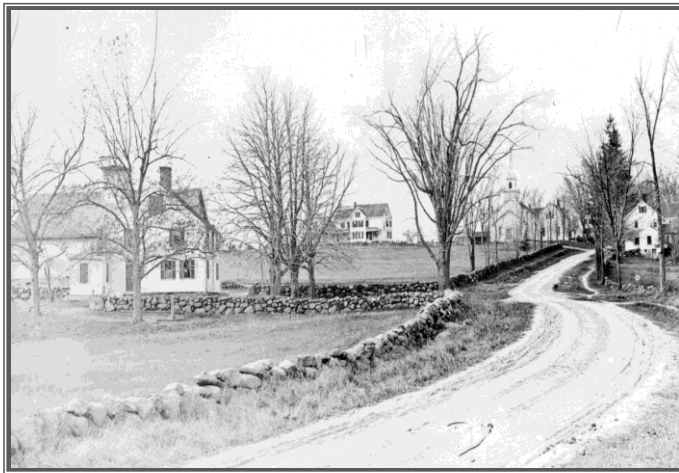


EXISTING LAND USE

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Overview and Introduction	ELU-1
2. Growth and Development Trends	ELU-2
3. Roadways and Transportation	ELU-4
4. Residential Development	ELU-5
5. Commercial and Industrial Development	ELU-6
6. Changes in the Land	ELU-6
7. Protecting Visual and Historic Resources	ELU-11
8. Changes Since the 1980 Master Plan	ELU-13
9. Conclusion	ELU-15
10. Recommendations	ELU-15

1. Overview and Introduction

Atkinson is a community of approximately 6,751 residents and comprised of 7,296 acres (6,578 of upland, 590 acres of wetlands, and 128 acres of surface water). Atkinson is located in southwestern Rockingham County in southeastern New Hampshire along the Massachusetts border. The town is situated within the I-93 corridor and is not served by public transit.



Atkinson has transformed in recent decades into a commuter community characterized by sprawling residential development as the dominant (developed) land use, comprising 2,571 acres of 35.4 percent of the town area (includes land and water area).

Atkinson still has significant acres of forested lands (approximately 3,227 acres or 44.5 percent of the town area), though these areas have become fragmented by development and reduced in size.

What makes the Town of Atkinson desirable as a place for families to establish their roots is the “rural” setting and the sense of community and involvement found throughout the town. As discussed more fully in the *Future Land Use Chapter*, this rural attraction brings people to the area.

2. Growth and Development Trends

The Existing Land Use Chapter of the Atkinson Master Plan provides information on both the topography of the land and the land uses allowed (zoning areas) and which are currently taking place throughout the town. This information is depicted on three maps:

- Base map shows topographical elevations, waterways, roadways and specific geographic reference points throughout the town;
- Existing Land Use map (2005) illustrates the various uses of the land throughout town such as industrial, commercial, retail, residential housing types, agriculture, conservation land/open space and other uses; and
- Zoning map shows the geographic extent of the 8 existing zoning districts.

Growth Trends

In the late 1980's and early 1990's the development slowed due to the decline in regional economic conditions coupled with stringent local land use controls. From the late 1990's through 2005 with a substantially improved economy, many more developments emerged throughout town, although the Town, through its strengthened regulations is better equipped to review these developments during the permitting process. The establishment of new roads throughout the town creates frontage and allows portions of previously inaccessible land to be developed.

New development and construction in town has not been limited to a specific geographical area. Rather, growth and development has spread throughout the town resulting in a highly fragment landscape. In the 1970's to 2005 Atkinson's development concentrated primarily on, or very close to, the major state and local roadways in town. Now, in the early 2000's, growth and development has sprawled deep and far from our major roadways with the construction of new local roads.

Table 1. Summary of housing statistics for Atkinson

	Total Units 2000	Net Change in Units									Total Units 2009
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
Atkinson	2,431	88	25	24	6	18	6	8	3	3	2,612

Population Growth

From 1990 to 2009 the population of Atkinson has increased by 24.6 percent from 5,188 to an estimated 6,466. The NH Office and Energy Planning projects that population will increase to approximately 7,790 by 2030, a roughly 20 percent increase over this 20 year period.

Table 2. Population statistics and projections for Atkinson from 1990 through 2030.

1990	2000	2010 Census	2009 persons Per square mile	OEP Projection 2030
5,188	6,178	6,751	592	7,790

[Source: NH Office of Energy and Planning, 2009 Population Estimates of NH Cities and Towns and 2010 - 2030 Population Projections for New Hampshire Municipalities]

Corresponding with population growth, housing stock has also increased since 2000 by 181 dwelling units (97 single-family and 84 multi-family), up from 2,431 units in 2000 to 2,612 units in 2009. Refer to Table 2 on page 5 for more detailed housing statistics.

