

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

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

PAGES

1

Work Session

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

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

A meeting of the Conway Planning Board and the Master Plan Steering Committee was held on Thursday, February 1, 2024 beginning at 5:30 pm at the Conway Town Office, Conway, NH. Those present were: Chair, Benjamin Colbath; Selectmen’s Representative, Steve Porter; Vice Chair, Ailie Byers; Secretary, Erik Corbett; Eliza Grant; Bill Barbin; Mark Hounsell; Alternate, Ted Phillips; Josh McAllister; Ben Wilcox; Kate Richardson; Jac Cuddy; Jason Gagnon; Janine Bean; and Town Planner, Ryan O’Connor.

WORK SESSION

The Board and Committee reviewed the attached Master Plan February 2024.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Holly L. Whitelaw
Planning Assistant



CONWAY FORWARD

TOWN OF CONWAY, NH MASTER PLAN

FEBRUARY 2024

Acknowledgments

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Conway Planning Board

Benjamin Colbath, Chair

Ailie Byers, Vice Chair

Erik Corbett, Secretary

Bill Barbin

Eliza Grant

Mark Hounsell

Steven Porter (Selectmen's Representative)

Debbie Haynes (alternate)

Ted Phillips (alternate)

Additional Committee Members

Janine Bean

Jac Cuddy

Jason Gagnon

Barbara Lyons

Josh McAllister

Ben Wilcox

TOWN OF CONWAY

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Paul DegliAngeli, Deputy Town Manager

Holly Whitelaw, Assistant Planner

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Jeff Levine, Levine Planning Strategies

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

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1. INTRODUCTION



1. Introduction

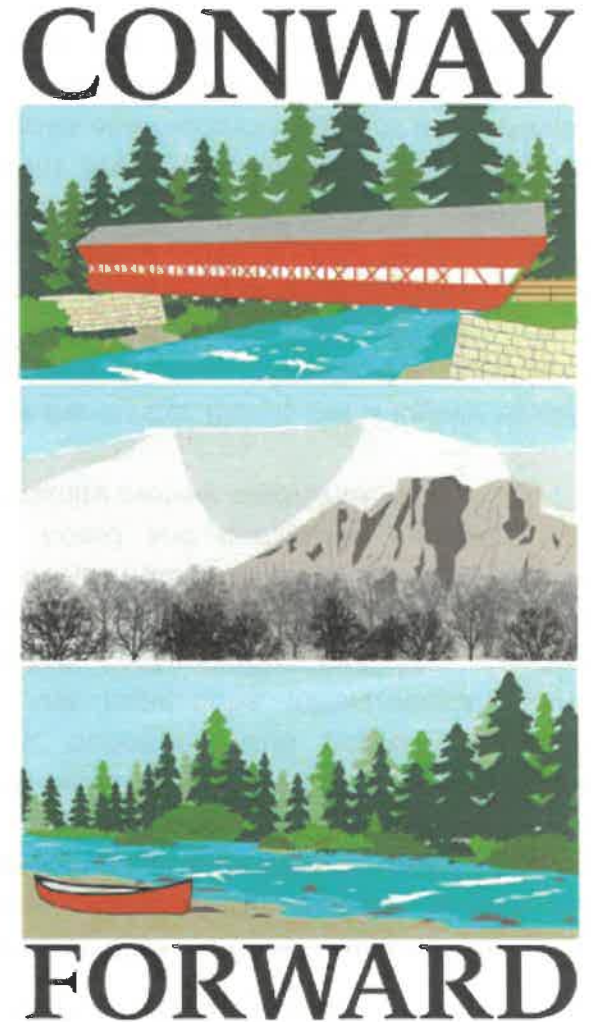
Introduction

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

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

The Town's previous Master Plan, prepared in 2003, identified many similar trends. Unfortunately, relatively little progress has been made on the actions identified in that plan. This new plan is the product of many conversations with community leaders and residents who care deeply about Conway and want to see their community thrive. The Conway community is prepared to meet its challenges, using this plan as a roadmap toward a healthier and more equitable future.

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



1. Introduction



Housing focus group participants discuss areas of opportunity.

About this Plan

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

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

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

1. Introduction

ABOUT THIS PROCESS

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

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

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



An attendee provides input at a February 2023 Open House.

1. Introduction

PLAN STRUCTURE

This plan is structured as follows:

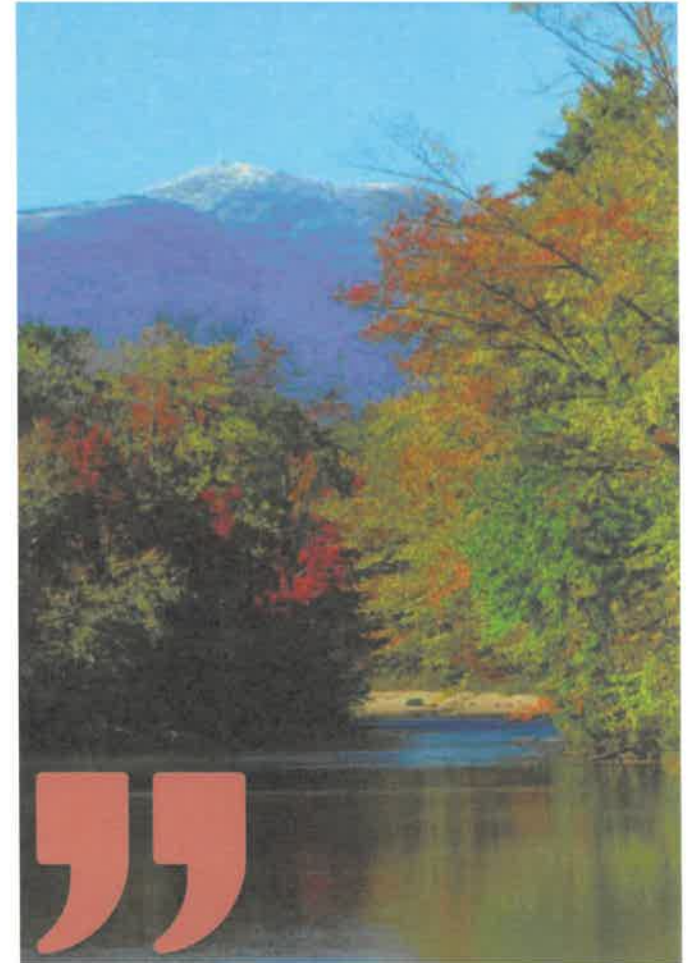
- **Part 1: Vision & Introduction**
 - » This section provides a broad overview of the plan vision, the purpose of the plan, state statutes related to master planning in New Hampshire, the planning process, and plan structure.
- **Part 2: Catalyst Projects**
 - » This section provides an in-depth explanation of two primary projects recommended by this plan: an update to the Town’s zoning and land use policies and complementary expansions to water and wastewater infrastructure. This section presents the plan’s Future Land Use Map and associated recommendations. This section also includes sample lists of subprojects that can be pursued to implement the Catalyst Projects in smaller pieces.
- **Part 3: Key Focus Areas & Strategies**
 - » This section includes background information, desired outcomes, policy recommendations, and selected case studies for the following focus areas:
 - A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability**
 - B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development**
 - C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway**
 - D. Steward Conway’s Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces**
 - E. Support Conway’s Arts, Culture, & Historic Character**
 - F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places**
 - G. Steward Conway’s World-Class Recreation Opportunities**
 - H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future**
- **Part 4: Appendices**
 - » This section includes the following items:
 - Community Profile
 - Visioning Open House Boards Results & Summary Memo
 - Existing Conditions Analysis Memos
 - Focus Groups Summaries
 - Action Priorities Survey Results
 - Final Plan Presentation & Open House Results

Vision Statement

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



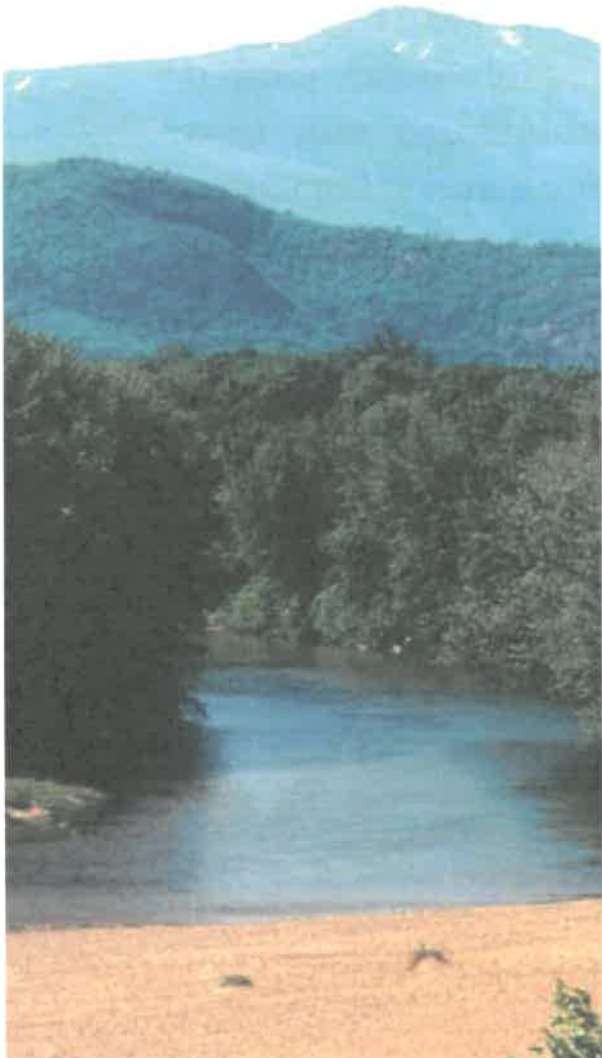
Located in the scenic Mount Washington Valley, the Town of Conway is a livable, vibrant, and inclusive community that values its industrial history and future as an iconic New England recreation destination. Through carefully revised zoning policies, Conway preserves its beloved village centers, supports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



1. Introduction

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

To Add



The slide features a decorative background with a light blue sky, a teal sea, and a grey mountain range. A line of trees is visible at the bottom. Several colored squares are overlaid: a large red square on the left, a green square above the title, a yellow square to the right of the title, and a teal square below the title.

2. CATALYST PROJECTS

2. Catalyst Projects

Catalyst Projects to Move Conway Forward

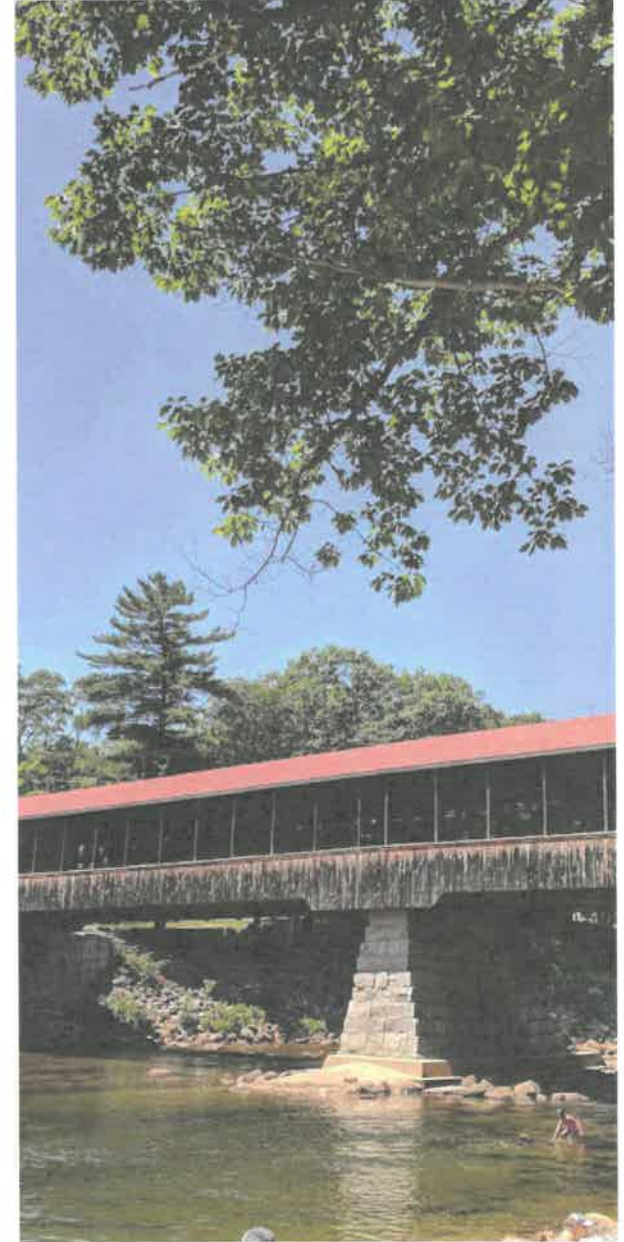
This Master Plan is made up of multiple sections that address different aspects of the Conway community, including commercial development, housing, transportation, and economic development. It will take several years to implement all of the recommendations in these chapters. Some of the recommendations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

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

To achieve the plan vision and move Conway Forward, two fundamental changes need to take place:

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

To help facilitate the implementation of this plan, the Town of Conway will use an online **{IMPLEMENTATION DASHBOARD}** tool to track and share implementation progress.



