

TOWN PLAN COMMITTEE

September 21, 1978

Dear Strafford Citizen:

The 1977 Town Meeting directed the Planning Board to start work on a Town Master Plan and report progress at the 1978 meeting. In the Fall of 1977 the Selectmen held a meeting of all Town Officials and members of Town Boards and Committees to discuss the need for developing a Town Plan. It was the consensus of that meeting that a Town Plan was needed and should be developed. The Planning Board requested Jack Penney and Mark Thompson to chair the committee, and gave them a list of various citizens whom they considered to have some knowledge or quality which would be helpful. A public meeting was held to explain about Town Plans, which was chaired by Jerry Howe of the University Extension Service, and more names of interested citizens were obtained. The Co-Chairmen researched materials from the Extension Service, the Strafford/Rockingham Regional Planning Commission and the State Office of Comprehensive Planning to learn how to develop such a plan.

The format selected was to divide the citizens committee into three sub-committees as vehicles to learn about the Town of Strafford. The Natural Resources Committee, Chaired by John Bozak, to study the physical characteristics of the land and its capacities; the Community Resources Committee, chaired by Charles Matteson, to study the Town government departments; roads and land uses; the Human Resources Committee, chaired by Jack Creamer, to study the population trends and economic base. These Committees met regularly for five months, and developed maps and information which would have cost \$3,000 if purchased professionally. A progress report was given at the 1978 Town Meeting and some of the maps were posted. The Committees reported their findings at two public meetings in April, where suggestions and comments were solicited from those citizens present. At all public meetings new members for the committees were recruited.

The Main Objective and Issues were developed based on these two public meetings. The same sub-committees went back into session to develop policies and recommendations. These were placed on paper in the form of a draft Town Plan, which was presented at a meeting of all committees in August. This was further refined into the present form, attached, and presented to the Planning Board at a special meeting on August 29, 1978. All during these ten months the Co-chairmen, three sub-committee chairmen along with Jerry Howe and Linda Bruschetti of the Extension Service, with input from

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Jim Foss, Planning Board Secretary and John Young, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, met regularly at "Staff Meetings" to pull together the work of the various citizen committees.

The forgoing is an accounting of how the Strafford Town Plan was developed. We tried to seek out the true facts about our Town and the true desires of its citizens. We tried to involve as many citizens as possible who were willing to contribute, time, effort and thoughts. We hope we have reflected truly their ideas. We continue to solicit public involvement in this effort, which will effect the future of Strafford.

Sincerely,

Jack Penney
Mark Thompson

Jack Penney
Mark Thompson

TOWN PLAN COMMITTEE

TOWNSPEOPLE WHO SERVED ON COMMITTEES

Natural Resources

John Bozak, Chairman
Don Black
Ed Cournoyer
Alan Corrindia
Carl Davis
Verna Davis
Marjorie Foss
Carl Gustafson
Lester Huckins
Hal Inglis
Albert Leighton
Bob Perry
Don Poppema
Dan Sundquist
James Stiles
Walton Stiles
Boyen Thompson
John Tucker

Community Resources

Charlie Matteson, Chairman
Bob Evans
Kitty VanZandt
G. L. Fistere
Tim Brown
Frank Onstott
Roger Leighton
Russell Shillaber
James Stiles
Bill Rooney
Marjorie Stiles
Robert C. Davis
Denny Thorne
Sarah Huckins
Robert Huckins
Don Shaw
Pete Carswell
Davis Clarke
Don Rhodes
Sue Gosselin
Dan Sunquist
Karen Seeman
Lester Huckins

Human Resources

Jack Creamer, Chairman
Ann Anderson
Rene Morin
Phyllis Morin
Joyce Cournoyer
Leonard Davis
Anita Evans
Sally Gustafson
Judy Cooper
Harold McDade
Ann Dudley
Bob Dowst
Lynn Shillabar
Lois Fistere
David Strong
Bill Cooper
Cal Schroeder
John Ahlgren
Pennie Whitcher
Bill Rooney
Don Shaw

SIRAFFORD, N.H., TOWN PLAN

A. Zoning Changes

2 Public Hearings
Town Vote

1. Wetlands ordinance (including setbacks)
(1.3Cc) p.7, (1.4B), (1.4 C a-e, h) p. 8-9, Appendix 2
2. Soil and Slope limitations
(1.4C d-g) p. 9, Appendix 1
3. Steepland ordinance
(1. 4C f) p. 9 Appendix 1
4. Cluster development floating zone
(1.2 cb) p. 6
(1.1. C b) p. 5
5. Larger lot sizes (part 1, 2 and 3) in forest and agriculture districts.
(1.1 C b) p. 5
6. Setback schedule for new construction along existing and proposed roadways.
(2. 1Cd) p. 11 Appendix 3

B. Subdivision Changes

2 Public Hearings
Planning Board Adopts

1. Access and interior road layouts and design
(2. 1 C) p. 11 (2.2 B) p. 12, Appendix 3
2. Screening requirements
(2.1C) p. 11
3. Retention of common forest land blocks
(1.3C b) p. 7

C. General Ordinances

Selectment Adopt

1. Driveway requirements and permits
(2.2 Cfgi) p. 13

D. Town Meeting

1. Zoning changes A. 1-6
- *2. Building permit limit system (3.1C) p. 15-18
- *3. Performance standard point system for allocating subdivision and building permit approvals.
(3.1C) p. 15-18
4. Scenic road classification
(2.2Cj) p. 13
5. Easement or acquisition funds
(1.3 C d) p. 7, (2.3c) p. 14
6. Non-residential site review authority
(3.1C) p. 19

