

This summary is intended to give the Ad-Hoc Committee on Auburn’s Agriculture and Natural Resource Economy a quick reference guide to sections of the Comprehensive plan related to agriculture and housing in Auburn’s rural areas that are currently used or zoned for agriculture.

The full plan is available at:

http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Comprehensive_Plan_FINAL_Approved_4_19_11.pdf

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Natural Resources Vision – continue to protect Auburn’s rivers and lakes in balance with allowing public access to such resources. Auburn continues to protect the water quality in Lake Auburn and Taylor Pond, as well as the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers. Programs support agricultural activities, protect natural features such as wetlands, and ensure the continued preservation of rural open spaces. Rural land preservation is balanced with the continued protection of landowner rights. Access to urban open space is increased through the expansion of the city tree program, the development of lot gardens, and the preservation of rural and river viewsheds.

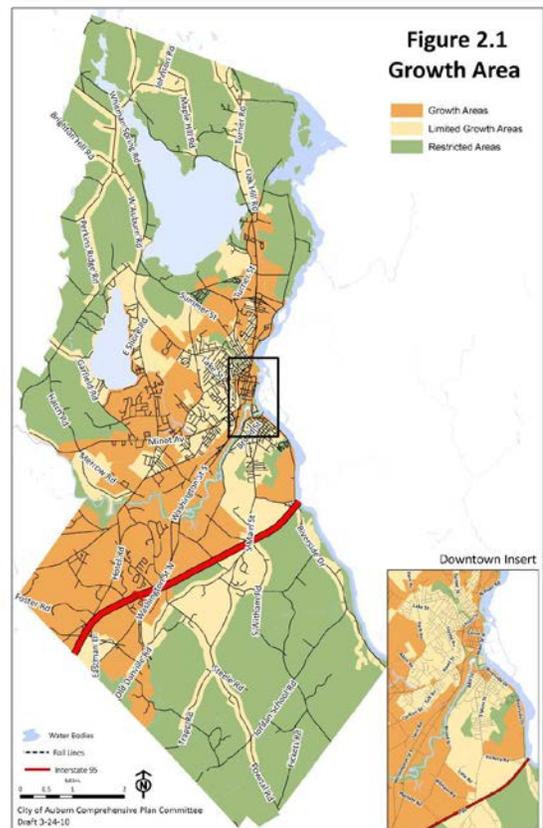
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B. LAND USE POLICIES

Chapter 2 of the 2010 Update of the Comprehensive Plan sets out a Future Land Use Plan to guide where and how growth and development should be accommodated over the next decade. The Future Land Use Plan shows, in a general sense, the desired pattern of future land use and development in the City.

The Future Land Use Plan reaffirms a central policy of prior of land use planning in the City, namely, that development in Auburn should grow out from the core and from older established neighborhoods. This policy was originally set forth in the City’s first comprehensive plan over a half century ago and has continued to guide the City’s land use planning since then. It is based on the fact that growth out from the downtown core and older established neighborhoods allows for the most efficient utilization of city services. This plan discourages “leapfrog” development in the outlying sections of the city where city services are not now available. The effect of continuing this longstanding policy is to guide most new development into the area south of Lake Auburn and Taylor Pond, and north of the Maine Turnpike.

To manage development and redevelopment in accordance with this basic principle, the Future Land Use Plan designates Growth Areas, Limited Growth Areas, and Restricted or Non-Growth Areas:



AG related References from the City Comprehensive Plan

- 1. GROWTH AREAS** – Areas where the City wants growth and development to occur. The anticipation is that most residential and nonresidential development over the next ten years will occur in these growth areas.
- 2. LIMITED GROWTH AREAS** – Areas that are either mostly developed, and therefore have limited development potential; or that have vacant or under-utilized land where the City desires a limited amount of growth and development over the next ten years.
- 3. RESTRICTED OR NONGROWTH AREAS** – Areas that are unsuitable or are otherwise undesirable for development; in these areas, the City desires to see little or no growth and development over the next ten years. The general location of these areas is shown on the adjacent map (previous page).

