

Comp Plan 8/20/15

Attendance: Don, Emily

*Tonight's objectives: review changes suggested in last meeting for the flup section "affecting all areas", tighter definition of expansion area, and addition of FOD area. Also, write down plan for completion.*

Minutes from last meeting needed to be reviewed due to potential sensitive nature – approved.

It has become clear that the expansion area on 220 has much more in common in the Downtown district than Rural and we should no longer ponder what to do about it potentially being in two: move the downtown district boundary to include the expansion area.

We still really need a better name for the area on 220, and also need one for the small area across from FOD that will have its own district.

In the current land use ordinance language, the downtown district is partially defined as "the area generally that is served by the sewer". This should be changed to something else like "the concentrated businesses area of town" (because it is proposed to now encompasses more than what is served by the sewer).

Need better name for the 220 expansion.... "transitional area" .... "vehicle based expansion" .... "low-density development area"

Went over changes to FLUP – new draft to come.

# UNITY FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Format:

## DISTRICT TYPE

- **District Name**

- Vision (purpose of/concept for district)
  - Location/Boundary Description
  - Allowed Uses, Types and intensity of proposed land uses, residential density
  - Specific Development Standards
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## Overview

One of the appealing features of Unity and many other rural communities is that homes and businesses are not segregated. This gives maximum flexibility to the property owner, allowing (for instance) for the creation of a home-based business. This “mixed-use” is also the hallmark of the traditional “village center” that is so cherished throughout New England. In Unity, a mixed-use downtown increases the customers at local stores and reduces traffic on smaller, outlying roads. Another important aspect of positive planning for Unity is to prevent sprawl and preserve the rural aspect that residents and visitors cherish. The districts and the standards for each listed below aim to balance economic prosperity with the rural, small-town feel. One major and over-arching goal is to maintain flexibility and to streamline the permitting processes while preserving full enforcement of the land use ordinance and other ordinances, especially in regard to the preservation and improvement of the water quality in Lake Winnecook.

Overall important goals to achieve in this plan are to:

- 1) Maintain flexibility to promote sustainable and manageable economic development downtown
  - 2) Prevent Sprawl and encourage a walkable downtown commerce area
  - 3) Protect Unity’s agricultural viability and open space
  - 4) Create a safe and vibrant place to work and live
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## Development Trends since 1993

Commercial growth has been significant for a community of Unity’s size, with most occurring downtown. Residential growth has been far more modest. Unity has seen a smattering of new single family homes, most of them in the rural area. Unity has also seen the development of many new rental units, most of them downtown. (This includes the rental complexes developed by Newell, Roberts, and Tozier.)

Downtown during this period has also seen growth in civic infrastructure, including an expanded post office, a new masonic hall, a new community center, a new recreational area (Field of Dreams), a new park (Triplet Park), the planting of over 70 street trees, some new sidewalks, a multi-use parking lots, a new fire station, and (most recently) a new town office. At the same time, the Unity Elementary School closed its doors.

Retail and Eateries have both grown. Mac's Hardware and the local grocery store (under various management) have both put on additions and added inventory. New retail stores include the Community Market, the Family Dollar, Verizon wireless, and a gift shop. New eateries include Dunkin Donuts, Crosstrax Deli and Catering, the Unity House of Pizza, China Jade, Subway, and Spanky's Pizza, while a restaurant in the former Homestead building has remained along with the sandwich bars in the Depot Store and the Pit Stop. Storage facilities have also been added.

Bangor Saving Bank and Downeast Credit Union both came to Unity during this period. Inland Hospital now runs a full-service Health Center in downtown Unity.

For the past decade or more, downtown Unity has experienced a bustle of commercial activity that didn't exist in 1993—and that has made Unity the envy of many neighboring communities.

The number of small farms has increased significantly during this period, with most of those farms raising vegetable or livestock for direct sale. At the same time, dairy farming has declined. Several former dairy farms are now occupied by Amish families. In service to the growing farming community, a long-vacant downtown building is being renovated to house a "food hub," which will aggregate, store, and help distribute local farm products.

Growth at Unity College includes more professors, more students, more staff, and a higher budget. Traffic in town is also up, perhaps due in part to the growth of neighboring commerce centers (primarily Belfast, Newport and Bangor)

Overall, Unity appears to have recovered reasonably well from the economic collapse in 2007.