History of Land Use from 1962 to 2005

To provide a sense of history, direction and cohesion to the Master Plan, the Existing Land Use Chapter describes the past trends and current conditions of land use, growth, development in Atkinson. For a historical context Existing Land Use maps for 1962, 1974, 1998 and 2005 are appended to this chapter to show the growth and change that has occurred over the last 50 years. Table 3 below presents numerical information of changes in land use by type from 1962 to 2005. Refer to maps beginning on page 13 which graphically depict land use changes from 1962 to 2005.

Increases in population during this timeframe correspond with land use changes dominated by conversion of forested lands to residential development.

Although commercial and industrial developments are concentrated in limited and well-defined zoning districts, residential development dominates the landscape. The resulting growth patterns in residential zoning districts has fragmented much of the landscape and created a road network that lacks connectivity between developments.

Table 3. Summary of land use/land cover types and change from 1962 to 2005

Land Use/ Land Cover Type	1962		1974		1998		2005	
	Acres	% total area	Acres	% Total	Acres	% total area	Acres	% total area
Residential	574.0	7.9	1,062.8	14.6	2,228.2	30.7	2,571.1	35.4
Industrial/Commercial	5.4	0.1	23.5	0.3	116.5	1.6	86.2	1.2
Mixed Urban	0.0	0.0	7.5	0.1	6.7	0.1	6.9	0.1
Transportation/Roads	75.9	1.0	99.5	1.4	159.5	2.2	215.3	3.0
Rail Transportation	0.9	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.9	0.0	24.6	0.3
Playing Fields	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	95.6	1.3	197.8	2.7
Active Agriculture	740.4	10.2	397.2	5.5	207.6	2.9	256.4	3.5
Farmsteads	23.4	0.3	22.1	0.3	12.8	0.2	36.6	0.5
Forested	5,445.0	75.0	5,098.0	70.2	3,996.7	55.1	3,227.4	44.5
Water	125.9	1.7	110.8	1.5	157.8	2.2	179.9	2.5
Wetlands	120.0	1.7	126.2	1.7	48.6	0.7	363.7	5.0
Idle/Open Land	147.4	2.0	307.9	4.2	227.7	3.1	92.3	1.3

Total Area of Atkinson = 7,296 acres comprised of 7,168 acres upland and 128 acres of water. Industrial Commercial includes schools and municipal buildings and facilities. Mixed Urban includes areas where uses are mixed or when no predominant use is identified. Farmsteads include only the main residence and outbuildings that support agricultural activities. Idle/Open Land includes transitional areas between open and forested cover, idle agricultural fields, disturbed land (such as construction sites of active mining), and other undeveloped land.

Note: The land use/land cover data and maps are estimated values of land use types and should be used for planning purposes only. Land use/land cover can vary by category over time due to changes in use and changes in new remote sensing technology and mapping standards.

3. Roadways and Transportation

Today, Atkinson has 58 linear miles of local roadways. Atkinson's major transportation corridor is Route 121, Main Street, which transects the town from the northern to the southern town boundaries. Local roads of significance that connect Atkinson to its neighboring towns include Maple Avenue, East Road, Academy Avenue, Island Pond Road, West Side Drive, Providence Hill Road, Salem Road and North Broadway. Numerous cul-de-sacs have been constructed in recent years to serve residential development. Although Atkinson does not have its own facilities, the town is currently served by public transit or park and ride facilities in Hampstead and Plaistow.

A major concern presented by recent development is that the lack of connection and continuance of roadways through newly developed areas. It is important from a safety and access standpoint that more than one roadway provides access to a particular location. This means that the number of cul-de-sacs should be discouraged unless a roadway serves only a limited number of housing units. Countering this planning issue is the desire of residents to live in small quiet neighborhoods that do not experience extraordinary "pass-thru" traffic. An examination of the Existing Land Use Map illustrates these competing goals - providing short dead-end "neighborhood" streets balanced against a general goal to provide a contiguous network of interconnected roadways for access and safety reasons. *Refer to the Transportation Chapter for additional information on this topic.*

Street Connectivity. The term "street connectivity" refers to a system of streets with multiple routes and connections serving the same origins and destinations. Connectivity relates how an entire area is connected by the transportation system. A well-planned, connected network of collector roadways allows all users to operate more efficiently. A well-designed, highly-connected network helps to:

- Reduce traffic congestion on arterials
- Reduce travel time
- Shorten travel distances and reduced vehicle miles of travel
- Create continuous and more direct routes for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users
- Improve emergency vehicle access and reduced response times
- Improve utility connections, easier maintenance and more efficient trash and recycling pick up.
- Reduce speeds and severity of accidents.