The Future Land Use Plan divides each of these areas into a series of land use designations (See Chapter 2). The following highlights the major policy directions incorporated into those designations:

1. Rural

- Continue to protect undeveloped rural areas including North River Road, the Lake Auburn and Taylor Pond watersheds, and South Auburn from development
- Continue to allow low density residential development along some rural roads in accordance with defined criteria
- Allow flexibility for where and how rural residential development occurs to minimize its impact on the rural character and agricultural uses

2. Residential

- Allow new residential development at varying densities on the fringe of the built-up area where municipal services and utilities can be provided
- Consider using “density-based” requirements for residential development in development districts rather than the current lot size requirements

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5. Resource Protection/Open Space

- Include significant resources along the rivers, streams and high value wetlands in a Resource Protection designation
- Designate land preserved as conservation land/open space
- Expand access to the rivers by creating a Riverfront Transition designation around the confluence of the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers

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Objective C.2.3: Support the public works department’s efforts to maintain Auburn’s road and sidewalk infrastructure in the most cost-effective manner, with a focus on quality and durable construction.

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy C.2.3.a: Limit the need for new roads by encouraging development along existing roadways, and within the designated Growth Area (See Chapter 2).

Comprehensive Plan Page 64 – Economic Development Strategies

In its largest job center, the industrial parks, the City expands infrastructure to ensure the availability of additional land for development. The area continues to grow as a regional job center with the expansion of good-quality employment in the vicinity of the airport and multi-modal center. To assure that there is an adequate supply of land for future economic growth, Auburn uses its Agriculture/Rural Zone as a “holding zone” -- promoting limited development and reduced tax rates on properties until such a time as the area is made viable for commercial and/or industrial development.

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Objective 1.2.3:

Ensure availability of land for appropriate business/industrial development in designated areas.

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy 1.2.3.a: Attract investment to designated industrial and commercial growth areas through the development of TIF districts and other financial incentives.

Strategy 1.2.3.b: Use the Agriculture/Rural Zone designation as a means of holding select areas for future commercial and/or industrial development.

i. Educate prospective developers and current landowners on the goals of the AG/Rural Zone within certain areas on the City’s long-range plans. Help them to understand that the properties in question are held within the AG/Rural Zone to limit development and reduce the tax burden until such a time as the appropriate infrastructure and/or development projects are made available to support the conversion to an industrial or commercial zoning designation.

ii. Rezone the New Auburn’s Witham Road Area as an Agriculture/Rural District to hold the land until infrastructure improvements are made to support the development of business/industrial parks. (See Chapter 2. Future Land Use Plan)

iii. Rezone the other areas designated as Industrial Transition Districts in Chapter 2. Future Land Use Plan on a case-by-case basis, when there is either an active development proposal, or a need for additional industrially zoned land.

iv. Maintain AG/Rural Zone designation of the Delekto Farm property until such a time as the area can be rezoned to support limited access residential, office, and business park development – either when agricultural use ceases, or as part of plans to establish a turnpike interchange. (See Chapter 2. Future Land Use Plan)

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3. RURAL RESIDENTIAL ROAD STRIPS

The City has historically zoned narrow strips of land along some rural roads for low density residential development. These strips represent a compromise between the City’s goal of limiting residential

development in rural areas, and existing conditions along these rural roads. As part of the development of the Future Land Use Plan (see Chapter 2), the City conducted a comprehensive review of where residential strips should and should not be created based upon the following set of criteria. The considerations outlined below apply sequentially – first to identify where strips are appropriate based on current land use patterns, and then to work through where residential strips are inappropriate based on a variety of considerations.

Consideration #1 – Established Residential Pattern

A residential strip **may be provided** along a rural road where there is an established pattern of residential uses along the road. An established residential pattern means at least 6-8 homes per half mile counting both sides of the road. In general, both sides of a road should have a residential strip unless there is a significant reason not to allow residential development based on the following considerations.

Consideration #2 – Reserve Area Adjacency

A residential strip **should not be provided** along a rural road if the area adjacent to the road is a “reserve area” where the objective is to maintain the land as undeveloped to allow for its conversion to a different use in the foreseeable future. There should be some realistic expectation that something will occur that will change the desired land use for the area in the future.