2. Catalyst Projects



Photo: Wiseguy Creative

CATALYST PROJECT 1:

UPDATE CONWAY'S ZONING & LAND USE REGULATIONS

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

End Goal: Updated Zoning Ordinance and Map, Updated Site Plan Regulations, Updated Subdivision Regulations

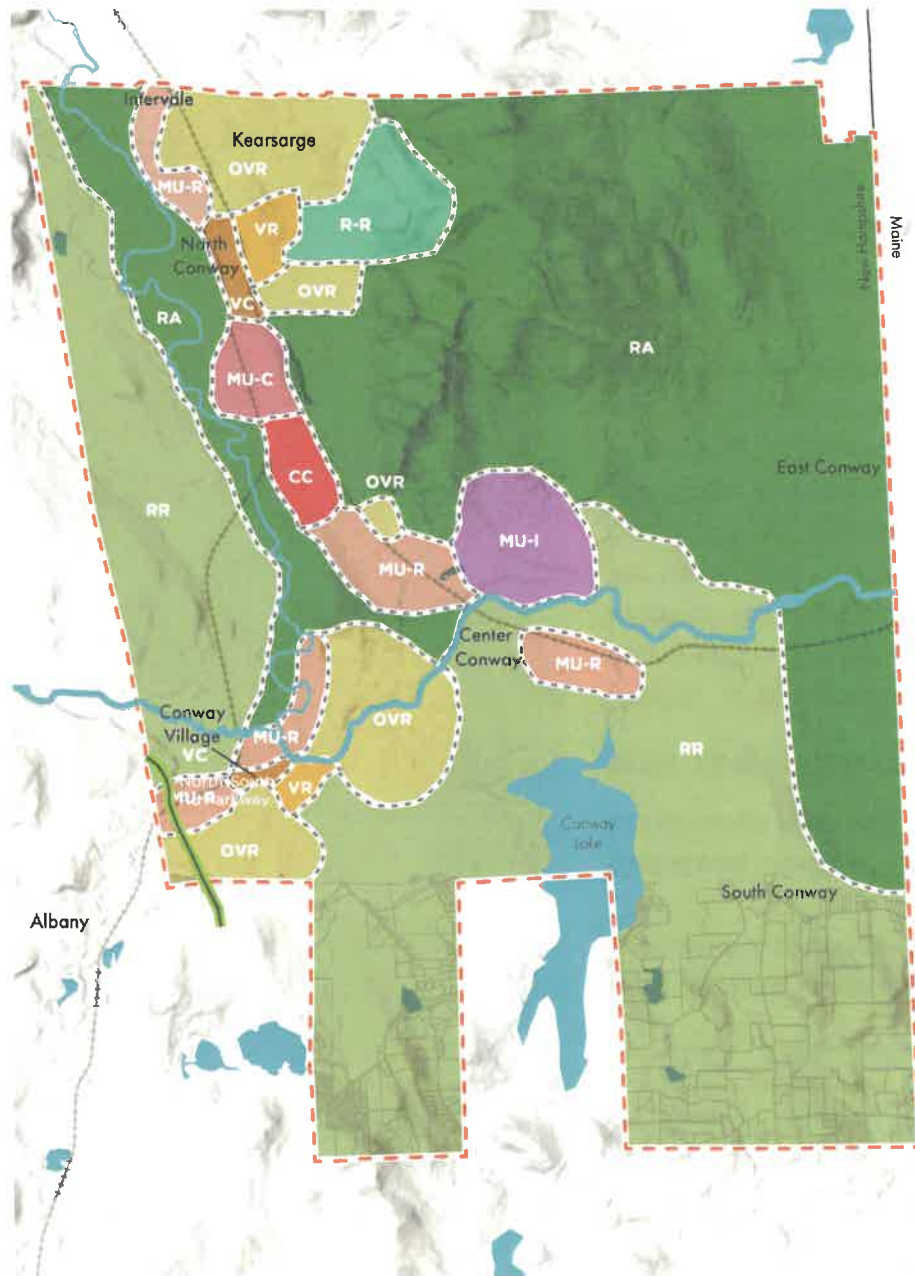
WHY THIS PROJECT?

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

This project moves Conway Forward by:

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

2. Catalyst Projects



FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The vision for zoning and land use in Conway is captured in the Future Land Use Map. This map shows recommendations for ways the Town of Conway should regulate land use to achieve community goals, including thoughtful limits on large-scale commercial development and priority areas for the creation of new homes. The identified areas on this map seek to establish a stronger balance of housing, commercial development, and natural resource conservation within the Town of Conway. To achieve the vision offered by this Future Land Use Map (FLUM), the Town will need to update zoning, subdivision, and site plan regulations accordingly.

The Future Land Use Map is provided as a full page in [Appendix X](#).

Future Land Use

January 2024

	Town of Conway		MU-R - Mixed Use Residential
	Parcels		CC - Commercial Core
	Railroad		VC - Village Core
	State Border		MU-C - Mixed Use Commercial
	River, Lake, Pond		RA - Rural Agricultural
			MU-I - Mixed Use Industrial
			OVR - Outer Village Residential
			R-R - Recreational Resort
			VR - Village Residential
			RR - Rural Residential

SE GROUP

2. Catalyst Projects

GUIDE TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

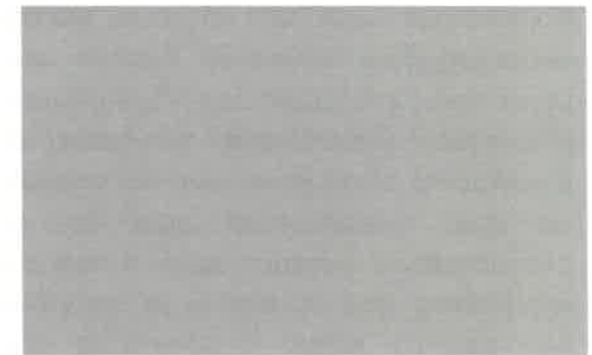
MIXED USE AREAS

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

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

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

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



Mixed use areas often include residential, commercial, and light industrial uses.

2. Catalyst Projects

The Role of Infrastructure

The vision reflected in the FLUM requires alignment between land use policies and supporting infrastructure. More compact development is possible within existing or envisioned water and sewer infrastructure service areas, whereas development density is more limited outside these service areas. Areas that are envisioned as compact neighborhoods will require proactive planning to create sidewalk networks, recreational facilities, parking and other elements that will improve quality of life and orderly development. See Catalyst Project #2 for information on expansions to water and wastewater infrastructure.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP AREA	ROLE OF PUBLIC WATER & WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE
Village Core (VC)	Served by W/WW
Commercial Core (CC)	Served by W/WW
Mixed Use-Residential (MU-R)	Served by W/WW
Mixed Use-Commercial (MU-C)	Served by W/WW
Mixed Use-Industrial (MU-I)	Served by W/WW
Recreational Resort (R-R)	Served by W/WW
Village Residential (VR)	Served by W/WW
Outer Village Residential (OVR)	Mostly served by W/WW
Rural Residential (RR)	Not served by W/WW
Rural Agricultural (RA)	Not served by W/WW

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

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

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

2. Catalyst Projects

RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

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

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

Outer Village Residential (OVR) – These areas cover existing, lower-density residential subdivisions adjacent to village centers. The creation of new housing opportunities is supported by enabling smaller lot sizes and permissive policies around accessory dwelling units, conversion of single-family homes to small multi-unit structures, and enabling neighborhood-scale multi-family dwellings.

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

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



2. Catalyst Projects

RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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



2. Catalyst Projects



HOW CONWAY GETS THIS DONE

There are many ways that Conway can approach these zoning updates and changes to land use regulations. The section below summarizes possible “subprojects” that Town staff, Planning Board members, and additional stakeholders could tackle to break up the zoning updates into more manageable pieces.

SUBPROJECT OPTIONS

Project #1: Pick the Low-Hanging Fruit

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

Project #2: Adopt a New Zoning Map

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

Project #3: Expand Infrastructure First

The Planning Board and Town staff may decide to prioritize expansions to water and wastewater infrastructure first and then use these expansions to inform changes to zoning. See Catalyst Project #2 for further information on infrastructure upgrades.

2. Catalyst Projects

Project #4: Address Zoning for Conway's Villages

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

Project #5: Refine Commercial Core Zoning and Site Plan Regulations

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

Project #6: Pursue Housing-Related Ordinances

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

INTENDED OUTCOMES

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

- **Integration with Water/Wastewater Expansions**

This zoning and land use policy update process should be coordinated alongside upgrades to water/wastewater services in Conway. See Catalyst Project #2 for more information.

- **Coordination with Community Stakeholders**

This process should be coordinated alongside relevant stakeholders, including schools, emergency services, community boards and organizations, and agencies.

- **Ongoing Community Engagement**

Processes to update zoning and land use policies should include robust community engagement to ensure that the changes reflect community feedback.

- **Recommended Related Studies**

This plan recommends several follow-up studies and plans, such as updates to the Town's Natural Resource Inventory, a new open space plan, and a destination management plan. The findings of these studies should inform updates to the land use code.

- **Showing Progress**

Town staff and the Planning Board should show progress on the zoning and land use updates using the Implementation Dashboard.

