

II. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Past and Present

Like most New Hampshire communities, New London (Map I-1) has experienced steadily increasing population for at least forty years. New London's rate of increase, however, has been faster than the State, as a whole, and many of its neighboring communities. During the 1990s alone, New London's annual population growth rate was 2.6%, about 2.5 times the state or regional rate of increase.

New London experienced a 50% population increase from 1980 to 2005, growing from 2,935 residents to 4,440. Forecasts are that the community will continue to grow. Historic trends indicate that by 2020, New London will reach a year-round population of about 5,940 people. This increase of about 1,500 residents over that 15 year period equates to an annual growth rate of 1.9%. Some of these new residents will likely be people who were formerly seasonal residents and visitors, as seasonal homes get converted to year-round dwellings.

Continued fluctuations in the population are likely, with visitors and seasonal residents tending to come in the summer for the lakes and winter for the skiing. While these increases are welcome, from an economic standpoint, these seasonal fluctuations can make it difficult for businesses to gear up and then down. Such population fluctuations also place higher demands on municipal services than are expected in a community with a level population throughout the year.

New London has become an older community, as more and more people retire here and as existing residents age in place. The median age in 2010 was 48.1 years which was nearly 20% higher compared with the county and state. The percentage of children 0 to 4 years old dropped from 2.9% of the total year-round population in 2000 to 2.3% in 2010. Over the same ten year period, persons age 65 and over increased from 29.9% to 30.7%. The demographic trends indicate that with the aging of the "Baby Boomer" generation, the number of seniors will increase dramatically on a national level. This trend combined with New London's desirability as a place to retire will make the number of seniors in New London increase substantially in the coming years.

A Vision for the Future

Growth will clearly have an impact on New London, as new people arrive and new homes and roads are built. Properly managed, growth can be a considerable asset, bringing new energy, economic stimulus and vitality to a community. It can bring new volunteers to serve on boards and committees, and new ideas to apply locally that people have seen work elsewhere. Improperly managed, growth can also bring negative impacts, as more development can put more strain on municipal services, bringing more congested roads, and more impervious surfaces. This in turn can accelerate polluted water run-off and erosion. This concern is particularly applicable to New London due to the topography and soils. Improperly sited development can adversely impact, among other things, the community's character, water and scenic resources, and wildlife habitat and corridors.

Some might wish otherwise, but growth is likely for most New Hampshire communities, and particularly true for New London, with its attractive natural resources and easy access to the interstate highway system via Interstate 89. The pending widening of Interstate 93 will also bring

New London additional growth. New London must prepare to manage this impending growth. This master plan is a key component of the effort to plan and guide New London's future growth and development.

To start the Master Plan process, about fifty New Londoners enthusiastically participated in the first of four Master Plan Workshops on Friday evening, October 12, 2007. The purpose of the Workshops was to give the public an opportunity for input in helping to shape the New London's vision statement. Presentations were made at the Friday evening Workshop on what a Master Plan is and is not, highlights of the 1998 Master Plan implementation, New London and regional growth trends, and local examples of Smart Growth Principles. The population trends and figures presented Friday evening set the stage for the Saturday Workshop when the public was asked to share their hopes and concerns for New London as they planned for the future. In small, facilitated, break-out groups, the workshop participants were asked to work through three exercises together.

The first exercise required each break-out group to allocate future residential and commercial growth in town. Each break-out group identified where they thought the future residential growth would occur (estimated to be 380 additional homes) and what the type and density of that residential growth might be. The second component of the first exercise, required the groups to if there should be additional commercial growth and, if so, where. Options included no commercial growth, an additional 12 acres of commercial growth to keep pace with growth in New London's population, or an additional 24 acres of commercial growth to keep pace with growth in region's population. If the group supported additional commercial growth, they were asked to identify where it should be located in New London.

In a second exercise, groups were asked to identify what made New London special--the important community elements that New London should retain. They were also asked about their current and future concerns. Finally, participants were asked for good ideas they had seen used in other communities, ideas that might be studied and introduced successfully in New London.

In the third exercise, each break-out group was asked to identify future issues and concerns to constitute one or two Master Plan topics.

In the afternoon, large group session, each break-out group presented and discussed with the full group the results of their growth exercise and the issues their break-out group identified for the assigned Master Plan topics.

This Vision Statement reflects public input received during the October Workshops, as well as public comment on the Statement draft obtained at community meetings on December 1, 2007 and January 5, 2008.

Description of Planning Terms

For the reader's benefit, some relatively new planning terms used in this Vision Statement are described below:

"Conservation Subdivision Design" is a land development approach that assesses and preserves a proposed subdivision's important natural resources and provides a network of interlinking open space with public trails with adjoining lands.

“Low Impact Development” or “LID” is a relatively new, comprehensive land planning and engineering design approach with a goal of maintaining and enhancing the predevelopment hydrologic regime in watersheds.

“Green Building Practices” refers to energy efficient practices to building siting, design and construction.

“Carbon Footprint” is generally defined as an annual measurement of the total amount of carbon dioxide generated by an individual mainly through their energy use.

A “Livable, Walkable Community” is one in which the built environment is returned to a state of natural and economic resource sustainability. This hopefully leads to more social interaction, physical fitness, and diminished crime and other social problems and results in whole, happy, healthy lives for the people who live in such a community.

A “Continuing Care Retirement Center” is a retirement center for senior citizens that offer housing and care programs designed for increasing levels of dependency from independent living units up to a nursing home setting.