E. Planning Board procedural regulations

1. Road classification recorded on subdivision plat
 2. Environmental review team
- (1.3 c a) p. 7

checklist item

F. Other

1. Booklet - Town policy concerning road maintenance and responsibility
(2.2 C) p. 12
2. Petition state to pass legislation to preserve and protect agricultural lands.
(1.1 C a) p. 4
3. Encourage current use assessment and conservation easement use.
(1.1 c b) p. 5
4. Natural History Education
(1.3 C e) p. 7
5. Enforcement of RSA 224.
(1.4 C b) p. 8
6. Issues for further study:
 - a) commercial/industrial standards
(3.1 C) p. 17
 - b) Natural, historic and recreation areas with particular attention to Water Street
(2.3B) p. 13
- c) Forest Land
(1.2 C a) p. 6

STRAFFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE, TOWN PLAN

MAIN OBJECTIVE:

To maintain the rural character of Strafford.

ISSUES:

1. Quality of Surface Waters
2. Loss of Agricultural Land
3. Town Employment and Industry
4. Town Roads
5. Natural and Historic Areas
6. Population Growth
7. Wildlife Habitat
8. Financial Situation Affordable for the Community

MAPS:

1. Soils
 - a. Soils Classification
 - b. Septic Tank Suitability
2. Watersheds and Wetlands
3. Groundwater
4. Elevation
5. Slope
6. Wildlife Habitat
7. Woodlands
8. View Quality
9. Constraints Composite
10. Existing Use Map
11. Subdivisions Map

(more)

LAND USE

Area: 30,256 acres
47.3 sq. miles

Approximate % of Total Area by Land-Use:

1. Forest	89.3%
2. Agriculture	4.8%
3. Idle- formerly agricultural	2.7%
4. Developed	1.4%
5. Other-swamp, ledge	1.8%
	<u>100.0%</u>

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1.0 NATURAL RESOURCES

1.1 Agricultural Land

1.1A Agricultural Land - Situation

Over the last 20 years Strafford has experienced a 30% loss in agricultural acreage. While a small portion of this land has become idle, the bulk of the loss has been to development. The town currently has about 1400 acres of agricultural land of all qualities. In addition to prime lands suitable for row and forage crops and lands in pasture, Strafford also has some unique lands where crops such as lowbush blueberries are produced.

Regardless of one's individual definition, the fact is that there are only a handful of full-time, commercial farms left in Strafford. Much of the land is leased and is not contiguous with the acreage owned by the farmer. In addition, many parcels are small in size making their management more difficult and costly. Many Strafford residents are part-time farmers, raising their year's supply of vegetables and often some home-grown beef, pork, poultry or dairy products.

The soils occupying our prime agricultural lands are deep to bedrock, reasonably well-drained, and are located on gentle to moderate slopes. These characteristics also make them desirable from the standpoint of ease of development. It must also be recognized that any future limitations which might be imposed on wetlands, shallow soils, steep areas, etc., will tend to increase the pressure to develop our agricultural lands.

Current trends in energy and transportation costs indicate that New England communities will have to rely more upon their own land base for future food and fiber production.

The State of New Hampshire has done little to develop and enact legislation which will promote the preservation of agricultural lands.

1.1B Agricultural Land - Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Town of Strafford, including its elected and appointed officials, its boards and committees, to work for the preservation of all agricultural lands in Strafford, whether they are actively farmed or not. At the same time the Town must recognize and protect the rights of the current owners of these lands.

1.1C Agricultural Land - Recommendations

a. Long-term:

The Town shall petition (and encourage its neighbors to do likewise) the State Legislature to pass appropriate legislation to preserve and protect agricultural lands. This might take the form of purchase of development rights or the creation of agricultural districts.

b. Short-term:

The town should encourage the current-use assessment of agricultural lands.

The use and application of conservation easements should be publicized by the Town. (N.H. RSA 477:45-47)

One immediate method to use would be large lot zoning of all agricultural land and/or the Town could allow cluster development on agricultural soils taking care that the least productive portions are used for buildings and roads.

1.2 Forest Land

1.2A Forest Land - Situation

The last land use survey of the town of Strafford showed that 89.3% of the land was forested. The survey was based on 1974 aerial photography. Since 1974, there has been a rapid encroachment by approved sub-divisions for housing on the town's forest lands.

The increased demand for sawlogs, fuelwood and other timber products has resulted in an increase in timber harvesting operations. The knowledgeable forest landowner finds forest management a sound business venture, especially on Strafford's better soils.

The town of Strafford receives a 10% yield tax on all timber harvesting besides the regular land tax. The only town services directly associated with forest lands are town road maintenance and fire protection.

The timber resources on private lands belong to the landowner while the wildlife is owned by the state. The average landowner will only carry on wildlife habitat work when it can be supported by the sale of timber or by some type of a public incentive payment. Generally, timber production and wildlife habitat management are compatible practices, however, the uncontrolled water level of beaver impoundment can be detrimental to timber production. Since 1948, Strafford has lost some valuable forest lands due to flooding by beaver. A desirable balance between wetlands, agricultural lands and forest lands must be maintained.

Of the 462 acres of Conservation land, approximately 454 acres are suitable for multiple use including the commercial timber production.

1.2B Forest Land - Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the town of Strafford, including its elected and appointed officials, its boards, and its committees to work for the preservation of forest lands and to promote good forest management on private lands. All town owned forest lands shall be managed for multiple uses including timber production and harvest.

