conway address larger-scale commercial development in its land use regulations?

Discussion:

- Break up the Highway Commercial zoning district and focus large-scale commercial development in a smaller area around Settler's Green.
- Require that large-scale developers provide housing or pay into a housing fund.

Polling Results:

How should the Town of Conway address larger-scale commercial development in its land use regulations?

13 Answers

Incentivize REDEVELOPMENT not New development	What Nik said	Reduced the number of required parking spaces
Consider regulation that requires new large scale developments fit into our revitalizing goals	Reduce parking requirements	Encourage building up and disincentivize sprawl.
Also limit the places that they are slowed	Remove area north of North Conway from HC district	Incentivize maintaining quality green space, not always more/new green space
Incentivize mixed use	How much more do we really need?	More camping!
I am not sure we need more overnight accommodations.		

What is your vision for future development of overnight accommodations in Conway?

Discussion:

- “Runaway” development of new hotels needs to be addressed.
- New development should not block views.

Polling Results:

What is your vision for future development of overnight accommodations in Conway?

7 Answers



How should the Town of Conway address future development of overnight accommodations in its land use regulations?

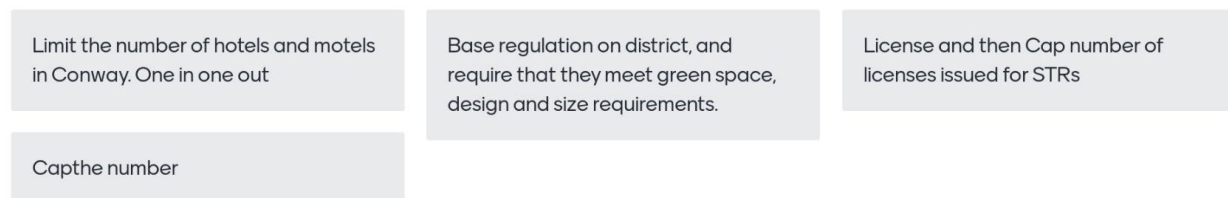
Discussion:

- Consider a cap the number of rooms within new hotel developments, as well as an overall Town-wide cap.

Polling Results:

How should the Town of Conway address development of overnight accommodations in its land use regulations?

4 Answers

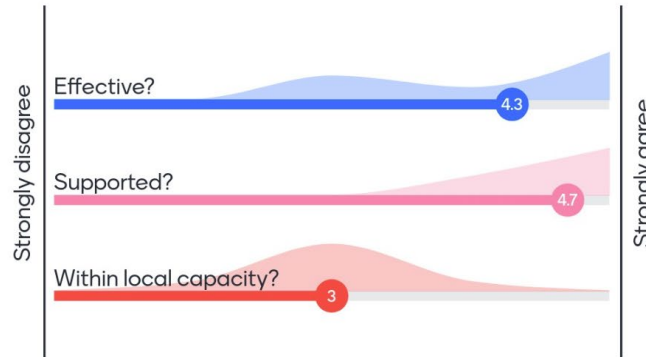


Part 3: Commercial Development Policy Evaluation

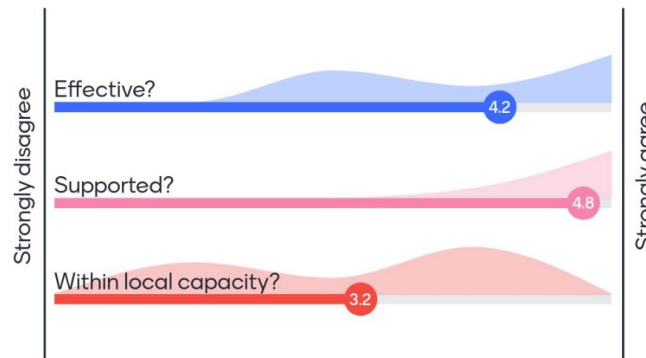
Participants engaged in a live polling exercise for specific policies and strategies around commercial development. The goal of the exercise was to gauge potential strategies based on three criteria:

- **Effectiveness:** Would this strategy be effective in addressing known commercial development needs in Conway? (1 = very ineffective; 5 = very effective)
- **Support:** How likely would the community be to support this strategy? (1 = very unlikely; 5 = very likely)

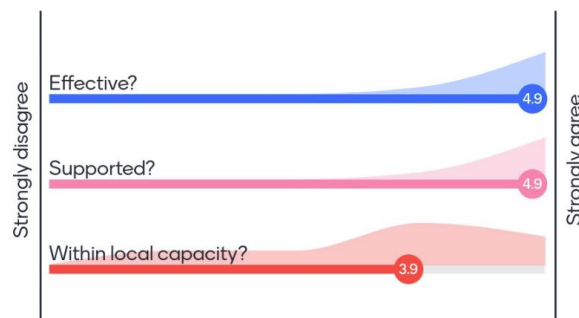
- **Capacity:** Do you feel that the Town of Conway and its partners currently have the capacity and resources to implement this strategy? (1 = capacity/resources are significantly lacking; 5 = could be easily implemented using existing resources and capacity)
1. **Reduce the size of Highway Commercial zoning district so that it no longer includes the Intervale area or the area along NH 16 from the Saco River to Veno's Specialty Foods. Promote smaller-scale, mixed-use development in these areas.**



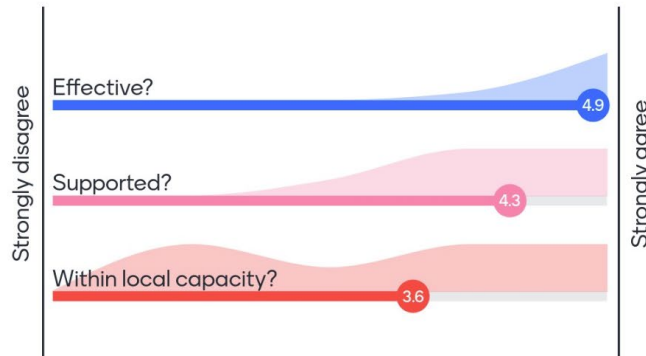
2. **Promote mixed-use development (e.g., apartments over ground-floor retail) in village areas by providing incentives for including housing in small-scale commercial developments (e.g., reduced water/sewer hookup fees, density bonuses).**



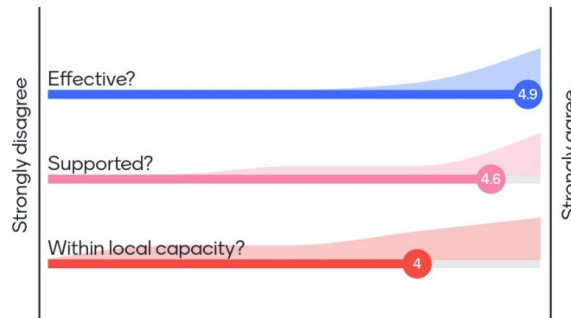
3. **Restrict new large-scale commercial development (e.g., hotels, big-box stores) to the area around Settler's Green.**



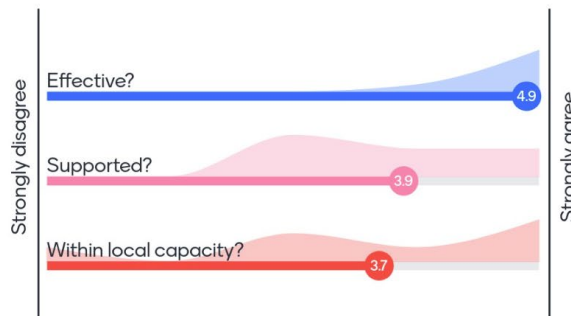
- Adopt a commercial linkage fee program, in which commercial developments over a certain size must provide a certain number of workforce housing units or a fee-in-lieu of those units.



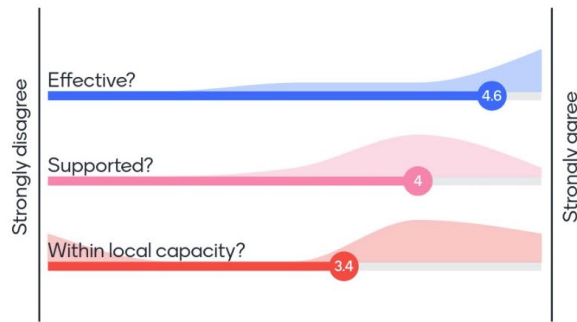
- In walkable village areas, relax minimum parking requirements to help facilitate infill development.



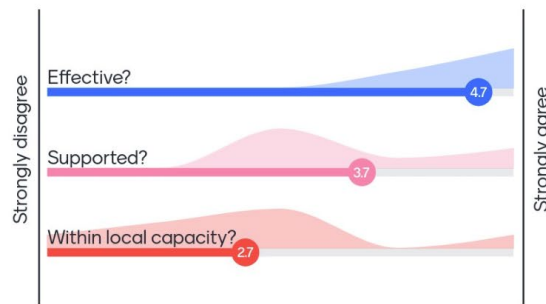
- Offer a “height bonus” to mixed-use commercial developments if the additional height is used for housing units (i.e., allow mixed-use development to build one story higher than commercial-only development).



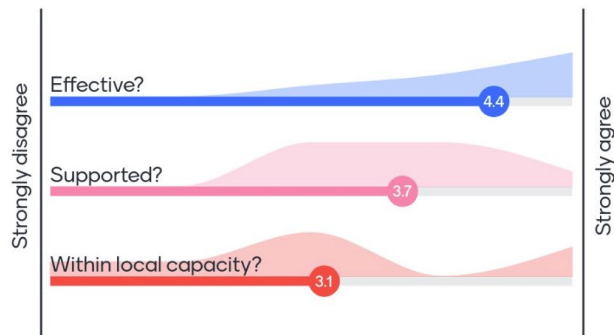
- Legalize the adaptive reuse of hotel buildings for residential or mixed-use development.

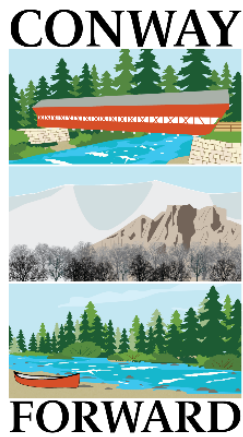


8. Create a new Housing & Economic Development Coordinator position within the Planning & Zoning Department to be responsible for administering housing and commercial development applications, coordinating with housing and economic development partners, creating and stewarding a long-term economic development strategy, and pursue grants and other funding sources to support local workforce and housing development initiatives.



9. Develop a community economic development advisory body to advise and coordinate on short-term and long-term economic development strategy (possibly staffed by Economic Development Coordinator).





HOUSING POLICY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY

6.14.2023

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Deputy Town Manager

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

Introduction

To inform potential housing and land use policy recommendations for the Conway, NH Master Plan, the Town convened a focus group on May 11th, 2023 consisting of local residents, businesses owners, and organizational representations. The purpose of the focus group was to identify priority areas for new housing development and evaluate potential policy solutions and strategies aimed around improving housing options and affordability.

Participants: Eliza Grant (Planning Board/Bluebird); Ailie Beyers (Planning Board), Bill Barbin (Planning Board); Josh McCallister (HEB Engineers); Kit Hickey (Bluebird); Andrew Dean (Cooper Cargill Chant/MWV Housing Coalition); Josh Brustin (Pinkham Real Estate/MWV Housing Coalition); Jen Stilwell (MWV Housing Coalition); George Reagan (NH Housing Finance Authority); Steve Johnson (Moat Mountain)

Staff & Consultant Team: Jamel Torres (Town Planner); Julia Randall (SE Group); Alex Belenz (SE Group)

Part 1: Housing Needs Discussion

The meeting began with an open floor discussion on housing needs in Conway. The following were key themes that emerged from the discussion:

- An “all of the above” strategy is needed for new housing development: single-family homes, “missing middle” (duplexes, triplexes) in village areas, affordable/workforce multi-family apartments, accessory dwellings, long-term rentals and homeownership opportunities.
- There has been local support for recent efforts to add more affordable/workforce housing, including from neighbors within village areas. Anecdotally, there has been enthusiasm about adding more residential units within village areas specifically.

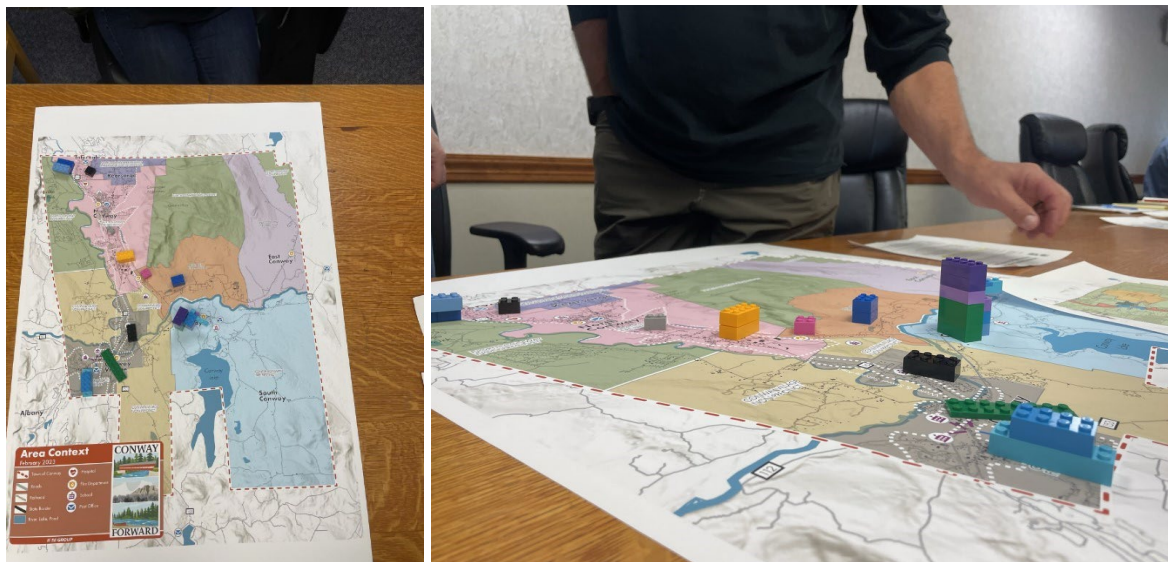
- Existing areas served by water/wastewater infrastructure should be the focus for dense development, but the Master Plan should consider new housing focus areas using proposed water and sewer expansions.
- The Town’s zoning has “aged out” - it is set up as if Conway were a much smaller community. For example, the Agricultural-Residential district is too broad and should be further refined to identify areas that are appropriate for future housing growth and areas that should be preserved as rural, working landscapes or intact forest. This could include refining density standards, minimum lot sizes, developing conservation subdivision standards, and other zoning tweaks.
- There is some affordable housing development in the pipeline; however, to-date, developers have not taken advantage of the affordable housing incentives in the current zoning code.
- Even in areas not served by water and sewer infrastructure, the sandy soils in Town permit a greater reliance on septic systems than is possible in other places.

Part 2: Housing Focus Areas Map Exercise

For this exercise, participants split into two groups and used Lego bricks to place approximately 575 new units of housing in Conway. The 2023 *Regional Housing Needs Assessment* projects that Conway will need add 575 new units of housing (of all types) by 2040 to keep up with market demand.

