



2. Land Use and Community Design

2.1 Introduction

An understanding of the Merrimack's historic and existing land use patterns, regulations, growth trends, natural resources, and infrastructure is useful in identifying opportunities and constraints to future development potential of the Town. Land use within a community is represented by the historic pattern of residential, commercial, industrial, municipal and institutional development, interspersed with what is generally considered as open space, such as forests and natural features, undeveloped land, agriculture and parks and recreational areas. The evolution of land use within a community is the product of local economic conditions and community preferences; growth and development is based on such factors as access to jobs, employment, and the availability of affordable land for new housing or commercial development. Community preferences, expressed as land use plans and regulations, dictate the use, form, location, and sometimes the pace, of new development. Land use forms the basis for master planning and determines, to a large extent, a Town's need to provide public

facilities and infrastructure, transportation networks and services, and protection of environmental resources. As communities plan for their future, determining how and where growth and development should occur will provide the basis for planning where investments for municipal services will be needed, as well as determining what controls will be necessary to protect areas of the Town from unwanted development. Communities have the ability to control land use and development patterns through a variety of mechanisms, including zoning and subdivision regulations, provision of public utilities and infrastructure, and protection of open space lands through direct purchase and the acquisition or acceptance of conservation restrictions/easements.

Although land use issues are addressed in this chapter, it is important to refer to other elements of the Plan to see how these issues are interconnected.

2.2 Land Use and Community Design Goals

- Provide for a sustainable and balanced land use pattern that incorporates the needs of the many stakeholders in Merrimack.
- Encourage the proper balance between residential, commercial and industrial development to ensure the Town continues to prosper while protecting the historic, environmental and rural character of the community.
- Look for opportunities to creatively revitalize underutilized and vacant sites.
- Establish guidelines for future multi-family, commercial and industrial development to enhance the design of buildings to create a quality built environment.
- Protect existing residential neighborhoods.

2.3 Historic and Current Land Use Patterns

Merrimack comprises 33.55 square miles (21,475 acres), which is second only to Amherst of the communities in the Nashua region. The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) maintains a Geographic Information System (GIS) database for generalized land use in Merrimack. This information categorizes the Town into thirteen different land use classifications, including separate categories for vacant land, water resources, and roads found within the boundaries of the Town.

Table 2-1: General Land Use Types in Merrimack (2001)

Land Use (parcel-based)	Total Acres	Percent Total Land Area
Commercial	532	2.5%
Industrial	1,020	4.7%
Mixed Use	20	0.1%
Multi-family Residential (includes Condominium Units)	314	1.5%
Park/Recreation/Open Space (public)	2,751	12.8%

Land Use (parcel-based)	Total Acres	Percent Total Land Area
Park/Recreation/Open Space (private)	889	4.1%
Public Facilities	557	2.6%
Public Lands (vacant)	694	3.2%
Single-family Residential	6,631	30.9%
Road	1,695	7.9%
Vacant	5,554	25.9%
Semi-public Facilities	216	1.0%
Water	601	2.8%
Total	21,475	100.0%

Source: NRPC GIS Database for land use, 2001; Merrimack Master Plan Update 2002, p. III-1.

The 2011 data, shown in **Table 2-2** below, shows land use categories based on data from the Merrimack Assessor's Office. The Town uses somewhat different classifications for the various land use categories. This is a more detailed breakdown, which includes the number of lots that fall into those land use categories. Note that the difference in total acreage for the Town is due mostly to the fact that the Town's tax parcels, on which the 2011 data is based, do not include the boundaries that extend into the Merrimack River and other water bodies, whereas the NRPC data included more water acreage. **Figure 2-1** illustrates the 2011 land use breakdown.