1.2C Forest Land -Recommendations

a. The Conservation Commission should initiate a study of Strafford's forest resources. The study should include (1) history of the use of the forest land, (2) present number of private woodland owners, (3) average size of ownership, (4) tenure of ownership, and (5) a five year forest resource cost and benefit analysis for the town of Strafford.

b. The town should consider cluster development to protect the town's agricultural and forest lands.

1.3 Wildlife Habitat

1.3A Wildlife Habitat - Situation

Strafford is fortunate to have within its bounds some 42 square miles of forested land and a variety of water bodies and stream courses. Interspersed among the forested acres are open agricultural lands. This mixture provides the key to maintaining and enhancing the wildlife of our town, on both private and town lands. All species of wildlife have different habitat requirements. Some examples follow.

The large wooded areas surrounding Parker Mountain and the other Blue Hills are sparsely inhabited by man. Species such as the black bear and bobcat thrive under these conditions. This kind of habitat condition may also allow for eventual reintroduction of the native turkey to our area. In addition, these same areas support deer yards which are important to herd survival. Deer and partridge are examples of species which can also make good use of those adjacent woodlots which have been lumbered using sound cutting practices.

Agricultural lands provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. The edges of pastures and fields form important habitat for many birds and small mammals.

Strafford's wetlands are important also. The loon population provides a unique challenge; how to maintain their nesting sites on lakes receiving heavy recreational use. The Town has two great blue heron rookeries within its bounds which face encroachment from development. The rookery areas also provide important habitat for waterfowl and furbearers. These last species groups also make use of our Town's marshes, swamps, and beaver flowages. Many streams in town are suitable for native trout habitat.

In summary, an integral part of the rural character of Strafford lies in its diverse wildlife whose populations can be altered or controlled by what we do to the land.

Strafford's

Wildlife Habitat - Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Town of Strafford to maintain and protect wildlife habitat by careful monitoring of all proposed land use changes and development. Where it appears that such changes will impact heavily on sensitive habitat, every effort will be made to modify said changes so that their negative effects on wildlife populations will be eliminated or minimized.

1.3C Wildlife Habitat - Recommendations

a. The planning board shall seek the advise of the Fish and Game Department and/or a wildlife professional concerning potential impacts on wildlife populations during the early review stages of proposed subdivisions or other land use changes.

b. Subdivisions of large wooded tracts should be planned and designed to cause the least negative impact on wildlife. This could require retaining large blocks of common forested land within a subdivision. Deeds issued as part of the subdivision could contain a retention clause to ensure habitat protection.

c. Buffer zones should be established adjacent to wetlands and streams to minimize effects of construction of roads, buildings, and septic systems. A minimum of 100 feet setback distance is recommended. This is meant to apply to all home construction and road construction, not just subdivisions.

d. Where possible, the Town should acquire additional lands for the maintenance and enhancement of wildlife populations.

e. An active program of natural history education should be established for school-aged children and adults in Strafford.

1.4 Wetlands and Other Sensitive Lands

1.4A Wetlands and Other Sensitive Lands - Situation

The Blue Hills range in Strafford forms a major divide between the Suncook-Merrimack drainage and the Isinglass and other drainages which lead more directly to the seacoast. The important watersheds are the Isinglass, Spruce and Hall Brooks (both of which eventually reach the Isinglass), the Mohawk, Berrys River (a portion of the Cocheco), and the Big River and Little River drainages (which flow to the Suncook).

The headwaters of these streams lie along the flanks of the Blue Hills which have a base elevation of 600 - 800 feet above sea level (Parker Mountain peak elevation, highest in the range, is over 1,420 feet). Some streams rise in the numerous wetlands scattered throughout town. In fact, Strafford is fortunate in having an abundance of wetlands. They act as sponges during periods of high rainfall and runoff and help regulate stream flow during drier periods.

Major uses requiring high quality water are potable water for home, farm, and business consumption; water for recreation; and water for fish and wildlife habitat. Quality water is also important to the communities surrounding Strafford since many of their streams originate in our town. Some other uses of water are fire protection, irrigation, and waste treatment. In the future any municipal water supplies or heavy industrial use of water will have to rely primarily upon surface waters. The current state of knowledge about the bedrock geology which lies beneath our town indicates that there are no large underground, high-yield aquifers (groundwater reservoirs) capable of supporting such demands.

The term wetland includes all brooks, streams, springs and rivers which flow year-round and ponds, lakes, marshes, bogs and swamps which contain surface water throughout the year. Other sensitive lands are those wet soils (often surrounding surface waters and streams) which have a seasonal high water table (water within 1-2 feet of surface); land shallow-to-bedrock (less than about 20"); land on steep slopes (over 15%); and land at high elevations which is highly visible as part of the natural landscape and often lies at the headwaters of drainages. The wet soils and other sensitive lands are related in that they are costly to develop, they have limitations as to type of waste disposal systems, and disturbance of soil or drastic removal of protective vegetation can cause soil erosion with subsequent siltation and sedimentation of water-courses and bodies of water. The net results are a lowering of water quality for human consumption, recreational use, and use by wildlife.

1.4B Wetlands and Other Sensitive Lands-Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Town of Strafford to protect the long-term quality and flow of its surface and groundwater supplies and to improve the quality of those waters which are low. Quality water is defined as meeting the State of New Hampshire requirements for Class A waters. Generally such waters are unpolluted by sewage or septic effluent and other biological or chemical contaminants. Quality water is also free of sediment and silt due to improper road construction, building site excavation, and other land use activities. Stream temperatures shall be maintained at levels favorable to native fish species. Practices which severely disrupt or damage wet soils, shallow-to-bedrock soils, steep slopes, or areas at high elevations which are highly visible in the landscape shall be restricted.

