

# Future Land Use

The Supplemental Materials for the Future Land Use Chapter of the Durham Master Plan 2018 provide valuable background information that helped generate the conclusions and perspectives of this chapter:

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## I. Future Land Use Community Forum Summary – Peggy Kieschnick, MSW, ACSW



# **Future Land Use Community Forum Summary**

May 13, 2017

**Summary Prepared for:** The Durham Land Use Committee  
**Respectfully Submitted by:** Peggy Kieschnick, MSW, ACSW  
Kieschnick Consulting Services, [www.kieschnickconsulting.com](http://www.kieschnickconsulting.com)

# INTRODUCTION

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On May 13, 2017 over 100 members of the community gathered for the better part of a day to share their perspectives on future land use.

Participants were invited to provide feedback on land use questions related to:

- Preserving and protecting the natural environment
- Agriculture and farm land
- Enjoyment of the land
- Housing
- Business and commercial development
- Downtown

They were also invited to share what they love about living in Durham; what they hope the community will be like ten years from now; and, what advice they have for the Land Use Committee as they seek to balance the needs of the community going forward.

Feedback on these topics was provided in a variety of ways, including facilitated small group discussions, color-coded preference dots, placement of development options on maps, and by completing individual cards noting their recommendations.

This document seeks to synthesize the feedback from the various methodologies and to capture:

- Opinions that were shared by many of the participants
- Areas of significant disagreement
- A sampling of suggestions made by individual participants

The Forum was planned by the Durham Land Use Committee with the assistance of the Strafford County Regional Planning Commission <http://www.strafford.org/> and Peggy Kieschnick, an independent consultant. Support throughout the day was provided by a cadre of facilitators most of whom volunteered their time.

The town's Land Use Committee will use this feedback to inform the development of the Future Land Use Chapter of Durham's Master Plan.

# WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY

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- **We love Durham's people and the level of community engagement!** Participants appreciate our friends, family and neighbors. Many stressed how highly they value the level of engagement we find here. *"I love the sense of community – that it comes together in times of need and it works together on important issues."* *"I love that we have an engaged community that struggles with protecting open land while trying to adjust to change."*
- **We deeply value the natural environment and beauty of this place.** When asked to name their favorite place, participants listed over 15 specific locations. They also spoke of *the "abundance of open land and trees,"* the *"rural character,"* having *"water everywhere,"* and having *"nearby places to walk in approximate wilderness."*
- **We love living in a college town.** A number of people said their favorite thing about Durham is the university: *"sharing the resource of the University: College Woods lectures."* *"I love the intellectual influence of UNH and cultural offerings."* *"I love the change of pace provided by the academic year."*
- **We love the mix of attributes available here.** Several people spoke of the combination of assets: the *"balance of open land and compact downtown business area with nearby residential areas";* the *"mix of students, families, university life and a vibrant school system";* *"the University coupled with the character of Durham; rural character, beauty, downtown neighborhood."*
- **We love being able to walk and bike.** Several people said how much they value being able to walk, run and bike as a part of their daily life.
- **Some of us couldn't pick just one thing we love about living in Durham.** When asked to pick just one thing they love about living in Durham, many people gave answers such as *"Our sense of community and unspoiled natural spaces; neighbors, intellectual and cultural opportunities; open land; rural character; Oyster River schools."*

# OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

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Participants shared their hopes for the future, including what they hope will be the same ten years from now and what they hope will be different. The ideas noted below were concepts expressed by many, if not all of the participants, and were echoed throughout the day.

## Ten years from now we hope....

### We will have preserved:

- **Our natural resources and open spaces and given them priority when making planning decisions.**
- **The character of the community – our small town feel, agricultural heritage, and sense of community.**
- **The sense of community, robust discourse, and the "commitment by neighbors to creating a strong community."**

### *Ten years from now I hope...*

*Durham will continue to have a "strong sense of community coupled with the joy and grounding provided by living in a 'rural-ish' place surrounded by nature, where one can walk outside safely at night and see the stars, go for a walk through wooded areas and by the water."*

### We also hope:

- **Downtown will attract year-round residents.**
- **We will have a more positive experience with students, including fewer problems with student behavior, with some of us hoping that we have fewer students living in "family neighborhoods."**
- **We will have a strong, balanced, cooperative relationship between the University and the Town.**
- **Our population will be more diverse and include young professionals, retired persons, students and people with a broader range of incomes.**
- **We will have new businesses that are attractive to year-round residents and allow us to dine, shop and participate in arts-related activities right here in town.**
- **It will be easier to walk and bike.**

*Some hopes were mentioned by just one or two people but are listed below to give a flavor of what else was on participants' minds:*

- Access to local food
- Lower taxes
- Improved transportation
- An openness to "embracing the University as the core of the Town's economy"
- Greater engagement of the next generation in Town decision making

# PRESERVING AND PROTECTING THE LAND

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## What Are We Doing Well?

- **Our values are in the right place.** There is widespread support for protecting and conserving Durham's natural environment and participants are pleased that the Town prioritizes this. One comment noted: "*Community values are clearly articulated regarding conservation priorities to guide decision makers (and they follow them).*"
- **We have protected a significant amount of land.** Participants recognize and are pleased that Durham has preserved a significant amount of land and protected the area's natural beauty.
- **We have been strategic in our approach to conserving lands.** A number of people noted that the town has made smart purchases taking into account such factors as: cost, value, and habitat continuity. One mentioned that the Town has also used partnerships as a way to leverage impact.
- **We are actively protecting our drinking water supply.** While there are many concerns about water (see below), multiple comments noted the positive attention the Town has paid to protect the Town's supply of drinking water.

## What Are Doing Not So Well?

- **We need to pay more attention to water quality.** A number of comments referenced the need to go beyond protecting drinking water. There is some concern that Durham is not taking adequate care of our ponds, streams and brooks.
- **We could do more to protect soil, manage pesticides and address invasive species.** One comment stated that we haven't protected our best soils and further cited examples of housing developments on good agriculture lands (e.g. Surrey Lane). Another comment noted that Exeter has better regulations concerning pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers (runoff). Another shared that there are new tools available for dealing with invasive species.

