

CHAPTER 2: HOUSING

Challenges and Opportunities

2.1 Lancaster is a community with a rich architectural heritage that distinguishes both its commercial and residential structures. However, the lack of available, adequate housing for all income groups and family sizes directly impacts the quality of life in Lancaster. The town should encourage policies that protect and enhance the present and future value of Lancaster's housing stock and maintain a fair balance of housing alternatives for all of our citizens.

2.2 The rental housing supply for the elderly and larger families is of particular concern to respondents to the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey. The condition of existing multi-family dwellings is also a concern. There is a need for more attractive, well-maintained multi-bedroom units, as well as for communal elderly housing. The current market rent does not support the provision of new, high quality rental housing. Entrepreneurial investment in rental housing is high risk, and management of rental housing is difficult.

2.3 Manufactured housing is permitted on individual lots in designated areas in all zoning districts. Manufactured housing subdivisions, considered to be an affordable alternative to conventional housing developments, are currently permitted in all zoning districts but the commercial/industrial district where it is available by special exception. In order to be an asset to the community, these manufactured housing subdivisions must have a pleasing design and a layout that is attractive for residents.

2.4 In the current agricultural district where large lot sizes and frontage requirements may cause the loss of productive land, clustered housing development is an option as a way of preserving prime agriculture soils and rural atmosphere. Under these zoning and subdivision provisions, extra building density may be offered where individual houses are grouped on smaller individual lots with the bulk of the parcel protected as common open space.

2.5 Compiled from NH's Office of Energy and Planning and listed on Lancaster's page of the State of NH Towns and Cities website, housing stock in Lancaster increased by about 4% from 1,553 housing units to 1,620 housing units between 1999 and 2008. Between 1999 and 2008 the Office of Energy and Planning estimates that the population of Lancaster was essentially stable. Multi-family units decreased by twenty-nine units during that time. Although the population is stable, the affordability and adequacy of multi-family housing stock is still identified in the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey to be inadequate to meet local needs. The need for elderly housing was identified as one of the greatest needs by the 2010 Master Plan Community Survey. There also was identified a need for more rental units, possibly due to the current economy and individuals' inability to afford their own homes.

Goal 2.1: Promote zoning regulations and town policies which offer incentives for residential development which compliments town character in the village and preserves open space in the rest of the town.

Objectives:

- 1)** Offer incentives such as extra units when a developer will provide multi-bedroom units in village residential zones.

- 2) Offer incentives such as extra units for housing development which preserves open space in rural residential areas, including manufactured housing subdivisions.
- 3) Create an overlay zoning district with reduced frontage requirements and maximum lot sizes no greater than the minimum required for the provision of on-site sewer and water for all areas with prime agricultural soils.
- 4) Promote the sensitive rehabilitation of substandard and historic housing in residential zones by providing information regarding grants, technical assistance and private incentives to homeowners and landlords.
- 5) Develop specific design standards for Manufactured Housing Subdivisions which promote pleasing design and an attractive layout for residents.
- 6) Encourage utilization of available, in-town property for residential development.

Goal 2.2: Promote housing opportunities for the diverse needs of the population.

Objectives:

- 1) Use 2010 U.S. Census data to determine the number and range of household sizes in relation to the number of bedrooms in rental units. This will reveal what housing needs are.
- 2) Take steps to encourage the development of adequate rental opportunities for all income levels and family sizes through zoning bylaw revisions and by providing information about funding programs.
- 3) Offer density bonuses for new housing developments if the added units are for elderly housing and located in town.
- 4) Work with area providers of services to the elderly to determine the need for additional group residential units for the elderly and work to identify funding opportunities for such housing.