

LACONIA MASTER PLAN

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Master Plan Elements presented in this insert:

- Community Character
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Transportation
- Natural Resources
- Historic & Cultural Resources

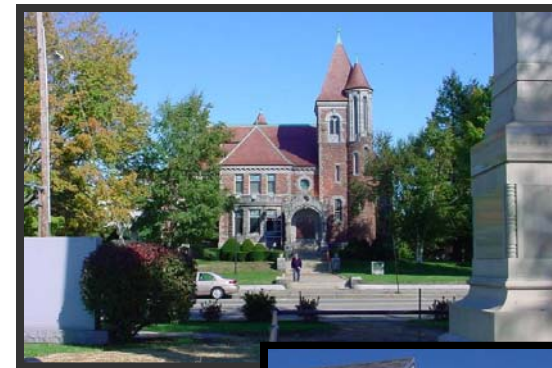
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

- Establishes Goals, Objectives, & Actions for land use, economic development, housing, transportation and community facilities.
- Incorporates the work of the Laconia Planning Board & Master Plan Steering Committee with citizen participation from community forums.
- Recently Adopted as an update to the City's 1995 Master Plan.

How has Laconia changed since 1995?

- What are the characteristics of Laconia's population?
- How will we guide the development of land and structures?
- How can we maintain and grow our economic base?
- What are our housing trends & needs?
- How can we design and expand our transportation systems?
- How can we preserve the historic and cultural resources?
- What environmental and cultural features are important?



This insert presents highlights, to read the complete master plan go to: www.city.laconia.nh.us

Community Character

Laconia's most significant strength is its natural resources – its lakes, mountains, woodlands, small town & rural character.

-Community Forum Public Comments

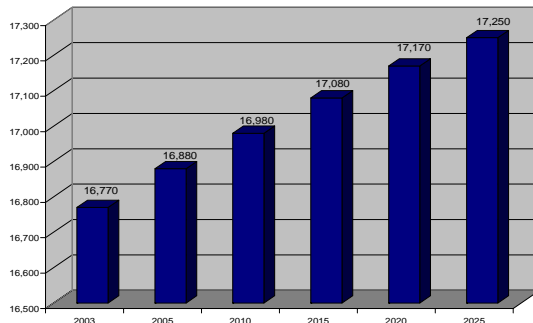
Laconia's "ToolKit" Includes:

- The natural environment of the region, especially the lakes.
- Proximity to airport facility for economic development.
- The small town character, including walkable economic centers and friendly residents.
- Recreational opportunities, including open space areas owned by the State & municipal parks.
- Strong seasonal economy with varied summer and winter activities.
- Historic buildings and diverse historic architecture.

Issues and Opportunities

- Population in Laconia is projected to increase from 16,770 residents to 17,250 by 2025.
- As of 2000, 52% of Laconia's residents had moved into their homes since 1995.
- From 1990 to 2000, the average household size in Laconia fell from 2.49 persons to 2.32 persons.
- As of 2000, 82% of Laconia residents over the age of 25 had high school diplomas and 20% had college degrees.
- The median household income in 2000 reached \$37,800, up 30% from the 1990 level of \$29,100.
- The percent of the population over age 45 is dramatically increasing, and the population under age 34 is decreasing.
- The total land area in current use in Laconia was reduced by 50% between 2002 and 2005
- 9 % of residents are considered to live below the poverty line.

Population Projection
Change in Laconia



Goals:

- Support the sense of community and preserve character of the rural areas, neighborhoods, and commercial centers
- Preserve and build community
- Enhance aesthetic character
- Manage water front and open space
- Require fiscally responsible development
- Improve the land development process
- Build municipal capacity

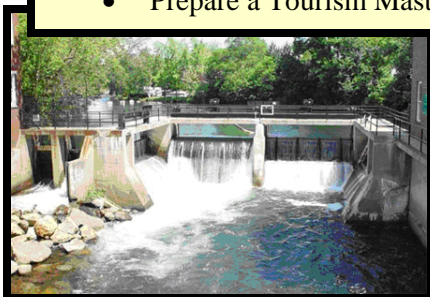
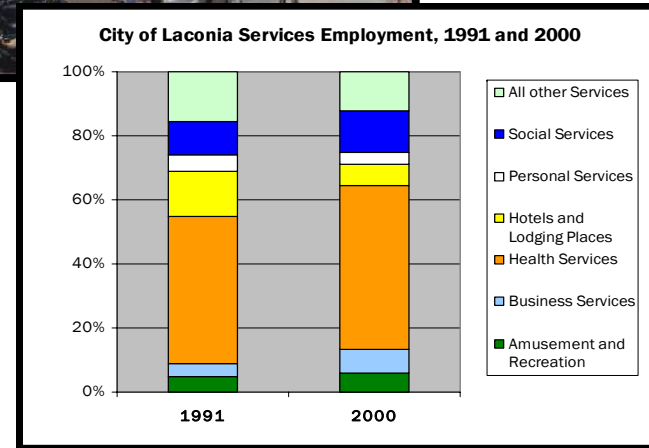
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Economic Development

“From 1991 to 2000, employment in Laconia was generally steady, with some modest increases and decreases”

Laconia’s “ToolKit” Includes:

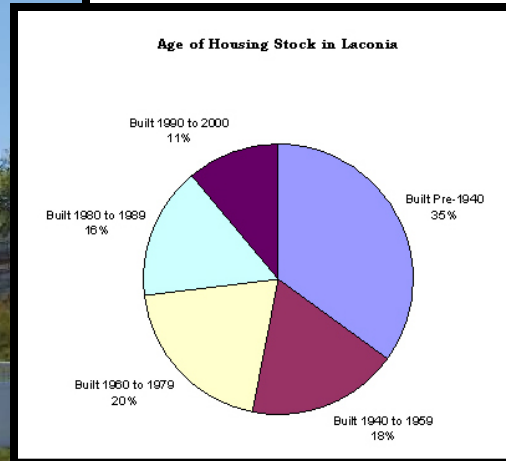
- Enhance the abilities of the Planning Department to address Community Development through the funding of a Community Development Planner.
- Support and promote the use of low-interest financing & incentive based zoning for business owner initiated redevelopment.
- Encourage & enhance mixed commercial/residential uses of buildings in commercial centers.
- Support the expansion of the Downtown Riverwalk by incorporating it into downtown and riverfront property development.
- Continue the cooperative relationship w/ Gilford to encourage future development within the Lakes Business Park.
- Prepare a Tourism Master Plan.



Goals

- Revitalize and enhance the Commercial & Economic Aspects of Community Centers. One of Laconia’s strengths is in its small town character. Downtown, Lakeport, and the Weirs as economic centers of Laconia, are prime areas for revitalization efforts and development enhancement.
- Enhance the City’s Attraction as a Tourist Destination – Focus Efforts on improving Laconia as a destination nfor tourism and recreation because tourism is one of Laconia’s strongest economic sectors.
- Explore new means of raising revenue to Support the City’s Capital and Operating Needs.
- Increase Office, Industrial/Manufacturing, and Business Park Development in the City.
- Revitalize and enhance the city’s Economic Development of its Waterfront.

Housing



As residential development expands, the City must allow for development in many varieties, types, and costs.



Laconia's "ToolKit" Includes:

- Establish "neighborhood/village" zoning districts to encourage the development of mixed residential/commercial use.
- Promote the development of mixed housing types/cluster development with an emphasis on maximizing high quality and function-rich green-space and natural resources.
- Adopt and implement a strategic City-wide plan for the upgrading of existing public utilities and the extension of public utilities.
- Provide for small neighborhood parks as a part of new development ("pocket parks").
- Develop and implement an outreach program for developers, contractors, financing institutions, schools, and the public.
- Connect neighborhoods by developing and publicizing pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle connections.

Goals

- Encourage and plan for a wide variety of housing types to accommodate people of all ages, incomes, lifestyles, and physical capabilities at appropriate densities and locations.
- Encourage Housing Diversity - The City should strive to maintain a heterogeneous mix of residents in terms of income level and residence status. This will strengthen all segments of the economy and keep the housing market strong.
- Encourage Community-focused housing - A community focus in housing encourages neighborhood connections and further strengthens community character.
- Develop and implement mixed-use zoning to provide connections between zones

Transportation

Traffic Circulation in and through Laconia is probably the most important transportation issue facing the community.

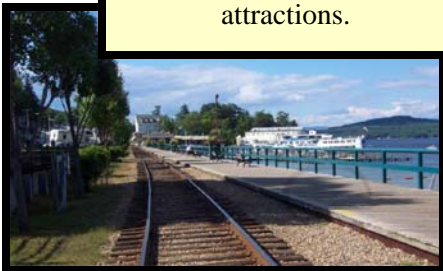
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Laconia's "ToolKit" Includes:

- Work with the Lakes Regional Planning Commission's transportation programs and the Regional planning process to advance projects of local and regional importance.
- Work cooperatively with the NH Dept. of Transportation and increase involvement in the regional Technical Advisory Committee to promote important Regional transportation projects through the 10-year Transportation Improvement Program.
- Review and revise municipal ordinances and regulations to design and manage access points from major roadways to increase safety and maintain rural character.
- Ensure adequate on and off-site traffic circulation at commercial development sites.
- Invest in and support non-motorized transportation systems such as the Rails with Trails program, the Riverwalk, and sidewalks.
- Install creative and eye-catching Gateway signage to welcome visitors and promote Laconia's businesses and attractions.

Goals

- Plan for the City's Long-Range Transportation Needs – Laconia should maintain an active role in data collection and analysis to identify and meet its transportation needs.
- Protect the Character of Rural and Scenic Roads – Several of Laconia's roadways provide magnificent views of the lakes and mountains.
- Manage Access on Commercially Zoned Streets – As the commercial corridors undergo revitalization and increased patronage, the flow of traffic must be addressed.
- Expand Laconia's Walkable/Bikeable Opportunities.
- Wayfinding on the City's Streets – Providing business and street signage is increasingly important.



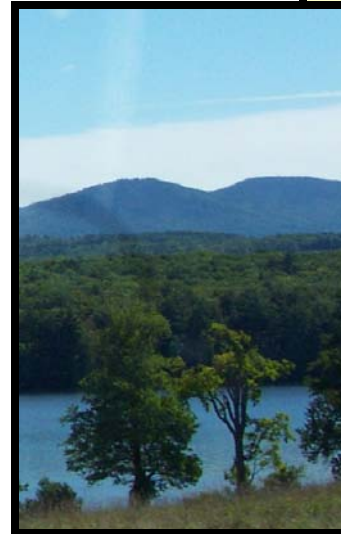
Natural Resources



Wetlands have been discovered to be one of the most fertile and productive ecosystems in the world...The 30 foot buffer requirement in the City is a positive step, but a larger buffer requirement would better protect most wetlands and provide upland habitat for wetland species.

Laconia's "ToolKit" Includes:

- Incorporate Best Management Practices identified in the Planning Study for Weirs, Paugus Bay, Opechee Bay, and Winnepesaukee River Watersheds [Watershed Study] into the Planning Board's project review process.
- Implement impact fees specifically to be used for storm water management and control.
- Establish a means to review the functional aspects of wetlands and buffers in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Site Plan Regulations.
- Complete a Natural Resource Inventory [NRI], including forest resources, and use the NRI to further guide and refine local decision making.
- Integrate sewer and water expansions with the goal of protecting open space, water quality, and wetlands.
- Improve cooperative relationships between City Departments and local Boards. Educate City Boards and officials so they are aware of the importance and protection of natural and scenic resources.



Goals

- Protect Water Quality – The biggest threat to Laconia's natural resources is the effect development has on water quality, specifically, to Paugus Bay.
- Protect Wetlands – Protect the wetlands that buffer and clean the source waters to our large lakes.
- Protect and Preserve Natural Areas and Scenic Resources – Laconia's natural and scenic resources, including lakes and rural areas, deserve Laconia's greatest protection.
- Lessen the Environmental Impacts of Development – Laconia should encourage development that is protective of our natural resources.
- Create Greater Environmental Awareness and Resource Conservation – Community support to preserve and protect natural areas must be built through outreach and education.

Cultural and Historic Resources



Working to preserve the character of Laconia's buildings, and incorporating complimentary design features into new construction, will reinforce Laconia's image for years to come.

GOALS

- Gather information to support and assist historic preservation.
- Facilitate historic preservation.
- Promote historic preservation through education and outreach.

Laconia's "ToolKit" Includes:

- Encourage collaboration among local and regional groups who work with Laconia's history and heritage.
- Identify and catalog structures and sites of historic importance and significance in the City.
- Encourage the continued preservation of historic structures by allowing incentives within municipal ordinances for reuse and renovation to include historical architecture.
- Allow for more flexibility in re-developing historic structures, including but not limited to, greenspace allowances and/or parking requirement exceptions.
- Develop a curriculum based on Laconia's heritage and history for use in local schools and for the tourism industry.
- Incorporate historic resources into tourist brochures and market the region as a tourist destination.
- Develop, and publicize interpretive walking historic tours and trail systems, such as the Riverwalk, the Meredith Parade Historic Trail, or an industrial waterway trail



Community Facilities and Services

Laconia's goal is to provide facilities and services that meet the needs of the City's population. There is a need to balance the services provided to the citizens of Laconia with the associated costs.



Laconia's "ToolKit" Includes:

- Create a Paugus Bay Watershed Overlay District to provide additional protection for the City's drinking water source.
- Update the 1976 Sewerage Plan for prioritization to protect waterfront districts and areas with large amounts of wetlands.
- Establish functional and economically feasible recycling and composting programs in the City and as part of the proposed Transfer Station Facility Upgrade.
- Cooperate with other municipal police departments to locate, design and build a Regional practice firing range.
- Increase the on-duty staff to 12 to provide adequate firefighter response throughout the entire City.
- Develop an equitable distribution of maintenance costs for all fields and facilities, including all interscholastic sports, as well as adult and youth programs within the City.
- Support and maintain adequate staff and training in the Code Enforcement Department to allow complete and efficient inspections within 48 hours of a phone call.
- Continue to upgrade and maintain the public school facilities.

