

Assessment of Master Plans and Land Use Regulations Newfound Lake Watershed Master Plan



The majority of the master plans in the Watershed have been prepared since 2002. Although they differ somewhat in the extent of their inventory and the details of implementation, they all provide a clear sense of what the community would like to work toward from a land use perspective. This is critical information that can inform the Watershed Master Plan.

There is a great deal of similarity between the various Watershed communities' vision statements. All of the Master Plans identify the elements of their individual community's character, the importance of natural resource protection, and the need for balancing the various forces of growth and development into the future. The strong parallels between the various vision statements provide an assurance that the Newfound Watershed communities can join together to work toward a common vision.

The common vision that has been created for the Watershed communities states:

By the year 2020, we envision a watershed where quality of life and economic vitality are fostered by stewardship and sustainable use of the watershed's natural resources, land uses and development are balanced with conservation, and maintaining water quantity and quality is central to the efforts of the nine watershed communities.

The Master Plans in the Watershed are in place to guide land use changes as the population grows. Based on the forecasts for population growth in the Watershed, the communities can plan on seeing a total of approximately 500 more year-round residents by 2020. These new residents will require housing units and non-residential services so **it is critical that the Master Plans are reinforced by regulations that will guide future development** toward the identified future land use plans and vision statements.

With the exception of some overlay districts, the majority of the Watershed falls under some form of a rural residential zoning district. As a result, most of the Watershed has a minimum lot size of 1-2 acres, and a minimum road frontage requirement of 150 to 200 feet. **This is potentially a very suburban pattern of development, and not one that matches the vision statements.** One exception to this is the Rural Residential District in Bridgewater, which notes the scenic, recreational, and environmental values of the land and calls for a lower density of development.

Moving forward as a Watershed it will be important to have a clear vision with detailed implementation actions that all of the communities can help work toward. Understanding the individual community visions within the Watershed, and the implementation tools that have been adopted locally was an important first step and the purpose of this *Assessment*. This information will be used to help inform the public, and to select areas that will need attention locally under future planning and implementation activities. This *Assessment* will also provide some baseline information on the level of planning and implementation in the Watershed, and a way to measure progress as more planning and implementation are accomplished in each of the Watershed communities. Selecting implementation actions that build on the work accomplished in each of the communities and leading the Watershed as a whole toward a common vision is central to the long-term health of the Newfound Lake region.