Over the last several decades, residential and non-residential development patterns have been created that lack internal vehicular and pedestrian connectivity. The lack of connectivity has created a physical environment that lacks mobility options and pedestrian friendly features. Development trends encouraged building residential communities with few street connections and numerous cul-de-sacs. The theory behind cul-de-sacs was that they lessened traffic, since they change the primary function of local streets — rather than offering a way to get anywhere, now they simply provide access to private residences. Residential subdivisions that are dominated by cul-de-sacs provide discontinuous street networks, reduce the number of sidewalks, provide few alternate travel routes and force trips onto a limited number of arterial roads.

Any future resolution of issues relating to expansion of the local road network will depend on the varying circumstances of each proposed development. The balance must be struck between the community’s need for efficient transportation, safe access, availability and cost of municipal services, and homeowner’s enjoyment and expectations regarding their property. Some of the policies regarding future connections and dead-end roads are discussed more fully in the Future Land Use Chapter.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Atkinson does not have bike lanes or sidewalks with the exception of two short sections of sidewalk on Route 121 connecting to the bridge to Plaistow and between Kimball Library and Atkinson Academy.

4. Residential Development

The predominant type of housing in Atkinson has been, and continues to be, single family detached residences, primarily on two acre lots, although an increasing number of condominiums have been constructed (see the *Housing Chapter* for more information).

Table 4. Housing unit statistics for Atkinson and Rockingham County

	Total Units 2000	Net Change in Units										Total Units 2010
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
Atkinson	2,431	88	25	24	6	18	6	8	3	3	4	2,616
Single-family	1,826	34	11	16	4	10	6	8	3	5	4	1,927
Multi-family	595	54	14	8	2	8	0	0	0	-2	0	679
Manufactured	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Rockingham County	113,023	1,576	1,579	2,071	2,019	1,583	944	733	635	432	126,709	124,595

[Source: “Current Estimates and Trends in New Hampshire’s Housing Supply: Update 2009”, NH Office of Energy and Planning]

As of 2005, residential development comprises 2,571 acres or 35.4 percent of the total area of town. This represents an estimated 142 percent increase from 1974. From 1980 to 1997, Atkinson experienced a 57.6 percent increase in residential development, with the addition of 822 dwelling units during this period from 1,428 to 2,250. From 2000 to 2010, Atkinson experienced a 14.7 percent increase in residential development, with the addition of approximately 181 dwelling units during this period from 2,431 to 2,788 (2000 and 2010 US Census data).

Since 1995 the following cluster subdivisions (refer to the Zoning Ordinance Article VI Rural Cluster Residential Development, Section 600) were approved that incorporated affordable workforce housing using the density incentives under Section 610 Inclusionary Housing Accommodation Incentive System:

- Dearborn Estates – 11, 3-bedroom single family homes with 3 units set aside for low/moderate housing.
- Carriage Chase Estates - 16, 4-bedroom and 5, 3-bedroom homes with 5 units set aside for low/moderate housing.
- Atkinson Woods - 56, 2-bedroom units with 12 units set aside for low/moderate housing.
- Mill Stream Crossing - 19, 4-bedroom single family homes and 5, 2-bedroom multi-family units.
- Birchwood – 10, 2-bedroom units with 2 units set aside for low/moderate housing
- Centerview Hollow – 52, 2-bedroom units with 11 units set aside for low/moderate housing
- Settlers Ridge – 105 approved mixed units (95 constructed) with 26 units set aside for low/moderate age-restricted rental housing

These cluster subdivision developments have helped diversify the housing options available within Atkinson and provided a base of reasonably priced homes for low and moderate income families. This issue is more fully described in the *Housing Chapter* of the Master Plan. Atkinson has progressed from its rural roots as a community of farmers to what could be called a "suburban" community. In the near future it will likely continue to feel the development pressures associated with regional and statewide growth, including the current expansion of Interstate 93.

5. Commercial and Industrial Development

As of 2005, commercial and industrial development comprises 86 acres or 1.2 percent of the total area of town, an increase from 23.5 acres in 1974. This represents a substantial yet relatively minor increase compared with the percent of the total land area of town and the prevalence of other land uses.

Atkinson has almost fully developed its commercially zoned land, which is limited geographically to small areas in the northwest and southeast portions of town. However, most of the existing commercial businesses in Atkinson fit into the town's rural character and rural setting. Commercial and retail development is important and Atkinson has acknowledged this fact by a change in the Commercial District in 1992 to expand it along Main Street northward as far as Robie Lane. Potential expansion of the existing commercial and industrial zoning districts might be accommodated proximate to Route 111 and in the extreme southeastern portion of town. Additional Industrial and Commercial development has taken place in both these areas of town

6. Changes in the Landscape

Natural Resources

There has been a substantial conversion of undeveloped land and open space in Atkinson – approximately 2,757 acres from 1962 to 2005 - due to the recent growth and development throughout town. The 2005 Existing Land Use map shows the distribution of remaining large unfragmented blocks of predominantly forested lands and wetlands in Atkinson.

