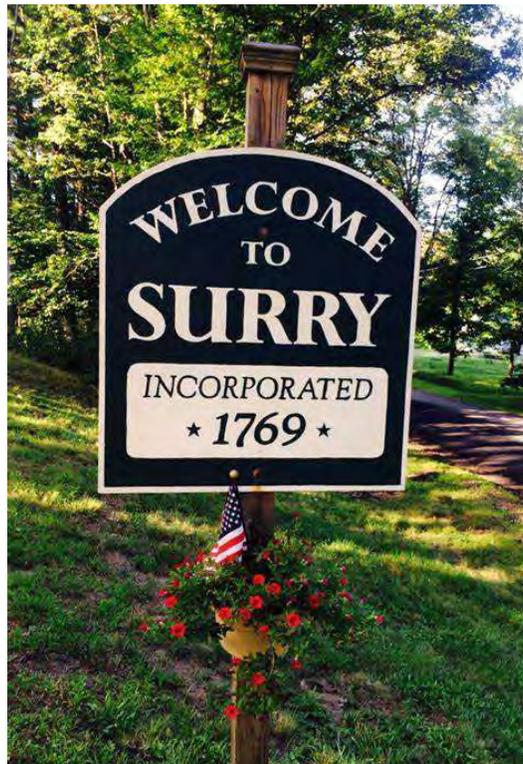




TOWN OF SURRY MASTER PLAN



June 25, 2025

MASTER PLAN UPDATE 2025

The following two sections of the Surry Master Plan were developed by the Surry Master Plan Steering Committee, with assistance from the Southwest Region Planning Commission. The Surry Planning Board would like to thank the following Surry residents and Planning Board members for their contributions to the development of this section, as well as the staff of the Southwest Region Planning Commission:

Planning Board

Laura Barrett

Matt Goodwin

Eva Morel, Chair

Ron Profaizer, Ex Officio

Master Plan Steering Committee

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Carol Lothrop

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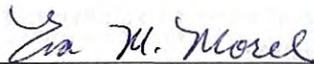
Michele Wright

In addition to the named individuals above, the Planning Board and Steering Committee are also grateful for the participation of numerous residents who responded to the master plan survey, participated in public events, and attended Steering Committee meetings.

CERTIFICATION (Pursuant to RSA 675:6 (III))

The Vision section and the Land Use Plan for the Town of Surry Master Plan were adopted by unanimous vote of the Planning Board on June 25, 2025 following a duly noticed public hearing on June 25, 2025. These sections shall take effect upon the filing of a copy of this certificate with the Surry Town Clerk.

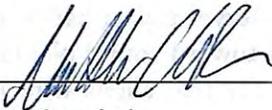
Attest: Surry Planning Board
Surry, New Hampshire



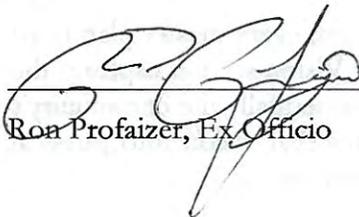
Eva Morel, Chair



Laura Barrett



Matt Goodwin



Ron Profaizer, Ex Officio

Introduction: A Primer for Master Planning

What is a Master Plan?

A master plan is a long-term planning document that outlines a community's vision for its future growth and development. It serves as a blueprint or roadmap for how the town or city should evolve, describing how, where, and at what pace the community wants to develop. The master plan addresses aspects like land use, housing, transportation, economic development, natural resources, and more – essentially capturing the community's goals for its character and quality of life. Importantly, a master plan is not a law or ordinance itself; instead, it provides guidance to local officials when making decisions on budgets, zoning, capital improvements, and development rules. In simple terms, the master plan offers a vision of what could happen in the community and steps to achieve positive outcomes, rather than setting enforceable rules on what can or cannot happen.

Legal Basis and Purpose

New Hampshire state law gives planning boards the authority – and responsibility – to create a master plan. Under RSA 674:1, every municipal planning board is charged with preparing and updating a master plan “to guide the development of the municipality. The purpose of a master plan, as described in RSA 674:2, is to lay out “the best and most appropriate future development” of the town as clearly and practically as possible, to help the board design ordinances that preserve and enhance the community's unique quality of life, and to guide all the board's other duties toward sound planning principles. In other words, the master plan is meant to steer growth in a way that aligns with the community's values and protects resources through smart planning.

RSA 674:2 also specifies what a master plan should include. At a minimum, every master plan must have two required sections: a Vision section and a Land Use section. The Vision section captures the broad wishes and goals of residents for the future of their community – essentially the community's long-term vision and guiding principles. The Land Use section translates that vision into physical terms by describing existing conditions and the desired future land use patterns.

Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances

One of the most important roles of a master plan is to serve as the foundation for local zoning ordinances and land use regulations. In New Hampshire, zoning ordinances (the local laws that govern how land can be used in different areas) must be based on an adopted master plan. In fact, RSA 674:18 explicitly requires that a community have a master plan (with the required vision and land use sections) before it can adopt a zoning ordinance. This means the master plan comes first, setting the policy groundwork, and the zoning ordinance follows, acting as a tool to implement the plan's vision. It's important to note that the master plan itself is not a regulatory document – you can't enforce the vision or recommendations in the plan directly. However, it gives legal standing to the implementation of ordinances and policies that a town adopts.

Who Develops the Master Plan?

In New Hampshire, the planning board is the local body responsible for most land-use planning activities, including the master plan. The planning board may delegate development of the plan to a master plan steering committee, as was the case with this update to the Town of Surry Master Plan. The planning board itself, however, must adopt the plan through a vote of its members and after holding a duly noticed public hearing. Master plans are best developed in close consultation with the wider community, through outreach methods such as surveys and community forums. The measures taken in updating this plan are described in Chapter 1.

Supporting Broader Community Goals

A master plan can be more than just a land use document; it is a comprehensive strategy for the community's well-being. By setting forth a shared vision, the master plan supports broader municipal goals in several ways. It can facilitate coordination across municipal committees, guide decisions about capital improvements, help provide the basis for grant applications, and more.

History of Master Planning in Surry

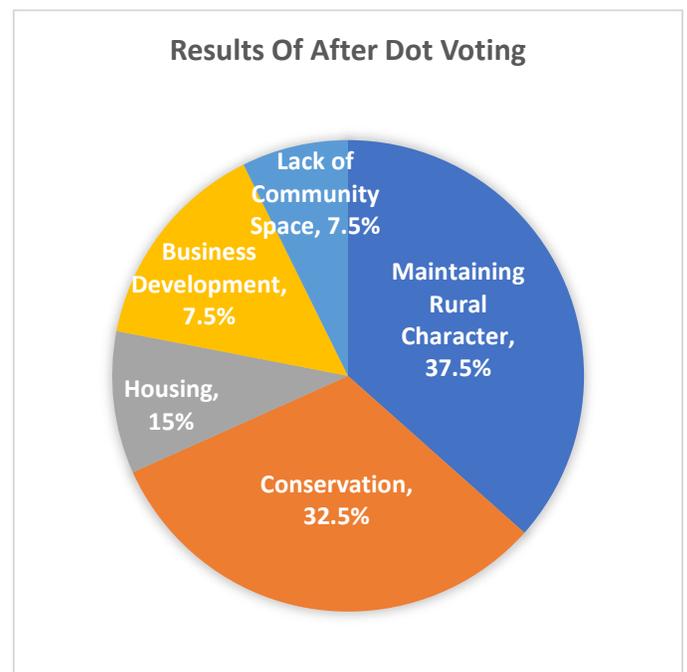
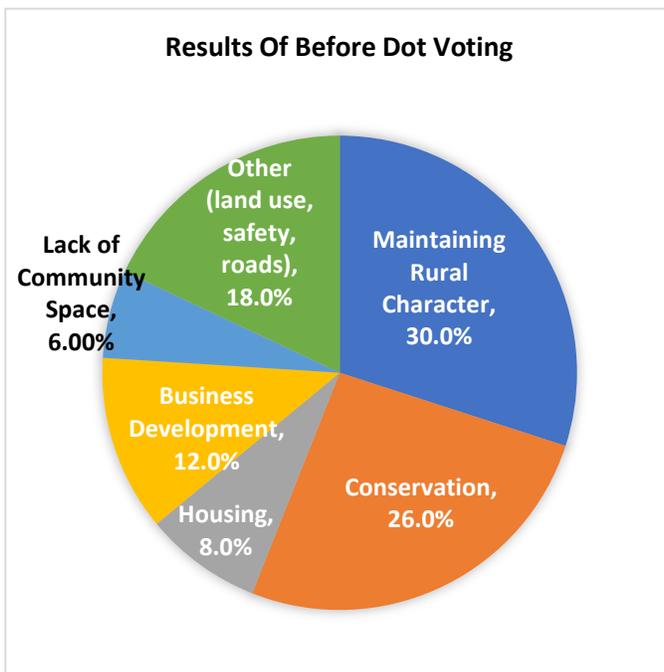
The Town of Surry first adopted a master plan in 1983. That plan included a range of topic-specific studies, including those on population trends, community facilities, and education, traffic and transportation, the economic environment, and existing land use. In addition, it included chapters on each of these topics, along with recommendations regarding implementation. In 2001, an update was undertaken that focused specifically on land use issues. In this most recent update to the plan, the revised document aims to right-size and structure the document so that it highlights action items that the town can take based on current trends and feedback received from community members.

Chapter 1 – Vision Statement

One of the two sections of a master plan required by state statute, the vision section contains “a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan...” *RSA 674:2: II (a)*. In order to capture this vision, the Surry Planning Board distributed a questionnaire to all households in Town and held a community forum at the Town Hall on Saturday, November 16, 2024.