Yet not all businesses have experienced growth. Economic decline has been evident in declining interest in the Unity Raceway, the closing of Chase's (a furniture, flooring and video rental store), and the closing of Thorndike Press. Thorndike Press was located in "the Hodges building" which now occupies a medical marijuana growing company. At this time, the marijuana facility employs fewer people than Thorndike Press did.

Residential house lots are in low demand and multiple subdivisions in Unity have vacant lots. The sales of single family homes are stable for the area but the lack of high-quality homes and "things to do" has driven some people to purchase homes in areas closer to Belfast and Augusta. This is particularly evident with Unity College faculty and staff.

The goal of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan to channel new development into a growth district (which in Unity is the downtown district) appears to have worked fairly well for commercial development, but not as well for residential development.

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# LAND USE POLICIES

## AFFECTING ALL OR MULTIPLE AREAS OF UNITY

The Comprehensive Plan Committee found the following areas of change for the future land use plan:

- 1) Add a new district to the land use plan that allows for more retail development.
- 2) Amend the development review standard to include:
  - a. Crosswalks added where pedestrian traffic is increased by proposed development to a level where safety becomes a concern
  - b. Encourage building practices that are in line with the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code.
  - c. To prevent unnecessary deterioration of our roads, limit new development that would increase heavy weight traffic over our sensitive town-maintained roads. Instead, encourage those developments with heavy road use to develop on Route 202/9, Route 139, or Route 220. To develop this standard, the Department of Transportation and applicable engineers should be involved. Exceptions from provision are for harvests of gravel, wood, and agriculture, and for residential development. Additionally, the planning board will be allowed to work with the applicant to come up with an alternative solution to lessen heavy traffic on town roads.

Furthermore, the committee found that many aspects of the current land use ordinance fit with the land use goals articulated in this new comprehensive plan. The provisions from the current ordinance that are listed below should all be retained in any future land use ordinance adopted under this new comprehensive plan. That is not to say that these provisions should remain exactly as they now appear. As changes to the current ordinance are developed, there is every reason to consider modest modifications to these provisions, but these provisions shall not be changed to the degree where their overall purpose, application, or impact is altered.

- **The Agricultural Protection Setback** which protects farmers from the “taking” of land by abutter’s development. Included in this is that wells installed must be at least 300’ from adjacent farmland and that principal structures must be at least 100’ from adjacent farmland (150’ and 50’ respectively in Downtown district)
- **Development Review Standards** for subdivisions and “high-impact” activities (as defined by the ordinance in Section X) that are in place to assure that the development will limit, as much as is reasonable, any negative impacts on the community.
- **Special Performance Standards** regarding parking, landscaping, commercial signs, lighting, commercial impacts, roads, mobile home parks, and wind turbines that lessen the artificial impact of development with its human connection and work to heighten the public’s pride, enjoyment and safety in relationship to the development.
- **Downtown Design Guidelines** that help preserve the historic visual character downtown by requiring new commercial development to follow basic standards (for roof pitch, window size ratios, etc.)
- **The rural district’s Farmland Protection Incentive Measure** that allows the use of smaller lot sizes in exchange for preserving a larger parcel of farmland or working woodland
- **Lot Size Density Bonus Incentive** that allows flexibility in lot sizes allowing larger lots to be interspersed with smaller lots as long as the overall density standards are not exceeded.

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# LAND USE POLICIES

## GROWTH AREAS

*Chapter 208 Section 4 numbers 3-A-(5-6) read: "Growth areas, to the greatest extent practicable, should be limited to an amount of land area and a configuration to encourage compact, efficient development patterns (including mixed uses) and discourage development sprawl and strip development"*

Growth areas are those where the Town wants growth and development to occur. The anticipation is that most residential and non-residential development over the next ten years will occur in these growth areas. Growth Areas include the areas with undeveloped land that is appropriate for development as well as developed areas where redevelopment or intensification of use is desired.

### ● **Downtown District**

- **Vision** – The Downtown District has a visual appeal and character that should be maintained without being overly restrictive. Downtown is where we celebrate our unique identity as a farming community, a market center, and a social hub. Encourage a walkable village area, with sidewalks, seating, and other opportunities for citizens to interact.
- **Location** – The Downtown District is the generally more densely developed part of Unity that encompasses the traditional village and the reaches of the sewer system. This district stretches to include Unity College, properties on the southern end of Unity Pond, Main St, Depot St and School St. The physical boundaries of this district shall stay the same as outlined in the current land use ordinance. All land in the downtown district can have some level of retail development.
- **Allowed Uses** – All parcels in the Downtown District can have some level of retail development. Parcels that are in the downtown district, and not in either of the *purple* or *orange* districts, can have retail development up to a 2,000 sq. ft. footprint, or 4,000 sq. ft. with a variance from the planning board where the site has been creatively downtown. The Downtown District also supports a smaller lot size than the Rural District, which should be maintained from the existing land use ordinance. All uses allowed in the Rural district are also allowed in the Downtown District.
- **Development Standards** – The current Downtown Design Guidelines and Development Review Standards both apply as described in the current land use ordinance.