## What Should We Keep In Mind As We Make Decisions Over The Next Ten Years About Preserving and Protecting the Land?

- **It is important to continue to protect the land.** There is wide agreement that preserving the land should continue to be a priority for the community. The most frequently mentioned areas to be preserved were the "Gateways," Mill Pond, and the Great Bay. There was not a lot of discussion about acquiring new parcels of land. One comment noted that acquisition is not the only strategy that can be used to protect land and gave zoning as an example of another option.

- **Balance the protection of land with other needs.** A number of people talked about the need to balance our desire to protect the land with our desire to ensure that Durham is an affordable place for people, including young families, to live.
- **Take a long-term approach.** Multiple people stressed the importance of taking the long-view with clear priorities and a focus on *"long term value over short term gain."*
- **Partner with the University of New Hampshire.** A number of people brought up the importance of working closely with the University. One comment was that *"the University owns a great deal of land and if they decided to develop that land it would have a significant impact on the amount of open and protected space."* Another commented that, *"we would benefit from a synergistic strategy of UNH to share resources with the town – more formalized relationship/planning."*
- **It is important to work in partnership.** There were several comments about the importance of partnering with others. Within the town, one person noted it is important to build more connections between the Town's committees, engage more people in committees and connect with citizens groups. Another person spoke of the need for a regional, coordinated approach as essential to addressing such issues as invasive species. Another comment reflected the potential of partnering as a means of sharing costs.
- **Pay attention to climate change.** Several comments urged the Town to consider climate change and its impact on rising sea levels, flash storm events, flooding, temperature and precipitation variations and rising water levels.
- **Make water protection more of a priority.** There were many comments on the importance of protecting the community's waterways. One comment stressed the need to develop an *"aggressive strategy to protect wetlands and waterways."* Another recommended that we *"expand priority land conservation beyond drinking water only project."* Other comments referenced dangers to the Great Bay, impervious surface impact, implications of development on water quality and the need to protect shorelines and watersheds.



# AGRICULTURE

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## How Important Is It To Support And Preserve Existing Farms?

- **We strongly value supporting and preserving existing farms.** A strong majority of participants indicated that it is "*important*" or "*essential*" to support and preserve existing farms. A small number view it as "*nice to have*" and only one person indicated it was "*not important*."

## Why Is It Important to Support and Preserve Existing Farms?

- **It supports our commitment to our natural environment.** Numerous comments referred to the role farmland plays in supporting the natural environment. They drew connections between farms and open space, wildlife corridors, conservation and the beauty of the natural environment. There were also several comments about farming as a way to bolster climate resilience and reduce the community's carbon footprint.
- **Farms add to the quality of life.** Several comments addressed ways in which the presence of farms contributes to the overall quality of life by preserving history, contributing to health, introducing children to farms and reinforcing a sense of place and a link to history.
- **Local Farms Means Local Food.** A number of people spoke about the value of local food production and the role farms can play in providing a sustainable food supply.
- **Farming May Have Economic Benefit.** There was some discussion of the economic benefits of farming and local agriculture as a driver of other local economies.
- **Durham Has Resources That Can Benefit Farming.** One person noted that Durham has particularly good soils. Another that UNH and the Thompson School are a great resource for cooperation and leverage.

## What Cautions and Concerns Does Farming Raise?

- **Not all land is good farmland.** Some participants cautioned that agricultural development should focus on lands that can support it. One person said: "*We need to be realistic about the amount of good farm land that is available.*"
- **Economic viability is not guaranteed.** Another voiced the concern that "not all farms are self-sufficient. Agriculture may not pay a "living wage."
- **There is the potential for negative environmental impact.** Some participants pointed out the downside of farms is that they can pollute the environment through pesticides, nitrogen, etc. As one person said, "*Cows are cool, but they pollute the river.*"

## What Are The Pros and Cons of Supporting Agritourism (farmers markets, weddings, corn mazes, etc.)?

- **Agritourism provides economic and community benefits.** Some of the benefits listed included:
  - Good for educating children and the general public
  - Provides local produce
  - Provides access to nature for urbanites
  - Provides community activities
  - Helps farms stay solvent
  - Farm-to-table grows local economy
  - Drives other business via vendors, and the state R and M tax
  - Keeps money in community
- **There is also a potential downside to agritourism.** Groups identified a number of cautions the Town should exercise when making decisions about agritourism. Some of these included the following:
  - Parking and the potential to negatively impact neighbors were the most commonly cited concerns. Noise, traffic and hours of operation are potential areas of concern.
  - Scale matters
  - Fear that agritourism could become the primary business rather than actual farming.
  - Loss of green space if too much is paved.
  - Tourism has potential to destroy rural character/create theme park

## What Steps Could We Take To Support Existing Farms?

- **Protect prime farmlands and provide infrastructure support.** Some examples included:
  - Farmers sharing equipment
  - Owners who can't farm anymore rent their land
  - Need to be able to offer crop diversity and additional services
  - Improve crop diversity/biodiversity
  - UNH/town garden partnership
- **Create markets for local food.** Ideas for doing this include: Farm-to-Table restaurants and integrating locally produced foods into local schools.
- **Help local farms market themselves.**
- **Support Activities that encourage people to visit and/or work on farms.** Activities suggested included: weddings, corn mazes, apple and blueberry picking, summer camps and educational programs, garden tours, the WOOFER program, etc.
- **Use policies and regulations to incentivize and support small farms.** Suggestions included: provide tax relief for small farms; include small agriculture in proposals for other types of development; consider being flexible about uses on farms to allow for agritourism.
- **Educate students and the community.**

## How Important Is It For The Town To Actively Encourage Community Agriculture (rooftop gardens, community gardens, chickens, etc.)?

- **The majority of participants view Community Agriculture as "important" or "essential."** Well over half the participants rated community agriculture as important or essential. However, support for community agriculture was not as strong as it was for farming. In contrast to ratings for farming, a significant number of people (though still a minority) rated community agriculture as "*nice to have*" rather than "*important*" or "*essential*."