Community Forum

At the forum participants were asked to use dots to indicate which of five topics were most important to them; those topics being maintaining rural character, conservation, housing, business development, and the lack of community meeting or gathering space. The program that followed consisted of the participants separating into two breakout groups with a facilitator, during which they discussed in detail the five topics. At the end of the forum, participants were asked to repeat the dot voting exercise, in order to see if any opinions had changed as a result of the forum. The charts below illustrate the results of the before and after dot voting.



As the charts illustrate, while there was some slight shifting in some of the topics, rural character and conservation remained the top two issues for the participants. Interesting to note is business development declined in importance and concerns about housing increased.

Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire was mailed to 366 households, and 153 persons responded, which is a response of 42%. The Steering Committee is encouraged by this number, since a 10% response is considered valid. The responses largely mirror the opinions expressed by the participants in the Community Forum, specifically:

- Nature and privacy are important to survey respondents, but so is a strong sense of community. When survey respondents were asked to prioritize ten different community characteristics, they ranked “large natural areas and habitat for wildlife” as first, with an average score of 8.04 out of 10. “Neighbors knowing one another and a strong sense of community” ranked a close second (7.35). “Privacy and ample space in between homes” scored third (7.07).
- Opportunities for outdoor recreation are seen as one of Surry’s biggest strengths, while places to gather and socialize are perceived as one of its most significant weaknesses. About 79% of respondents indicated that “opportunities for outdoor recreation” were either a major strength or somewhat a strength in Surry, while only 10% thought they were a major weakness or somewhat a weakness. The remaining 10% of respondents indicated that outdoor recreation was neither a strength nor a weakness. On the topic of places for residents to gather and socialize, meanwhile, 45% of respondents indicated the issue represented a weakness while 11% indicated that it represented a strength. Just under 44% thought it was neither a strength nor a weakness.
- Respondent opinion on other issues was more evenly divided on whether they represent community strengths or weaknesses. Some variation did exist from topic to topic. For example, 45% of respondents thought that “town government communication and transparency” was a strength in Surry, while only 28% thought it was a weakness. In contrast, 32% of respondents thought that “resident involvement in the community” was a strength, while 40% thought it was a weakness. On some issues, a plurality of respondents was neutral on whether the topic represented a strength or weakness. For example, 43% indicated that “existing housing types that meet the needs of the community” was neither a strength nor a weakness, while 32% thought it was a strength and 25% thought it was a weakness.
- A majority of respondents supported some new development in Surry, outside of the village center. Just over 62% of respondents indicated they support “some small business development along NH 12,” while 56% supported “some small business development along NH 12A” and 53% “some residential development in other areas of town, outside of the village and in locations that can be serviced by town vehicles (such as plows and fire trucks).” Only 39% of respondents said they would support “modest amount of additional development in the village center, especially if it were generally similar to the existing neighborhood.” About 22% of respondents opposed all new development.
- Of eleven housing types presented to respondents in unlabeled photographs, four were identified by a majority of respondents as examples that “would fit well within Surry.” They included: a structure built in the style of a farmhouse that could support multi-generational living (67% of respondents in support); a 1,500 SF single family home built in a traditional architectural style and on a modestly sized lot (66%); a detached accessory dwelling unit (66%); a duplex with a gambrel roof and cottage-like appearance (63%).

Both the results of the survey and the Community Forum informed the vision for Surry going forward, with an expectation that this Vision will be relevant for the next 10 years. The Vision for Surry is articulated through four key themes that were identified from the community forum and the questionnaire; they are as follows:

Theme 1. Rural Character/Conservation: Surry’s cherished rural character will be preserved through a thoughtful balance of conservation with responsible development, ensuring that the valuable land assets are utilized in a way that maintains the town’s unique rural feel.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Maintaining Surry’s rural residential character requires thoughtful planning that accommodates development while protecting the elements that comprise the “look and feel” of Surry.
2. Conservation efforts will consider how to protect Surry’s most sensitive, valuable natural resources from future development.

Theme 2. Housing: A community where housing is available and affordable for all generations, making Surry a welcoming and inclusive place for everyone.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Housing should be safe, accessible for all physical abilities, and within reach of all income levels.
2. Ensure that there is a sufficient supply of diverse housing options to meet the varying needs of residents at all stages of their lives.

Theme 3. The Local Economy: Support and nurture small businesses that align with Surry’s rural character.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Economic growth will be balanced against the impacts of large-scale businesses that could alter Surry’s rural residential character.
2. To the extent feasible, the town will support businesses in adopting new technologies and innovative practices in order to stay competitive.



Theme 4. Social Engagement: Revitalize social connections within town by creating new opportunities for residents to connect and collaborate, thereby fostering community engagement and participation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Community events should be accessible to all regardless of age, language, or abilities.
2. Town officials will continue to explore options for informing the residents about all Town-related plans, decisions, opportunities for involvement, etc.

Chapter 2 – Land Use Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Land Use section of the master plan is the one in which the vision statements are translated into physical concepts. It includes an analysis of certain selected topics in the plan as well as the existing land uses in town. These are all translated into a Future Land Use Plan that describes, in text and/or maps the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land uses in town.

A land use analysis is an important element of community planning. It is also one of two sections of a master plan that is required by state statute for a planning board to develop and maintain, pursuant to RSA 674:2: "...The master plan shall include, at a minimum, ...:

“(b) A land use section upon which all the following sections shall be based. This section shall translate the vision statements into physical terms. Based on a study of population, economic activity, and natural, historic, and cultural resources, it shall show existing conditions and the proposed location, extent, and intensity of future land use.”

Once raw land is converted to a particular use, it is usually committed to that use for a very long time, if not indefinitely. It is extremely difficult to change a pattern of development once it takes place. Therefore, decisions about future land use should be made carefully, with a studied eye to the potential ramifications of those uses. A well-conceived land use plan allows for new growth and development while it protects and preserves the integrity of neighborhoods, businesses, transportation routes, and the environment.

This chapter describes the pattern of existing land uses in Surry and analyzes the changes that have taken place in the land use pattern since 2001, the date of the last land use analysis for Surry. This information provides the baseline necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of future development and the availability of suitable land for such development.

The development of a land use plan forms the basis of land use regulations, which are implemented through zoning ordinances and subdivision and site plan review regulations. The land use plan describes the goals and objectives envisioned by the town; the regulations are the means to put those goals into place. For instance, if in the process of describing present land use patterns in Surry, recommendations are made to encourage a particular land use activity in a particular area, the zoning ordinance should be amended to permit that kind of activity in that location - if it does not already do so. Or, by the same token, the land use plan might recommend that the zoning ordinance be made more restrictive in particular areas, for the purpose of protecting and preserving certain natural features in town.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Master planning fosters agreement on community goals, enhances understanding of local conditions, and lays a solid foundation for future policies and regulations. However, its true value lies in outlining a clear path to action. This path is essential for making tangible improvements.

Acknowledging that planning proves its worth through implementation, this chapter emphasizes the planning strategies adopted by the Planning Board by placing them front and center of this Plan.

The strategies are structured to enable ongoing and regular review of the plan to evaluate progress on its implementation. A recommended approach is for the Planning Board to review the strategies on an annual basis, which allows the Board to: assess progress made to date; revisit priorities, if necessary; and focus on the strategies not yet accomplished. The strategies are presented in a matrix below that is, in effect, the Implementation Plan for the Future Land Use Plan of Surry. It presents the Goals and the Objectives related to those Goals and the entities deemed to be responsible or participating in the implementation. Further elaboration of the Implementation Plan may be necessary in the future in order to put it into action. For example, identifying specific milestones and timeframes for each objective would help track progress. These goals and objectives reflect the four key themes that were identified from the community forum and the questionnaire. Note that the Objectives in the matrix may be a shorter version of the full text, which can be found in the Future Land Use Plan following.

Implementation Plan for the Future Land Use of Surry

Theme #1 Goal: Safeguard and maintain the town’s rural character while ensuring that the protection of treasured land assets is balanced with responsible development.	
Objectives	Responsible/Participating Party
#1. Ensure that all subdivisions retain the existing natural vegetation and other natural resources existent on the property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning Board ▪ Conservation Commission
#2. Consider the adoption of additional overlay districts for the protection of significant and/or sensitive natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning Board ▪ Conservation Commission
#3. Collaborate with relevant organizations to safeguard water quality and the riparian and aquatic habitats of the Ashuelot River Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning Board ▪ Conservation Commission ▪ Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee
#4. Revisit the steep slopes ordinance, considering whether to reduce the gradient at which the ordinance applies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning Board ▪ Conservation Commission
#5. Hold a joint meeting of the Conservation Commission and Planning Board to review the updated Natural Resources Inventory, once completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning Board ▪ Conservation Commission
Theme #2 Goal: Ensure that Surry’s land use regulations offer a variety of housing options.	
Objectives	Responsible/ Participating Party
#1. Consider allowing by special exception two ADU’s per single-family home.	Planning Board
#2. Explore creative housing solutions, such as cottage courts, cluster subdivisions, or other innovative land use planning techniques.	Planning Board

#3. Consider allowing the conversion of large single-family homes into two- or three-family dwellings by right in all districts.	Planning Board
#4. Study how the characteristics and condition of Surry's road network may warrant revisions to the zoning ordinance.	Planning board
Theme #3 Goal: Accommodate new commercial and light industrial growth at a scale consistent with the rural nature of Surry and in harmony with the natural environment.	
Objectives	Responsible/ Participating Party
#1. Consider reducing the minimum lot size in the Commercial/Industrial District	Planning Board
#2. Develop an Energy chapter for the Master Plan.	Planning Board
Theme #4 Goal: Strengthen opportunities for community engagement.	
Objectives	Responsible/ Participating Party
#1. Support the Select Board's efforts to maintain the email notification system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Select Board ▪ Planning Board
#2. As much as is feasible, make all Town official meetings accessible remotely to make it easier for residents to participate.	Town boards
#3. Support efforts to make the Town Hall more useable and therefore available for public/community functions.	Select Board

LAND USE CATEGORIES

The first step in the land use analysis is to determine how to classify the various structures, uses and land areas that exist within the town. In short, a land use classification system is used so that each use can be described in concise and easily understandable terms. The second step is to develop an existing land use map that shows all of the parcels in town by the designated use category.