Goals

- Provide Potable Water.
- Manage Wastewater.
- Manage Solid Waste.
- Enhance Police Protection.
- Provide Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services.
- Provide Library Services.
- Provide Social Services.
- Provide Parks & Recreation Opportunities and Programs.
- Provide Adequate Code Enforcement.
- Support and Maintain Comprehensive Strategic Planning for the City.
- Maintain a Comprehensive Education System.



INTRODUCTION

New Hampshire State Law – Master Plan Requirements

The Master Plan is a document integral to a city or town’s successful planning process. According to State Law 674:2:

“The purpose of the Master Plan is to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board, to aid the Board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the Board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection.”

Per this statement the Committee charged with writing the Master Plan has three tasks:

1. Set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board;
2. To aid the Board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire; and
3. To guide the Board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection.

Task one recognizes that the Master Plan will be the driving document in the Planning Board’s local planning process for several years in the future. The actions cited in the Master Plan must be clear, practical for Laconia, and based on the long-term vitality of the City.

Task two defines the Master Plan as the foundation of the zoning ordinance and cites the intent to preserve and enhance the unique characteristics of Laconia. There is no doubt that the citizens of New Hampshire feel that quality of life comes from the irreplaceable natural resources and our rich history and culture imbedded with deep ideals. This is unique to the State and an important backbone to each and every community. For this reason the Legislature mandates that this heritage be preserved and enhanced in the Master Plan.

Task three cites sound planning, wise resource protection, and Smart Growth. Smart Growth is defined as having the following principles:

- Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective
- Mix Land Uses
- Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

What this document is not is a set of rules, but instead is a set of statements and land use and development guidelines for the municipality. In other words, this document must outline and describe the principles under which Laconia would like to see growth and development occur.

Vision Statement

In order that this Master Plan document is consistent with one underlying and deeply rooted principle, State law mandates what it calls a “Vision Statement”. This Vision Statement is “a set of statements which articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the Master Plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole State.”

Laconia’s Vision Statement was formed at the very beginning of the Master Plan process through a series of public input sessions. The vision emphasizes the importance of Laconia’s natural resources and rural character as a factor of Laconia’s economic development. Laconia’s role as a regional leader in neighborhood development, integrating open space, transportation, pedestrian means, and economic growth in the planning process is highlighted as important characteristics of the Vision. The theme of the Vision was incorporated throughout the drafting of the goals and implementation plan.

Laconia Today

The Laconia Today section is intended to provide the citizens of Laconia a snapshot of what the community currently looks like. This section provides statements of facts, citations of data, and figures that describe Laconia's present state. This data was used to determine the actions required to meet the objectives outlined in the Objectives, Goals, and Actions' section.

Objectives, Goals, and Actions

The objectives and actions of this Master Plan meet the intent of the State law. The objectives and actions are written as clearly and practically as possible to provide for the best and most appropriate future development of the area, to achieve the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection. Not all actions are within the jurisdiction of the Planning Board; however the intent is to encourage and facilitate the collaboration of all departments in the planning process.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is the most integral part of the Master Plan, as it serves to facilitate completion of the Planning Board's recommendations. The Implementation Plan assigns every action to a responsible organization or City department and serves to keep track of completion. This provides a checklist that should be updated as action items get completed.

The Laconia Planning Board wanted the 2006 Master Plan to be a much different document than past Master Plans. The Master Plan is meant to be something that every home and business owner can pick up and apply to the development of their property and civic life as a resident of Laconia. In the next chapter you will see the process by which this document has been developed. The process is important to help understand why certain goals and objectives exist.

PROCESS

The process for completion of a Master Plan can be quite complicated and intense. This was especially true for the 2006 Master Plan given the combination of two factors: the realization of both Planners and citizens that a new form of Master Plan was needed and an unprecedented era of growth.

The first City Master Plan was adopted in 1963. The 1963 Plan focused on capital improvements and urban renewal in Laconia. The 1963 Master Plan was entirely rewritten and readopted in 1979. In 1979, the focus changed to a land use strategy that hoped to minimize capital expenditures.

In 1991, the Master Plan was updated with a focus on the existing conditions in Laconia and with an in depth analysis of population and economic data. This Plan contained 13 lengthy, detailed and technical Chapters with a separate appendix for statistical and scientific evidence. There were 51 tables of information, 17 other charts, maps and figures, and 15 maps. The final product was more than 500 pages and contained substantial amounts of data and analysis. However, its implementation was overshadowed and the Plan was not regularly utilized. In 2002, when a new rewrite committee was organized, they were determined to streamline and simplify the Master Plan for ease of implementation and to enhance its usability.

In early 2002, members of the Planning Board and staff put out a request for individuals from the community who would be interested in serving on a rewrite committee, and shortly thereafter formed the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC). The committee then issued a Request for Proposals to secure the services of a qualified consultant to re-write the Master Plan. After researching the responses to the RFP, the Committee hired the consulting firm of Wallace, Robert & Todd, LLC.

The consultant spent the next few months meeting with the City Council, Planning Board and MPSC members. Additionally, the consultant met with stakeholders – key decision makers in the community, including representatives from civic and volunteer organizations, economic and business leaders, and environmental, historic and cultural resource advocates.

In December 2002, the MPSC put together a series of community forums. The forum participants clearly identified Laconia's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Laconia's natural resources were overwhelmingly cited as Laconia's greatest strength. Weaknesses that were identified (1) lack of affordable housing; (2) poor planning and code enforcement; (3) loss of jobs and weak wages; and (4) high property taxes. Laconia's greatest opportunity was seen as the potential for redevelopment and preservation of the historic infrastructure – period structures such as the Colonial Theatre and manufacturing infrastructure such as the Allen Rogers Mill. The greatest perceived threat was the impact of current development on natural resources and water quality.

In August 2003, a second set of Community Forums was organized and from these, the Vision Statement was drafted.

During 2004 and 2005, the MPSC and staff hired the firm of Jeff Taylor and Associates to complete the Laconia Today report. The committee also hired the Lakes Region Planning Commission to complete a Build-Out Analysis. Finally, the committee began working on the development of the Objectives and Actions.

A final set of community forums, the Growth Forums, was held in the summer of 2005. These forums reconfirmed the issues and recommendations from the 2003 forums. The MPSC incorporated this final public input into the Master Plan and presented their final product to the Planning Board in April 2006.

MASTER PLAN VISION STATEMENT

Laconia, nestled in the center of New Hampshire's Lakes Region, and framed by lakes and mountains, is known as "The City on the Lakes". These same lakes and mountains contribute to the quality of life cherished by residents and visitors alike. They serve as important elements of the City's economic vitality. The protection, enhancement, and preservation of these irreplaceable natural resources are paramount.

Our City's rural character allows us to buffer our urban areas with open space. Individual neighborhood identities are preserved and anchored by vibrant business districts. Streetscapes are aesthetically appealing, enhance visual character, and typify the rural, small town feel.

Compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian friendly development is encouraged for the efficient use of land, resources, and infrastructure. Traditional neighborhood development is conducive to strong community life. Growth is directed to make maximum use of resources without over-development. Laconia leads the way in the County and State in enabling consumer decisions for sustainable practices such as developing livable/walkable neighborhoods, recycling, purchasing organic and local foods, using renewable sources of energy, and conserving energy and our natural resources.

Laconia is the regional center for professional, medical, and governmental services, and is the seat for Belknap County. Our economy embraces a blend of industrial, manufacturing, commercial, retail, and service opportunities, together with a buoyant tourism sector.

Our community and our lakes are connected by a safe and accessible network of roads, walkways, waterways, railroad, and a vibrant regional airport. Neighborhoods and businesses are linked by a variety of pedestrian and vehicular means. Trails for biking, hiking, skiing, and snowmobiling, and our linked waterways for boating, canoeing, and kayaking, provide ample opportunity for recreation and healthful living, as well as access to other lake communities.

Laconia is a friendly, proactive community. Our municipal government is responsive to its citizens in its efforts to provide municipal services, housing, high quality schools, and public safety. Volunteerism is an integral element of our success as evidenced by the scores of charitable and non-profit organizations and churches that call Laconia home. The special quality of life in Laconia is enhanced by expanded access to recreational facilities and open spaces. Our community values and supports educational excellence in our schools. Our citizens are engaged, informed, and well-educated on key issues affecting growth and change in Laconia.

Revised 12/09/03

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

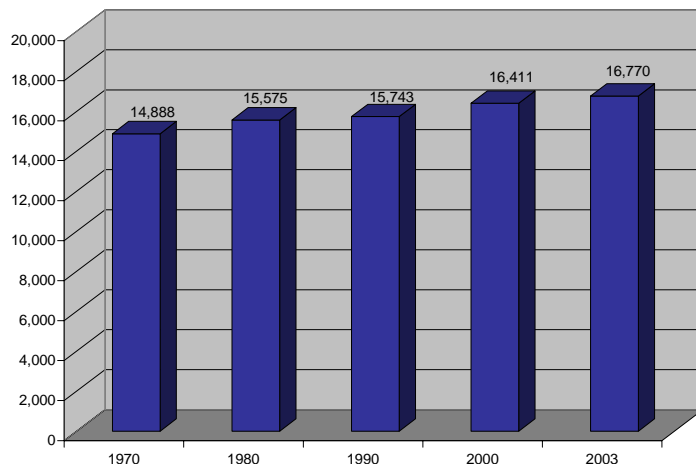
POPULATION

Population Demographics

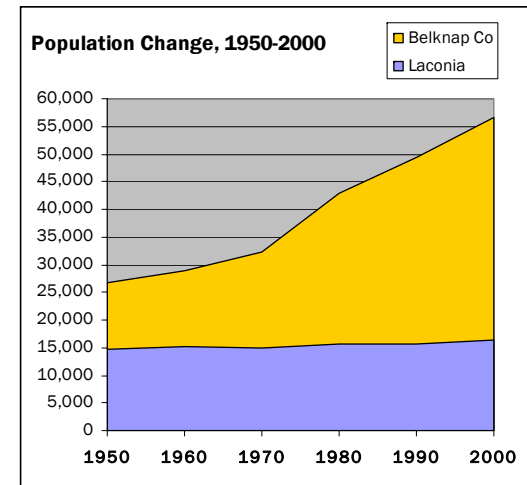
Laconia has grown very slowly over the last five decades, but its internal demographics have shown dramatic changes.

Total Population

As the County seat, Laconia has long been the hub of Belknap County and the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. However, as employment has dispersed and individual mobility has increased, Laconia's role in the region has changed considerably over the last fifty years. During this time, Laconia's population has been very stable in total numbers, but its internal demographics have shown dramatic changes.



Population Change in Laconia (1970 - 2003)



As recently as 1950, Laconia accounted for 55 % of the total population of Belknap County.

Since then, suburbanization and the booming popularity of the Lakes Region as a retirement destination have swelled the populations of nearby towns such as Gilford, Meredith, and Alton. Laconia now represents 28% of the County's total population.

Laconia grew by a total of only 1,882 residents from 1970 to 2003. The 2003 Census estimate for Laconia was 16,770 residents, which ranked as the 15th largest population among New Hampshire's incorporated cities and towns. In 1990, Laconia ranked 13th in population, and back in 1960 it ranked 9th among New Hampshire's incorporated cities and towns.

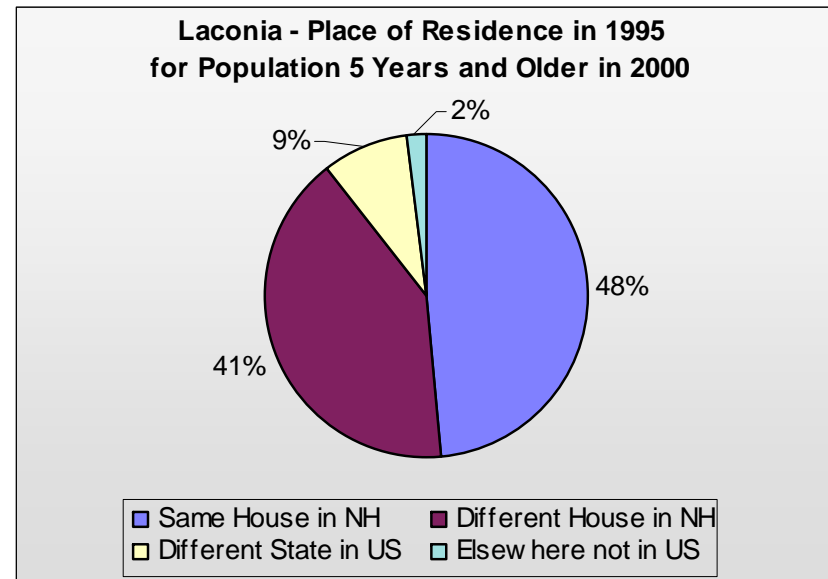
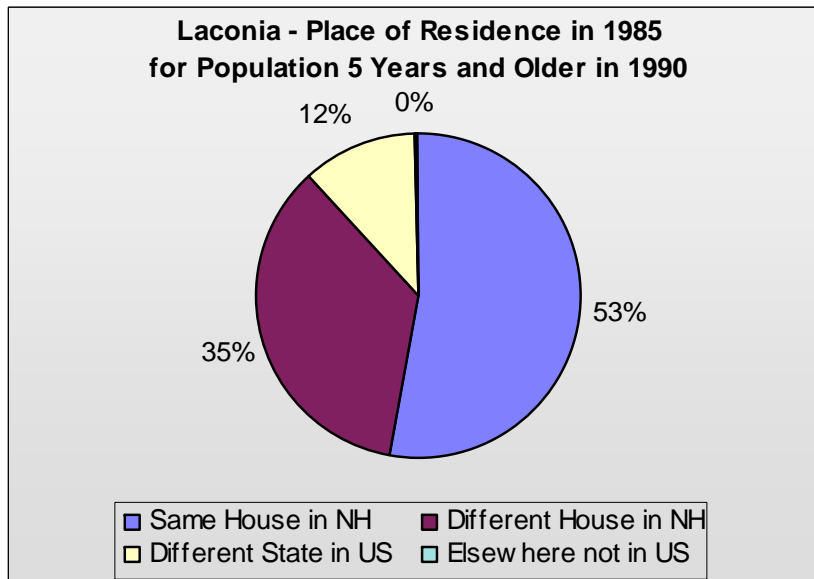
One aspect of Laconia’s population that is difficult to measure is the seasonal fluctuation. The summer and winter populations have different characteristics, but there is a lack of data in this area.