## What Are The Pros And Cons Of Supporting Community Agriculture?

- **There are a number of benefits to community agriculture.** Some of the benefits identified included:
  - Enhances life enjoyment
  - Provides a bonding experience, fostering community
  - Allows farms to stay in business
  - Connects people with food sources
- **It's important not to "go overboard."** Some participants commented that this is "*quasi-recreational*" and questioned whether this is where the town should be spending its time.
- **Community agriculture can contribute to pollution.** One comment noted that when people don't understand the effects of gardening practices, their use of herbicides, etc. can have a negative impact.

## What Steps Could We Take To Support Community Agriculture?

- **Implement "common sense" restrictions.** There were a number of suggestions for restrictions including: zoning to limit in-town agriculture; clear rules about chickens, etc.
- **Don't implement new restrictions.** While some favor using restrictions to manage potential conflicts, others indicated that current regulations are sufficient and no new regulations should be added.
- **Make more land available.** Ideas for doing this included: Wagon Hill, right of way of railroad beds, and future uses of already conserved land.
- **Educate the public.** Some of the ideas identified were: promote composting; host education sessions at the library; partner with Cooperative Extension to educate citizens about how to garden; offer garden tours; encourage people to shop at farmers' markets and farm stands; and, teach people about bee pollination.
- **Support community gardens and agriculture in small spaces.** Suggestions included: encourage private and community gardens; integrate small scale agriculture in neighborhoods and downtown; and, permaculture in public spaces.
- **Encourage other types of community agriculture.** Suggestions included: rooftop gardens, vertical gardens, and neighborhood use of animals for lawn maintenance.

# ENJOYING THE LAND

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## What Kinds Of Outdoor Activities Would We Most Like To See Durham Add/Expand In The Next Ten Years?

- **The most frequently mentioned activities were:**
  - Playgrounds - including natural playgrounds, centrally located playgrounds and small neighborhood playgrounds (specifically, Oyster River Park)
  - Picnic Areas – including covered/pavilion area that can be reserved for group activities
  - Hiking
  - Biking
  - Skiing and Snow Shoeing
  - Water Activities (canoeing, boating/kayaking, fishing)
- **Other suggested activities included:** Courts (tennis and pickle ball) and Playing Fields, Dog Park (though some do not favor this), Birding, Skating, Back Country Camping Experience in Town, Multi-age Rope Courses and Horse Trails.
- **There are some types of recreation we do not want!** There was wide, if not universal agreement that Durham should not encourage motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles, motorcycles, four-wheelers, etc.

## Can We Accommodate These Activities On Our Existing Open Spaces Or Do We Need To Find New Land For This Purpose?

- **Our primary focus should be on caring for the land we have and making it easier to get to and use.** There were a couple of suggestions for acquiring new land (Wiswall Dam and Renners) but the vast majority of comments focused on the need to maintain and improve the property we already own. Two other pieces of advice were: Group recreational facilities together and *“the land should define the activity.”*
- **Add/formalize hiking and biking trails and make them accessible for a variety of users including the elderly.** Participants also suggested the Town provide maps, signs for historical and trail information, and parking. Another suggestion was to provide a central information source for all activities.
- **Increase access to waterways.** There were numerous comments supporting this idea.
- **Connect our outdoor spaces.** There were many comments in favor of increasing connectivity. Suggestions included: long recreation loops; more connected cross-country skiing, walking and biking trails; connectivity of trails between conservation and recreation areas and other towns.

# HOUSING

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## What Types of Housing Do We Most Need To Add In The Next Ten Years?

- **We want Durham to be a community that is accessible for people of diverse ages and financial means and we understand that this requires a mix of housing types.** This sentiment was raised numerous times.
- **We are very clear that we do not support additional student housing!** Participants struggled to answer questions about housing types and tradeoffs without discussing who might be attracted to the various categories. Concerns about student housing permeated the conversations about housing types.
- **Some of us are not convinced that we need to add any new housing.** Some participants feel strongly that Durham should not add any new housing. These conversations were often closely tied to fears of losing the town's rural character and reducing or degrading the environment.
- **Many of us see a need or potential need for additional Single Family Homes.** For those who are open to adding more housing, Single Family Homes appeared to be the least controversial.
- **Many of us see a need or potential need for additional Assisted Living/Nursing Homes though this is controversial.** While many people are open to this type of housing, a significant number are concerned that the market has been saturated. Some spoke of a desire for 55+ and independent living options rather than Assisted Living.
- **Many of us see a need or potential need for Multi-Unit Apartments though this is also controversial.** A number of people spoke of the fact that this type of housing makes Durham affordable for a wider range of people. Two comments referenced the importance of providing workforce housing and see this as meeting that need. The greatest concern appeared to be the fear that apartments were synonymous with student housing.
- **We are split on whether or not we need additional 2-3 Unit Apartments/Condos.** Participants commented that this type of housing encourages ownership by people with different income levels. Others struggled in the conversation to distinguish between this type of housing and multi-unit rental apartments.
- **While some of us see a potential need for Manufactured Housing, the majority of us do not view this as something we should pursue.** Some people spoke positively about manufactured housing because it is affordable and encourages economic diversity. One comment noted that we "*don't want to be perceived as exclusive.*" Others, however, expressed concerns about aesthetics, energy efficiency and strain on schools and police.
- **We have some interest in other types of housing.** Some groups discussed the possibilities of Workforce Housing, "Tiny Houses," "Co-housing," Cluster Housing and a "*Conservation Subdivision.*"