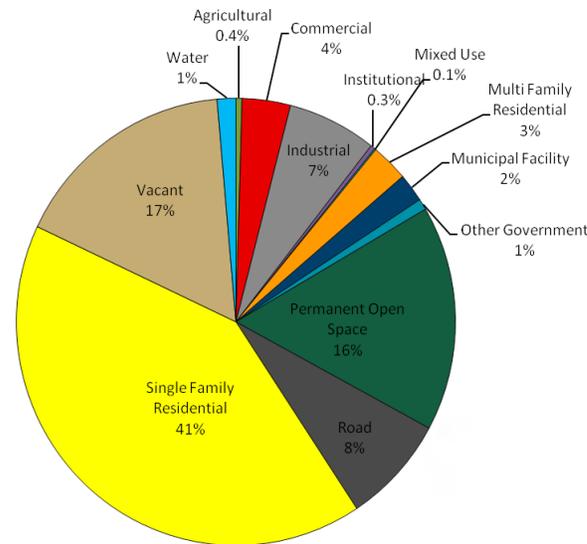
Table 2-2: General Land Use Types in Merrimack (2011)

Existing Land use	Number of Lots	Total Acres	Percent Total Land Area
Agricultural	3	94	0.4%
Commercial	221	748	3.6%
Industrial	60	1,381	6.6%
Institutional	16	69	0.3%
Manufactured Housing	14	33	0.2%
Mixed Use	2	23	0.1%
Multi-family Residential	163	576	2.7%
Municipal Facility	34	314	1.5%
Other Government	3	168	0.8%
Permanent Open Space	116	3,271	15.5%
Recreation	10	162	0.8%
Road	33	1,651	7.9%
School	10	120	0.6%
Single-family Residential	6,852	8,662	41.1%
Vacant	556	3,502	16.6%
Water	21	290	1.4%
Total	8,398	21,066	100.0%

Source: Town of Merrimack tax parcels; VHB

Clearly, there was an increase in single-family housing over the last ten years, with developed land in that category increasing 31 percent to 8,662 acres. Most of this land is west of the F.E. Everett Turnpike. Multi-family residential development occupies 576 acres, an increase of 262 acres over the last ten years. Overall, residential development represents 44 percent of the Town's land area. Permanently protected open space occupies approximately 16 percent. New commercial development occupies 216 more acres than in 2001 and industrial uses also saw an increase of 261 acres during that time frame.

Figure 2-1: Land Use Breakdown in Merrimack (2011)



There are other changes that will affect land use into the future, which are discussed later in this chapter. These include:

- The Circumferential Highway proposal has been abandoned by NHDOT, so land potentially impacted by the project can be planned accordingly.
- The Manchester Airport Access Road construction has been completed, which is likely to create new development opportunities along the Bedford/Merrimack line. The project, which created a new, two-mile highway, will improve transportation to and from Manchester/Boston Regional Airport, but will also provide access to industrial and commercial land for economic development in Londonderry.
- The Merrimack Premium Outlets project may create pressure for development in the southerly portion of Continental Boulevard.
- Vacant land is in relatively short supply – this may create an impetus for redevelopment of existing uses.

What is zoning?

Modern zoning began in the early 1900's in response to the location of potentially incompatible and noxious land uses next to commercial and residential areas. The zoning ordinance has evolved over the years as a means to limit the types of land uses that could locate in a particular area of the municipality, resulting in a separation of uses. Ideally, the Master Plan is the blueprint for the Town and the zoning ordinance is the regulation that implements the plan. Typically, a zoning ordinance regulates land use by:

Specifying and distinguishing different land use types;
Creating development standards for the size and shape of lots and the buildings erected on those lots;

Addressing lots, buildings and uses that predate the adoption of the zoning ordinance (non-conformities);

Establishing criteria for the evaluation of permit applications for new buildings;
Establishing procedures for permitting uses not specifically allowed by right;

Defining terms that have specific meanings under the ordinance; and,

Creating a map that displays the geographic extent of each zoning district.

2.4 Merrimack's Zoning Districts

For the most part, zoning districts in Merrimack correspond with existing land use patterns. Zoning district boundaries as of June 2011 are illustrated on the Zoning Map – **Figure 2-2**. In addition to the zoning districts described in this chapter, the Aquifer, Flood Hazard, Shoreline Protection, Wetlands Conservation, overlay districts are discussed in Chapter 5, Natural Resources and Open Space.

2.4.1 Industrial Zoning Districts

The Industrial Zoning District in Merrimack is divided into three sub-districts, I-1, I-2 and I-3, based upon the intensity of use and location. The I-1 District is intended for the establishment of general manufacturing, wholesale, and distribution facilities, large office complexes and other similar uses. Uses such as churches, gas stations and parking garages are allowed in this district. Restaurants, banks, offices, day cares, and hotels or motels are considered support uses to the Industrial District, and “big box” retail establishments are only allowed by Conditional Use Permit. The I-1 District is the largest industrial district, including almost all the land between the F.E. Everett Turnpike and the Merrimack River south of Greeley Street, much of the land between NH Route 3 and the Merrimack River north of Greeley Street and land on both sides of Continental Boulevard.