In general, land is classified according to its physical characteristics and the present use occurring on it. The two major divisions in a land use classification system are developed and undeveloped uses. Each of these divisions can be further subdivided into specific categories. Following is a listing and description of the present land uses found in Surry:

- **RESIDENTIAL**: Properties on which dwelling units are found. These can include standard (site-built) single family homes, duplexes, multi-family dwellings, factory-built modular homes, mobile homes (now classified as "manufactured housing"), and seasonal cottages.
- **RESIDENTIAL WITH A HOME OCCUPATION OR HOME-BASED BUSINESS**: Properties on which dwellings also serve as a site for the carrying out of an occupation as an accessory use on the property; this occupation may be of a commercial or

industrial nature. Note that this does not include farming, which is typically considered to be a primary use.

- **COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL**: All lands and structures that supply goods and/or services to the general public as a principal use of the property, or engage in manufacturing, processing, packaging, storage, and/or warehousing.
- **PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC**: This category relates to establishments and facilities supported by and/or used exclusively by the public or non-profit organizations; this includes town buildings & land, libraries, schools, cemeteries, churches, and post offices.
- **AGRICULTURAL**: Lands that are used for the growing of crops or husbandry of livestock, equines, aquaculture, poultry, bees, or domesticated fur-bearing animals.

LAND USE DETERMINANTS

Several factors, known as land use determinants, act singularly or in combination to influence growth and development in a town. The major physical and topographic features, such as the existence of flat or gently- sloping land, steep slopes, rivers, wooded and open spaces, etc. are the primary factors that influence the initial as well as the subsequent development of land. Secondary factors usually consist of man-made features such as roads, railroads, utilities and major commercial, industrial or recreational facilities, which attract and/or stimulate new or expanded development. The following land use determinants have played an important role in the development of Surry:

- **Topography**

Topography has, in the past more so than today, affected where roads would be sited and houses built. It is no coincidence that, in looking at existing land use and topographical maps, that the areas of steep slopes have either very little or no development. In Surry, the predominant topographical feature is Surry Mountain, (elevation 1400 feet), which runs nearly the entire eastern boundary with Gilsum.

There are hills and ridgelines as you approach the edges of Surry, leaving only the center of town just to the east of Route 12A and west of Surry Mountain with some flat areas (500-700 feet).

- **Transportation Systems**

Surry has only one major transportation route, and that is Route 12A, a state highway that runs from Keene north through Surry to Alstead. Route 12, a major transportation corridor for the region, runs for less than a mile through the southwest corner of town connecting Keene to Westmoreland; this highway has no effect on the other roads in Surry.

- **Rivers**

The Ashuelot River runs nearly the entire length of Surry, entering from the east-northeast on the border with Gilsum. The river valley is one of the predominant topographic characteristics of the town, rising westward to the divide between the Ashuelot and Connecticut Rivers and eastward to Surry Mountain. The river forms the huge Surry Mountain Reservoir by a dam at the southern end of town. Construction of this dam began in 1938 and was completed in 1940.

- **Soils**

Soil conditions also play an important part in the development process. Good soils encourage development and can support a wide variety of land use activities. By contrast, poor or marginal soils have limited development potential because of construction constraints caused by such factors as shallow depth to bedrock, ledge, etc. State regulations that govern the siting and construction of septic systems are based in large part on soil types, thereby soils are probably more of a development constraint today than they were in the past, when the science was not as advanced. Surry has only a few areas of wetlands that appear on a soils map.

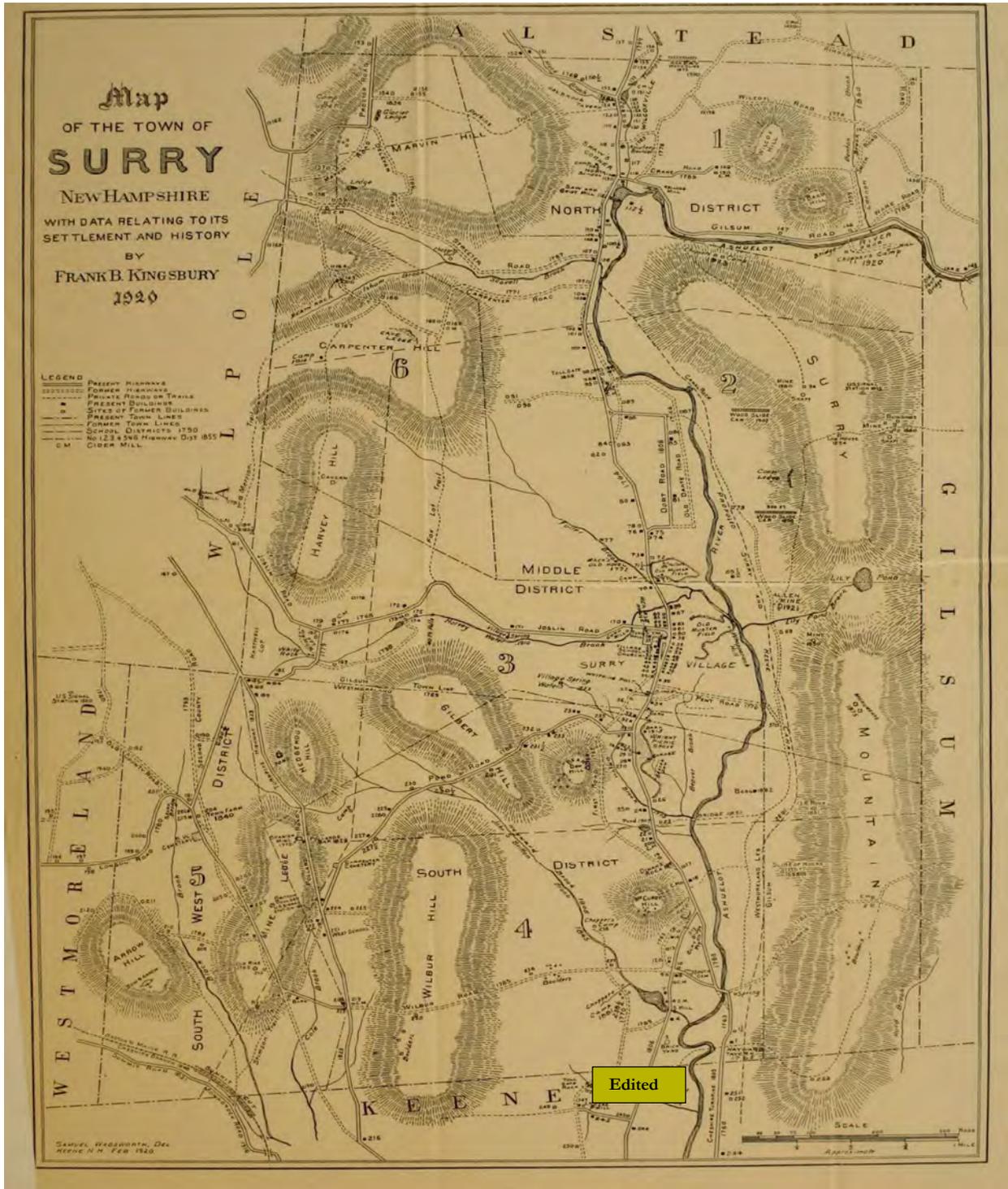
THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Surry's settlement pattern is reflective of many small New Hampshire communities – that is, agricultural in nature, and/or those with the potential for river-powered energy also supported various mills and factories. The floodplain soils along the Ashuelot River played a significant role in the early farming enterprises of Surry.

A village was established in the approximate geographic center of Town within the very early years of the town being chartered in 1769. The Village was the site of the types of mixed commercial, public, and residential uses typical of New England villages, including mills, shops, taverns, and hotels. These uses were not limited to the Village; outside of the Village there were other settlements – again, typical of that era when transportation was primarily by foot or horseback.

The cemeteries on Farm Road, Pond Road, and East Surry Road point to the presence of settlements far removed from the Village center (where Surry Village Cemetery is located). This pattern is illustrated on the historic map below.

Map #1: 1920 Map of Surry



THE PRESENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

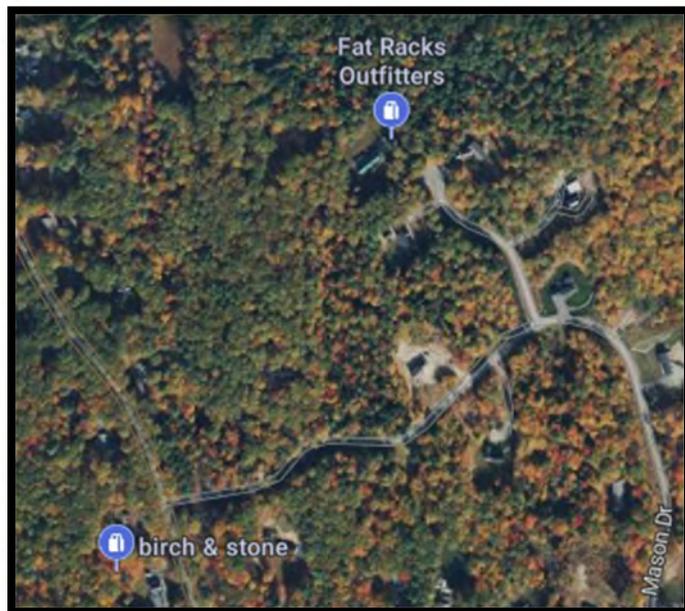
The various land uses in Surry are presented on the Existing Land Use Map following, and described as follows:

- **Residential Development**

Residential development in Surry consists overwhelmingly of single-family homes. Occupancy is predominantly year-round; seasonal or recreational homes play a very small role in the total housing stock. The development pattern is fairly evenly dispersed around town, with housing located on all town- and state-maintained roads.