## What Kinds Of Tradeoffs Should We Be Willing To Make In Order To Create Space For More Housing In New Neighborhoods?

- **Some of us were reluctant to answer questions about housing trade-offs in new neighborhoods because we do not want to create new neighborhoods. We would much prefer to increase in-town density and preserve rural areas.**
- **Many of us also found it hard to talk about tradeoffs without breaking them down by location.** Participants noted that the tradeoffs we would support in some areas are very different from those they would support in other areas.
- **Many of us think that what we do now in terms of lot size requirements is about right but a large number of people are in favor of allowing for smaller lots as a way to create space for more houses.** Participants who support allowing smaller lot sizes noted that this makes cluster housing possible and the compactness that results can create community. Smaller lots allow for denser development which reflects their desire to add housing while at the same time protecting open spaces. It can also make homes more affordable. The keys to success are location and good planning.
- **We have no agreement on whether there should only be one type of housing in each neighborhood.** More people indicated that it is okay to allow people to build neighborhoods that include a mix of different kinds of housing units but there was nowhere near consensus on this. Positive comments referred to the potential to meet the needs of a more diverse range of people; the desirability of "pocket neighborhoods," and opportunities for people to each contribute to the neighborhood in their own way. Concerns included aesthetics, "*invasion of neighborhoods by students.*" Other recommendations included: restrict mixed neighborhoods to the town core; limit building height; and, ensure that that the housing blended with the neighborhood.
- **We have near consensus that we should either keep or increase our environmental buffers.** A small number of people recommend allowing for less buffer space but the rest of the comments split fairly evenly between keeping the current requirements or requiring more buffer space. Participants stressed the importance of protecting the environment – particularly the waterways. "*If you don't protect streams and waterways you have nothing!*" Some comments expressed concern that buffer rules are applied inconsistently. One person cautioned that it is important to scientifically justify the amount of buffer required.
- **We do not have agreement about whether or not to allow multi-unit housing in more locations.** The majority of participants recommended that the Town keep requirements as they are now but a significant number of people would like to allow people to build multi-unit housing outside of the current "*student housing*" areas and quite a few people's opinions fall somewhere in between the two ends of the continuum. Student housing was again raised as a concern. One person said simply that the "*student housing dilemma has to be resolved first.*" Traffic associated with multi-unit neighborhoods was also cited. Those in favor of allowing multi-unit housing suggested that this type of housing can be done well in ways that save space and provide options for young workers and older people who can no longer drive. One person supported allowing multi-unit housing as long as it is "*confined to designated area within town/not willy nilly.*"

# BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL

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## What Should We Consider When Making Decisions About Future Commercial Development?

- **Any new commercial development should be done with great care.** Some of us believe there should be no commercial development at all. Others believe some development is acceptable and/or desirable. All participants were clear that any commercial development that is done should be done cautiously. They reiterated that it is critical that the community preserve the natural environment and small town, rural character of the community.
- **We should focus new commercial development on businesses that cater to year-round residents.** There was widespread and strongly felt support among participants to move beyond businesses that cater to university students.
- **When deciding which types of businesses we want to encourage there are a number of factors we should consider.** Individual participants identified a number of considerations to take into account when deciding on the types of businesses our community needs. These included:
  - Pay attention to what has worked in other college towns. The answer may be clean, high-paying jobs and start-ups.
  - Our goal should be a “live-work-play” community.
  - The key is to identify businesses that have a personal investment in the community.
  - Selected business would generate the demand for other categories.
  - Ask if this type of business can last? Can we sustain it? Is there sufficient demand? Is the necessary workforce available?
  - Are there opportunities for UNH Town partnerships?
  - Do we really have the space for more business?
  - How will the business affect traffic, parking, road infrastructure and community transportation services?
  - How does the business fit in with our desire for a walkable community?
- **Good design matters.** The New England Center was cited as an example of good design.
- **Some of our commercial needs could be met through re-location and/or redevelopment of existing properties.** Individual suggestions included:
  - Re-locate the post office.
  - Re-develop the middle school (if a new school is built) as a community center.
  - Re-locate fraternities and sororities to UNH property west of the railroad track.
  - Re-develop historic district student housing (restaurants, offices, shops).
  - Note that the development decision on Young Drive will impact choice of economic needs (55+ or student housing).

## What Types Of Businesses And Services Would We Most Like To Add To What We Have Now In Durham?

- **The types of businesses most needed are:**
  - Flexible Space for start-up businesses, artists, etc.
  - Restaurants (Especially “nice” restaurants and ice cream spots. No fast food or pizza)
  - Professional Office Space
  - Research and Development
  - Small Retail (including food stores, bakeries, hardware stores, book stores, etc.)
- **Some, but not all of us, would also support:**
  - Recreation/Entertainment
  - Farm Stands
  - Child Care Centers, Adult Day programs, etc.
  - Hotel/Conference Center
- **We are split on whether or not to allow for additional Assisted Living/Nursing Home development.** A number of people are concerned that we are “oversaturated” (or will be after completion of the next development). Others suggested a focus on smaller units; converting downtown apartments, etc. Some noted the need to attract young people and creating a continuum of options in the community.
- **We have some advice on specific types of development:**
  - Restaurants – *Restaurants can serve as community gathering places. The New England Center was a great model. There may be opportunities to re-use existing buildings.*
  - Research and Development – *“Pay attention to access to roads, parking, water and sewer.” “Architecture and scale matter.” “Could be connected with UNH.” “There is the potential for R&D to help make Durham known for solar and ocean engineering.” “R&D would be supported by the Downeaster.” “Location is key.” “Could be designed for mixed use with floors for retail, professionals, and residential.”*
  - Recreation and Entertainment – *“Size and scope matter.” “We have the potential to create a rich performing arts environment by strategically partnering with the university.” “We have enough bars.”* Some think Durham has plenty of performance venues already.