2. Catalyst Projects

CATALYST PROJECT 2:

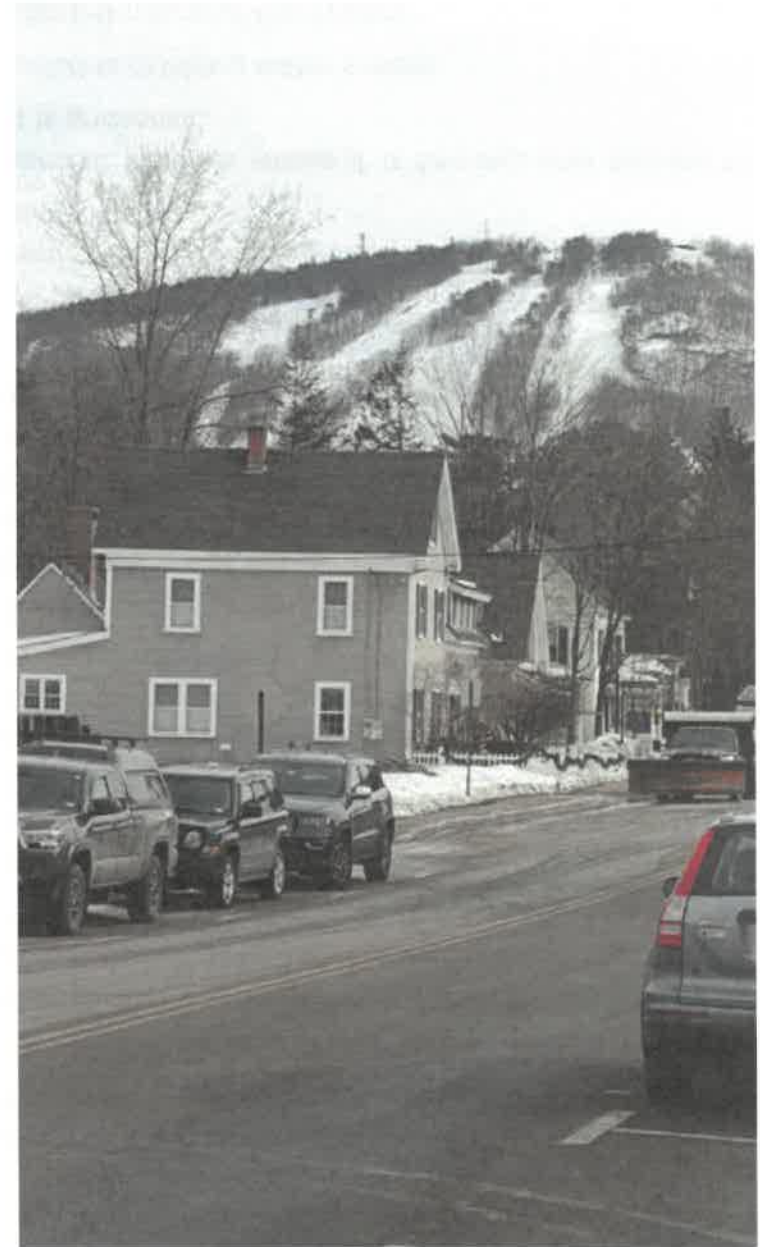
WATER & WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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

End Goal: Water & Wastewater System Improvement Plan

WHY THIS PROJECT?

Water and wastewater infrastructure is centrally important to Conway's future. The availability of public water and wastewater connections has a significant influence on development patterns, particularly in areas where compact development patterns and small lot sizes are prohibitive to the use of private wells and septic systems. The Future Land Use Map (p. XX) identifies areas in Conway where different types and intensities of land use are desired and forms the basis for revising regulations to manage development. The presence of water and wastewater infrastructure is similarly important to the location and form of future development. To facilitate needed residential development in areas where it is desired, there will need to be a nexus between land use regulations and infrastructure availability and capacity. **Without enhancement and expansion of these systems, opportunities for needed creation of new homes in Conway, including affordable housing, will be significantly curtailed.** Conversely, placing thoughtful limits on the extents of water and wastewater service areas can be an effective complement to zoning regulations for limiting development potential in rural and environmentally sensitive areas.



2. Catalyst Projects



Changes to water and wastewater infrastructure have wide-ranging implications for future development, conservation, and other community initiatives. A detailed, long-term plan is needed to address these implications:

- **Protecting water resources.** Centralized treatment of wastewater has significant environmental and public health benefits, including enhanced protection of surface waters and drinking water aquifers from pollutants.
- **Long-term maintenance of the system.** A long-term plan is an opportunity to consider the need for system expansion alongside maintenance needs and costs. With the dissolution of the Conway Village Fire District in 2025, the Town of Conway will be absorbing the district's water and wastewater system – a significant maintenance responsibility. A long-term plan can examine proposed capital improvement projects alongside maintenance costs and potential increases in revenues associated with system expansion and enhancement.
- **Addressing failing private community water systems.** Most older residential subdivisions in Conway use private community water systems. As of 2023, there were nearly 30 private community water systems in Conway and most were experiencing issues related to system capacity and infrastructure condition. The costs of overhauling these systems are significant. A long-term plan can consider the benefits and costs of the Town-extended public water service to these subdivisions, including the upfront cost versus potential future revenues.

This project moves Conway Forward by:

- **Laying the groundwork for infrastructure improvements that are critical to expanding Conway's supply of market-rate and affordable housing.**
- **Supporting walkable, village-style development in areas where it is desired, and helping to limit denser development in areas where it is undesired.**
- **Protecting surface waters and the Town's pristine drinking water supply.**
- **Supporting long-term, fiscally responsible maintenance of the system.**

2. Catalyst Projects

KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS & PRIORITIES

Aligning land use regulations and water/wastewater service areas. Changes to zoning districts and current/desired water and wastewater services areas should be evaluated concurrently to ensure that there is appropriate infrastructure to support desired levels of residential development. The Future Land Use Map (p. XX) can serve as a guiding reference for potential expansions of water and wastewater service areas to facilitate residential development in areas where it is desired.

Areas on the Future Land Use Map that will require public water and wastewater service to support desired development density include Village Core, Commercial Core, Mixed Use- Residential, Mixed Use-Commercial, Mixed Use-Industrial, Recreational Resort, and Village Residential. Depending on desired future residential densities, Outer Village Residential areas could potentially benefit from public water and wastewater service. Rural Residential and Rural Agricultural areas will generally not require public water and wastewater service, and there can be conservation and open space benefits to limiting service to these areas as well.

Public Outreach & Education. Previous attempts to expand public water and wastewater service areas in Conway received pushback from residents with concerns about costs and sparking new, undesired development. The process to develop a water and wastewater system capital improvement plan should include an educational component that provides information on the nexus between infrastructure, housing, land use regulations, and water quality, as well as opportunities for

the public to inform the planning process.

System Expansion, Maintenance, and Management. Public water and wastewater systems are complex and capital-intensive, requiring significant infrastructure and ongoing maintenance and management. Long-term planning should consider the costs and revenues of existing systems, capital and long-term maintenance costs of expansions, projected revenue increases from expansions, and potential future increases in the costs of regulatory compliance for safe drinking water. Additional sources of funding and financing should be considered as well, such as the State Clean Water Revolving Fund and impact fees from private developments.

Specific Needs and Opportunities. The plan should articulate specific water and wastewater expansion goals and priority areas that are in line with the Future Land Use Map and community priorities. Possible system expansion priorities that can be explored through this planning process include:

- Expanding water and sewer service through Redstone and along East Conway Rd to the current industrial area.
- Completing a loop from East Conway to Center Conway and connecting to Conway Village
- Extending water service to underperforming private community water systems.
- Refining a process to monitor all water and wastewater systems in the Town of Conway for safety and quality at regular intervals

2. Catalyst Projects

RELATED MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

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

PLAN SECTION	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability	A-1.1; A1.2
B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development	B-1.4
D. Steward Conway's Unique Natural Resources & Open Spaces	D-1.1; D-1.2; D-1.3
F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places	F-2.3
H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future	H-1.4; H-3.4; H-3.5; H-3.6



2. Catalyst Projects

HOW CONWAY GETS THIS DONE

There are multiple interrelated initiatives that Conway can take on to facilitate the enhancement and expansion of public water and wastewater service.

Develop a Water and Wastewater System Improvement Plan

This planning process could be overseen by Town staff, as well as an ad-hoc Water and Wastewater Committee with representation from the Planning Board, Selectboard, School Board, municipal and precinct departments, and town residents.

Impact Fee Policy

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

Revise Land Use Regulations

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

Develop a Town-wide Capital Improvement Plan that is informed by the Water and Wastewater System Plan

As recommended in *Section F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places*, the expansion and maintenance of public water and sewer systems should be considered alongside the Town's other capital improvement needs, such as roads, bridges, sidewalks, and municipal facilities, to ensure that there are adequate financial resources to support future infrastructure investments. This process can also reveal opportunities for alignment with other infrastructure projects, such as roadway reconstruction along roads where buried water and wastewater pipes exist or are proposed.



The background features a stylized illustration of a forest with various shades of green trees. In the foreground, a red covered bridge with a white lattice structure spans across a blue river. The bridge has a grey roof. On either side of the river, there are stone walls. The top of the page is decorated with several colored rectangles: a large red one on the left, a green one in the upper middle, a blue vertical one in the center, and a tan one on the right.

3. KEY FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIES



A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability

A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability

Introduction

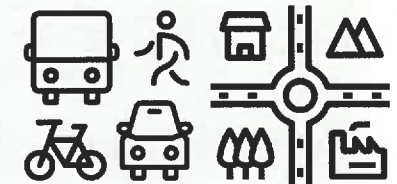
This chapter presents goals and strategies for improving housing options for Conway residents, including strategies for enhancing housing affordability. It also includes strategies pertaining to changes to the Town land use code, as local land use regulations play a central role in determining the types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

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

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

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

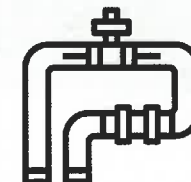
**RELEVANT
MASTER
PLAN TOPIC
AREAS**



Transportation Land Use



Municipal
Services



Infrastructure



Commercial
Development

A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability

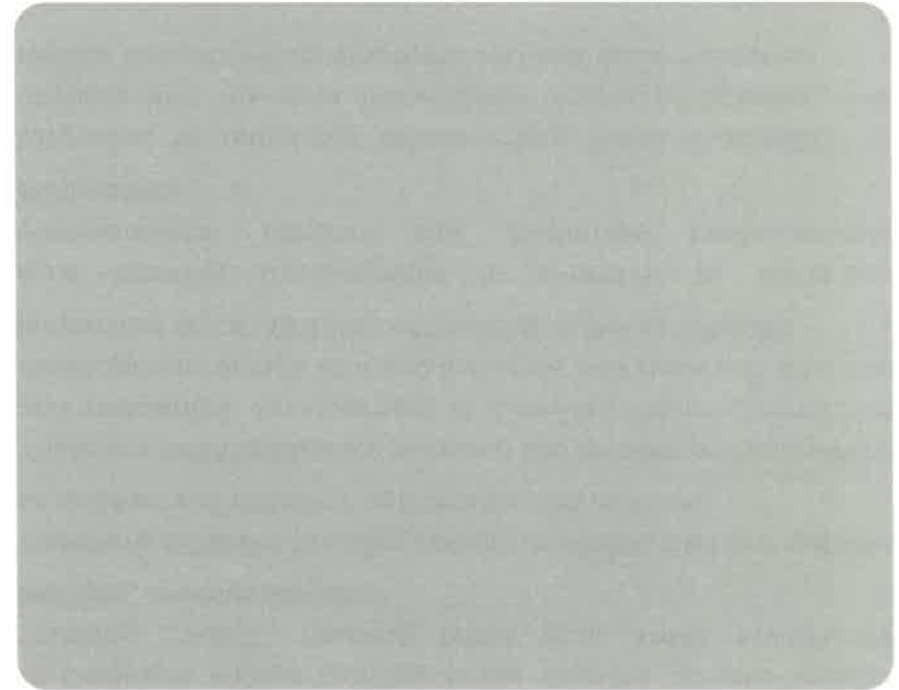
Key Terms

Affordable Housing - Affordable housing refers to housing that is priced at a level that is affordable to individuals or families earning a specific income level. Housing costs are generally considered affordable if they are less than 30% of a household's income.

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

Workforce Housing - Workforce housing is defined by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Agency as "permanent housing, intended as a primary year-round residence that is available to households regardless of age and is best provided near places of employment." Workforce housing can refer to several types of housing, including subsidized housing, affordable housing, market-rate, and mixed-income housing.

