

FUTURE LAND USE CHAPTER

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Introduction

The Future Land Use Chapter reflects changes in landscape and development throughout town since it was last adopted in 1998. In updating the chapter, the Planning Board incorporated the majority opinions and values represented in the 2013 Master Plan Community Survey. The survey was mailed to every residence in town, posted on the town’s website and provided in paper form at town hall, the library, community center and post office. The Chapter’s section headings address the priority issues for the future of Atkinson as identified in the Survey and by the Planning Board.

A. Maintain Rural Character

1. Preserve Open Space

Open space consists of wildlife habitat, natural resources, scenic views, and forests. Open space preservation is supported in several ways by the town:

- Direct purchase of land and conservation easements
- Use of general funds as available and consideration of bonds to leverage federal, state and private funds
- Dedication of 100 percent of the Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) collected toward land conservation
- enabled by the zoning ordinance through rural cluster residential development zoning

The rural cluster subdivision ordinance provides incentives to create compact development patterns and preserve open space through the provision of density bonuses, reduction in

dimensional requirements, and reduced lot size. The two density bonus options are described below.

Roadside Buffers

Incentives to retain forested and naturally vegetated roadside buffers are a density bonus option provided in the rural cluster residential development zoning ordinance. Buffers help to retain rural character by sheltering development from view along state and local roadways, creating an aesthetic of rural country charm and scenic beauty.

Open Space Developments

The Rural Cluster Residential Development ordinance (Zoning Ordinance Article VI, Section 600), which includes a density bonus incentive for preservation of scenic vistas and pronounced landscapes (as designated in the Existing Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan), requires that fifty percent (50%) of the parent parcel be designated as permanent open space. To date, this ordinance has placed 697 acres in open space protection.

Zoning Ordinance Article VI, Section 610 Inclusionary Housing Accommodation Incentive System ordinance requires that forty percent (40%) of the parent parcel be designated as permanent open space.

2. Preserve and Maintain the Town Forests

The Atkinson Town Forest consists of numerous properties varying in size totaling approximately 514 acres. The Town Forest properties are a registered tree farm. The Town routinely consults with professional foresters to maintain the health and viability of Town Forest properties through implementation of forest best management practices. Since 1985, the Conservation Commission has worked with a consulting forester to update the management plans for several properties in the Town Forest to keep them productive and aesthetically maintained.

3. Preservation of Agricultural Land

The Town has an option to support agriculture through the creation of an ad-hoc Agricultural Committee. The Committee may serve as a technical advisor for the community about issues relating to agricultural, protection of land and local food production/economy.

4. Development Pattern of Single-family Homes

The development pattern of Atkinson is largely dominated by single-family homes. This pattern reflects the low-density residential zoning that covers the majority of land in town.