## Where Should We Locate These Businesses?

- **We have widespread agreement that we are not willing to sacrifice the natural beauty and character of our community for future development.**
- **Some of us do not want any additional commercial development.**
- **Some of us are passionately opposed to development along any of the “gateways” to the town.**



- **Most of us oppose commercial development on Mast Road/Rte. 155A South of Main Street.** There was strong agreement that there should not be any development on Mast Road south of the commercial area at the intersection of Route 155A and Main Street.
- **Most of us oppose commercial development along Route 108 south of the Oyster River.** Most people indicated that there should be no commercial development in this area. One group's map indicated that a farm stand would be okay. One group suggested a restaurant in an existing building would be okay. Another indicated a spot for one restaurant.
- **Most of us are open to additional commercial development in the core downtown area.** The majority of participants are open to adding new commercial development in the core downtown area (Main Street up to the greenhouses). Some are also open to development on Main Street at the intersection of Main Street with 108. The types of businesses most mentioned on the maps for these areas were restaurants, professional office, and retail.
- **We are split in our opinions of the advisability of commercial development in the following areas:**
  - WEST MAIN STREET (greenhouses to Mast Rd/Route 155A) – The majority indicated that there should not be any additional commercial development on West Main Street. However a few suggested that R&D, small retail, child care and a farm stand would be acceptable.
  - INTERSECTION OF MAIN STREET and MAST RD./ROUTE 155A (commercial area) - More than half of the maps indicated there should be no additional development here but several people indicated some development was okay. Suggestions for types of development were: professional office space, Research and Development, small retail, restaurant.
  - GOSS – There was a fairly even split in responses to development in the Goss International area. About half the maps suggested some development would be okay with most of them suggesting this as a location for Research and Development. Some also suggested this as a location for flexible space for artists and start-ups, professional office space. One person suggested the possibility of light manufacturing.
  - "GASOLINE ALLEY"/ROUTE 108 UP TO THE ROUTE 4 INTERCHANGE – Participants were fairly evenly split on whether or not it is acceptable to add commercial development in this area with some people seeing the potential to add restaurant, retail, child care, artist space, R&D and/or office space.
  - ROUTE 108 NORTH OF THE ROUTE 4 INTERCHANGE – Participants were evenly split on whether or not it's okay to add new development in this area. Some indicated a willingness to see assisted living, R&D, office and artist space in this area.
  - ROUTE 4 EAST– Participants were again evenly split on the development potential for this area. Those who did indicate some openness to development listed businesses such as farm stands, assisted living, research and development, one restaurant, professional office space.

# DOWNTOWN

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## What Can We Do To Improve The Downtown Area And Make It More Likely That We Will Spend Time There?

- **Encourage businesses that draw non-students to downtown.** Many of the conversations focused on this idea. There were a variety of suggestions for the types of businesses including: a bookstore/coffeehouse, good restaurants, ice cream, high quality small retail, and a bakery.
- **Make downtown less "student-centric."** This theme was woven into many of the conversations about downtown.
- **Make Durham a "walking friendly town."** There is strong, widespread support for making it easier to bike and walk within and between downtown neighborhoods, Town Landing, and points of interest. A number of people suggested creating pedestrian-only areas downtown (such as Jenkins Court), widening sidewalks, and changing traffic patterns. There was also a request to be sensitive to people with mobility issues.
- **Improve parking.** Numerous comments referenced the need for improved parking.
- **Make downtown more attractive.** There was particular support for creating green spaces such as pocket parks and adding and improving landscaping. Participants also suggested fostering a unity of architecture, adding outdoor art, burying utility cables, etc. A number of people recommend adding outdoor seating and eating places.
- **Increase activities that foster a greater sense of community.** Numerous people expressed a desire for this and suggested activities such as a bandstand, farmers markets, joint activities with the university, small music-concert venues, and gathering spaces.
- **Make use of existing retail/commercial space before building more.** Several comments echoed this theme encouraging the Town to focus on infill, attractive redevelopment; and increased density (including some 2-4 story buildings) within the core downtown area.
- **There were several other comments regarding development:** Re-locate the post office. Redevelop Madbury Rd. up to the library. *"Mill Plaza redevelopment is key to downtown."* *"Make sure Town landing is not just an afterthought."*

# PARTING WORDS OF ADVICE

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Participants also had a few additional words of advice for the Land Use Planning Committee as they strive to find the right balance for future land use.

- **Take a slow, thoughtful approach to development.** *"Every step should be part of a plan and evolution, not part of a land use 'revolution.'"*
- **Employ practices in development that:**
  - Focus on more intense development of already-developed areas (infill)
  - Keep business & housing downtown & protect undeveloped land
  - Encourage multi-use buildings
  - Allow for creative redevelopment
  - Support "walkability"
  - Foster community gathering places
- **Engage the Community, including the younger generation in the planning process.**
- **Don't Over-Regulate**
- **Focus on the quality of life for (existing) residents. If that is high, other factors will fall in to place.**
- ***"Bring your patience."***

**Future Land Use Forum attendees (103 people)**  
**Holloway Commons, UNH, May 13, 2017**

Alberto Manalo	Janice Aviza	Rachel Dewey, SRPC
Alex Chase, UNH student	Jay Gooze	Rob Leveille
Amanda Merrill	Jay Michael	Sally Tobias, Town Council
Andrea Bodo	Jean McPeak	Sean McCauley
Andrew Corrow, LUC, Planning Board	Jennifer Pribble	Steve Fink, facilitator
Annmarie Harris	Jim Lawson, Town Council	Sylvia Foster
Art Guadano, facilitator	Joanna Wicklein	Timothy Horrigan
Audrey Cline, facilitator	Joe Friedman	Tina Leveille
Barbara Dill, LUC, Planning Board	Joe Moore, LUC	Todd Selig, Town Administrator
Bernie Casey	John Carroll	Tony Matrumalo, facilitator
Bernadette Komonchak	John Mengers	Tyler Smith, UNH student
Beth Olshansky	Joseph Vaillancourt	Walter Rous
Bob Brown, facilitator	Joyce Williams	Wayne Burton, Town Council
Bob McNitt	Julia Belshaw	Will Wollheir
Carden Welsh, Town Council	Kitty Marple, Town Council	Robbi Woodburn
Charlie Blitzer	Linda Mengers	
Chris Regan	Lyn Howard	
Christina Healy	Maggie Moore	
Chuck Hotchkiss	Maggie Morrison	
Cynthia Casey	Mal Sandberg	
Cynthia Copeland, SRPC	Marguerite Covini	
Dan Keefe	Marjorie Smith	
Dan Sheehan	Mark McPeak	
David Williams	Martin Lee	
Dea Brickner-Wood, facilitator	Mary Ellen Humphrey, facilitator	
Deborah Hirsch Mayer	Mary Friedman	
Dennis Meadows	Mary Ann Krebs	
Diana Carroll	Matt Komonchak	
Diane McCann	Michael Behrendt, Town Planner	
Dick Lord	Michael Bradley, facilitator	
Donald Brautigam	Mike Drooker	
Doug Bencks, LUC	Molly Donovan, facilitator	
Doug Karo	Nancy Lambert	
Duane Hyde	Nancy Sandberg	
Dudley Dudley	Naomi Kornhauser	
Edgar Ramos	Nathaniel Morneault, Planning Board	
Emma Rous, facilitator	Paul Rasmussen, LUC, Planning Board	
Eric Stern	Peggy Kieschnick, Forum Facilitator	
Erin Hale	Penny Drooker	
Esther Wolfe, facilitator	Peter Wolfe, facilitator, LUC	
Frank McCann	Phil Kincaide, DCAT	
Fred Meissner	Rachael Mack, SRPC	
Heidi Ely	Robin Mower	
James Burdin, SRPC		
James Pollard		