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



Current and Planned Housing Projects

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

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

A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability



Desired Outcomes

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

GOAL A-1:

Expand Housing Supply in Water and Wastewater Service Areas

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:


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

- Create Mixed Use-Residential, Mixed Use-Commercial, and Commercial Core districts that are aligned with water/wastewater service and support higher residential densities (See *Future Land Use Map*)
- Create Rural-Agricultural and Rural-Residential zones to accommodate low-density residential development in areas without access to water and wastewater service (See *Future Land Use Map*)

- Continue to use the Town's overlay districts to preserve water resources and direct residential and commercial development out of key resource areas (See *Overlay Districts Map*)

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

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


ACCORDING TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, ABOUT 15% OF PRIVATE WELLS IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE ELEVATED LEVELS OF CONTAMINANTS, INCLUDING BACTERIA, NITRATES, AND OTHER SUBSTANCES HARMFUL TO HUMAN HEALTH

GOAL A-2:

Reduce Zoning-Related Barriers to Affordable and Attainable Housing in Conway

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



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



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



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

A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOAL A-3:

Increase Affordable Housing in Conway Through a Multi-Faceted Strategy

CHALLENGE #1:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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



A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability

CHALLENGE #2:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

- Allocate additional operating budget and pursue grant funding to support needed studies, planning efforts, and coordination.
- Consider adding a new Housing & Economic Development Coordinator position to assist the Town Planning Director with development review and coordination with affordable housing partners regarding funding opportunities for affordable housing.

CHALLENGE #3:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



GOAL A-4:

Thoughtfully Manage Short-Term Rentals (STRs) in Conway

CHALLENGE:



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

STRATEGIES:

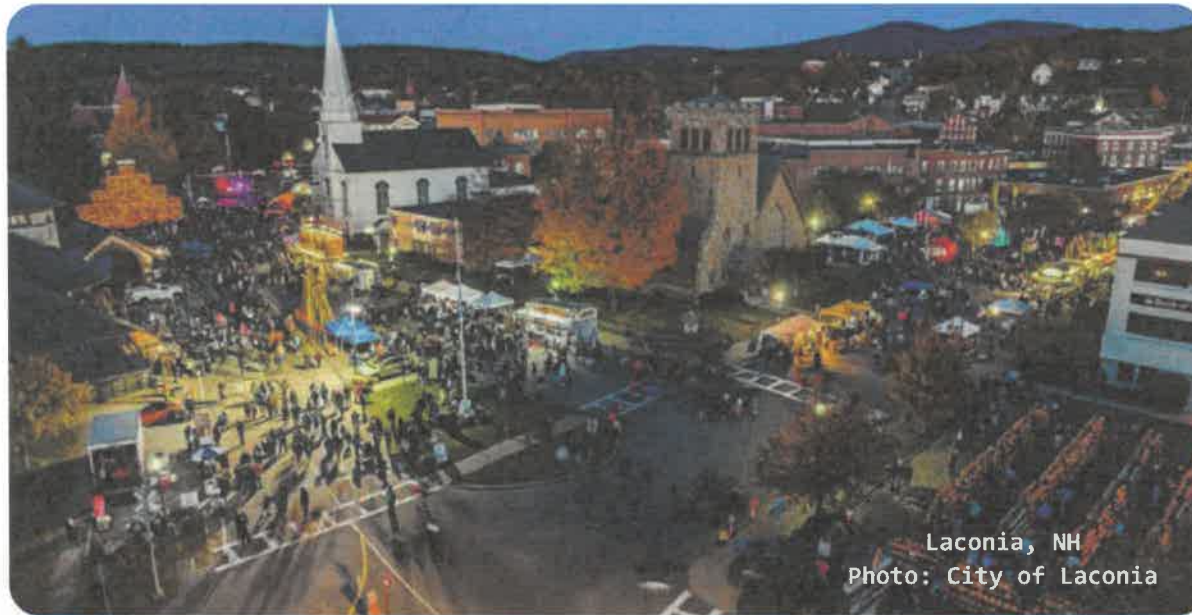
A-4.1: Continue to monitor local levels of short-term rentals.

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

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

-  In 2021, there were an estimated to be at least 500 short-term rentals in Conway, equivalent to about 10% of single-family homes in Conway
-  STRs host about 1/3 of overnight visitors in Conway during peak travel times

A. Improve Long-Term Housing Availability and Affordability



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

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





B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

Introduction

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

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

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

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

Recent And Planned Commercial Development Projects

RECENT PROJECTS:

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

PLANNED PROJECTS:

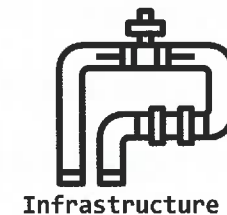
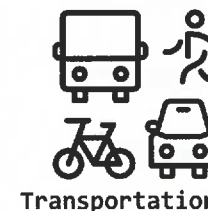
- At the time of this Master Plan update, there were two hotels and one large commercial building currently under construction in Conway. These projects were approved before the Town of Conway placed a moratorium on commercial and hotel development in April 2023. Thus, the scale and number of planned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



Desired Outcomes

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

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

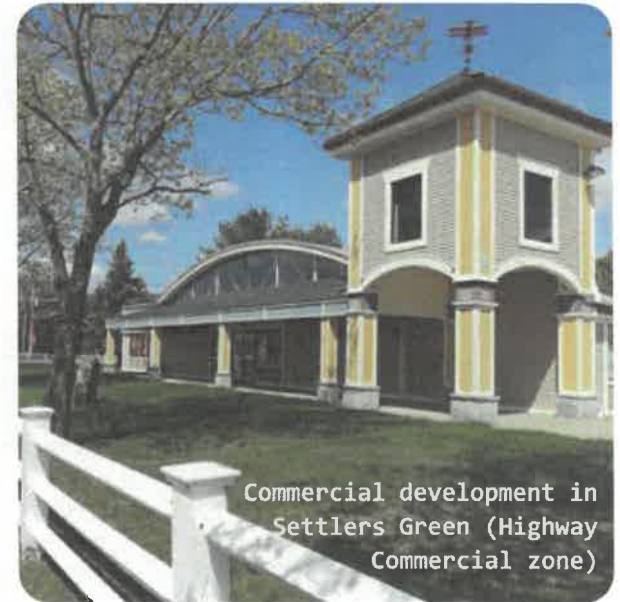
GOAL B-1:

CHALLENGE #1:

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

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

STRATEGIES:



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

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

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

CHALLENGE #2:

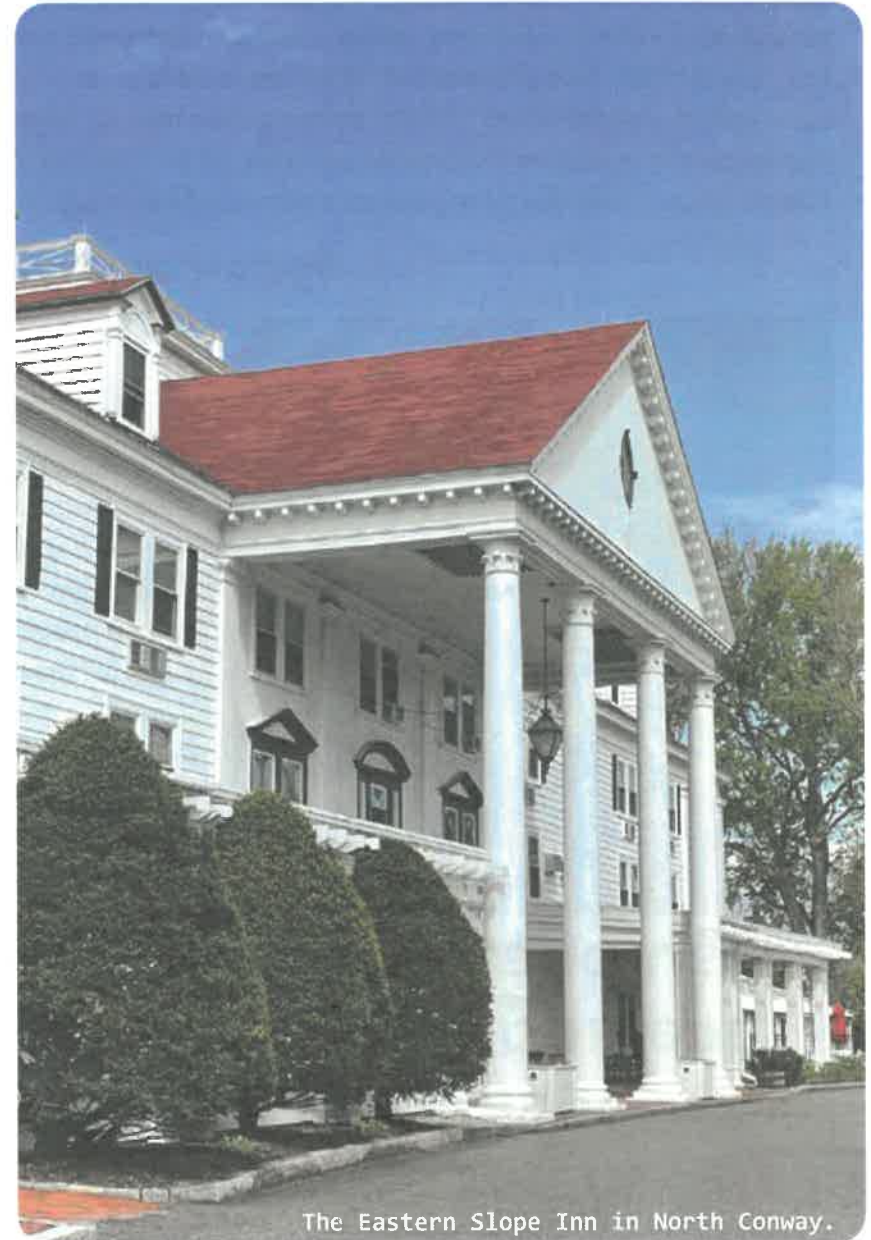
Hotel development in Conway has proliferated at a fast pace in recent years; residents have not been supportive of this development. The development of these hotels has generally added to Conway's housing crunch; staff at these new hotels need affordable places to live, placing further demand on the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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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



The Eastern Slope Inn in North Conway.

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

CHALLENGE #3:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



USING COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT TO FUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

GOAL B-2:

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

CHALLENGE:

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



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

B. Thoughtfully Manage Commercial Development

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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

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

- Create block perimeter standards for the recommended Mixed-Use Core district. Limiting the perimeter of blocks can limit the distance between destinations and can make a place more inviting to walk.

- Adopt standards that encourage or require parking in the back of buildings.
- Adopt standards that require pedestrian infrastructure or shared-use paths as a part of new developments.
- Require pedestrian connectivity to neighboring developments.
- As noted in the Transportation chapter, this change will require lessening or removing parking requirements, which are often too onerous and can inhibit infill development.

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

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



GOAL B-3:

Support Small-Scale Industrial Uses in Conway

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



Brewing equipment at Tuckerman Brewing near Conway Village



C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

INTRODUCTION

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

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

Conway promotes a strong local economy by cultivating a strong community. Conway supports its village centers, which contain ample housing opportunities, thriving businesses, and a vibrant arts and cultural scene. Town policies and actions support the economic health and wellbeing of the community, encouraging tourism in balance with other industries and within the capacity of community infrastructure.