Group A:

The first group placed mostly larger multi-family apartment developments along East Conway Rd, the current Highway Commercial Zone, and near Center Conway, which would necessitate water and sewer system expansions. Other housing development opportunity areas were in Conway Village (in the vicinity of Tuckerman Brewing) and lands behind Avesta, north of North Conway Village. This group also highlighted an opportunity for more mixed-use buildings along the Route 16 strip towards North Conway Village.



Group B:

The second group identified similar opportunity for new housing growth areas (East Conway Rd, Center Conway, Highway Commercial, Village areas). The group identified South Conway as an area

that could also receive smaller-scale housing development such as additional single-family homes and duplexes.

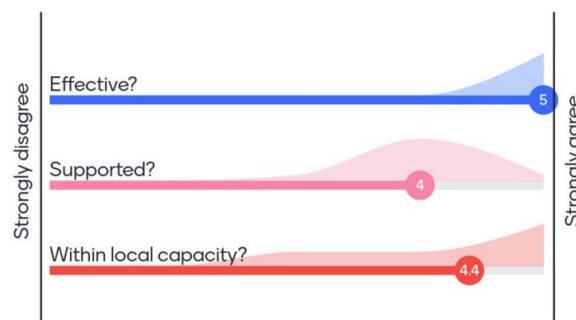


Part 3: Housing Policy Evaluation

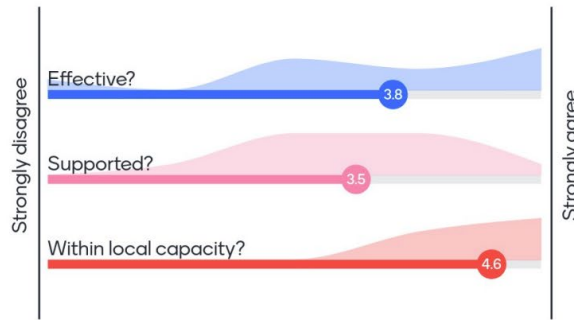
Participants engaged in a live polling exercise for specific policies and strategies around housing development and affordability. The goal of the exercise was to gauge potential strategies based on three criteria:

- **Effectiveness:** Would this strategy be effective in addressing known housing needs in Conway? (1 = very ineffective; 5 = very effective)
- **Support:** How likely would the community be to support this strategy? (1 = very unlikely; 5 = very likely)
- **Capacity:** Do you feel that the Town of Conway and its partners currently have the capacity and resources to implement this strategy? (1 = capacity/resources are significantly lacking; 5 = could be easily implemented using existing resources and capacity)

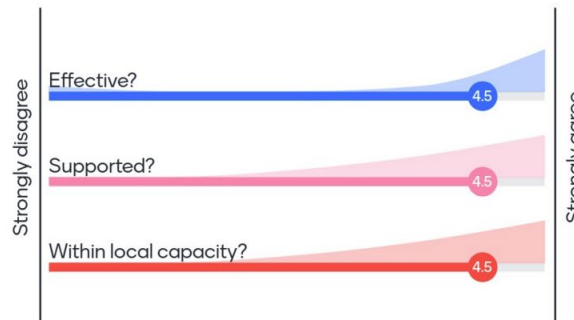
1. Permit increased housing density in areas served by water and wastewater infrastructure.



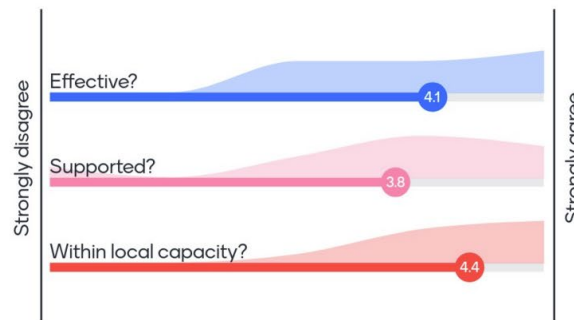
2. Establish a minimum mandatory housing density for new housing development in village areas where new housing developments must contain at least two units (e.g., duplex or single-family home with accessory structure).



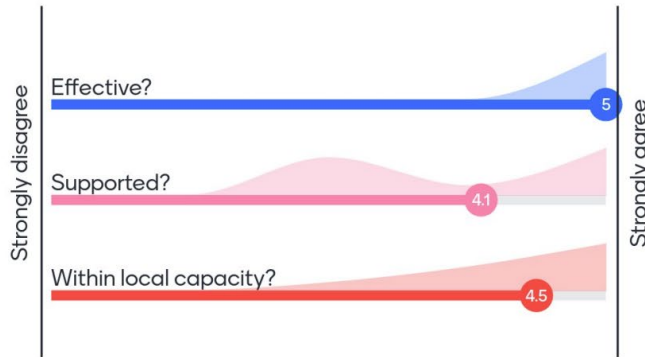
3. Provide incentives for including affordable units within new market-rate housing developments, such as a density bonus that permits additional units to be constructed.



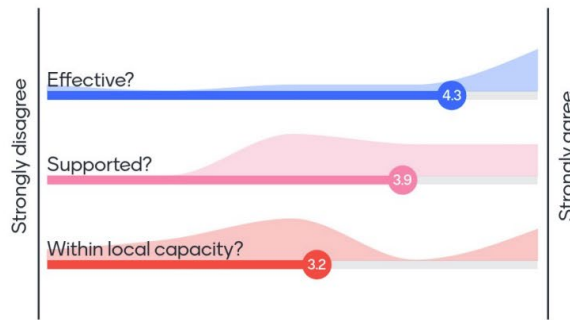
4. Require that new market-rate housing developments over a certain size provide some number of affordable units (e.g., a development over 30 units could be required to provide 2 affordable units for every additional 10 units built).



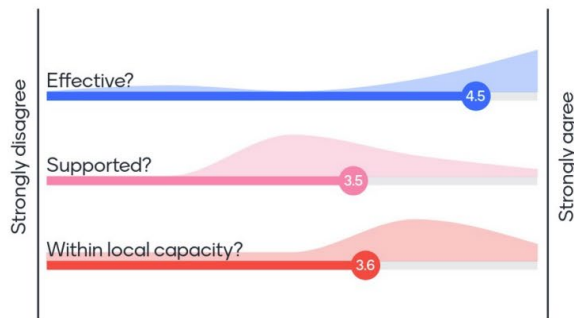
5. Promote mixed-use development in village and commercial areas by providing incentives for including residential units in new commercial developments.



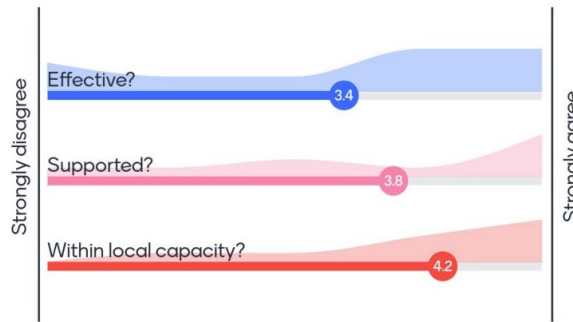
6. **Require that large new commercial developments include residential units or pay into a housing trust fund. This fund would be managed by the Town and would financially support the creation of more affordable units in Conway.**



7. **Revise village-area zoning standards to promote “missing middle” housing types (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, and small multi-unit structures).**

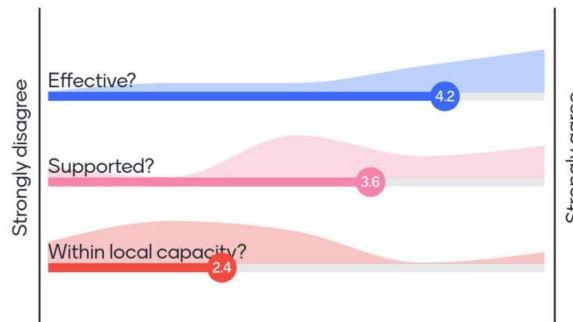


8. **Limit the scope and scale of housing development on undeveloped or environmentally-sensitive lands, and/or lands that are not connected to public water and sewer.**



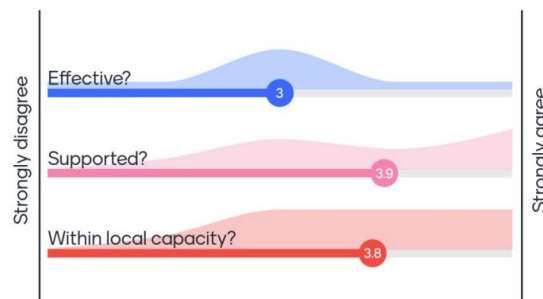
Discussion: participants felt that there were appropriate areas for future housing growth that are not currently connected to water and sewer. These areas could be connected to water and sewer in the future or could utilize community water and wastewater systems.

- In partnership with local businesses and major employers, facilitate the creation of a private capital pool to invest in the creation of new workforce housing in Conway and the Mount Washington Valley.

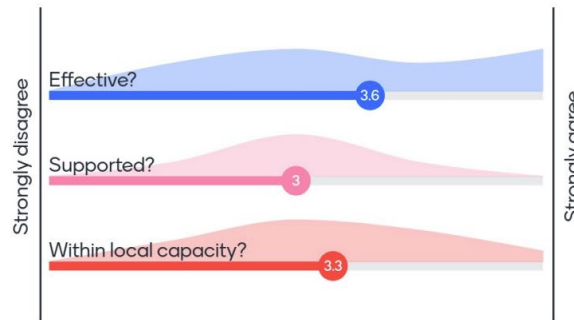


Discussion: participants felt that the lack of large employers could limit the ability to raise sufficient capital through such a program. Participants were also concerned that the fund would struggle to spend and distribute its resources because of capacity constraints or other hurdles.

- Reactivate the MWV Homeshare program with local and regional partners. Homeshare programs match residents in need of housing (often individual seniors) with homeowners with extra space in their home in exchange for rent, help around the home, or some combination thereof.

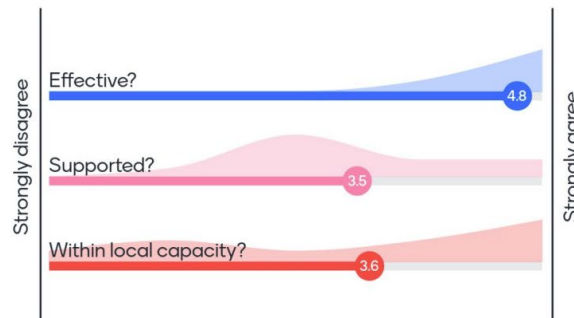


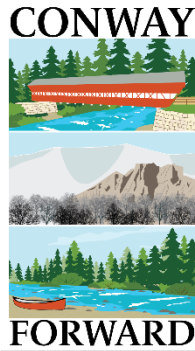
11. Partner with the WayStation to provide overnight shelter services for residents experiencing homelessness.



Discussion: participants felt that most residents experience homelessness are not currently unsheltered; rather, they are in temporary or improvised housing situations. Resources could be better spent creating permanent housing options.

12. Create a new Housing & Economic Development Coordinator position within the Planning & Zoning Department to be responsible for administering housing and commercial development applications, coordinating with housing and economic development partners, creating and stewarding a long-term economic development strategy, and pursue grants and other funding sources to support local workforce and housing development initiatives.





ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

6.26.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

TO: Master Plan Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Assistant Town Manager

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

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for the environment and natural resources in the Town of Conway and will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan.

Overview

Environment and Natural Resources in Conway – Key Takeaways

- Climate change poses a significant threat to Conway's ecosystems and ways of life
- Public lands and natural landscapes are highly important to Conway's economy, health, and culture
- The Town of Conway has an important responsibility to use local land use regulations to further goals for conservation and natural resource protection. The Town should prioritize collaborations with other stakeholders in the local conservation space, including the White Mountain National Forest, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, and the Saco Headwaters Alliance
- The Town of Conway needs a comprehensive, Town-wide approach to conservation (as opposed to current regulations, which focus on singular resources or site-specific goals). This approach will assist the Town in balancing two very important goals: providing housing for residents and protecting local landscapes/resources

Context and Key Resources

Climate and Weather Monitoring

North Conway is home to a Global Historical Climatology Network-Daily (GHCN) station. This station has recorded climate data since 1960. The Mount Washington Observatory also records key weather data. Much of the climate data referenced in this memo has been collected from these stations.

Key Resources & Habitat Areas

Forest Type

The State of New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan contains detailed information regarding Conway's forest composition and habitat types. As shown in the Wildlife Action Plan map below, the two predominant terrestrial habitat types in Conway are Hemlock-hardwood-pine and Northern Hardwood-Conifer. More than half the town's acreage is Hemlock-hardwood-pine forest. 284.2 acres of the town are cliff and talus slopes. 724.4 acres are marsh and shrub wetland.¹ Other habitat types include swamps, floodplain forest, rocky ridge, and grassland.

