

Town of Sugar Hill, New Hampshire



2014 Master Plan

Master Plan
Sugar Hill, New Hampshire
Adopted May 7, 2014

Developed by the Sugar Hill Planning Board
with the assistance of the Sugar Hill Conservation
Commission
and North Country Council, Inc.



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ADOPTION OF SUGAR HILL, NEW HAMPSHIRE MASTER PLAN

In accordance with New Hampshire RSA 674:4, Master Plan Adoption and Amendment, and New Hampshire RSA 675:6, Method of Adoption, the Sugar Hill Planning Board, having held a duly noticed public hearing on April 2, 2014, hereby adopts and certifies the Master Plan dated May 7, 2014.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Sugar Hill

Sugar Hill is a town in Grafton County, New Hampshire, United States. According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of 17.2 square miles, of which 17.0 square miles is land and 0.2 square miles is water. Sugar Hill is drained by the Gale River and other tributaries of the Ammonoosuc River. The town is crossed by New Hampshire Route 117. Interstate 93 and New Hampshire Route 18 pass through the northeast corner of the town. The highest point in town is the summit of Bronson Hill, at 2,078 feet above sea level.

The population was 563 at the 2010 census. Sugar Hill is a venerable resort community which overlooks the White Mountain National Forest, with views of the Presidential, Franconia, Kinsman and Dalton ranges.

Sugar Hill was part of the 1768 charter of Gunthwaite, which was renamed Lisbon in 1824. Though settled about 1789, this town is New Hampshire's second youngest, having incorporated in 1962 (Hart's Location in Carroll County incorporated as a town in 2001). After considerable litigation, it was carved out of Lisbon to be an independent voting unit. The name Sugar Hill comes from a large grove of sugar maples in the hills.

With clean air and panoramic views from atop Sunset Hill Ridge of both the White Mountains and Green Mountains, the community became a fashionable Victorian resort. First attracted by paintings of White Mountain artists, the wealthy arrived by train to escape the heat, humidity and pollution of summers in Boston, Hartford, New York and Philadelphia. Several hostelries were built, including the Hotel Lookoff. But the grandest was the Sunset Hill House, built in 1880 after rail service arrived in neighboring Lisbon Village (Sunset Hill Station).

The Sunset Hill House, Sugar Hill, NH; from a c. 1910 postcard.

With the longest porch on a single side in New Hampshire, the Second Empire hotel



accommodated 350 guests and 300 staff. Patrons found amusement in the casino, bowling alley, or on carriage rides touring nearby Franconia Notch. Built in 1897, the 9-hole Sugar Hill House Golf Course, together with its 1900 clubhouse, is the oldest in the state and today listed on the National Register. Bobby Jones played the links.

With the advent of automobiles came a decline in the grand hotels, as tourists were no longer restricted by the limits of rail service. The Sunset Hill House remained open until 1973, longer than many of its type in the region. But it closed at season's end, when the furnishings were sold at auction. The aging structure was demolished in 1974, although its annex survived and now operates as an inn of the same name.

The first resort-based ski school in the U.S. was opened at Sugar Hill in 1929 by Katharine "Kate" Peckett with Austrian ski instructor Sig Buchmayer, both important figures in the history of skiing. The same year, organized ski trains from Boston began running to the White Mountains.



Community involvement in current local issues is strong. Improvements to our community roads, bridges and recreation areas continue to be planned and executed. This is done through careful execution of our limited budget by maintaining very small growth in the tax rate and by the active participation of community-based organizations such as the Sugar Hill Improvement Association, the Sugar Hill Historical Museum and the Sugar Hill Willing Workers group. The children's playground behind the Carolina Crapo Memorial Building (Town Hall), the basketball half court and the benches that grace the lawn of the Carolina Crapo Memorial Building were paid for by the Sugar Hill Improvement Association. Great pride is taken in providing for amenities not funded through the tax base for the benefit of the community at large. In addition, the locally founded Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust is continuing their program of acquiring and preserving our natural lands for the benefit of all.

The Master Plan

The Master Plan is a guidance document developed and updated periodically by the Planning Board following a thoughtful process of engaging the community in conversation about current and future development-related issues. The Plan contains the Planning Board's recommendations, based on what we've heard from the community, on how Sugar Hill can best maintain the special character of Sugar Hill while meeting the needs of current and future residents. The Master Plan provides the foundation for future proposals for amendments to the Sugar Hill Zoning Ordinance, and for revisions the Planning Board will make itself to the Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations, as well as for other town initiatives.

Since it is the responsibility of the Planning Board to ensure that the Master Plan is based on residents' goals and desires, public input formed the basis for the recommendations contained in the following pages. Public input was obtained through public meetings and a community survey. North Country Council was retained to provide a professional planner to facilitate the public meetings, work with the Planning Board to develop the survey, facilitate Planning Board discussions on appropriate strategies for the town, and draft the plan. A start-up "visioning session" was held on Saturday, August 22, 2012 to identify elements of the community that define Sugar Hill for residents and priority land use issues. Vision statements were developed based on those two steps. Next, the existing zoning ordinance was reviewed to determine the adequacy for shaping future development in a direction consistent with residents' desires. A community survey was then developed based on the results of the visioning session and zoning ordinance review. The survey was mailed to all residents and property owners. One hundred and ninety-eight completed surveys were received. Ninety-five percent of respondents live in Sugar Hill full or part-time. A summary of the survey results follows. The actual text of the survey with responses is contained in Appendix A. The results for the subset of respondents who vote in Sugar Hill were similar to the results as a whole.

What does the community want to keep the way it is?

- The existing 2, 3 and 5 acre zoning densities (53%)
- The existing 200 foot frontage and 75 foot setbacks throughout town (51%)
- The current list of roads designated as scenic roads (66%)
- Keeping the town Shorefront District limited to the Gale River, Streeter Pond and Coffin Pond (59%)

What does the community want to change?

- Make outdoor lighting requirements more detailed (75%)
- Regulate lot shape to avoid "spaghetti" and "flag" lots (57%)
- Adopt flexible regulations that would enable the Planning Board to influence the layout of subdivisions to minimize negative impacts on scenic views and natural resources (76%)
- Relax some zoning and site plan review requirements for agricultural enterprises (81%)
- Restrict certain activities in order to protect water resources:
 - construction in floodplains (54%)
 - hazardous materials over the aquifer (90%)
 - filling or draining wetlands (68%)
 - development close to wetlands (62%)
 - development on steep slopes (57%)
- Make development on hills and ridgelines less visible (64%)
- Allow second dwelling units to provide more affordable choices for families and seniors, specifically, accessory apartments:
 - in existing homes (87%)
 - in existing accessory structures (76%)
 - added onto existing homes (71%)

What does the community want the Planning Board to review?

- The types of businesses allowed in various parts of town (74%), including businesses that should be encouraged in the town center.
-

With the survey results in hand, the Planning Board held a series of brainstorming sessions with North Country Council staff to consider the most appropriate approach to the natural resource and land use issues of concern to residents. Conservation Commission volunteers assisted in drafting several elements of the plan focusing on natural resources. A public workshop was held on Saturday, July 13, 2013 to gather additional input on the approaches to various natural resource issues most appropriate for Sugar Hill.

A public hearing was held on the draft plan on April 2, 2014. The plan was adopted on May 7, 2014.

The final step will be implementation by town officials, voters, and volunteers, and annual review of the policies and recommendations at a joint meeting of the Planning Board and Selectboard to ensure that municipal activities and spending priorities remain consistent with residents' vision for the future of Sugar Hill.

Vision

Our vision for Sugar Hill in twenty years:

Sugar Hill continues to be a small town known for its scenic beauty, with mountain views across open fields, with homes and businesses that complement the landscape. Residents and visitors enjoy peace and quiet and dark skies, and have easy access to the natural environment.

Decision-making has considered the interconnectedness of natural systems, the relationship between public and private land use decisions and natural resources, and the relationship between Sugar Hill's natural resources and those of neighboring communities.

Flexible land use regulations have furthered both the needs of residents and natural resource protection goals.

The role of the village area has been enhanced, as a focal point and as a meeting place, as somewhere to "connect with" the community. Local businesses consistent with the small town feel provide goods and services to residents and visitors, and contribute positively to the local economy without negatively impacting the local environment.

The transportation system balances the needs of through-traffic with those of local activity, and provides safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Community spirit expresses itself in neighbors helping neighbors, and in support for good stewardship of local cultural, historic and natural treasures. Town government continues to be transparent and inclusive.



2. COMMUNITY PROFILE

Population

Prior to incorporation in 1962, population for the area now included in the municipal boundaries of Sugar Hill was not reported separately by the US Census. However, growth and decline followed regional trends, which were in turn driven by national trends. The growth and development of the area was initially driven by agriculture and logging; by the mid-1800's the region was bustling with mills and other industry and commerce related to the agricultural base. The Civil War years and the opening up of the midwest and west for more productive agriculture saw an exodus from the farms of northern New Hampshire, and soon after, sale of forest lands from the state to private companies led to the depletion of the forest resource. With the decline in the agriculture and forest products industries, industrialization and WWI, the rural communities of Northern New Hampshire in general saw a decline in year-round population until the 1970s. However, during the same period, the railroad brought seasonal visitors drawn by the scenery and four-season recreation opportunities.

POPULATION OF TOWNS IN SUGAR HILL AREA, 1850-2010

Year	Lisbon	Sugar Hill	Bethlehem	Franconia	Landaff	Easton	Littleton
1850	1880		950	584	948		2008
1860	1846		896	708	1012	(Eastern Landaff became Easton in 1867)	2292
1870	1844		998	549	882 >		2446
1880	1807		1400	550	506	302	2930
1890	2000		1207	594	499	248	3365
1900	2221		1261	655	500	249	4066
1910	2460		1201	504	526	226	4069
1920	2288		866	440	510	181	4239

1930	2324		872	514	469	132	4558
1940	2103		935	568	389	156	4571
1950	2009		882	549	342	94	4817
1960	1788 >	incorp. 1962	898	491	289	74	5003
1970	1480	336	1142	655	292	92	5290
1980	1517	397	1784	743	266	124	5558
1990	1664	464	2033	811	350	223	5827
2000	1587	563	2199	924	378	256	5845
2010	1595	563	2526	1104	415	254	5928

(Source: US Census, 1850-2010)

Sugar Hill's population had been growing significantly since incorporation in 1962 until the recent economic recession. Projections developed for NHOEP and the regional planning commissions based on past demographic trends show Sugar Hill's population remaining stable over the next few decades. Changes in the global economy, housing market trends in northern New England, the seasonal home market in the area, and regional job growth all influence Sugar Hill's population. In addition, decisions made by individual owners of large parcels can have significant impacts on the population of a small town.

POPULATION CHANGE IN SUGAR HILL, 1970 - 2010

Year	Year-round Population	% Change
1970	336	
1980	397	+18.2%
1990	464	+16.9%
2000	563	+21.3%
2010	563	NC

(Sources: US Census, 1970-2010)

While the overall year-round population of the town has been stable in recent years, the make-up of that population has been changing. According to US Census counts, the number

of year-round Sugar Hill residents who are age 65 and older increased almost 10% from 2000 to 2010. In the North Country, this shift is caused both by the aging “baby boomers” and by the increasing popularity of the region with retirees. As shown below, this trend can be expected to continue into the next couple decades – *there are almost three times as many residents between 45 and 64 years of age than there are in the 25 to 44 age group.*

SUGAR HILL RESIDENTS BY AGE GROUP, 2000 - 2010

Age Group	US Census 2000	US Census 2010
Residents younger than 5	19	26
% younger than 5	3%	5%
Residents 5 – 17 years old	83	77
% 5 – 17	15%	14%
Residents 18 – 24	30	19
% 18 – 24	5%	3%
Residents 25 – 44	136	85
% 25 – 44	24%	15%
Residents 45 – 64	190	241
% 45 – 65	34%	43%
Residents 65 and older	105	115
% 65 and older	19%	20%

(Source: U.S. Census, 2000, 2010)

Countywide figures tell a similar story – between 2000 and 2010 school age children (age 5 – 17) decreased from 16% of the population to 14%, while those 65 and older increased from 13% to 15%. Even more telling are the rates of increase – *the population of Grafton County increased 9% over the ten year period 1990 – 2000 and at the same rate from 2000 to 2010; the population that is 65 and older increased 18% during the 1990s, and by 26% in the following ten year period.*

These changes in demographics have implications for the types of services and facilities that will be required to meet the needs of Sugar Hill residents in the coming years, including housing, transportation, access to healthy food, health care, and exercise, and the often forgotten social/spiritual needs that are integral to healthy aging.

In addition, the trend toward fewer young families – only about 15% of the town’s population is between 25 and 44 – represents to some people a loss of community vitality, not only by virtue of age but also because children’s events and activities provide a common means to build community connections. On the plus side of the equation – after children leave home, many people find they have more time to volunteer, increasing the pool of knowledge and experience available for town boards and community activities. One challenge to ensuring that the community continues to be able to benefit from older residents’ wealth of knowledge will be to ensure assistive hearing devices are provided for gatherings, as well as carpooling for those unable to drive to evening meetings, or no longer able to drive at all.

Housing

In 2000, the US Census counted a total of 359 dwelling units in Sugar Hill; 87 of these were reported to be seasonal. In 2010, the US Census counted a total of 429 dwelling units (*an increase of 70*); 160 of these were reported to be seasonal (*an increase of 73*). Most of the 429 homes counted in 2010 were single family structures (95.5%) (2011 ACS 5-year estimates).

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

Total housing units	429	100.0
Occupied housing units	254	59.2
Vacant housing units	175	40.8
<i>For rent</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.7</i>
<i>Rented, not occupied</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.0</i>
<i>For sale only</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.7</i>
<i>Sold, not occupied</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>1.4</i>
<i>For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>37.3</i>
<i>All other vacants</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.7</i>
<i>Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)</i>	<i>1.4</i>	
<i>Rental vacancy rate (percent)</i>	<i>5.9</i>	

(Source: US Census 2010 SF1)

Of the 254 occupied units counted in 2010, the majority (81.1%) were owner-occupied. The average household size was smaller for renter-occupied units (1.90) than for owner-occupied units (2.29). In twenty-one of the town's occupied housing units, a householder 65 or older was living alone (US Census 2010 SF1).

HOUSEHOLD POPULATION

Occupied housing units	254	100.0
Owner-occupied housing units	206	81.1
<i>Population in owner-occupied housing units</i>	<i>472</i>	
<i>Average household size of owner-occupied units</i>	<i>2.29</i>	
Renter-occupied housing units	48	18.9
<i>Population in renter-occupied housing units</i>	<i>91</i>	
<i>Average household size of renter-occupied</i>	<i>1.90</i>	

(Source: US Census 2010 SF1)

In this decade, home building has been relatively slow in most of the state, home prices have in general been higher than in the previous decades, and vacancy rates have been low. The result in much of the state has been a shortage of housing affordable to median income working families. It has been estimated that in the Littleton Labor Market Area, which Sugar Hill is part of, 39% of renter households and 29% of owner households are paying more than 30% of their household incomes on housing costs (North Country Region Housing Needs Assessment, North Country Council, June 2011). Paying over 30% is considered to be overpaying; for many this means not enough money left in the household to pay for other basic necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, medical and dental care, and day care. Concern for this issue, particularly in areas such as southern New Hampshire and the Upper Valley, where job growth has continued, led to the passage of SB 342 in 2008 (RSA 674:58-61) requiring all communities to ensure that local regulations “provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for the development of workforce housing, including rental multi-family housing.” This means that in the majority of every town, zoning and subdivision regulations must not preclude developing housing affordable to a median

income household. In addition, some part of each town needs to be zoned to allow multi-family workforce housing of at least five units.