Laconia may now be on the cusp of significant growth with 2,000 single-family units approved by the Planning Board, but not yet constructed.

Migration and Mobility

Laconia is a City in transition. In 2000, 52% of Laconia's residents had moved into their homes since 1995.

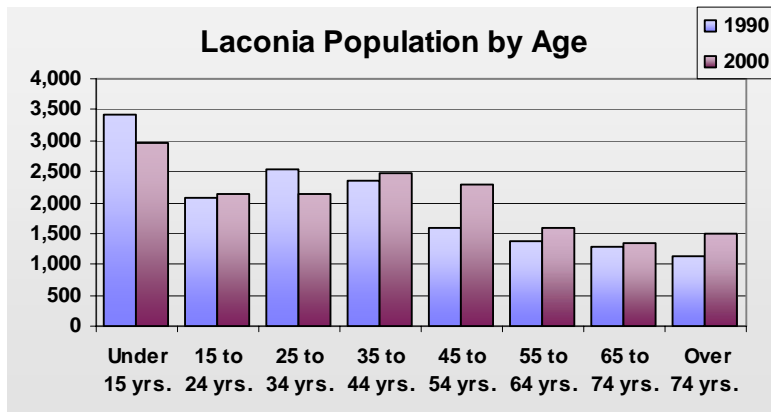
Laconia is a City of recent arrivals, with 52% of residents in 2000 having moved into their homes since 1995. Among this population, 11% moved to the City from outside of New Hampshire. There is clearly a substantial amount of demand for housing from immigrants and out-of-state residents. This may be due, in part, to the number of rental units in Laconia compared to surrounding communities and the City’s role as the “County Seat”, which makes it a central location for social services.



Age

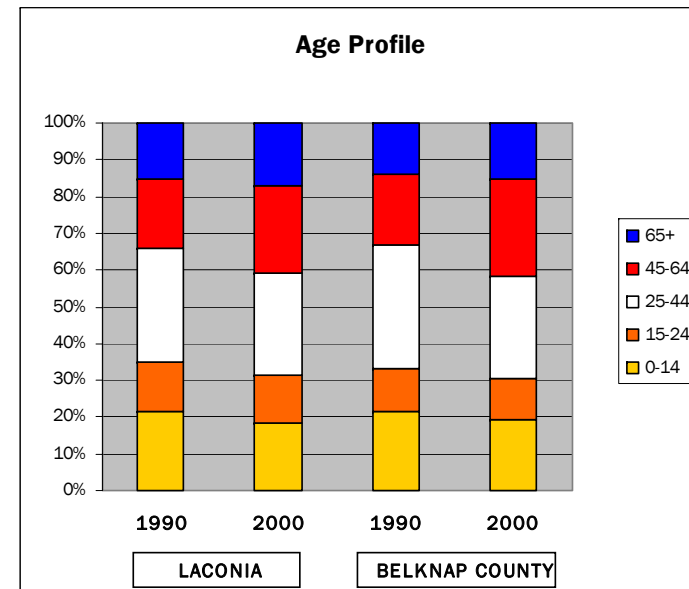
Laconia's population is getting older, and the lack of growth among the working age population presents a potential problem for economic growth in Laconia and the Region.

The Lakes Region is an increasingly attractive location for pre-retirees and seniors. From 1990 to 2000, the number of residents in Belknap County over the age of 45 increased by more than 7,100.



The net change of people aged 44 and under for this rapidly growing County was zero. The lack of growth among the working age population and among those who will be entering the workforce presents a potential problem for economic growth in the Lakes Region, as it points to a future workforce shortage. This is a national concern as well, as we approach 2011 and anticipate the largest senior population the United States has ever had.

Age trends were similar in Laconia. The share of the City's population over the age of 45 grew by approximately 1,300 people. Since Laconia's total population only grew by 668 persons during the 1990s, the number of residents under 45 actually decreased by more than 600 persons. The loss of residents under 15, and those aged 25 to 34, could represent a decrease in the number of young families in Laconia. In 2004, the Laconia School Department reported its lowest level in elementary school enrollments in ten years.



Race and Ethnic Origin

58.7% of Laconia’s population was born in New Hampshire, and 2% of the City’s population is from outside the United States.

The general race and ethnic origin of Laconia’s population underwent some changes from 1990 to 2000. There was an increase (2%) in the non-white population thru 2000. At the same time, there was also a 2% increase in people from outside the United States. In 2002, the School Department reported that they were experiencing an increase in child refugees from Bosnia, Croatia, Vietnam, and Somalia.

In 2000, 58.7% of Laconia’s population was born in New Hampshire. Although a slight decrease from 1990, Laconia still has a slightly higher percentage of New Hampshire natives than the State's average of 43.3%.

Laconia Residents’ Place of Birth

Place of Birth						
Universe: Total Population		1990 Census			2000 Census	
Total:		15,743			16,411	
United States Native		15,257	96.9%		15,831	96.5%
New Hampshire Native		9,455	60.1%		9,629	58.7%
Born in Different State		5,717	36.3%		6,054	36.9%
Northeast		4,504	28.6%		4,710	28.7%
Midwest		508	3.2%		499	3.0%
South		442	2.8%		514	3.1%
West		263	1.7%		331	2.0%
Native Born Outside US		85	0.5%		148	0.9%
Foreign Born		486	3.1%		580	3.5%
Naturalized Citizen					223	1.4%
Not a Citizen					357	2.2%
Source: 1990 Census, STF3, Table P042; 2000 Census, SF3, Table P021						

Household Structure

From 1990 to 2000, the average household size in Laconia fell from 2.49 persons to 2.32 persons. The percentage of one-person households now exceeds the percentage of family households with children.

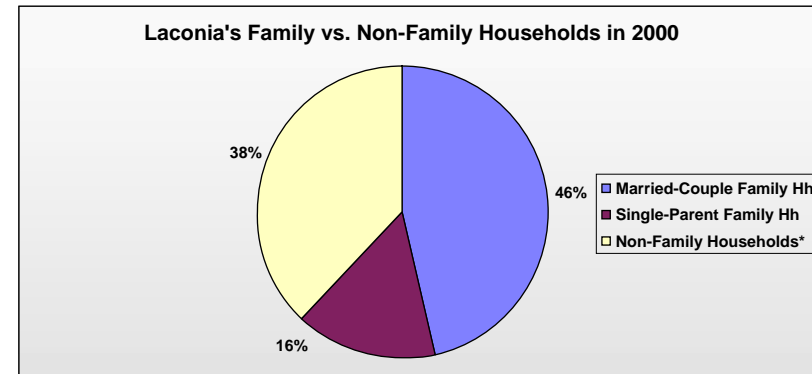
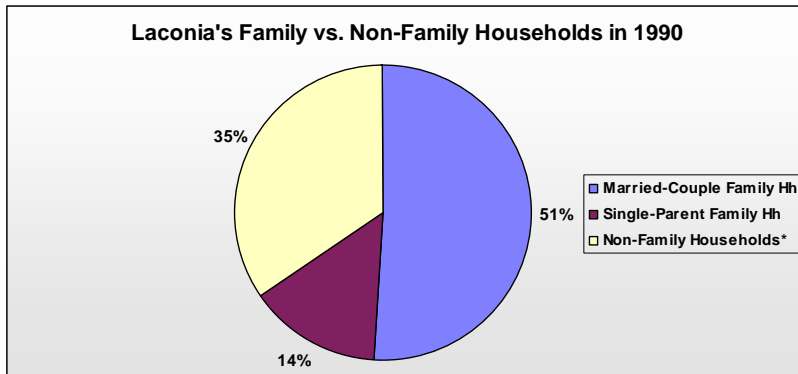
Laconia has experienced some significant changes in household structure. Households in Laconia are now smaller and the number of single parent households and non-family households (i.e., roommates, cohabiting couples) have increased. The continued shrinking of household sizes is an ongoing trend nationwide as more people live alone, couples have fewer children, and the divorce rate increases. However, the pace of decline of the average household size in Laconia has been much faster than typical.

Average Household Size

Location	1990	2000
Laconia	2.49	2.32
Belknap County	2.57	2.46
New Hampshire	2.62	2.53

The main implication of shrinking household size is its effect on housing demand. As each housing unit holds fewer and fewer people, the number of housing units needed to accommodate the same number of people increases. In Laconia, this trend is clearly evident. Comparing the City's population gain from 1990 to 2000 of 668 persons with its concurrent gain of 564 households explains the increasing demand for housing units in Laconia. Much has been made of the statistic from the 2000 Census that, Nationally, the percentage of one-person households now exceeds the percentage of family households with children. This statistic holds true for the City of Laconia. In Laconia, 30% of

*Includes single person households, roommates, families without children, and cohabiting couples.



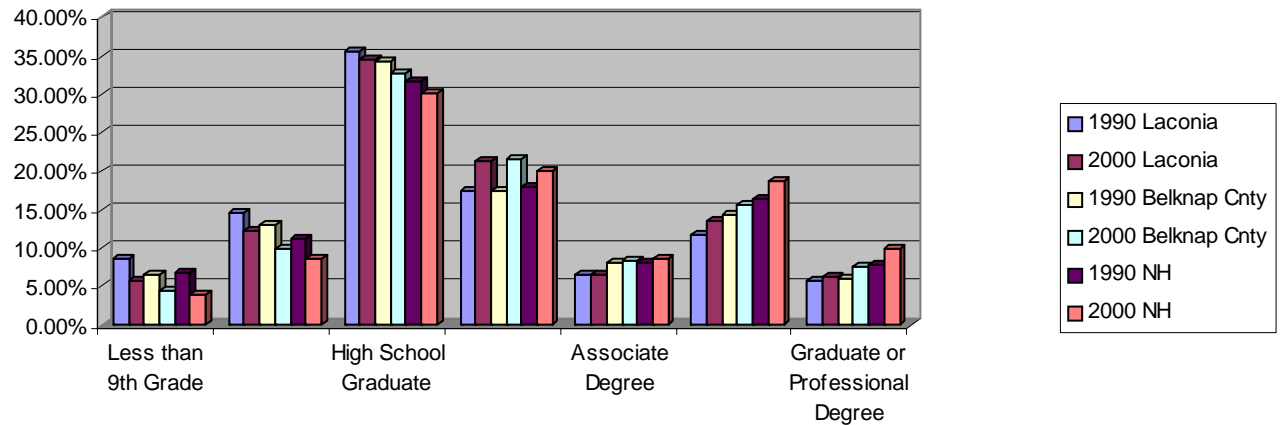
households are one-person households, 29% are families with children, and the remainder are families without children and non-family households. In Laconia, 25% of the families with children are now headed by single women.

Education

As of 2000, 82% of Laconia residents over the age of 25 had high school diplomas and 20% had college degrees.

The levels of educational attainment for both Laconia and Belknap County increased during the 1990s, in part because the number of pre-retirees and retirees increased within the City and the Region. In 2000, 82% of Laconia's residents over the age of 25 had high school diplomas and 20% had college degrees.

Highest Educational Attainment in Laconia, Belknap County, and New Hampshire



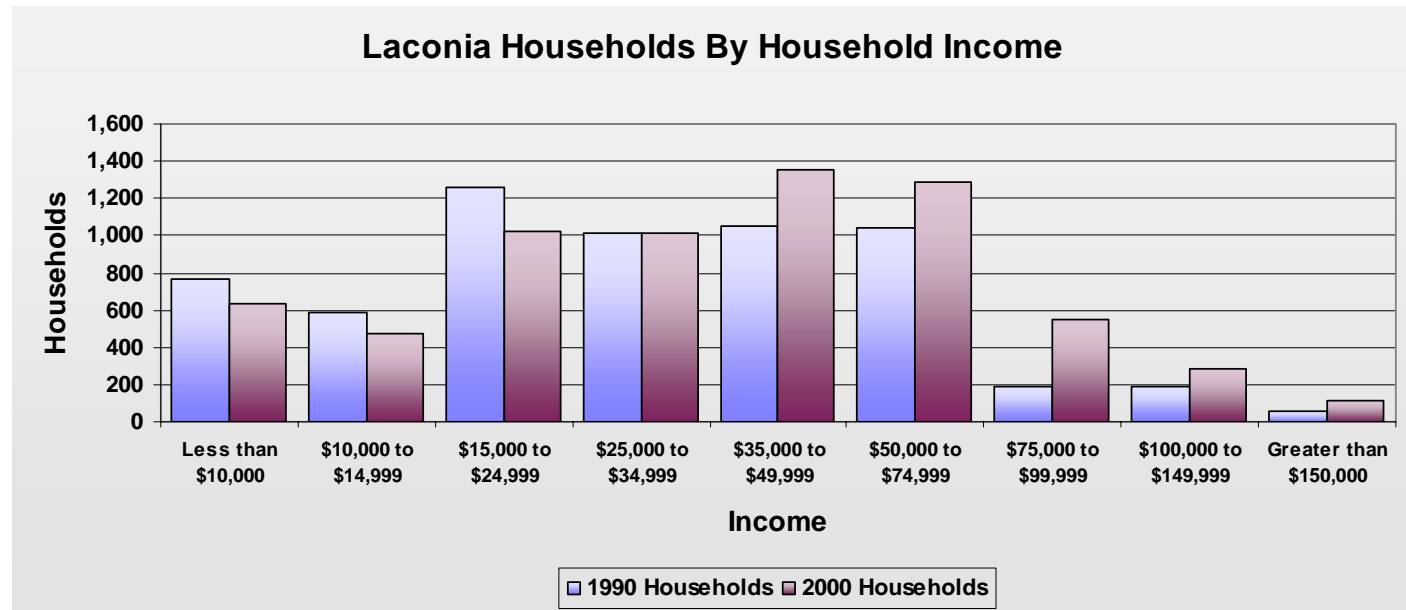
For Belknap County as a whole, the percentage of adults with high school diplomas increased to 86% in 2000 and the percentage of college graduates increased to 23%. While these gains are positive, the region as a whole still lags behind the State in educational attainment.

Income

The influx of high income households drove Belknap County's median household income from \$32,500 in 1990 to \$46,200 in 2000 - an increase of 42%.