Consideration #3 – Natural Resource Adjacency

A residential strip **should not be provided** along a rural road if the area adjacent to the road has significant natural resource value. Areas with significant natural value include areas that are zoned Resource Protection or are high value wetlands, 100 Year floodplains, significant wildlife habitats, and areas with steep slopes (>25%).

Consideration #4 – Conservation/Open Space Adjacency

A residential strip **should not be provided** along a rural road where the adjacent land is protected open space, or where there is a reasonable expectation that the land will be preserved as open space in the foreseeable future, and residential development is inconsistent with that open space use.

Consideration #5 -- Ability to Provide Public Services

A residential strip **should not be provided** along a rural road if residential development will tax the City’s ability to provide municipal services as indicated by the following:

- The road is a gravel or dirt road
- The road is a poorly maintained paved road that will need to be improved to support residential development along it

Consideration #6 – Water Quality Protection

A residential strip **should not be provided** along rural roads with undeveloped frontage that are located in the watershed of Lake Auburn, unless such development will not have an adverse impact on the lake’s water quality.

The Future Land Use Plan (see Chapter 2) shows the areas where low density residential development is proposed to be allowed along rural roads based on these criteria. These criteria should be used in the

AG related References from the City Comprehensive Plan

future to review the areas designated as residential strips as conditions change, or to review property owner-initiated requests for rezoning.

Comprehensive Plan Page 73-Future Land Use Plan

This Future Land Use Plan reaffirms the basic objective of land use planning, that development in Auburn should grow out from the core and from older established neighborhoods. This policy was originally set forth in the City's first comprehensive plan over a half century ago, and has continued to guide the City's land use planning ever since. We continue to believe that growth out from the downtown core and older established neighborhoods provides the most efficient utilization of city services. This plan does not favor "leapfrog" development in the outlying sections of the City where city services are not now available. This pattern is often referred to as "suburban sprawl," and is not considered desirable for Auburn. The effect of continuing this long standing principle is to guide most new development into the area south of Lake Auburn and Taylor Pond and north of the Maine Turnpike. Figure 2.1 identifies these areas as the City's Growth Area and Limited Growth Area; they are depicted in the brown and tan colors.

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Industrial Expansion Transition District (INT)

Objective – Allow for the orderly expansion of the City's industrial district over time by zoning additional land Industrial (see Figure 2.3). The Industrial Expansion Transition District includes two different types of areas. One type of area is characterized by developed residential properties or neighborhoods on the fringe of an existing industrial zone (see Figure 2.6). In these areas that are currently developed, the City should rezone properties Industrial on a case-by-case basis in an orderly manner, while maintaining the livability of the remaining residential properties as well as protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The second type of area is undeveloped or lightly developed areas that are currently zoned Ag/RP or low density residential and are essentially "in reserve" for future industrial use (see Figure 2.7). These undeveloped or lightly developed areas that are "reserved" for future industrial use should be zoned Ag/RP or its equivalent in the short term; the area should be rezoned to Industrial only when there is a development proposal that includes the provision of public water and sewerage.

Allowed Uses – The allowed uses of the current zone or the Ag/RP District or its equivalent should remain in force until these areas are rezoned.

Development Standards – The current development standards or Ag/RP standards should remain in force until these areas are rezoned.

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TYPE D: PROTECTION/RESERVE AREAS

DESIGNATION: OPEN SPACE/CONSERVATION

Resource Protection District (RP)

Objective – Retain areas with significant natural resource value in an undeveloped, natural state (see Figure 2.3). This includes undeveloped 100-year floodplains adjacent to the rivers and significant streams and areas around freshwater wetlands that are moderate-high value habitat.

Allowed Uses – Within the Resource Protection District, allowed uses should be limited to natural resource and open space uses including agriculture and forestry, low-intensity recreation, facilities that provide water access, and similar low impact uses. Uses that involve significant structural development or impervious surfaces should not be allowed in this district. Uses such as utility lines and roads may be located within the district if there is no alternative appropriate location.