1.4C Wetlands and Other Sensitive Lands - Recommendations

a. Develop a schedule of setback distances from wetlands based on combinations of soil type and slope classes in order to protect water quality from contamination and sedimentation (it should be noted that swamps, marshes, etc., often have an indistinct edge and direct field observation in concert with soils data would be required to determine the line from which setback would be measured).

b. Within the setback zone along streams cutting of forest vegetation shall be restricted and shall conform to the conditions in RSA 224. All construction and logging equipment must be kept out of streams. These measures are intended to ensure streambank stability, prevent erosion and siltation, and promote low water temperatures.

2.0 COMMUNITY RESOURCES

2.1 Road Scenic Quality

2.1A Road Scenic Quality - Situation

The rural character of the town of Strafford is viewed and appreciated in two ways: as we carry out our lives at our homes, and as we move through the environment on our roadways. Since we see more of the town from the road than from the home, it is crucial to preserve the view quality along the roadways.

The actual structure and makeup of the roads is important in the quality of the scene viewed. Our relatively narrow, winding roads are the quintessence of "country roads". The stone walls, large shade trees, and hedgerows along most roads add to the New England atmosphere. The structures which are visible from the road are of many types, but there exists a rich cultural expression in many of the older homes. The few remaining barns lend to the agricultural character of the land, also. Utility lines tend to be relatively concealed because today only a few power and telephone lines are needed. Mail boxes and driveways are typically some distance from one another, lending the idea of "elbow room" between neighbors. Finally, the large expanses of wooded land and the open fields when they occur, provoke and maintain the sense of rural character and the attraction to encounter nature and things wild which is so rare and priceless in metropolitan areas today.

It must be recognized that with increased development a built-up environment will evolve which in turn will change the perception of the town's environment and thus alter the sense of rural character which now exists. As the number of households increases, so does the traffic. It has been pointed out that the town harbors a sizeable commuting population and most goods and services are located outside the town, so that travel to and from the town is a necessity. Many of our roads, especially Class V roads, do not exhibit the proper surfacing, drainage provisions or safe alignments to accommodate increasing numbers of motorists. Development on these roads will eventually create a major maintenance responsibility for the town as the citizen call for upgrading becomes heard. In another vein, development on our better road (Class II) can create significant public safety problems as the number of driveways and turning movements along these more heavily-travelled roadways increases.

As roads are upgraded, they are typically transformed into more streamlined alignments in order to move the increased traffic. This trend will cause radical change in our rural roads if the need to upgrade arises. Stone walls must be bulldozed, shade trees lost and changes in alignment may bring roads uncomfortably close to homes.

Finally, the act of improving the quality of roadways in terms of the travel characteristics embodies a growth-inducing principle in itself. Smooth roads with streamlined alignments provide greater access to the town and would attract a broad commuting population of people who wish to live in "the country" and work in town. This effect can be documented in all suburban bedroom communities surrounding metropolitan areas.

2.1B Road Scenic Quality - Policy Statement

i. It shall be the policy of the town to protect and preserve the view quality and sense of rural character in the town by reviewing and controlling proposed land use changes based upon their impact on the view from the road and on the roadways themselves.

2.1C Road Scenic Quality - Recommendations

a. Development shall be encouraged in proximity to Class II roads rather than Class V or Class VI roads. On Class II roads frontage lots shall be served by roadways on the interior of the development rather than by individual driveways on the Class II roadway. Development roadways shall be constructed to town standards and maintained by the developer until the town shall vote to include any new roadways in the town's responsibility.

b. Existing stone walls, large shade trees and hedgerows shall be protected in new development proposals. Existing barns, outbuildings and homesteads shall be encouraged to enhance the rural character wherever possible, except where they result in hazardous travel conditions.

c. The scale of town roads shall be preserved by limiting roadway width to a minimum of 16 feet and a maximum of 24 with shoulders three feet maximum width. Wherever possible roadway width shall be kept to 20 feet for both travel lanes.

d. A schedule of setbacks for minimum distances between residential structures and roadway rights-of-ways on existing town roads be adopted as part of the subdivision regulations. Please refer to appendix 3 for specific recommendations.

2.2. Road Functional Considerations

2.2A Road Functional Considerations - Situation

Most roads will eventually require a new surfacing treatment. Historically, this has been a thin "chip seal" coat of asphalt emulsion on a gravel base which builds up over the years to form our "tar roads". This approach was satisfactory for improving travel on rural roads as long as the daily traffic volumes are low, but with increased development these light-duty roads deteriorate rapidly. The proper solution is to rebuild the roads to professional engineering standards with deep, improved gravel bases and thick wear courses of asphalt. Since frost action is so inevitable in New England, even these vastly improved roads must be maintained. Whether by Town Road Department or private contractor, the cost still accrues to the townspeople.

The commitment to asphalt surfacing will become an increasing liability to the town if it chooses to improve a significant portion of the town roadways. Most asphalt products today come from petroleum processing and most petroleum in New England is imported from foreign sources. If and when overseas sources of crude oil are interrupted, the cost of asphalt will escalate rapidly, leaving the town in the position of choosing whether or not to maintain costly asphalt surfacing on roads which will then be carrying greatly increased numbers of motorists.

2.2B Road Functional Considerations - Policy

All Class V roads shall be brought to a level of year round passibility consistant with its level of use. The town road network is one key to orderly growth of the town. Miles of new or reopened Class VI roads will contribute adversely to town growth by permitting far flung development and adding to an already heavy road maintenance burden. Therefore, the town shall accept no road as a town road except where such roads do not present an unreasonable financial burden to the town. No roads shall become town roads unless they meet town road construction standards in effect at the time of their take over by the town. Town Road Specifications shall be subject to periodic review.

