

## **VISUAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES**

### Introduction

In recent years, particularly as some of the attractive landscape in the community was consumed by development, the visual qualities of the community have become an increasingly significant part of the planning process. The following study deals with Atkinson's landscape and a way in which it contributes to the quality of life in the town. In developing the visual inventory and analysis, the following objectives were taken into consideration:

- 1 To create an increasing awareness of the community's inhabitants in identifying the visual quality in the hopes of protecting it. Although Atkinson may wish to protect this landscape through special review requirements, informed citizens, however, can greatly contribute to the aims of retaining this particular aspect of quality of life through voluntary control.
2. To provide a landscape analysis that can serve as a practical component in the development of Site Plan Review considerations. It is hoped that, in part, this visual analysis will contribute in the selection of land use density allocations in Atkinson. Wherever possible, the visual analysis should be applied in order to preserve the scenic qualities in the future developments of the community and avoid intrusions against these qualities (careful development in building locations).
3. To provide information to guide development in the town. It may be impossible to regulate all facets of visual qualities. However, the knowledge should be available and choices be made based on this information in order to help Atkinson's Planning Board in reviewing and negotiating with builders and developers.

The Following study is undertaken with the aim of maintaining visual quality in Atkinson that can have psychological, planning, and economic benefits to the community. It is urged that high-quality landscape areas be not only understood by the residents and the voters, but be protected as much as possible.

It is the protection of quality of landscape that lends to the quality of life in a community and can instill and retain community pride and the community's desire to continue the thoughtful use of its land.

It is hoped that in the Comprehensive Planning efforts, the town will use its review process to minimize impacts of development and, as far as possible, promote positive effects of developments by exposing views and retaining qualities of landscapes as identified.

In the preparation of the following inventory and analysis, the Consultant appreciates the assistance of Mrs. Evelyn Shore and Ms. Lynne Monroe. The visual analysis greatly benefited from the Cultural Resources Survey and Inventory conducted by the Strafford Rockingham

Regional Council in 1979. It is hoped that the incorporation of this Survey into the Comprehensive Planning process will be, in part, a contributing element to the retention of quality of life in Atkinson, while allowing and continuing orderly community growth.

### Contributing Elements to the Visual Quality of Atkinson

The basic elements of making an area one of pronounced quality is two fold:

1. The vista that a certain location renders.
2. The identification of short range, middle range, and long range views in the town's landscape.

### Areas of High Visual Quality

In Atkinson, a generally beautiful community, there are areas that are particularly high in visual quality. This survey differs from the identification of historic areas and areas of architectural significance. However, it does, as the Cultural Survey indicated, give, in many instances, a glimpse of "old" Atkinson. Many of these highly scenic areas are those that have been preserved for centuries. They are identifiable and are located on the map. They include:

1. Providence Hill area
2. Jericho Road - North Broadway view shed
3. Main Street - Sawyer Avenue section
4. Lower Maple Avenue
5. Lower East Road
6. Town Center - south
7. Town Center - north
8. Island Pond Road - Route 111 @ plain
9. Island Pond environs

In addition, long distance vistas of significance have been identified as:

1. Pine Knoll area
2. Maple Avenue - Bragg Hill section
3. Hogg Hill
4. Providence Hill - west

### Areas of Visual Quality

#### Providence Hill

This is the section that borders on Salem and is located in the southwest corner of Atkinson. It provides a view shed that is identifying agricultural meadowland encompassing an area of approximately one half mile. This area, though framed by mature forest stands and stone walls, gives one the feeling of spaciousness and of the "original" southern New Hampshire landscape.

Its retention should be accomplished by careful building placement, taking advantage of interfaces between open spaces and the forested areas.

#### Jericho Road - North Broadway Sector

This is a large area, nearly three quarters of a square mile in size and bound by Jericho Road on the south, Salem Road to the west, and North Broadway to the north.

It is one of the major areas in the community still in agricultural use and is indeed beautiful, restful to the eye, and rather unique in a community that is as heavily forested as Atkinson. Its active form use contributes to the uniqueness.

#### Main Street - Sawyer Avenue Area

This area is located in the southern portion of Atkinson, bordering Massachusetts. It is an area that has, in addition to historic significance, a short range view that is of decisive significance. Not only is it exposed to a large volume of passersby, but it has been virtually preserved by its marginal suitability for development. This marginal quality for development is one that should encourage the community to retain these characteristics of this view shed and render a setting to an identified historic area in the community.