Natural resources most impacted by growth and development have been forested unfragmented lands. The pattern of growth to support residential development - by subdivision and the

construction of roads - is apparent when comparing the Existing Land Use maps from 1962, 1974, 1998 and 2005. The resulting fragmentation of landscape can impact many species of plants, animals and birds dependent upon forests and large unfragmented blocks for their survival. Refer to *Atkinson's Natural Resources Inventory (2011)* for more detailed information about natural resources.

Table 5. Summary of changes in natural resources and developed lands from 1962 to 2005

<i>Land Use Type</i>	<i>Loss or Gain (acres)</i>			
	<i>1962 - 1974</i>	<i>1974 - 1998</i>	<i>1998 - 2005</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agricultural	-343.2	-189.6	48.8	-484.0
Forests	-347.1	-1,101.3	-769.2	-2,217.6
Ide/Open land	307.9	-80.3	-135.3	-55.1
<i>Natural Resources Change</i>				<i>-2,756.7</i>
Residential	488.8	1,165.4	343.0	1,997.2
Industrial/Commercial	18.1	93.0	-30.2	80.9
Transportation/Roads/Rail	23.6	60.0	55.8	139.4
<i>Developed Lands Change</i>				<i>2,217.4</i>

Cluster subdivisions (refer to the Zoning Ordinance Article VI Rural Cluster Residential Development, Section 600) have been approved in recent years that incorporated preservation of scenic vistas and pronounced landscapes defined in the Master Plan by using the density incentives defined in Section 600:6(c) and Section 505, and natural resources through open space preservation. These cluster subdivisions have preserved 697 acres as listed below in Table 6:

Table 6. Open Space and Scenic Vistas/Landscapes protected through cluster subdivisions

<i>Name</i>	<i>Map/Lot</i>	<i>Open Space Protected (acres)</i>
Cogswell Farm	13-1-1	18.33
Bryant Woods	10-7	*170.23
The Commons	17-86	67.84
Wright Farm (Phases I and II)	13-94	43.09
Jesse Page Estates	13-22	26.55
Jamison Ridge (Winslow Dr.)	13-29	36.76
Twin Oaks (Butler Estates)	6-76	14.82
Ashford Drive	17-29-7	11.30
Waterwheel Estates	21-1	40.88
Centerview Hollow	13-96	47.94
Dearborn Ridge	18-74	14.59
Carriage Chase Estates	9-62-22	17.21
Settlers Ridge	12-1	83.26
Millstream Crossing	11-39/11-11/11-54/11-53	14.14
Eldon Way(Birchwood)	7-139	12.84
Fieldstone Village	2-1	28.14
Atkinson Woods	20-49	41.25
Little River	9-33	7.90
<i>Total</i>		<i>697.07</i>

* Includes common areas held by homeowners association

Adoption of the Rural Cluster Residential Development ordinance has served to mitigate the potential negative consequences of growth and development by preserving approximately 697 acres of land and natural resources. Although much of this land limits access to those property owners in the cluster subdivisions, the land and resources and their ecosystem services are permanently protected which benefits everyone. The ordinance also serves as a primary mechanism for land protection without cost the tax payers of Atkinson.

Earth Excavations

Excavation and/or the removal of earth is not permitted in Atkinson unless the Zoning Board of Adjustment grants a special exception under Section 430 of the Atkinson Zoning Ordinance and as permitted by NH RSA 155-E.

Island Pond

Island Pond is a 497.9 acre surface water body with a surface elevation of 203.3 feet. Island Pond is a surface water body under the jurisdiction of NH's Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA). Big Island Pond is located in the extreme northwest corner of Atkinson, with a large portion of the lake located in the towns of Hampstead to the north and east and Derry to the west. Property surrounding Island Pond was originally developed in the late 1800's as a seasonal/recreational use area where at that time land use requirements were less stringent than in the central portion of town. Buildings and lots were much smaller than the town's current zoning standards. Septic systems were small and rudimentary (many were initially installed as holding tanks), which was not of great concern because of the seasonal use of the properties, allowing ample time for the recovery of the systems. Many of the septic systems which have been replaced over the past 50 years were found to be oil drums which had corroded, allowing raw septage to leach into the ground and discharge to surface waters.

Town records indicate that the first year-round residents came to Island Pond in 1954, when the road crew was required to plow Hemlock Heights in order to provide emergency access to a family with several children. Between 1954 and the present, many of the cottages have been converted to year-round residences or rental property. Efforts by the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment to regulate these conversions (and, more importantly to monitor the septic systems) have not been entirely effective. The housing density surrounding Island Pond in Atkinson is upwards of 10 dwelling units per acre, whereas other areas of Atkinson are subject to one dwelling unit per 2-3 acres under current zoning standards. The NH Department of Environmental Services recommends minimum lot sizing based on soil types to support on-site septic and well, which are typically not much less than one acre per unit under most conditions. The Town's concerns at Island Pond are the potential impact that deteriorating uninspected septic systems may have, not only on the natural resources of the once pristine pond, but also on the quality of individual water supplies and other potential human health impacts.