### ● **Across from FOD**

- **Vision** – This area is particularly special because of its proximity to the downtown area, Lake Winnecook, and the Field of Dreams. The committee's conclusion is that the best use of this property is to have high-density residential in the front of the lots, and business development behind it, with a greenway to connect the two. "High-density residential" includes lodging, condominiums, and multi-family housing.
- **Location** - Map 11 Lots 42, 42-1 and 49

- **Economic Development District (Overlay on *Downtown*) (School St)**

- **Vision** – This is where retail development is encouraged. The purpose is to maintain a market center, allow development growth, and keep retail shops within walking distance of each other.
- **Location** - The Economic Development District encompasses all lots bordering School St from Main St to Sandy Stream. The physical boundaries of this district shall stay the same as outlined in the current land use ordinance.
- **Allowed Uses** – All uses are allowed in the Economic Development District, subject to current Development Review Standards. This district is the most flexible location to locate development in Unity.
- **Development Standards** – The current Downtown Design Guidelines and Development Review Standards both apply as described in the current land use ordinance.

- **Retail Expansion Area**

- **Vision** – The purpose of this “expansion area” is to allow more places where retail businesses or a certain type can locate. This area is intended for those businesses which, because of their size or nature of goods they sell, don’t fit into a walkable downtown. Businesses well-suited for this area include a lumber yard, agricultural good/feed store, antique mall, auto dealership, or landscaping products store. Smaller stores that don’t fit into this concept may include a pub, bookstore, convenience store, or art gallery. Reasons for creating this expansion area are because of input from citizens to have more places to develop retail, the existence of larger development in that area already, and its close proximity to the existing development area.
- **Location** – The land encompassed in this expansion area includes properties on which other retail businesses have already developed (under the existing home-based business rule), and land between the outer ends of the Downtown District (between the ends of Depot St and Main St). Specifically, the expansion area is an overlay on a portion of the Downtown district and a portion of the Rural district and includes only the lots that abut the Thorndike Road from Route 202/9 to Leelyn Drive, and those on Main St from the railroad tracks to Route 202/9 (see map).
- **Allowed Uses** – Retail activities are allowed. All uses allowed in the Rural District also apply in the Retail Expansion Area (manufacturing, residential, commercial, and agricultural)
- **Development Standards** –
  - **Development Review Standards**, as outlined in the current land use ordinance, apply in this area if triggered.
  - **Lot sizes minimums** for the Downtown district (10,000 square feet) apply for the entire expansion area only if the applicant brings the sewer to the lot. If the applicant is going to use an on-site wastewater treatment system, the minimum lot size for the rural district applies (20,000 square feet).
  - **Design Guidelines?**
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# LAND USE POLICIES

## RURAL AREAS

*Chapter 208, Section 4 number 3-E-2 reads: “The Future Land Use Plan must identify proposed mechanisms, both regulatory and non-regulatory, to ensure that the level and type of development in rural areas is compatible with the defined rural character and does not encourage strip development along roads.”*

- **Rural District**

- **Vision** – This is the area of town that lends greatly to the “rural feel” that the community and its visitors are drawn to in Unity. Forests, Farms, Homesteads, and Scenic Vistas welcome visitors on every route in town that leads from the rural area to the downtown. There should be a distinct visual difference from being in the rural district to being downtown, generated mostly by the difference in density.
- **Location** – The Rural District comprises all of Unity that is outside of the Downtown District.
- **Allowed Uses** –
  - Retail in the Rural district is allowed if one of the following conditions exist: A) Occurs at a home; B) The goods are grown, made, or altered on the property (or services related to those goods); C) Attracts no more than 20 car trips/day; D) Occurs less than 15 days/year; or E) The activity is engaged in the sale or repair of motor vehicles, or equipment such as lawn mowers or chainsaws.
  - Manufacturing and Commercial development are allowed, and are subject to performance standards and development review (as listed in the existing land use ordinance).
  - Development Review Standards and Performance Standards are applicable, when triggered.
  - Uses that are **not** allowed are: 1) detached multifamily on one lot exceeding two year round homes per lot, and 2) Multi-family homes exceeding 3 units.
- **Development Standards** –
  - The rural district shall include a Farmland Protection Incentive Measure that allows the use of smaller lot sizes in exchange for preserving a larger parcel of farmland or working woodland. An Agricultural Protection Setback shall also be in place to protect farmers from the “taking” of land by abutter’s development. Included in this is that wells installed must be at least 300’ from adjacent farmland and that principal structures must be at least 100’ from adjacent farmland.
  - As a way to prevent strip development, lots shall not be required to have a 200’ minimum of road frontage. A shared access road shall be allowed rather than each lot being serviced by the primary road.
  - In order to prevent the creation of long narrow lots (which often restrict access to and the productivity of the contiguous back land) no newly created lot shall have a ratio of length to width of greater than 5:1.