Economics

Employment: The most recent data on commuting patterns available at the town level is based on the 2000 US Census.

PLACE OF WORK – SUGAR HILL RESIDENTS

Place of Work	Estimated Number of Residents
Sugar Hill	69
Littleton	60
Franconia	54
Bethlehem	31
Lincoln	21
Haverhill	15
Coos County	14
Upper Valley – Hanover + Lebanon	7
Lisbon	5
Other State	5
Plymouth	4
Landaff	3

(Source: US Census, 2000 Sample Data)

The sixty-nine Sugar Hill residents estimated to work in Sugar Hill include self employed, telecommuters, and those that worked outside the home in town. The American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year-estimates 2007-2011 reported 8.0% of Sugar Hill workers 16 and over worked at home. This is slightly higher than the county (5.0%) or statewide (5.4%) averages. Similarly, the ACS 2007-2011 reported that 21.0% of Sugar Hill residents had some self employment income in the past year compared with 14.2% of New Hampshire residents taken together and 17.3% of those in Grafton County as a whole.

Sugar Hill residents are fortunate to live in a location that has the attributes of a small town but easy access to several of the region's job centers. This is reflected in a relatively short amount of time spent commuting back and forth to work. Over three-quarters (76.8%) of Sugar Hill residents travel less than a half hour to work, a figure that is slightly higher than the county figure (72.4%) and significantly higher than the state-wide figure (63.9%) (ACS 5-year estimates 2007-2011). Similarly, only 5.6% of Sugar Hill residents have commutes of an hour or more compared to 7.8% of county residents as a group and the statewide figure of 9.0 %.

The unemployment rate in Sugar Hill was only 2.8% in 2012 (NH Employment Security). Jobs in Sugar Hill are provided by a number of well established small businesses, such as Presby Construction, Polly's Pancake Parlor and Sunset Hill House. A substantial number of residents also work in either Franconia or Littleton, both easily accessible via state highways. The largest employers in Franconia are Garnet Hill catalog sales, Franconia Notch State Park, Cannon Mountain, and Lafayette Center nursing home. In Littleton, four of the largest ten employers are in retail – Shaw's, Home Depot, Lowes, and WalMart. Other large employers in Littleton's service sector are Littleton Coin and Littleton Regional Hospital. Manufacturing jobs are provided by Hitchiner Manufacturing (metal products), Burndy Corporation (electrical connectors), Genfoot America (boots) and other occupants of the Littleton Industrial Park.

The tables below from NH Employment Security Economic + Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMI) show the number of employees and average weekly wages for the various industries in Sugar Hill, Franconia and Littleton in 2011. (Sectors with too few employers to publish data without violating privacy are shown with an "n".) Following those tables is another containing ELMI projections for this decade. As shown, the largest industry in Sugar Hill is Accommodation and Food Services, and while that industry is projected to grow in the North Country, average weekly wages in Sugar Hill for jobs in that industry were only \$345.47 in 2011, substantially below the average for the town as a whole (\$527.65). In adjacent Franconia where many residents also work, the largest sectors are State Government, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Accommodation and Food Services. Again, all three sectors are projected to grow, but all have average weekly wages below the average for the town. In Littleton, the largest sector is retail, with average weekly wages of \$565.50. On the positive side, Littleton also provides a substantial number of manufacturing

jobs with average weekly wages of \$718.27, and Littleton's Health Care and Social Assistance sector paid an average weekly wage of \$1040.92 in 2011.

SUGAR HILL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage
Total, Private plus Government	134	\$527.65
Total Private	122	\$515.88
Goods-Producing Industries	n	n
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	n	n
Mining	n	n
Construction	n	n
Manufacturing	0	\$0.00
Service-Providing Industries	n	n
Utilities	0	\$0.00
Wholesale Trade	n	n
Retail Trade	n	n
Transportation and Warehousing	0	\$0.00
Information	0	\$0.00
Finance and Insurance	0	\$0.00
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	n	n
Professional and Technical Service	n	n
Management of Companies/Enterprises	0	\$0.00
Administrative and Waste Services	n	n
Educational Services	0	\$0.00
Health Care and Social Assistance	n	n
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	\$0.00
Accommodation and Food Services	49	\$345.47
Other Services Except Public Admin	n	n
Unclassified Establishments	0	\$0.00
Total Government	11	\$656.61
Federal Government	0	\$0.00
State Government	0	\$0.00
Local Government	11	\$656.61

(Source: NH Employment Security Economic + Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMI), 2012)

FRANCONIA EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage
Total, Private plus Government	879	\$702.50
Total Private	660	\$774.64
Goods-Producing Industries	41	\$770.95
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	0	\$0.00
Mining	0	\$0.00
Construction	n	n
Manufacturing	n	n
Service-Providing Industries	619	\$774.88
Utilities	0	\$0.00
Wholesale Trade	26	\$975.88
Retail Trade	n	n
Transportation and Warehousing	0	\$0.00
Information	0	\$0.00
Finance and Insurance	12	\$544.02
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	9	\$488.82
Professional and Technical Service	n	n
Management of Companies/Enterprises	0	\$0.00
Administrative and Waste Services	7	\$303.87
Educational Services	n	n
Health Care and Social Assistance	120	\$620.38
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	23	\$492.05
Accommodation and Food Services	98	\$247.78
Other Services Except Public Admin	56	\$822.53
Unclassified Establishments	0	\$0.00
Total Government	219	\$485.33
Federal Government	3	\$1,117.08
State Government	164	\$409.09
Local Government	52	\$691.24

(Source: NH Employment Security Economic + Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMI), 2012)

LITTLETON EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Employment	Avg. Weekly Wage
Total, Private plus Government	4,467	\$698.43
Total Private	4,086	\$682.23
Goods-Producing Industries	781	\$708.50
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	n	n
Mining	0	\$0.00
Construction	n	n
Manufacturing	635	\$718.27
Service-Providing Industries	3,305	\$676.02
Utilities	n	n
Wholesale Trade	52	\$738.89
Retail Trade	1,456	\$565.50
Transportation and Warehousing	26	\$724.79
Information	74	\$833.38
Finance and Insurance	103	\$756.73
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	105	\$586.80
Professional and Technical Service	163	\$1,019.22
Management of Companies/Enterprises	n	n
Administrative and Waste Services	44	\$286.99
Educational Services	n	n
Health Care and Social Assistance	758	\$1,040.92
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7	\$529.71
Accommodation and Food Services	416	\$316.45
Other Services Except Public Admin	95	\$435.40
Unclassified Establishments	0	\$0.00
Total Government	381	\$872.02
Federal Government	35	\$1,056.31
State Government	69	\$826.06
Local Government	278	\$860.13

(Source: NH Employment Security Economic + Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMI), 2012)

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS FOR
NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL REGION

	2010	2020	Percent	
	Base	Projected	Change	Change
Total Employment	46,410	47,591	1,181	2.5%
Goods-Producing Industries	5,660	5,670	10	0.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	969	950	-19	-2.0%
Mining	35	32	-3	-8.6%
Construction	1,527	1,645	118	7.7%
Manufacturing	3,129	3,043	-86	-2.7%
Service-Providing Industries	37,246	38,629	1,383	3.7%
Utilities	201	188	-13	-6.5%
Wholesale Trade	549	530	-19	-3.5%
Retail Trade	7,866	7,619	-247	-3.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	974	939	-35	-3.6%
Information	418	382	-36	-8.6%
Finance and Insurance	850	827	-23	-2.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	486	493	7	1.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	654	638	-16	-2.4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	474	500	26	5.5%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services	564	583	19	3.4%
Educational Services	4,468	4,722	254	5.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,763	6,660	897	15.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,724	2,018	294	17.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	7,189	7,554	365	5.1%
Other Services (Except Government)	1,356	1,311	-45	-3.3%
Government	3,710	3,665	-45	-1.2%
Federal Government, excluding Postal Service ¹	258	249	-9	-3.5%
State Government, excluding Education ²	1,138	1,182	44	3.9%
Local Government, excluding Education ²	2,314	2,234	-80	-3.5%
Self-employed and Unpaid Family Workers	3,504	3,292	-212	-6.1%
Self-employed	3,477	3,271	-206	-5.9%
Unpaid Family Workers	27	21	-6	-22.2%

n - Employment data does not meet disclosure standards

1. Does not include employment at Federal Correctional Institution, Berlin

2. Employment for public schools and colleges is included in sector 61, *Educational Services*.

(Source: NH Employment Security Economic + Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMI), 2013)

Incomes: The incomes of Sugar Hill residents are in general higher than county or state averages. The American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2007-2011 (adjusted to 2011 dollars) reported a per capita annual income of \$37,857 for Sugar Hill, \$29,090 for Grafton County, and \$32,357 for the state as a whole.

ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Income	Sugar Hill	Grafton County	State
Median	\$75,066	\$53,000	\$64,664
Mean	\$85,139	\$71,765	\$81,537

(Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2007-2011, in 2011 dollars)

Tax Base: Since communities vary in their schedules for reassessments, and so their ratio of assessed value to true market value, equalized valuation per capita is typically used when discussing the tax base. As shown below, Sugar Hill's per capita equalized valuation of \$265,803 is similar to that of Easton and Franconia, and substantially higher than other adjacent towns. These three towns also have in common a high proportion of seasonal homes.

While tax rates are assisted by the presence of seasonal homes, other factors with a substantial influence include the population of the community, level of services provided, and nonresidential property.

TAX BASE AND SEASONAL HOMES

Town	1. Per Capita Equalized Assessed Value in 2011	2. Percentage of Housing Stock that is Seasonal.	3. Total Property Tax Rate in 2011
Bethlehem	\$92,378	20%	\$29.87
Easton	\$259,792	35%	\$10.83
Franconia	\$256,106	38%	\$16.29
Landaff	\$119,444	18%	\$17.29
Lisbon	\$70,174	10%	\$28.60
Littleton	\$104,816	5%	\$20.40
Sugar Hill	\$265,803	37%	\$18.63

(Sources: 1. NH Public Finance Consortium, based on NHEOP population estimates and NH Department of Revenue Administration data. 2. 2010 US Census. 3. NH Public Finance Consortium, based NH Department of Revenue Administration data.)

3. NATURAL RESOURCES

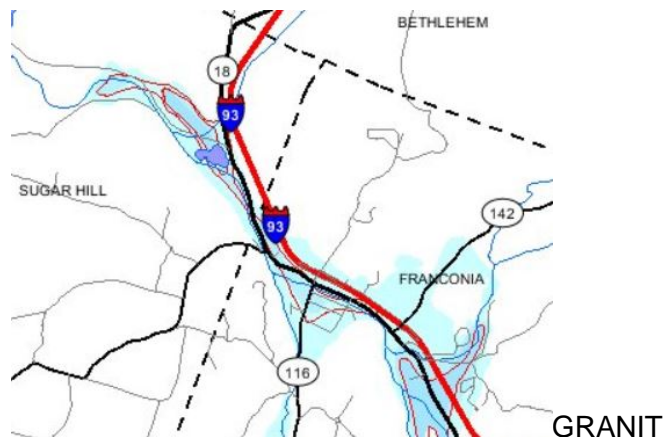
Introduction

Sugar Hill's natural resources are important to residents and visitors alike. The scenic outdoor environment, and opportunities it provides, form an essential foundation of the community's character. When planning for the continued growth of Sugar Hill, it is critical to ensure that high priority natural resource areas are protected, and that development is sited and managed in a manner compatible with continued enjoyment of a clean, scenic outdoor environment. Development should also occur in a manner compatible with natural resource-based enterprises. This section of the plan provides some background on several types of local resources, and some resource-specific recommendations. Conservation Commission volunteers contributed much of this information. Additional discussion and recommendations regarding some natural resource-based development considerations can be found in

Section 4. Land Use.

Groundwater

New Hampshire's important stratified drift aquifers have been mapped by N.H. Department of Environmental Services and U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey. As shown below, there is a stratified drift aquifer in the area of Coffin Pond and the Gale River which may have potential for a future public water supply or to supply a business dependent on large volumes of water. As shown, the larger portion of this aquifer is in neighboring Franconia. Contaminants would flow from Franconia to Sugar Hill – protection of this resource will require the participation of both communities.



Sugar Hill residents, visitors and businesses throughout town are currently entirely dependent on a continued supply of clean groundwater from private wells to meet their needs. At the present time local officials are not aware of any apparent threats to groundwater purity in town. The Selectmen's actions in removing junk vehicle storage areas have prevented potential contamination from leaking oil and other fluids. There are currently few other potential contamination sources in town. Land use must continue to be managed carefully to ensure that activities do not occur which could pose a threat to water quality. A large majority of survey respondents (90%) indicated support for restricting businesses that use or store large quantities of hazardous materials in aquifers. Some of the uses with the potential to contaminate groundwater include those which involve the production, sale, storage or transportation of fuel oil, gasoline, or other hazardous substances; disposal, processing or recycling of hazardous substances; septage lagoons; snow dumps; solid waste facilities; storage of road salt or other de-icing chemicals; and vehicle service and repair shops. Guidance on managing these and other land uses in aquifer areas is available in NHDES/NHOEP Model Groundwater Protection Ordinance (revised June 2006).

Except for wells that are considered to be a public water supply due to the number of users, most wells in town are not subject to period testing requirements. The Conservation Commission has recommended that the town perform a sampling of drinking water to establish a baseline for drinking water purity. In addition to bacterial contamination, water would be analyzed for toxic minerals, nitrogen content, and a reasonable number of toxic chemicals such as petroleum, pesticides and herbicides. This would be of use in determining whether future spills had any detrimental effect on water quality.

Large water withdrawals are also an increasing concern in some New Hampshire communities. State law does not currently enable towns to regulate these withdrawals; however, zoning powers do allow towns to limit land uses to those compatible with available resources and services. In addition, improved methods of managing stormwater can also have the benefit of increasing groundwater recharge. This includes designing the site to enable recharge, and also protection of wetlands and vegetated buffers to slow flow down and allow time for more recharge to occur.