Within the I-1 District, a conditional use permit can be granted for mixed uses “which allow the creative integration of industrial, commercial, and residential housing developments based on a master site development plan”. These are limited to single consolidated parcels that are at least 50 acres in size, are serviced by public water and sewer, and have a minimum of 500 feet of frontage along the state maintained portions of the Daniel Webster Highway.



The I-2 District is intended for the establishment of lighter manufacturing facilities and large office developments. Support uses similar to those permitted in the I-1 District are also allowed. The I-2 District includes a large area of land west of the Turnpike in the vicinity of Exit 10 including the approximately 550 acre Fidelity Investments property and the site of the Merrimack Premium Outlets project, opened in June 2012.

The I-3 Industrial District is similar to the I-2 District but is intended to “take into consideration the proximity of Town water supply wells and established residential uses adjacent to the district”. Permitted uses include light manufacturing, offices, and research and development. The I-3 District is limited to a single 50 acre parcel located on Continental Boulevard, north-east of Greens Pond, which was recently approved by the Planning Board as the future location of Atrium Medical Corporation.

2.4.2 Commercial Zoning Districts

Commercial zoning in Merrimack is divided into two sub-districts, C-1 and C-2, based upon location and intensity of use. The C-1 District is intended to permit limited commercial use on portions of Route 3 that have a mixture of residential and non-residential uses. The District is generally applied to small lots in areas abutting residential uses and where there is a trend to convert residential structures to commercial uses. Uses allowed by right include retail establishments, personal services, and offices. Banks, automotive related uses, single user “big box” retail greater than 75,000 square feet, hotels and motels are prohibited. The Zoning Board of Adjustment may grant special exceptions for restaurants, cafes, residential uses, new telecommunication towers and accessory uses. The C-1 District includes several strips of land approximately 250 feet deep fronting on Route 3. The largest C-1 District area is on either side of Route 3 in the Reed’s Ferry area.



The General Commercial (C-2) District is intended to serve local and regional shopping and service needs. Uses allowed by right include retail establishments, offices, banks, restaurants, hotels and motels. Special exceptions may be granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment for

certain residential, automotive and other uses. “Big box” retail establishments are prohibited. District C-2 includes an area in southwest Merrimack on both sides of Route 101A, and area around F.E. Everett Turnpike Exit 11, and several stretches along Route 3 from the Exit 11 area, north toward the Bedford town line.

2.4.3 Residential Zoning Districts

Residentially zoned land in Merrimack is divided into four sub-districts, R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4, depending upon soil limitations, the provision of public sewer and water or (in the case of R-1) the rural character of the sub-district. Except in the defined R-1 District, minimum residential lot sizes are based on soil characteristics or the provision of public water and sewer. If a septic system is to be used to accommodate residential wastewater disposal, then the minimum required lot size varies from 100,000 square feet to 80,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet of contiguous non-wetland soil depending on whether the soils are classified as severe, moderate or slight, respectively. Lots with public water and sewer must meet a 40,000 square foot minimum lot size requirement and contain not less than 20,000 square feet of contiguous non-wetland soils.

Single-family residential uses and certain home occupations are allowed by right in all the residential sub-districts. The R-3 and R-4 districts permit two-family residential uses and the R-4 district permits also multi-family residential uses east of the F.E. Everett Turnpike. Churches and camouflaged telecommunication towers are allowed by special exception granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment in all of the residential districts. Each residential sub-district is further described below.

Residential (R-1) District

The R-1 District is designed to accommodate single-family residential development in areas with severe soils limitations for septic systems or areas defined by the zoning map as R-1. The area of R-1 defined by the zoning map is that relatively undeveloped rural land in the west-central and northwest areas of the Town (see **Figure 2-2**). The minimum contiguous non-wetland area for a single-family residence is 100,000 square feet (2.3 acres).