- **Commercial/Industrial Development**

Commercial and industrial uses in Surry are limited, although diverse. This is typical for a town like Surry, since it is predominantly rural, with no central district, nor does it have a town water and/or sewer system. There are several principal business uses in town (see the links below with details). In addition, there are a number of cottage industries – i.e., businesses that operate from a homesite but are clearly secondary and incidental to the residential use of the property. These are dispersed around the town and the uses vary, although automotive repair and service businesses are fairly prevalent. There are certainly other businesses being carried on in homes today that are not obvious, particularly since the pandemic of 2020 that sent many workers home to work remotely; however, thanks to computers, modems and telephone lines, these occupations are invisible to the neighborhood.

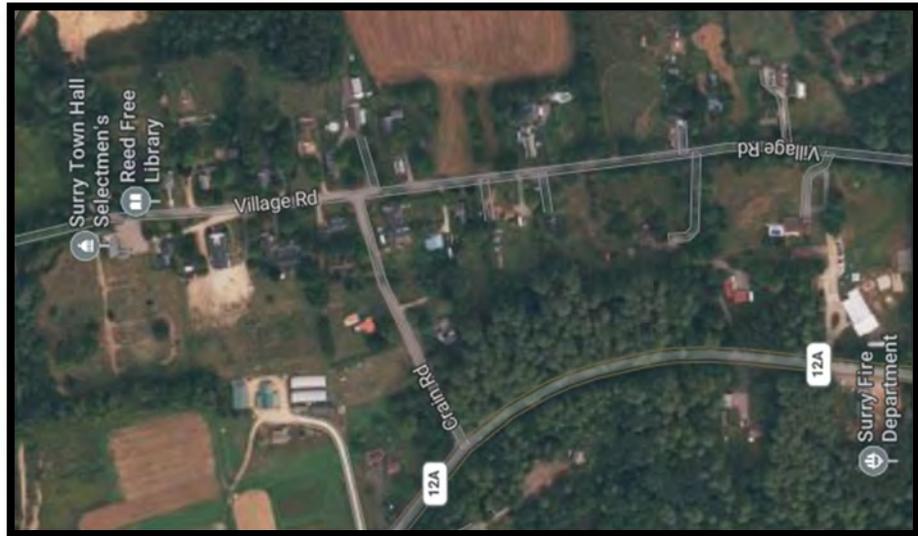


- **Public/Semi-Public**

Public and semi-public uses in Surry include all town-owned land; the Town Hall, fire station, highway garage, library, four cemeteries and a church.

- **Recreational**

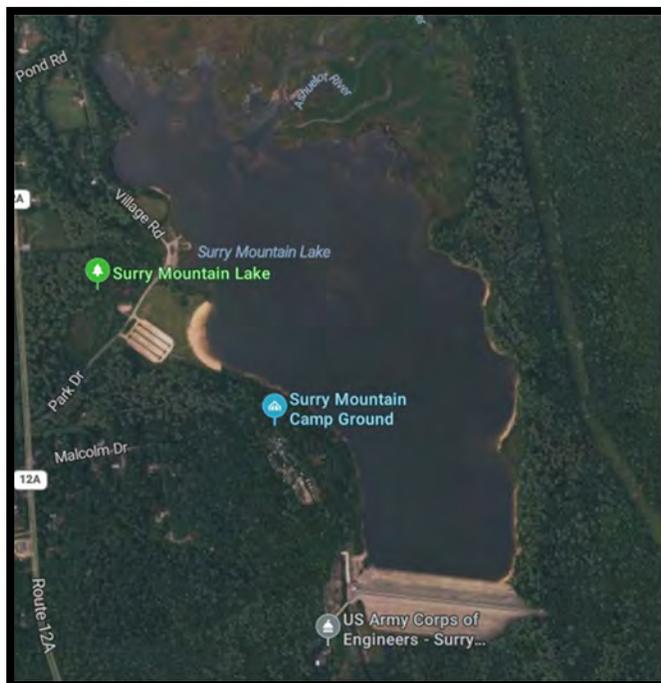
Land available for recreational use in Surry is limited in scope, but certainly not in area: the vast acreage (1,682 acres of water and land) taken up by the Surry Mountain Flood Control Project provides opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing, and hiking.



Camping accommodations are available at the privately-owned Surry Mountain Campground, located on adjacent land. There are several small tracts of conservation land owned by the town that are available for outdoor recreation. These parcels are listed, along with other town-owned properties, under the “Schedule of Town Property” in the Annual Report.

- **Agricultural**

Agriculture plays a very small role in Surry's land use pattern today. There are only four principal farming operations in town. In addition, there are properties where some type of agriculture is being conducted, but it is not the principal income source for the residents.



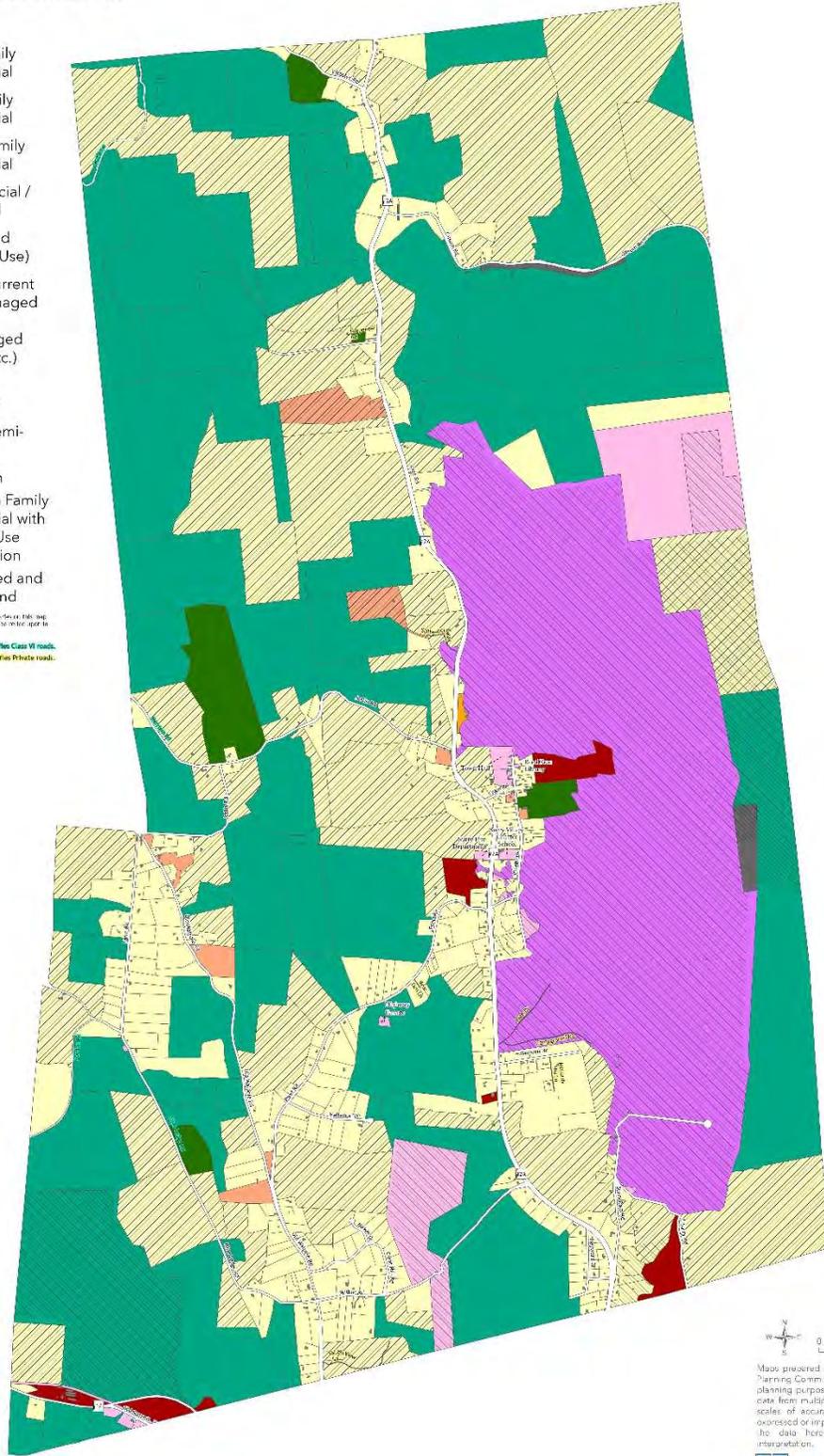
Map #2: Existing Land Use 2024

Current Land Use

Town of Surry, New Hampshire

- One Family Residential
- Two Family Residential
- Three Family Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Farm Land (Current Use)
- Other Current Use (Managed and Unmanaged Forest, etc.)
- Exempt (Federal)
- Public/Semi-Public
- Unknown
- One/Two Family Residential with Current Use Designation
- Conserved and Public Land

Conserved and public lands are shown in grey. Private roads are shown in white. Green highlighted text signifies Class VI roads. Yellow highlighted text signifies Private roads.



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EXISTING LAND USE

This section describes the various land use activities existent in Surry today. The Town of Surry has a total land area of 15.7 square miles. The following tables and graphs present the estimated acreage devoted to each of the above-described land uses in Surry; in addition, the table also presents the percentage each category represents of land that is actively used, and of total land area.