Conservation and Open Space Lands

Figure 1 below shows the location of conservation and open space lands in Atkinson. As of January 2011, Atkinson has approximately 1,357.6 acres of town forest, conserved and open space (set aside for subdivisions) lands (18.6 percent of the total 7,296 acres of land and water). Conservation land means land upon which a restrictive easement or other legal mechanism has been placed that prevents the land from being developed. This development restriction can be placed on an entire property or a portion of a property. Conservation lands are held either in

private ownership, town ownership, or held by a land trust or other entity. Open space lands are typically set aside as a requirement for open space or cluster type subdivisions (see the Atkinson Zoning Ordinance Article VI. Rural Cluster Residential Development) and can be for private or public access depending upon the terms and conditions of the subdivision approval.

The Town designated the Atkinson Conservation Commission as the entity responsible for managing the Conservation Fund for the purpose of conserving and protecting land. These efforts are supported by contributions from the Land Use Change Tax (LUCT), a tax assessed to property owners when land is removed from Current Use for subdivision or other development purposes. Currently, the town allocates 100 percent of the money collected from the LUCT to the Town's Conservation Fund (excluding interest collected).

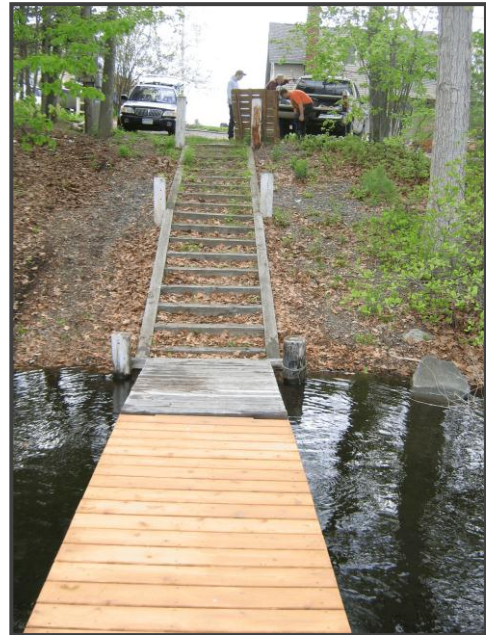
Refer to Atkinson's Natural Resources Inventory (2011) for more detailed information about open space and land conservation.

Recreational Land Use and Facilities

While the Planning Board has approved many subdivisions which incorporate private trail systems and open space, the Town has also provided recreational facilities for its residents. Woodlock Park, located off Woodlock Park Lane, is the Town's primary recreational facility providing: 2-tennis courts, 1-(1/2 court) basketball court, four baseball/softball fields, 2-soccer fields, a pavilion with restrooms, a toddler playground and a small picnic area, 3-4 acre open fields behind the Community Center, 10 acre conservation/recreation area on East Road, and a 4 acre field off Sawyer Avenue (part of the Town Forest). No public beaches exist in Atkinson. Other issues and information regarding public recreational facilities as well as anticipated demand are discussed more fully in the Community Facilities chapter.

Recreational Trails

The Atkinson Conservation Commission developed a Conservation Trails brochure (available on the Town's website under the Conservation Commission). The brochure shows the location, access points and configuration of trails, and provides a general description of conserved lands and the natural features and resources found on them.