Residential (R-2) District

The R-2 District is designed to accommodate single-family residential development in areas with moderate soils limitations for septic systems. The minimum contiguous non-wetland area for a single-family residence is 80,000 square feet (1.83 acres).

Residential (R-3) District

The R-3 District is designed to accommodate single and two-family residential development in areas with slight soils limitations for septic systems. The minimum contiguous non-wetland area is 40,000 square feet for a single-family residence and 80,000 square feet for a two-family residence.

Residential (R-4) District

The R-4 District is designed to accommodate single, two-family and multi-family residential development (east of the Turnpike) in areas where public water and sewer is provided. The minimum contiguous non-wetland area is 40,000 square feet for a single-family residence, 80,000 square feet for a two-family residence, and 40,000 square feet per family dwelling unit for a multi-family residential development.

2.4.4 Planned Residential District (Overlay)

The Planned Residential District is designed to promote efficient use of land and utilities by providing an optional pattern of site development different from one in which there is a division of the land into separate lots for each structure. Planned unit developments (PUDs) are permitted within the PRD District. The PUD allows for higher density residential and compatible non-residential development in areas served by public water and sewer and with good highway access. PUDs are intended to promote site designs that make efficient use of land and utilities, and provide varied land uses, housing types and forms of ownership. PUDs must have a minimum gross tract area of 12 acres and may not exceed 400 units. Maximum density varies from 7-8 units per gross tract acre for one-bedroom units to 3 units per acre for dwellings with three or more bedrooms. Setback, landscaping and buffer requirements also apply. Several PRD Districts, most located along NH Route 3, have been established.

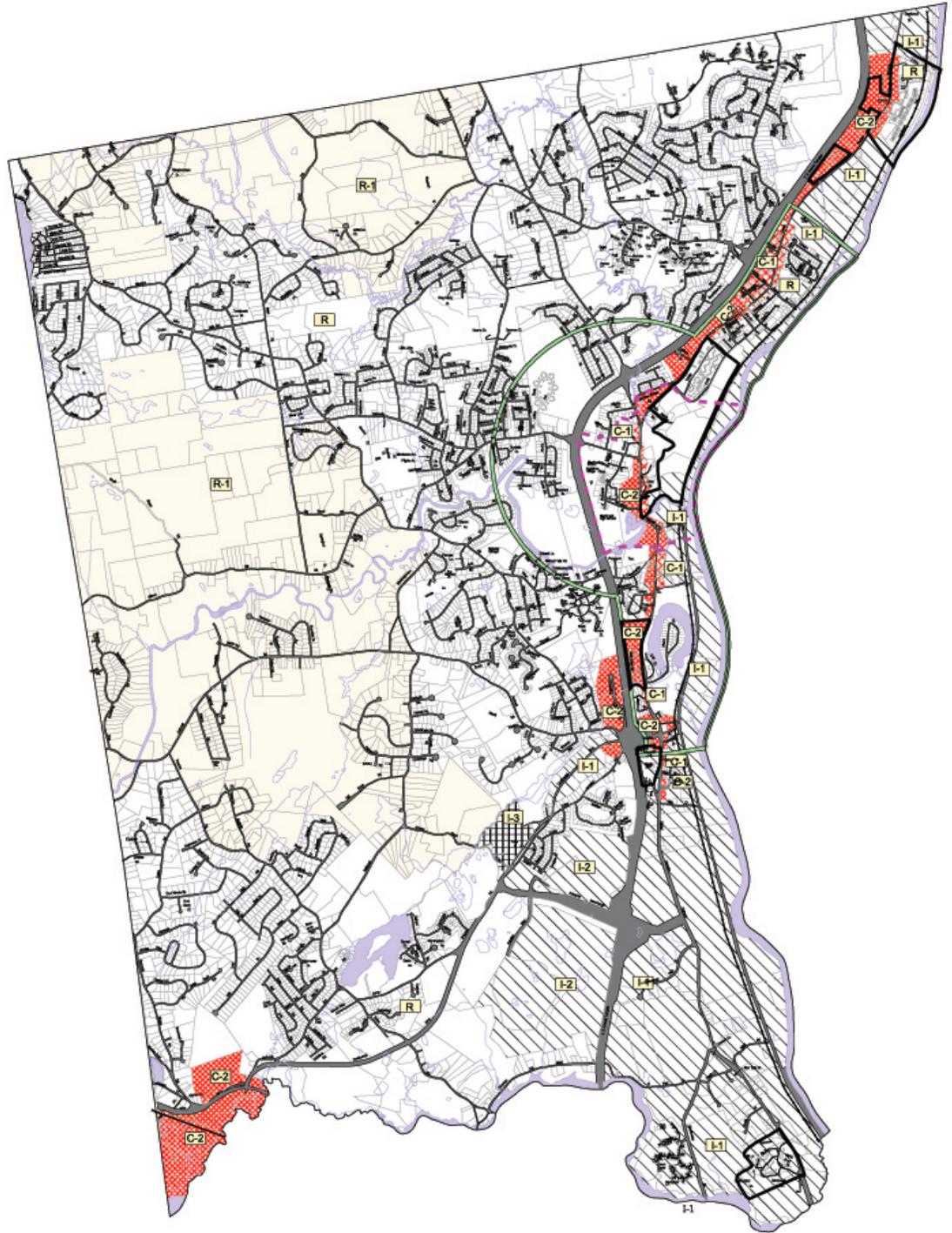
2.4.5 Elderly Zoning District (Overlay)