Northern hardwood forests consist of sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, red maple, white ash, and conifers. Wildlife in this forest type include gray fox, flying squirrel, red-eyed vireo, white-breasted nuthatch, ovenbird, and more. Hemlock forests are similar to spruce-fir forests and support black-throated green warblers, hermit thrushes, blue-headed vireos, porcupine, deer, and more.²

¹ Wildlife Action Plan [conway_PotentialWAPspecies_byRange.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

² Roberge, Steven. New Hampshire's Forest Types & Ecology ([ForestEcology_Roberge \(unh.edu\)](#))

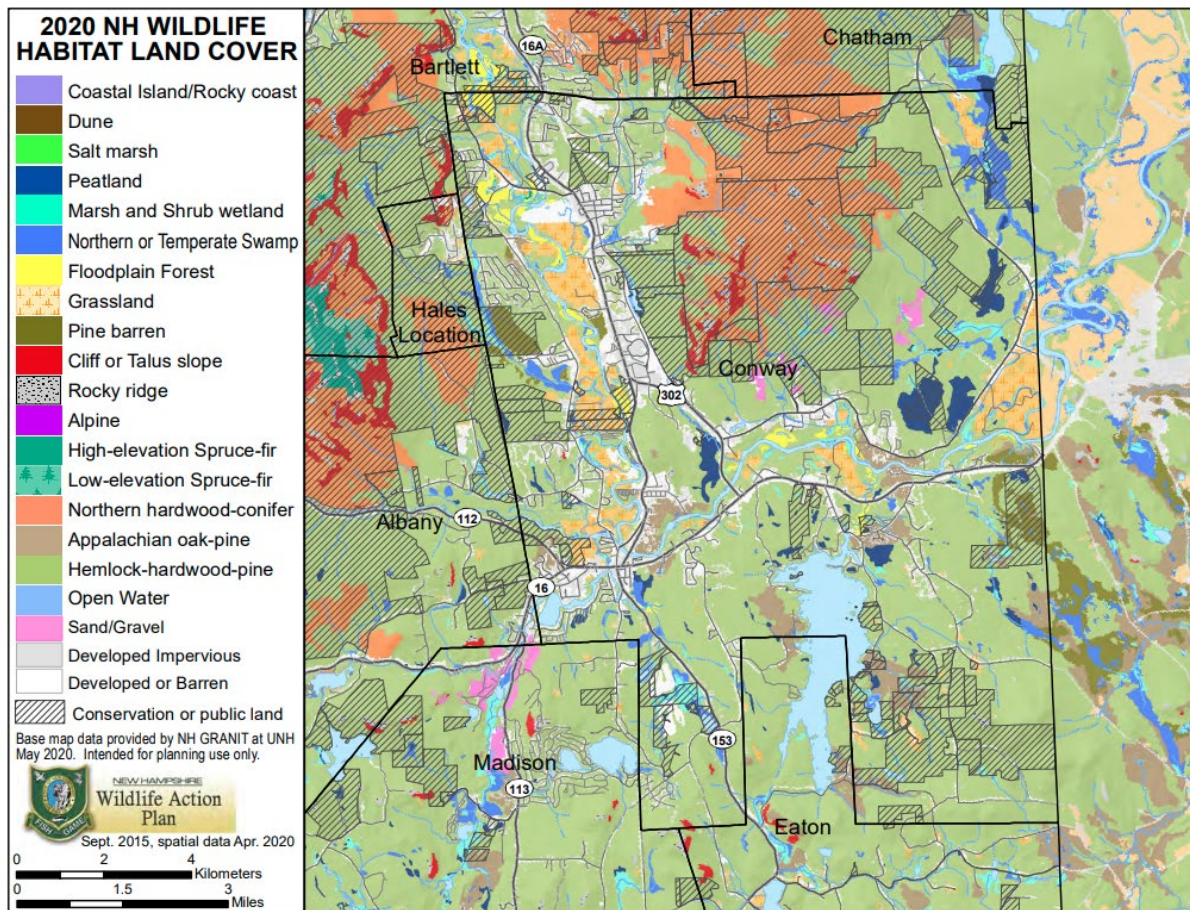


Figure 1. Habitat types in Conway. The predominant habitat types in Conway include Hemlock-hardwood-pine and Northern hardwood-conifer. Source: 2020 New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

High-Ranking Habitat

The Wildlife Action Plan also records high-ranking habitat areas in New Hampshire and Conway. As shown in the map below, Conway contains several large blocks of Highest Ranked Habitat in New Hampshire and Highest Ranked Habitat in the Biological Region. As noted in the legend of the map, “biological regions” refer to certain subsets of habitat types. These high-ranking areas include the Saco and Swift River corridors and floodplain, the Cranmore Mountain and Green Hills area, and portions of South Conway. As shown on the map, substantial portions of high-quality habitat in Conway have been designated as Conservation lands or are public lands. The Saco floodplain area in North Conway is not designated as a conservation area, but it does fall within the Floodplain Conservation Overlay District.

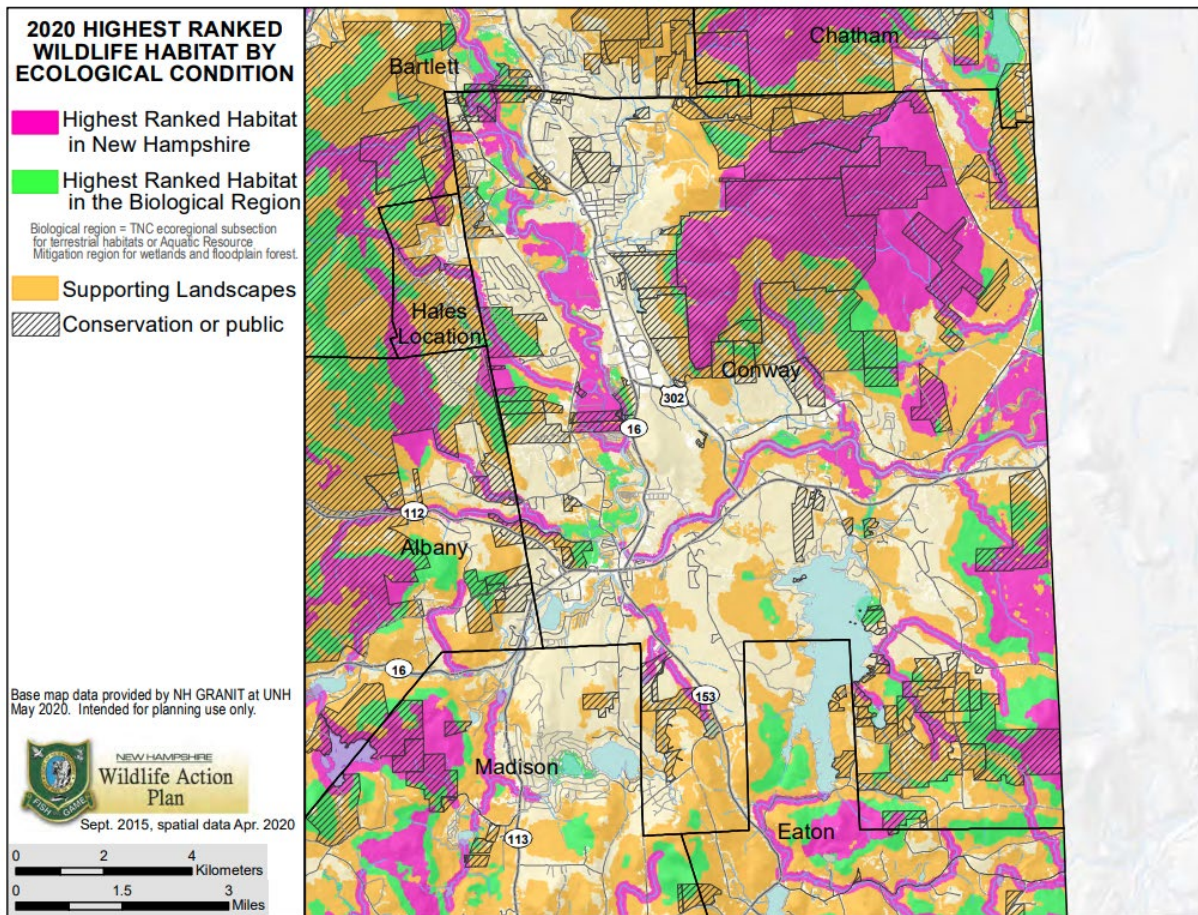


Figure 2. Habitat ranking in Conway. The town contains several large blocks of high-ranking habitat. Source: 2020 New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

Endangered and Threatened Species

Conway is home to a variety of special wildlife. The following wildlife have been identified as threatened or endangered in Conway:

- Canada Lynx (federally threatened, state endangered)
- Northern long-eared bat (federally threatened, state endangered, species of greatest conservation need)
- Peregrine falcon (state threatened)
- Purple Martin (state threatened)
- Rusty-patched bumblebee (federally endangered, state endangered, species of greatest conservation need)
- Spotted turtle (state-threatened)
- Tricolored bat (state endangered)

In total, 63 species in Conway are identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in the Wildlife Action Plan.

Rivers and Watershed

Conway has over 1,400 acres of surface water, which includes rivers, lakes, and several ponds. Conway's water resources include the Saco River and the Swift River, which feeds into the Saco. The town is located within the Saco and Swift watersheds. The town's other major water resource is Conway Lake. The shore of Conway Lake is primarily privately owned. The town's municipal water supply is exclusively groundwater, the primary source of which is the Saco River Valley Glacial Aquifer.

Water Quality

Water quality is an important concern for the Town of Conway's rivers, wetlands, and bodies of water. The New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP) was established by the Rivers Management and Protection Act of 1988 (RSA 483) and has designated the Saco and Swift rivers as significant rivers with unique resources. The two rivers have their confluence in Conway.

The [Saco-Swift Corridor Management Plan](#), which was prepared for the Town of Hart's Location and is currently in draft form, highlights several threats to the health of the corridor, including flooding, development, riverbank erosion, water quality degradation, and recreational overuse. The plan outlines the following key goals to manage and protect the corridor: "(1) manage the resources of the Saco-Swift Corridor, with a particular focus to manage flooding, recreational resources, and natural habitats, and (2) to protect the resources of the Saco-Swift Corridor, with a particular focus on protecting natural habitats, water quality, in-stream flow, and building climate resiliency."

The plan highlights the following concerns regarding development and water quality: "In recent decades, forested land, forested wetlands, and row crops have been steadily cleared and replaced by open fields and residential development. Though these land use changes are slight, they indicate the larger trend of low-density urban sprawl and increased development in the region. This highlights the importance of land use planning and regulation within the river corridors in order to protect valuable riparian resources into the future."

Viewsheds and Scenic Resources

Important viewsheds in Conway primarily include views towards the surrounding mountains. Views north towards Mount Washington from Artists' Hill and views west towards the Moats are some of the most iconic views in town. Residents have expressed concern about potential building heights blocking portions of these views.

Climate Change Impacts in Conway

According to the most recent New Hampshire Climate Assessment, which was conducted by the University of New Hampshire, New Hampshire's annual maximum temperature increased an average of 0.19 degrees Fahrenheit per decade between 1901 and 2020.³ There was an average increase of 0.39 degrees Fahrenheit per decade between 1971 and 2020. Maximum temperatures have increased more in the winter months compared to other seasons. Precipitation has also been increasing in this time period, at the rate of 0.67 inches per decade between 1901 and 2020 and 0.74 inches per decade between 1971 and 2020.

³ Lemcke-Stampone, Mary D.; Wake, Cameron P.; and Burakowski, Elizabeth, "New Hampshire Climate Assessment 2021" (2022). The Sustainability Institute. 71. <https://scholars.unh.edu/sustainability/71>

As noted in the 2014 Climate Assessment for Northern New Hampshire, the increases in precipitation are expected to occur as part of more intense rain events. In general, climate change is understood to increase overall temperatures, which in turn increases the overall variability and intensity of certain weather events.

Snowpack

Snowpack in Conway is expected to decline in the coming decades. According to the current New Hampshire Climate Assessment, “New Hampshire skier visitation is strongly correlated to the number of days per season with natural snow cover, a pattern that is robust across all New England states.” The report projects that days with deep snow cover will dramatically decrease in the coming decades. The historical pattern (1980-2005) has nearly reached 100 days with deep snow cover. As climate change worsens, this number is projected to decrease to under 60 days in a lower emissions scenario and under 30 days in a higher emissions scenario.

The 2014 Climate Assessment for Northern New Hampshire notes that there was an average loss of 2.7 inches of annual mean snowfall in Conway between 1970 and 2012. According to a 2019 report, the New Hampshire ski industry brought about 3 million visitors to NH ski areas, generating over \$500 million in economic impact.”⁴ Climate change threatens this important segment of the economy of the Mount Washington Valley.

Hotter Summers

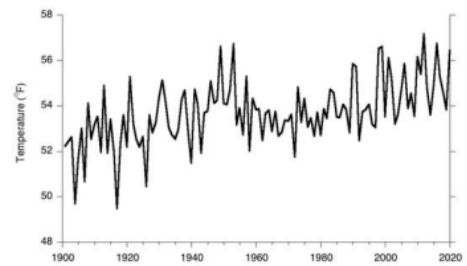
Although the winter season is expected to experience the greatest temperature increase, higher temperatures are also predicted for the summer months. Higher temperatures can heighten the risk of heat stroke, particularly for older residents. As such, higher temperatures increase the need for shade, air conditioning, hydration, and other accommodations. Higher temperatures can threaten wildlife, including species of freshwater fish that thrive in cold water. The 2014 Climate Assessment for Northern New Hampshire notes that in as early as fifty years under a higher-emissions scenario, North Conway would have nearly sixty days with temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit each summer.

Weaker Foliage

Fall foliage is a major tourism draw for the Conway area. Warmer temperatures have been delaying the start of winter, and the start of leaf-off conditions. With climate change, brilliant fall colors may become more dull over time. This is because stressed trees may not be able to complete their normal nutrient cycles. In addition, one Columbia scientist has observed the peak foliage period in an area of upstate New York getting shorter, since colder temperature drops are arriving later, but

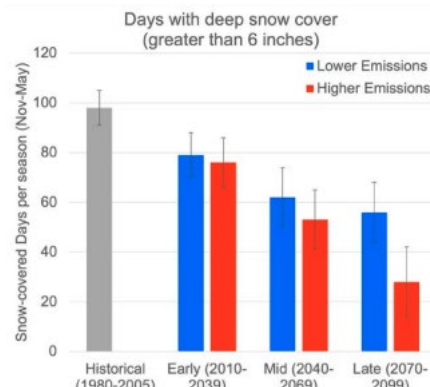
Figure 2. New Hampshire Annual Maximum Temperature, 1901-2020

Trends are estimated using Sen’s slope; statistically significant trends ($p \leq 0.05$) are highlighted in **bold and are underlined**.



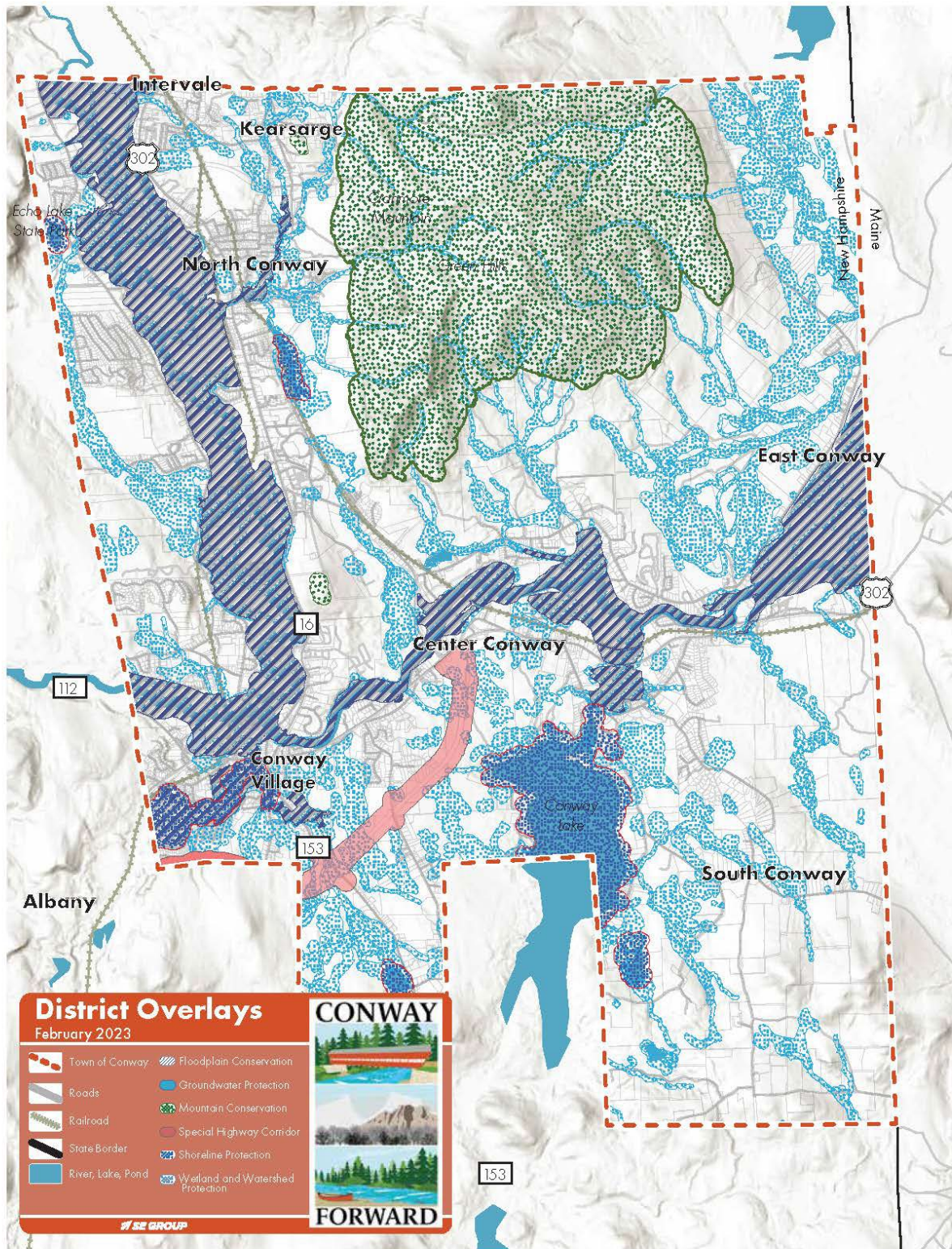
1901–2020: **0.19**°F per decade
 1971–2020: **0.39**°F per decade

Temperature increases in New Hampshire between 1901 and 2020. Source: 2022 New Hampshire Climate Assessment.