Speed limits of 35 mph maximum be posted and enforced on all Class V and Class VI roads.

Truck traffic (10,000 lb. GMWV) or heavier be prohibited from travelling Class V and VI roads during "mud time" or when road base is in an unstable condition.

The town shall adopt a policy of requiring subdividers to bear a portion of the cost of upgrading Class V roadways, when subdivision proposals are made on these roads. Generally, the factors to be considered within this new policy would include but not be limited to:

- a. Proportion of frontage on the roadway
- b. The potential traffic increase from the subdivision
- c. The logical access routes to and from the subdivision
- d. The character and potential for development of the neighborhood served by the roads.
- e. The number of residences presently on the road.
- f. The number of undeveloped building lots on the road.
- g. The standard to which the town road is presently maintained.

The subdivider can be compelled to bear only that portion of the cost which bears a rational nexus to the needs created by, and special benefits conferred upon, the subdivision. For further clarification of this concept, refer to the N.H. Supreme Court decision in the case of Land/West Properties, Inc. vs. Town of Plainfield, (October 24, 1977).

The town shall investigate all aspects of the revised New Hampshire Scenic Road Law as a primary method of preserving the rural character of the Town.

2.2C Road Functional Considerations - Recommendations

- a. People moving into town, realtors, contractors, developers, builders, etc., will be informed that roads in town (for foreseeable future) will be maintained in their present condition.
- b. Proposed new roads approved by Planning Board before construction begins.
- c. When building on roads which are closed subject to gates and bars, homeowners have all responsibility to fix, maintain and plow the road. The town is in no way responsible.

- ility
Plans.
- d. The classification of roads should be recorded on subdivision plans.
 - e. The town is not responsible for maintaining private rights of ways.
 - f. The town should develop regulations regarding driveways along town roads and require permits. The state system might be adopted.
 - g. The number of driveway cuts onto roads in town should be minimized. Regulations concerning multiple driveways and access road should be considered.
 - h. Dead-end roads in subdivisions should be examined and discouraged as they hinder fire and police protection.
 - i. Road requirements for minor subdivisions should conform to those of major subdivisions.
 - j. Scenic road legislation should be examined. Criteria for designating certain roads should be established and specific roads to be considered for designation as Scenic Roads by vote of the town.

2.3 Natural, Historic and Recreational Areas

2.3A Natural, Historic and Recreational Areas - Situation

Strafford contains natural, historic and recreational resources of unique importance to our community. These resources should be considered in our community planning decisions.

2.3B Natural, Historic and Recreational Areas - Policy

Sites of particular historic or townscape value, natural areas and recreational areas should be identified and provisions adopted for their preservation when development is proposed. Plans for location and development of future facilities for public use should be formulated and put into effect as resources of the town permit. Land to serve future areas of population shall be set aside for each section of town.

The Planning Board should encourage common use of public land on Water Street. Any future building of docking facilities along the public property on Water Street shall require a permit which is non-transferable at time of sale. A future public docking and launching facility be provided by the town. A town plan be prepared for the recreational development along Water Street.

All existing burial grounds and cemeteries shall be preserved and their maintenance encouraged.

2.3C Natural, Historic and Recreational Areas- Recommendations

Historic and significant natural sites now owned by the town shall be retained and maintained.

Acquire easements to privately owned historic and special natural sites to protect them and compensate owners by tax reductions or other measures.

3.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

3.1 Human Resources

3.1A Human Resources - Situation

BACKGROUND The rampant population increase which Southern New Hampshire towns have experienced in the recent past is a fact which needs no additional documentation. This growth, once predicted to be a blessing which would expand municipal financial bases, has proven to be just the opposite, as uncontrolled expansion has overtaxed the services which the towns are required to provide. Now, after the fact, many of these towns are struggling with rigorous growth control measures.

Strafford has experienced its first wave of this increase, with a population growth of 41% between 1970-1977. While this is considered very high, two neighboring towns, Barnstead and Barrington, have experienced far greater rates of increase. There is no reason to believe that, if growth is allowed to remain unmanaged, these high rates will not be experienced in Strafford. Our best estimate, assuming that growth is not controlled, is a Strafford population of 2700 by the year 2000.

IMPACT There are two adverse results of uncontrolled growth, overtaxing of municipal services--schools, fire and police protection, etc.; and loss of the rural character of the town. The attached costs vs. taxes study demonstrates that, at present, new dwellings do not pay the town costs associated with them. This is not unique; other towns have completed similar studies with similar results. For this reason, town officials cannot assume that taxes paid by an increased population will cover the costs of services generated by the increase.

The second impact is more difficult to measure, but a logical after-effect of a dramatic population increase. At some undefined point, a town loses its rural character, and becomes just one more overcrowded and underserved municipality.

There are other adverse effects. These are the impact on sensitive areas, and the areas where special safety considerations should prevail. Wetland and game preserves fall into this category. So do areas in which building has been so dense that the surface and underground water supplies, lakes and streams, are threatened with pollution. Two such critical areas are the shoreline of Bow Lake generally, and the entire hillside on the southern side of Water Street, from the Post Office to Dave Baker's property. To prevent the possibility of serious pollution, special curtailment on development should be imposed in these areas.