Despite some gains in the high income household levels, Laconia contains the County's concentration of low and middle-income households. Meanwhile, income levels in Belknap County overall have risen very rapidly since 1990.

The most dramatic changes in the income structure of the Region have occurred at the higher end of the income scale. The influx of high income households drove Belknap County's median household income from \$32,500 in 1990 to \$46,200 in 2000 - an increase of 42%. By 2000, the City's median household income reached \$37,800, up 30% from the 1990 level of \$29,100.

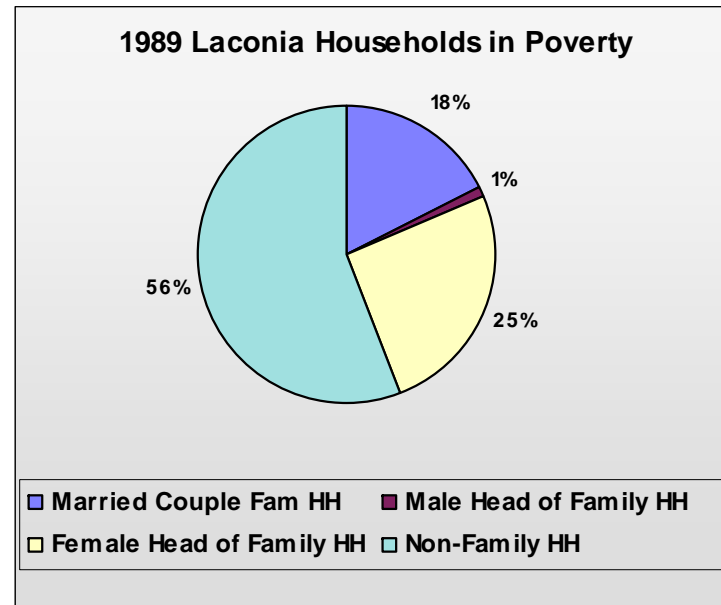
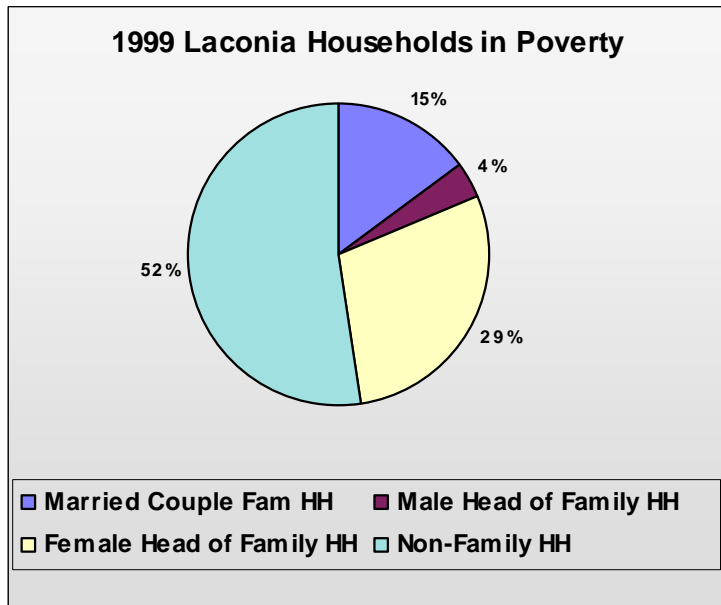


Although Laconia has also experienced some growth in upper income households, 67% of all households in Laconia earned less than \$50,000 as of 2000, and 32% earned less than \$25,000. The share of households earning more than \$75,000 in Laconia grew from 7% in 1990 to 14% in 2000.

Poverty

In Laconia, 8.9% of individuals are now categorized as living below the poverty level.

The poverty level is calculated by the U.S. Census by assigning an income amount to each family based on what is required to support that family, considering the number and age of its members. In Laconia, 8.9% of individuals are categorized as living below the poverty level. This is much higher than the New Hampshire average of 6.8%, and is an indication of the higher social needs in Laconia. The number of households in poverty increased from 8.6% (531) to 10% (665) overall from 1989 to 1999. The number of single parent households in poverty increased to 33% by 1999. In addition, Laconia is experiencing an increasingly transient population. This is evident in the turnover of enrolled students within the school system, the number of individuals and families living in rental cottages during the off-season, the number of overcrowded rental units, and the increase in police call volumes and violent crimes.

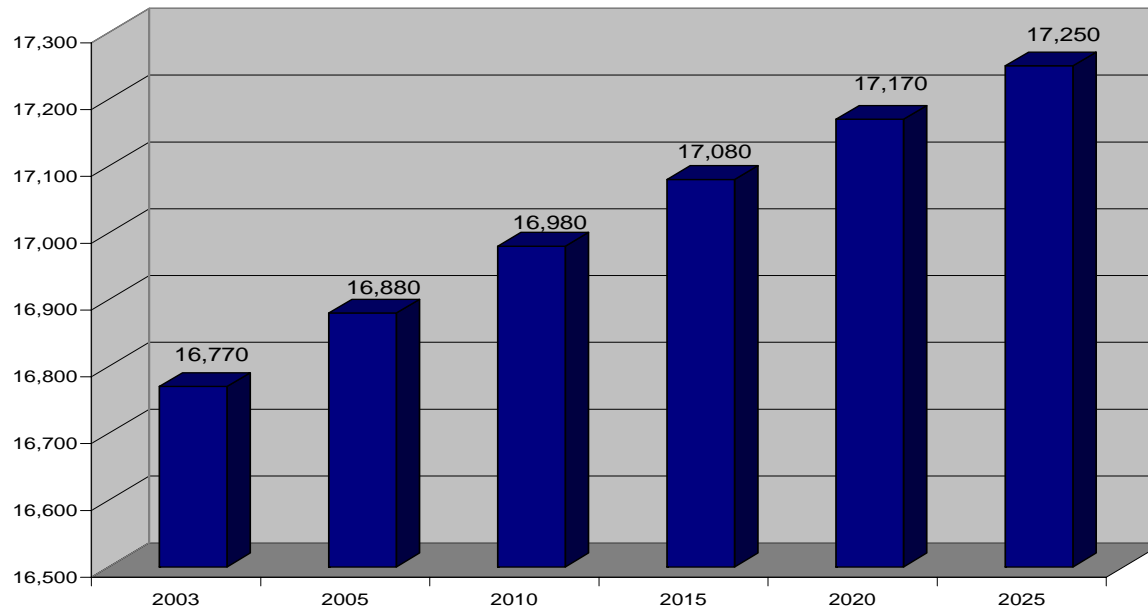


HH = Households

Future Population Growth

Methodology

The Office of Energy and Planning has prepared population projections for New Hampshire since 1964. Local projections are highly dependent on the limits set by the County totals. The County projections are roughly based on long-term trends that occurred during the 1960 to 2000 period. The local projections are based on a community's historical share of its respective County's growth. Staff at the Office of Energy and Planning and the Regional Planning Commission then evaluate the projections to make sure that the trends are likely for that community or if some other external factors should be considered.



If the current household size remains about the same in Laconia, and the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning population estimate is correct, Laconia will need approximately 125 new year-round units by 2020. If the current growth rate (2000-2005) continues, Laconia will likely see a demand for nearly 610 year-round units by 2020.

Population Densities

With a land area of 20.3 square miles, and a water area of 6.3 square miles, Laconia's population density was 826 per square mile in 2003. According to the Forest Society's report "NH's Changing Landscape," Laconia's population density is considered Suburban (144 to 1000 people per square mile). By 2020, Laconia's population density is projected to be approximately 840 people per square mile.

Residential units are concentrated in the City's economic centers. A Build-out Analysis recently completed by Lakes Region Planning Commission identifies the downtown core as having 25% of the residential units in the City, the Weirs area as having 26% of the units, and the rural portions of the City as having 9% of the residential units.

LAND USE

Agriculture is limited in Laconia. In 2002, the Department of Agriculture identified six agricultural operations in Laconia.



Agricultural Land Use

Overview of Laconia's Agricultural Community

In 1880, 64% of New Hampshire's land was in agriculture. As of 2002, approximately 8% of the State's land base was farmland. Traditional agricultural activity in New Hampshire is at its lowest level in history. New Hampshire ranks 49th out of the 50 states in the level of agricultural production in the United States. One reason for this is that land suitable for agriculture is also excellent

for development. The agricultural land that remains undeveloped adds a special rural character to a community while at the same time

providing habitat for local wildlife. According to the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, the face of agricultural operations in New Hampshire is changing quickly. Niche markets, including specialty crops and herds, customized farm products, and small-scale operations, are redefining agriculture.

Agriculture is limited in Laconia by the amount of available land that is well suited for farming, market forces, and soils. The total acreage of prime farmland soils in Laconia is around 400 acres according to 1991 estimates. Land once used by small, non-mechanized farms has reverted back to forest land or has been developed. Miles of stonewalls in mature forest stands are testimony to an agricultural heritage in Laconia that has been lost over the past several decades. Even with this ongoing conversion of agricultural land, the Forest Society reports that Belknap County was the only County in the State to see an increase in cropland from 1997 to 2002. According to the Belknap County Conservation District, part of this increase may be from residents purchasing old farmsteads and returning a portion of the property to an agricultural use.

Trends and Issues Affecting Agriculture

The total acreage for active agricultural operations in Laconia is approximately 700 acres.

Despite recent trends in the County, the agricultural landscape has been vanishing from Laconia at a steady pace. The reasons for converting farmland to other uses are seemingly simple, yet involve a number of factors. More efficient agricultural production from other parts of the country and the loss of markets for local farmers has contributed to this decline. The increasing value of farmland for uses such as housing or commercial development makes it financially difficult for farming families to continue agricultural operations.

According to the Department of Agriculture, there were 231 farms in Belknap County in 2002 and the average size of a farm was 101 acres. In 2002, the Department of Agriculture identified 6 agricultural operations in Laconia. Of these 6 operations, 5 were reported as selling less than \$50,000 in agricultural products annually, and one farm was reported as selling more than \$250,000 of agricultural products annually. The Natural Resource Conservation Service's District Conservationist reported that the existing farm operations include a number of small vegetable and berry growers (a total of approximately 30-40 acres), some hay producers (approximately 300 acres), half a dozen horse operations, and one or two beekeepers. The total acreage for active agricultural operations in Laconia is approximately 700 acres.

The presence of agriculture in the City has implications for community character, open space, viewsheds, wildlife habitat, and local produce and products. If these items are important to the City long-term, the City should examine adopting farm-friendly policies, such as incentive based site plan review requirements for farm stands.

Forestry Land Use

According to the New Hampshire Tree Farm Committee there are 3 tree farms listed within Laconia, totaling 281 acres.

Forest Resources and Production

A report by the Forest Society, New Hampshire's Vanishing Forests (2001), found that while New Hampshire remains predominately forested, the amount of forest cover will decline to 80% statewide within the next 20 years, and of that, there will be a decline in large tracts and the commitment to long-term forest management. Additionally, most landowners no longer rank timber production as the main reason for owning forest land. Only 10% of the landowners include timber production as a primary reason for ownership, with aesthetic enjoyment now more than 50% of the landowners' reason for owning forest land.

Laconia's forests are comprised of three main categories: softwoods, hardwoods, and mixed stands. The predominant softwood is white pine, followed by hemlock, spruce, and fir. Hardwood stands are predominantly red oak and red maple. The mixed stands constitute a combination of the two. In terms of forest management in Laconia, State Forest Lands, which are managed by the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, are those that are most actively managed for forest products. There are no actual management plans in document form for these parcels, but "stand type" maps are available that illustrate acreage of species managed in each State Forest. There remains one sawmill in Laconia, the Dow Sawmill on Parade Road.

Commercially Managed State Forests in Laconia

State Forest Name	Acres Managed for Forestry
Paugus Bay SF	226
Swain SF	99
Huston Morgan SF	73
Prescott SF	77
Hamel SF	41

Aside from these State managed lands, some private land owners manage their forestlands as Certified Tree Farmers. This is a program established by the American Forestry Council that encourages private foresters interested in providing the timber industry

with good quality raw materials. According to the New Hampshire Tree Farm Committee there are three tree farms listed within Laconia, totaling 281 acres.

Land Use Trends Affecting Forestry

It was found that parcels of land 500 acres or more are those most commonly held for long-term forest management. With regard to the short-term impacts of logging, the State has a built-in mechanism to monitor logging operations – the notice of 'Intent to Cut.' Once an 'Intent to Cut' is filed, a community can review the proposed cut to determine if the logging operation is going to impact sensitive or critical natural resource areas, such as wetlands, deer yards, fragile biotic communities, etc. It could also help to identify logging operations that are planned on areas used for recreation, such as paths and trails. Steps could then be taken to work with landowners and foresters to temporarily close or re-route trails during the logging operations. A review of 'Intent to Cut' forms at the Laconia City Assessors Office reveals that forestland on 67 lots was logged in the City over the past 5 years.

Total Board Feet of Lumber Harvested in Laconia 2000 – 2004

Year	Properties Harvested	Total Board Feet
2000	15	438,466
2001	16	214,626
2002	12	558,751
2003	12	426,081
2004	12	355,599

The 'Intent to Cut' forms require that timber harvesting be done using “Best Management Practices” to control erosion and follow wetland regulations. As Laconia becomes more urbanized, increasing pressures are exerted to convert undeveloped areas of the City into commercial or residential land uses. Forested land is one of the resources that is continually being transformed into developed portions of the City, yet Laconia’s forests also have implications for water and air quality, recreation, tourism, wildlife habitat, community character, local timber production, and as a local energy source.

Current Use

In 2002, Laconia had 3,984 acres of land in current use, approximately 31% of the total land area. By 2005, the number of acres in current use had been reduced by half.

New Hampshire's Current Use Program recognizes the benefits of preserving open space and encourages landowners to keep land open by offering tax incentives to do so. The primary benefit for the public is conserving land and maintaining the character of the City's landscape, water, agriculture, and wildlife resources. The Current Use program is a taxing strategy aimed at making it easier for landowners to keep their open space undeveloped. The program taxes large open space parcels at their income producing capability rather than real estate market value. In other words, land is taxed as a woodlot or a farm, not as a potential site for houses. As of 2002, Laconia had 3,984 acres of land in Current Use, approximately 31% of the total land area. The current trend in Laconia is the loss of open space and woodlands.