The Elderly Zoning District is designed to allow for the provision of higher density housing exclusively for elderly persons. The district is defined by distance from the intersection of Route 3 and Baboosic Lake Road. The district encompasses the area within a one-mile radius of the intersection west of the F.E. Everett Turnpike and within a two-mile radius east of the Turnpike. Within the district, a maximum density of eight dwelling units per acre is allowed for dwellings specifically designed and designated for occupancy by the elderly and having two or fewer bedrooms. A minimum tract area of three acres is required, and heads of households occupying the units must be at least 55 years old.

2.4.6 Town Center District (Overlay)

The Town Center District is designed to implement the recommendations of the Town Center Plan (see Appendix A, Town Center Master Plan) by encouraging an appropriate mix of land uses, transportation options and forms of development suitable to typical New England town center. Uses allowed by right include residential and any uses permitted by the underlying zoning district. In order to ensure that the intent of the Town Center Plan is being met, special exceptions may be granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment for education facilities, day care centers, offices, churches and meeting halls in any underlying zoning district. Special exceptions are also required for automotive sales and service, gas stations, drive through food service, freight and trucking terminals, contractor's yards and fuel storage if such uses are permitted in the underlying zoning district. In order to encourage rehabilitation of existing structures, special exceptions may be granted under certain circumstances to allow improvements to buildings or sites that do not conform to the minimum dimensional requirements.

Figure 2-2: Merrimack Zoning Map



Source: Base Map - Town of Merrimack, James W. Sewall Co.
 Zoning - Official Town of Merrimack, May 2000 Digitized
 by NRFC. Last updated, Feb. 2001.

2000 0 2000 4000 Feet



Town of Merrimack ZONING MAP

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | Limited Commercial District (C-1) | | Elderly (Overlay) |
| | General Commercial District (C-2) | | Planned Residential District |
| | Industrial District (I-1, I-2) | | Town Center District |
| | Industrial District (I-3) | | Property Parcel Boundaries (Approx.) |
| | Residential District (R) | | Railroad |
| | Residential District (R-1) | | Town Roads |
| | Surface Water | | Rivers and Streams |



Map prepared by NRFC. Printed 2/08
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2.5 Merrimack's Physical Form and Land Use Character

Bounded by the towns of Bedford and Manchester to the north, Amherst to the west, Litchfield and Nashua to the south, Hollis to the southwest, and the Merrimack River and floodplain along its eastern side, the Town of Merrimack is located within the area known as the Eastern New England Upland which begins at the Massachusetts border extending north to the White Mountains. This region is typified by two land forms; the rolling, somewhat hilly and wooded landscape of the land outside the floodplain with fertile soils, panoramic views from high points, numerous small lakes, wetland areas and well drained valleys. Much of the land in Merrimack, from the F.E. Everett Turnpike west to the Amherst line, falls within this category. Consequently, from a land use perspective, development patterns here are typical of other towns situated within this landform, which has been highly sought as a location for farming and ultimately, for single family residential development. Where served by individual septic systems, this development is large lot and mature in age. Much of the Town's preserved open space lies within this area which further adds to its value for residential development. Almost all of the Merrimack land that falls within this upland region is residential.