Perhaps our most serious safety problem is Route 202A, between Bow Lake

village and Center Strafford. The road is narrow, with poor to non-existent shoulders throughout much of its length. In four places along the road, its rise and fall limits the driver's view of the road ahead to 100-150 ft. Recent building has produced many blind drives on each side. Since the road is straight, and the hard surface in good condition, speeds in excess of 40 mph are the rule. Any future building should restrict blind drives, and provide for school bus turn-offs.

3.1B Human Resources - Policy

The problems associated with rapid and uncontrolled growth, experienced by several southern New Hampshire communities, has been outlined in detail. All levels of government within the state, therefore, are, or should be, aware of these problems, and of the actions which several communities have taken to combat and correct them.

Given these conditions, the citizens of any municipality have a right to expect that their elected and appointed officials will take whatever action may be necessary to assure that growth in their municipalities is properly managed; that public health, safety and welfare is assured; that public facilities are efficiently and effectively planned; that public funding is competently planned, levied and committed; and that the character and atmosphere of the community be preserved.

The residents of Strafford have, by their decision to reside here, indicated that the rural nature of the town, with its basic public and private services, represents their preference. Retention of these features is therefore essential, and is a responsibility of municipal authorities. These authorities, making full use of the powers which flow from state statutes, will take those appropriate actions necessary to the safeguarding of the present character of Strafford. In the exercise of these powers, the following principles will apply:

a. That the natural beauty of the town, its woodlands, lakes and streams, constitutes a resource which is the common property of all, to be retained for the enjoyment of all citizens.

b. That ownership of property does not confer upon the owner, the right to take any action in regard to that property which hazards the property of another or of the town; or which hazards public health, safety or welfare; or which commits the town to an unprogrammed expenditure of public funds.

c. In consideration of subdivision requests and building permits, due regard must be had for the rights of low and moderate income groups to purchase and own property which is in conformance with existing regulations and laws.

3.1C Human Resources - Recommendations

The sole method of preventing runaway growth is the timely establishment of a growth control system. This is most effectively done through some control of subdividing and building. The Community Resources Committee determined

that approximately 400 sites have been approved and not yet built on. Obviously the only remaining control of these 400 lies in the area of building permits. The number of building permits issued for these 400 sites is not known. There are two feasible methods of managing subdivisions and building:

- (1) establishment of numerical quotas, and
- (2) adoption of rigorous standards, which, of themselves, limit growth to acceptable numbers, types, and locations.

The second method is probably superior to the more common quota system.

However, adoption of a full-fledged performance system requires the services of experts in such areas as traffic control, pollution control, municipal planning, and soil mechanics. At present, Strafford does not have the expertise available to consider adoption of a complete and effective performance standards system.

Quota systems are based on the establishment of a specific number of subdivision approvals and building permits issued each year; or a percentage of dwellings now occupied, serving as the ceiling. The numbers are further refined to limit a developer or builder to a percentage of the total allowed each year, and a provision to prevent commercial developers and builders from securing all permits issued in any given year. A maximum time limit during which approvals are valid is also established. A further refinement assures that long-time residents receive favorable consideration, and are not lost in a "numbers" game.

The authority to enact legislation safeguarding the health, safety and general welfare of a municipality, and the right to "regulate and restrict--the density of population," is within the police power granted to towns. (NH RSA 31:39, 31:60, 36:21). The courts have held that this includes provisions for adequate fire and police protection, schools, etc. It has even been extended to the maintenance of the rural character of a town. The chief concerns appear to be that the constraints be reasonable; i.e., related to the ability of the town to plan for and provide services, or to the recent growth rate of the general area. Also, enabling legislation must conform to relevant RSA's. For example, a zoning ordinance must follow the procedural requirements of RSA 31: 60-89.

The simplest proposal would be the establishment of a maximum number of subdivision approvals and building permits in each calendar year. Ground rules would include limits on numbers issued to any individual or concern, valid time limits and subdivision phasing. This system would complicate the planning board function, in deciding among competing applications, and do little to assure that new developments are located, planned and constructed in a fashion responding to what is best for Strafford.

We can manage growth, and at the same time exercise some control over what is built, and where it is built, by adding a point system to an established limitation on numbers of subdivisions and building permits. In

other words, we can introduce performance standards into the system. The point system will be established for both building and subdividing, with some standards common to both. Positive points would be assigned for those characteristics which promote the town goal of preservation of the rural atmosphere, and negative points for those features counterproductive to that goal.

Specific recommendations:

- A. That a limitation be placed on the numbers of building permits authorized in a calendar year for dwellings. This number is not to exceed ~~three~~ ⁵ percent of the number of year-round occupied dwellings within the town limits. This limitation does not apply to garages, outbuildings, etc., or to any dwelling additions not designed to increase the number of families in the dwelling.
- B. That approvals under A be valid for ~~six months~~ ^{1 yr.} from the date of issuance, at which time, unless a foundation is in place, they become void. That the planning board may extend this time limit by an additional six months if, in its opinion, overriding conditions warrant.
- C. That a limitation be placed on the number of subdivision sites approved in a calendar year. The number authorized is not to exceed six percent of the number of year-round occupied dwellings within town limits. This larger number, as compared with A, is authorized in order to provide planning flexibility to the developer, when, in the judgement of the planning board, such is advisable and warranted.
- D. That approvals under C be valid for a two year period from date of issuance, at which time, unless specific and agreed on site preparation has been completed, they become void. That planned site preparation to be completed within the time frame will be included in the subdivider's proposal. That the planning board may extend the time limit by an additional year if, in its opinion, overriding conditions warrant.
- E. That approvals under A and C above be scheduled periodically throughout the year, with numbers of approvals divided equally among the periods; that any one concern or individual be limited to 25% of the total approvals in any one calendar year, and 50% in any three consecutive years; ~~that not more than 75% of the yearly quota of subdivision approvals be issued to commercial developers, unless all valid and conforming requests of Strafford property owners have been approved~~

Land which is subdivided within the immediate family not more than once every five years is exempted from the 6% limitation.