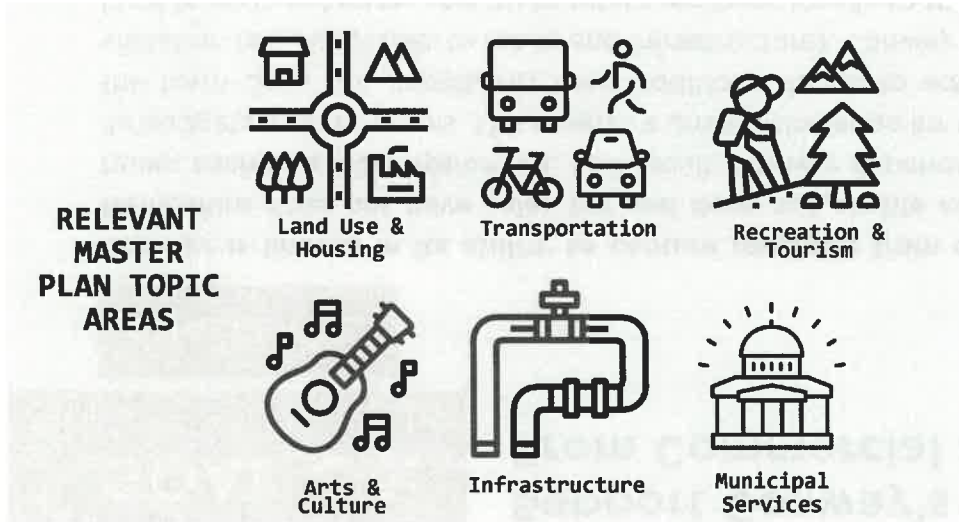
C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

Recent Economic Development Projects

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

Desired Outcomes

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



C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

GOAL C-1:

Support Conway's Tax Base & Capture Economic Benefits From Commercial Activity Associated with Tourism

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:



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

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

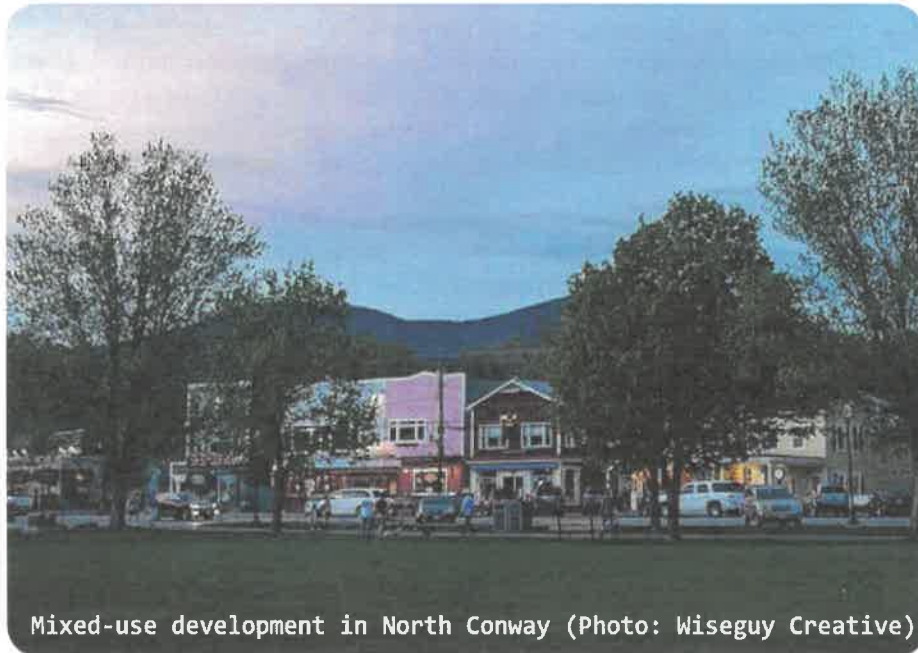
C-1.2: Encourage the development of locally-owned and operated tourism businesses to help keep tourism revenue within the community.

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

C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

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

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



THE VALUE OF MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Which generates more tax value for the Town of Conway - a large single-family home, or a small apartment building with a store on the ground level? According to a report conducted in 2020 by Urban3 and the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority that examined 15 New Hampshire communities, multi-family and mixed-use development consistently generate more tax revenue compared to single-family structures.

Rochester, NH Case Studies



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



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

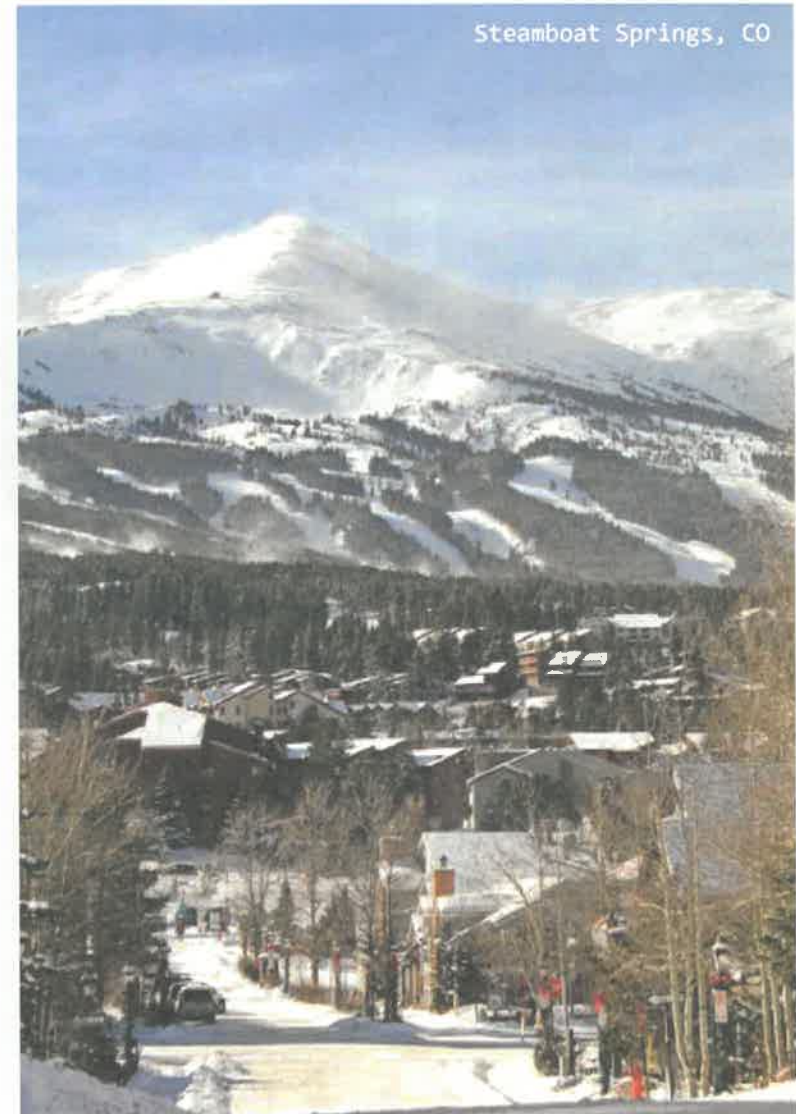
C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

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

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

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

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



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

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

- Promote the MWV Pledge, which encourages visitors to respect the environment during their visit.

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

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



STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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

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



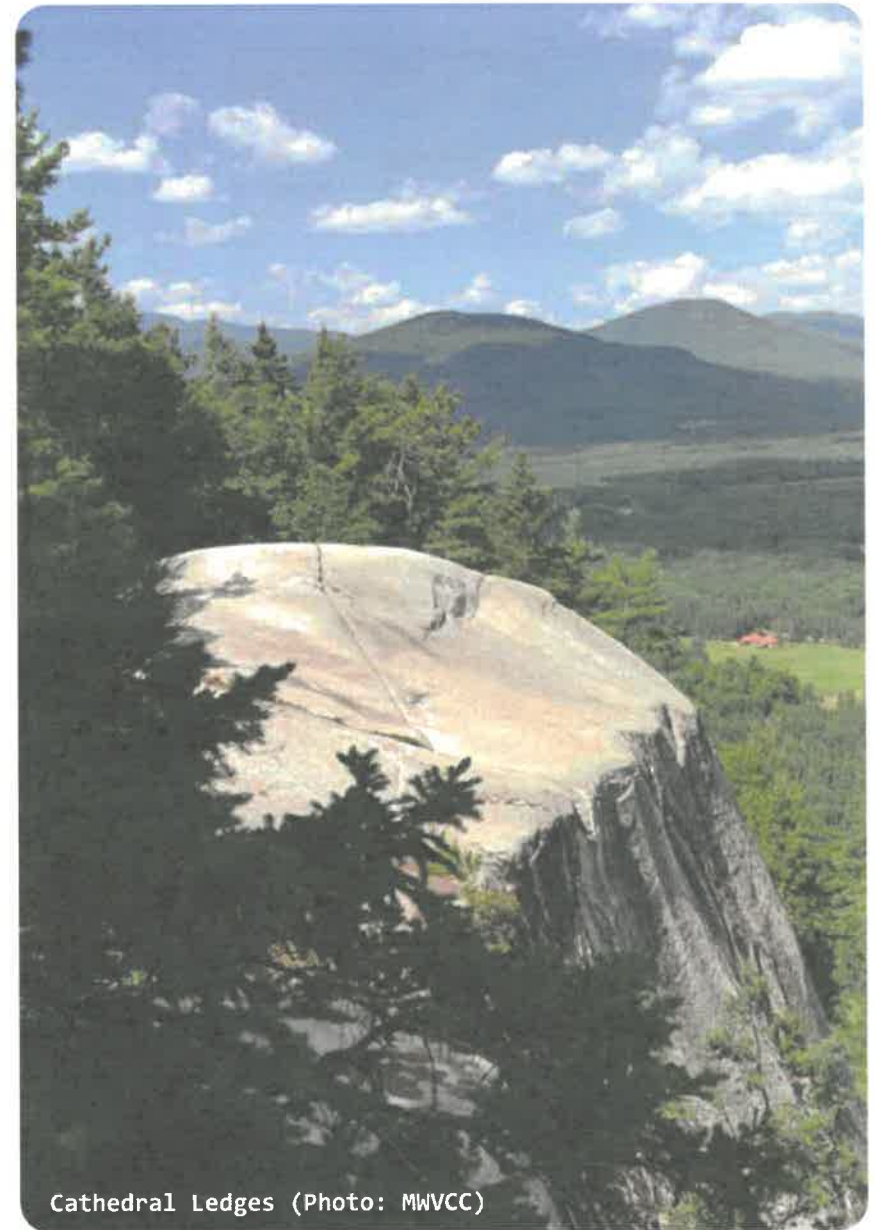
C. Promote a Local Economy That Works for Conway

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

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



Conway Train Station



Cathedral Ledges (Photo: MWVCC)

GOAL C-3:

Support A Diversity of Housing Options for Conway's Residents and Employees

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

C-3.3: As recommended in the Housing chapter, build Conway's capacity to address housing issues by hiring a Housing & Economic Development Coordinator.

LACK OF HOUSING, LONG COMMUTES

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

PROVIDING EMPLOYEE HOUSING IN DOVER AND DURHAM, NH

Architect Maggie Randolph and contractor John Randolph have been working to create housing opportunities for their employees at the assisted living and memory care facilities they run in Durham and Dover. In Durham, they built 7 1-bedroom apartments and a childcare center in a mixed-use building. In Dover, they are building a tiny home community that will provide 44 units of housing for their employees priced at 30% of their income.

GOAL C-4:

Promote a Diverse Economy that Supports Conway's Year-Round Community



CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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

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



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

INTRODUCTION

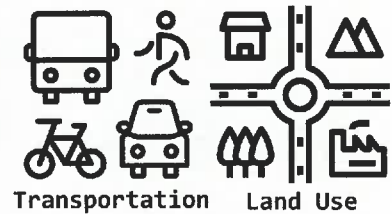
This chapter presents goals and strategies for conserving and enhancing natural resources in Conway, including water resources, critical habitats, and farmland. It also includes strategies related to managing flood risk and balancing future development with environmental considerations.