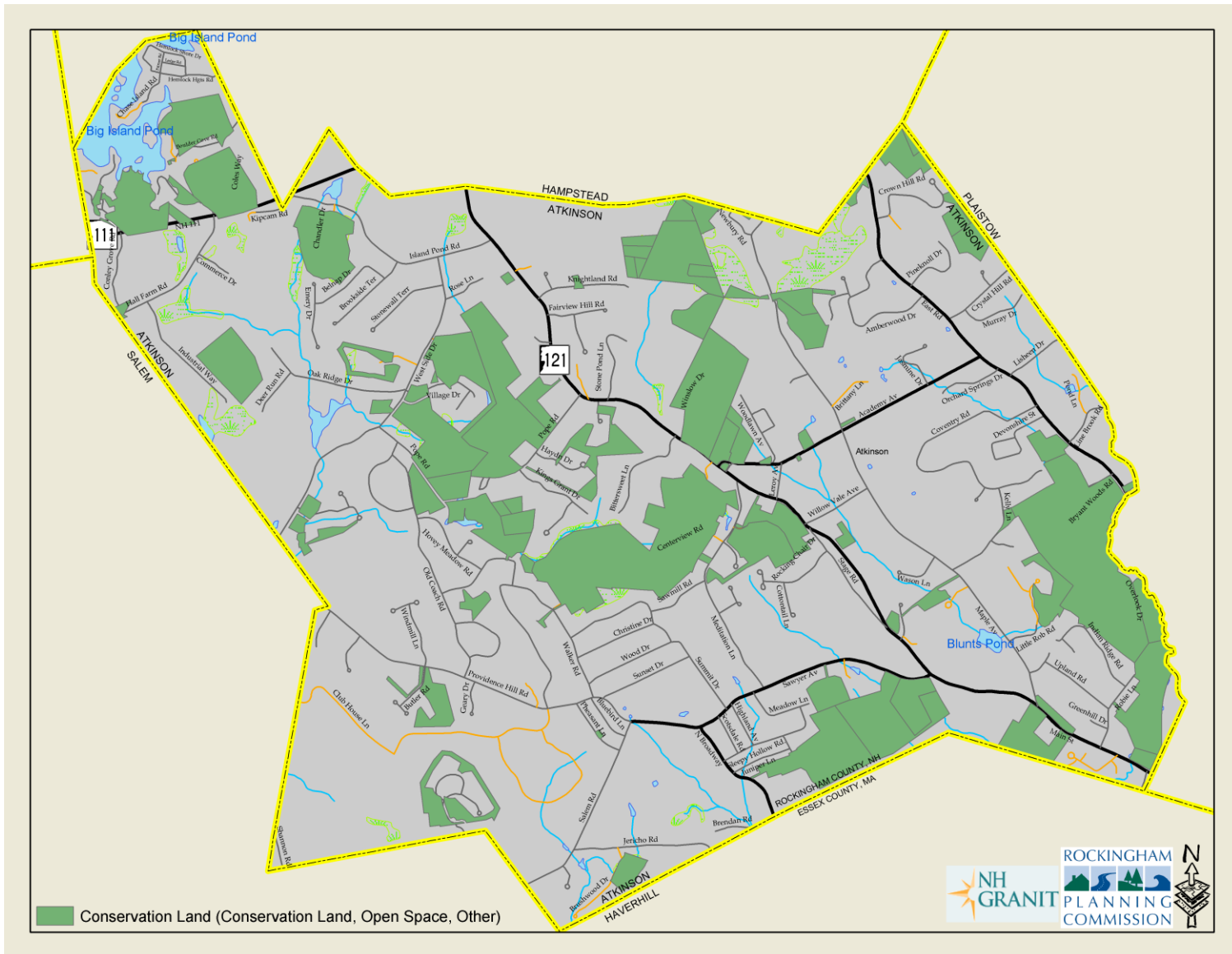


Public trails are located at the following town owned conservation properties: Stickney Land, Marshall Land, Pope Road Land, Sawmill Swamp, Crown Hill-Noyes Rock, Carolyn Orr Conservation Land, and Sawyer Land.

Canoe and Kayak Launch at Island Pond

After five years without a public launch, and over 20 years since the first launch was opened, Atkinson reconstructed their canoe and kayak launch at Island Pond. The launch is on Stickney Road off Waters Edge and has off-road parking for up to ten cars.

Figure 1. Map of Conserved and Open Space Lands



7. Protecting Visual and Historic Resources

In 1992, the Historic District Commission and the Historic District were abolished by vote in favor of a citizen petition on the Warrant Article at Town Meeting. Since this time, an awareness of the importance of historic and visual resources has emerged as development continues to consume these features from landscapes in the community. Thus, the visual qualities of Atkinson have become an increasingly significant part of the planning and development approval process employed by the town's land use boards and resource based commissions.

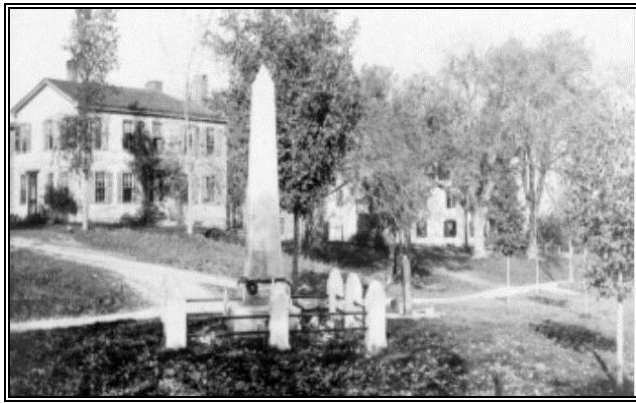
Through responsible planning efforts, the town will use its review process to minimize impacts of development and promote the positive effects of developments by preserving views and retaining qualities of the landscapes that have been identified as locally significant.