- F. That in order to assist the planning board in selecting equitably among competing applications, and to assure that future development is

in conformance with town goals; a performance point system be established, to allow ranking, in order of merit, applications for subdivision and building permits.

Features to be included include:

Feature	Applicable to Subdivision	Dwelling
1. On, or in close proximity to, a Class II road.	x	x
2. On an existing school bus route, or within walking distance of school.	x	x
3✓ If not on a Class II or V road, developer's contribution to necessary improvements of roads, bridges, connecting site with nearest or most appropriate Class II or V road.	x	
4. Within 1000 ft. of a water supply suitable for firefighting.	x	x
5. Soil suitability for septic systems.	x	x
6✓ Plan containing time-phased development.	x	
The 7 No. Years taxes paid on property by applicant.	x	x
8. Years applicant has resided in town.	x	x
9✓ Plan retaining natural features of site (trees, natural contours, etc.)	x	x
10✓ Plan retains an area of woodland or open field, permanently undisturbed and reserved as open space. This area is to be at least one acre in size for sites of ten acres or less, not less than 20% of total acreage for sites of over ten acres.	x	x
11✓ Innovative development features (cluster, etc.)	x	
12. Outside building material of wood, brick or stone.	x	x
13✓ Variety of house styles and floor plans.	x	
14. Site in designated "sensitive zone", (overdeveloped, wetland, game refuge) a critical safety zone, or a zone currently devoted to agriculture.	negative	negative
15. Variances required.		negative

0a+

INDUS marked consid.

Each feature should be assigned one or more points, depending upon the relative importance in the eyes of the Planning Board.

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS These types of ventures are markedly different from the subdivision development and building permits considered above. Environmental pollution and esthetic concerns are here much more important. These and other by-products, traffic generations, etc., require a specific expertise to properly predict and evaluate.

Fortunately, the problems here are not as immediate as those concerned with subdivisions and homes. Commercial expansion in Strafford is probably several years away, and will come when population growth generates a demand for it.

This subject is recommended as one requiring additional study, and for which additional time is available. A commercial/industrial panel should be charged with the development of standards which will control future development and expansion. The study should include, but not be limited to, environmental and esthetic concerns, the pros and cons of an industrial park, and the use of sensitive and fragile areas.

APPENDIX 1

Recommended Schedule
of Soils and Slope Development Limitations
For Strafford, N.H.

Slopes over
15%
Steepness

No disturbance,
all soil types

Soils 15%
or less in
Steepness

The following soil types have serious
limitations:

Group 1

Hollis) No Septic System Development
(Shallow to bedrock; less than
24")

Group 2

Leicester) No Development
Muck & Peat)
Mixed Alluvial) all severe, high
Ridgebury) water table year-
Rumney) round
Whitman)

Group 3

Acton) No Development
Deerfield) all with seasonal high
Sutton) water table
Woodbridge) (less than or equal to
30")

Group 4

All other) No Limitations
Soil types

All developable sites above 600 feet above sea level should be closely
examined for potential visual impact and it is suggested that highly
visible sites be subject to a 5 acre minimum lot size.

APPENDIX 2

Setback Buildings and Septic
Systems Adjacent to
Wetlands*

<u>Slope Class</u>	<u>Minimum Horizontal Setback Distance **</u>
0 - 8%	100'
+8 - 15%	150'
+15%	200'

*Wetlands defined as: all streams, brooks, and rivers which normally run year-round and all bogs, swamps, marshes, ponds and lakes.

**Exception: Hollis soil types are shallow to bedrock. Add 50' additional horizontal setback to each slope class.

APPENDIX 3

On Class II Roads:

100' minimum setback

Within this zone no more than 50% of the basal area of existing woodland may be cut in any given five year period.

On Class V and VI roads:

50' min. setback - where the zone contains 50% or more crown cover in existing conifers or where screen planting* is proposed as part of plan.

100' min. setback - Where zone contains less than 50% existing conifers or 50% to 100% crown density in hardwood.

150' min. setback - Where zone contains less than 50% existing conifers and less than 50% crown density in hardwood.

200' min. setback - Where zone is open to view from roadways.

Exception on agricultural land and prime agricultural soils.

*Screen planting= A twenty-foot wide zone with 100% crown density in five years growth of mixed conifer and hardwood species appropriate to the vicinity of the site to be maintained and guaranteed by developer.

APPENDIX 4

Town of Strafford
Population Growth and the Tax Base

The purpose of this study is seen as twofold. First, to verify that new residential construction in the Town of Strafford has the same effect on property taxes generally, as in other towns in New Hampshire where similar studies have been done. Specifically, that new residences built in the town increase the tax burden on all.

Secondly, to quantify the results for comparison with other towns, that any demographic variables are identified and verified for consideration.

The study covers new residences built or installed (mobile homes), for the years 1974, 1975, and 1976. Properties built in 1977-78 were not included, since assessment thereon is not yet complete.

A total of 47 residential units were identified from building permits, and verified as complete from property and tax records of the town, from which the figures were taken. Total present and future pupil population figures from these units were taken from the latest files of the Strafford Elementary School, which reflect attendance also at secondary schools in the area.

Explanation of the sources for other figures will be found in footnotes to the tabular summary attached hereto.