## II. Durham Land Use Committee Engagement – Molly Donovan and James Burdin, AICP

# Durham Land Use Committee Engagement

The Land Use Committee hosted a successful community forum with robust discussion on the future land use issues in Durham, NH. The number of participants at the forum was satisfactory but tended to represent those who are already engaged in Durham issues and represented an older demographic. The Land Use Committee discussed this and concluded that they wanted to engage other populations in the community to ensure that their voices were heard. The Land Use Committee particularly wanted to hear from families, business leaders and our most senior population. The committee invited some community members and Durham staff to meet to discuss opportunities to reach these audiences.

The committee agreed to use the graphic designed by Barbara Dill for the forum on comment cards and posters as a way to solicit comments. Committee members agreed to take an active role in attending public events, distributing card and posters and analyzing the data once complete. The following engagement plan was set:

## DURHAM FUTURE LAND USE FORUM



- Mark McPeak would engage the population over 80 years old to learn about Durham's history and talk about the future.
- Rachel Gasowski, Durham Parks & Recreation Director would work with the committee to identify recreation events where it would be appropriate to have LUC committee members present to talk to participants and to distribute comment cards.
- Posters would be developed and distributed around Durham so community members could provide responses to the general questions.

Interactive Posters and Postcards were available at:

- Young's Restaurant
- Durham Town Hall lobby
- Durham Public Library
- St. Thomas More Parish
- St. George's Episcopal Church

Some things the community would like to see....

- bike trails and bike lanes
- Senior center, affordable senior housing
- Free library movies
- Lego house
- Free mini golf course
- Wine bar and more great food options
- Indian restaurant

Source: Poster at Durham Public Library



What do you hope will stay the same?  
What should be different?

Durham Land Use Committee Engagement Summer 2017  
Summary prepared by Molly Donovan and James Burdin

The posters had an area where participants could write an answer. The posters were well received by the public and filled up with comments. 133 individual comments were received via posters.

Land Use Committee members attended the Durham Family Camp Out on June 24, 2017 at Wagon Hill Farm. This event was for families which was a target audience of the land use committee. Committee members attended Music on Main Street on August 3, 2017. Comment postcards were available to the public at both events, and 54 postcards with feedback were received.

Friday Updates encouraged people to email their comments throughout the summer. Emailed comments were received from 10 people.

All outreach comments were recorded and shared with Strafford Regional Planning Commission for analysis. The most common topics addressed by these outreach activities were the downtown and economic development (62 comments related to each), with the economic development comments primarily focused on types of businesses that should be prioritized. Other common topics included recreation opportunities (54 comments), green space (36 comments), and housing (11 comments). These comments were analyzed alongside data from the forum and other outreach activities, such as the interviews with elderly residents and the business focus group.

### III. Report on Consultation with Seniors – Mark McPeak



## Report on Consultations With Seniors

Mark McPeak  
Durham, 24 July 2017

### Introduction

The Land-Use Committee of the Durham Planning Committee is currently gathering input for the final chapter of the updated town Master Plan. This report summarizes the results of consultations with 21 seniors living in Durham.

The Committee held an open forum in May, 2017, at which the views of over 100 town residents and other stakeholders were collected related to: how the town should preserve and protect the natural environment; include agriculture and farm land; provide for enjoyment of the land; allocate space for housing, business and commercial development; the nature of Durham's downtown.

At the forum, the author volunteered to help collect information from residents who had not attended the event, including children, excluded groups, and "respected elders", as he had extensive experience with these kinds of consultations across the world. The Committee heartily endorsed this idea, and asked him to seek the views of local seniors.

### Process

I met with 21 seniors between 28 June and 20 July, 2017, meeting with 12 women and 9 men, none of whom had attended the forum. Participants were suggested by members of the Land-Use Committee, and by other Durham residents who I reached out to. The average age of those interviewed was just under 90 years. In terms of their length of residence in Durham, many participants had lived in the town for less than ten years, but others were either long-term residents or had relocated from nearby locations and thus had a sense of how Durham had evolved.

Participation was voluntary, and those who agreed to be interviewed were promised anonymity. Seniors seemed to be very pleased that their views were being sought and heard. Many thanks go to those who gave their time.

Each interview took around one hour; some were in groups. Participants were promised anonymity. Interviews were qualitative, using a semi-structured, "key-informant" approach. Generally speaking, the interviews centered on four questions:

- How has Durham changed for the better?
- How has Durham changed in a bad way?
- What is valuable to you about Durham, that should not be changed?
- What should be changed about Durham?

## Results

Findings from the interviews were very consistent with the results of the May forum.