Areas of High Visual Quality

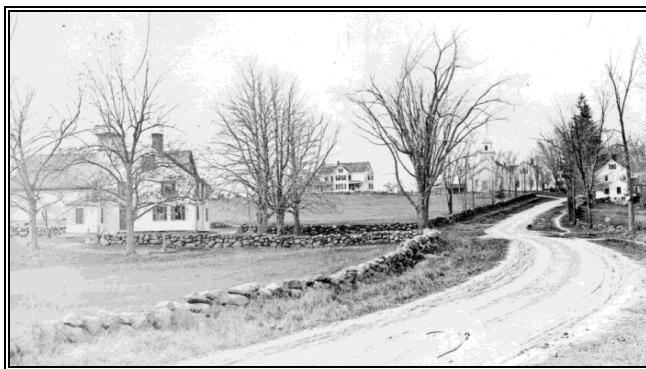
This section details areas of Atkinson that contribute to the natural, historic and visual character of Atkinson's landscape as identified in the *Visual and Scenic Resource Chapter*. In 1998, the Zoning ordinance was amended by addition of Section 505 Scenic Vista and Pronounced Landscape Regulation. This Section establishes incentives to protect scenic vistas designated in the Master Plan by allowing increased density for clustered developments which preserve these areas was adopted. These highly scenic areas provide a glimpse of "old" Atkinson, where high quality natural, historic and cultural characteristics remain relatively intact on the landscape. Of these original designations, many of the following *areas of high visual quality* remain preserved in whole or in part.

Table 7. Description of areas of high visual quality

<i>Location of Area of High Visual Quality</i>	<i>Description</i>
Providence Hill	Some development but viewshed mostly preserved
Jericho Road	North Broadway viewshed
Main Street (Sawyer Avenue section)	New development and forest growth on bordering lands; interior views along trails
Lower Maple Avenue	Area developed with limited views preserved
Lower East Road	New conservation/recreation lands and adjacent to designated prime wetland
Town Center - South	Some development but viewshed mostly preserved
Town Center - North	Viewshed focused around the historic Paige Farm on both sides of road
Island Pond Road - Route 111 plain	Active agriculture remains at intersection of Main Street and Island Pond Road with viewshed mostly preserved
Island Pond Environs	New residence along Chase Island Road, otherwise both views remain of Hemlock Heights



Town Common circa 1900 (left) and today (right).



Main Street circa 1900 (right) and today (left).

The following *long distance vistas of significance* as identified in the *Visual and Scenic Resource Chapter* of the Master Plan.

Table 8. Description of long distance vistas of significance

<i>Location of Long Distance Views of Significance</i>	<i>Description</i>
Pine Knoll area	Tree canopy mature with limited views to Plaistow
Maple Avenue - Bragg Hill section	Some areas developed with range of views lost due to forest growth with small viewshed remaining at Maple Avenue and Brittany Lane
Hogg Hill	No longer intact due to mature forest and telecommunications facility
Providence Hill (west)	Conserved through land preservation

8. Changes Since the 1980 Master Plan

Although development throughout the region slowed in the 1990's, there were some changes and impacts upon land use through amendments to the zoning ordinance, growth and development

within town, and other changes in the physical and political landscape. While several of the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance have been regarded as ‘housekeeping’ measures - correcting confusing/vague language or clarifying intent – the amendments listed below were intended to affect local growth and development patterns. The land use regulations adopted between 1980 and 1990 (page II-2 of the 1990 Master Plan) are also presented, in a slightly different format, to provide the reader with an accurate history of changes to regulatory development standards in Atkinson.

- 1980-90 In fulfillment of an earlier Land Use Plan, a commercial/office/industrial complex was developed in the northwest corner of Town, near Route 111.
- 1980-90 Departure from a single-family residential community to a community that utilizes a density based approach that has created multi-family, condominium, and duplex-oriented developments.
- 1980-90 Plans to establish a "Town Center" area were initiated. The construction of a new Town Hall, and the planning for the relocation of the Highway Garage were undertaken.
- 1980-90 Approximately 1,000 acres were rezoned from Rural Residential-3 to Town Residential-2 in the area near Providence Hill Road, west of Geary Lane and Old Coach Road. When this change was carried out, there appeared to be little land use planning to support it.
- 1980-90 Courts mandated, and expanded by Town Meeting, the granting of right to expand existing commercial- industrial development in the Town’s northwest corner.
- 1980-90 Several minor zoning changes were adopted by Town Meeting, which were promulgated to carry out the intent of the original Master Plan to encourage development in the areas near community services and readily available transportation networks. This resulted (as of 1990) in the majority of development (0.70 percent) occurring in the TR-2 District with the remainder in the RR-2 and to a lesser degree in the RR-3 districts (i.e. Oak Ridge Development).
- 1992 The Historic District Commission and the Historic District were abolished by vote in favor of a citizen petition on the Warrant Article at Town Meeting.
- 1994 The 300 foot wetland setback was eliminated from Section 410 Wetland Zoning, based upon the recommendation of the Conservation Commission and in support of State of NH guidelines.
- 1995 Strengthened in-law apartment special exception criteria, including the expiration of the exception upon vacancy of the unit, requiring re-application for new occupancy.
- 1997 Amendments to the Low-Moderate Housing Accommodation Incentive System, adopted in 1992, were adopted to ensure that the low-moderate income housing conforms to Federal guidelines.
- 1997 Section 630 Planned Residential and Recreational Development was deleted from the Ordinance. Originally adopted in 1990, this Section conflicted with Section 620, both of which related to the Sports Complex/Residential Sub-District. Amendments were also adopted to Section 620 which, among other things, will encourage that a portion of the residential units in this District are reserved for those who are aged 55 and older.