Development Standards – All new structural development and paved surfaces except for roads, trails, and facilities for access to the water, should be set back from the water body or wetland and a green buffer maintained along the edge of the resource. In general, all activities within the district are also subject to the Shoreland Zoning performance standards.

Agricultural/Rural District (AG)

Objective – Preserve and enhance the agricultural heritage of Auburn and protect the City’s natural resources and scenic open space while maintaining the economic value of the land (see Figure 2.3). The district is characterized by a rural, very low density development pattern that limits sprawl and minimizes the City’s service costs. The District maintains the current rural development pattern allowing for a broad range of agriculture and natural resource-related uses, while restricting residential development. Recreational development is encouraged both as a means of protecting open space, and as a means to provide reasonable public access to outdoor destinations such as Lake Auburn and the Androscoggin River. The Agriculture/Rural District is intended to serve as a land reserve, protecting valued community open space and rural landscapes, while maintaining the potential for appropriate future development.

Allowed Uses – The Agriculture/Rural District should continue to include the uses allowed in the existing AG/RP zoning district. In addition, a broader range of rural uses should be allowed. Agriculturally-related businesses including retail and service activities and natural resource industries should be permitted. The reuse of existing agricultural buildings should be allowed for low intensity non-agriculture related uses. Residential uses should continue to be limited to accessory residential development as part of a commercial agriculture or natural resource use, not just traditional farms. The criteria for determining when an accessory residential use is permitted should be based on updated standards that take into account the economic realities of today’s commercial agricultural activities, including outside sources of income and part-time and small-scale commercial operations. Residential development may also be part of a commercial recreational use as part of a planned development in which the recreational open space is permanently preserved.

Development Standards – All new development, redevelopment, and expanded uses in the Agriculture/Rural District should be required to meet “best management practices” for stormwater management and environmental protection to ensure adequate protection of natural resources. All development activities in the Agricultural/Rural District should be subject to low impact development (LID) standards such as limiting impervious surfaces, minimizing lot disturbances, creating natural buffers, and capturing and treating runoff through filtration measures.

AG related References from the City Comprehensive Plan

The City should continue to encourage a very low density development pattern as a means of protecting natural resources and preserving the rural character. The basic residential density standard for the current AG/RP zoning district should be maintained. The standards for the development of accessory residential units should provide greater flexibility in the siting of those units. In an effort to place accessory residential development in areas where it will have the least impact on natural resource and/or the agricultural value of the land, the standards should allow for a waiver or elimination of road frontage requirements and access from a private driveway.

Residential development that is proposed as part of a master planned commercial recreational development should be limited to the same density standard (one unit per 10 acres) as other accessory residential uses. A recreational master plan should be required outlining the scope, scale, and location of residential units and ensuring a cluster development pattern in which the majority of the land is retained as recreation/open space. A conservation easement, or other legally binding preservation measure, should be required to permanently conserve the recreation/open space areas.

Where a parcel that is located in the Agriculture/Rural District land also includes residentially zoned land, a residential unit should be allowed to be transferred from the residentially zoned portion of the parcel to the Agriculture/Rural portion as long as the relocation does not negatively impact natural resources or the agricultural potential of the land. As with other residential development in the Agriculture/Rural District, the development standards should encourage flexibility in the location and size of the lot, allow for a waiver of road frontage requirements, and allow access from a private driveway. When a transfer occurs, the land in the residential zone from which a residential unit is transferred must be permanently protected from development through a legally binding preservation measure, such as a conservation easement.

Conservation/Open Space District (COS)

Objective – Formally recognize those parcels that are used for cemeteries, water quality protection or are permanently protected for conservation or open space purposes (see Figure 2.3). The land included within this district will change over time as additional land is conserved. The intent of this designation is to establish a policy that these types of properties/uses should be recognized as important resources and that any significant change in use should be considered a policy decision.

Allowed Uses – The allowed uses within the Conservation/Open Space District should be limited to low intensity recreational facilities and natural resource uses, including agriculture and forestry.

Development Standards – The development standards should provide flexibility for the appropriate use of the land, while protecting its natural resource and ecological values.