When reflecting about how Durham has changed for the better, seniors noted the quality, effectiveness, and transparency of town staff. Local businesses were highlighted, particularly noting Bella's, The Works, and Young's restaurants, and Tecce's farmstand. One long-term resident mentioned how the Route 4 bypass had been an improvement. Several informants noted that the new buildings on Main Street were an improvement.<sup>1</sup>

*"Todd Selig and Chief Kurz are both perfect people for the town. The Town staff and Council are decent and good people."*

*"Police Chief Kurz understands the civic / university dynamic. Applause for Chief Kurz!"*

*"Interacting with the town staff is great. They are friendly and things get done easily. Somebody from the town came out to speak with us about voting, helped with absentee ballots."*

*"Overall, the development of the town has been good. Change is good!"*

*"I only go into town now when school is out. When students are in town, it's not worth the effort. Students don't see the drivers, they all have earphones on. Every once in a while you get a wave, they should be taught the rules of the road."*

*"This interview is 15 years too late. The damage has been done to the town, the new buildings – on Main Street and Madbury Road. Poor job architecturally, too high."*

*"The only bad thing about Durham is the parking situation. This is a problem in every college town."*

*"The traffic pattern is a challenge."*

*"A poor job has been done controlling student housing. It's gotten out of hand, the students' behavior. This is not good for the neighborhoods."*

*"The town is not doing a good job with zoning. Enforce the rules or change them."*

*"We've lost some valuable stores, the hardware"*

When reflecting about how Durham has changed in a bad way, some seniors noted the redevelopment of Main Street and Madbury Road in particular, that the town's approach to zoning enforcement was bad. Another negative aspect of Durham was student housing: this was felt to be out of control, and having a negative effect on the neighborhoods.

A sense that Durham's downtown is crowded and difficult to access (in terms of traffic, and parking) was very commonly noted.

Finally, the loss of certain iconic business establishments was felt keenly: in particular, Houghton's Hardware, George the Barber, Zyla's, and Pam Shaw of the (former) Durham Marketplace. The demise of the New England Center was also noted.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: other seniors felt that this change was negative; see below.

In terms of what is particularly valuable about Durham, that should not be changed, almost all seniors mentioned the association with UNH – access to events, the university library, the ability to take classes, the vitality and energy that comes with being a college town.

Seniors feel that Durham is a friendly, welcoming place, with a strong sense of civic engagement and a responsive, effective, and transparent town staff. The yearly church fairs, the Swap Shop, and the wealth of trails and natural resources were noted by many.

*“Todd is the calming force.”*  
*“Friday Updates in Durham is very important, Durham is very transparent.”*  
*“I came from a provincial NH town of about 2500 people. The college community, the vitality energy and youth keep us young.”*  
*“Interacting with the town staff is great. They are friendly and things get done easily. Somebody from the town came out to speak with us about voting, helped with absentee ballots.”*

*“It’s hard to park. Hard to take advantage of UNH, because the parking is difficult. It’s hard to parallel park and use the new meters.”*

*“The ambiance of a college town is great, but it’s hard to get around. Sometimes there are stairs.”*

*“It’s hard to find out what’s going on.”*

*“They could make the Mill Plaza more inviting. The plan to put residences there is a*

Seniors mentioned several things that they would change.

Most stakeholders mentioned parking and the difficulty they have to access the town and the university as being their main concern. Several mentioned that the town should give more attention to architecture, and that the Mill Plaza issue should be settled soon.

There is a sense that off-campus housing is overbuilt, and is a problem. Finally, several seniors would like to see a wider range of adult-oriented restaurants in town.

## Personal Reflections

I have attempted to report the commonalities of what seniors said without interpretation or bias. Looking back after interviewing 21 seniors, however, I would offer several personal reflections:

- Parking and traffic in the downtown, and also physical access to UNH, is a key issue for seniors, an obstacle for their full appreciation of what our town has to offer;
- There is a very strong appreciation for the town staff, Todd Selig and Chief Kurz were noted in particular, and for the high quality of services provided;
- The connection with UNH is a fundamental feature of life in Durham for seniors. This relationship is mostly positive, in terms of access to culture, events, and a certain sense of vitality. On the negative side, the incursion of student housing into Durham’s neighborhoods was lamented, there is some resulting alienation from the downtown, and there is a sense the off-campus housing is overbuilt at present;
- There is a strong sense of nostalgia for Durham’s past: key relationships with local merchants and characters, the small-town feel, which has (to some extent, for some seniors) now vanished. This has led to some sense of estrangement from today’s Durham. This sense of loss of the past, “small-town,” is, in my experience around the world, quite common as the globalized economy has changed society.

#### IV. Durham Business Focus Group Meeting Notes – Molly Donovan, Rachael Mack, and Cynthia Copeland, AICP

Thursday August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 8:00am Durham Police Station conference room

Facilitators - Molly Donovan, Joe Moore, Future Land Use Committee

Attendees - Eight Durham residents and business owners

Recorder at meeting - Rachael Mack, SRPC

Edits and final compilation – Cynthia Copeland, SRPC

- I. Big Picture – “When you think about Durham 10 years out what should stay the same (the community at large)?” “What should change?”
  - a. It’s always been the intent of UNH to create an R&D park; R&D is a logical way to diversify economy and marry the town and UNH.
  - b. Diversifying economic base relies on communication with UNH.
  - c. Idea to expand office/professional use in Durham did not happen; instead we have development of assisted living.
  - d. Town’s character (Oyster River and Wagon Hill) should be preserved, but UNH is in center of town. Encourage center of town to be hub of activity; okay for some things to be pushed to rural areas.
  - e. Conservation exists in spades – over 30%, we need more economic diversity.
  - f. Durham is wonderful. Students can go off campus without safety worries; but where is the sustainability? 99% of sustainability comes from business community and that’s what’s missing - a no-brainer in a university town. Experience has been that development like that gets blocked; town isn’t business friendly. Ten years from now what we’ve already done will fail if we don’t keep up with other business development.
  - g. Student housing was developed during depth of recession; zoning changed in 2007 and development occurred in 2008 and on. Students are huge part of demand in town; we need to continue to develop student oriented development in addition to other types of development.
  - h. Downtown is the hub. Student housing is maxed out (UNH isn’t growing, more online options). Town wants to enhance student housing as it is a big slice of tax base. What else is there for development to help tax base within walking distance of downtown?
  - i. In 10 years is Main Street or Jenkins Court going to be a walking area? What we need to do (like in Europe) is: green spaces on roof; IOLs (interoperability) firms of the world are calling for quality space; need for space downtown to sustain what we want it to be
  - j. Clarification of people’s perspective on student housing: town has enough; what town has done through zoning is to say no more student housing.  
Clarification: more businesses directed toward student population? No.  
More R&D and business directed toward university? Yes.
  - k. Remember time when downtown had 2 grocery stores, 2 hardware stores, clothing store, movie theater; used to walk/bike to downtown. Don’t want to go back in time. Need to provide similar businesses again to make downtown vibrant and provide for residents of community; give people a reason to make Durham a destination, an alternative to Portsmouth.