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

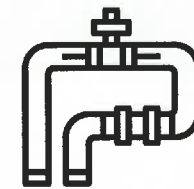
Conway is a town with many environmental sensitivities. It is located at the confluence of two major river corridors that form the gateway to a large mountainous region, with elevations ranging from just 400 feet along the Saco River to over 6,000 feet at the summit of Mount Washington. The region's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

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

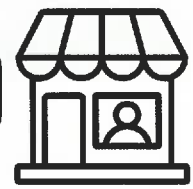
RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



Municipal Services



Infrastructure



Commercial Development

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

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

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

Desired Outcomes

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



Photo: Wiseguy Creative

GOAL D-1:

Protect & Enhance Conway's Critical Water Resources

CHALLENGE #1:

Conway's drinking water resources face threats to water quality. All drinking water in Conway comes from local groundwater aquifers within Town boundaries. While there are many benefits to this level of local control, the Town must thoughtfully manage the use and protection of these groundwater resources to ensure that safe drinking water is provided in perpetuity.

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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

CHALLENGE #2:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

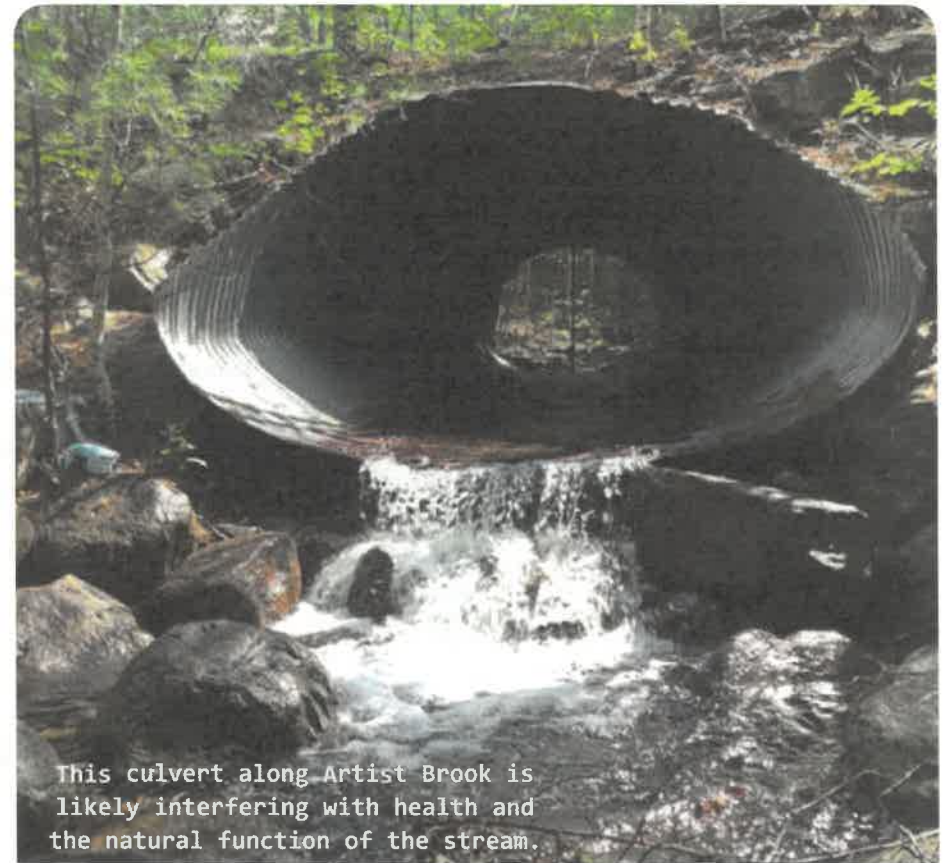
D-1.5: Consider further limiting vegetation clearing in shoreland and river corridor areas.

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

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

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

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



GOAL D-2:

Conserve Open Spaces and Keep Them Connected

CHALLENGE:

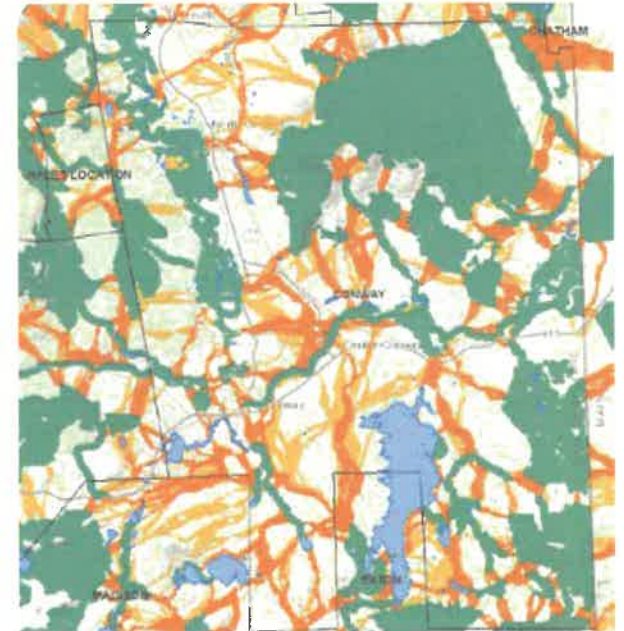
Ecologically sensitive areas of Conway face development and climate pressures. While Conway's forested valleys and hills provide valuable habitats and help form its picturesque aesthetic, these areas can also be desirable for future residential development. In recent decades, significant residential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

STRATEGIES:

D-1.9: Update the Town's 1996 Natural Resource Inventory, including providing information on key wildlife corridors.

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

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



Interconnected wildlife corridors are critical for species health. Areas in green on the map represent high priority habitat blocks of 50 or more acres. Areas in orange and yellow represent potential wildlife corridor connections between habitat blocks. Additional local studies can help verify the on-the-ground location of critical wildlife corridors. Source: New Hampshire Fish & Game Wildlife Corridors Map (2021).

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

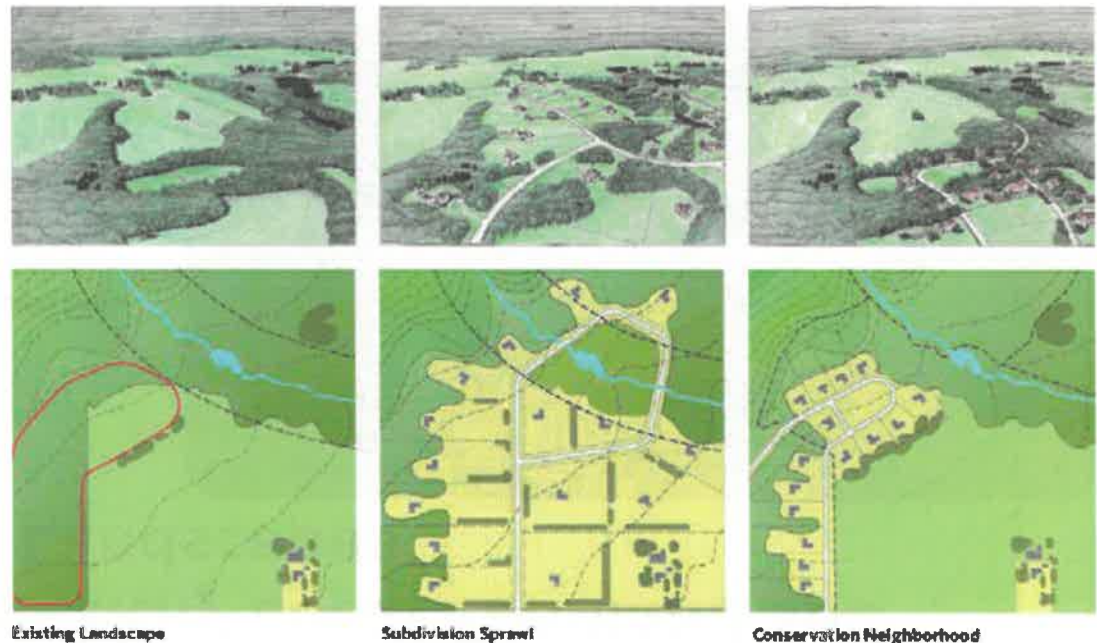
D-1.12: Consider amending the Town's cluster housing development provisions using "conservation subdivision" standards where a minimum percentage of the subdivided area is set aside for conservation.

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

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

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

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



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

GOAL D-3:

Sustain Healthy Local Farmland and Working Landscapes

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

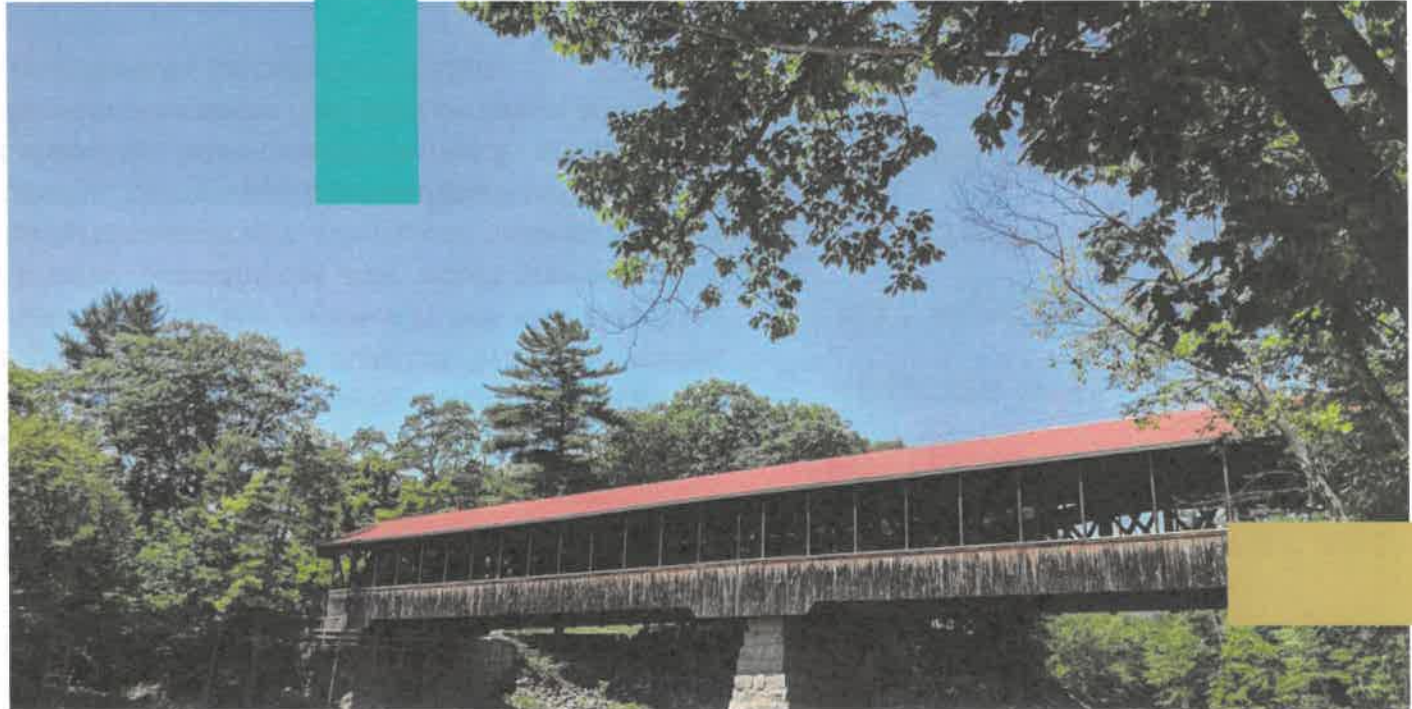
D-1.18: Require appropriate buffers and screening for new residential developments adjacent to existing farms.

