

Town of Milford

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 2006 REPORT

In 2006 Milford's desirability, attractiveness, and reputation as a progressive New Hampshire community continued to challenge the Town to manage and balance residential and commercial growth while working to protect its small-town character. The Planning and Community Development Department is the department responsible for implementing and using land use tools and regulations to help Milford citizens manage the Town's physical and natural environment.

This past year began with the implementation of the Growth Management Ordinance (GMO), which was overwhelmingly supported by voters in March. The ordinance applies to all new residential development, and focuses on ultimately limiting the rate of new residential unit growth to one percent (1%) of the total number of existing dwelling units in Town. In the most basic terms, this translated to allowing up to 30 permits for brand new lots created during 2006, with allowances for those approved lots ready for permits that were "grandfathered" by approvals prior to 2006 (estimated allowable permits to be 30-40). In reality, the regional and national slowdown in home construction provided its own local growth control mechanism, as only 43 residential building permits were issued (with only one permit subject to the GMO). This number was down from 79 issued in 2005. New residential building was spread about Town, with most building occurring in the southeast quadrant off Ponemah Hill and Federal Hill Roads (Wyman Farms, The Reserve, Wallingford Place). Residential projects working their way through the permitting process include Boynton Hill Estates (ninety plus lots off Mile Slip and Mason Roads), Harvest Lane (ten lots off Knight Street), thirty lots off Union Street, and five new lots off Stable Road. All these new subdivisions will be subject to the phasing and building permit limitations of the GMO.

Commercial development continued at a steady yet not overwhelming pace. Giorgio's Restaurant opened in October, a 100-unit assisted-living complex began construction in June, the 49-unit Cahill Place condominium project (for residents over 62 years of age) on Nashua Street was completed by the end of the year, St. Mary's Bank opened at the Richmond Plaza, Lake Sunapee Bank on Elm Street replaced the old vacant Gulf Station, and the Hampshire Dome indoor sports complex on Emerson Road opened its doors in January. New commercial development is being planned for the commercial zone on Nashua Street to the west of the Richmond Plaza, inclusive of a new pharmacy and with potential for a restaurant and lodging. Many smaller commercial renovations and relocations continued to occur throughout the community.

Other large construction projects included the completion of Milford United Methodist Church on North River Road and the new Police Facility on Garden Street. A new wing to Heron Pond Elementary school was also completed to house the relocation of the fifth grade from the Middle School.

Economic development efforts continued in Town as this Department provided staff support to both the Milford Industrial Development Corporation and the newly established West Milford Tax Increment Financing District Advisory Board. The Advisory Board, with the support of the MIDC, has made great strides in developing and promulgating development tools such as financing options and zoning flexibility for the BROX and adjacent vacant TIF district industrial areas.

At the tail end of 2006 the Planning Board was faced with a complex proposal from a large East Coast residential development firm that offered economic development incentives to the Town in exchange for a relaxation of the growth management restrictions and density regulations. The firm of Landquest proposed a 500 mixed-unit residential project for a 127-acre area south of the 101 Bypass and north of Mason Road, adjacent to the BROX property. The firm also proposed to purchase the BROX industrial land and construct the infrastructure, which was also needed to serve the residential proposal. Because there were many issues involved, including a change in growth management philosophy, changes in zoning regulations, and many details in how the BROX property would be incorporated into the scheme, the Planning Board made it clear it could not properly address the issues in time for the March 2007 warrant.

In addition to development permitting and regulation, this Department has many additional responsibilities to support both long-range planning and community development functions. The Department assists the Planning Board in master planning and regulation overhaul, and has been working with the Board in the Master Plan Update with the Community Character chapter pending final approval, and the Housing, Traffic and Transportation, and Economic Development chapters being next priorities.

Significant staff time has been and will continue to be designated for an ongoing overhaul of the Town's subdivision and site plan regulations, portions of the Zoning Ordinance, the federally-mandated stormwater regulations, and the development of design standards for the Nashua Street corridor with the assistance of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission. At the direction of the Planning Board, this Department guided the review and development (with the support of a strong subcommittee) of a revised sign ordinance, and developed the proposed rezoning of the west-side industrial land to the proposed Integrated Commercial-Industrial 2. Other ongoing projects and responsibilities include the planning of Kaley Park and the provision of staff support for the Capital Improvements Plan process, the Facilities Committee, and the BROX residential lands committee.

The Department has been intensively involved in traffic and transportation-related projects this past year, having worked closely with the Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team (DO-IT) Main Street Program in acquiring the \$625,000 federal Transportation Enhancement grant for South Street improvements and the NHDOT on a \$3,500,000 transportation earmark for downtown traffic improvements. Additionally, this Department has coordinated the planning and design for the Ponemah Hill Road/Nashua Street intersection improvements and the North River Road sidewalk that will connect the sidewalk on Mont Vernon Street to the MCAA fields.

The Town will continue to see the development of increased data management capability from this Department, as the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) and MUNIS permitting and tracking software are implemented to greater degrees. Web site development to better meet the needs of the community is also a high priority. A comprehensive inventory and database of all town-owned lands and roads is well underway.

At year's end the Department was reorganized into the Department of Community Development, which will house the Planning, Building, Zoning Administration, Code Enforcement, and Health functions of the Town. The intent of this reorganization is to provide for increased efficiencies in the provision of Town services to the taxpaying public and citizens of the Town. As always, this Department will continue to pride itself in its customer service. If there are ever any issues or concerns that you need to have addressed, please contact us at 603-673-7964 or at www.milfordnh.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Parker
Director of Community Development