Current development projects have the potential to decrease the amount of land in Current Use. When land is removed from Current Use status for a development project, a penalty is assessed. In 2004, the City of Laconia created a "conservation fund" in which penalty fees were deposited. This account will help fund City efforts to assist landowners wishing to donate land or conservation easements to either the City or to private and public conservation trusts. Penalties paid for land removed from Current Use status during Fiscal Year 04 totaled \$57,110, and in Fiscal Year 06 totaled \$262,500. The fund, however, has a cap of \$100,000 in total allowable funds. At the present time that cap has been met. Unfortunately, property values have outpaced the fund and now the \$100,000 cap has limited both the purchase of large tracts of open space and the purchase of development rights on large tracts. The Conservation Commission hopes to use these funds as matching grants to serve the stated purpose.

Open Space and Scenic Roadways

Open space and scenic roadways are important aspects of Laconia's Community Character. The remaining parcels of open space in Laconia provide wildlife habitat, working landscapes of pasture and forests, and recreational opportunities. According to the New Hampshire Conservation Lands Map there are approximately 868 acres of land in Laconia designated as open space in the forms of State Forests, State Parks, and City Parks. There are also an



unknown number of parcels, or portions of parcels, that may be protected by private conservation easements. All of these parcels create an important patchwork of open space properties that support the residents of Laconia. Currently an inventory of open space and protected parcels is kept by the Conservation Commission.

Existing Architecture

Laconia's existing architecture also contributes to the City's community character. The architectural styles of Laconia's older buildings embody a sentiment of when Laconia was a booming waterfront tourist community with a strong mill and manufacturing economy and should be preserved. Efforts should be made to incorporate the historic architecture into new development. An excellent source of information on the architectural styles found in Laconia is *Slates, Shingles, and Shakes*, prepared by Hart and Associates, and Peter Hance, a former Laconia Planning Director. The Lakes Region Planning Commission has one copy of this document in their files and others may exist in Laconia.



Commercial and Industrial Land

Laconia has three main commercial centers which center along the major transportation routes through the Downtown area, Lakeport, and the Weirs.

There are two major industrial areas in Laconia, the Laconia-Gilford Industrial Park and surrounding land south of Downtown, off of Route 107, and the Industrial Park, northwest of downtown, off of Rote 106. Both areas contain 10-15 industrial parcels. Growth trends have been medium to slow.

Community Strengths and Challenges

This section presents an overview of Laconia's community strengths and challenges. All of this data was collected from the community forums held between 2002 and 2005. At both sets of forums participants were asked to list Laconia's strengths, Weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. These lists give us a superb idea about what sort of community Laconia's residents envision for the future and what some of the perceived obstacles are to getting there.

Laconia's strengths include:

- The natural environment of the region, especially the lakes.
- Recreational opportunities, including open space areas owned by the State and municipal parks.
- The visual environment and scenic vistas.
- The small town character, including walkable economic centers and friendly residents.
- The involved citizenry including volunteer committees, clubs, and community groups.
- Waterfront resources - ranging from the downtown riverfront area, to the quiet Lake Winnisquam, Lake Opechee, and the bustling Lake Winnepesaukee.
- Healthcare as a driving economic force in Laconia, thanks to the presence of Lakes Region General Hospital.
- Proximity to airport facility to provide value for economic development.
- Cultural Activities including the Belknap Mill's gallery, performing arts and museum, the Winnepesaukee Playhouse, Putnam Fund Programs, Streetcar Theatre Group, scenic railways, M/V Mt Washington Cruise ship, school activities (theatre and sports), and close ski areas.
- Historic buildings and diverse historic architecture.
- Presence of Public transportation, including the bus and seasonal scenic train.
- Geographic location – mid-state with easy access to lakes, mountains, and seacoast.
- Pending Riverwalk and Rails with Trails projects.
- Active and strong Main Street Program and Weirs Action Committee mobilizing citizenry for change.
- Strong seasonal economy with varied summer and winter activities (Motorcycle week, NASCAR, sled dog races, skiing).
- Strong educational institutions including New Hampshire Technical College and the Hout Technical High School.
- The potential for redevelopment of existing historic buildings and areas such as the Colonial Theatre, Allen Rogers, Scott and Williams, and the historic Weirs.



Some of Laconia's challenges include:

- Providing truly affordable housing to meet the demand.
- Managing the level of community services that attracts new residents while keeping the tax rate such that existing residents are not priced out of the market.
- Maintaining a strong economic base keeping wages at the "living wage" level.

- Providing a well maintained roadway infrastructure that provides sufficient flow yet allows adequate access for businesses.
- Balancing the development along the shorefront and riverfronts with high water quality and aesthetic natural shorelines.
- Allowing future residential and commercial development without exacerbating sprawl – allowing for “Smart Growth”.
- Embracing the tourist season and stretching it into more than one season.
- Maintaining a lodging market (Hotels Motels and Inns) while meeting the demand for seasonal condominiums.
- Encouraging high wage industrial or hi-tech jobs to move into and invest in making Laconia their home.
- Encourage property owners to redevelop and improve sites and buildings in order to strengthen business and enhance the beauty of properties while maintaining local control.
- Expanding the current public transportation system to provide the service to all facets of the Laconia Community, as well as the tourists.
- Protecting upland and drainage throughways in the watersheds of all the City’s natural water systems while allowing highest and best use of the land.
- Maintaining high to excellent water quality.
- Engaging the new resident to participate in community government and volunteer civic organizations.
- Providing a level of service in code enforcement that results in an improvement of neighborhoods and commercial entities.

Goals, Objectives and Actions

The City of Laconia chose to rename their “Land Use” section “Community Character.” This reflects the fact that Laconia is, and seeks to remain, a tight-knit community focused on the individuals while supporting the sense of community that encompasses daily life. The City wants all land use to relate back to the character of the community as a whole. This section, thus, is a reflection of the land use and community related goals the City wanted to see itself accomplish.

1. Goal: Protect and preserve the character and quality of life in Laconia’s neighborhoods, commercial centers, and rural areas. Preservation of natural resources and the rural and historic character of the City is extremely important to the citizens of Laconia as indicated by the public input throughout the Master Plan process. There was also concern expressed regarding the influx of seasonal property owners and the resulting lack of community and soaring property values that affect the existing quality of life. The following objectives and actions reflect these concerns.^{i,ii}

Objective:

- 1.1 Collect Key Decision Making Data - In order to make informed decisions that will have a long-term effect on the community, what information does the City need? This information is the tool for better decision-making at all levels of our government.^{iii,iv}

Actions:

- a. Complete and present to all local policy makers and the public a summary report which clearly explains the effects of “growth” on the City’s infrastructure and services. This will include financial obligations as outlined in the report “Cost of Community Services” (completed Jan. 2000).^{v, vi, vii}
- b. Complete a “build-out” report and maps for the City that will demonstrate the density and intensity of land use that could result from the subsequent “highest and best use” of all available vacant land within the community based on current zoning.^{viii,ix}
- c. Review and amend local zoning ordinances and land use regulations to conform to Laconia’s “Vision Statement” and be compatible with the stated Goals and Objectives outlined in the Master Plan.^{x, xi}
- d. Complete a professional analysis of the City’s economy to see where the economic strengths and weaknesses are. This information can be used to better refine the land use ordinances and regulations to support and encourage smart residential growth and economically viable non-residential growth.^{xii}
- e. Complete an accurate census of our residents, including seasonal and transient populations, in order to understand current needs and seasonal impacts on the City.^{xiii}
- f. Complete an assessment report on the economic, social, land-use, and transportation influences on the City from Bike Week. Explore how to further integrate Bike week activities into the Lakeport and Downtown economies.^{xiv}



Objective:

- 1.2 Preserve and Build Community – As emphasized in public comment, one of Laconia’s strengths is its sense of community, the ties that bind community members together, and the sense that Laconia is a distinct and special place.^{xv,xvi}

Actions:

- a. Coordinate public and non-profit activities to maximize the results of cooperative work. Establish a directory of organizations and publicize it through several media to ensure that the variety and diversity of clubs and associations are aware of one another and of each other's purpose and objectives.^{xvii}
- b. Promote and foster the City's civic and volunteer efforts through recognition events. Active promotion of citizen participation will increase the ownership interest in local events. Include seasonal residents in these efforts as much as possible.^{xviii}
- c. Maintain a focus on broad based and long-term planning including, but not limited to, City-wide plans for transportation, sidewalks, trails, and village plans. Ensure that development proposals meet the criteria of such plans. Avoid expedited projects with short-term results that work against the Master Plan and long-term goals.^{xix,xx}
- d. In the development process, work to build individual, inclusive community character without compromising the existing mutual respect between the different and distinct areas of the City, including the Weirs, Lakeport, Downtown, and the Rural corridors.^{xxi,xxii}

Objective:

- 1.3 Enhance Aesthetic Character – There are many small changes that have been highlighted by the City Departments and the public that would help beautify and brighten the City.^{xxiii,xxiv,xxv}

Actions:

- a. Recognize the aesthetic aspects of sight, sound, touch, and smell in developments by incorporating review procedures for façade and architecture matters, site arrangement for sound/noise management, aesthetically pleasing textures in building materials, and effective waste control system. Work to preserve and enhance aspects of the City's "small-town" characteristics and architecture.^{xxvi,xxvii,xxviii}
- b. Encourage high-quality, well thought-out, site-specific lot layout and development that will improve the City's visual landscape. The architectural style of building and signs should conform to the neighborhood. Utility lines should be located below grade. Landscaped areas should be located adjacent to streets and sidewalks. Greenspaces should be integrated into the overall natural resource area with appropriate vegetation.^{xxix,xxx,xxxi}

- c. Keep the community clean by increasing volunteer and municipally funded cleanup/enhancement activities of public places. Provide and maintain trash receptacles and public restrooms throughout the City.^{xxxii,xxxiii}
- d. Protect important scenic vistas through innovative land use regulation to promote the views of lakes, rivers, and streams from public ways. Use appropriate signage to highlight views and provide roadside viewing areas where possible.^{xxxiv,xxxv}
- e. Use natural-based architectural design regulations (building into or with the terrain, not altering the terrain in order to build) in specific areas to ensure that views from waterways or buildings and other land improvements are aesthetically pleasing.^{xxxvi,xxxvii}
- f. Improve the visual aesthetics of the transportation “Gateways” into the City with landscaping and signage. Gateways include Court Street, South Main Street (Route 106), Province Road. (Route 107), Meredith Center Road, Parade Road (Route 106 South), Endicott Street East, and Endicott Street North.^{xxxviii,xxxix,xl}
- g. Install vegetated and/or landscaped strips in conjunction with sidewalks, where appropriate. Expand the Adopt-a-Spot program to include these areas or offer incentives for private care of these spots to lessen municipal maintenance costs.^{xli}
- h. Commission a façade study of commercial corridors including Union Ave, Elm Street, Downtown, and Weirs Beach, and recommend suggested improvements and regulation modifications.^{xlvi,xlvii,xlviii,xlv}

Objective:

- 1.4 Manage Waterfront and Open Space – Laconia’s sense of community and economic backbone is derived from its waterfront areas and natural landscapes. Much of the new development is located in waterfront areas and a more proactive approach to this development is appropriate.^{xlvi}



Actions:

- a. Establish updated minimum building setbacks and naturally vegetated buffer areas at specified distances from water bodies and wetlands to ensure the view from the lake onto land is not overly dense and crowded looking, but as natural and aesthetically pleasing as possible. Incorporate the promotion of these natural areas into a tourist attraction network.^{xlvi,xlviii}

- b. Establish a Paugus Bay Watershed District within which stricter rules shall apply to runoff and drainage issues. Less intensive land use shall be promoted in this District to protect drinking water and the City’s natural resources. ^{xlix,i,li,lii}
- c. Review the stated purpose of the Shoreline Protection Overlay District to assure it protects Laconia’s natural resources. Consider revisions relative to maximum lot coverage, permitted uses, and required vegetated areas and plantings. ^{liii,liv,lv}
- d. Establish an Open Space Commission or other similar mechanism for managing municipally-owned open space, and to maintain and enforce conservation restrictions, deed restrictions, and other open-space protection easements. ^{lvi,lvii,lviii,lx}
- e. Research and evaluate mechanisms that encourage and provide incentives for open space in the rural zones in order to establish scenic byways. Incorporate the promotion of these byways into the tourist attraction network. ^{lx,lxi,lxii}

Objective:

1.5 Require Fiscally Responsible Development – As the population moves northward, Laconia has become an attractive development environment. There are several ways to manage the costs of new development that encourage developers to contribute to the overall City infrastructure and capital needs. ^{lxiii}

Actions:

- a. Work within the municipal framework and the State Statutes to implement a comprehensive Impact Fee Ordinance for use with large developments and with commercial development and re-development. ^{lxiv,lxv,lxvi,lxvii}
- b. Support the use of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) by establishing municipal economic development and revitalization districts. ^{lxviii}
- c. Integrate the anticipated annual build-out of development with the Capital Improvements Program. Maintain a working relationship with large land owners and owners of key commercial properties to allow a free flow of information for long range planning. ^{lxix}



Objective:

1.6 Improve the Land Development Process - Preserve and enhance community character, maintain a high quality business potential, and preserve natural resources.^{lxx}

Actions:

- a. Revise the current Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Site Plan Regulations to:
 - i. Fix inconsistencies within the Zoning Ordinance and between the Zoning Ordinance and the Regulations.
 - ii. Expand the defined terms in the Zoning Ordinance.
 - iii. Simplify zoning in the commercial villages (Downtown, Lakeport, and the Weirs) to allow mixed use incentives for small businesses and “infill” development.
 - iv. Establish campground/RV park design guidelines, hillside development regulations, and seasonal property guidelines.
 - v. Update the sign ordinance, fencing ordinance, cluster ordinance, fire protection ordinance, regulations for locating and screening dumpsters, and street acceptance regulations.
 - vi. Require review and approval of developments in phases while considering the impacts of full development build-out plans.
 - vii. Review lot size in proportion to setbacks and minimum roadway frontage.
 - viii. Allow for a series of density and lot size options to encourage consideration of specific characteristics such as scenic views and/or vistas, valuable habitat and/or wetlands, rural areas, or historic areas.
(lxxi,lxxii,lxxiii)