Note that this table does not include recreation as a category, given that the largest recreational area in town is the federally exempt land of the Surry Mountain Reservoir; in fact, most of the exempt land in town are accessible for recreation.

Table #1: Surry Existing Land Use by Acreage 2024			
Land Use Category	Acres	% of Developed Land	% of Total Land Area
Residential:			
One-Family	3,770	92%	38%
Two-Family	89	2%	1%
Three-Family	3	0%	0%
Commercial/Industrial	84	2%	1%
Farmland	146	4%	1%
Exempt:			
Federal	1,682		16%
State	4		0%
Municipal	294		3%
Undeveloped/Current Use	4,064		40%
Total Acreage	10,168		
<i>Source: Town of Surry Assessing Database</i>			

The numbers above illustrate that Surry remains largely undeveloped; this is the highest land use category at 40% of the total land area. Even though residential uses appear to account for 39% of the total land area, it must be noted that much of this is not being “actively used;” many homes sit on large parcels and only a small amount of the land area is actually developed.

Note also that this analysis does not compare the acres devoted to various land uses to the last analysis done in 2001, as different techniques were used, and it is not possible to compare with a good sense of accuracy. Based on data from the U.S. Census, it appears that Surry gained 66 homes since the 2000 Census. Thus, the amount of land devoted to residential has certainly increased; it is likely, however, that the exempt lands have not changed substantially, with the possible exception of lands that have gone into protective easements since 2000.

LIMITATIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

In land use and planning contexts, “development” generally refers to any significant alteration or improvement of land or property for a particular use. This often involves construction activities (such as erecting buildings, roads, or utilities) as well as changes in land configuration (like grading, subdivision, or landscaping). Development is intended to transform the natural or existing state of a piece of land into a state that supports housing, commerce, industry, recreation, or other human needs.

In Surry limitations to development consist of several natural resource constraints, and the existence of substantial acreage that is protected from development. These are illustrated on Map #3 following; Table #2 presents the land area by acre that is made up of these particular characteristics. These constraints impact potential development in different ways; in some cases (e.g. steep slope), making development not impossible, but more challenging, and in other cases ruling out development altogether (e.g. building in a wetland).

Topography

In Surry, the predominant topographical feature is Surry Mountain, (elevation 1400 feet), which runs nearly the entire eastern boundary with Gilsum. There are hills and ridgelines as you approach the edges of Surry, leaving virtually only the center of town just to the east of Route 12A and west of Surry Mountain with some flat areas (500-700 feet). Approximately 66% of Surry's total area is composed of steep slopes, which can make development at best difficult and expensive. The steep slopes depicted on the Development Constraints Map are those that are over 20%, since it is typically at this grade that construction becomes very difficult, and soil erosion and sedimentation control are also problematic.

Wetlands

There are various methods for identifying the location and characteristics of wetlands. A commonly used reference for mapping wetlands for high-level planning purposes is the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. According to the NWI, most of the wetlands in Surry are located north of Surry Mountain Lake, along the Ashuelot River. While these wetlands are the largest in area, there are multiple pockets of wetlands dispersed all around Town, predominantly on the west. The east side, with the presence of Surry Mountain, has only a few pockets of wetlands, as reflected in the NWI. It is possible that site-specific investigation by certified wetland scientist, as is typical during subdivision applications or site plan review, would reveal the presence of additional wetlands. The ongoing update to the Town's Natural Resources Inventory may reveal additional information about the location and characteristics of local wetlands.

Water Resources

When considering the development potential for land it is important to note the Shoreland Protection Act. This legislation was adopted by the NH Legislature in order to protect the shorelands of the state from inappropriate development. In Surry, the Ashuelot River, including its impoundment at Surry Mountain Lake, is the only surface water that is covered by the Act. The law sets standards for land uses, lot sizes, septic systems, use of common waterfront lots, and expansion of non-conforming uses within this area. This does not mean that the affected area along the river is not at all developable, as are some of the land types examined in the table above, only that development can only be conducted in concert with the protective measures adopted by the state.

Water resources include aquifers, which are shown on the Developments Constraints Map running north to south through Town, along the Ashuelot River and around Surry Mountain Lake. The presence of an aquifer does not prevent development but does limit the kinds of development that can/should take place over an aquifer; since its very nature is highly permeable sand and gravel, if pollutants are spilled, they can easily seep into the water supply. There is residential development over this aquifer from the Village south to Malcolm Drive, but residential development is typically not a concern for aquifers, relative to commercial or industrial development. However, lawn-related herbicides and pesticides can be a source of groundwater pollution.

Soils

The largest percentage of development constraints by far are soils that have a shallow depth to bedrock. This is not surprising, given the amount of steep slope soils in Surry. While these soils do not preclude development, they can require special construction techniques and attention to drainage.

Conservation Lands

Public or private lands that are permanently protected through conservation easements or other methods are by default a limitation to development, although not in the same way that natural features can limit development. Nevertheless, these lands are not taken into consideration when an analysis is conducted to evaluate the potential for future development. In Surry, there are five major areas of conserved lands, shown on Map #2 above, amounting to more than 2,500 acres of land that are not available for development. (Surry Mountain - 1,849 acres; Indian Arrowhead Forest Preserve – 282 acres; Chase-Graf Town Forest – 106 acres; French-Harris Memorial Forest – 190 acres; Surry Mountain Preserve (portion of 1200 acres shared with Gilsum.) It is worth noting that conserved and/or public lands have varying levels of protection based on individual arrangements.

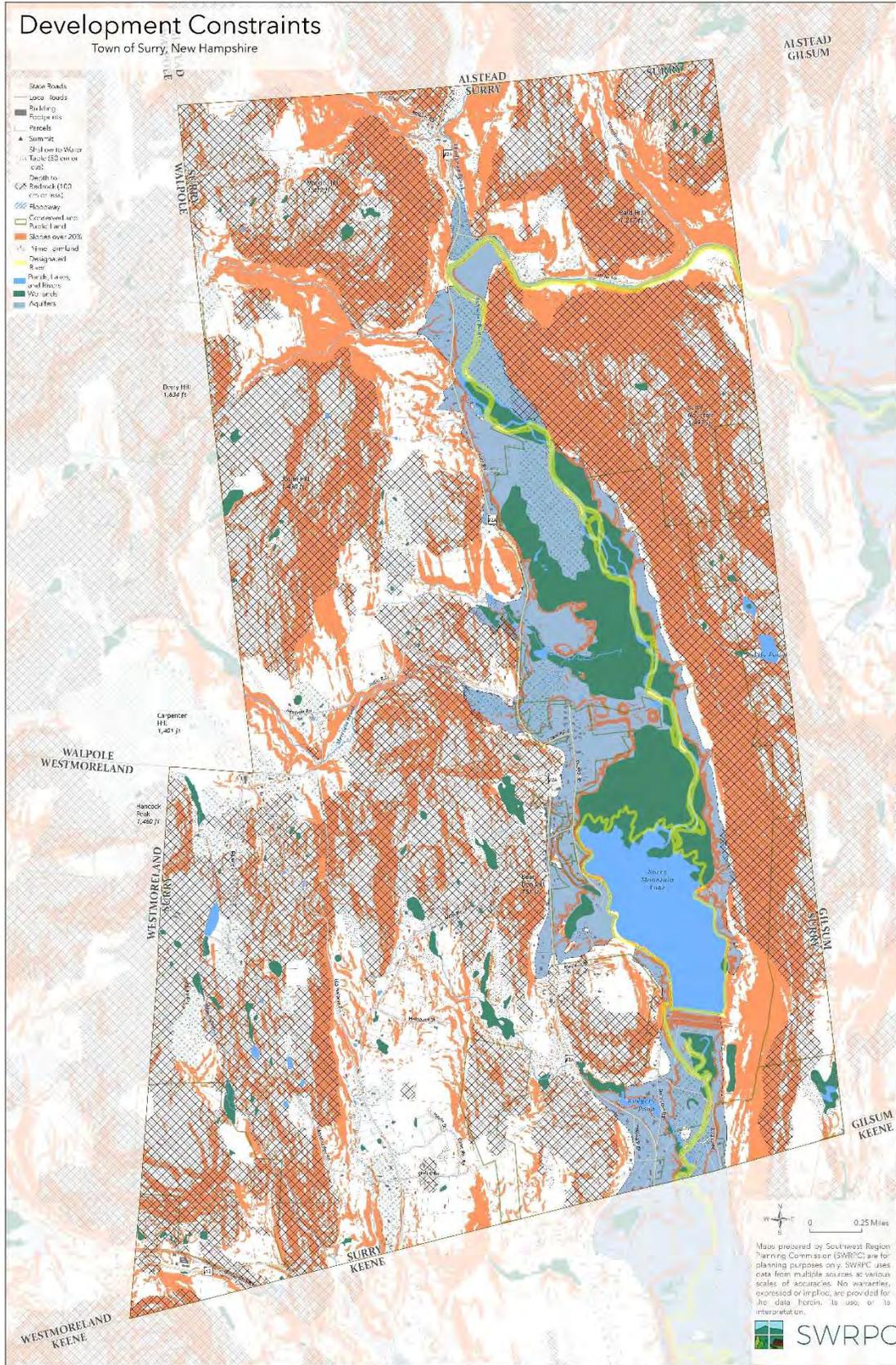
Another factor to consider when looking at potentially developable land is the current use tax law (RSA 79-A). The statute, as originally adopted in 1973, was intended to promote the preservation of certain types of open land by allowing such land to be taxed at a value based on its "current use," rather than on the fair market value of the land. The statute defines the allowable categories under which land is allowed to be taxed according to its current use (e.g.: farmland, forest land, unproductive land). The difference in the amount of property tax paid by the owner when land is put into current use can be quite significant, and for this reason the program is used by many property owners with large tracts of land.