Merrimack's other land form, the river valley and floodplain, provides the location of major regional transportation systems – the F.E. Everett Turnpike connecting the Town to Massachusetts on the south and to the City of Manchester and Interstate 93 to the north, a second north/south connector- Daniel Webster Highway – which serves as a local and regional arterial, and the Boston & Maine RR which serves adjacent industrial uses but also acts as a barrier to the river. Development patterns within this valley take advantage of the flat topography and connectivity regionally with larger footprint retail, office and industrial parks and large single use buildings. There is a small amount of older, smaller lot residential development and a few higher density residential developments (smaller lot sizes, apartments and condominiums) located in pockets along the corridor. Town zoning policies over the years have supported this development pattern.

It is important to note that much of the Merrimack's prime developable land has already been developed leaving floodplain, which is not as feasible to develop.

The majority of the town's arterial roads that provide connections to the surrounding towns (refer to **Table 9-1** for roadways and roadway types) are non-commercial corridors where residential and open space networks provide the predominant character reflecting the town's rural residential base. Continental Boulevard, located in the southern portion of the town, links the commercial and transportation corridors (Daniel Webster Highway and the F.E. Everett Turnpike) with Route 101A, a highly commercialized corridor located within a small portion of the southwest corner of the town.

2.5.1 Development Character: Uplands

As mentioned, the rolling "hill and dale" topography of the upland portion of the Town has provided an ideal setting for low density residential use. These areas are served by roads which have maintained a more rural character in keeping with the low density land use. In many areas, wetlands have prohibited development from lining these roads and the result

reinforces the rural character and provides a driving experience that is diverse and more interesting. For most residents, this combination of land form and built residential form is highly valued and defines the Town's character.

Large blocks of open space provide passive recreation but also support residential land values by preserving the more rural character of a large portion of the community.

The major connecting roads in this region are defined by the adjacent low density residential and large blocks of open space/wetlands and as a result there is little long term threat to this character. A few large, undeveloped parcels still exist. Continental Boulevard, which links the Route 101A commercial corridor to F.E. Everett Turnpike and the Daniel Webster Highway corridor to the northeast, is emerging as a more mixed use corridor with a retail pocket at the Turnpike, light industrial and some office spaces mixed with residential. The completion of the Merrimack Premium Outlets and its future related hotel and commercial uses will further impact the character of the corridor, although future development may be limited by access restrictions.

2.5.2 Development Character: River Valley

The overall development character of the river valley is a mixed bag of patterns dominated by the Daniel Webster Highway corridor. Large footprint retail, office and industrial development mix with pockets of older single family homes and multi-family developments. The presence of older homes converted to commercial use has helped to rein in the scale of the corridor in certain places. There are no unifying elements, such as signage, lighting or street tree planting which could serve to tie various areas of the corridor together. Any visual relief within the corridor is provided by the residential pockets which are more effectively landscaped and afford a contrast to the commercial development which also suffers to some degree from a lack of continuity.



In certain areas the developments patterns have also been a function of lot depth between Daniel Webster Highway and the F.E. Everett Turnpike where shallow lots result in smaller footprints and strip development. Where the roadways diverge, development patterns and uses are more diverse. Larger scale development is located at the southern portion of the corridor, south of Industrial Drive where further divergence of the two roadways has

provided for large parcels of land and much larger footprint development types. Although the Merrimack River defines the valley's eastern border, its presence is effectively obscured throughout most of the Daniel Webster Highway corridor and the Boston & Maine Railroad creates an effective barrier to both physical and visual access to the river.

While the F.E. Everett Turnpike effectively serves as a separator, major arterial roads (see **Table 9-1** for roadways and roadway types) cross the highway and intersect with the Daniel Webster Highway creating key nodes in the corridor. These may provide opportunities for restructuring future development patterns and corridor character. In a related way, the character, scale and mix of development types within areas of the long, linear corridor may also provide opportunities to divide it into smaller zones or pockets, reinforced over time by new standards and common features such as signage and landscaping.

2.6 Relevant Trends

It is important to consider trends, both regionally as well as nationally, that may impact the nature and character of future development patterns in Merrimack when considering future land use policy.