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

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



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



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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

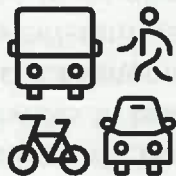
E. Support Conway's Arts, Culture, & Historic Character



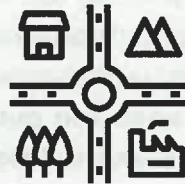
Desired Outcomes

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

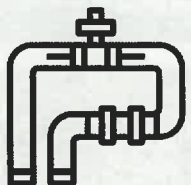
RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



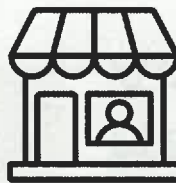
Transportation



Land Use



Infrastructure



Commercial
Development



Municipal
Services

GOAL E-1:

Ensure that the Conway's Villages & Neighborhoods Support Arts & Cultural Activities and Businesses

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



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



Star Dancers by Dale Rogers, part of the Settlers Green Public Art Walk.

Photo: OVP Management

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

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

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

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

E-1.4: Support vibrant public spaces in Conway.

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

GOAL E-2:

Encourage Adaptive Reuse of Historic Structures in Conway

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures for housing. Consider offering incentives (e.g., expedited review processes or fee waivers) for adaptive reuse projects that would create housing for Conway residents.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of industrial spaces for artists and creative enterprises.
- Capitalize on adaptive reuse [grant opportunities](#).

E-2.2: Institute protections for historic buildings in Conway, such as a demolition delay ordinance.



WHAT IS A DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE?

A demolition delay ordinance is a regulatory measure designed to protect historically or architecturally significant structures from immediate demolition. This ordinance typically requires property owners to notify local authorities of their intent to demolish a building, triggering a waiting period or “delay” before the demolition can proceed. The purpose of this delay is to provide an opportunity for the town to assess the historical or architectural value of the structure and explore alternatives to demolition, such as adaptive reuse or preservation efforts.

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



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

i WHAT IS ADAPTIVE REUSE?

Adaptive reuse refers to the practice of repurposing existing buildings or structures for a different use than what they were originally designed for, while retaining their historic features and/or façades. The goal of adaptive reuse is to breathe new life into old buildings, preserving the building's historic features while adapting the interior to accommodate a new function.

Adaptive reuse can help prevent demolition or extensive renovation, which may result in the loss of the building's historical character. Adaptive reuse promotes sustainability by reducing the need for new construction and minimizing the environmental impact associated with demolition and disposal of building materials. Some examples of adaptive reuse include converting old factories into apartments, turning warehouses into office spaces, and transforming churches into housing.

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

CHALLENGE #1:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



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



CHALLENGE #2:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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

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

GOAL E-4:

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

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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



CASE STUDY: ARTIST HOUSING IN BURLINGTON, VT

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



F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

INTRODUCTION

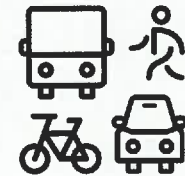
This chapter presents goals and strategies for improving transportation options for Conway residents, including strategies for addressing transportation infrastructure and services. It also includes strategies related to land use regulation, as local development patterns have a significant impact on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

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

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

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

RELEVANT MASTER PLAN TOPIC AREAS



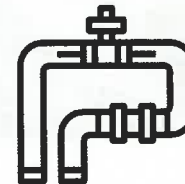
Transportation



Land Use & Housing



Municipal Services



Infrastructure



Commercial Development

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

Desired Outcomes

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

Recent And Planned Projects

Recent Projects:

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

Planned Projects:

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

GOAL F-1:

Manage Traffic Congestion Following Recent And Planned Transportation Infrastructure Projects

CHALLENGE:

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

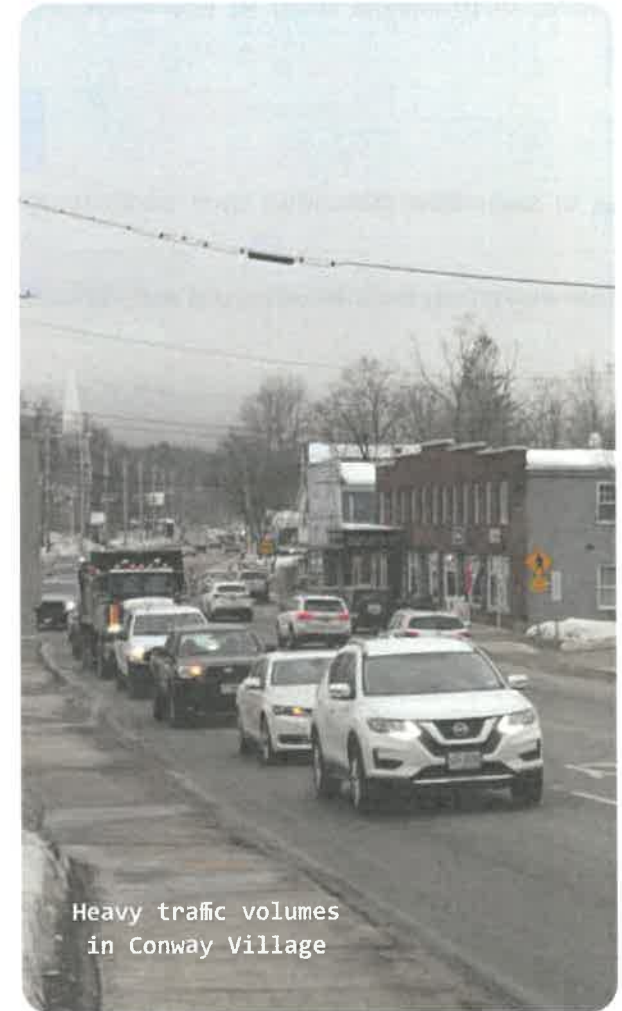
STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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



Heavy traffic volumes
in Conway Village

GOAL F-2:

Improve Walkability In Village Centers And Commercial Areas

CHALLENGE #1:

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



- i** During peak times of year, traffic along “The Strip” (NH 16/US 302) can exceed 20,000 cars per day, a volume of traffic typically associated with towns with much larger populations.
- i** NH 16/US 302 in North Conway Village has a curb-to-curb width of nearly 80 feet in places. Combined with heavy traffic, this distance discourages people from crossing the road on foot, particularly families with children and residents with limited mobility.
- i** During the process to develop the Master Plan, residents expressed a strong desired to see Conway’s village centers become more pedestrian- and wheelchair-friendly.

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places



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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

F-2.2: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BEAUTIFYING VILLAGE STREETSAPES.

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

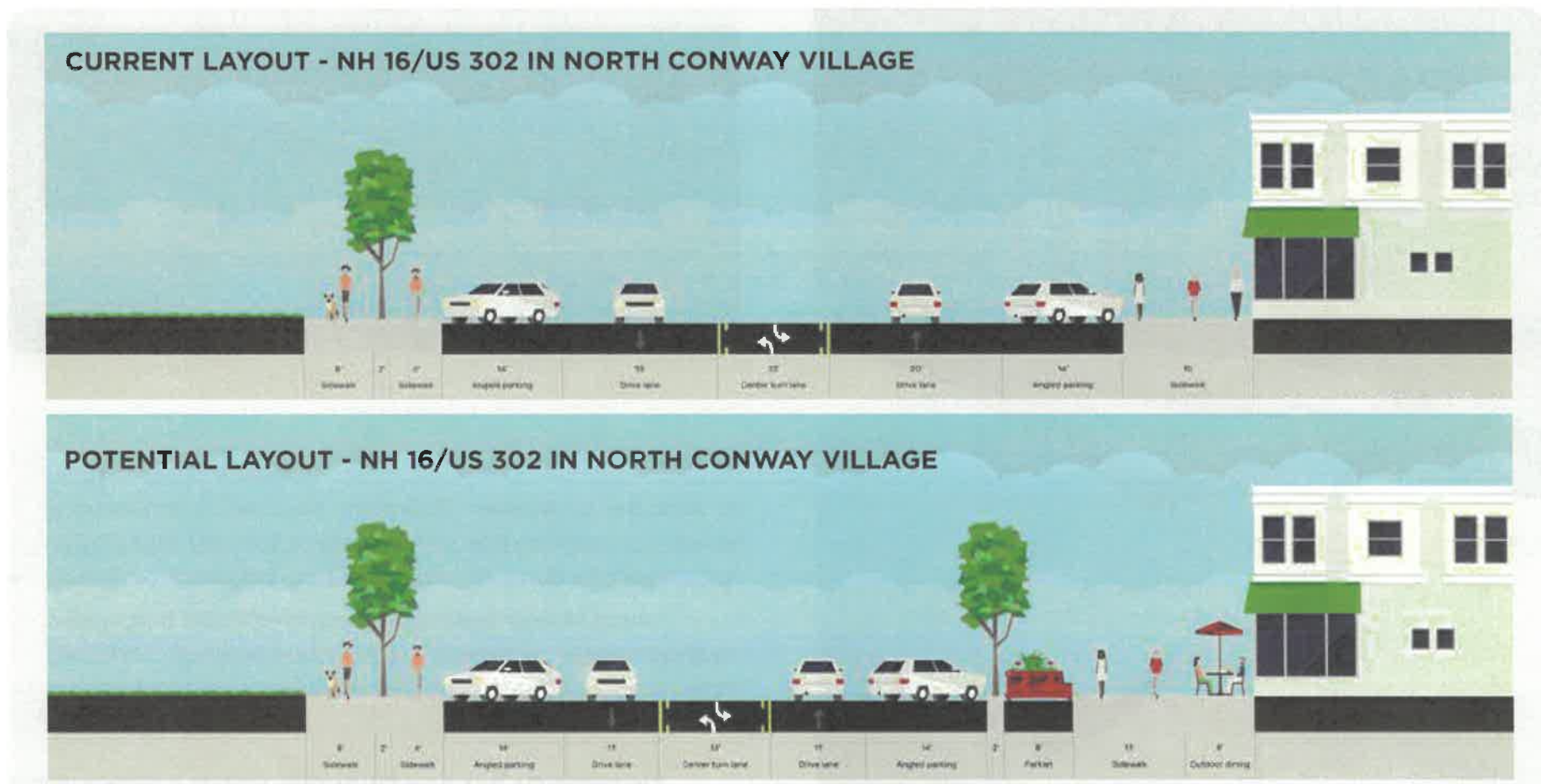
F-2.3: ADDRESS GAPS IN THE SIDEWALK NETWORK.

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

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

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

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



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

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

F-2.5: CREATE SAFER WALKING ROUTES TO SCHOOL.

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



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



F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

CHALLENGE #2:

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



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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places

GOAL F-3:

Improve Transportation Safety And Access In Commercial Areas

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

F-3.1: Develop a comprehensive corridor study for "The Strip" that addresses vehicular traffic safety, pedestrian access, and commercial access management along NH 16/US 302.

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

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

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

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



GOAL F-4:

Improve Bicycle Connectivity Between Different Areas Of Town

CHALLENGE:

THE BICYCLE ROUTES BETWEEN CONWAY'S VILLAGES ARE ALONG HIGH-TRAFFIC ROADWAYS.

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



i 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).

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

F. Enhance Transportation Options to Connect People and Places



STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOAL F-5:

Explore Options For Improved Public Transportation Services

CHALLENGE:

Public transportation options are limited in Conway. There is currently no public bus service in the Mount Washington Valley other than the Concord Coach Line, which is not suitable for local or commuter use. Tri-County Transit provides low-cost dial-a-ride 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. Tri-County Transit previously operated the Blue Loon commuter bus, which provided service to Conway and adjacent towns, but was unable to sustain the service.

STRATEGIES:

F-5.1: Explore possible microtransit solutions for Conway.

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

F-5.2: Promote carpooling/ridesharing.