Road Access

This constraint is not shown on the Development Constraints Map, nevertheless it bears noting in this Plan. Both the 1983 and 2001 Land Use sections of Surry's Master Plan noted: "Residential growth should relate to the Town's most service-accessible roads, and should be directed into those areas which can be most efficiently and economically serviced by the Town." This is as true today as it was then. There are several roads in Town that are extremely problematic, some only in winter, others year-round, due to topography and physical layout. Three in particular: Webster, Joslin, and Mine Ledge Road have been identified by the Steering Committee as being particularly difficult and at times completely inaccessible. All three are located on the western side of Town, in areas identified as having at least a 20% slope.

Table #2: Development Constraints by Acre		
Constraint	Acreage	% of Total
Wetlands	564	5%
Surface Water	363	3%
Prime Farmland	555	5%
Hydric Soils	740	6%
Shallow Water Table	732	6%
Shallow Bedrock Depth	5360	44%
Conserved / Public Land	2542	21%
Aquifer Transmissivity: less than 2,000 sq. ft/day	1335	11%
Aquifer Transmissivity: between 2,000-4,000	47	0%
Aquifer Transmissivity: 4,000 +	1	0.01%
	12,240	100%

Map #3: Development Constraints



Note: A large format version of this map can be found at www.swrpc.org/surry-maps-2025

REGULATORY ANALYSIS

Zoning Ordinance

The Surry Zoning Ordinance provides for four zoning districts in the town: Village Residential, Rural Residential, Commercial/Industrial, and the General. Article V of the Zoning Ordinance contains the land uses that are permitted in each zoning district, and Article VI contains the land and space requirements for each zoning district.

The Zoning Ordinance provides for a wide range of uses that are either permitted by right or permitted by a special exception of the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The dimensional requirements range from one to three acres for a minimum lot size, and 150 to 300 feet of frontage.

The question this Plan must address is whether the Zoning Ordinance aligns with the vision of Surry, as expressed by the residents through public engagement. Following is a summary of the public input received, and the way in which the ordinance does or does not, and if not, how it could address the issue.

Vision Theme	Issue	Zoning Provisions	Possible Remedies
Rural Character/ Conservation	Retain Surry's rural residential character while accommodating change and growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no provisions in the zoning ordinance that speak directly to the preservation of rural character. Typically, this would be addressed through lot sizes and permitted uses in specific zoning districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attempt to quantify what features constitute "rural character" and adopt provisions that facilitate them (for example: dark skies or open spaces). ▪ Adopt a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance.

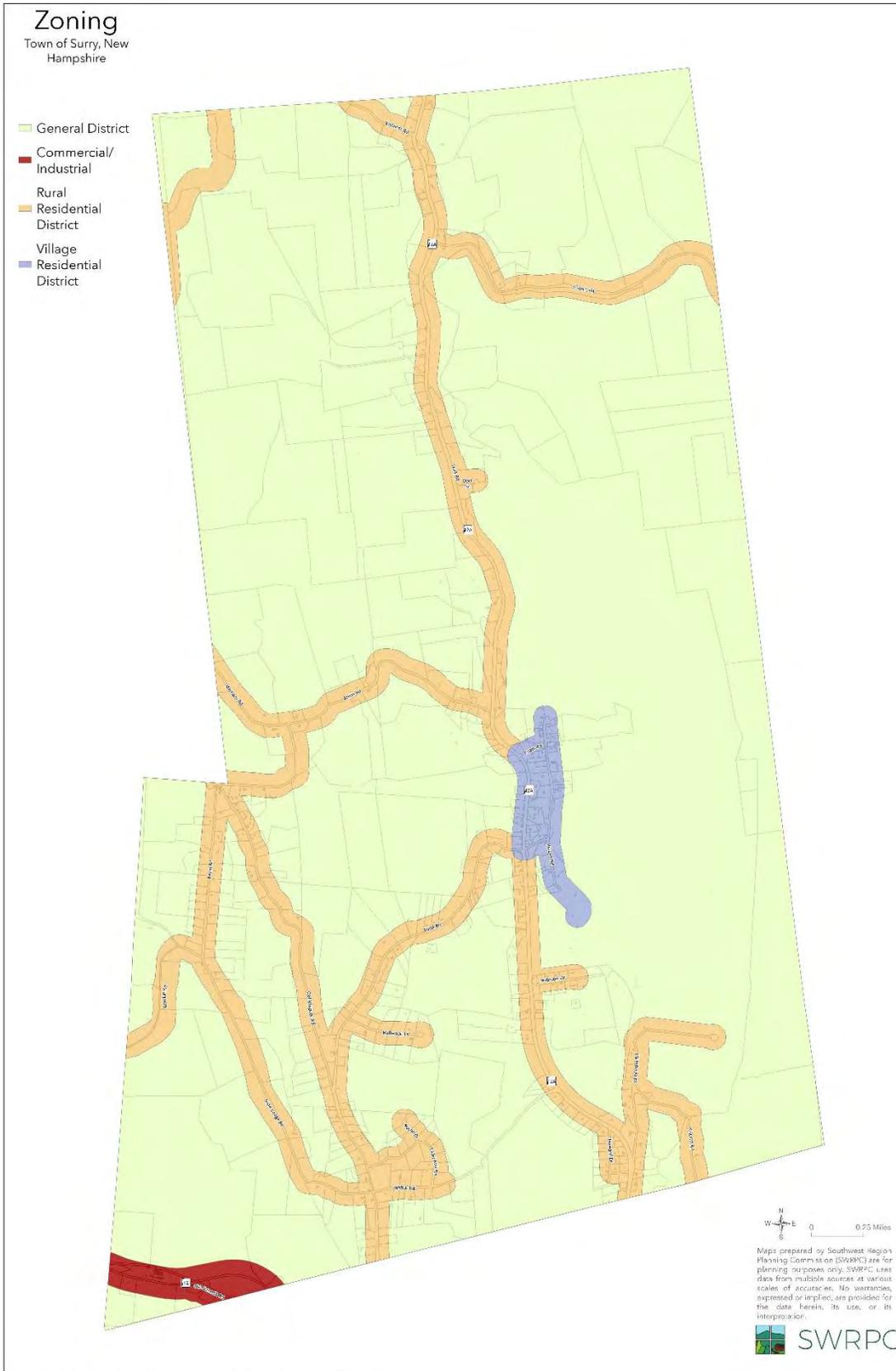
Vision Theme	Issue	Zoning Provisions	Possible Remedies
Housing	The need for more housing choices, both for affordability and diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No residential uses are permitted in the Commercial/Industrial District ▪ Only single-family and pre-site-built housing are permitted by right. ▪ Duplexes are permitted by right and by special exception. ▪ Accessory Dwelling Units are permitted, with some conditions. ▪ Manufactured Housing is permitted on individual lots in the General District. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow Duplexes and Accessory Dwelling Units by right in the Village Residential District. ▪ Reduce the parking requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units from two to one. ▪ Allow Manufactured Housing on individual lots in the Rural Residential District. ▪ Allow for the development of Cottage Courts and Cluster Subdivisions. ▪ Allow existing large single-family homes to be converted to two- or three-family homes.
Local Economy	Support for small, local businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The zoning ordinance permits a range of business uses, including Home Occupations. ▪ There is a Commercial/ Industrial District, with a three-acre minimum lot size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many of the permitted uses require a special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The process could be simplified by either allowing some of these by right, or by Conditional Use Permit with the Planning Board. ▪ Consider reducing the minimum lot size thereby increasing opportunities for small-scale commercial development.
Social Engagement	The importance of strengthening community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no provisions in the zoning ordinance that speak to this issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any possible remedies for this lie beyond the scope of a zoning ordinance.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations typically have less impact on development than zoning ordinances, given that it is the zoning ordinance that contains the provisions that dictate what uses are allowed, and where, as well as the dimensional standards for the creation of new lots. That being said, there are few areas within the Regulations that are relevant to the vision statements of this Plan, specifically the preservation of rural character, such as:

- (1) Section IV. B. calls for the Preservation of Existing Features (natural as well as historic). This is a provision that is found in many subdivision regulations but one that is frequently difficult to realize in small towns where most subdivisions are one or two lots. Nevertheless, the Planning Board can require that subdivision plats identify these features and demonstrate how they are going to be protected or preserved.
- (2) Where there are plans for landscaping, require that it be native vegetation and not invasive.
- (3) Section VII. D. addresses septic systems, requiring the standard 4,000 square-foot area for the leach field. Language could be added that makes provisions for alternative, innovative septic systems that don't require the same amount of area, subject to approval by NH Department of Environmental Services.

Map #4: Surry Zoning



Note: A large format version of this map can be found at www.swrpc.org/surry-maps-2025

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan is one of the most critical elements of a town's Master Plan. The principal goal of the Land Use Plan is to develop a land use pattern that maintains the rural residential lifestyle considered by residents to be so important. Additionally, the plan should encourage compatible land use relationships; discourage indiscriminate location of commercial and industrial uses; protect property values; and minimize land use and environmental conflicts. The Land Use Plan is the vehicle by which recommendations are made to correct any inconsistencies or conflicts that might come to light through this examination. While the text of the Future Land Use Plan may present conceptual long-range planning considerations, the future land use map will reflect shorter-range land use proposals that are consistent with existing or proposed zoning districts.

It is important to note that the information collected and the analysis conducted for this Plan are of a limited nature, and for this reason this Land Use Plan will deal with only a few specific issues - primarily those that were addressed in the Survey Questionnaire and the Community Profile.

The following narrative provides more detail and background on the goals and objectives outlined in the Implementation Plan.

Theme #1: Protect Surry's Rural Character

Goal: Safeguard and maintain the town's rural character while ensuring that the protection of treasured land assets is balanced with responsible development.