- b. Encourage that all residential development in the rural zones be built in a cluster design, unless it can be demonstrated that this type of housing development is not in keeping with the rural character.^{lxxiv,lxxv,lxxvi}

- c. Inventory the City’s open space lands to determine areas that should be considered for open space acquisition and/or conservation restrictions. Develop open space/conservation criteria including, but not limited to, important habitat corridors.^{lxxvii,lxxviii,lxxix,lxxx,lxxxi,lxxxii}

Objective:

- 1.7 Build the City’s Capacity to Accomplish Its Vision - Focus on critical needs, leverage existing groups with similar goals, and recognize the importance of long-term planning.^{lxxxiii}



Actions:

- a. Encourage volunteer efforts to accomplish City beautification goals wherever possible (adopt-a-spot, green space maintenance along sidewalks and roadways).^{lxxxiv,lxxxv,lxxxvi}
- b. Hire sufficient code and zoning enforcement officers.^{lxxxvii,lxxxviii,lxxxix,xc,xcI}
- c. Maintain a City-wide focus on long-range, broad-based planning and financing.^{xcii,xciii,xciv,xcv}
- d. Continue GIS training and technical capacity. Integrate GIS into the everyday functions of more departments for better customer service in land use decision-making.^{xcvi}
- e. Establish a data and permit management capability that is consolidated on one City server.^{xcvii}

ⁱ Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 1
ⁱⁱ City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,18,22-26,31-32
ⁱⁱⁱ Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 6
^{iv} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,17-25
^v Planning Department, City of Laconia, 2000 Cost of Community Services Study: Laconia, NH
^{vi} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 5-6
^{vii} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #2, 2
^{viii} Lakes Regions Planning Commission, City of Laconia, NH: Technical Build-out Analysis, October 2005
^{ix} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 5
^x Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3, 4
^{xi} City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,12
^{xii} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 6
^{xiii} City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,12-13
^{xiv} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,57, 59, 61
^{xv} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 1,3,16
^{xvi} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,31
^{xvii} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,28,30,38,39
^{xviii} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 5,6
^{xix} Lakes Regions Planning Commission, City of Laconia, NH: Technical Build-out Analysis, October 2005,7,8
^{xx} Planning Department, City of Laconia, 2000 Cost of Community Services Study: Laconia, NH,8,9
^{xxi} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 13-15
^{xxii} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,59
^{xxiii} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 9,12-16
^{xxiv} Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,51
^{xxv} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,31

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- xxvi Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 3-4
- xxvii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,36,52
- xxviii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 8-9
- xxix Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 11,13,15
- xxx Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth, 4-5
- xxxi Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,8
- xxxii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,5-6
- xxxiii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 1-3
- xxxiv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 2,6,29
- xxxv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 11,19
- xxxvi Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 12,3,20,29
- xxxvii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 2,3,7,9,11,19
- xxxviii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 4,26
- xxxix Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 2,10,12,20,22
- xl Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,61
- xli Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 6,7,8,11
- xlii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,5
- xliiii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 16,29
- xliiv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,37
- xlv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,4,12,16
- xlvi City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,30-31
- xlvii Lakes Regions Planning Commission, City of Laconia, NH: Technical Build-out Analysis, October 2005,17
- xlviii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,50
- xlix Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1,3,5
- l Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,3,4,25
- li Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 3,17
- lii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,11,17,31
- liii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 6,23,28,30
- liv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,55
- lv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,12,20
- lvi Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1,4-6
- lvii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 7,23
- lviii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,3-4
- lix Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 21-22
- lx Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #2,1-2
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- lxiii City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,25-26
- lxiv Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3, 5

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- lxxv Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 6
- lxxvi Lakes Regions Planning Commission, City of Laconia, NH: Technical Build-out Analysis, October 2005
- lxxvii Planning Department, City of Laconia, 2000 Cost of Community Services Study: Laconia, NH
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- lxxix Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 8,15
- lxxx City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,31
- lxxxi Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,4
- lxxxii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,3,19,58,60,62,21,22,41,37
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- lxxxvii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 3,5
- lxxxviii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,2,3(map)
- lxxxix Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 2-3,6-7,17,27
- lxxx Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,3-4,13,37
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- lxxxii Planning Department, City of Laconia, 2000 Cost of Community Services Study: Laconia, NH
- lxxxiii City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,33
- lxxxiv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,16,25,28
- lxxxv Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,3,6,8,22
- lxxxvi Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,3,27,28
- lxxxvii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,14,20
- lxxxviii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,12,16,17
- lxxxix Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 2,5
- xc Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3, 2,5
- xci Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,4
- xcii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,2,4,6,8,10,30
- xciii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, 16,22
- xciv Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 4,5,6
- xcv Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3, 2
- xcvi Lakes Regions Planning Commission, City of Laconia, NH: Technical Build-out Analysis, October 2005
- xcvii Wallace, Roberts & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,12,43

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Existing Conditions and Trends

Labor Force and Employment Trends

From 1991 to 2000, employment in Laconia was generally steady, with some modest increases and decreases.

From 1991 to 2000, employment in Laconia was generally steady, with some modest increases and decreases. March 1992 marked the highest unemployment rate at 10.7%, but by the end of the decade employment began to improve. Overall, Laconia's net job change from 1991 to 2000 was 306 jobs - a 3.7 % increase. However, in comparison with the growth in the surrounding area, Laconia ended up with a smaller percent of the Labor Market Area by 2000.

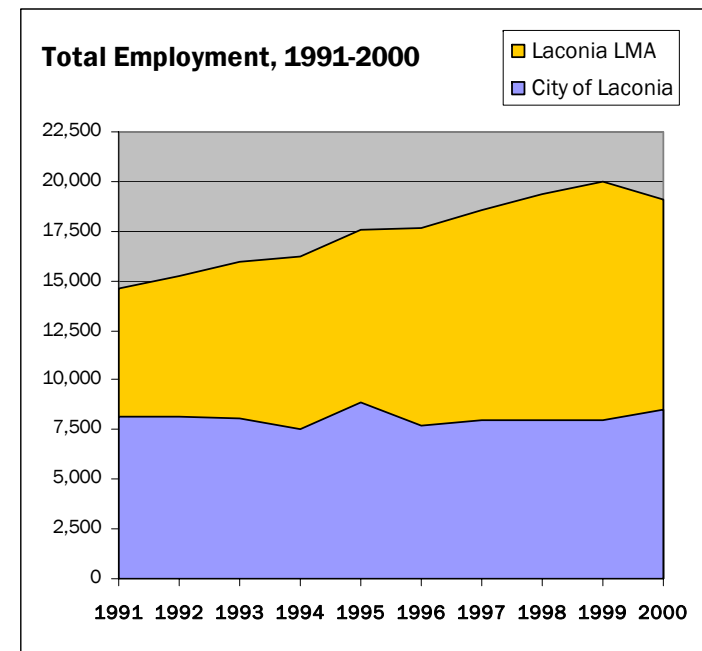
The Laconia Labor Market Area (LMA) includes the City of Laconia and the Towns of Alton, Belmont, Center Harbor, Gilford, Gilmanton, Meredith, Moultonborough, New Hampton, Sanbornton, and Sandwich. For the entire Laconia Labor Market Area, growth was much stronger from 1990 to 2000 than it was in the City. The total growth rate for the

Laconia Labor Market Area during this period was 30.5 %.

Unemployment Rates in 2003

Area	Unemployment Rate
Laconia	3.3%
Laconia LMA	3.5%
New Hampshire	4.0%
United States	5.4%

In 1991, the City of Laconia accounted for 56.2 % of all jobs in the labor market area. By 1999, the City's share of the Labor Market Area's total employment had fallen to 39.2 %. However the reversal of trends in 2000 resulted in Laconia having 44.6 % of the Labor Market Area's total jobs in 2000.



City of Laconia vs. Laconia Labor Market Area

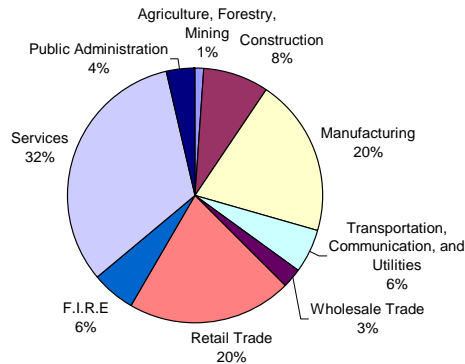
In 2003, the unemployment rate for the Labor Market Area was 3.5%, which was lower than the State and National unemployment rates, but higher than the City's rate of 3.3%.

Employment by Sector

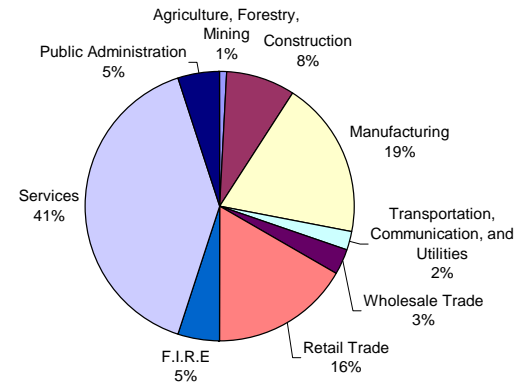
Despite its status as a major tourist center, just 16 percent of the City's jobs are in retail, an indication both that Laconia still has a manufacturing base, and that many of its retail jobs have moved to new developments.

From 1990 to 2000 there were some notable shifts in employment by industry in Laconia. In contrast to the State and the Labor Market Area, the City of Laconia has a much higher percentage of its jobs in the services sector. Despite Laconia's draw as a major tourist center, the number of jobs in retail continues to decline. Unlike the Region and the State, manufacturing continues to be the second largest sector in Laconia. The Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate sectors were hit hard in the early 1990s when the banking industry was struggling, but it rebounded by 2000.

City of Laconia Employment by Industry, 1990



City of Laconia Employment by Industry, 2000



F.I.R.E = Finance Insurance and Real Estate

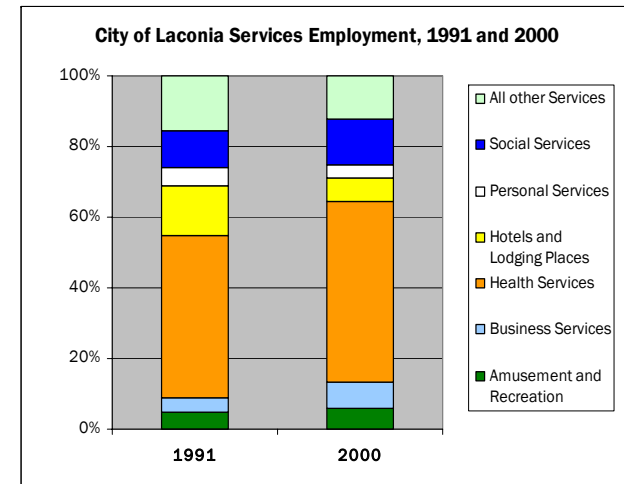
It is estimated by the Belknap County Economic Development Council that the County has lost as many as 25% of its manufacturing jobs since 2000.

During the 1990s, Laconia’s economy behaved differently from that of the Country as a whole. Nationally, manufacturing employment was dwindling and jobs in this sector were being replaced by service and retail jobs. In Laconia, however, manufacturing employment has survived. By 1995, the City had lost nearly half of its manufacturing jobs, but it recovered strongly, adding 700 new jobs in this sector in 2000 alone. However, it is estimated by the Belknap County Economic Development Council that the County may have lost as many as 25 % of its manufacturing jobs since 2000.

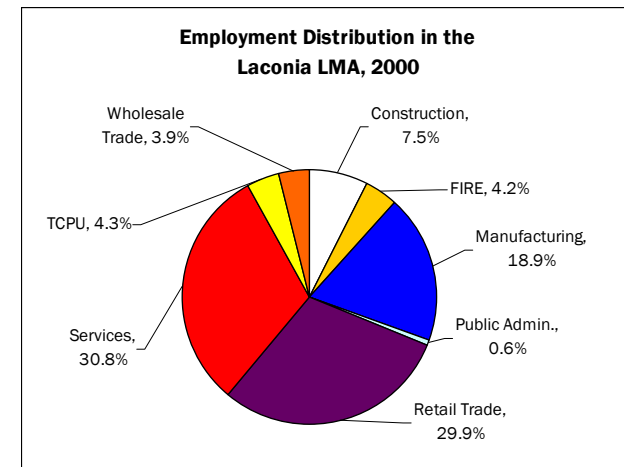
Surprisingly, retail share of the Labor Market Area’s job base only decreased to 29.9 % in 2000, given the boom of retail in the Town of Tilton, which is just west of the Laconia Labor Market Area. Overall, this sector of the Labor Market Area still posted a net gain of more than 1,000 jobs during the decade; however, it is important to remember that retail jobs typically offer lower wages than manufacturing.

Looking more closely into the service sector in Laconia, the presence of Lakes Region General Hospital and its affiliated medical practices contributes greatly to the employment base. Over 2,000 people are employed in health service jobs in Laconia at better wages; this category alone accounts for 51 % of Laconia’s service jobs, and nearly a quarter of all jobs in the City. The second largest category of services, social services, employs about 500 people in the City.

Laconia’s tourism industry depends not only on the pristine natural resources, but on the strength of the hotels and other lodging places, which is also a subset of the service industry. In 1991, there were 22 establishments in this category in the City and these businesses employed 435 people. By 2000, only three establishments were lost, but 180 jobs were cut. It is evident that the lodging industry in Laconia has lost some strength over time. This may be due to the conversion of rental units



F.I.R.E = Finance Insurance and Real Estate
 TCPU = Transportation, Communication, and Public Utilities



to condominiums and the increase of new lodging facilities in surrounding towns. This, despite the annual Sled Dog Derby, the growth of Bike Week, and the addition of new events such as the NASCAR races in Loudon.

Earnings

In 2000, the average health services job wage (\$31,980), was much higher than the wage for hotels and lodging places (\$14,820).