Projected days with deep snow cover compared to historical levels. Source: 2022 New Hampshire Climate Assessment.

⁴ Lee, D.S., 2019: Economic Contribution of the Ski Industry in New Hampshire. Prepared for Ski New Hampshire, Plymouth State University, Plymouth, NH, 26



A full breakdown of land use policies is provided in the *Zoning & Land Use Analysis* memorandum.

Some key takeaways related to land use regulation and natural resources include:

- The Town’s Residential Agricultural District is intended for low-density residential and agricultural uses, but it contains 69% of the town’s residential units. The development pattern in this area is highly diffuse, with residences scattered across most areas of the district. However, it is still possible to create large-scale residential development in this district through a PUD. Subdivided areas within the district do not align with the purpose and intent of the district.
- Dimensional and minimum parking standards limit ability for new residential development in and around village areas, which has the effect of pushing new development to outlying districts.
- Although the town has multiple overlay districts with an environmental focus, there is no “Conservation zone” that is specifically targeted to conserve sensitive natural landscapes in Conway.

Partners

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT)

The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT) is a local land trust with a mission to “preserve the ecological systems and cultural values of the Upper Saco River Valley. We will provide for the continued well-being and availability of land for farming, forestry, recreation, and education, as well as for land remaining in its natural state, benefiting natural and human communities.” USVLT works in 11 towns, including Conway.

USVLT owns and manages several preserves in Conway:

- Gerson/Margolis Preserve (139 acres)
- Kearsarge Brook Preserve (17 acres)
- Leita Monroe Lucas Preserve (63 acres)
- Long Island Preserve
- Pequawket Pond Preserve (24 acres, partially in Albany)
- Pine Hill Community Forest (539 acres)
- Redstone Preserve (94 acres)

USVLT also manages several conservation easements in Conway:

- Charles Thorne Conservation Easement (1 acre)
- Cobbs Conservation Easement (2 acres)
- Cranmore Conservation Easement (53 acres)
- Deans Conservation Easement (16 acres)
- Dickinson Family Easements (743 acres, partially in Eaton)
- Earle Family Farm Easement (128 acres)
- Faraway Conservation Easement (6 acres)
- Fisher Conservation Easement (28 acres)
- Gross Conservation Easement (2 acres)
- Hatches’ Orchard Easement (50 acres)
- Hussey Farmland Easement (75 acres)
- Kennett Farmland Easement (62 acres)
- Lucy Brook Farm Easement (42.5 acres)
- Lucy Family Farm Easement (45 acres)
- Sandy Beach Easement (13 acres)
- Thaddeus Thorne Family Easement (786 acres)
- Thorne/Whalen Family Conservation Easement (6 acres)
- Tin Mountain’s Bear Paw Conservation Easement (1180 acres)

The USVLT’s conservation lands and other priority conservation areas (aquifers, wellhead protection areas) are identified on a [webmap](#). The USVLT has a Conservation Plan that was released in 2022. This plan identifies conservation priorities based on a ranking system and identifies steps for implementation. The resources identified are grouped into four categories (Water Resources, Ecological Integrity, Farmland Protection, and Public Access & Scenic Value). The plan also asked local conservation boards for input on natural resources conservation priorities. Conway

respondents rated water-related resources very highly, with aquifers, flood storage, and wellhead protection areas receiving the highest scores.

White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)

A small portion of the western portion of Conway near Birch Hill is in the WMNF boundary. The WMNF also makes up most of the northern and western boundaries of town. Following the passage of the Weeks Act in Congress, the WMNF was formed in 1918. The WMNF manages public lands “to provide healthy ecosystems, clean water and air, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and a sustainable yield of high-quality forest products.” The WMNF upholds the goals of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, which declared that all uses and benefits of National Forest lands would be treated equally. The WMNF is a major driver of tourism to town; many visitors are drawn to the area seeking to visit Mount Washington, Crawford Notch, and nearby ski areas within the National Forest.

The WMNF collaborates with Conway on a variety of initiatives, including the management of Diana’s Baths. The Forest has no cooperative law enforcement agreement with Conway, but they do have one Carroll County. Importantly, WMNF has worked with local fire precincts on fire prevention in Conway around Birch Hill and the Cedar Creek/Dandi View neighborhood. Droughts in the forest have increased fire risk, and the Forest does contain some fire-dependent tree species, such as red pine and pitch pine. The Forest considers anything within 0.5 of the Forest boundary to be in an “interface” area – in Conway, this area includes several residential subdivisions and forested areas.

80% of the Saco River is within WMNF boundaries. As such, the Forest supports the health of the Saco and Swift Rivers and Saco watershed. Although the WMNF is not leading the effort, there is a [corridor management plan](#) currently underway for the Saco and Swift Rivers. A central initiative of this planning effort is to protect and maintain the floodplain by preventing development in that area.

The WMNF is also working to improve stewardship and visitor education. The Forest partners with the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce to promote stewardship measures, such as the MWV pledge. Tin Mountain Conservation Center also provides several conservation education programs with similar goals.

Saco Headwaters Alliance

The Saco Headwaters Alliance is an organization that aims to increase the health and resiliency of the Saco River & watershed area. The organization helps connect municipalities in the watershed with funding for watershed protection projects. The organization also educates municipalities and facilitates policy changes that support water quality. The Saco Headwaters Alliance has identified several [threats](#) to the Saco headwaters, including stormwater pollution, agricultural runoff, drought, septic failure, road salt, human development, invasive species, and more.

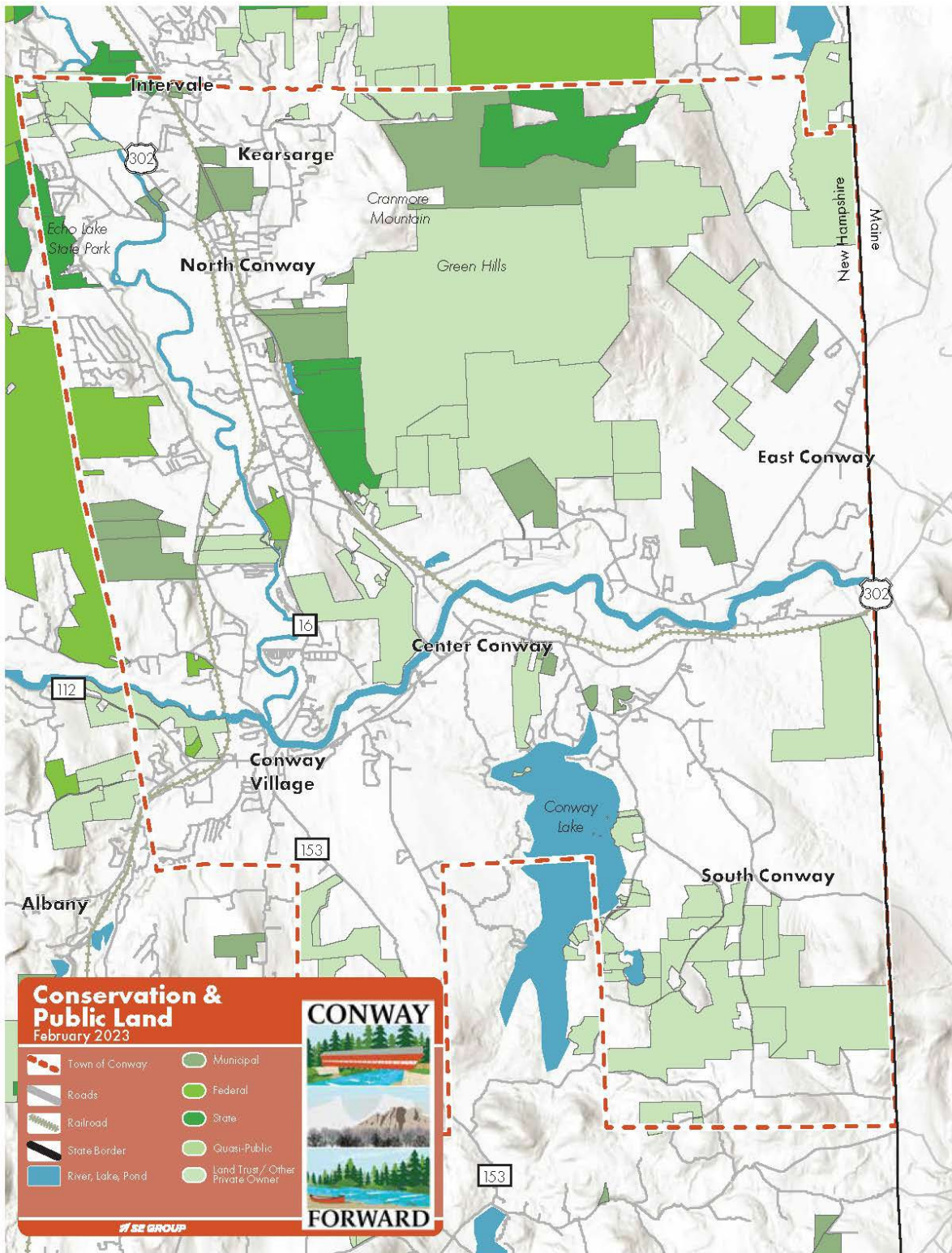
Conway Lake Conservation Association

The [Conway Lake Conservation Association \(CLCA\)](#) has a mission “to preserve the water quality of Conway Lake, its tributaries and estuaries, and to protect the habitat for loons, bald eagles, and other wildlife indigenous to the lake’s environment.” The CLCA administers a Lake Host Program that is responsible for inspecting boats coming through the public boat launch. This complies with NH state law (NH REA 487:16-d), which mandates inspecting boats entering NH lakes for aquatic invasive species (AIS). The CLCA also engages in several other initiatives focused on lake health, including water quality monitoring of the lake and the 14 streams that feed it. The UNH Lake

Monitoring program has assessed recent data for Conway Lake and has deemed it an “oligotrophic” lake, meaning that the lake is clear and has high oxygen levels.

Conway's Conserved Lands

The following map shows various conserved lands in Conway, which are managed by the National Forest, the State of New Hampshire, and private owners/land trusts.



Climate Goals

The State of New Hampshire is the only New England state that has not yet adopted legislation aimed at transitioning away from fossil fuels toward more climate-friendly energy sources. The State's Climate Action Plan, which was created in 2009, set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) 25% by 2025. It is unclear if the State will meet this target. The State recently updated its 10-year Energy Strategy, but the document did not specifically prioritize renewable energy sources. The plan emphasized the importance of cost-effective energy but did not expressly encourage renewable sources over others.

Environmental Records and Monitoring

The NH Department of Environmental Services maintains an [Environmental Monitoring Database](#) (EMD) containing a range of environmental data, including key facilities and structures, sites for monitoring and protection, and various natural features. The map indicates that Conway has two national pollutant discharge elimination systems (NPDES), a location at which point-source pollution is regulated. The two NPDES sites are along the Saco River. The map also shows dozens of underground storage tanks sites, dams, environmental remediation sites, multiple air facility systems permit locations, hazardous waste-generating locations, and solid waste facilities. The map also shows local potential contamination sources.

Housing & Conservation

The State of New Hampshire Housing Toolbox, which was developed by the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, offers several zoning strategies aimed at improving conservation outcomes. These strategies include [cluster housing](#), the [Village-Plan Alternative](#), and [Transfer of Development Rights \(TDR\)](#).

How the Environment & Natural Resources Interact with Other Plan Goals

- **Zoning & Land Use Policy:** Zoning is an important tool that determines whether something can be built and where. Zoning relates to environmental and natural resource considerations because zoning policy can establish conservation areas, buffers, or other protection zones around key natural resources and landscapes. Without these restrictions on development enacted through land use policies, natural resources may be under threat by development.
- **Housing:** Zoning and land use determines what kind of housing can be built and where. Housing subdivisions can break up habitat, disrupting the normal health and functioning of wildlife and broader ecosystems. Without careful planning, housing that is located close to sensitive natural resources can threaten those resources. In addition, housing located in floodplains and fire-prone areas poses a risk to life and property.
- **Economic Development:** Economic development and the environment are closely related. Economic development sometimes relies on extractive industries, such as mining and logging. However, the health of local economies also depends on the health of the environment. Communities rely on clean air, water, and soil to thrive.
- **Transportation:** The transportation sector is one of the major contributors to climate change – carbon-intensive modes of travel, such as car and air travel, contribute to air pollution in the form of CO₂ emissions. These emissions, which are a type of greenhouse gas, contribute to the warming of the planet, which is an overall threat to environmental health. With more options

for walking, biking, and transit, a community can reduce its carbon impacts associated with transportation. In New Hampshire, many roads cross over streams or lie adjacent to streams. Updates to culverts and efforts to prevent washouts are important for road safety and ecological health.

- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is important for environmental health in several ways: water and wastewater infrastructure can help enable compact, village-style development, which lessens the likelihood of land-intensive, sprawling development. Adequate, up-to-date infrastructure is necessary to ensure that the systems are protecting, not polluting, local resources. Likewise, septic systems, propane tanks, and other facilities must be responsibly sited and managed to protect local ecosystems.

What the 2003 Master Plan Says About Environment & Natural Resources

The 2003 Master Plan specified the following initiatives for natural resources:

- Permanent protection of environmentally-significant lands to support the local economy and quality of life
- Wetland protection policies, given the abundance of steep slopes in Conway and increased development pressure on flat wetland areas
- Protections for groundwater resources from future development pressure

The plan also notes that in the early 2000's, there were 132 sites in Conway there were either contaminated with hazardous materials or tagged for potential contamination monitoring; most of these sites involved underground storage or heating oil tanks.