The results for the Town of Strafford, based on this limited sampling appear to suggest the following:

1. That the pattern observed in other towns is being repeated here. That is, new residences do not carry their own weight as to town costs.
2. That to date, the impact here is not as great as in other towns, especially the one used as a "model" for this study, Mt. Vernon, N.H. For example, the additional cost to the town per new household in Mt. Vernon ranged from \$242.00 to \$1456.00, with the preponderance in the \$1000.00 to \$1456.00 category. This current study reflects an average of about \$277.00 per new household in Strafford.

Several factors suggest themselves by way of explanation. First, new residences in Strafford seem to produce fewer children of school age. The Mt. Vernon study produced averages of from 1.0 to 3.0 school age children per new household. The Strafford figures reflect current student population of about .55 per new household, to which the addition

of pre-schoolers raises the figure only to about .75.

Secondly, relative to most towns, perhaps Strafford has a much higher percentage of summer residents, whose children attend school elsewhere.

Finally, perhaps local economics weighs heavily in favor of financially secure "older" and retired new residents, and against younger working people of child-bearing age, whose incomes preclude the purchase of the new expensive housing.

In summarizing, the demographic variables in Strafford appear to have accrued to the town's advantage to date. However, further construction of residential units of the "housing development" variety might well change the picture, and accelerate the negative impact of population growth.

New Residential Construction

<u>Year Built</u>	<u>Type Residence</u>	<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Taxes Billed</u>	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>Pre-School</u>
1974	House	\$22,150	\$944.54	0	0
"	Mobile	8,100	313.69	0	0
"	House	16,200	919.10	2	0
"	Mobile	11,500	516.35	0	0
"	"	3,000	134.70	0	0
"	House	4,500	152.05	0	0
"	"	11,670	456.64	0	0
"	"	13,200	592.08	0	2
"	"	7,050	222.84	0	1
"	"	16,600	695.34	3	0
"	"	16,300	681.87	0	0
Totals	11	\$130,270	\$5,630.00	5	3
1975	House	13,320	598.07	1	0
"	"	14,380	645.66	0	0
"	"	12,630	517.09	0	0
"	"	13,495	605.93	1	0
"	"	8,060	361.89	1	0
"	"	7,200	323.28	5	0
"	"	17,880	802.81	0	0
"	"	18,100	812.61	0	0
"	"	14,550	653.30	0	0
"	Summer	14,940	670.81	0	0
"	Mobile	13,730	618.48	0	0
"	Summer	9,750	437.78	0	0
"	Mobile	9,480	425.65	0	0
"	House	11,800	529.82	0	1
"	"	13,100	588.19	0	0
"	"	*	*	1	0
"	Mobile	9,400	422.06	1	0
"	House	15,930	665.26	1	0
"	"	16,360	734.56	0	2
"	Summer	4,060	182.29	0	0
"	House	8,550	333.90	0	0
"	Summer	15,000	673.50	0	0
Totals	22	261,715	11,602.94	11	5

* Building permit approved-not shown in property book

New Residential Construction

No. of
Prop.

<u>Year Built</u>	<u>Type Residence</u>	<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Taxes Billed</u>	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>Pre-School</u>
1976	House	\$21,140	\$949.19	0	0
"	"	3,935	176.68	0	0
"	"	21,600	969.84	0	0
"	"	15,070	676.64	0	0
"	"	19,900	843.51	3	0
"	"	7,825	351.34	0	0
"	"	19,900	893.51	0	0
"	Summer	2,940	132.01	0	0
"	Mobile	5,800	260.42	0	0
"	"	6,735	302.40	2	0
"	House	16,970	761.95	2	1
"	"	19,000	853.10	2	0
"	"	14,420	647.46	0	0
"	"	7,400	332.26	1	0
	14	\$182,635	\$8150.31	10	1

Tabular Summary

<u>No. of Properties</u>	<u>Year Built</u>	<u>Ass'd. Value</u>	<u>Taxes Billed</u>	<u>No. of Children</u>	<u>School Costs</u>	<u>Other Costs</u>	<u>Total Costs</u>	<u>Shortage</u>
11-3 ¹	1974 ²	\$130,270 ³	\$5,630 ⁴	5-3 ⁶	\$5,905 ⁷	\$1,746 ⁸	\$7,651	\$2021
* 22-2	1975	\$261,715	\$11,603	11-5	\$12,991	\$3,507	\$16,498	\$4891
14-3	1976	\$182,635	\$8,150	10-1	\$11,810	\$2,447	\$14,257	\$610
<u>47-8</u>		<u>\$574,620</u> *	<u>\$25,383</u> *	<u>26-9</u>	<u>\$30,706</u>	<u>\$7,700</u>	<u>\$38,406</u>	<u>\$13,0</u>

1. Mobile Homes
2. Per Building Permits
3. From Property Book
4. Actually Billed
5. Children in School
6. Pre-School Children
7. Based on:
 - a. 1978-79 Proposed Budget (\$358,113.75)
 - b. 1977-78 Pupil Attendance (303)
 - c. \$1,181.00 Per Pupil
8. Based on 1977 Tax Rates
 - a. County .73/\$100.00
 - b. Town .61/\$100.00

Other Results:

Present Pupils in School	26	=	.55 Pupils per Residence
New Residences	47	=	
Three Year Shortage	\$13,023.00	=	\$277.09 Per Dwelling
New Residences	47	=	

* The 1975 summary of New Residential Construction reflects one building permit issued, and one child in school from that family-however, completion could not be verified from the property book. However, the small effect this would have on the overall conclusions is believed to be insignificant.