Recommendations

- *Initiate a conversation with the Franconia Planning Board to discuss protection of the shared aquifer along the Gale River.*
- *Review and amend the zoning ordinance to ensure that only land uses compatible with future water supply protection are allowed in aquifer areas, and to require best management practices for the use or storage of hazardous materials throughout town.*
- *Consider possible approaches for developing a water quality database through a voluntary testing program.*
- *Ensure that the town's emergency response plan is current and resources are available to manage a spill of potential contaminants on state and town highways.*
- *Review proposed new development to ensure that existing neighboring wells receive adequate protection.*
- *Review the land uses allowed in town to ensure that large water users are restricted to areas where drawdown will not negatively impact other users.*
- *Amend land use regulations to require stormwater to be managed on the site in a manner which will maximize clean groundwater recharge.*
- *Ensure that the town continues to follow best management practices for salt storage.*

Surface Water Resources

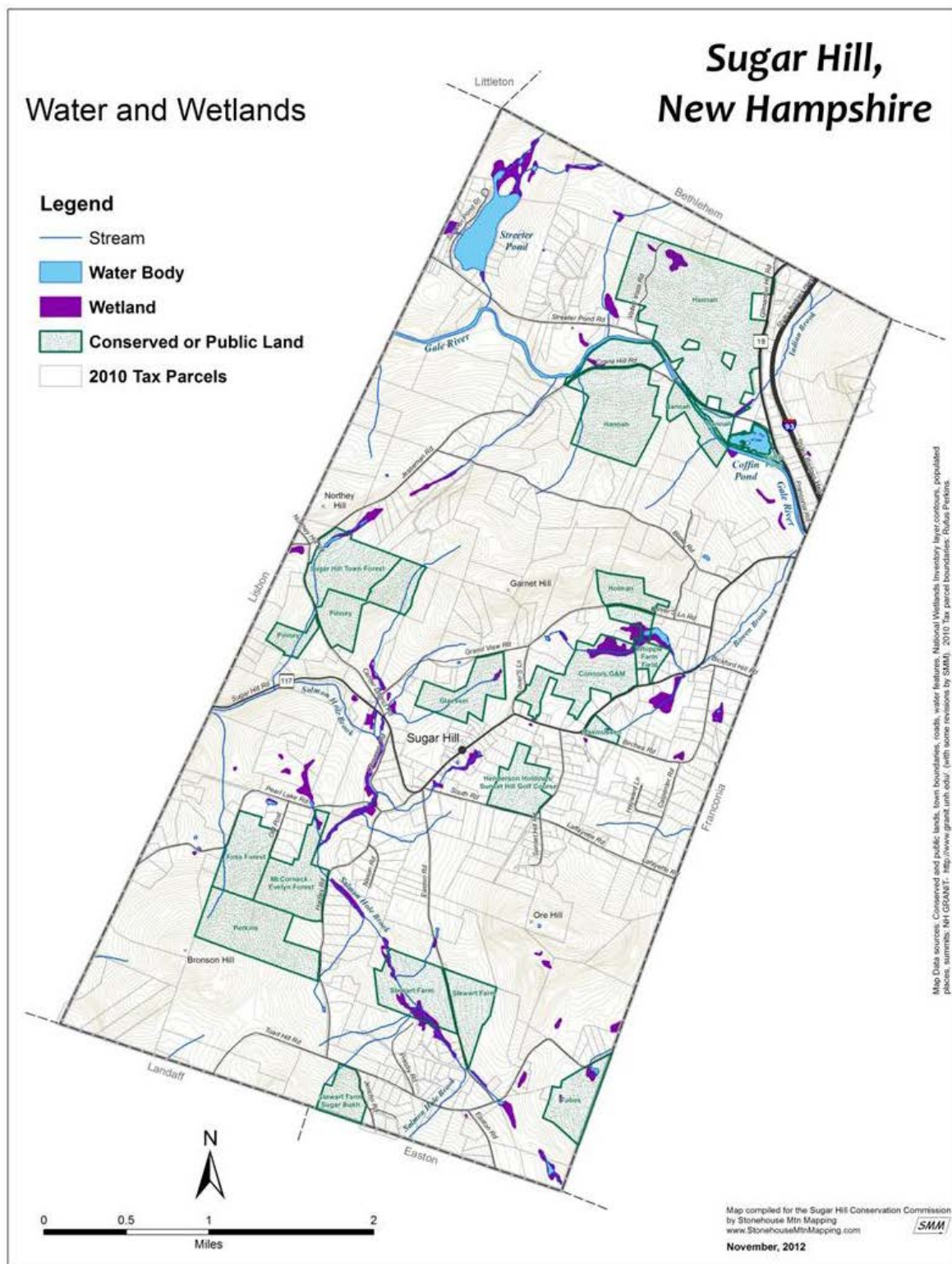
The map on the next page shows the major surface water resources of Sugar Hill.

The Gale River is the only river in Sugar Hill, where it flows uninterrupted by



dams. The eastern half flows through a floodplain only a few feet above normal high water which results in natural periodic flooding of adjacent property. The floodplain of the Gale

also includes some of the best agricultural land in the town (see Agricultural Soils map on page 32).



In the areas upstream of Sugar Hill (Franconia) the river banks have been left wooded, thus reducing silt load and riverbank erosion. In some areas in the eastern part of Sugar Hill the riverbanks have been cleared or left with only a few trees; this is associated with erosion and silt load during periods of high water. The state's shoreline regulations have been in flux for several years and resources for landowner education and enforcement have been cut substantially.

The Bowen Brook system drains northeastern Sugar Hill and the Salmon Hole system drains southwestern Sugar Hill in that direction. Unlike the Gale, many of these smaller streams have been dammed; some of these impoundment areas are associated with important wetlands which serve to slow water runoff and reduce erosion, while creating wildlife habitat. These dammed areas both large and small play an important role in mitigating the effects of poor logging practices which have occasionally plagued Sugar Hill, silting up streams, damaging roads and destroying trout habitat.

The three ponds of note in Sugar Hill are Streeter Pond, Coffin Pond and Bowen Brook Dam. Streeter Pond and Bowen Brook Dam were originally streams flowing through wetlands which were dammed in the early 20th century to produce ponds. These ponds then developed more extensive wetlands. Beaver moved in and extended the dams, increasing the wildlife habitat further. Both of these ponds have deep organic bottom layers. These two large wetlands provide some of the most important wildlife habitat in the town (see Wildlife Habitat map, page 35). Coffin Pond is derived from a gravel pit dug for the interstate, has a hard bottom, and less extensive vegetation and thus less wildlife habitat. Its level is regulated by a sluiceway to the Gale River.

In addition to these ponds there are numerous smaller ponds. In most cases these are associated with wetlands, but a few are man-made and surrounded by mowed grass. These decorative ponds are of some value in holding runoff and controlling erosion, but lack many of the important advantages associated with naturally vegetated wetlands. One concern is that if herbicides and other lawn chemicals are used near these ponds, they may constitute a water quality threat by providing a conduit to groundwater and downstream areas.

In addition to the large wetland complexes easily visible on the Water and Wetlands Map on page 22, there are also numerous smaller seasonally wet areas that also serve important

functions. Depending on their type and location, wetlands provide important wildlife and plant habitat, groundwater recharge, and water quality protection, while slowing down stormwaters to moderate floodwater flows.

To maintain the high quality of Sugar Hill's surface waters and its healthy aquatic ecosystems, it is necessary to both keep development activities separated from the town's rivers, brooks and wetlands, and to maintain a vegetated buffer around these surface waters. Shoreline vegetation, and the layer of organic matter that builds up underneath it, slow down stormwater runoff and trap sediment and other pollutants before they reach the river or brook. Vegetation also provides for necessary shade for aquatic species and slows the advance of some harmful invasive species. Following a thorough review of available research and consultation with natural resource professionals and state and federal regulators, New Hampshire experts recommended a minimum naturally vegetated buffer width of 100 feet for removal of pollutants and some of the needs of wildlife ([Buffers for Wetlands and Surface Waters: A Guidebook for New Hampshire Communities](#),



Chase, Deming, and Latawiec, 1997). The 100 foot width had been shown to be associated with 70% or better removal rate for pollutants. Shoreline buffers are important for both open water such as ponds, brooks and rivers, and for wetlands. It should be noted that sensitive habitat areas and many wildlife species require larger buffers. In Sugar Hill, the state

Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act only provides some minimal protection for the Gale River, Coffin Pond and Streeter Pond, requiring only a fifty foot setback for primary structures, and requiring 25% of the area between 50 feet and 150 feet to be maintained in its natural state. Groundcover must be left intact in the 50 foot buffer except for a 6 foot path; some trees and saplings can be removed within this 50 foot buffer according a point system. The town's Shorefront District provides some additional protection for these water bodies. The town requires a 150 foot setback for most uses and requires a special exception for the cutting of trees and other natural vegetation.

Recommendations

- *Maintain the Shorefront District in the town's zoning ordinance.*
- *Increase awareness of our rivers and ponds to strengthen public support for conservation efforts. The Conservation Commission could prepare a brief pamphlet for the lower Gale River, Streeter Pond, and Coffin Pond, with maps showing access, points of interest and appropriate activities.*
- *Educate the community, with special emphasis on landowners, on the benefits of wetlands and shoreline buffers, and on the benefits to the community of regulations to protect them. Many property owners are aware of state wetlands and shoreline regulations only when they apply for permits to build or when they learn that that they have committed violations. The possibility of including this type of education information, e.g., about common wetlands and shoreline infractions, in tax bills should be explored. Brochures and posters on how to enhance wetlands protection and restore vegetated buffers should be displayed at the town office. The Conservation Commission should sponsor one or more lectures on wetland and shoreline regulations each year, and assist with a field trip for students.*
- *Strengthen efforts to enforce state wetlands and shoreline regulations. This includes both increasing awareness of developers and contractors, and engaging town officials such as police and the road agent who may be the first to see a disturbance.*
- *Amend the zoning ordinance to incorporate local protection for wetlands. The majority of survey respondents supported protection for both wetlands and their buffers. Local regulations would fill the gaps left by state and enable local enforcement.*
- *Amend the zoning to strengthen the town's floodplain ordinance. The majority of survey respondents supported restricting new construction in the 100 year floodplain. Climate change has led to increases in the frequency of severe storms. NHDES*

Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques contains a "no adverse impact" floodplain ordinance which could be adapted to the town's needs.

- *Monitor the reach of floodwaters during and after storm events to augment NFIP mapping with local knowledge.*
- *Strengthen stormwater regulations in subdivision and site plan review regulations to reduce the potential for erosion and sedimentation.*
- *Work with conservation organizations and willing landowners to obtain conservation easements on undeveloped areas along the Gale River, the north end of Streeter Pond, Coffin Pond and Peckett's Pond (Bowen Brook Dam), as well as high priority wetlands. One focus of this effort should be establishing linkages between existing conservation areas.*
- *Explore the possibility, and costs and benefits, of designating Streeter Pond and the associated wetlands complex as a prime wetland.*
- *Research and consider possible approaches to provide landowners with incentives to protect and restore vegetated buffers along all of the town's smaller brooks as well as the Gale River.*

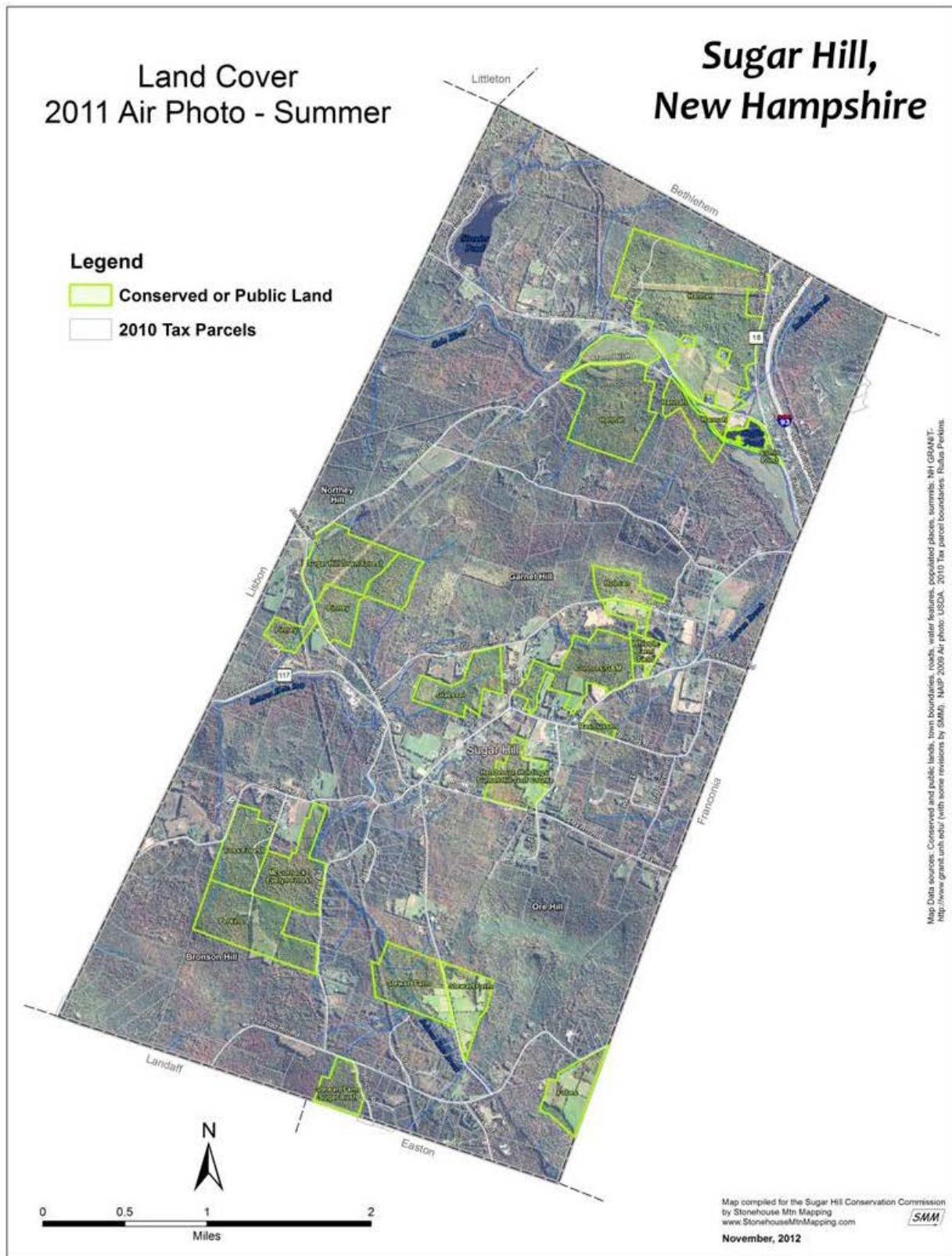
Forest Lands

The forests of Sugar Hill have gone through many changes since the first European settlement. In the years since the settlers arrived, the forests have been utilized for construction; cleared to convert land to agriculture, both for crops and for grazing livestock; used to produce charcoal to fire the "Iron Furnace" and heat homes; cleared to open views for vacation homes; and utilized for industries such as furniture-making and area paper and pulp mills. Much land that was cleared for agriculture has now grown back to forest. Today, the vast majority of the town is forested. Local forests continue to be valued by residents for their scenic, wildlife habitat and recreation benefits, as well as for fuel and forest products.

The majority of the forests of Sugar Hill are mixtures of the Northern Hardwoods forest type. This forest type is dominated by a combination of sugar maple, American beech, ash, and black cherry, with scattered large white pine, and mixtures of paper birch, big-tooth aspen, elm and red maple. In areas of sandy soil, white and red pine become more common as do red maple and balsam fir. In wetter areas, white pine, eastern hemlock, red maple and balsam fir often flourish.

Because of the heavy utilization of the forest, practically continually since settlement, the forest stands we see today are relatively young in respect to their successional stage of development. An example of this is the abundance of aspen and large limbed, mature paper birch in forest stands in Sugar Hill. These two early successional species are first to appear when a farm field or pasture is taken out of production because they will only germinate and thrive in full sunlight condition. So when we see these species mixed in with the almost ubiquitous stands of sugar maple, beech and cherry, we know that the birch got its start first, as the farm was left to return to its native state. In the years to come, these “pioneer species” will become less and less of a feature of forest stands; however, they will remain in their place on the forest edge and in old fields that are left unmowed.