The Plan includes a Future Land Use Map that is intended to inform land use policy changes. The map identifies a large district for "limited development" that encompasses Cranmore, the Green Hills, and part of East Conway. The map identifies all of South Conway, including Conway Lake, as a "Low Density" area. The map identifies almost all of the area west of the Route 16 corridor as a "Residential Planned Unit Development" area. This runs contrary to the other goals of the plan, which suggest that flood areas (i.e., along the Saco and Swift) should be given special protection and consideration.

Public Input

Feedback from February Open House

The major feedback on natural resources in Conway included the following priorities:

- **Conservation of open spaces, natural beauty, and recreational resources:** Respondents expressed a high interest in conserving Conway's open spaces, preserving its natural beauty, and protecting its recreational resources.
- **Thoughtful development and land use strategy:** Respondents indicated a desire for a more thoughtful approach to development and land use in the town. They expressed discomfort with the pace and character of recent hotel development and emphasized the need for a strategy that aligns with the town's vision.
- **Interest in stewardship efforts and sustainable tourism:** There was interest in promoting stewardship efforts and sustainable tourism in Conway. However, further engagement was deemed necessary to determine the specific meaning of "sustainable tourism" to the community. Research tasks were recommended to address the use capacity of key recreation destinations within Conway.

- **Preservation of village centers and neighborhoods:** Respondents expressed interest in cultivating and preserving Conway's village centers and neighborhoods, highlighting their importance to the community.
- **Disinterest in large-scale commercial development along Route 16:** There was a strong disinterest in further large-scale commercial development along the Route 16 Corridor. Respondents preferred a more thoughtful and slow-paced commercial development strategy that benefits the year-round community.

Overall, the feedback emphasized the importance of preserving natural resources, promoting sustainable development, and maintaining the unique character of Conway while addressing workforce housing needs.

Potential Areas of Focus

Weave Natural Resource Protections into Town-wide Land Use Policy

Unplanned, incremental development can have a cumulative negative impact on natural resources. By writing natural resource protections directly into local land use policy, the Town of Conway can more effectively balance development with land conservation and focus development only in suitable areas. Currently, the Town's policies related to open space largely relate to greenspace requirements in site plan review. This approach is insufficient to protect the Town's water resources, habitat, and forest health on a Town-wide and landscape scale.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Create a formal Conservation and Open Space zoning district (beyond overlay districts) that encompasses steep mountain slopes, intact forests, water resources and floodplain areas, and historic farmland. Ensure that the provisions of this district support the long-term health of Conway's water resources, ecosystems, and historic relationships with the land
- Use USVLT conservation assessments to inform Town-wide conservation planning priorities. Use the assessments to identify priority conservation areas and appropriate growth receiving areas
- Amend open space requirements to allow shared open space in village areas; encourage site plans to provide gathering spaces and ecosystem services. Require applicants to state how their project conforms to Town-wide goals for conservation

Invest in Infrastructure to Promote Environmental Health

Infrastructure investments are an important component of watershed planning and protection. Effective water and wastewater systems promote human health and protect local resources by preventing pollution and contamination.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Provide appropriately scaled water and wastewater infrastructure to serve current and future development
- Identify problem septic tanks and other waste facilities; develop a transition plan to address aging and failing septic systems

Prioritize Water Protection & Climate Resiliency

Water is an essential resource to the Town of Conway. As climate change worsens, the Town should increase protections for water resources and work to remain resilient against climate change-fueled floods and other events.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

Note: The following recommendations were also recommended by the [Saco-Swift Corridor Management Plan \(2022\)](#)

- Require homes to be built at least 2 feet above projected flood levels
- On-site retention of stormwater
- Require or encourage Low-Impact Development (LID) principles
- Limit and prevent clearing along river corridors

Improve Forest Health and Support the White Mountain National Forest

In addition to the Town-wide conservation strategy recommended above, the Town should also implement specific protections aimed at reducing forest fragmentation and supporting forest health. Given the importance of the White Mountain National Forest to Conway's identity, ecology, and economy, this action is especially important.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Continue to collaborate with the White Mountain National Forest Saco Ranger District on fire management of the Conway section of the WMNF and adjacent areas
- Ensure that the WMNF has opportunities to comment on land use policies and guidance that affect the Forest
- Ensure that Conway residents are informed of fire risks and the fire-dependent nature of some forest systems in the WMNF
- Work with the WMNF to improve resilience to forest pests such as gypsy moth, hemlock wooly adelgid, emerald ash borer, and Asian longhorned beetle⁶

Promote Stewardship Principles to Encourage Safe, Responsible Outdoor Recreation in Conway

Conway attracts visitors looking to enjoy a variety of outdoor activities. The Town of Conway should display a strong commitment to stewardship of the natural environment to encourage visitors to do the same.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Encourage visitors to take the [MWV Pledge](#) to respect the local environment while recreating
- Partner with recreation land managers and local outdoor education providers to display appropriate signage and information at key recreation destinations
- Use temporary closures, trail reroutes, site remediation efforts as necessary to deal with stewardship issues

Provide quality greenspace areas in Conway's villages

Greenspaces do a lot of good for a community – they can absorb carbon and improve air quality, provide inviting gathering spaces, and contribute to the overall visual appeal of a place. Conway

⁶ NH Wildlife Action Plan, Appendix B: Habitats. Northern Hardwood-Conifer Forest. [Draft Report \(state.nh.us\)](#)

should encourage the provision of accessible greenspaces throughout town (beyond Schouler Park in North Conway).

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Set a goal of providing an accessible public park, plaza, or greenspace in each village center in Conway
- Ensure that these spaces provide ecosystem services in the form of carbon absorption, pollinator habitat, and more. Lawns alone are not fully functioning greenspaces.

Protect Conway's Agricultural Lands and Farming Opportunities

The State of New Hampshire has a right-to-farm law that is intended to protect farming opportunities across the state. The law was established in 1985; since that time, the state has lost 20% of its farmland (in acres), but the number of farms has increased 20%.⁷ Given this trend, the Town of Conway should help support farm operations, particularly smaller farms.

Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Ensure that zoning regulations support and do not effectively prevent farming uses
- Allow farming uses to count as acceptable open space for PUDs
- Provide guidance on the use of land for solar farms; ensure that the use of land for solar farms does not inhibit opportunities for traditional farming on a Town-wide scale
- Support community gardening in Conway; provide resources to local gardeners looking to host community gardening events

Identify and Protect Key Viewsheds in Conway

Conway residents and visitors value views of the surrounding mountains. In its land use policies, the Town should specifically identify priority viewsheds and provide parameters for development in these viewshed areas.

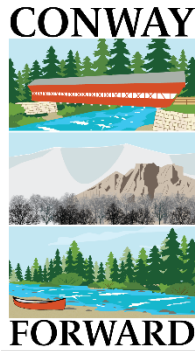
Potential Recommendations/Areas of Focus:

- Identify priority viewsheds in Conway on a map and incorporate viewshed protections into site plan review
- Encourage context-sensitive development throughout Town

Conclusion

- Conway's current land use and development standards do not adequately address the Town's natural resource conservation needs
- The Town must update its land use regulations and related policies to both mitigate and adapt to climate change
- The Town should prioritize policy changes that promote the health and safety of residents; these provisions and changes should address water quality, pollution, fire management and risk, and safety while recreating
- Conway's natural environment is a major component of the Town's identity and should be strongly prioritized in all Town policymaking

⁷ [New Hampshire's Right-to-Farm Summary | One Rural \(uky.edu\)](#)



TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

7.3.2023

EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

TO: Steering Committee

CC: Paul DegliAngeli, Deputy Town Manager

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

About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions for transportation and community facilities (i.e., water & wastewater infrastructure) in the Town of Conway and will serve as a basis for the recommendations of the updated Town of Conway Master Plan.

Background

Transportation – Key Takeaways

- Conway experiences traffic volumes that are typical of much larger communities as a result of multiple factors, including the convergence of multiple state and US highways, the Town's role as a regional service and employment hub, and seasonal tourism. There are major intersection improvement projects planned aimed at addressing traffic backups in Conway Village.
- Within Conway's villages, many homes, workplaces, and businesses are in relatively close proximity – close enough for many residents and visitors to comfortably walk to and from destinations. However, "walkability" in the villages is challenged by high traffic volumes and long pedestrian crossing distances along main roads, despite the presence of sidewalks. In addition to being a barrier for resident mobility, this may also contribute to negative experiences for visitors to Conway's villages.
- Conway's culvert and bridge infrastructure is generally in a state of good repair. However, there are many culverts that may be vulnerable to damage or washouts during heavy precipitation events or that may be significantly impacting the natural operation of stream channels.
- Given the high traffic volumes along the main thoroughfares in Conway, it is likely that the majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable bicycling between Conway's villages and residential hubs unless they are able to do so using bike paths, trails, or low-traffic

side roads. The completion of the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path in 2023 will provide both recreational and transportation benefits to the community, as it will provide a safe and comfortable bicycle connection from Redstone to North Conway.

- There are relatively few public transit options in Conway. “Dial-a-ride” services are available, but there are no fixed-route public transit services.
- While some Conway residents have relatively short commutes, nearly one-in-five commute over 50 miles one-way to their primary job. For workers commuting into Conway, over one-quarter travel from over 50 miles away.

Community Facilities – Key Takeaways

- Conway’s water and wastewater systems benefit significantly from local natural assets. All drinking water in the Town comes from local aquifers within Town boundaries, and the sandy, well-drained soils provide significant septic loading capacity. As a result, Conway has a significant amount of water and wastewater capacity and retains significant local control over these systems. Protection of the local water supply is a clear public priority.
- Water and wastewater systems are a critical component of future economic development in Conway. With the merger of the CVFD and the Town, and the significant available capacity at the NCWP treatment facility, the Town is well-positioned to consider expanding water and wastewater infrastructure to areas that are desired for future growth, as well as accommodate infill development within existing water and sewer service areas.
- Inflationary costs and identification of new contaminants are key long-term financial considerations for the management of water and wastewater systems.
- There are a significant number of private community water systems that could benefit from being connected to Town water. This could be an opportunity to increase the number of rate payers and improve the financial health of the system, although there may be mixed community support for the upfront capital cost of providing these water connections.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION

Road & Bridge Infrastructure

Road Network

Conway is well-served by the local, regional, and statewide highway network. There are 122 miles of maintained public road in Conway, including 82.1 miles of locally-maintained road and 39.5 miles of state and federal highway (Table 1). The Town is located at the convergence of multiple US and state highways (US 302, NH 16, NH 112, NH 113, NH 153), but is a significant distance from any Interstate highways – I-93 in Lincoln is the closest Interstate and is at least a 30-mile drive.

Table 1. Roadway Mileage in Conway by Legislation Classification

Road Classification	Maintenance Responsibility	Mileage
Class I – Primary Highways (e.g., US 302, NH 16)	State	16.0
Class II – Secondary Highways	State	23.5

Road Classification	Maintenance Responsibility	Mileage
(e.g., NH 112, East Conway Rd)		
Class III – Recreation	State	0.47
Class IV – Urban Compact	Municipality	0.0
Class V – Local	Municipality	82.1
Class VI – Local Unmaintained	n/a	6.4
Class O – Private	Private	65.8

Source : New Hampshire Department of Transportation

Vehicular Traffic Volumes

As a regional highway bottleneck, service center, and tourist destination, Conway experiences high traffic volumes, particularly along NH 16 and US 302. “The Strip” (NH 16/US 302) is one of the most-trafficked roads in northern New Hampshire, with over 17,000 vehicles on an average day. This volume of traffic is typically associated with municipalities with much larger populations. Daily traffic volumes during peak tourism seasons are likely significantly higher than the annual daily averages shown in Table 2; for example, traffic counts performed in July 2017 recorded traffic volumes over 20,000 vehicles per day along the Strip.

Table 2. Estimated Daily Traffic Volumes (AADT) at Selected Locations Conway

Traffic Count Location	Legislative Class / Owner	AADT*
NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of East Side Rd	Class I / NHDOT	12,000
NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of NH 113 at Saco River Br	Class I / NHDOT	12,000
NH 16/NH 113 (Main St) West of NH 153	Class I / NHDOT	13,000
NH 16/NH 113 (White Mt Hwy) at Albany TL	Class I / NHDOT	13,000
US 302 (Main St) at Maine SL	Class I / NHDOT	8,000
US 302 (Main St) East of US 302/NH 113	Class I / NHDOT	11,000
US 302 (Theodore Roosevelt Rd) East of NH 16	Class I / NHDOT	13,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of Echo Acres Rd	Class I / NHDOT	17,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of Ledgewood Rd	Class I / NHDOT	11,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) North of River Rd	Class I / NHDOT	15,000
US 302/NH 16 (White Mt Hwy) South of Grove St	Class I / NHDOT	15,000
East Conway Rd East of Dump Rd	Class II / NHDOT	4,100
East Conway Rd East of US 302	Class II / NHDOT	3,500
East Conway Rd East of US 302	Class II / NHDOT	4,500
East Conway Rd Over White Lot Brook	Class II / NHDOT	2,400
NH 112 (Kancamagus Hwy) at Conway TL	Class II / NHDOT	2,000
NH 113 (East Main St) East of NH 16	Class II / NHDOT	11,000
NH 113 (East Main St) South of US 302	Class II / NHDOT	7,500
River Rd Over Lucy Brook	Class II / NHDOT	3,200
River Rd Over Saco River	Class II / NHDOT	4,500
Artist Falls Rd Over Artist Brook	Class V / Town	620
Cranmore Rd South of Skimobile Rd	Class V / Town	330
East Side Rd North of Saco River Bridge	Class V / Town	3,400
Mill St Over Conway Lake Outlet	Class V / Town	1,600
North-South Rd South of Artist Falls Rd	Class V / Town	9,100
North-South Rd South of Kearsarge St	Class V / Town	8,800
Old Bartlett Rd Over Kearsarge Brook	Class V / Town	350
West Side Rd South of River Rd	Class V / Town	4,700

Source: New Hampshire Department of Transportation

*AADT = Annual Average Daily Traffic. AADT is an *estimate* of daily traffic volumes based on several days of recorded traffic counts and seasonal adjustment factors.

Highway Freight Traffic

- Conway is located at a critical freight access point to New Hampshire, with US 302 being the primary connection to the Portland, Maine metro area. The 2018 New Hampshire *Statewide Freight Plan* identifies US 302 through Center Conway as having one of the highest percentages of truck traffic in the entire state (Figure 1).

State Highway Pavement Condition

- According to 2021 data from NHDOT, the condition of state-maintained roads in Conway varies significantly (Figure 2). Class I highways (NH 16, US 302) and numbered Class II highways (NH 112, NH 113, NH 153) are generally in good to fair condition, whereas non-numbered Class II highways (e.g., Eastman Hill Rd) are largely in fair to poor condition, with Hurricane Mountain Road being in very poor condition.
- This is consistent with trends around New Hampshire, with NHDOT increasingly focusing limited resources on maintaining major routes with higher traffic volumes. NHDOT projects that the mileage of state-maintained highway that is in good or fair condition will continue to decline over the next decade.