From 1991 to 2000, the average annual wage per job in the Laconia Labor Market Area increased from \$18,720 to \$27,820, an annual rate of increase of 4.5 %, not adjusted for inflation. Only two of the eight employment sectors failed to post wage increases of greater than 4 %: retail (3 %) and public administration (2 %). Services, the largest industry group in the Labor Market Area, saw its average annual wage increase by exactly 4 % per year, from \$18,460 to \$26,260.

In the City of Laconia, wages from 1991 to 2000 only increased by 3.6 % annually. Despite increasing more slowly than the Labor Market Area, the average wage in Laconia in 2000 was \$27,664, nearly the same as for the Region, and likely the result of Laconia's remaining manufacturing employment base and growth in healthcare services. Increases by sector varied widely, from a 7 % annual increase in the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate sector, to a 1.6 % annual decline in the transportation and utilities sector. In 2000, the average services wage was \$26,520 and the average retail wage was just \$21,112. The average annual pay of manufacturing jobs in Laconia was \$32,084. Within services, wages vary widely from category to category. In 2000, the average health services job wage (\$31,980), was much higher than the wage for hotels and lodging places (\$14,820).



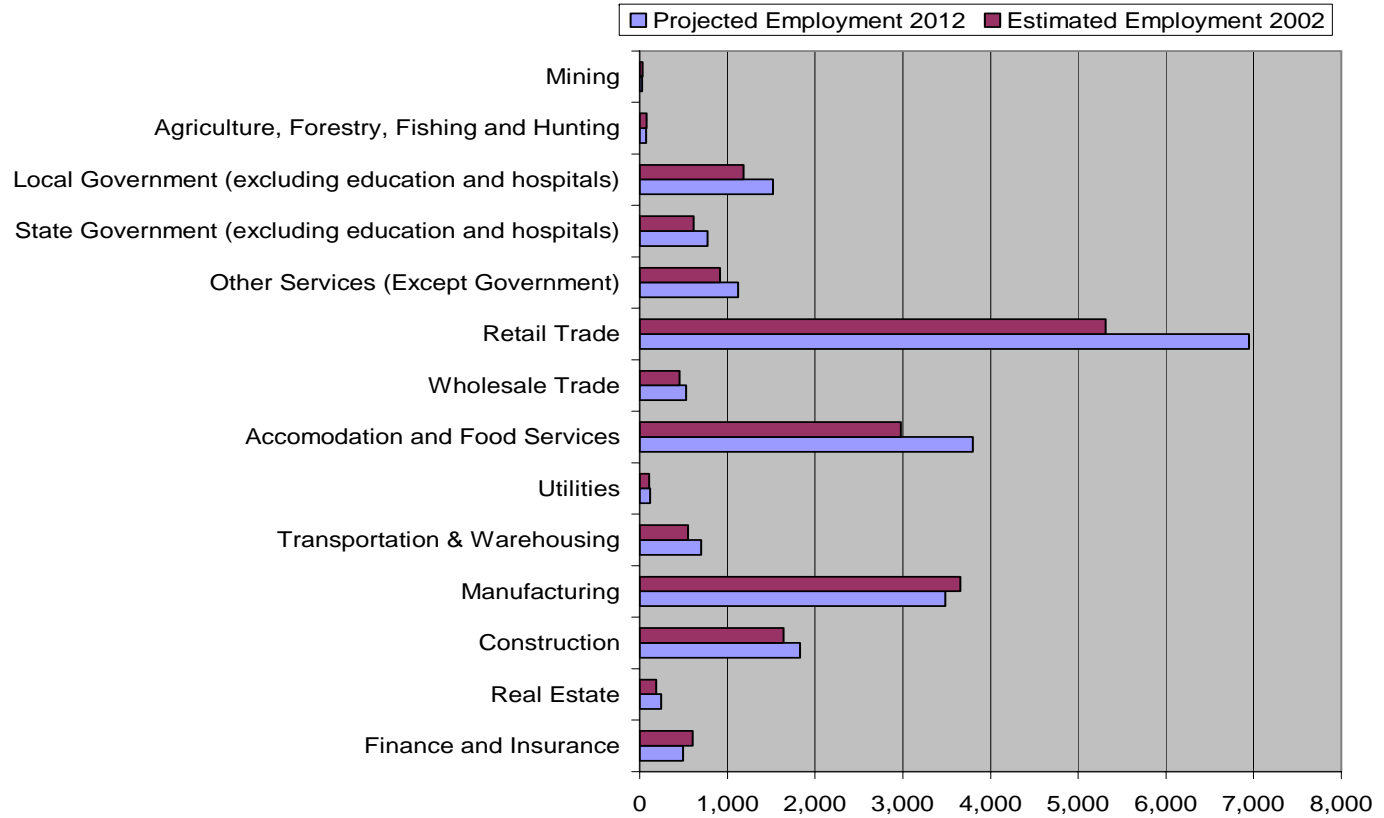
Employment Forecasts and Projections

Manufacturing is expected to continue to decline as an industry in the region, and the retail and service industries are expected to grow.

According to New Hampshire Employment Security, the employment trends experienced in Laconia and Belknap County during the 1990s are expected to continue for the most part through 2012. Manufacturing is expected to continue to decline as an industry in the

Region and the retail and service industries are expected to grow. The retail industry shows the largest projected growth in employment for the County, but reports one of the lower average wages in the Region.

Belknap County Employment Levels and Projections for Key Industries



Employment areas

Laconia has three distinct community centers: Lakeport, Weirs, and Downtown. Each center has its own identity in the form of residential villages and commercial center. In addition each has its own individual character that sets it apart from the others and

makes each community distinctly “Laconia”. All three areas have mixes of natural and cultural resources with some of the best examples of historical architecture found within the core of each of these areas.

The Downtown area centers on the Winnepesaukee River and the Main Street economic area. The area includes a multitude of retail centers as well as City, State, and Federal services. There is ample parking and a well connected and comprehensive sidewalk system for pedestrians. The Downtown area hosts the World Championship Sled Dog Derby, as well as several events along the waterfront such as Multicultural Day, the Riverfront Festival, and a summer concert series at Rotary Riverside Park. A Riverwalk is planned to run the expanse of the River and take 10 years to fully build out.

Lakeport centers around Lakeport Square, where Union Avenue and Elm Street intersect. The Lakeport Dam, between Paugus Bay and Lake Opechee, is very visible in Lakeport Square and helps define the area’s character. Again there are several retail areas and a large waterfront and water-view residential community. Sidewalks line not only the main streets in this area, but many of the residential neighborhoods enjoy a comprehensive sidewalk system.

The Weirs centers on Lake Winnepesaukee and encompasses the northern end of the City. The Weirs has an eclectic mix of retail and seasonal entertainment establishments. The Weirs is the center of Motorcycle Week and the docking place of the M/V Mount Washington Cruise ship. Regional events, such as the NASCAR races in Loudon, bring in tourists to utilize the Weirs availability of hospitality services. Sidewalks are available on the main streets. Yet the residential areas and Weirs Blvd area, where most of the hospitality services are located, do not have sidewalks or any other means of safe pedestrian movement.

Each of these areas contains an element of Laconia that is distinct, yet makes Laconia the City it is. Each of the three areas can benefit by continued redevelopment and revitalization. Through both municipal and private efforts, the three business centers can become more attractive and enjoy increased vitality.

Laconia’s Economic Development Partners

Laconia is fortunate to have a number of dedicated economic development partners at the City, Regional, and State level. A few of the organizations that are especially involved in Laconia include:

Laconia Main Street Program

- Part of the National Main Street system which promotes historic preservation and economic redevelopment of traditional business districts throughout the country.
- Leading efforts to make downtown Laconia a "destination".

- Program is working to revitalize the City's commercial district by focusing on Laconia's unique architecture, rich history, and strong sense of community.

The Greater Laconia/Weirs Beach Chamber of Commerce

- Serves the businesses, professions, and non-profit service agencies located in and around the following communities of the Lakes Region: Alton Bay, Ashland, Belmont, Center Harbor, Gilford, Gilmanton, Holderness, Laconia, Meredith, Moultonborough, Sanbornton, Tilton, and Weirs Beach.

Belknap County Economic Development Council (www.bcedc.org)

- Established in 1992 as a regional business support service.
- Set up as non-profit with some support from County, grants, and fees for services for revolving loan fund.
- Role is as a catalyst for sustainable economic development. Serving the Greater Lakes Region with a focus on Belknap County. Organization is a problem-solving organization.
- Approach is on accessing economic opportunities as a catalyst for retaining and expanding economic development.
- Very interested in workforce development – focused on youth and first jobs.
- Critical concern is reuse of existing facilities and availability of affordable housing.
- Also concerned about support to entrepreneurs. Facilitated loans and tax credit programs for businesses and organizations.



The Lakes Region Association

- Non-profit organization which markets the Lakes Region of New Hampshire as a vacation destination worldwide.
- Acts as a conduit for visitor information and facilitates communication on tourism-related issues among the various communities within the region.

Ongoing Economic Development Activities

The Laconia Main Street Program is an example of one ongoing economic development activity in which the City actively participates.

Laconia is also looking beyond its traditional City boundaries for opportunities. An inter-municipal agreement approved in 2001 between the City of Laconia and Town of Gilford created the Lakes Business Park and outlined the rights and responsibilities of both communities. Located on land partially in the Town of Gilford and the City of Laconia, municipal water has been brought from Laconia to the park. The agreement also stipulates how revenue will be shared. Generally, proceeds from the sale of lots are to be split according to ownership interest, 82 % to Laconia and 18 % to Gilford. The first 15 % of property tax revenue (or a minimum of \$25,000) and the cost of any Business Park use of Gilford's solid waste disposal are earmarked for Gilford. Property tax revenue beyond that is divided 50/50 between Gilford and Laconia.



Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal:

Promote a strong tax base and ample economic opportunities for a diverse base of employers and employees; preserve and enhance the existing economic base; work to attract well-paying jobs; and achieve continued and well-balanced economic development while protecting the environment. ^{xcviii,xcix,c,ci}

Objective:

2.1 Build the City's Capacity for Economic Development – Laconia has great potential for business and economic development. In order to support that potential, the City should strive to expand and diversify the tax base and provide long-term job opportunities. This may require some changes to City policy and ordinances. ^{cii}

Actions:

- a. Enhance the abilities of the Planning Department to address Community Development through the funding of a Community Development Planner whose responsibilities shall include:^{ciii,civ,cv,cvi}
 - i. Maintain an economic database for the City;
 - ii. Evaluate economic trends in the City;
 - iii. Review relevant Ordinances and Regulations for impacts on existing and new business development;
 - iv. Assist in the establishment of a business development plan for the City;
 - v. Assist existing and new business to meet their development needs;
 - vi. Promote and support sound economic development and growth for all elements of the City's economy; and
 - vii. Encourage entrepreneurial growth, diversity of businesses, and protection of our environment by incorporating incentives and appropriate "steering mechanisms" into the zoning ordinance and subdivision and site plan regulations.
- b. Encourage Departments to cooperate, collaborate, endorse, and participate in regional economic development and marketing programs with each other and with such entities as the Belknap County Economic Development Council, Laconia Main Street, the Lakes Business Group, the Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Civic Engagement, Volunteer NH, HealthLink2 eNetwork, and others.^{cvii,cviii}
- c. Develop and implement a permanent working relationship among the City, the schools, the Community Technical College, and the local business community to strengthen, diversify, and coordinate educational opportunities and facilities to provide a strong employee base for the future.^{cix,cx}
- d. Review and revise all commercial and industrial zoning districts in the City for appropriateness and for improved possibilities for economic development.^{cx1,cxii}

Objective:

2.2 Revitalize and Enhance the Commercial and Economic Aspects of Community Centers - One of Laconia's strengths is its small town character. Downtown, Lakeport, and the Weirs, as economic centers of Laconia, are prime areas for revitalization efforts and development enhancement.^{cxiii,cxiv,cxv}

Actions:

- a. Support and promote the use of low-interest financing and incentive based zoning for business owner initiated redevelopment to promote high-quality



design and preservation of commercial storefronts.^{cxvi,cxvii,cxviii}

- b. Review the layout and appearance of the City’s commercial areas to improve patronage and aesthetic qualities. Enhance access and conditions of circulation, parking, building façades, streetscapes, and pedestrian ways.^{cxix}
- c. Encourage and enhance mixed commercial/residential uses of buildings in commercial centers.^{cxx,cxxi,}



- d. Encourage restoration and reuse of historic properties, historic facades, and interior architecture by working with property owners to secure funding and by developing a system of incentive-based zoning and regulations.^{cxxii,cxxiii,cxxiv,cxxv}
- e. Encourage development and expansion of “after hours” venues and events, including theatres, special events, arts/music festivals, riverfront festivals, convention center, clubs, restaurants, etc.^{cxxvi,cxxvii,cxxviii,cxxix}
- f. Develop appropriate zoning to incorporate design review criteria and site layout regulations specific to “big box” retail to avoid traffic related sprawl and inappropriate citing.^{cxxx,cxxxi}

Objective:

2.3 Revitalize and Enhance the City’s Economic Development of its Waterfront - Laconia’s waterfront development exemplifies both the value of Laconia’s natural resources and center of Laconia’s small town character. The waterfront has been the backdrop to both citizenry involvement and Laconia’s parks and public lands, and links all of Laconia’s village centers; therefore, it is a high priority area for maintaining economic vitality.^{cxxxii}

Actions:

- a. Support the expansion of the Downtown Riverwalk by incorporating it into downtown and riverfront property development. Assist in the procurement of funding. Include public car-top watercraft access and public picnic areas.^{cxxxiii,cxxxiv,cxxxv,cxxxvi}
- b. Promote outreach and events which exemplify the connection of the lakes and river to the Laconia community and identity.^{cxxxvii,cxxxviii}

- c. Support renovations of commercial and mixed-use waterfront properties through any needed changes to the zoning ordinance. Provide additional technical assistance whenever possible.^{cxxxix,cxl}
- d. Determine and evaluate feasibility of more car-top and trailer-boat access to the water.^{cxli,cxlii,cxliii,cxliv}

Objective:

2.4 Increase Office, Industrial/Manufacturing, and Business Park Development in the City – In order to maintain a strong local economy, a diversity of business opportunities must be present. Appropriate infrastructure expansion and maintenance should be fostered.^{cxlv}