Preserving the rural character of a town is a much-quoted goal of almost every Master Plan in New Hampshire. This was high priority for the 1983 Master Plan, repeated in the 2001 Plan, and continues to rank very high among respondents. Surry residents cherish their relationship with the natural world.

While this is, in fact, how many people feel, it is not always possible to achieve, and certainly not without some effort. The Planning Board recognizes that growth is inevitable. With Surry's proximity to Keene, it can be expected that Surry will experience some pressure for development. However, based on NH Office of Planning and Development population projections, Surry is expected to lose population by 2035.

The challenge for the Planning Board and the town is to make sure that the land use regulations do all they can to maintain Surry's visual and aesthetic values in dealing with both residential and non-residential development.

At the time of the adoption of the 2001 Land Use Plan, the Town had only two zoning districts. One recommendation relative to the issue of rural character was to create a Village Zone with a one-acre minimum lot size, and a Rural Residential Zone with a two-acre minimum lot size, the intent being to minimize a suburban type of land use pattern. This recommendation was in fact acted upon: there is a Village Residential District with one-acre zoning; a Rural Residential District with two-acre zoning; and a General District with two-acre zoning.

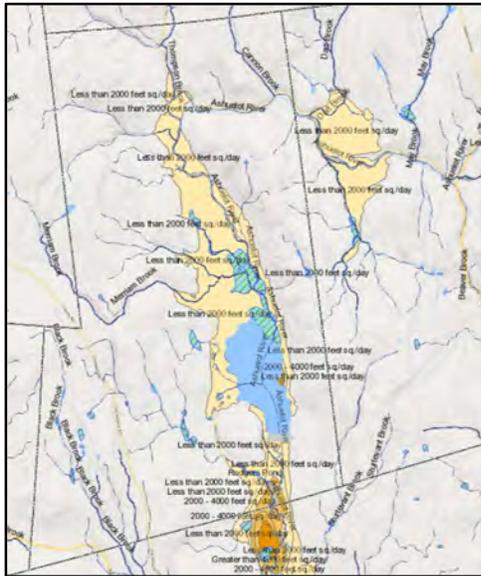
Supporting conservation efforts is another method for protecting rural character, since these two things are often intertwined – lands and water bodies that are permanently protected are often the very features that people refer to when they talk about rural character.

The four Objectives under this Goal offer techniques that are aimed specifically at achieving this goal, as follows:

Objective #1: Ensure that all subdivisions retain, to the greatest extent practical and feasible, the existing natural vegetation and other natural resources existent on the property.

A common challenge for a Planning Board processing a subdivision application is to limit or restrict the amount of land clearing often carried out prior to construction. While property owners have rights to cut and clear their land, the Planning Board can include provisions in their Subdivision Regulations to prohibit this activity prior to subdivision approval; and during the review process, work with the applicant to develop a plan that minimizes these kinds of impacts.

Objective #2: Consider the adoption of additional overlay districts for the protection of significant and/or sensitive natural resources, such as wetlands, aquifers, and floodplains.



An overlay zone is a geographic zoning district layered on top of another existing zoning district, or districts, that implements additional regulations. The technique can be effective for protecting natural resources that don't follow man-made boundaries, and that have different characteristics and therefore different needs for protection. Provisions of an overlay only apply when the particular resource is affected, and each overlay district will have provisions that are specific to the resource affected.

Objective #3: Collaborate with relevant organizations to safeguard water quality and the riparian and aquatic habitats of the Ashuelot River Valley by adhering to the management goals and recommendations set forth in the Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan by the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC)."

Objective #4: Revisit the steep slopes ordinance, considering whether to reduce the gradient at which the ordinance applies.

Currently, the town's steep slopes ordinance applies to areas with a gradient of 20% or greater. Given the potential for erosion when developing areas with even gentler gradients, it may be prudent to consider reducing the threshold at which the steep slopes ordinance applies. Less stringent requirements could be applied to these gentler yet still relatively steep slopes. The Conservation Commission's update to the Natural Resources Inventory represents a good opportunity to consider this question, in consultation with the Planning Board.

Objective #5: Hold a joint meeting of the Conservation Commission and Planning Board to review the updated Natural Resources Inventory, once completed.

Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) is a term used to describe a document that includes natural and cultural resources information that all conservation commissions are required to inventory under NH law (RSA 36-A:2). The NRI can address topics such as conserved properties, valuable ecological resources, and planning for future conservation and preservation efforts. As of 2025, the Town of Surry Conservation Commission is in the beginning stages of updating its NRI. Once complete, coordination between the Conservation Commission and Planning Board could help ensure that findings from the updated NRI could inform the maintenance or amendment of relevant local land use regulations.

Theme #2: There are varying views in Surry regarding housing needs.

Goal: Ensure that Surry’s land use regulations offer a variety of housing options.

Some residents at the community forum held on November 16, 2024 expressed a clear need for more housing, both housing that is affordable, and housing that can accommodate younger families and seniors. These participants noted that the high cost of housing is prohibitive for young families; and for seniors who want or need to downsize, there is no place in Surry for them to go.

Community input through the survey, however, was somewhat different. When asked whether “existing housing types that meet the needs of the community” represented a strength or a weakness, 32% of respondents indicated that it was a strength, 25% a weakness, and 43% neither a strength nor a weakness.

Recognizing the range of public opinion on the matter, one potential way to build consensus and strike compromise would be to focus on small, incremental revisions to local land use regulations that support a wider range of housing options while continuing to protect Surry’s rural character. Most of Surry’s housing stock is of the single-family type, and much of it is on larger lots. Even though the lot size in the Village was reduced from two acres to one acre, there has only been one new house constructed in the Village since that change was made.



Surry, like most small towns in New Hampshire, has no municipal water or sewer systems, which limits its ability to provide denser housing development. With advancing innovative septic system technology, it is not impossible to develop housing on smaller lots, but it is more of a challenge.

The Development Constraints Map illustrates the limited amount of land in Surry that is actually developable and is not already occupied or conserved. For this reason, as well as those noted above, the most likely scenarios for new housing may be conversions of larger single-family homes into two- or three-family homes, or the redevelopment of an existing single-family home when that one is being replaced.

Additional context related to housing issues in Surry can be found in Appendix A: Demographic and School Enrollment Data.

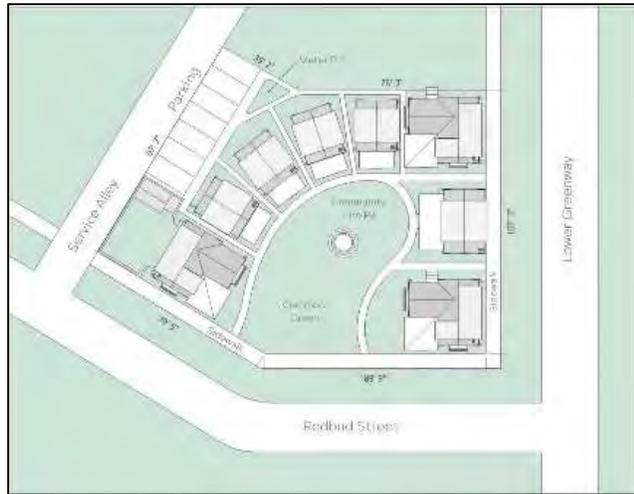
Three Objectives are proposed to achieve the overall Housing Goal. In general, these Objectives recognize the geographic limitations facing Surry in relation to housing supply. As the Development Constraints Map illustrates, there is very little land area that is either not owned/protected by federal, state, or other entity and/or is



“vertical.” Given these restrictions, a practical approach for Surry is to build on what is already existing that does not require new land clearing or infrastructure.

Objective #1: Consider allowing by special exception two ADU’s per single-family home – one attached or within the principal dwelling, and one in a separate structure, provided that NH Department of Environmental Services septic requirements are met.

Recent developments in housing production and supply in New Hampshire have indicated that the addition of an Accessory Dwelling Unit on a property is the easiest, least expensive, and least disruptive means to add to the existing housing stock. While there are still costs associated with the addition – varying depending on the type of construction, it is far less expensive than building a stand-alone home; in addition, it does not require new infrastructure and either minimal or no site work. Many homes in rural residential towns such as Surry are located on large lots that could easily accommodate a second ADU in a separate structure without having negative impacts on the parcel or the neighboring area.



Objective #2: Explore creative housing solutions, such as cottage courts, cluster subdivisions, or other innovative land use planning techniques.

Cottage courts provide a middle ground between single-family homes and multi-family developments. They offer smaller, and therefore potentially more affordable, housing options, and are attractive for a broad demographic, from young professionals to seniors.

While the clustering aspect might appear to be a more urban design, cottage courts can be adapted to rural settings as well, since the Planning Board has the flexibility through Site Plan Review to adjust the site and design standards as needed to suit the environment. Clearly this type of development would have to be able to accommodate on-site water and sewer, which is also a factor the Planning Board takes into consideration for any such proposal.



Courtesy Wildlife Conservation Society, Adirondack Program

Conservation subdivisions, meanwhile, require a certain amount of land in a subdivision to be set aside for permanent protection and utilized only for specific purposes that implement conservation goals. The value for conservation of this type of development is not only that it requires a certain amount of land to be protected from development, but it also ensures that the protected land is usable and functional for its intended purpose. In addition, by locating houses closer together on

smaller building lots, it avoids sprawling development that fragments open space and wildlife corridors and habitats.

A number of approaches exist beyond these two examples of creative housing strategies. A good resource to consult for additional ideas is “Innovative Land Use and Planning Techniques: A Handbook for Sustainable Development,” whose authorship was spearheaded by NH Department of Environmental Services.



Objective #3: Consider allowing by special exception the conversion of large single-family homes into two- or three-family dwellings in the Village District.