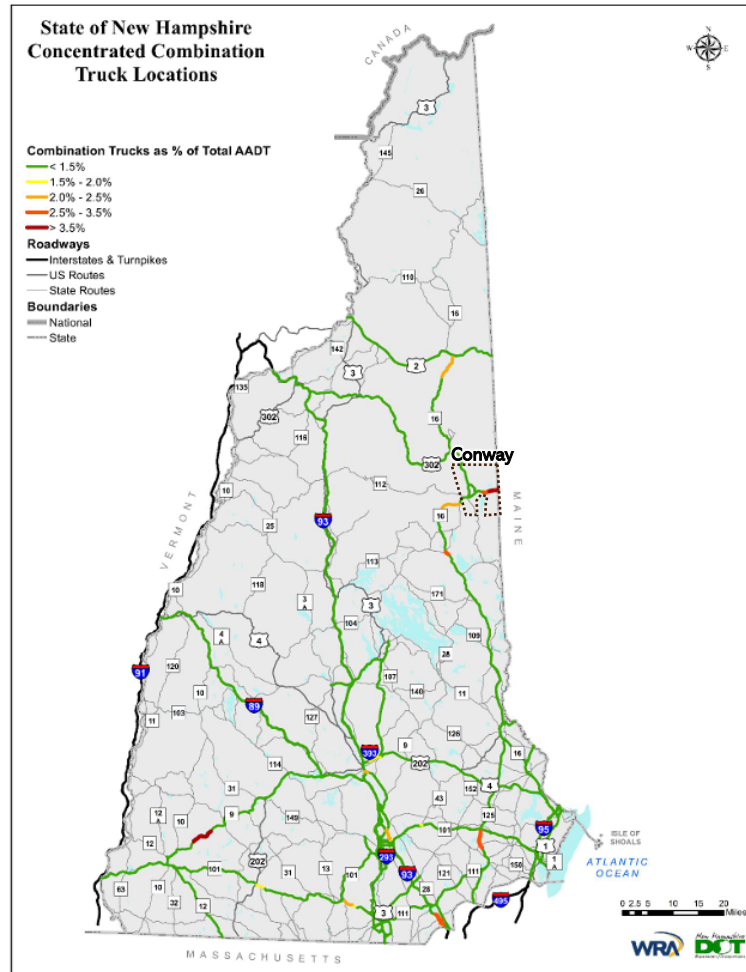


Figure 1: Truck traffic as a percentage of overall traffic in New Hampshire, 2018. Source: NHDOT

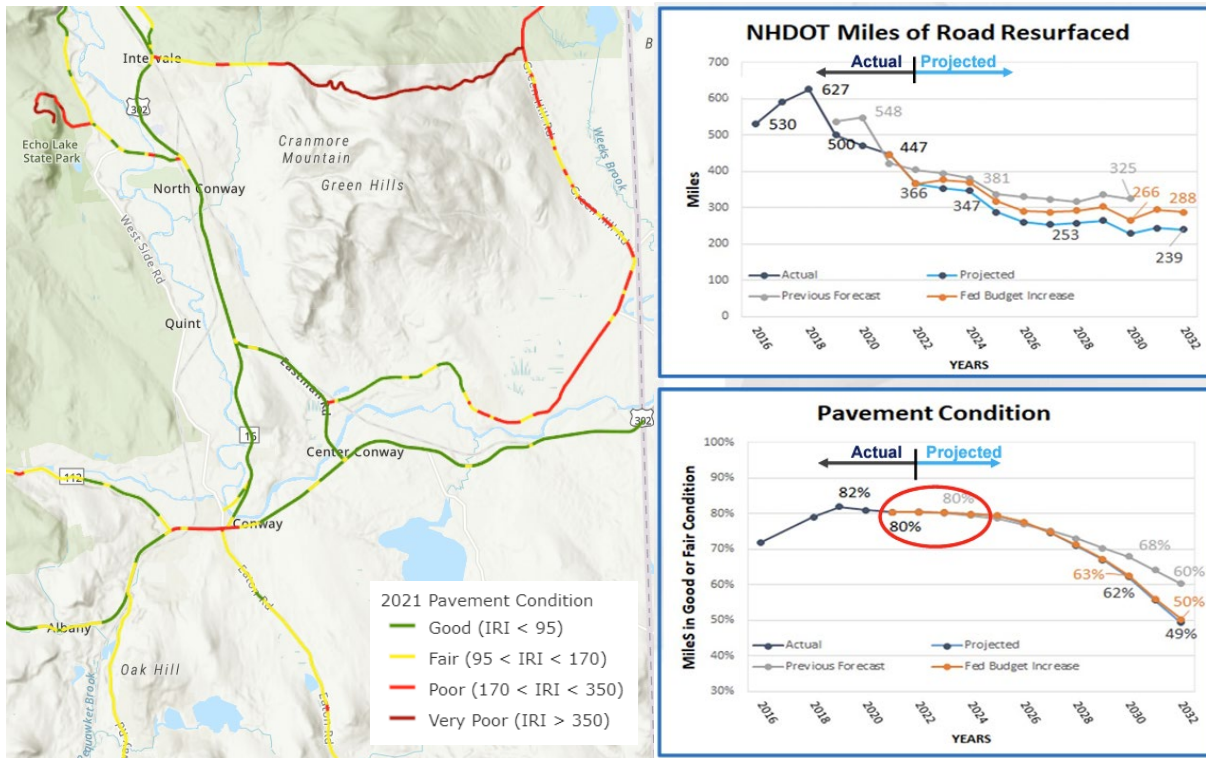


Figure 2: NHDOT pavement condition ratings for state-maintained roads in Conway + statewide projections for pavement conditions through 2032 (Source: NHDOT).

Bridge Infrastructure

- There are 24 public roadway bridges in Conway, eight of which are maintained by the Town. Public bridges are inspected yearly by NHDOT, as well as large box culverts (Table 2).
- If a bridge is deemed to be structurally deficient during inspection, NHDOT will add it to the Municipal Bridge Red List, which triggers additional inspections and potential weight postings or closures, depending on the severity of the deficiencies. Currently, there are no Red List roadway bridges in Conway.
- Nearly all municipally-maintained bridges are in good or very good condition overall; the Washington Street bridge over the Saco River was rated as being in “fair/satisfactory” condition during the most recent inspection.

Table 2. Bridge Ownership and Condition

Bridge Location	Maintenance Responsibility	Deck Rating	Superstructure Rating	Substructure Rating	Culvert Rating	Scour Critical Rating
**CONWAY SCENIC RR over RIVER ROAD	Conway Scenic Railroad	5 – Fair	5 – Fair	4 – Poor	n/a	n/a
EAST CONWAY RD over WHITE LOT BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 – Satisfactory	Stable

Bridge Location	Maintenance Responsibility	Deck Rating	Superstructure Rating	Substructure Rating	Culvert Rating	Scour Critical Rating
EAST SIDE ROAD over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
HURRICANE MT ROAD over KEARSARGE BROOK	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	8 – Very Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
NH 153 over PAGE RANDALL BROOK	NHDOT	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
NH 16 over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
NH 16/NH113 over PEQUAWKET POND	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	8 – Very Good	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Stable
NHRR over ARTIST FALLS ROAD	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	8 – Very Good	7 – Good	n/a	n/a
RIVER ROAD over LOVEJOY BROOK	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	6 – Satisfactory	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Stable
RIVER ROAD over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	5 – Fair	6 – Satisfactory	5 – Fair	n/a	Stable
RIVER ROAD over SACO RIVER OVERFLOW	NHDOT	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
US 302 over BLACKCAT BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 – Satisfactory	Stable
US 302 over BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 – Satisfactory	Stable
US 302 over SACO RIVER	NHDOT	7 – Good	6 – Satisfactory	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
US 302/NH 113 over CONWAY LAKE OUTLET	NHDOT	8 – Very Good	9 – Excellent	8 – Very Good	n/a	Stable
US 302/NH 16 over ARTIST FALLS BROOK	NHDOT	n/a	n/a	n/a	7 – Good	Stable
WEST SIDE ROAD over LUCY BROOK	NHDOT	6 – Satisfact.	7 – Good	8 – Very Good	n/a	Stable
ARTIST FALLS ROAD over ARTIST BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Stable
MILL STREET over CONWAY LAKE OUTLET	Town	8 – Very Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable

Bridge Location	Maintenance Responsibility	Deck Rating	Superstructure Rating	Substructure Rating	Culvert Rating	Scour Critical Rating
NORTH/SOUTH ROAD over ARTIST FALLS BROOK	Town	n/a	n/a	n/a	7 - Good	Stable
OLD BARTLETT ROAD over KEARSARGE BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	8 - Stable
SKIMOBILE ROAD over KEARSARGE BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good		
TASKER HILL ROAD over PEQUAWKET POND	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	7 – Good	n/a	Stable
WASHINGTON STREET over SWIFT RIVER	Town	5 – Fair	6 – Satisfactory	6 – Satisfactory	n/a	Unstable
WHITAKER LANE over KEARSARGE BROOK	Town	7 – Good	7 – Good	8 – Very Good	n/a	

***Bridge included on Red List*

Planned NHDOT Road and Bridge Infrastructure Improvement Projects

- NHDOT tracks major capital improvement projects for roads and bridges through the State Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (also known as the “Ten-Year Plan”). Projects in the Ten-Year Plan are typically funded 100% using federal and state dollars. The following capital projects in Conway are identified in the current Ten-Year Plan, which covers fiscal years 2023 through 2032.

Table 3: Planned NHDOT Road and Bridge Infrastructure Improvement Projects

Location	Project Scope	Phase & Timeline*	Budget*
Conway Village	Intersection improvements at NH 16/NH 153 and NH 16/113	Construction (FY 2023)	\$3,296,237
US 302/East Conway Rd	Construct roundabout at intersection	Construction (FY 2023)	\$2,701,600

**Timeline and budget are presented as listed in NH Ten-Year Plan; may not reflect most current project schedule or cost.*

Stream Culverts

Through the *New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative*, all stream culverts located on public roadways in Conway have received an assessment in 2021. The assessment covered four primary metrics:

- **Aquatic Organism Passage:** how much does the culvert interfere with the upstream migration of fish and other aquatic organisms
- **Structural Condition:** does the culvert show evidence of structural deterioration or failure
- **10-Year Storm Hydraulic Vulnerability:** how likely is the culvert to overtop or wash out during a ten-year rainfall event.
- **Geomorphic Compatibility:** how much does the culvert interfere with the natural flow and movement of the stream.

Figures 3 – 6 display the results of these assessments. In general, road-stream culverts in Conway are in good or fair structural condition; however, there are many culverts that may be vulnerable to damage or washouts during heavy precipitation events or that may be significantly impacting the natural operation of stream channels. Increased heavy precipitation events are one the primary forecasted changes for New Hampshire as a result of climate change.¹

In interactive map of the stream crossing assessment scores can be accessed via the NH Aquatic Restoration Mapper:

<https://nhdes.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=21173c9556be4c52bc20ea706e1c9f5a>.

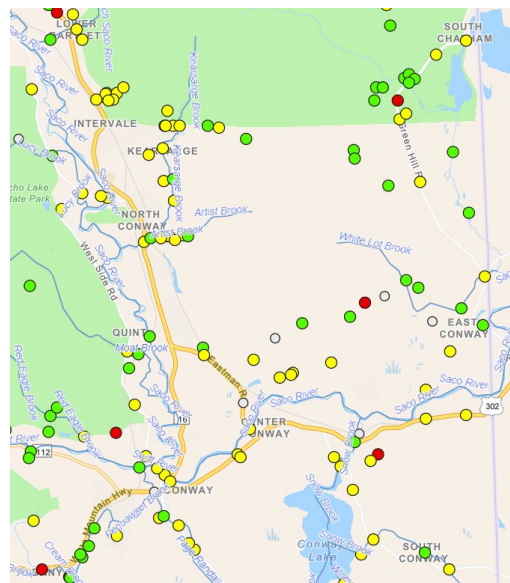
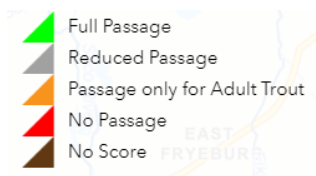
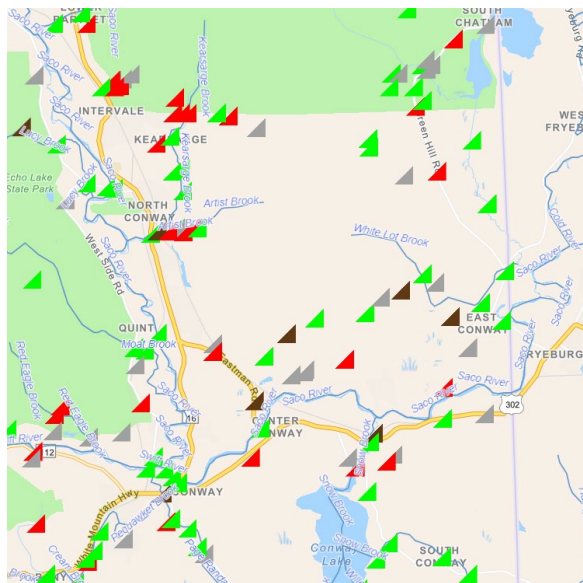


Figure 3: Aquatic organism passage scores for road-stream culverts in Conway (Source: NHDES)

Figure 4: Structural condition ratings for road-stream culverts in Conway (Source: NHDES)

¹ <https://home.dartmouth.edu/news/2023/06/extreme-precipitation-northeast-increase-52-2099>



Figure 5: 10-year storm hydraulic vulnerability scores for road-stream culverts in Conway (NHDES)

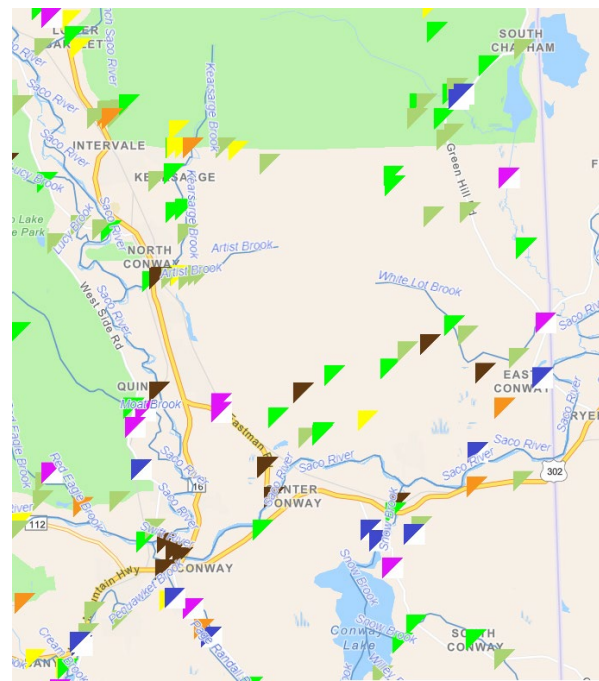


Figure 6: Geomorphic compatibility scores for road-stream culverts in Conway (Source: NHDES)

Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure

Walkability in Conway

- When defining the “walkability” of a place, planners typically look at concentrations of trip origin and destination points (e.g., homes, workplaces, businesses, services) within a 5-minute walk (approximately ¼ mile). Beyond this distance, most people will opt to drive to their destination. This is not universally true but is a useful standard for planning purposes.
- Broadly speaking, North Conway Village and Conway Village are “walkable” areas based on the concentration of residences, businesses, and services. However, there are barriers to walkability in these areas:
 - **Traffic Volumes:** the main thoroughfares through North Conway and Conway Village are heavily-trafficked (Table 2), which likely discourages some from crossing these streets on foot.
 - **Crossing Distances along Major Roads:** North Conway Village and Conway Village are both well-served by the sidewalk network. However, pedestrian crossings across NH 16 are nearly 80 feet long curb-to-curb, an unusually long distance which discourages limited-mobility residents and families with children from walking across the street to destinations that otherwise could be within easy walking distance (Figure 7). Vehicular travel lanes along NH 16 in North Conway are as wide

as 20 feet (10 – 12 feet is considered a standard travel lane width for downtown and village areas). The wide, straight roadway likely also encourages higher vehicular speeds, with additional safety implications for pedestrians.