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

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

GOAL F-6: Manage Parking Effectively



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

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

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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



G. Steward Conway's World-Class Recreational Opportunities

Introduction

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

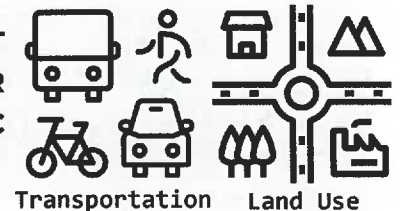
Conway is well-served by municipal recreation facilities & programs. There are no major gaps in the overall availability of recreational facilities. Overall, municipal recreation facilities are in a good state of repair and the town is meeting demand for recreation programs. Programs are available for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

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

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

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

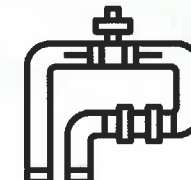
RELEVANT
MASTER
PLAN TOPIC
AREAS



Transportation Land Use



Municipal
Services



Infrastructure



Commercial
Development

G. Steward Conway's World-Class Recreational Opportunities



levels ensures that everyone can participate and derive the benefits of recreation. A town that invests in a full spectrum of recreational opportunities demonstrates a forward-thinking approach, recognizing the diverse needs of its residents and creating an environment where everyone can thrive and enjoy a well-rounded lifestyle.

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

Desired Outcomes

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

Additional Context

Recent Projects/ Plans:

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

Stakeholders:

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

Public Input:

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



GOAL G-1:

Partner with local land managers to address environmental impacts from recreation

CHALLENGE 1:

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

THE SACO AND SWIFT CMP NOTES THAT "FROM JUNE TO SEPTEMBER, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1,000 USERS DURING THE WEEK OF THE SACO RIVER FROM BARTLETT TO REDSTONE AND SIMILAR FROM REDSTONE TO THE MAINE BORDER. ON THE WEEKENDS, THESE NUMBERS CAN INCREASE TO 2,000 OR MORE (ESTIMATED BY PETER GAGNE, SACO RIVER TUBING CENTER/BEACH CAMPING AREA).

STRATEGIES:

1.1: Support Efforts to Study Recreational Impacts on the Saco and Swift Rivers

- *This could include impacts to vegetation, soil, wildlife, and water*
- *The severity of the impacts dictates the acuteness of the need for mitigation measures.*

1.2 Back Initiatives to Emphasize Responsible Use of The River Corridor & Promote More Sustainable User Behavior

- *Educate Users on Recreation Use Ethics*
- *Encourage or Require Certain Behavior - Smaller Group Sizes, Litter, etc.*

1.3 Sustain Efforts to Improve River Access Amenities and Facilities

- *Amenities and facilities include parking, bathrooms, trash receptacles, etc.*

1.4 Promote Comparable Water Activities to Diversify Where People Are Recreating to Reduce the Use of Problem Areas

G. Steward Conway's World-Class Recreational Opportunities

CHALLENGE 2:

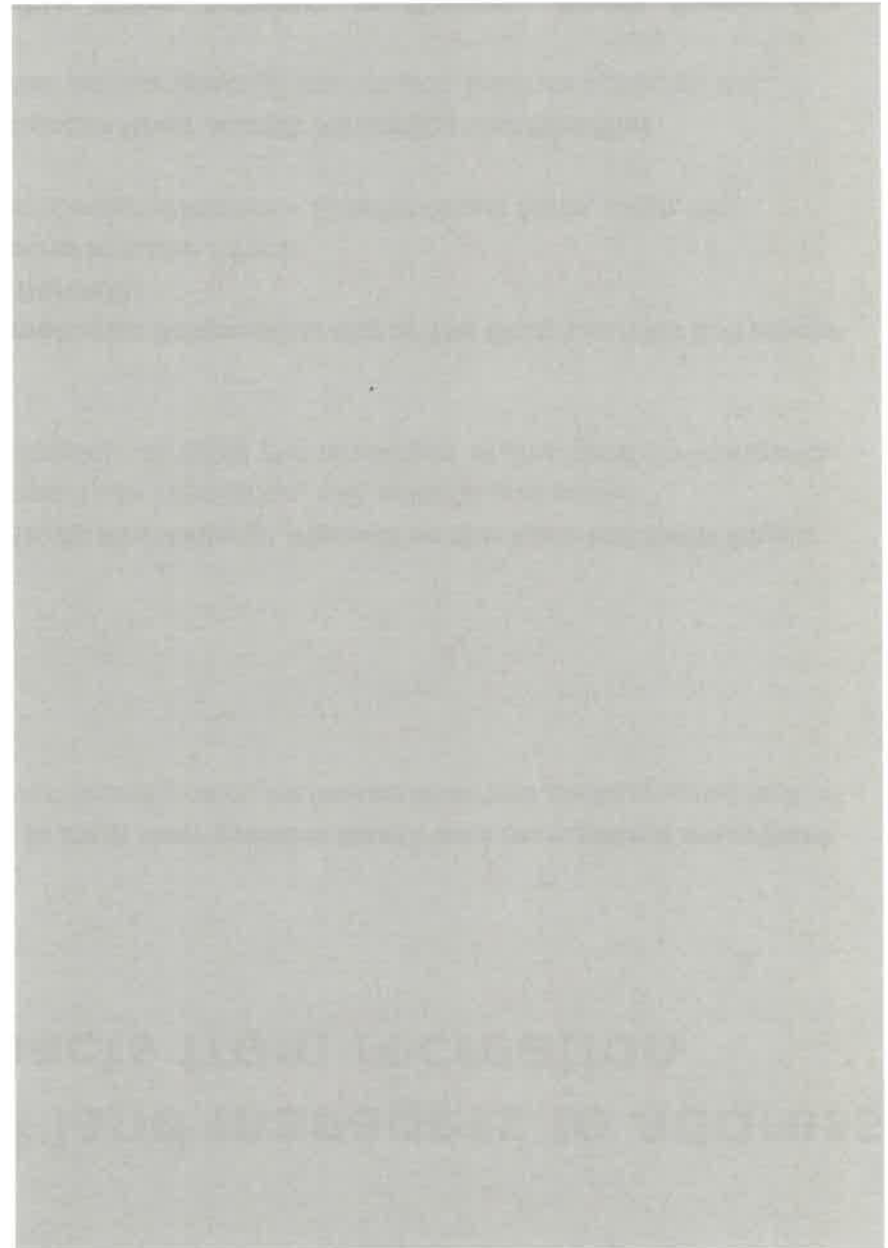
Conway is the geographic and cultural gateway to the eastern White Mountains, one of the most heavily visited National Forests in the country with over 6 million visitors annually. This sustained visitation helps support local outdoor recreation and tourism industry, but also presents challenges for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

STRATEGIES:

1.5: Partner with WMNF for more institutional support for Saco Ranger District.

1.6: Continue collaborative actions designed to help address parking at Diana's Baths.

1.7: Support efforts to develop a destination management plan for the Mount Washington Valley.



GOAL G-2:

View Trails as Vital Community Infrastructure

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:



2.1: Support Efforts of the 2023 Mount Washington Valley Trails Association Off Road Trails Plan

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

2.2: Diversify trail offerings to meet needs of diverse users

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

GOAL G-3:

Celebrate and Expand Municipal Recreation Facilities and Programs

CHALLENGE 1:

Despite having significant water recreation opportunities, Conway has relatively few formal access points to public waterbodies in town, including Conway Lake, where there is a single shared beach and boat ramp for the public to use.

STRATEGIES:

3.1: Expand Public Beach/ Water Access

- *Separate the beach and boat launch at Conway Lake, both for safety and purposes and for the improvement enjoyment and relaxation of beach users.*
- *Add more opportunities for boat launches along Conway Lake*



CHALLENGE 2:

Conway is well-served by municipal recreation facilities and programs but could benefit from a deeper look into how to better serve the community.

STRATEGIES:

- **3.2: As part of a longer term capital improvement program, explore opportunities to provide new recreational experiences through facility enhancements**
- **3.3: Promote teen center and use programming through a variety of channels**
- **3.4: Explore opportunities for recreational amenities that are walkable from neighborhoods and residential centers**
- **3.5: Ensure all recreation facilities and programs are accessible for residents of all physical abilities, genders, races, financial backgrounds, etc.**



H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future

H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future

INTRODUCTION

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

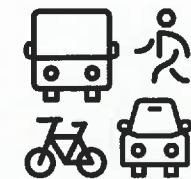
In the early 2000's, the Town invested significant resources into an update of the Town Master Plan. This process produced a comprehensive and robust planning document; however, the Town was not able to make significant progress towards many of the plan's key recommendations, including changes to land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

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

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

FORWARD.

**RELEVANT
MASTER
PLAN TOPIC
AREAS**



Transportation



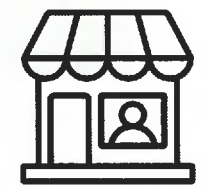
Land Use



Municipal
Services



Infrastructure



Commercial
Development

H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future

Desired Outcomes

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



GOAL H-1:

MOVE FORWARD ON KEY GOALS AND STRATEGIES IN THE MASTER PLAN

CHALLENGE #1:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

H-1.2: Consider creating a new Housing and Economic Development Coordinator staff position within the Planning Department.

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

H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future

CHALLENGE #2:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

- Create a calendar of relevant grant funding opportunities and deadlines.
- Perform public-facing Master Plan implementation tracking.
- Create a Master Plan implementation sub-committee of the Planning Board, or include Master Plan implementation as a regular Planning Board agenda item.

- Perform a five-year Master Plan review to assess progress and any needed minor plan updates.

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

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

H-1.5: Update the Master Plan by 2034.

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

GOAL H-2: Enhance Town Governance

CHALLENGE #1:

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

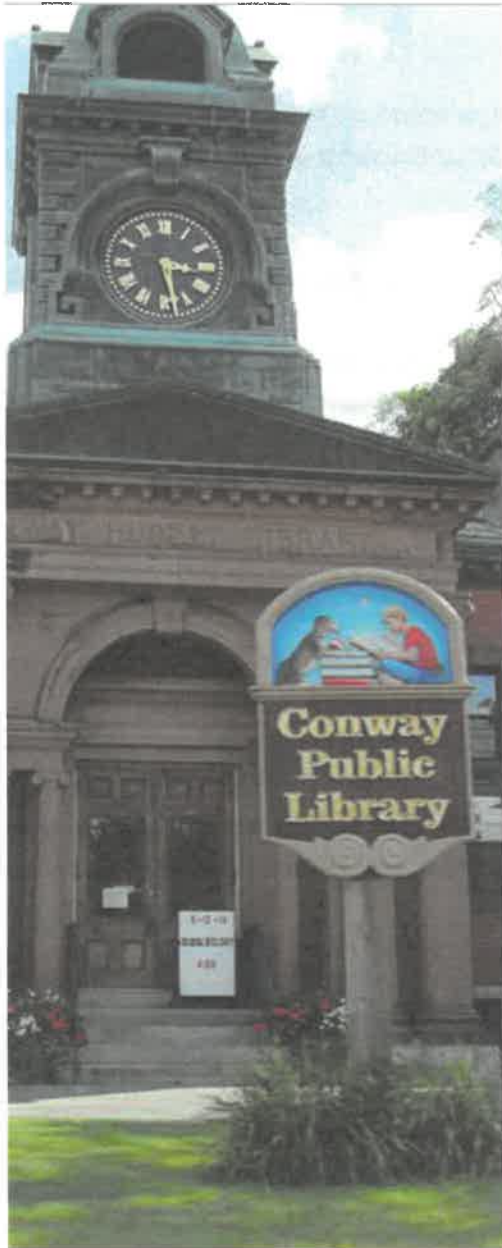
STRATEGIES:

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

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



H. Enhance Municipal Services and Plan for the Future



CHALLENGE #2:

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

STRATEGIES:

H-2.4: Consider overhauling the Town website to become more user-friendly.

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

H-2.5: Create improved channels for communication of Town news, meetings, and updates, such as increased use of social media platforms and use of email communications.

H-2.6: Consider creating a volunteer or paid Public Information Officer (PIO) position.

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

H-2.7: Provide alternative venues for public engagement and conversation.

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

GOAL H-3:

Support Capital Needs of Municipal Departments

CHALLENGE:

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

STRATEGIES:

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

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

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

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



4. APPENDIX