New Hampshire's forests help mitigate climate change by transforming carbon dioxide to oxygen and storing the carbon. However, climate change holds several threats to our forests. Several pests and pathogens are expected to increase in severity as winter temperatures are moderated by climate change. In addition, extreme weather events, and associated flooding and high winds, are expected to increase as sources of damage to local forests. Climate change is also expected to lead to shifts in the ranges of many tree species. It is important to keep our forests as resilient as possible for adapting to climate change and withstanding these factors. This means helping maintain forest health through good management practices, and staying abreast of pest and disease outbreaks and responding quickly. In addition, a diversity of species will help mitigate the results of species shifts and pest and disease outbreaks.

One type of forest pest that the public has become more knowledgeable about is invasives. Invasive species pose a considerable threat to habitat biodiversity and to the forest products industry. The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Emerald Ash Borer, and Asian Longhorned Beetle (not yet documented in N.H.) have all been making headlines. Just as harmful are the invasive plants that crowd native species out of disturbed areas or new openings in the forest created by harvest operations.

Landowners desiring to have their forests managed to support the continuation of the region's forest products industry, realize income from their woodlands, or diversify the wildlife habitat, often lack the personal knowledge needed to ensure that those working in the forest are following best practices. The results of disregard for best practices can be devastating erosion of productive soils, poor regeneration, loss of forest health, loss of habitat, siltation of surface waters, and damage to roads.

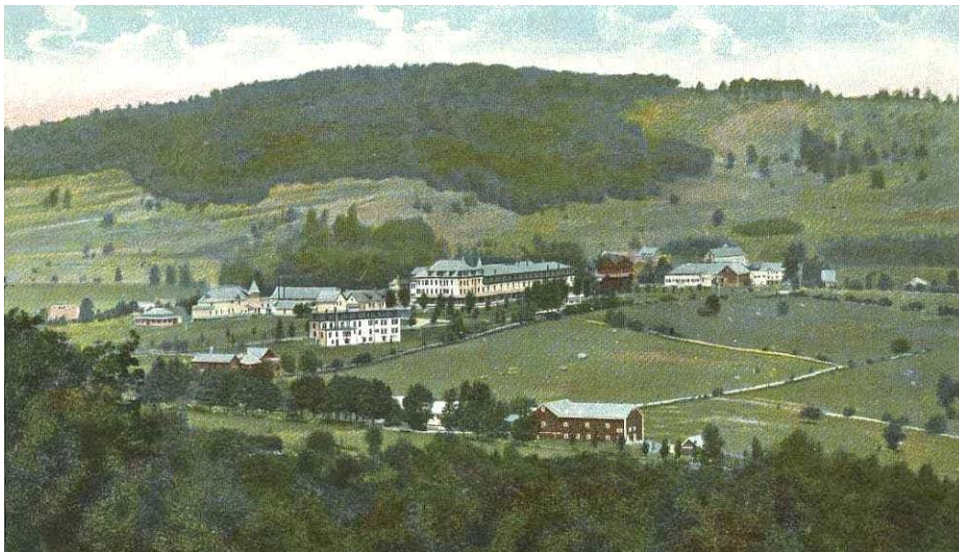
Recommendations

- *Initiate program of training for and by Conservation Commission members on the identification of invasive species.*
- *Increase education for forest landowners. Opportunities include providing copies of best management practices guides, a model harvest contract, and county forester contact information to large landowners, and to those applying for building permits or subdivision approval.*

- *Explore the possibility of re-establishing a town forester position to provide education and consultation with landowners and loggers when an intent to cut is filed, and subsequent monitoring, including to ensure that appropriate timber tax is paid.*
- *Research and consider incentives that could be provided for implementing better forest management practices such as increased buffers along surface waters and trails, and protection of important habitat areas.*
- *Encourage landowners to manage their forest lands for timber, wildlife habitat, and public recreation where appropriate.*

Agricultural Lands

Similar to rest of the state, the amount of land in agricultural use in Sugar Hill has been declining over the years. Old photographs such as this 1906 postcard show that the land cover pattern was once the opposite of today's – cleared land with occasional forested areas rather than forested land with occasional open spaces. Reforestation occurred as New England's agricultural economy declined, and the remaining open areas were easier and less costly to develop. Much of the land that remains open today is not being used to produce food for people or animals.



The Sunset Hill House, Annex and Cottages, Sugar Hill, NH; from a c. 1906 postcard, Wikimedia Commons.

Prime agricultural soils are those which are most productive for food, feed, forage and other crops due to their physical and chemical properties. In many cases, these are the same properties that have made them attractive areas for development – level and well drained. As shown on the map on the next page, Sugar Hill has significant acreage of prime agricultural soils; however, much of this has already been subdivided for residential use.

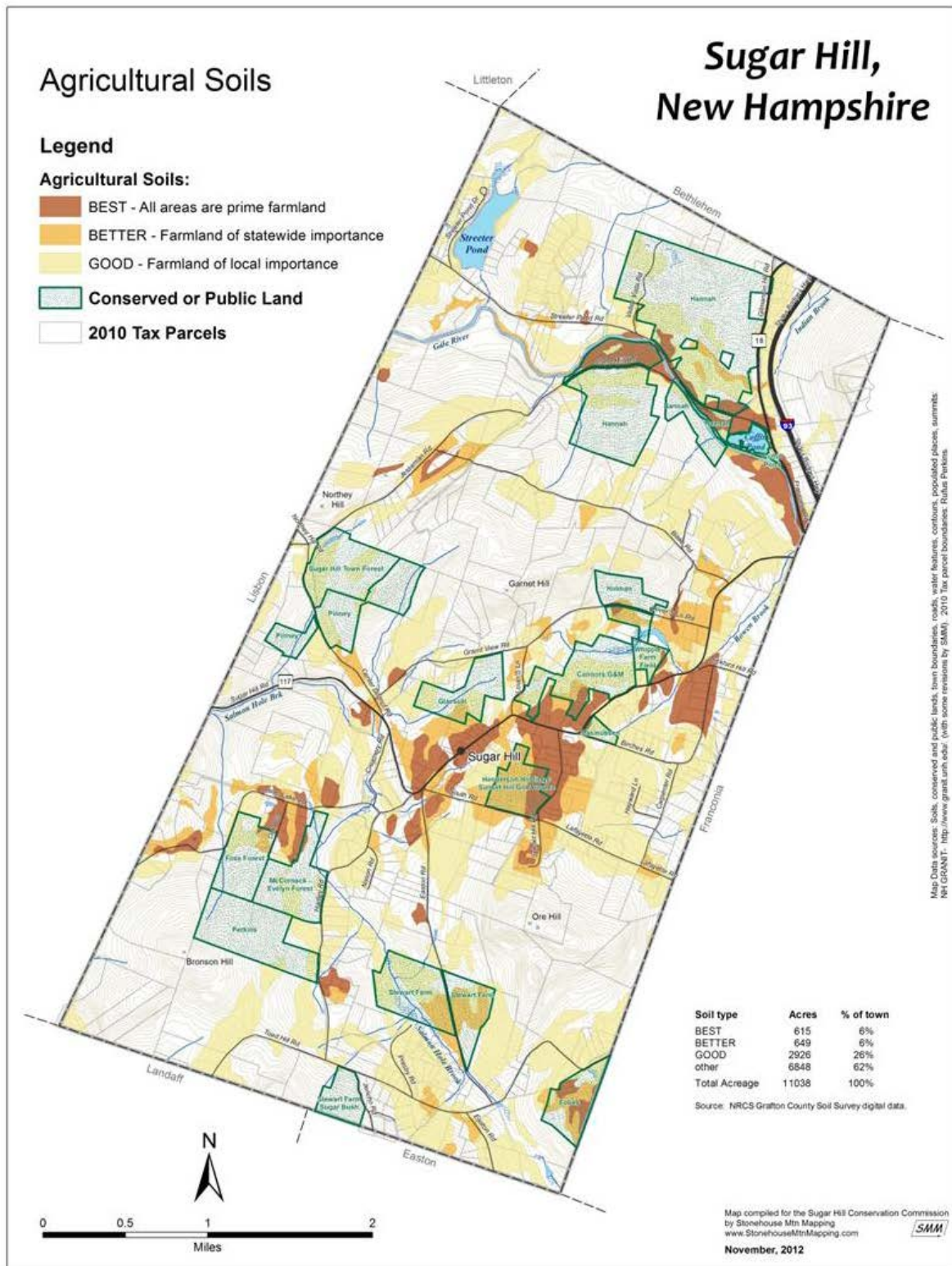
The state's current use program provides a tool for landowners wishing to keep their land in agriculture, forest or other open space use; land in current use is taxed on the value of the land as used today instead of its higher development value. In 2003 there were 141 owners participating in the program in Sugar Hill representing 239 parcels totaling 7927 acres. Of these, 1081 acres were considered farmland. In 2013, participation had increased to 160 owners with 265 parcels totaling 8094 acres. However, the acreage that is farmland has dropped to 965 acres.

Two significant farms in Sugar Hill and part of a third (the rest of the property is in Franconia) have been permanently conserved. These are the Ski Hearth Farm, Stewart Farm, and Toad Hill Farm. A portion of the open fields of Bronson Hill as well as the last open field of the former Whipple Farm on Route 117 have also been conserved. All of these lands are available for farming in the future.

Significant tax benefits and funding opportunities are available for landowners who conserve prime agricultural land.

Agricultural lands provide a fundamental element of the character of Sugar Hill. The scenic views the town is known for are dependent upon the views of mountains across an open foreground. Local products and agricultural activity are also essential ingredients. In turn, the local and regional economy are dependent on this scenery and working landscape character. Across New England, local food sources, and the





opportunity to produce food locally by keeping prime agricultural lands open, are being recognized as important elements of community resiliency. It is also understood that a critical mass of agricultural activity supported by regional networks, and the ability to be flexible and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances and markets, are essential to the agricultural economy.

Today, in 2014, we are hoping to revitalize an agrarian economy and support building a local food system in northern New Hampshire. Demand for local food far outstrips supply in our region. A key strategy to meet the demand for food is to encourage and assist Sugar Hill residents to put their land into productive agriculture, whether for grazing animals or growing vegetables or high quality hay.



The Sugar Hill community has consistently indicated support for agricultural land protection in surveys. In a 1982 Sugar Hill Conservation Commission survey, 93% of respondents felt that agricultural land should be protected using land use planning and property tax breaks. In a similar 2002 survey, the majority of respondents felt that it was important to preserve working farmland and undeveloped/open fields. In 2012, 81% of respondents favored relaxing zoning and site plan review requirements for certain agricultural enterprises.

With the increase in interest in local foods and land stewardship, county-wide figures have shown a reversal in agricultural land loss trends. Both the number of farms and the total acreage in the county in agricultural use increased between the 2002 and the 2007 US Census of Agriculture.

Recommendations

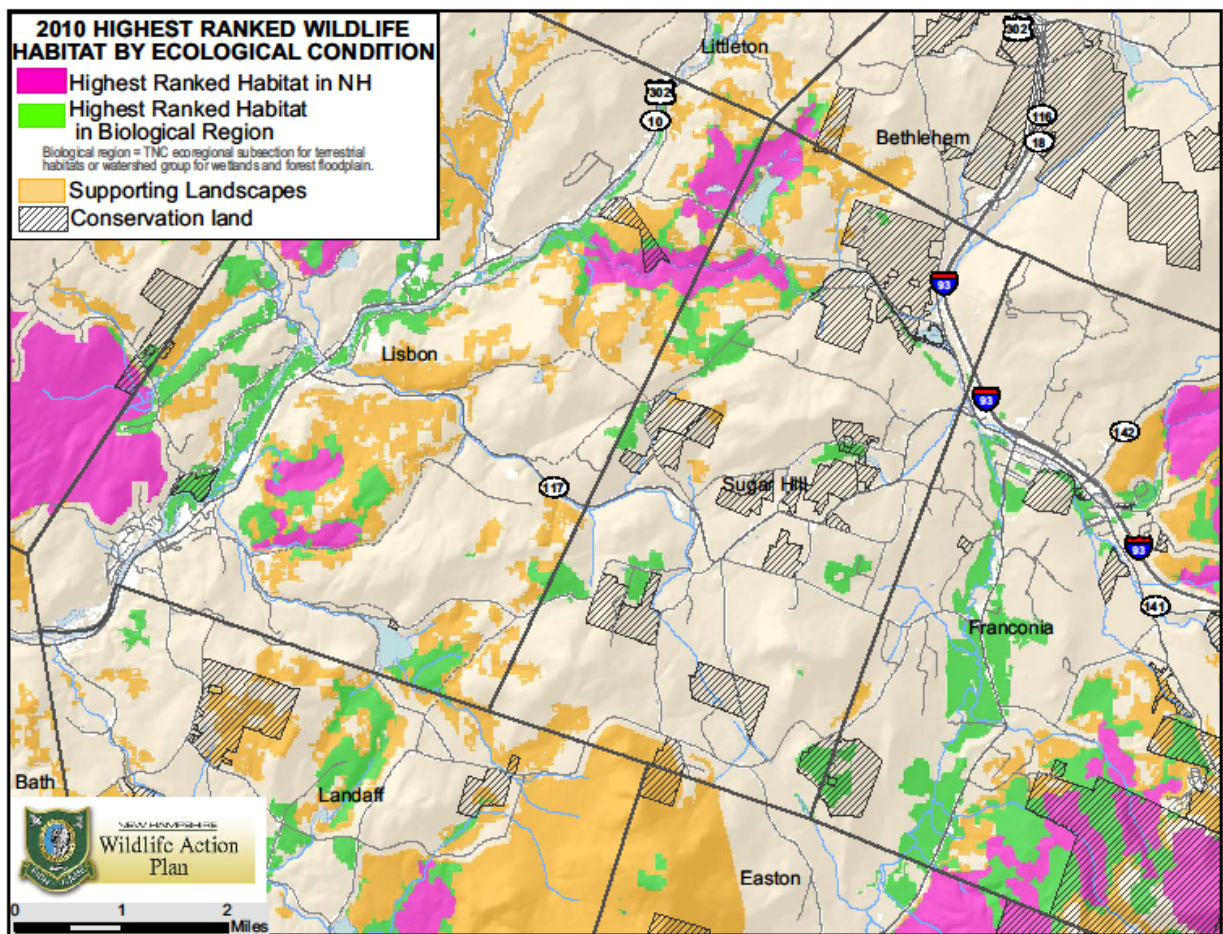
- *Review and amend as needed the town's zoning ordinance and site plan review regulations to ensure they do not provide barriers to or unnecessary costs to new or expanded agricultural uses. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents supported relaxing requirements for either all or small scale agricultural enterprises. Farm-friendly zoning includes such things as allowing a second dwelling for a farmer*

starting out or for worker housing, cooperative processing and marketing enterprises to enable farms to experience economies of scale, farmstands and other seasonal and temporary structures and signs, and agritourism.