#### Lower Maple Avenue

This area is one of uninterrupted view for approximately 2,000 feet to the west and encompasses nearly 4,000 feet in length along Maple Avenue. Because of the slope of Maple Avenue coming off from Bragg Hill, this is an area that is not only a short and medium range area, but has a significant long range view as well. The view shed is located generally between Main Street and Maple Avenue and is one that is characteristic of the high visual quality in Atkinson. It is an area that makes one wonder where the many people in Atkinson are actually residing. It is typical of the many open spaces that are still preserved and hopefully will be retained in the community's future landscape.

#### Lower East Road

This area is located in the southeast corner of the community and adjacent to Plaistow. Its significance is the large open area created by a high water table and marsh condition. Its beauty is framed by mature free growth located approximately 1,500 feet to the southwest of East Road.

The protection of this vista to the traveler along East Road is one of significance and should be preserved. In addition to its being a beautiful view, it is an introduction to an historic area identified as part of a Cultural Survey just south of Line Brook Road.

#### Town Center - South

Probably one of the most significant areas of visual quality in Atkinson is the view from the town center to the south. Not only is it an historic area from which the view is rendered, but it is one that encompasses both sides of Meditation Lane. It reaches from Main Street 180 degrees to

Bittersweet Lane area to the northwest.

For significant reasons, not only is this view an historic setting, but the open fields framed by stone walls in the background and foreground make this a viewshed that contributes greatly to the town's visual quality and should be protected.

#### Town Center - North

In the central part of town going north, just prior to reaching the low point before rising towards Hogg Hill, is a medium and short range vista to the north created by marsh lands and open lands framed by wooded areas. In a way, this is one of the more typical vistas in the Town of Atkinson and represents the kind of quality that makes Atkinson the pretty town that it is. It is a vista that should be protected.

#### Island Pond Road - Route 111 - Route 111 Area

This view shed is located in the northwest portion of Atkinson, framed by two highways rendering exposure to the traveling public. In addition to being one of the earlier settled areas in Atkinson, it is one that, for reasons of natural conditions because of high water tables and marsh areas, has been undeveloped, while in the easterly portion, particularly in the vicinity of the section of Main Street and Island Pond Road, agricultural endeavors have maintained the open space quality. Their quality is identified here and their protection should be accomplished, for it is one of the areas that create the landscape which is predominant and makes Atkinson a visually attractive community.

#### Island Pond Environs

Island Pond is generally visible only to private property owners save for a few key vistas. One of these is on the approach to Chose Island; the second one is on the northern portion of the Hemlock Heights development.

The view connected to Chase Island is one into a wetland area created by a cove on Island Pond and renders a rather unique area of wilderness - wetland area. The view from the Hemlock Heights development is one showing a portion of Island Pond and its beauty created by the forest-covered shoreline contrasting with the tranquility of a large water body. These elements are being identified here to record their significance for future consideration as permits are being issued for further development in that northern-most portion of Atkinson.

#### Maple Avenue - Bragg Hill

This point identified on the Visual Analysis Map is one that renders a great view towards the south and southeast from Maple Avenue. A possible visual easement consideration should be given to the retention of this long range distance view in the retention of visual qualities of Atkinson.

### Pine Knoll

In the extreme northeast portion of Atkinson is the Pine Knoll Crown Hill development area. Because of the high elevation of Pine Knoll, it does render an extremely beautiful view of the southern New Hampshire landscape. Much of the vista areas are occupied by private development and possible future visual easements should be given consideration particularly if the potential public access to an area providing an outlook over the southern New Hampshire landscape could be accomplished.

### Hogg Hill

Hogg Hill renders the most significant view towards the west from the Town of Atkinson. This view shed is a long distance view of the westerly portion of southern New Hampshire and is one similar to Pine Knoll, that of being increasingly absorbed by private ownership and development pressures. Possible acquisition of visual easements and a location of public lookout might be worthy of consideration in the town's planning efforts.

### Providence Hill - West

The descending topography on Providence Hill Road, along with a view shed identified earlier, is also a long distance view rendered to the traveler. If possible, visual easements by controlling vegetative growth and development along particularly significant areas of exposure to this long range view should be accomplished through identification in the Comprehensive Plan expressing town-wide concern by retaining this unique view and protecting it for future generations.

MAP

(The original document contained a map which cannot be read. I assume it is a map showing natural and scenic areas in Atkinson. *MSB*)