As noted above, Surry has very little available land that is suitable for development; therefore, utilizing existing housing stock to add units where appropriate and feasible is worth considering. Surry’s existing housing stock is predominantly single-family, with many of these homes occupied by one or two persons. The Zoning Ordinance currently allows multi-family housing by special exception in the Rural Residential and General Districts, but not in the Village District. Allowing by special exception the conversion of a single-family home into a two- or three-unit dwelling in the Village District is an approach that increases housing options without adding infrastructure or new construction.

Objective #4: Study how the characteristics and condition of Surry’s road network may warrant revisions to the zoning ordinance.

Certain areas of Surry are accessible only by roads with steep gradients, sharp curves, and that may be subject to load limits during certain portions of the year. Consequently, there may be value in evaluating existing land use regulations with respect to areas fronting on local roads with challenging geometry or surface conditions. New development in these areas may pose a challenge given that they may increase the need for larger vehicles such as school buses or fire trucks to access difficult-to-reach sites.

Theme#3: Support the Local Economy

The previous Master Plans noted that Surry had very little commercial base, and given its proximity and easy access to Keene, that it was unlikely that major commercial establishments would flourish in Surry. While this prediction has been born out, the questionnaire and the Community Forum both indicated the presence of, and the importance to the residents of limited commercial development in town. Even though it remains unlikely that large-scale businesses will seek to locate in Surry, attention to this issue is important for several reasons:

- (1) Residents should have an opportunity to engage in commerce, which contributes to the economic health of both those residents and the town; and
- (2) The Town would benefit from revenue captured from local enterprises, in particular by helping to offset the cost of sending Surry's pupils to Keene.
- (3) Home-based businesses are important as means of income for the property owners, but they are unlikely to be assessed and taxed as a business when they are considered secondary and incidental to the principal dwelling unit.

The 1983 Master Plan proposed designating Route 12, now zoned as Residence, for commercial and/or industrial use, and the 2001 reiterated this recommendation. In 2003 the Planning Board proposed, and the voters adopted, a Commercial/Industrial District along the stretch of Route 12 from the Keene town line to the Westmoreland town line.

Goal: Accommodate new commercial and light industrial growth at a scale consistent with the rural nature of Surry and in harmony with the natural environment.

Objective #1: Consider reducing the minimum lot size in the Commercial/Industrial District in order to broaden opportunities for business development.

It was noted in the Zoning Analysis that the Planning Board could consider reducing the minimum lot size of three acres in the Commercial/Industrial District; there are two potential advantages to doing this:

- (1) Having smaller lots in a relatively small area zoned for business would increase the possibility of more businesses being established, and at a small scale that residents have expressed a preference for.
- (2) An advantage of having more business is the impact on tax revenues, which is an important consideration for the town, as it seeks ways to help offset the cost of tuitioning students to Keene. Smaller lots mean more possibilities for individual businesses in what is a relatively small area that is zoned for business.

Objective #2: Develop an Energy chapter for the Master Plan.

During the process of developing this master plan section, it was noted that commercial property generates more tax revenue than residential property, and there was some discussion regarding commercial wind and solar farms. This is a topic that deserves more study, and to that end the Planning Board could establish a subcommittee to develop an Energy chapter for the Master Plan that would evaluate options that are appropriate for Surry.

Theme #4: Strengthen Opportunities for Community Engagement

Residents have expressed the importance of community engagement and social interaction but acknowledge the challenges they face. Younger families are often time-constrained with childcare and jobs, and older people can have transportation and/or mobility issues. In addition, since the closing of the elementary school, the town lost its primary gathering space. The Town Hall and the Library are the only remaining public spaces in town. The Town Hall is available for public events, but this is not widely known.

As noted previously, there is not much that land use regulations can do to address what is largely a social issue; nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Select Board is attempting to improve on in-town communications by establishing an email notification distribution list (see notice on the Town's website in the sidebar).

Goal: Surry strives to be a community that provides opportunities for social engagement and community involvement.

Objectives

Objective #1: Support the Select Board's efforts to maintain the email notification system.

The Select Board has set up an email registration to sign up for the Surry Newsletter. This is part of the Select Board's efforts to make information about Surry news easily accessible and available.

Objective #2: As much as is feasible, make all Town official meetings accessible remotely to make it easier for residents to participate.

The Town currently does not use technology that makes it possible for residents to participate in or just observe meetings remotely, such as Zoom or Teams. Having this option increases the likelihood that more people will participate and be engaged in Town business and activities.

Objective #3: Support efforts to make the Town Hall more useable and therefore available for public/community functions.

The Town Hall has a large gathering space upstairs that is handicapped accessible. There is also meeting space downstairs. There is a kitchen downstairs, but the lack of potable water has been an obstacle to the Town Hall being more usable.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION – NEW TOWN EMAIL NOTIFICATION REGISTRATION – Action Needed

The Select Board are working to improve communications and keep the town informed about important updates and events impacting the community. I'm sure you have already noticed the changes to the website's landing page, but to reach more people, we are now looking to establish an email distribution list that will allow us to send the information directly to you.

If you want to receive these updates, email townemail@surry.nh.gov from the email account where you would like to receive them. Please include your name (First and last) and your mailing address in the body of the email. Your phone number is optional.

Your email will trigger an automated response to confirm you've registered. If you don't see the email in your Inbox after a few minutes, please check your Spam folder and flag it as "Not Spam" to prevent future emails from going there.

CONCLUSION

Given what is known about these physical limitations, and the growth trends in Surry over time, there are some observations that can be made about Surry's future land use, such as:

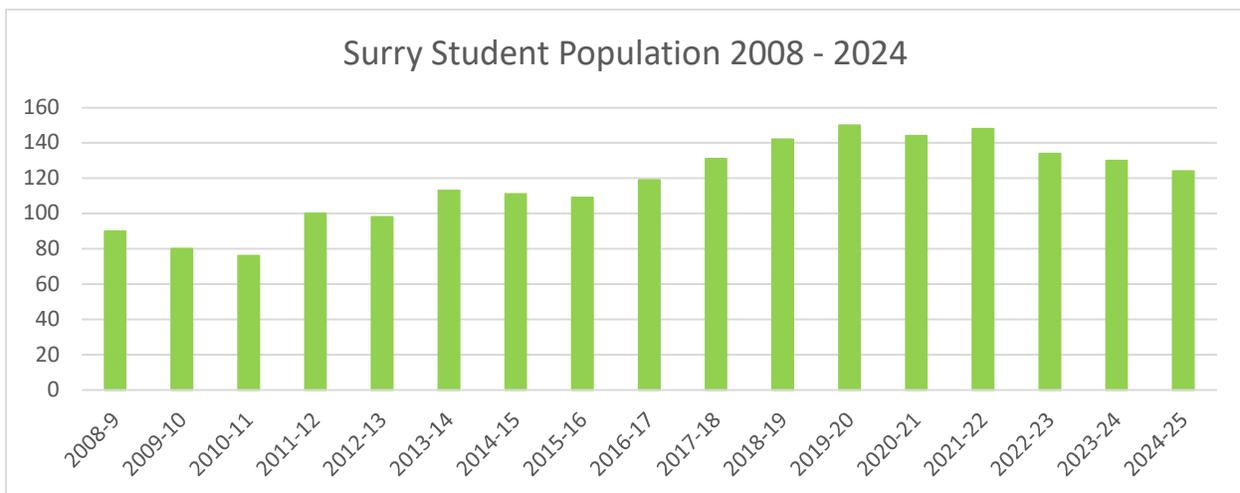
1. New commercial development will be limited, due to the shortage of usable land, as well as Surry's proximity to Keene. This factor makes it unlikely that Surry will see small retail business, as there is not enough population in Surry to support it. As for larger, non-retail business, there is opportunity and land for that, although limited due to natural resource constraints.
2. New residential development is subject to some of the same constraints as non-residential development. The town of Surry is a very desirable place to live but has a limited housing supply. In order to balance the competing pressures of new population and the strong desire to protect what Surry is today, the Planning Board will need to think about alternatives to the traditional subdivision and single-family home.

Appendix A: Demographic and School Enrollment Data

In order to better understand housing needs in Surry, it's important to consider population shifts in town, as evidenced by demographic and school enrollment data. Notable demographic and housing statistics for Surry include:

- 25% of the population was aged 65 and over in 2020, as compared with 8% in 1980.¹
- 68% of all households in 2020 consisted of one or two persons.²
- 98% of all residences in Surry are single-family homes, based on 2025 town assessment data.

These data point to an aging population and small households living in single-family homes that may not be suitable for them now or in the future. In addition, while the elderly population is expected to increase in terms of its proportion to the total population, the school-aged demographic is declining in its proportion to the total population. The chart below shows the numbers of students by school year from 2008 to 2024, including homeschooled students. While it has fluctuated over time, the recent trend is downward, which is not unique to Surry, but observed statewide. All of these statistics indicate that the composition of households is changing and that different housing options may be needed to meet these circumstances.



Source: Surry School Board.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census. For 2020 data, see <https://data.census.gov/table?t=Older+Population&g=060XX00US3300575300&y=2020&d=DEC+Demographic+Profile>. For 1980 data, see the Town of Surry 1983 Master Plan or the National Historical GIS at <https://data2.nhgis.org/>.

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates, Table S2501, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2020.S2501?q=household+size&g=060XX00US3300575300>

While recognizing that demographic changes may affect the amount and type of housing needed by residents, it's also important to observe that addition to the local housing supply could have fiscal implications for the community. This is especially true for Surry, which left Monadnock Regional School District in 2007, during a period of low, declining enrollment. In tandem with that decision, the public elementary school in Surry was closed and the Surry School District (SAU91) was created. SAU91 enrolls its students in public schools in the Keene School District through a tuition agreement. While this arrangement saves costs in some respects, it also means that Surry has limited control over its education-related expenditures. Consequently, it may be prudent to study how any future changes in local land use regulations could affect the school-aged population.