- *Amend the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to enable the Planning Board to influence the siting of development in a manner which will maximize the remaining agricultural potential of the land.*
- *Engage local, regional and state economic development groups in the growing conversation about building the agricultural economy.*
- *Educate landowners on the agricultural potential and value of their lands.*
- *Learn about and connect with existing programs to link landowners with those interested in finding land to farm.*
- *Research and consider possible ways to provide incentives to encourage farm start-ups, such as bridge financing, lease to own arrangements, or land banking by a conservation organization.*
- *Ensure that the impacts of agricultural operations are properly managed and the scale is appropriate to the neighborhood.*
- *Use the Conservation Fund to help landowners conserve agricultural lands.*

Wildlife Habitat

As part of developing the state's Wildlife Action Plan, NH Fish and Game biologists ranked habitat condition throughout the state based on such factors as biodiversity, landscape and human impacts. As shown on the map on the next page, some of the state's highest ranked habitat is shared with Lisbon in the northwest corner of Sugar Hill around Streeter Pond and the Gale River. Other areas of habitat important to the region are shown throughout town.



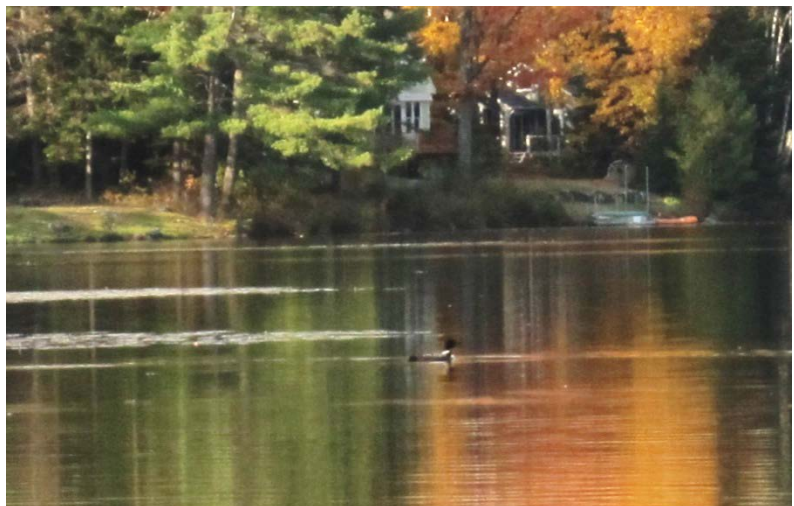
The wildlife in Sugar Hill is very diverse; this is due to the variety of terrain. The land in Sugar Hill is comprised of three main forests: 1) Hemlock-hardwood-pine forests - comprised of mostly hemlock, white pine, beech, and oak trees. Since this is a transitional forest, it can occur at different elevations and over different types of soil and topography, so the composition of vegetation can be variable. This forest type is the most common in New Hampshire and covers nearly 50% of the state. 2) Northern hardwood conifer forests - this habitat type is typically found between 1,400 and 2,500 feet in elevation and is usually made up of hardwood trees such as American beech, sugar maple, yellow birch, and conifer trees such as eastern hemlock, white pine, and balsam fir. 3) Lowland spruce forest - occur between 1,000 and 2,500 feet in elevation and are comprised of a mosaic of lowland spruce-fir forest and red spruce swamp communities. Typical vegetation includes red spruce, balsam fir, hobblebush, and bunchberry. (New Hampshire Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan)

Currently, the town has healthy populations of deer, bear and turkey. These animals can often be seen along field and forest edges in the early morning and at dusk in most of the town. The moose population in New Hampshire is on the decline and the population in Sugar Hill is not an exception. On top of the game animals mentioned above, Sugar Hill also has an abundance of ruffed grouse, woodcock and various migratory and resident songbirds. Other wildlife inhabiting the fields and forests include coyote, fox, snowshoe hare, fisher, bobcat, and the state-endangered American marten.

People recreating along lakes, ponds, rivers and streams can find many different species of wildlife living in the immediate area. Salmon Hole Stream, the Gale River and area brooks boast plentiful native brook trout populations. Furbearing wildlife such as mink, otter and beaver can all be found in the rivers and streams flowing through town. Beaver are especially plentiful as they have limited predation and the ability to improve their own habitat.

As we have few productive farms at this time, crop destruction and ruminant predation is rarely an issue. As the town is comparatively thickly settled for the North Country, hunting is limited and not a major tourist attraction, although fishing is enjoyed by many in the town's rivers, streams, and ponds. Evidence of this can be seen at both Streeter Pond and Coffin Pond.

Streeter Pond and the lower Gale River offer the best fishing and some of the best wildlife viewing in town. We are fortunate that residents and visitors can view a variety of wildlife in a central location. Interested parties at Streeter Pond can see moose, deer, otter, beaver, turtles of all sizes, osprey, loon and many other waterfowl, and an unusual variety of migrant song birds, while enjoying fishing swimming, boating and even sailing, all on such a small body of water.



Like other towns in the North Country, we have nuisance bears and moose and deer that consume ornamental plantings; however, the principal challenge we face is in maintaining this balance between wildlife and development so there will continue to be wildlife to watch and enjoy. One of the challenges as the town grows in human population is to maintain habitat that wildlife use to travel to and from areas for foraging, denning, hunting, feeding, and breeding. Travel corridors along waterways and through forested areas help wildlife move between larger forests, wetlands, meadows, and other habitats. And it is not just terrestrial species that travel. It is vital for fish and other aquatic species to be able to move up and down streams for spawning and feeding. Many culverts and bridges are inadequate for aquatic habitat connectivity.

Biologists and conservation partners are working hard to identify what may be impacting specific animals and the resources on which they depend. Residents and visitors alike can control how they utilize land and interact with wildlife. Residents can make a positive impact on wildlife populations by following best forestry practices, being responsible around water and wetlands, and by conducting further research. If we collectively focus on improving habitat, wildlife populations will thrive for years to come.

Most of the wildlife populations inhabiting Sugar Hill appear to be doing very well. However, there are a few species that could fare better. While residents and visitors will see the occasional moose, the majority of the town does not have ideal moose habitat. Winter tick, brain worm, and collisions are all responsible for the diminishing moose population in the state. The moose population in Sugar Hill would benefit from selective cuts on some of the larger tracts of forest land. These cuts would provide a much needed food source in the area, as moose would be able to browse on the regenerated vegetation. Snowshoe hare and bobcat in the area would also benefit from selective timber harvesting as the first growth in a newly harvested area often includes dense softwood understories.

Resource allocation and land conservation is an excellent way to protect and conserve key wildlife habitats. An excellent example of this land conservation is the Cooley-Jericho Community Forest. As shown on the habitat map on page 35, the NH Wildlife Action Plan identified habitat areas of statewide importance in the areas of Streeter Pond and the Gale River on the western side of town. Other areas of important habitat were identified throughout town. As shown on the map, very little of our most valuable wildlife habitat is conserved. Some small parcels are conserved around Bowen Brook Dam (Peckett's Pond)

and Coffin Pond. Acquiring larger land tracts in the future would provide the town the ability to improve habitat and effectively promote healthy wildlife populations.

Recommendations

- *Ensure that landowners are aware of the resources available for learning how to improve habitat on their land such as the UNH Cooperative Extension county forest resources educator, NH Fish and Game regional biologist, UNH Cooperative Extension wildlife biologist, Conservation Commission members, and NH Audubon.*
- *Work with conservation organizations and willing landowners to conserve important habitat and corridors around Streeter Pond and Gale River.*
- *Educate the public on the tax benefits conservation land has for the municipality.*
- *Educate landowners on the importance of vegetated buffers along surface waters and wetlands.*
- *Provide educational material to homeowners, and to those intending to build, on methods for minimizing the negative impacts of residential use on wildlife.*
- *When replaced or installed for the first time, culverts and bridges should be designed to accommodate aquatic wildlife passage.*

Scenic Resources

In a 2002 Sugar Hill survey, 89% of respondents indicated that the rural character of Sugar Hill was important, and 75% felt conserving scenic views was very important to maintaining that rural character. Our mountains, hillsides, waterbodies, wetlands, streams, scenic views and special resource areas continue to be very important elements to our economic well-being and quality of life in town. Key scenic views to protect include ridgelines, hilltops, and mountain peaks that can be seen from public locations, as well as spots from which to observe them.

The highest priority views include:

- Presidential and Franconia Ranges from Lover's Lane, Blake Road, Birches Road, and Sunset Hill Road and the viewpoints of Iris Farm, Polly's Pancakes, Sunset Hill House, the former site of Peckett's, and the Community Church on Route 117
- Sugar Hill and Garnet Hill from the viewpoint of Franconia Village and the Gale River
- Bronson Hill and the Cooley-Jericho Community Forest from Route 117 in the village center
- Sugar Hill from Scragg Hill

In many of these locations, open fields in the foreground are key elements of the quality of the view. Historical photographs of Sugar Hill from the 1800s and early 1900s show the abundance of open meadows, pasture and farm fields. Today many of the same views are often obscured by forests. In addition, development on ridgelines and hilltops has in some locations begun to detract from the views. The survey results indicated community support for strengthening the tools available to the Planning Board to shape development in a manner more consistent with protection of the town's scenic resources.



The following roads have been designated as scenic roads by the town:

- Lafayette Road from Sunset Road to the Franconia/Sugar Hill Line
- Birches Rd from the Episcopal Church on Route 117 to O'Brian Road (Bickford Hill Road)
- Grandview Road from Center District Road to Lover's Lane
- Lover's Lane from Route 117 at the Community Church to Route 117

- Blake Road from Route 117 to Center District Rd also known as Jesseman Road
- Pearl Lake Road from Route 117 to the Lisbon Town Line
- Jesseman Road/Crane Hill Road
- Center District Road



This means when roadwork or utility work takes place, the Planning Board must hold a public hearing and review and approve removal of any trees or stone walls associated with that work. The survey results indicated that residents are content with the current list of officially designated scenic roads. Nonetheless it is important to recognize the important role roadside trees and stone walls play in the town's scenic landscape on many of the other roads in town as well.

Recommendations

- *Preservation of scenic views highly valued by the community should be included in the Conservation Commission's land conservation priorities.*
- *Access to scenic views should be considered in forest management and roadside cutting plans.*
- *Adopt and implement flexible zoning techniques to site development in a manner compatible with maintenance of important scenic resources when possible. This includes both clustering/siting homes away from open areas that provide a foreground for the view, and also siting homes that are within important viewsheds in a manner that provides the maximum screening.*
- *Adopt and implement design guidelines regarding clearing/landscaping, exterior colors, lighting and reflective glass for development on ridgelines and hilltops in the highest priority viewsheds.*
- *Continue to manage the town's roadsides with sensitivity toward the contribution trees and stone walls make to the highly valued scenic quality of the town.*



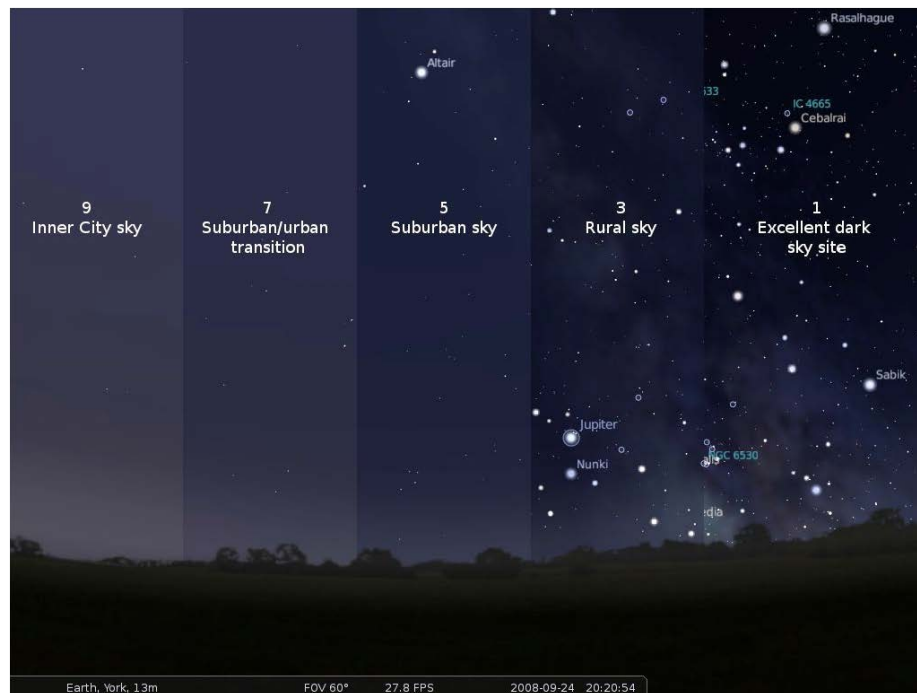
Air Quality

At present we do not have a major source of air pollution in the town. Air quality is strictly regulated and monitored by the state, and there is consideration to strengthening federal standards. Continued diligence will be required to ensure that the increasing use of biomass power generation for agriculture, hospitals and larger buildings does not degrade the region's air quality.

It is traditional to burn brush here; for small amounts this is not a problem. Like wood stoves and outdoor wood furnaces, increasing development density may lead to localized air quality issues.

Dark Night Skies

Being able to see the stars at night, and look around at dark hillsides, are important elements of the rural feel that is part of the quality of life in Sugar Hill. This is no longer possible in the commercial areas of Littleton or Franconia's Main Street due to street lighting. Three-quarters of survey respondents supported amending the zoning ordinance to require that new light fixtures aim downwards and away from the sky and neighbors.



Sources: Stellarium & EdouardStenger.com

Recommendations

- *Consider simple lighting regulations to ensure that outdoor lighting does not exceed what is necessary, and is aimed downward and shielded so it does not affect neighboring property or others.*
- *Educate homeowners on the unintended consequences of their outdoor lighting choices.*
- *Continue to monitor the necessity and type of street lighting in town.*

Quiet

Like darkness, quiet is one the important elements of the quality of life in Sugar Hill. Zoning and site plan review can prevent excessive noise from nonresidential uses and ensure that those likely to be associated with high levels of noise or noise at odd hours are not sited adjacent to residential areas. Isolated issues are best dealt with on a case by case basis, utilizing the town's noise ordinance when necessary.

Recommendations

- *Ensure that the zoning ordinance and site plan review regulations and their administration adequately protect nearby residential uses from excessive noise. This includes consideration of the type of land uses, such as heavy equipment-related, and performance measures such as decibels at the property, at what hours, and what percentage of the time.*
- *Enforce the town's noise ordinance as needed.*

Recreation

The town's natural resources provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Recreation and tourism are important components of the town's economic base. The scenic views, rural atmosphere, open spaces, air quality, and clean water make Sugar Hill a destination-type vacation area. The town has opportunities for hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, golf, and boating. Sugar Hill has the oldest nine-hole golf course in the state, which is permanently conserved. We also have related historical and cultural legacies. Streeter Pond provides swimming, fishing, and boating, and has become a magnet for kayaking and canoeing with up to a dozen

paddled boats on the pond at one time in 2012. The marshy areas of the north end of the pond are particularly suited for paddlecraft. In winter all three ponds are used for skating, skiing and snowshoeing, and ice fishing occurs in Streeter Pond. All of our ponds, streams and wetlands provide opportunities for nature study. Wild orchids, insectivorous plants, songbirds, loons, ducks, osprey beaver, otter, moose and spring peepers are some of the wildlife to be seen and heard. All of the ponds and the Gale River are accessible to the public; greater use could be made of them by residents and visitors without danger to the waterbodies. Greater recognition of the recreation potential of these areas could be a benefit to our local inns.