- l. Feel strongly about maintaining the rural landscape. Not everyone who wants to move here should be provided a house, but need economic drivers to help sustain this.
- m. Not healthy to have just wealthiest able to live here. Need to create a different situation downtown by supporting other businesses we want to have (office space and clothing store for nonstudent adults)
- n. Started a business here 30 years ago and physically couldn't find a space in Durham. In other towns people can buy a house on Main St. and convert it to a business; can't do that in Durham. Could allow conversions on Madbury Rd or sections if we updated zoning.
- o. Clarification on R&D: support for downtown businesses (employees eating lunch downtown); helps strengthen university (faculty spinning off research ideas); strengthen tax base of town (another source of business); more people downtown that aren't students (young professionals in apartments, etc.)
- p. Barriers to offices downtown are: parking, zoning/building regulations. People want to own rather than rent but where do you own in downtown Durham?
- q. Durham isn't affordable unless you're upper- middle-white, commercial and particularly residential. A vocal minority in town expresses their view that affordable is not going to happen in town - with the zoning that is in place. How to have an open discussion for future of town?
- r. Provide an accepted, fact-based realistic approach to study affordability. Needs to be change for the better. Groups in town, not just business, working on positive change.
- s. Currently is tumultuous in town; before it was - *keep it quaint*, then it was - *make Durham a destination*, then it was - *cater to student development*. The town – instead of supporting businesses - reduced bed square footage and big money came in for student development. Town needs to be more business friendly, planning not reactionary.
- t. Zoning keeps changing over the years as a reaction to proposals. Who wants to invest in the community if rules are always changing? A tenet of smart growth is to make zoning predictable and fair – not the case in Durham.
- u. Don't necessarily agree on need for more business downtown for residents; great idea but not realistic. Agree with diversification of local economy, but not sure about R&D. Don't see need for more conservation. This is a time to think about other economic development. Leaders are spending new tax revenue; revenue should go to tax relief
- v. Frustration from business community: student housing used to be only way for developer to get bank to finance.
- w. Noticed posters around town (Future Land Use) with comments on need for green space. Who's paying for that? People need to recognize they're paying for that completely with development. They need to understand what has to happen for developer to afford to provide green space in a project.
- x. Clarification on public comments on posters: green space comments are prevalent; people want commons, meeting and community spaces; they understand value in businesses like Young's for meeting space as well.
- y. Vibrant communities don't live in parks. It's the small plazas, tight roads, narrow river walks that make it vibrant. There's been talk of creating a "walkway" through Durham for a while, but

hasn't happened. Want to get people downtown? Create spaces and businesses that draw people there. People connect at those places. Green space parks aren't the solution.

- z. Never seen anyone actually sit in the park next to Pauly's Pockets; it shouldn't have been required of the business owner. Durham has Wagon Hill, Jackson Landing – parks where people can go and bring kids/family/elderly; no need for green space for the sake of green space downtown.

II. Map Based Discussion: What are constraints for business? Opportunities?

- a. Explanation of exercise on map to mark off locations with preference for no development and indicate locations for business (small retail, hotels, restaurants, R&D, office space, entertainment/recreation).
- b. Gateway: not a fan of concept as the gateway gets spread out, just because it's a gateway – overblown.
- c. Map is irrelevant – who's going to know about this? How does it get communicated to residents? Example of Hannaford and Rite Aid in Mill Plaza – Rite Aid wanted drive-thru and people want a bigger Hannaford (more selection of items). Town rejected Rite Aid drive-thru which would have allowed them to move location, and Hannaford would have been able to take over Rite Aid and expand.
- d. Lee traffic circle! Students at Lodges, Cottages, Bryant property go to Lee because they can't park in downtown Durham, and there are more options (Walgreens, Market Basket, and restaurant).
- e. If you have infrastructure in an area – use it. Out on Main St by Cottages, Lodges, Bryant property there's water and sewer, but we can't put commercial development out there. This makes no sense; two people said they had enough and managed to stop it.
- f. There was a citizens' initiative by 45 people to limit development to 3 stories.
- g. Some downtown buildings look bad design-wise. If we're going to have design standards we should have sensible ones (agreement among group). Some look nice from the outside but inside is terrible.
- h. How will businesses survive with no real parking?
- i. There is a market for office space if you create the right situation and conditions; there are serious leases being signed.
- j. Need affordable housing somewhere; need to change subdivision regulations in town to allow for it – the regulations are ridiculous. This all relates to social equity and diversity, economic reasons. Need housing that people who work in town at University, Oyster River School, etc. can afford to live in.
- k. Lot sizes – can't build townhouses in town, and those are an affordable housing type.
- l. Clarification: where do employees come from? students
- m. Clarification: Consider UNH staff as part of market base? Hayden Sports is fan shop for UNH, so 95% is students and parents. Hard to understand anti-University perspective from town residents.
- n. Observation: seems like UNH staff are a huge part of downtown economic business.

- o. If there were more adults in downtown Durham the students may not act so deplorably. We need to save the downtown or else it'll be student-driven mob-mentality.
- p. Clarification: diversify economy, but also diversity of who is using downtown? Yes.
- q. One thing that should change is we need to fuel parks and recreation opportunities – help build community character and buy-in.
- r. Constraints put in area of West Main St are too much; we've invested millions in water and sewer out there and then made it so you can't do anything.

III. Other comments

- a. Hasn't been shown to be a big benefit to having more single family homes; almost better to have empty land. We need more businesses and diversity and zoning is restricting this.
- b. We need patience; when zoning changes, can't expect immediate results.
- c. Just a couple people shut-down business park development; a few voices can have major influence.
- d. Town leadership: Needs to provide consistent interpretation of policies over time and across various boards and departments.