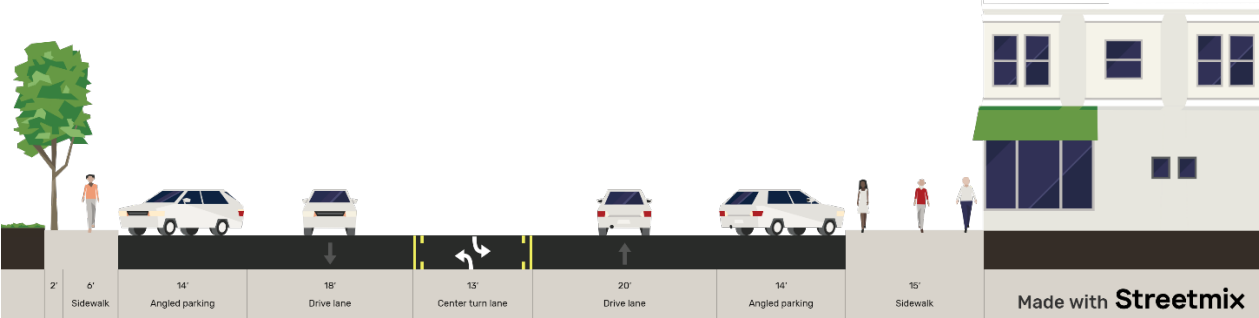


Figure 7: Cross-section of NH 16 in North Conway Village (approximate widths derived from aerial imagery).

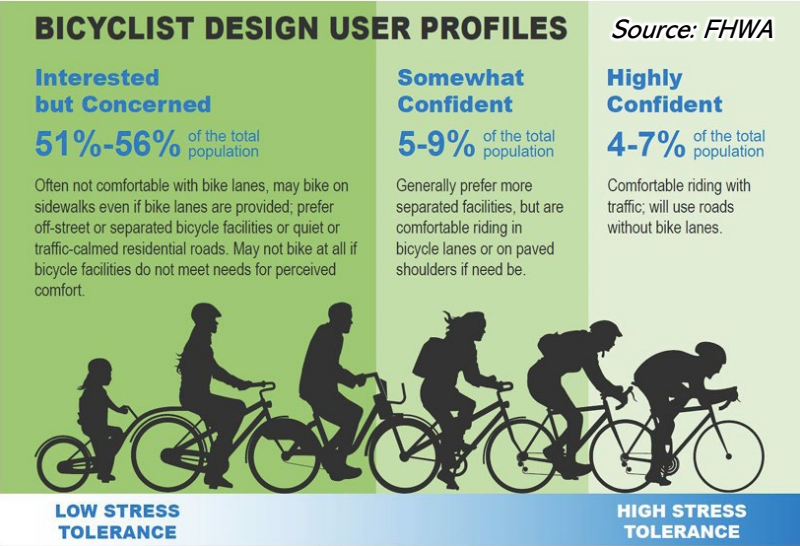


On this winter day in February 2023, it was easy to observe which parts of the NH 16 streetscape in North Conway are regularly used by cars and trucks (Figure 8). Vehicular travel mostly occurs in the central travel lanes. Areas of roadway closer to the curb are not used by through traffic and could be considered for pedestrian crossing safety improvements such as curb extensions. Curb extensions along NH 16 in North Conway could reduce pedestrian crossing distances by nearly 30 feet.

Figure 8: Pedestrian crossing along NH 16 in North Conway

Biking around Conway

- High traffic volumes along major roadways in Conway are likely a deterrent for many bicyclists. According to research conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, the vast majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable sharing the road with higher traffic volumes unless there is some level of physical separation from traffic (i.e., riding on a separate bike path such as the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path). If riding on the road, these bicyclists will tend to ride in areas with lower levels of “traffic stress” (i.e., roads with slower speeds, lower traffic volumes, better sightlines/ lighting, etc). A smaller percentage of the general population (estimated at 9-17%) is



estimated to be comfortable using painted bike lanes along roads with higher traffic volumes.

- Given the high traffic volumes along the main thoroughfares in Conway, it is likely that the majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable bicycling between Conway's villages and residential hubs unless they are able to do so using bike paths, trails, or low-traffic side roads. More confident and experienced cyclists will be more comfortable using on-road facilities on busier roads, such as the striped shoulder on North-South Rd.
- The completion of the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path in 2023 will provide both recreational and transportation benefits to the community, as it will provide a safe and comfortable bicycle connection from Redstone to North Conway.

Public Transportation Services

- **Fixed-Route Bus Service:** Currently, there are no fixed-route public transportation services in Conway or the Mount Washington Valley. Tri-County Transit previously operated the Blue Loon commuter route, which provided service to Conway and adjacent towns, but was unable to sustain the service.
 - The 2020 NHDOT *Statewide Strategic Transit Assessment* noted the Conway area as having a “significant need” for local public transit service, but with the potential for significant fluctuations in demand based on the time of year. The *Assessment* included a conceptual service plan for a seasonal, fixed-route bus service operating between Memorial Hospital and Conway Village from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The estimated cost to run this service would be \$150,000 per year. To-date, there has not been an effort to implement this service.
- **Intercity Bus Service:** Concord Coach Lines provides daily intercity bus service between Berlin, NH and Boston Logan International Airport, with stops in Conway and a dozen other municipalities, including Concord. This is a paid service with subsidy from NHDOT. Given the schedule and fares, it is generally not suitable as a commuter or local bus service.
- **Demand-Response Bus Service:** Tri-County Transit provides low-cost demand-response bus services (i.e., door-to-door) that are focused on senior and limited-mobility residents but are also available to the general public in Conway. This service is offered Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, although Medicaid-insured riders can request weekend service.
 - There are other demand-response bus service options in Conway; however, they are typically only available to clients or residents of specific organizations. For example, the Gibson Center for Senior Services provides door-to-door service for their clientele.

Rail Infrastructure and Service

- Currently, there is no freight or passenger rail service to Conway. There are two active rail lines - Conway Scenic Railroad owns 7.2 miles of the Conway Branch line from the Albany town boundary to the intersection with the state-owned Mountain Division line in North Conway. Conway Scenic Railroad uses both rail lines for scenic tourist train excursions from North Conway Village into Crawford Notch.

- South of North Conway Village, the Mountain Division line is not currently used and is overgrown in places. The line is considered “active” rail in that there has not been a move to formally discontinue or abandon the rail corridor.
- A 2007 Maine DOT study examined the possibility of implementing passenger and/or freight rail along the Mountain Division line from Portland, ME into Conway, concluding that there was insufficient demand to warrant passenger rail service. However, there has continued to be interest from advocates for reexamining potential high-speed or overnight train service through the region, such as passenger service from Boston to Montreal.

Commuting To Work

- In 2019, there were approximately 4,699 workers commuting into Conway from other municipalities, 1,999 workers commuting within Conway, and 2,271 workers commuting from Conway to other communities (Figure 9).² This resulted in a net influx of approximately 2,400 workers on a daily basis.
- For jobs located in Conway, workers tended to either have relatively short commutes or very long commutes. Over half (57%) of workers commuted less than 10 miles one-way, while over one-quarter (25.9%) of workers commuted over 50 miles one-way (Table 4). This could be partially due to the distance between Conway and regional population centers (e.g., Rochester, Portland, ME), as well as the limited housing options in the Mount Washington Valley.

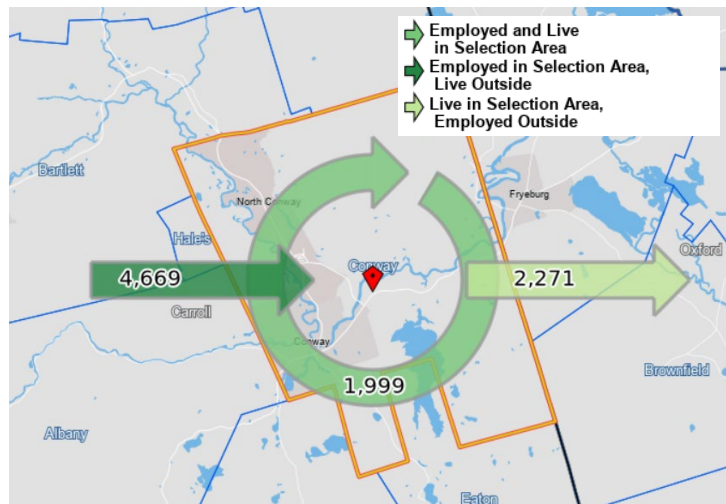


Figure 9: Daily inflow and outflow of workers in Conway (2019). Source: US Census Bureau On-The-Map

Table 4. Commute Distance to Jobs Located in Conway (2019)

Commute Distance to Primary Job	Number of Workers	%
Less than 10 miles	2,445	57.3%
10 to 24 miles	379	8.9%
25 to 50 miles	338	7.9%
Greater than 50 miles	1,108	25.9%
Total	4,270	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau On-The-Map

² The most recent inflow-outflow commute data from the US Census Bureau is from the year 2020. It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in some changes to commuting patterns in the region; however, given the service-based economy in Conway, these shifts are likely not as dramatic as in other regions.

- Nearly half (44%) of Conway residents commuted under 10 miles to work in 2019, while nearly one-in-five (19.3%) commuted over 50 miles to work (Table 5). The vast majority of residents commute using personal automobiles (86.5%, including 10.5% that carpool as their primary transportation to work and 76.0% who drive alone). Approximately 10% of residents work from home. Just 2.6% of residents walk to work and less than 1% use public transportation services.

Table 5. Commute Distance to Jobs for Conway Residents (2019)*

Commute Distance to Primary Job	Number of Workers	%
Less than 10 miles	2,957	44.3%
10 to 24 miles	1,386	20.8%
25 to 50 miles	1,039	15.6%
Greater than 50 miles	1,286	19.3%
Total	6,668	100.0%

*Source: US Census Bureau On-The-Map. *Includes jobs located outside of Conway that are held by Conway residents.*

Considerations For Master Plan Process

Transportation-related Feedback from the February 2023 Open House

- Respondents cited biking safety concerns along Route 16 in North Conway
- Respondents indicated interest in bike lanes and improved sidewalks in North Conway Village
- Respondents indicated interest in a bike/walk bypass from Washington St and Kennett Middle School
- Respondents indicated interest in bike connection between Conway Village and North Conway
- Respondents **unanimously agreed** with the following statement: “I wish Conway’s village centers were more pedestrian- and wheelchair-friendly”
- Respondents **agreed** with the following statement: “I wish Conway’s village centers were more bike-friendly”
- Respondents **disagreed** with the following statement: “I wish Conway’s village centers were more car-friendly”
- Respondents **agreed** with the following statement: “I wish there was better pedestrian/bike connectivity between Conway’s village centers”
- Respondents **mostly agreed** with the following statement: “I wish Conway would invest in public transportation to serve its village centers”
- Respondents **mostly agreed** with the following statement: “I am concerned about vehicular traffic safety in Conway’s village centers”
- Respondents **did not agree** on the following statement: “Regional automobile traffic through Conway has a negative impact on village centers”
- Map exercise:
 - There was a lack of yellow and green dots in North Conway village compared to the other village centers, indicating that people generally feel safer walking and biking in that area compared to other village centers
 - Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe biking along Route 16

- Respondents indicated that they did not feel safe walking at the intersection of Grove St and the North-South Rd, near the train tracks and the US Post Office
- Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe driving at the intersection of Route 302 and Eagle's Way
- Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe walking around the perimeter of Settler's Green (Route 302 corridor and North-South Rd)
- Respondents indicated that they feel unsafe walking, biking, and driving throughout Conway Village. In particular, respondents indicated that the intersections of Route 113 and Washington St and Route 113 and E Main St were unsafe.
- Discussion:
 - One attendee who resides in North Conway described how they typically drove their car to bring their children across NH 16 in North Conway instead of walking out of safety concerns.

Next Steps

Key Takeaways

- Conway experiences traffic volumes that are typical of much larger communities due to multiple factors, including the convergence of multiple state and US highways, the Town's role as a regional service and employment hub, and seasonal tourism. There are major intersection improvement projects planned aimed at addressing traffic backups in Conway Village.
- Within Conway's villages, homes, workplaces, and businesses are in relatively close proximity – close enough for many residents and visitors to comfortably walk to and from destinations. However, “walkability” in the villages is challenged by high traffic volumes and long pedestrian crossing distances along main roads, despite the presence of sidewalks. In addition to being a barrier for resident mobility, this may also contribute to negative experiences for visitors to Conway's villages.
- Conway's culvert and bridge infrastructure is generally in a state of good repair. However, there are many culverts that may be vulnerable to damage or washouts during heavy precipitation events or that may be significantly impacting the natural operation of stream channels.
- Given the high traffic volumes along the main thoroughfares in Conway, it is likely that the majority of interested bicyclists are not comfortable bicycling between Conway's villages and residential hubs unless they are able to do so using bike paths, trails, or low-traffic side roads. The completion of the Mount Washington Valley Rec Path in 2023 will provide both recreational and transportation benefits to the community, as it will provide a safe and comfortable bicycle connection from Redstone to North Conway.
- There are relatively few public transit options in Conway. “Dial-a-ride” services are available, but there are no fixed-route public transit services.
- While some Conway residents have relatively short commutes, nearly one-in-five commute over 50 miles one-way to their primary job. For workers commuting into Conway, over one-quarter travel over 50 miles one-way.