Sugar Hill's town forest located off of Center District Road has a network of trails. The Foss Forest, MacCornack Evelyn Forest, and the Bronson Hill Conservation Area, all permanently conserved, have a network of walking trails as well. A multi-use trail network is planned for the Cooley-Jericho Community Forest. The Whipple Field next to Polly's Pancakes is also permanently conserved for public use.

There are an increasing number of lands posted against hunting and other passive recreation uses. The current use program provides one tool to ensuring residents and visitors continue to have access to private lands for outdoor recreation. For land already in the current use program, a 20% discount is given for "recreation land," which means the owner has chosen to open his or her land to the public at no charge. There can be no

prohibition of skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, hiking or nature observation unless such uses are incompatible with a particular tract.

Recommendations

- *Continue to develop and map a multi-use trail network for different abilities.*
- *Seek opportunities to develop family friendly multi-use paths to separate walking and biking from roads.*
- *Provide public education for hunters and other users regarding respect for landowners' interests.*
- *Work with recreation groups to ensure there is communication between landowners and trail users.*
- *Recognize landowners who allow recreation on their property for the valuable benefit they provide to the community.*
- *Promote awareness of "Hunting with Permission Only" signs as an alternative to posting, and make them available for purchase locally.*
- *Work with landowners to allow trails through their land that would link conservation lands with trails for year-round use.*



4. LAND USE

Introduction

Sugar Hill's land use pattern is a reflection of the area's rich history as a tourist destination and second home location for those seeking the quiet beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities. Development is somewhat denser in the town center where services and businesses are concentrated. Iconic tourist



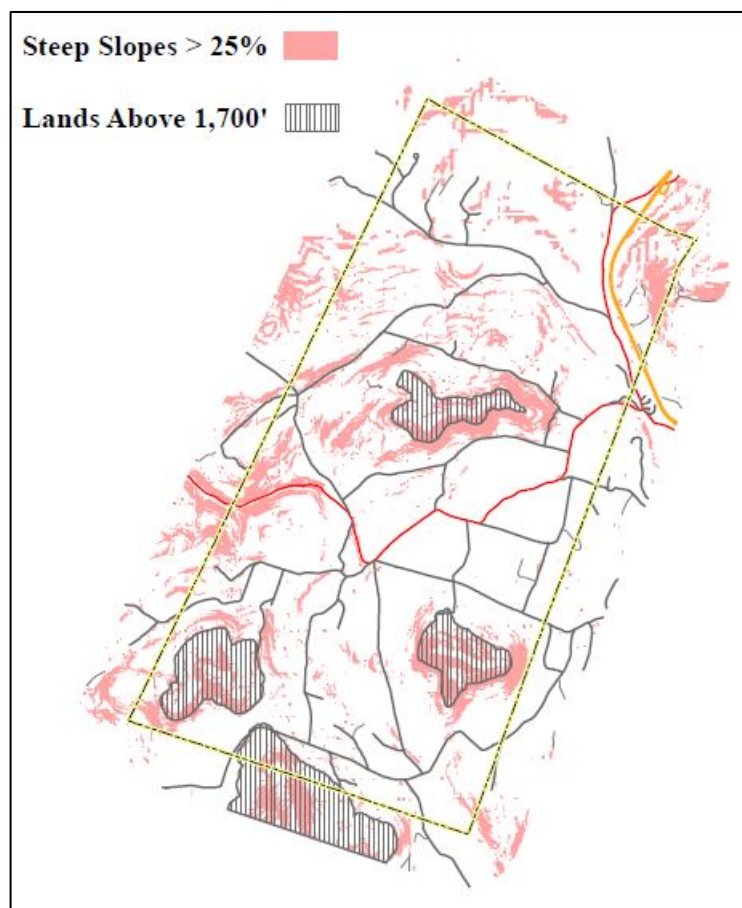
businesses - the Sunset Hill House, Sugar Hill Sampler, Polly's Pancake Parlor and Harmon's Cheese & Country Store - define the character of the town center. Development is also concentrated adjacent to Streeter Pond. The areas surrounding the town center and Streeter Pond are primarily wooded with scattered year-round and seasonal homes and a few open fields.



With 429 housing units counted by the 2010 US Census (254 occupied year-round, 160 seasonal, 15 vacant), this translates to an average residential density of about one house per 25 acres, well below the 5 acre density of the town's most rural zoning district (RR2). The challenge as the community continues to grow and change will be how to hold onto the quiet scenic rural atmosphere vs. more of a suburban "feel." This will require thoughtful deliberate planning with an eye to protection of natural features and other key elements of the character of Sugar Hill.

Limitations to Development

As shown in the image below showing steep slopes and high elevation lands, steep slopes are a concern in many areas of town, including but not limited to the larger hillsides such as Ore Hill and Garnet Hill. Slopes over 25% are not suitable for development due to the high potential for erosion and sedimentation and unsuitableness for onsite septic disposal. Development on slopes over 15% requires special consideration to ensure erosion and sedimentation does not occur during or after development. Access needs to be carefully evaluated as well, since response times in an emergency are affected by grade and drainage issues.



Natural Resource Co-occurrence inset map, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, 2008

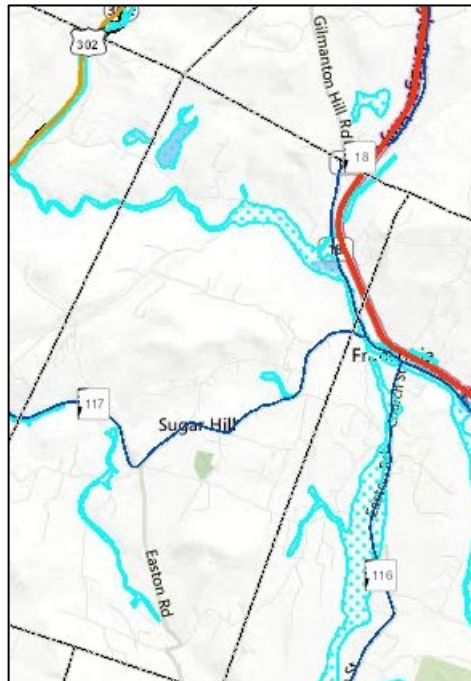
Recommendation

- *Define the most appropriate mechanism for incorporating the Performance Standards contained in "Model Ordinance for Steep Slope Protection" (Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques, NH Department of Environmental Services, NH*

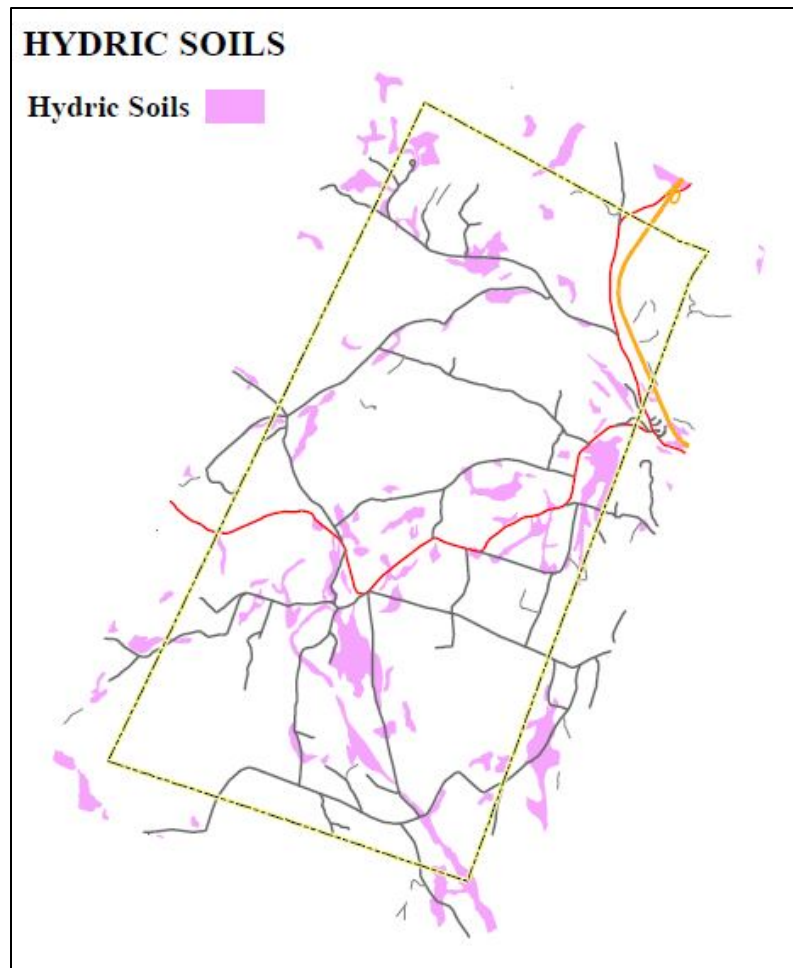
Association of Regional Planning Commissions, NH Office of Energy and Planning, and NH Municipal Association, October 2008) in future development plans:

- A. The grading cut and fill should not exceed a 2:1 ratio.*
- B. Existing natural and topographic features, including the vegetative cover, should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. In the event that extensive amounts of vegetation are removed, the site should be replanted with indigenous vegetation and should replicate the original vegetation as much as possible.*
- C. Driveway slopes should not exceed 10 percent for residential subdivisions or 8 percent slope for nonresidential site plans.*
- D. No structures should be built on an extremely steep slope (greater than 25 percent prior to site disturbance).*

As shown in the maps below, much of the level land in town is wetland, as represented below by hydric soils, or is subject to flooding. These areas are unsuitable for development due to water quality and health and safety issues, as well as potential for structural damage. In addition, loss of flood storage capacity in one place leads to increased flooding someplace else, an issue that is of increasing importance as New Hampshire is experiencing more frequent severe storm events, and more of our winter precipitation is coming as rain ([Climate Change in Northern New Hampshire: Past, Present, and Future](#), Cameron Wake et al, 2014).



100 Year Floodplain, GRANIT



Natural Resource Co-occurrence inset map, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, 2008

The Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques Handbook developed by the regional planning commissions and published by NHDES in 2008 contains model language for a Flood Hazard Area zoning ordinance which can be used as a basis for local amendments. The model incorporates National Flood Insurance requirements, and goes beyond them to also incorporate the “no adverse impact” principles as recommended by the Association of State Floodplain Managers. Some of the key components:

- New principal buildings are not allowed in flood hazard areas unless there is no other site available on a lot of record at the time of adoption.
- Uses with an especially high potential for causing hazardous conditions during a flood event are prohibited.
- New structures and additions must be 1 to 3 feet above the base flood elevation.
- Fill or other encroachments must be mitigated by compensatory storage.

Many of the elements of this model ordinance are FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) activities, which means the community would get points toward a reduction in flood insurance rates for residents. Model language is also available from NHDES and North Country Council regarding fluvial erosion hazard areas, those areas most apt to become river channel in the future.

Recommendations:

- *Amend the zoning ordinance to incorporate the provisions contained in the Flood Hazard Area model published by NHDES in 2008.*
- *Seek funding to map fluvial erosion hazard areas along the Gale River.*
- *Protect the flood storage capacity of the town's wetlands and filtering capacity of wetland and shoreline buffers.*

Layout of Future Development

Future subdivisions, and businesses on existing lots requiring site plan review, should be laid out in a manner that protects key scenic resources and high priority natural resources, such as agricultural land and important habitat areas to the extent practicable. This means equipping the Planning Board with the tools needed to influence the layout prior to the developer's investment in final plans and engineering. For example, development in the middle of an open field providing the foreground to a scenic view tends to detract from the quality of the view more than if the same development is sited near a wooded edge. If the open field is suitable for agriculture, lot size averaging provides a tool to ensure development is sited in a manner which will retain as much of the productive use of the land as possible. Similarly, residential development scattered around on steeper slopes tends to impact forest resources, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities more than if concentrated in a lower elevation portion of the land. Development near shorelines impacts water quality, habitat and recreation. Lot size averaging entails zoning for maximum density rather than minimum lot size. Minimum lot sizes are instead determined by that required for sustainable on-site septic systems and water supply. Lot size averaging can be applied to minor subdivisions as well to keep scenic views, farmland or important habitat areas intact. The process should start with a mapping of the important resources on the site, and home

sites identified as the following step, rather than the traditional subdivision planning process where these steps occur in the reverse order.



Lot size averaging combined with Planning Board input during the preliminary review stage can result in a development that is designed in a manner compatible with the protection of high priority scenic and natural resources.

Recommendations:

- *Amend the Zoning Ordinance to (a) change cluster development to lot size averaging, (b) make lot size averaging a permitted use in all zoning districts, (c) enable the Planning Board to require lot sized averaging in certain cases, and (d) change the wording in Section 604 so that the subdivision contains no more than the number of lots that would be have been feasible with a conventional subdivision. The ordinance is currently worded so that the calculation is the number of lots x the minimum lot size without regard for barriers for development.*
- *Carry out a Town Meeting vote authorizing the Planning Board to require preliminary review of subdivisions.*
- *Amend the subdivision regulations to incorporate a preliminary plan step for consideration of scenic and natural resources prior to the laying out of lots, and to include the details on the lot size averaging plan review process.*
- *Utilize “Lot Size Averaging: One Size Does Not Fit All,” Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques, NH Department of Environmental Services, NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions, NH Office of Energy and Planning, and NH Municipal Association, October 2008 as a starting point for the amendments.*

Lot Shapes

Currently there is no restriction on the shape of new lots created in Sugar Hill. Sometimes in an effort to subdivide marginal lands, developers create long skinny lots called "spaghetti lots," or oddly shaped lots to meet the minimum road frontage requirements. The majority of survey respondents supported amending the zoning ordinance to regulate the shape of new lots in Sugar Hill.

Recommendation

- *Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require the lot width be no narrower than 25% of the lot length (1:4 ratio).*

Designing Hillside and Ridgeline Development

Sugar Hill's scenic resources are highly valued by residents and visitors. Land use regulations are available to ensure that development is compatible with stewardship of the scenic views most highly valued by the public. Where local hilltops, hillsides and ridgelines are important scenic elements, design guidelines can be added to the zoning ordinance to require some special considerations in siting and design.

Recommendations

- *Inventory and prioritize the scenic views most important to the community. This could be done by photographing the views and linking them to a map to facilitate an online and/or in person public discussion. Map the viewsheds to incorporate contours and the results of observations in the field. As an alternative, review of maps might indicate that regulation above a certain uniform elevation contour throughout town would achieve the desired goal. In either case the process should involve the public at every step of the way to ensure that the resulting zoning amendment reflects the consensus of the community.*
- *Consider the model regulation outlined below contained in Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques (NHDES, NHARPCs, NHOEP, NHMA, October 2008) as a starting point for discussion of what specific design guidelines are appropriate in Sugar Hill.*
 - A. Building Envelope: The building envelope permitted in this district is a rectangle with an up-slope boundary 40 feet or less from the building, side boundaries 40 feet or less from each side of the building, and a down-slope boundary 25 feet or less from the building. Accessory structures shall be built*

within the building envelope. Building envelopes shall be at least 30 feet from property lines.

B. Clearing for views: In order to develop a view, trees may be removed beyond the building envelope for a width of clear cutting not to exceed 25 feet and extending outward therefrom at an angle of 45 degrees or less on both sides, to a point down-slope where the tops of the trees are at the same elevation as the ground floor of the building.. The 25-foot opening may be at any point along the down-slope boundary.