2.6.1 Changing Demographics

Changes in demographics which first emerged in the 2000 census and that have been reinforced by the findings of the 2010 census suggest impacts on certain land use development patterns and more importantly, land use relationships, densities and the desire for transportation options. Among the most compelling findings impacting land development are:

- The aging of the “baby boomers” and their preferences for walkable living, in proximity to services, shopping, recreation and transportation options;
- Fluctuating gas prices and energy costs place an emphasis on development patterns that reduce dependence on the automobile which has caused renewed interest in mixed use development from municipalities as well as from the development community;
- The preferences of generation X, Y and the “creative class” (young professionals whose work is idea focused) for environments that provide live/work/play synergy;
- Changes in national transportation policies that place new emphasis on funding for TOD (Transit Oriented Development) and compact design, and reduced funding for highway development;
- The rising concerns of the public regarding energy use, sustainability and environmental consciousness;
- Technological advances that impact the home, how we work and the marketplace (how we shop);
- A growing trend toward globalization where manufacturing is moving overseas leading to a decrease in local manufacturing. This is reflected within Merrimack and has been a national trend over the past decade, and is not anticipated to reverse itself in the foreseeable future;

- Some of Merrimack's largest businesses are owned by overseas companies, such as Atrium Medical Corporation and Anheuser-Busch.

2.6.2 Land Use Policy

The impacts of these trends have slowly begun to have an effect on land use policy and have gained momentum during the last half decade as towns look to balance growth while preserving their values for quality of life:

- In rural locations, towns have looked to techniques such as cluster development and smaller lots to provide for growth while preserving rural character;
- The emergence of Smart Growth and New Urbanism which have served to establish a national dialog about the importance of neighborhoods; placed new focus on the metrics we use to create residential areas and which have provided new consideration regarding the mix of uses, walkability and scale;
- In many communities, accommodating new growth has placed an emphasis on infill sites as opposed to using undeveloped land at the periphery. For example, the City of Concord, NH, established an Opportunity Corridor Performance District for the economic development of underutilized urban properties located between the downtown business district and Interstate 93, as well as former brownfield locations within the City. Offices and a hotel and conference center have been built since the district's creation. In response to the rising demands for live/work/play relationships the development community is also looking at compact, mixed use development;
- Changing retail habits combined with rapid changes in technology have led to new retail models...in suburban areas which has resulted in the creation of "main street" and "town center" development to provide centers in "centerless" suburbs...in more urban areas this has led to new uses for older retail boxes and strips.

Regionally, Merrimack lies within the Boston sphere of influence and growth pressures and accommodation will continue to pressure towns near the NH/Massachusetts border. One of Merrimack's great strengths as articulated by its citizens- its location- will also pose a threat to its "way of life" as new development looks to capitalize on this location.

2.7 Guiding Merrimack's Land Use Development

As Merrimack looks to its future it must meet the challenges presented by its favorable location recognizing the need to balance growth with community desires for maintaining a certain kind of community, continuing needs for revenue generation so that a high level of services can be sustained and adapting it's limited land resources to meet emerging desires for new living options of a balanced demographic base. Not doing so may lessen the town's ability to attract new, high quality development as well as maintaining a healthy demographic cross section.

Given the community's expressed desire to maintain the more rural character of much of its residential area coupled with demographic desires for live/work/play synergies, to accommodate future growth Merrimack should look to the valley and the Daniel Webster corridor and

develop short, mid and long term policies and strategies for growth accommodation. Aside from the rural/residential issue, there are a number of factors that support this:

- In terms of residential product, this is where the multi-family and attached residential projects are located today...i.e. there is clear precedent for this type of development.
- This is where the bulk of support services and jobs are located.
- The corridor is well served by existing infrastructure.
- Some of the larger vacant land parcels are located here and there is a higher likelihood for change as retail trends and shopping habits impact the existing retail pattern. More importantly, taking a long term view, this is where potential changes to large, existing business operations would offer the greatest potential impacts/change to the community.
- Access to the region from the F.E. Everett Turnpike is ideal and there are now further impacts/opportunities from the completion of the Airport Access Road in late 2011.
- Future transition of former industrial uses along the river may create opportunities for using the riverfront as a positive amenity in attracting new development and providing the community with improved access to the river as an open space resource.
- The possibility of commuter rail service at some time in the future points to the need for a long term strategy for maximizing development opportunities that balance growth and meet other community objectives.