- Protect remaining extensive large habitat blocks from development pressures, particularly those that support high value plant and animal communities. Also promote connectivity between these blocks.
  - Encourage the retention of open land, particularly along roadsides.
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## LAND USE POLICIES CRITICAL NATRUAL AREAS

*Must include map(s)*

### ● **Shoreland District**

- **Vision** – The vision for all Shoreland Zones is to dramatically improve the water quality of Lake Winnecook and its watershed.
- **Location** - The Shoreland Zone is an overlay district that surround certain bodies of water as defined by the State of Maine Shoreland Zoning Law
- **Allowed Uses** – Being an overlay district, the allowance of a use is first dictated by the district it's in as dictated by the Unity Land Use Ordinance. The use is then further restricted by the State of Maine Shoreland Zoning Law.
- **Development Standards** –
  - Land use activities and recreational activities must not harm the water quality in Lake Winnecook and its watershed.
  - Specific development standards are otherwise dictated by the state of maine shoreland law. The town may decide at a later time to further restrict development than as outlined by said law in order to further protect the lake and its watershed.

### ● **Aquifer Protection Overlay District**

- **Vision** – The vision for the Aquifer Protection District is to protect the aquifer for future use by the town. The town should identify sites for a future aquifer system for the town, and acquire those sites for the public good. Additionally, all land use activities conducted over the aquifers must not harm these valuable sources of groundwater.
- **Location** – There are two primary aquifers: 1) the sand and gravel aquifer associated with Sandy Stream, and 2) the bedrock aquifer underlying the downtown area. An aquifer is a naturally existing body of water beneath the earth's surface, and the protection district surrounds them as they naturally occur and as established by archeological studies done for the Unity Comprehensive Plan of 1993.



- **Allowed Uses** – No use is restricted solely by the aquifer protection district, but certain applicants will have to explain how they will prevent contamination, if requested to by the Planning Board.
- **Development Standards** –
  - All applicants for a building permit or a development permit who propose activities in the Aquifer Protection District which have the potential to contaminate groundwater as determined by the Planning Board shall include as part of their applications descriptions of:
    - a) their intended use of ground water; b) the potential sources of ground water contamination from any of their proposed land use activities; and c) their proposed means of preventing any potential contamination.
  - Provision shall be made to protect against discharge or loss of toxic or hazardous materials resulting from corrosion, accidental damage, spillage, or vandalism. These provisions shall include: spill control measures at hazardous material delivery, storage and transfer points; secured storage areas for toxic or hazardous materials; and indoor storage provisions for corrodible or leachable materials. Handling and storage of toxic and hazardous materials shall meet performance standards established by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.
  - For uses that involve significant volumes of liquid chemicals, all activities shall be conducted under cover and over an impermeable surface. Use of dikes, liners, or other effective techniques will be required to enable collection of any spill that might occur. All materials will be handled and stored in properly covered and secured containers and disposed of according to all applicable federal and state regulations.
  - Proposed activities shall not negatively impact the quality or quantity of the groundwater.
  - Proposed "high-use" wells located within the Downtown District shall demonstrate that no adverse impact shall occur to any existing well as a result of the proposed well's operation. (NOTE: A "high-use" well is any well that will pump a long-term average rate of 1 GPM if located within 200 radial feet of other wells or 2 GPM regardless of location.)
  - All new wells of any intended pumping rate located in the Downtown District shall be located at least 85 radial feet from neighboring wells, unless a Maine certified geologist can demonstrate to the Planning board's satisfaction that due to relative depth or other factors, there is no scientific likelihood of well interference posed by the proposed well.