C. Natural/neutral colors will be used.

D. Reflective glass will be minimized.

E. Only low level, indirect lighting shall be used. Spot lights and floodlights are prohibited.

F. No portion of any structure shall extend above the elevation of the ridgeline.

G. Structures shall use natural landforms and existing vegetation to screen them from view from public roads and waterways to the extent practicable.

H. Cuts and fills are minimized, and where practical, driveways are screened from public view.

I. Building sites and roadways shall be located to preserve trees and tree stands.

Wildlife Habitat

As discussed in **Section 3. Natural Resources**, Sugar Hill has some areas of wildlife habitat identified as Highest Ranked in NH Fish & Game's Wildlife Action Plan. Throughout town, sightings of wildlife in our yards or when we are out for a walk or drive is an important element of the character of the community. There are a number of things that homeowners can do to ensure that the impacts of their homes on wildlife are minimized. These include:

- Maintaining vegetated buffers around wetlands and vernal pools and along both year-round and seasonal streams.
- Learn about rare and endangered species that might be on the property and avoid activity in sensitive areas.
- Minimize the size of the lawn. Use instead a variety of native noninvasive plants.

- Keep a variety of vegetation sizes in the wooded areas, and a transition zone of native shrubs between the yard and woods.
- Ensure that rubbish and pet food are adequately enclosed so they don't attract wildlife.
- Shield and direct lighting away from natural areas to avoid disrupting natural behaviors.
- Avoid the use of pesticides.

Recommendations

- *Initiate a public education campaign with the Conservation Commission and other partners on living with wildlife. An education program could be held in conjunction with another town event. Develop a flyer for homeowners using resources from NH Fish & Game, NH Audubon and NH Wildlife Federation.*
- *Develop an advisory handout to provide with building permit and subdivision applications based on the checklist in Chapter 2.3 Habitat Management of Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques (NH Department of Environmental Services, NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions, NH Office of Energy and Planning, and NH Municipal Association, October 2008).*

Accessory Apartments

Minor changes in zoning can substantially improve the ability of the elderly, the disabled, and young families to remain in the community. "In-law" apartments, whether an actual apartment in or attached to the main house, or a detached unit such as an existing garage or barn converted to living space, can provide an opportunity for extended families to assist each other, or for an elderly or disabled resident to both receive income from their property and have the assistance of someone else living on-site. Survey respondents supported allowing accessory apartments in existing homes, existing accessory buildings, and also when added onto an existing home. The Zoning Ordinance does not currently allow two-family dwellings of any kind whether constructed as a typical duplex or as a primary dwelling with an accessory unit.

Recommendation

- *Review and amend the zoning ordinance to allow one accessory apartment within or added to the existing home, or in an existing accessory building. Include language to ensure that proper permits are obtained for wastewater disposal, the structure is in compliance with building codes, parking is adequate for a second dwelling, and setbacks for a dwelling will be met.*

Agriculture

Even though it is not a dominant land use in Sugar Hill, agriculture remains an essential ingredient of the scenic rural atmosphere of the town. In addition to the availability of local products and interaction with farming activity, many of the favorite scenic views include open fields. For agricultural land to remain open, landowners need to be able to respond to the economics of farming in northern New Hampshire. Two trends which are increasing opportunities for those interested in farming are the interest in local foods and agri-tourism. Farmers have to be able to respond quickly to changes and opportunities as these trends continue and others emerge. The state's "right to farm law" provides that agriculture "shall not be unreasonably limited by the use of municipal planning and zoning powers" (672:1, III-b) . Nonetheless, zoning ordinances and site plan review regulations meant to implement the local master plan can sometimes instead provide barriers to achieving the community's goal to protect farmland.

Recommendations

- *Review the Sugar Hill zoning ordinance and site plan review regulations and amend as needed to ensure the town is farm-friendly. This requires consideration, for example, of what the farm owner's needs are for processing and selling products.*

Producing local foods at a cost effective scale may require several farms going in on a processing facility, or in staffing a stand or shop to sell products. Ordinances like Sugar Hill's that incorporate the



state's definition of agriculture do not cover many of these joint ventures. Similarly, the state's definition of agri-tourism may not necessarily cover some activities desired to augment farm income such as a small gift shop. Review and amendment of the zoning ordinance and site plan regulations should focus on limiting the requirement for a Special Exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment to only those specific activities which have the potential to have significant negative impacts of neighboring residences and businesses. Scale thresholds should also be incorporated in the ordinance. Similarly, site plan review requirements should be limited to those aspects of site design with the potential to create threats to health or safety. This would include, for example, the parking and signage for a roadside farmstand. A streamlined process should be considered for those minimal-impact uses such as seasonal stands operating less than six months of the year.

Small Business

Residents have expressed a desire for more businesses in the village area (General Residence District) of a nature that are compatible with the peaceful rural small town atmosphere. This means, for example, certain tourist businesses with a low volume of traffic, such as antique or book shops, art studios, galleries, cafes, shops with locally made or grown products, bed and breakfasts, or a neighborhood grocery catering to the day-to-day needs of residents and guests. Some tourist-related businesses with a low volume of traffic might be suitable anywhere in town, such as camps and passive nonmotorized outdoor recreation. In general, agricultural or other natural resource-based businesses are considered to be compatible with the character of the community provided the potential negative impacts are properly mitigated. In addition, some services or professional offices such as a salon or law office might be compatible with neighboring residential uses in rural areas depending on the scale, operation and site design. Throughout town, the size of the building or operation and potential impacts of a proposed business on the community and its natural resources are paramount in determining the suitability for Sugar Hill. This includes the amount of impervious surface, volume and nature of traffic, hours of operation, visibility to passers-by, odor, noise, unsightly outdoor storage, lighting, and signage.

Recommendation

- *Perform a comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance regarding the regulation of businesses throughout town to ensure that the uses listed for each district, together with the specific zoning provisions such as special exception criteria and performance standards, will accomplish a future consistent with the desires of the community.*

Outdoor Lighting

Until development reaches a level where neighborhood noise and traffic are significant, seeing outdoor lighting from other properties at night is the one of the main impacts of development that can change the rural “feel” of our homes in Sugar Hill.

Recommendations:

- *Update the site plan regulations to incorporate the latest ISA-IES (International Dark-sky Association & Illuminating Engineers Society) standards for minimizing the impacts of nonresidential lighting on neighboring properties and on the dark night sky. Minimizing the unintended impacts of lighting requires attention to fixtures, providing the minimum amount of lighting required, having the lights on the minimum number of hours required, and ensuring the fixtures are aimed appropriately.*
- *Initiate a public information campaign to help year-round and seasonal residents learn about low impact lighting choices. This might include hosting an educational program on the unintended consequences of outdoor lighting choices, and brochures issued with building permits and periodically included with other town-wide mailings.*
- *Continue to monitor the necessity and type of street lighting in town.*

Special Land Uses

Special land uses such as transmission lines, telecommunications towers, and large energy production facilities such as wind farms pose special challenges for small communities like Sugar Hill. In many cases federal and state regulations preempt local control. It is important for the town to participate proactively and to have a strong voice in state and federal review processes. Proposals should be consistent with the preservation of scenic views and other local goals, with careful attention to mitigation of negative impacts.



Even at the residential scale, alternative energy generation can pose conflicts with the enjoyment of neighboring property. Large solar arrays can be unsightly to neighbors and sometimes produce glare to drivers. Wind turbines can cause flicker and noise annoying to

neighbors. Outside wood boilers can produce heavy smoke affecting neighboring residences even when in compliance with state regulations. Land use regulations need to address potential negative impacts while allowing local energy production.

5. SERVICES, FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Introduction

The provision of public services is an important element in protecting the health, safety and welfare of the community. This chapter reviews the facilities, or in some cases, cooperative arrangements with other communities, associated with these services. The need for community facilities is determined by a number of factors including: existing population, future population growth, demographics, land uses, changing state and federal requirements, and changing expectations of residents. Anticipated needs in the next ten to twenty years are included.

Transportation

Highway Department Facility

The Highway Department stores the equipment used to maintain the town roads at the town garage on South Road. The Highway Department has equipment to do wintertime snowplowing and sanding, as well as culvert thawing. In warmer weather, other equipment is used to maintain paved and unpaved road surfaces, as well as roadside ditches and trees and brush along the town's roads. This facility is also used to service and repair various trucks, loaders and other heavy equipment. The Highway Department also uses this facility to store winter road sand and asphalt paving material.



The Highway Department building is served by an emergency standby generator. The Highway Department facility also houses storage tanks for diesel and gasoline fuels used by the various town vehicles.



Recommendations:

- *Continue building insulation and heating system upgrades to make this the highway garage more energy efficient.*
- *Continue periodic routine inspections to ensure best management practices are followed for the storage and use of fuels and other hazardous materials.*

Highways

Sugar Hill's highway system is comprised of 3.174 miles of Legislative Class I Primary Highway (Interstate 93), 4.724 miles of Legislative Class II Secondary Highway (NH 116/18 and NH 117), 29.222 miles of locally maintained Class V roads and .5 mile of Class VI road that is not maintained. NH Department of Transportation sends out an annual request for verification of the official town highway maps used to calculate the exact mileage of roads in each classification. These figures then form the basis for state aid to towns for highway maintenance.

The local Class V roads are maintained by the Sugar Hill Highway Department. The Sugar Hill Road Agent, along with the volunteer Roads Committee, assess road conditions and report to the Board of Selectmen. Maintenance and repairs are then carried out based upon those reports. It is important that this assessment be performed systematically with a long range view. There are tools available to use for this called "road surface management systems." Allowing a road that is going to be reconstructed soon to continue to deteriorate, and instead repaving one that appears to be in much better shape is often the wiser investment for the town's paving budget. In this way costs are not increased by deferred maintenance.

The town does not currently have a formal policy to guide decisions regarding the issuance of building permits on the existing Class VI road, or other town roads in the event they become Class VI in the future. A Class VI Road Policy, developed by the Planning Board and Selectboard and adopted by the Selectboard, would enable objective identification of the relevant criteria and conditions in advance of a specific request. A model policy and several good examples can be obtained from North Country Council.

There are 0.829 miles of private road in Sugar Hill. Future private road construction needs to comply with the specifications found in the Town's Subdivision Regulations and be inspected by the Sugar Hill Highway Department while under construction. The regulations should be reviewed to ensure the language governing the construction and maintenance of private roads is adequate and amended if needed. The Town of Sugar Hill will consider accepting any private road for town maintenance after it has been inspected by the Highway Department and it has been paved with asphalt.



Changing weather patterns, including more frequent severe storms and winter weather patterns shifting toward less snow and more rain, have been associated with an increase in expenditures on stormwater damage to transportation infrastructure. More attention is needed to retaining “green infrastructure” such as wetlands, floodplains, and vegetated buffers to slow and absorb floodwaters. Where ditching and culverts are necessary, proper maintenance is essential. Many bridges and culverts are of insufficient size and/or geometry for floodwaters and debris to clear properly and should be upgraded as possible.

Recommendations:

- *Review and if necessary correct the NHDOT official highway map for the town to ensure the town receives the correct amount of state aid for road maintenance.*

- *Assess the road conditions systematically each year to ensure summer road maintenance and road reconstruction funds are used efficiently.*
- *Adopt a Class VI Road Policy.*
- *Review the subdivision regulations to ensure the language governing the construction and maintenance of private roads is adequate, and amend if needed. This assistance is available to North Country Council member towns free of charge.*
- *Consider potential downstream affects on transportation infrastructure when prioritizing wetlands, floodplains and vegetated buffers for protection.*
- *Ensure that today's best management practices, consideration of fluvial erosion hazards, and proper sizing and design of bridges and culverts, are incorporated into maintenance and design of stormwater facilities.*

Other Transportation

There is no general public transportation available in Sugar Hill other than Dave's Taxi in Littleton. There are limited services for medical appointments for seniors, those with disabilities, and those with certain medical issues, some provided by volunteer drivers. These nonemergency medical rides are coordinated/provided by: American Cancer Society, Littleton Regional Hospital Care-a-Van, North Country Transit, Grafton County Senior Citizens Council, Northern Human Services, Easter Seals, Granite State Independent Living, and the VA. Privately owned wheelchair van services can be obtained from North Country Medi-Van and Ross Ambulance Service.

Recommendation:

- *Sugar Hill should continue to participate in statewide and regional efforts to improve access to transportation for all residents.*

Meeting House

Originally the Advent Church, the Meeting House was purchased by the Sugar Hill Improvement Association in 1952 for \$1.00. In 1963, a year after becoming a separate town from Lisbon, the town bought the Meeting House for \$10,000. The



Meeting House was remodeled for use as a town building after that. Major renovations have been done over the years including the clock being modernized. The building is now used for town meetings, civic functions, and for private functions as approved by the Selectmen's office. No changes in use or major renovations are planned in the near future.

Carolina Crapo Building

Sugar Hill Town Hall is located at 1411 State Route 117, in the Carolina Crapo Building. Originally built in 1948 by Henry Crapo in memory of his wife "Carolina," the Caroline Crapo Building was first used as a town school. In 1996 the building was renovated to be used as town offices after being sold to the town by the Sugar Hill Improvement Association. The building currently houses the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Selectmen, Police Department and the town library will be found. Town Hall also contains a map room for use by the public to see where individual parcels of land and subdivisions are located. Sugar Hill Town Hall is served by an automatic emergency generator in the event of any power outages, thus being designated as an emergency shelter for residents.

There are ongoing efforts to maintain and upgrade this building which at the present time has consisted of replacing and modernizing the basement kitchen facility as well as installation of



energy efficient basement windows and replacing the entire roof surface.

Recommendation:

- *Future capital improvements should include replacement of all the large first floor windows, installation of energy efficient lighting throughout the building and the possibility of replacing/supplementing the current oil-fired heating boilers with renewable energy heat source such as a wood pellet or wood chip furnace.*

Richardson Memorial Library

The Richardson Memorial Library is located in the Carolina Crapo Memorial Building. The Library is open 4 days per week at varying times to meet the needs of the residents of Sugar Hill. Non-resident library cards are available for a small fee. The library houses a variety of audio, hardcover, and paperback books for all ages. Wireless internet is available for guests.



To maintain this rich community resource, the Trustees should continue to monitor and address changing needs and technology as they relate to the library facility.

Schools

Sugar Hill is part of the Lafayette Regional School District that serves grades K-6. Lafayette Regional School serves students from the towns of Easton, Franconia and Sugar Hill. At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year there were 111 students enrolled.

Profile School is a regional junior and senior high school that serves students in grades 7-12 from the towns of Bethlehem, Easton, Franconia, and Sugar Hill. Profile Junior/Senior High School was ranked #2 in the US News and World Report as the Best High School in N.H. in 2013.