Potential Areas of Focus for the Master Plan

- Consider coordinated transportation and land use strategies. Transportation “mode choice” (i.e., the choice to walk or drive) is heavily influenced by land use (i.e., the proximity of destinations to one another). For areas where walkability desired, such as village areas, the following land use strategies could be considered:
 - Promoting a dense mix of uses (residential, commercial, and recreational) in and around Conway’s village areas.
 - Considering pedestrian-oriented building design in village areas, such as requiring a minimum amount of transparent glass on street-level storefront.
 - Considering “right-sizing” parking standards and/or promoting shared parking arrangements in walkable areas.
- Strategies for improving the safety and comfort of pedestrians in village areas should be considered. More specifically, strategies for improving the safety of pedestrian crossings of major roadways in village areas should be examined:
 - Considering locations where curb extensions could be installed to reduce pedestrian crossing distances and improve driver awareness of crossing pedestrians.
 - Considering locations where pedestrian refuge islands (i.e., central medians) could be installed to provide additional protection for pedestrians.
 - Considering locations where crosswalk lighting improvements are needed.
 - Considering other “traffic calming” strategies that improve driver awareness and moderate traffic speeds in areas with high pedestrian traffic.
 - Considering the opportunities and limitations for making alterations to state-owned roadways.
- Consider multi-modal transportation strategies for areas targeted for infill and mixed-use development, such as “The Strip” and the area around Settler’s Green. Comprehensive transportation strategies that include walkability, vehicular access, and parking will aid in the orderly redevelopment of these areas. For NH 16 along “The Strip”, consider complementary transportation improvement and beautification strategies, such as converting the roadway into a boulevard with central medians and landscaped areas.
- Consider coordinated capital improvement projects that address transportation needs as well as other infrastructure needs. For example, a proposed water and sewer expansion project that will require digging up a roadway could be an opportunity to reconstruct the roadway, improve drainage systems, and/or add sidewalks.
- Consider opportunities for proactively upgrading stream culverts that may be undersized, vulnerable to flood impacts, or otherwise impacting the natural movement of stream channels or aquatic organisms.
- Considering future bicycle path connections that provide safe alternatives to riding along main roads between different areas of Town.
- Considering opportunities for the potential conversion of the Mountain Division rail line to a rail trail or “rail with trail” between Center Conway and Redstone, where it could connect with the Rec Path.
- Consider opportunities for providing additional public electric vehicle charging stations in Conway.
- Consider potential pathways for re-establishing fixed route bus service in Conway.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

The Town is currently served by two water and wastewater precincts: Conway Village Fire District and North Conway Water Precinct. The Town is also well-served by natural assets related to water and sewer: all drinking water in the Town comes from local aquifers within Town boundaries, and the sandy, well-drained soils provide significant septic loading capacity. As a result, Conway has a significant amount of water and wastewater capacity and retains significant local control over these systems.

Conway Village Fire District

- Conway Village Fire District (CVFD) currently operates water and wastewater systems that serve the Conway Village area. In 2023, Conway Village residents voted to dissolve the CVFD in 2025, which would involve the Town absorbing the CVFD water and sewer department (along with other services).
- The CVFD water system includes approximately 21 miles of water mains, two wells, two storage tanks (located in Albany), and an on-site water treatment facility. Average daily demand for the system is approximately 180,000 gallons.
- The CVFD wastewater system includes approximately XX miles of transmission mains, a primary pump station and five neighborhood area pump stations, a gravity interceptor, and a remote monitoring system. Wastewater is collected by CVFD and sent to the North Conway Water Precinct for treatment per a 2013 Intermunicipal Agreement. Average daily wastewater production for the system is approximately 27,000 gallons per day.
- The CVFD manages multiple reserve funds to support future equipment purchases and capital improvements and maintenance.
 - Currently planned capital projects for the water system include the Pump House 1 Building in 2025, Well 1 Casing and Screen in 2025, replacement of the 12" Cross Country main in 2027, and replacements of the River Rd-VFW 12" main in 2031.
 - The Sewer Projects and Maintenance Expendable Trust fund includes dozens of anticipated projects ranging from \$10,000 to \$180,000 based on projected replacement dates for different facilities and pieces of equipment. Some of the larger projects include replacement of the screen compactor and grit system in the Headworks facility, anticipated in 2031.

North Conway Water Precinct

- North Conway Water Precinct (NCWP) operates water and sewer systems serving North Conway, Intervale, Kearsarge, and lower Bartlett. The NCWP treatment facility was designed and built to have capacity to serve all of Conway as well as surrounding areas. Currently, the facility operates well under capacity.
- The NCWP water system produced 269 million gallons of water in 2022. Water system product and revenues have remained steady in recent years, within minor annual fluctuations largely driven by weather patterns and irrigation use. Water system is expected to remain steady due to a combination of new development and more efficient water usage.

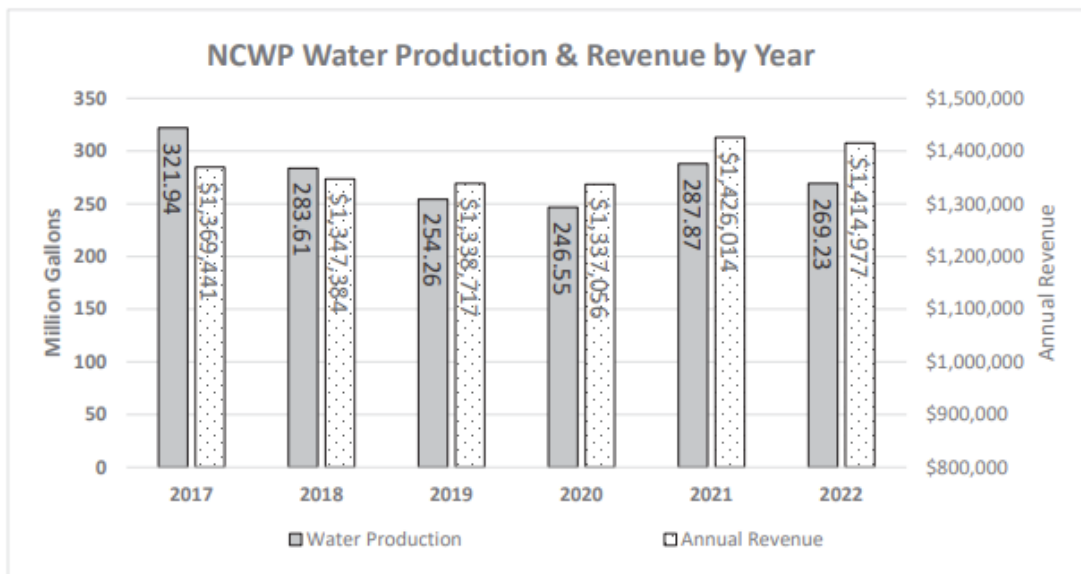


Figure 10: NCWP water production and revenue by year.

- The NCWP wastewater system treated 252 million gallons of effluent in 2022. Approximately 34% of this effluent is received from CVFD per a 2013 Intermunicipal Agreement. There have been annual fluctuations in sewer flows received by NCWP, whereas revenues have been increasing due to an increase in septage receiving following upgrades that were approved by precinct voters in 2016. As a result, septage receiving has increased to 7 million gallons in 2022 from 1.5 million gallons in 2018, resulting in approximately \$500,000 of additional annual revenue. This increase in revenue has allowed NCWP to absorb recent inflationary increases in costs without raising rates.

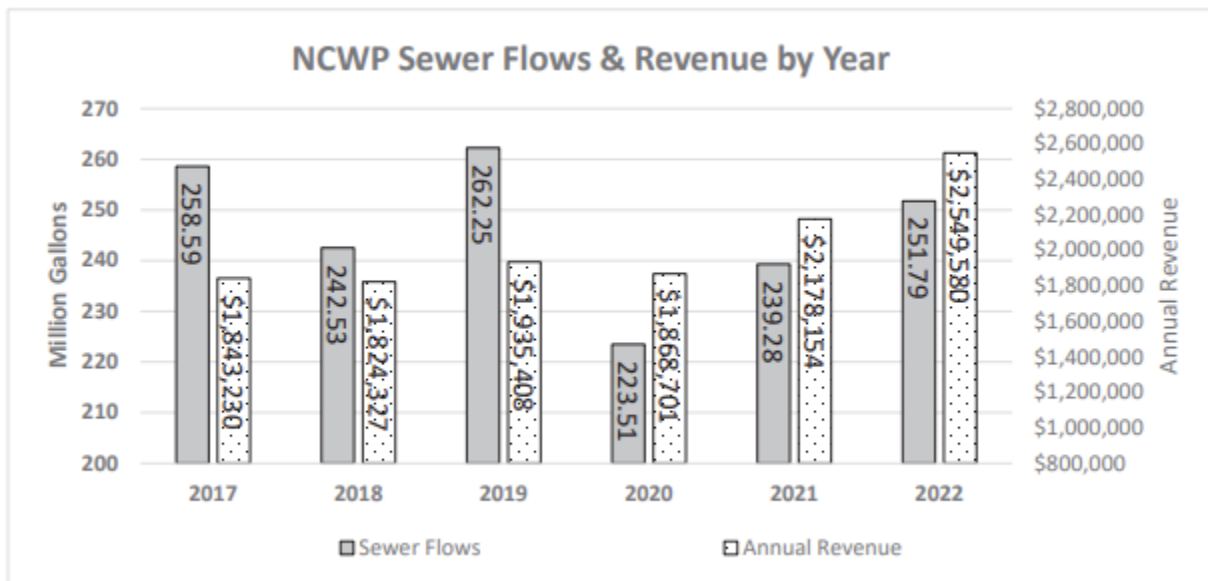


Figure 11: NCWP sewer flows and revenues by year.

- NCWP is currently engaged in several capital improvement projects:
 - **Saco River Erosion Mitigation:** the Saco River channel has migrated over 600 feet towards the NCWP treatment facility since 1940. NCWP is working to develop a project to mitigate further erosion and protect this facility, with design and permitting work scheduled for 2023.

- **Aeration Upgrades** are being design for the east carousel of the treatment facility, with final design scheduled for 2023.
- **Sludge Dryer:** as a result of receiving increased septage, NCWP has needed to pay for the disposal of treated sludge. Drying sludge will make it more economical to dispose of. NCWP is currently evaluating different technologies and funding partnerships.
- **Country Road Sewer Upgrades** are planned for 2023 following meetings with neighborhood residents.
- **Water Pressure Zones Connection:** final design work is planned for 2023 on a new water main that will run from Skimobile Rd to Artists Falls Rd and provide a redundant connection between NCWP's two water pressure zones.

May 2023 Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Focus Group

In May 2023, the Master Plan project team convened a focus group of residents, staff, and experts to discuss the future of water and wastewater infrastructure in Conway. Key themes from the discussion included:

- Support for expansion of water and wastewater systems to desired future growth areas, such as East Conway Rd and/or Center Conway.
- Consideration of the increasing costs of maintaining existing water and wastewater assets and compliance with new regulations. CVFD has made progress towards replacement of existing pipe after many years of deferred maintenance. The discovery of new contaminants such as PFAS has resulted in increased water treatment costs; it is likely that new contaminants will be discovered in the future as well.
- Exploring additional aquifer protections to protect local drinking water supplies.
- Challenges with failing private community water systems in Conway, many of which were built decades ago with insufficient capacity and substandard materials. There are currently 27 residential areas with private water systems, most of which are aging and have insufficient capacity.
- A need to educate residents about the role and purpose of water and wastewater systems, particularly in the context of any future proposed system expansions.

Considerations For Master Plan Process – Water & Wastewater

Related Feedback from the February 2023 Open House

- Respondents **strongly supported** a focus on protecting groundwater aquifers in the Master Plan.

2003 Master Plan

- The 2003 Master Plan included the following implementation strategies related to water and wastewater infrastructure:
 - Interconnect the Conway Village Fire District and North Conway Water Precinct infrastructure systems (*accomplished in 2016*).

- Prepare a comprehensive water and sewer infrastructure plan, including expansions to non-precinct areas.
- Establish a Capital Improvements Program Committee and maintain a six-year capital improvements program.

Next Steps – Water & Wastewater

Key Takeaways

- Conway's water and wastewater systems benefit significantly from local natural assets. All drinking water in the Town comes from local aquifers within Town boundaries, and the sandy, well-drained soils provide significant septic loading capacity. As a result, Conway has a significant amount of water and wastewater capacity and retains significant local control over these systems. Protection of the local water supply is a clear public priority.
- Water and wastewater systems are a critical component of future economic development in Conway. With the merger of the CVFD and the Town, and the significant available capacity at the NCWP treatment facility, the Town is well-positioned to consider expanding water and wastewater infrastructure to areas that are desired for future growth, as well as accommodate infill development within existing water and sewer service areas.
- Inflationary costs and identification of new contaminants are key long-term financial considerations for the management of water and wastewater systems.
- There are a significant number of private community water systems that could benefit from being connected to Town water. This could be an opportunity to increase the number of rate payers and improve the financial health of the system, although there may be mixed community support for the upfront capital cost of providing these water connections.

Potential Areas of Focus for the Master Plan

- Consider the development of an integrated Town-wide water and wastewater expansion strategy. This strategy would incorporate desired future growth and infill development areas, requisite land use regulation strategies, and complementary infrastructure improvement projects (e.g., road reconstruction, sidewalk construction, other buried utilities).
 - Such an approach would also support public outreach and education on the topic of water and wastewater expansion, which was identified as a critical need during the focus group.
- In line with the above strategy, the Master Plan could identify potential complementary capital improvement projects that address water and wastewater, other buried utilities, transportation infrastructure, and other community facilities (e.g., a potential expansion of the Police Department facility).
- Consider strategies for addressing failing private community water systems in a way that strengthens the financial health of public water systems.
- Identify alignment between potential zoning, land conservation, and groundwater protection strategies to develop approaches for water quality protection that benefit many stakeholders.

Other Community Facilities

Police Department Facility

The Conway Police Department is located at the corner of US 302 and East Conway Rd in Center Conway. In May 2023, the Conway Selectboard approved the use of \$35,000 in ARPA funds for a feasibility study for upgrades to Police Department facilities. The current 8,000 square foot facilities was completed in 1989 and provides insufficient space for the current size and scope of the Department. Other Police Department facility needs include:

- Insufficient climate control for the storage documents and evidence
- Insufficient office space for the number of employees, with closets being used as offices
- Insufficient garage space for parking cruisers
- Safety concerns in the holding cell area
- Other standard facility maintenance needs, such as window replacements
- Lack of a basement

Libraries

Conway is served by two libraries. Both libraries offer a variety of public services in addition to traditional library offerings. This includes community meeting rooms, internet access, programming for seniors, and science programs.

- Conway Public Library: located in Conway Village. The building is an architecturally-significant Classical Revival built in 1900; it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. The Library's Strategic Plan includes the goals and objectives related to library facilities:
 - Address ongoing storage challenges, including creating off-site storage
 - Improve how space is utilized within the library
 - Address parking issues
- Pope Memorial Library: located on Main Street in North Conway. While free and open to the public, the Pope Library is operated as a private 501(c)3 non-profit and does not receive dedicated funding from the Town of Conway operating budget. Voters in the North Conway Water Precinct typically appropriate \$10,000 per year to the library via warrant article.

Town Hall

In 2018, voters approved the Board of Selectmen to lease the former Bank of New Hampshire building in Conway Village to be the new town hall. The former Town Hall in Center Conway remains owned by the Town and is used for various Town and precinct purposes. The new Town Hall location offers expanded office and meeting space in a more convenient location for Town residents.

Fire Stations

Conway is served by three fire stations:

- North Conway Fire Station: located on Norcross Circle, the \$6.7 million station was finished in 2021.
- Conway Village Fire Station: the station is currently operated by the Conway Village Fire District and will be turned over to the Town of Conway starting January 2024.
- Center Conway Fire Station

Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities will be covered in a separate memo.