- 1998 Addition of Section 505 Scenic Vista and Pronounced Landscape Regulation which established incentives to protect scenic vistas designated in the Master Plan by allowing increased density for clustered developments which preserve these areas was adopted.
- 1998 Adoption of Article XVI: Public School Impact Fees with amendment to Section 1600:5(d) in 2007.
- 1998 An amendment to the Zoning Ordinance was adopted which clarified the intent of existing language in Section 410 Wetlands Zoning to ensure that no buildings could be built within 100' of a wetland. Prior to the adoption of this amendment, it was unclear whether a garage could be built within the wetland setback.
- 1998 Provisions of NH RSA §79-A: 25, II were adopted, authorizing the town to contribute 100 percent of the Land Use Change Tax revenues to a conservation fund for future protection and purchase of conservation and public lands. Revisions to Section 410:8(b) Buffer Zones.
- 1999 Revision to term 'structure' in Zoning Ordinance Section 300 Definitions; revisions to Section 440 General Farming and Keeping of Animals; and revisions to Section 480:1 Storage of Vehicles.
- 2000 Adoption of Zoning Ordinance Article VIII Wireless Communication Facilities and corresponding additions to Section 300 Definitions, as well as the terms 'frontage' and several terms relating to lot lines and frontage, and yards.
- 2003 Addition of 'prime wetlands' to Section 300 Definitions.
- 2006 Additional of Section 400:8 Eminent Domain and Section 620 Golf and Sports Complex/Residential Sub-District (SCR Subdistrict).
- 2007 Revisions to Section 450:2(c) and (g) Home Occupations and revisions to Section 460:2(h) Accessory Living Unit.
- 2008 Adoption of Zoning Ordinance Section 420 Floodplain Management Ordinance and corresponding revisions/additions to Section 300 Definitions, as well as the terms 'development', 'recreational vehicle', and 'start of construction'. Designation of three prime wetlands under Section 410.10.
- 2009 Amendments to Zoning Ordinance: adoption of three prime wetlands under Section 410.10, amendments to Section 700:1(d) and 700:4 Non-Conforming Uses, and adoption of Section 610 Inclusionary Housing Accommodation Incentive System.

9. Conclusion

The existing land use type and development pattern in Atkinson is very clear - single family dwellings far outweigh any other use and will likely continue in the future. Atkinson has not experienced substantial growth of multi-family, mobile homes and manufactured homes which has largely been a result of the market systems. Condominium development, however, has increased recently, and is proving to be beneficial to the Town. Predominantly, the condominiums being developed are expensive, and owned by people with few or no children.

Although expansion of existing uses and new commercial development is invited and anticipated by most towns, development in Atkinson may be difficult due to the large amount of land devoted to residential development.

10. Recommendations

1. The Planning Board encourages cataloging updating of resource and other reference maps including but not limited to conservation lands, wetlands, trails, historic sites, water resources, etc.).
2. To protect the Town and the taxpayers, it is suggested that a tri-town committee (Atkinson, Derry and Hampstead) be established to assess the area surrounding the Island Pond, analyze the associated problems, and develop regulatory solutions to ensure future protection of this important resource.
3. The Planning Board, in conjunction with the Conservation Commission, should research ways to strengthen Atkinson's ordinances and regulations so that appropriate care is taken to preserve natural and environmental resources.
4. The Planning Board should encourage long-term planning for the location of recreational facilities.
5. The Planning Board should encourage a long-term plan for further development of the Town trail system. All developments that potentially contain land usable as part of the town-wide trail system should be encouraged to provide adequate open space easements to allow for the interconnection of the trail system, thereby giving the residents access to the system while protecting areas for parks, recreation, and open spaces of adequate proportions.
6. The Planning Board should continue to closely monitor and evaluate the development of new Town roads in order to insure the harmonious development of the community, and avoid scattered and premature development.
7. The Planning Board will encourage continued use of the Rural Cluster Residential Development ordinance to maximize preservation of valuable land and resources as open space.