Waste Disposal

Tri-town Transfer Station

Over the past few decades available space in existing landfills has become very limited, state and federal environmental protection requirements have increased, and disposal costs have risen dramatically. To enable collaboration on these issues pursuant to RSA 53-B, Sugar Hill joined with seventeen other area communities to form the Pemi-Baker Solid Waste District in 1989. District membership allows for the negotiation of disposal and hauling contracts as a District rather than individual towns among other benefits. For the last

several years Sugar Hill has had a cooperative agreement with Franconia and Easton where the three towns operate and cost-share the Tri-Town Transfer Station located in Franconia. The waste is hauled to North Country Environmental Services (NCES) landfill in Bethlehem. The District recently signed a new waste disposal agreement with NCES giving District members a long-term waste disposal option with very competitive pricing for a ten (10) year period commencing on May 1, 2013. The towns have implemented an extensive recycling program over the past several decades including glass, aluminum cans, and newspapers since the early 1980s and tin cans, corrugated cardboard, and certain plastic containers since 1991. Construction debris, metal, furniture, electronics, tires, and landscaping debris is also separated and disposed of appropriately. A modest reuse center is maintained benefitting those in surrounding communities. Most recent figures (2012) pertaining to recycling volume include:

Newspaper -- 2.6 tons	#2 Plastic -- 5.1 tons
Cardboard -- 2.1 tons	Scrap Metal -- 19.4 tons
Mixed Paper -- 44.1 tons	Glass -- 88.2 tons
Aluminum -- 3.1 tons	Textiles - 6.2 tons
Tin -- 5.3 tons	Electronics - 11.9 tons
#1 Plastic -- 3.3 tons	

These collective efforts and attention by town employees and citizens typically result in an annual recycling rate of 44%, well above the state average of 22%.

Hazardous Waste

As a member of the Pemi-Baker Solid Waste District, Sugar Hill participates in annual household hazardous waste collections at the Tri-Town Transfer Station in Franconia, where residents and small businesses can bring materials such as paint, fluorescent light bulbs, and electronics. The collection programs are expensive to hold on an annual basis, as such individual residents are reminded of the following tips to help keep costs down and reduce toxicity of the environment: (1) buy only what you need (2) leftover product should be properly stored to maximize long-term use (3) use biological controls and organic products for pests and diseases in gardens where feasible (4) apply chemical pesticides as a last

resort following instructions listed on labels (5) air-dry leftover latex paint for disposal as part of your household trash.

Septage

RSA 485-A:5-b requires each municipality to provide or assure access to a NHDES-approved septage facility or NHDES-approved alternative option. ("Septage" is the material that needs to be periodically pumped out of septic tanks to prevent system failures.) Compliance is typically via a written agreement with a recipient facility indicating that the recipient facility agrees to accept septage generated in that municipality. The capacity needed to service the town is calculated as the number of households x 200 gallons (assumes each 1,000 gallon tank is pumped every five years). The Town of Sugar Hill recently signed an agreement with Schofield's to ensure haulers access to their disposal facility.

Emergency Services

Police Department

The Sugar Hill Police Department, operating out of the Town Hall, is presently under the direction of a full time police chief and employs a second full time officer as well as a part-time administrative assistant. Utilizing a four wheel drive police vehicle the department responds to local calls for assistance as well as to direction from the Grafton County Dispatch Center. The Sugar Hill Police Department also assists the Town's Fire Department and the Town's Highway Department as needed. The Police Department also employs several part-time police officers on an as-needed basis.

Fire/Emergency Medical

Sugar Hill Fire-Rescue has been protecting the town since the department's inception in 1948. The all volunteer department responds to approximately 60 calls per year and, as of 2011, consists of 21 Firefighters. The Fire Station, located in the center of town on State Route 117 houses the 3 fire engines and an emergency vehicle. The Sugar Hill Fire-Rescue department is a member of the Twin State Mutual Aid Fire Association to aid other towns and receive help with local emergencies. The Fire Department relies on the Dispatch

Center, located at the Grafton County Justice Complex, for notification of fire and rescue emergencies.

The Sugar Hill Fire Station is also served by an emergency generator and is able to serve as an emergency shelter, if needed.

Currently Sugar Hill is in contract with Calex Ambulance Service, with their ambulance unit being stationed in the Littleton Fire Station.

Hazard Mitigation

In 2012, the Town of Sugar Hill's Emergency Management Director (in cooperation with the Sugar Hill Fire, Police and Highway Departments) has updated the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan has identified an extended power outage as the largest natural disaster threat to the town and its residents. Steps were developed to address this hazard and have been fully implemented. A copy of the Hazard Mitigation Plan is kept in the Selectmen's office for inspection.



With an increase in severe weather events in New Hampshire, and an increase in winter rains running across frozen ground into frozen watercourses, more attention is being paid to hazard mitigation as a means for increasing community resiliency.

Recommendation:

- *Ensure that the town's hazard mitigation and emergency operations plan consider the changing weather patterns and increases in flood events in New Hampshire in recent years. This includes paying close attention to the needs for maintenance and upgrade of culverts and bridges, as well as consideration of potential road flooding and washouts relative to emergency response.*

Recreation

Sugar Hill residents and visitors have access to a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities, both in town and nearby. The types of recreation facilities and some examples of each are listed below.

Trails

- Town Forests: Philip Robertson Town Forest, Foss Forest
- Bike Trails
- Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing: Sunset Hill Nordic Center – 30km on 60+ acres of wildlife preserve and woodlands.
- Hiking trails: Cushing Bridge, Lupine Trail, Whipple Field Trail.

Fishing/Boating Accesses

- White-water kayaking: Put in on Jesseman Rd. to Ammonoosuc River, 4 miles, Class III-IV, high to medium water (late April through May and after heavy rain).
- Canoeing on Coffin Pond, car-top boat launch.
- Motorized boating on Streeter Pond, drive-down boat launch.



Town Recreation Facilities

- Asphalt tennis court on Main Street in the center of town.

Golf

- Sugar Hill Golf Links – 9 holes, 360 degree mountain views, White Mountains to the East and Green Mountains to the West.

Cemeteries

The town maintains two cemeteries: Sunnyside Cemetery on NH Route 117 just west of the center of town, and Streeter Pond Cemetery on Streeter Pond Road. In recent years the town purchased a substantial piece of land adjoining Sunnyside Cemetery for future need.



In addition to routine maintenance, recent projects have focused on cleaning and repairing some of the older monuments and repairing and replacing fencing.

Energy

Energy Policy

The Town of Sugar Hill, recognizing the principal of sustainable energy, has a policy in place for its implementation. It is intended to reduce the reliance on imported power, reduce harmful



environmental impacts, reduce energy costs, promote sustainability and support state and local economies. It is intended to prevent the degradation of the landscape and maintain the rural nature of the town, promote tourism and provide for prosperity and employment of the people of Sugar Hill.

Electric Service

Electricity for the town is supplied by Public Service of NH and the NH Electric Cooperative.

Communications

Telephone

Fairpoint is the service carrier for telephone land lines. At this time there is limited DSL internet provided by Fairpoint in town.

Cell phone coverage

There is cell phone coverage for much of the town depending on topography. The Selectboard continues to investigate further coverage.

Internet

Fairpoint DSL internet and Time Warner Cable serve portions of town. Verizon WIFI and satellite internet are options for some others. The Selectboard continues to investigate further coverage.



Area Health Care and Social Services

The area is served by a patchwork of agencies and nonprofits, each providing a specific service, or serving a specific population. Most of these organizations depend upon the annual support of communities to continue to be available when residents are in need.

Hospitals/Clinics

Littleton Regional Healthcare provides the majority of hospital care for Sugar Hill residents and is located 15 miles to the north. A full complement of health care and specialty services includes significant investments made recently in the hospital campus and technology.

Littleton and Franconia, NH serve as convenient locations for many of the region's physician, chiropractor, dentist, therapist, and family health clinic offices. Ammonoosuc Community Health Services (ACHS) provides a network of primary health care and support services throughout the 26 communities they serve and in 1994 was designated as the region's Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) making all services available to members of the community regardless of social or economic status. As of 2012 ACHS served a total number of 179 patients from Sugar Hill.

Northern Human Services/White Mountain Mental Health & Common Ground

Northern Human Services provides professional support and services to people affected by mental illness, developmental disabilities, substance abuse, acquired brain injury or related disorders. The organization serves residents of the northern counties in NH including Grafton County and the town of Sugar Hill. Nearby facilities are in Littleton, NH.

North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency

North Country Home Health and Hospice Agency is a Medicare home health & hospice certified agency established in 1971 which provides home care and hospice services to a 21-town service area including Sugar Hill. Home care is a service to recovering, disabled, or chronically ill people who need medical treatment and/or assistance when a person requires care which family and friends cannot easily or effectively provide on their own. Services are provided to all ages, from infant to elderly. Payment sources include Medicare, New Hampshire Medicaid, private insurance and private pay with a sliding fee scale.

Grafton County Senior Citizens Council

Grafton County Senior Citizens Council works throughout the region to make sure that older members of the community receive services that help them remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

The council serves nearly one out of every two residents over the age of 60 in the county. The number of elderly people in Grafton County is growing, and the number of participants

in the programs is also growing. Incorporated in the Lebanon, New Hampshire area in 1973, the council has since assumed responsibility for service provision to older residents of all areas of the county.

The council serves approximately 138 individuals in Sugar Hill delivering meals to 38 of our residents and provides social services to approximately 25.

Recommendation:

- *Continue to support area agencies providing health and social services to ensure that they remain available for when Sugar Hill residents face challenges in their lives.*

Local Organizations Serving Sugar Hill

Sugar Hill Historical Museum

The Sugar Hill Historical Museum is a non-profit entity. Its purpose is to educate through the collection, preservation, research, study and exhibition of those objects that will serve to illustrate the history of Sugar Hill and the local region. Each year a different theme is featured for viewing. During the summer of 2011, a total of 1,567 visitors viewed the exhibits. Additionally, static displays are shown in the Carriage Barn. An excellent gift shop is also a permanent part of the museum.

Sugar Hill Improvement Association

The Sugar Hill Improvement Association (SHIA) was founded in 1890 as a community based non-profit group dedicated to the betterment and beautification of the Town of Sugar Hill. In addition to its original purpose, it was later expanded to provide a trust to be exclusively used for educational purposes. Its revenue source is a trust fund derived of moneys received from the sale of properties donated by Henry H. Crapo in 1949. Membership is open to all residents of Sugar Hill. A sample list of accomplished



projects funded by SHIA include the planting of sugar maple trees, Meeting House enhancements, Town Hall renovations, construction of town basketball and tennis courts and improvements to the village green.

APPENDIX A

2012 Sugar Hill Master Plan Survey

****Complete results including all responses to write-in questions are available from Sugar Hill Planning Board.*

1. Sugar Hill's existing zoning ordinance contains only general language about outdoor lighting, referring to suitable protection for adjacent homes. Would you support making this zoning provision more specific to require that new light fixtures aim light downward away from the sky and neighbors?

a. Yes **145** b. No **36** c. Not Sure **12** **N=193**
2. Sugar Hill's existing zoning ordinance provides for an eventual residential density of one home for each 2 acres, 3 acres, or 5 acres, depending on the zoning district. Would you support reducing the density in the most rural areas of town to one home per 10 acres?

a. Yes **67** b. No **101** c. Not Sure **24** **N=192**
3. In every zoning district in Sugar Hill the minimum road frontage required for new lots is 200 feet, and the minimum setback between the road and new buildings is 75 feet. Should these be larger in the rural areas of town than they are near the town center?

a. Yes **69** b. No **97** c. Not sure **25** **N=191**
4. Currently there is no restriction on the shape of new lots created in Sugar Hill. Sometimes in an effort to subdivide marginal lands, developers create long skinny lots called "spaghetti lots" or oddly shaped lots to meet the minimum road frontage requirements. Some towns have a width:depth ratio, for example requiring that no part of a lot be less than 1/4 as wide as it is long.

Would you favor regulating the shape of new lots in Sugar Hill?

a. Yes **110** b. No **65** c. Not sure **18** **N=193**
5. Would you support more flexible regulations that would enable the Planning Board to have input into the layout of new subdivisions to ensure that new homes are located where negative impacts to scenic views and natural resources are minimized?

a. Yes **146** b. No **32** c. Maybe; it would depend on: **14** **N=192**
6. Do you feel we should encourage agriculture by relaxing some zoning ordinance and site plan review requirements?

a. Yes, all agricultural enterprises should be given preferential treatment. **69**

b. Yes, but only if small scale or home-based. **85**

c. No **19**

d. Not sure **17**

N=190

7. The town zoning ordinance currently allows retail and light industry in most of the town. Should the planning board review the types of businesses allowed in the various parts of town to ensure that they are compatible with the existing character of the area, and recommend some changes to Town Meeting if necessary?

a. Yes **144** b. No **42** c. Not sure **9** **N=195**

8. Are there certain types of businesses that you would like to see encouraged in the town center?

a. Yes. **83** Please list some examples:

b. No **65**

N=148

9. Are there certain areas of town where light industrial uses should be encouraged?

a. Yes. **41** Please tell us where:

b. No **107**

N=148

10. The following roads have been designated as scenic roads by the town:

- Lafayette Road from Sunset Road to the Franconia/Sugar Hill Line
- Birches Rd from the Episcopal Church on Rt 117 to O'Brian Road (Bickford Hill Road)
- Grandview Road from Center District Road to Lover's Lane
- Lover's Lane from Route 117 at the Community Church to Route 117
- Blake Road from Rte 117 to Center District Rd also known as Jesseman Road
- Pearl Lake Road from Route 117 to the Lisbon Town Line
- Jesseman Road/Crane Hill Road
- Center District Road

This means when roadwork or utility work takes place, the Planning Board must hold a public hearing and review and approve removal of any trees or stone walls

associated with that work. Are there other roads in town that you would like to see designated as scenic roads?

a. No **107**

b. Yes **55**, and they are _____

N=163

11. Right now the town's zoning ordinance and state shoreland regulations only protect the shorelines of the Gale River, Streeter Pond and Coffin Pond from clearing and development activities. Would you support expanding the town's Shorefront District to include brooks?

a. Yes **74**

Any particular ones? _____

b. No, leave the Shoreland District as is. **105**

N=179

12. Would you support restricting the following activities in Sugar Hill to protect our water resources:

a. construction of new buildings in areas of town that have a 1% chance of flooding each year (100 year floodplain) N=183	Yes 98	No 70	Maybe 15 , depends on
b. businesses that use or store large quantities of hazardous materials in aquifers N=192	Yes 173	No 10	Maybe 9 , depends on
c. filling in or draining wetlands N=190	Yes 129	No 39	Maybe 22 , depends on
d. development close to wetlands N=189	Yes 117	No 38	Maybe 34 , depends on
e. development on steep slopes N=191	Yes 109	No 56	Maybe 26 , depends on

13. Would you support design guidelines to make development on hills and ridges less visible?

a. Yes **123**

b. No **47**

c. Not sure **23**, depends on:

N=193

14. Would you support allowing private residences to include a second dwelling unit to provide more affordable housing choices for local families and to make it easier for some seniors to stay in their own homes? Please circle ALL of the following you would support provided that the lot could easily handle the additional septic flows and parking:
- a. accessory apartments in existing homes **163**
 - b. accessory apartments in other existing buildings next to homes, such as garages or workshops **142**
 - c. accessory dwelling added onto existing home **134**
 - d. new duplexes **46**
 - e. none of the above **16**

N=188

15. In recent years the Town renovated and restored the Sugar Hill Meetinghouse cupola and clock, and renovated the Carolina Crapo Memorial Building. Are there additional projects involving the conservation of the town's natural, cultural or historical resources that you would like to see the community pursue?
16. What is your relationship to Sugar Hill? Please circle ALL that apply.
- a. Voter **91**
 - b. Year-round resident **94**
 - c. Seasonal resident **94**
 - d. Own less than 10 acres **62**
 - e. Own 10 acres or more **82**

N=195

Thank you for helping us make the Sugar Hill Master Plan be Your Plan!