Daniel Webster Highway corridor is linear and lends itself to be divided into smaller series of "villages" to enhance the corridor.



While the Daniel Webster Highway corridor is linear and in places very narrow, existing development patterns and uses in combination with land forms and fingers of open space present opportunities to divide the corridor into smaller pieces creating a series of "villages" in the corridor mitigating the linearity. This can be further reinforced by accentuating existing nodal points defined by intersections with arterial roads that cross the F.E. Everett Turnpike (Bedford Road, Baboosic Lake Road, Continental Boulevard and Industrial Drive).



Reeds Ferry

[LEFT] Corridor along Baboosic Lake Road can be enhanced to feel like a Center Village.

[RIGHT] The southern end of the corridor (Thorntons Ferry Village) provides another opportunity for mixed-use villages.

Town Center Area

At the north end, the area known as Reed’s Ferry Village provides a number of elements that present an opportunity to create a true pedestrian scaled place. The completion of the Airport Access Road will eventually change the land use dynamics of this area and whether the commuter rail project is realized or not this area will be well suited to future mixed use development with higher density housing and retail. Reed’s Ferry Village could provide a northerly anchor to the corridor as well as a gateway entry to Merrimack from the north.

At the center of the corridor the concentration of public facilities, schools and open space along Baboosic Lake Road and the node at its intersection with the Daniel Webster Highway present an opportunity to create a “Center Village” (alternately “Town Center Village”) reinforced by common elements such as landscaping, lighting, signage and appropriate, small scale land use. There are some natural open space features as well as existing single family residential that would complement the village center.

The southern end of the corridor, known as Thorntons Ferry Village, characterized by larger land parcels and uses, could provide another opportunity for significant mixed use development that takes advantage of existing businesses, access to the F.E. Everett Turnpike and proximity to the river to create a walkable, mixed use development to anchor this end of the corridor and provide a gateway to Merrimack from the south.

Steering new development to the corridor implies that new policies should be put in place to control the type and quality of development. Further, Merrimack must compete for new development with surrounding towns that enjoy some of the same location benefits. To be successful, not only should there be a “climate” that is favorable to new development, but there must also be a level of environmental quality to the corridor that says this is a place with a long range community vision and a public sector commitment. Workable guidelines for the size, massing and character of new buildings, public improvements such as street trees, reinforcing special areas such as the town center with uniform signage and the like will attract good development that can balance the land use of the corridor in a sustainable and more livable manner.



[LEFT]
Daniel Webster Highway near
the Town Center



[RIGHT]
Signage near the
Town Center on
Daniel Webster Highway

2.8 Recommendations

- L-1 Adopt a zoning modification that allows mixed use as an infill style development with appropriate controls and design recommendations in all appropriate areas of the corridor.
- L-2 Allow higher density development in the northerly and southerly portions of the Daniel Webster Highway corridor, where connectivity to the regional transportation system is best and existing infrastructure supports this type of development.
- L-3 Adopt zoning or regulation amendments to foster access management in the Daniel Webster Highway corridor, and to provide off-street pedestrian and vehicular connectivity throughout the corridor.
- L-4 Develop portions of the Daniel Webster Highway corridor as village nodes, with traffic calming measures, pedestrian amenities, and streetscaping.
- L-5 Improve design standards for landscaping, site design, and site amenities.
- L-6 Develop access to the river corridor where possible and adopt zoning provisions in areas surrounding these access points to incentivize use of the river as an amenity.
- L-7 Develop pedestrian and bicycle connectivity from the westerly portions of the Town to the Daniel Webster Highway corridor where possible.
- L-8 Preserve and enhance the rural aesthetic of existing neighborhoods by maintaining existing allowable densities and generous setbacks west of the F.E. Everett Turnpike.
- L-9 Create incentives for open space residential development to enhance protection of open space.
- L-10 Perform a comprehensive review and update of the Subdivision Regulations, including a separation of the Site Plan Regulations as a separate set of regulations.
- L-11 Examine development review process and consider development of a “pre-application design review” process as outlined in RSA 676:4.