Actions:

- a. Continue with the cooperative relationship with Gilford to encourage future development within the Lakes Business Park that benefits both communities.^{cxlvi,cxlvii,cxlviii,cxlix}
- b. Work in cooperation with the Greater Laconia Weirs Beach Chamber of Commerce to explore the concept of the small business incubator.^{cli,cli}
- c. Evaluate whether the land currently being provided for industrial and manufacturing development is appropriate and meets the needs of that economic sector. Propose changes wherever appropriate.^{clii,cliii,cliv}

Objective:

2.5 Enhance the City's Attraction as a Tourist Destination – Focus efforts on improving Laconia as a destination for tourism and recreation because tourism is one of Laconia's strongest economic sectors.^{clv}

Actions:

- a. Prepare a Tourism Development Master Plan with the assistance of the Lakes Region Planning Commission and the State's Tourism Office. Goals should include: enhancement of the visitor experience, community-based economic development, and long term environmental sustainability. Adopt the plan as a future supplement to the Master Plan.^{clvi,clvii,clviii,clix}

- b. Facilitate the creation and expansion of day-trip destinations such as children’s museums, parks, Winnepesaukee Opechee Winnisquam (WOW) Trails, beaches, and historic destinations to expand tourism year round.^{clx}
- c. Enhance tourist amenities including lodging, rental cottage communities, and campgrounds by exploring and creating incentives to develop and re-develop these businesses.^{clxi,clxii}



- d. Complete a study to investigate how “condo conversions” affect the Laconia-specific tourist economy and make recommendations to the City.^{clxiii,clxiv}
- e. Include tourist destination signs into Laconia Gateway designs as detailed in Chapter 1.^{clxv}
- f. Collaborate with Gilford to encourage airport expansion and development including rezoning to allow mixed commercial/industrial use. Promote the airport as a tourist destination and gateway to Laconia.^{clxvi,clxvii,clxviii,clxix}

Objective:

2.6 Manage and Benefit from Annual City-wide events (Bike Week, NASCAR, Multicultural Day, River Festival, Sled-Dog Derby). Laconia hosts numerous events that occur in and around the Lakes Region that should be incorporated into Laconia’s economy.^{clxx}

Actions:

- a. Encourage and include diverse, family-oriented events into the planning process for each of these events.^{clxxi,clxxii}
- b. Incorporate these events into Laconia’s marketing and tourism plans specifically making reference to the many tourist amenities available for event participants.
- c. Schedule, diversify, and geographically extend events to improve success, regardless of weather, transportation gridlock, and resident apathy.^{clxxiii,clxxiv,clxxv}
- d. Ensure that the event provides for the financial success of all parties, including the City. Review and revise permit fees, etc., wherever appropriate.

- e. Re-write the existing “Special Events Ordinance” (Chapter 195) to include general provisions for any special event and incorporate specific Department’s safety and management concerns.

Objective:

2.7 Explore New Means of Raising Revenue to Support the City’s Capital and Operating Needs – The demands of new development are not always met by the increase in property taxes. The City must explore other means of providing services to its residents.

Actions:

- a. Encourage the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF).^{clxxvi}
- b. Implement a policy for impact fee assessment on new development proposals.^{clxxvii}
- c. Complete a study on solid waste expenditures and consider the savings potential of recycling and “pay-as-you-throw”.^{clxxviii}
- d. Develop a better system for water and sewer billing to incorporate those properties that have private water systems and public sewer systems.^{clxxix}

^{xcviii} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 42,44,46,49

^{xcix} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,46,52,53,58,61

^c Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,8,15,18,26

^{ci} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 1

^{cii} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 43,45,47,48

^{ciii} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,28,48

^{civ} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1,1,4

^{cv} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #2,2

^{cvi} City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,9-13

^{cvi} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23, 2003,38

^{cvi} City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,14

^{cix} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,1,4

^{cx} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2,28

^{cx} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,4

^{cxii} City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,12

^{cxiii} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 46,47

^{cxiv} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,1

^{cxv} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003, 6,16,41,14

^{cxvi} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,66,21,22

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- cxvii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,3
 - cxviii City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,7-8
 - cxix Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,11,16
 - cxx Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,17,40,52
 - cxxi Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,4
 - cxixii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,6
 - cxixiii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,7,13,15
 - cxixiv Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,5
 - cxixv City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,12
 - cxixvi Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,6,13
 - cxixvii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,4,13,15
 - cxixviii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,59,65
 - cxixix City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,11
 - cxixxx Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,4
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 - cxixxxii City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 46,47
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 - cxixxxvi City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,7-8
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 - cxixxxix Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,4
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 - cxliiii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,3
 - cxliv City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,15
 - cxlv City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 43,44
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 - cxlvii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,38,39,46
 - cxlviii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1,6
 - cxlix City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,10
 - cli Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,30,48,49,55,58
 - cli City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998,11,12
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- clv City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 46
 - clvi Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,2,6,11,17,20
 - clvii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,1,5
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 - clx Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3,5
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HOUSING

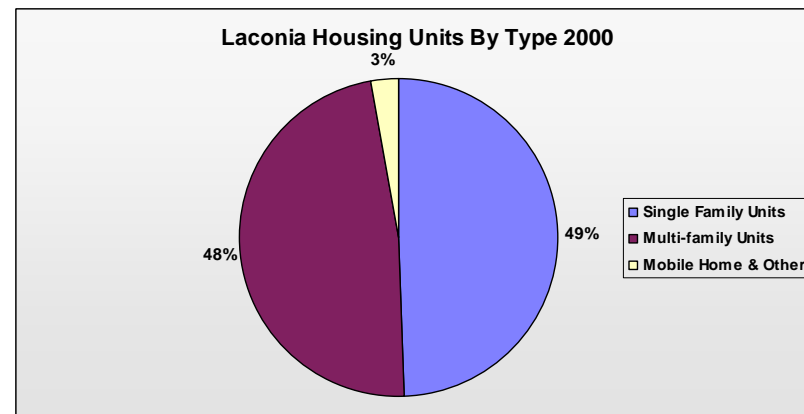
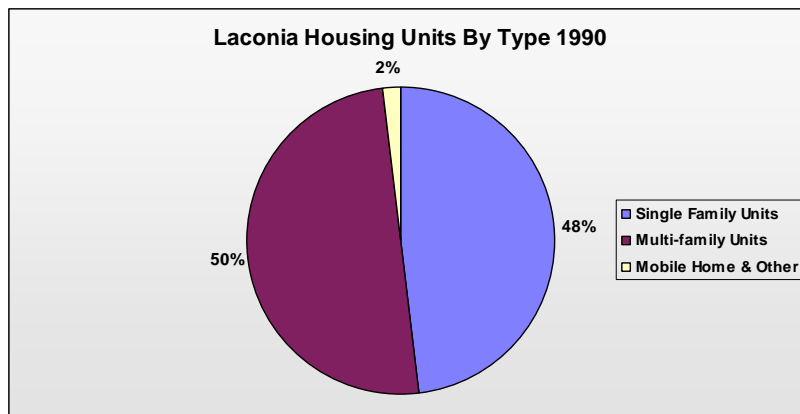
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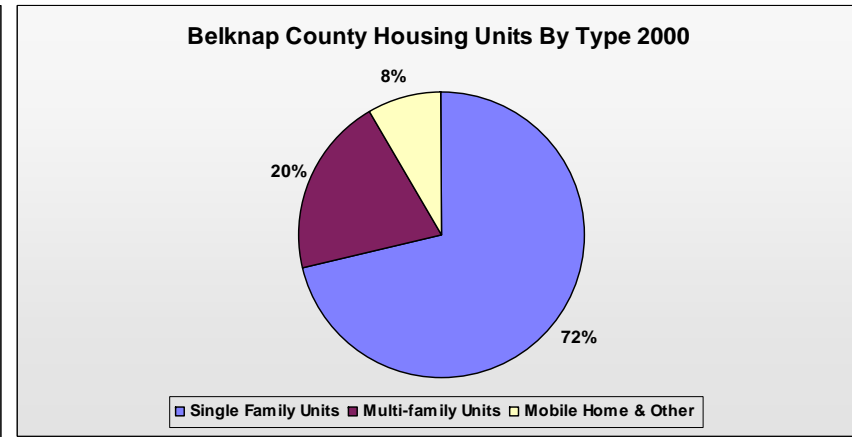
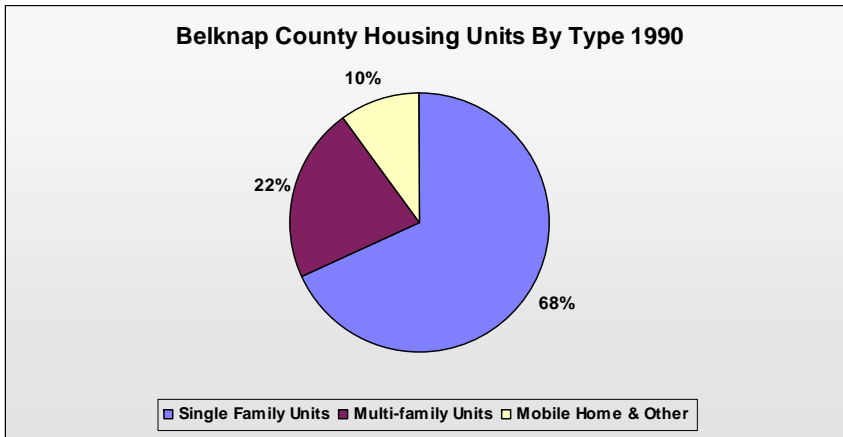
Housing Inventory and Housing Types

An increasing demand for housing units in Laconia is due to new people moving to the City, coupled with smaller sized households, which increase the overall number.

The mix of housing types in Laconia has remained relatively constant over time, roughly half single-family detached and half apartments. As of 2005, Laconia appears to be on the cusp of a significant increase in new single-family housing units. In the past two years, nearly 2,000 single-family units have been approved, but not constructed, in Laconia. By comparison the total increase in housing units in Laconia during the 1990s was 353.

During the same period, the number of housing units in Belknap County increased 32,121, up 5.9 %. The City's total housing stock in 2000 (8,554) represented 27 % of the County's total housing units. As a longstanding seasonal tourism area, a significant percentage of housing units in the Lakes Region are seasonally occupied. However, the percentage of seasonal units in the County decreased during the 1990s, indicating that many former seasonal units are now being occupied on a year-round basis. In Laconia, the percentage of units that are seasonally occupied actually grew during the 1990s from 15 % to 18 %.



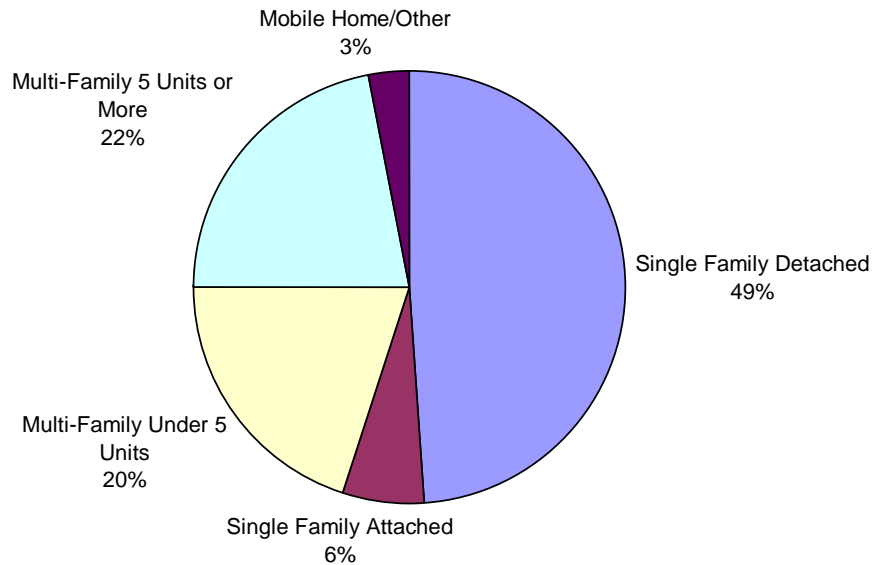


The vacancy of year-round units in the area came down significantly from 1990 to 2000. In 1990, 10 % of all year-round units in the City of Laconia were unoccupied. In 2000, just 3 % were. Countywide, the vacancy rate for year-round units also declined, falling from 7 to 3 %. These low vacancy rates are a sign of the demand for new housing, which is causing housing prices to rise.

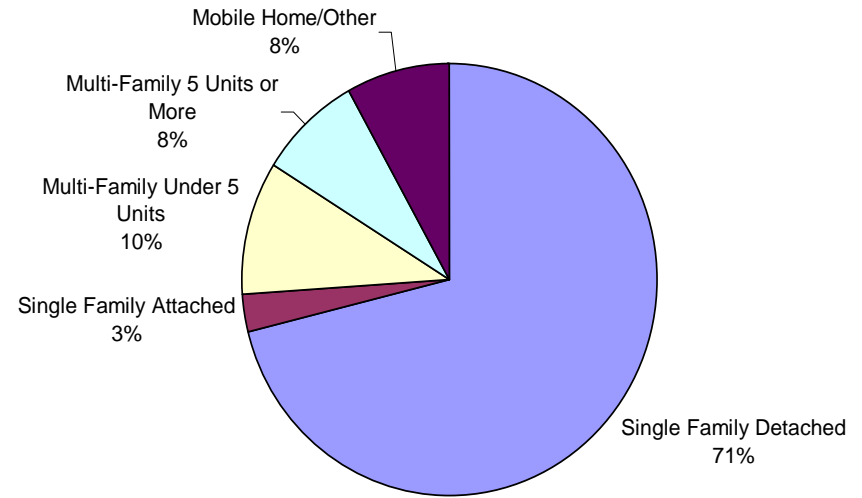
In Laconia, 49 % of all units are detached single-family units and 57 % of the units in Laconia are owner occupied. As a result there are a higher number of rental units in Laconia than in surrounding communities.

In Laconia, 49% of all units are detached single-family. In Belknap County, 71% of the units are single-family detached units. Laconia is providing 50% of the rental units in the County.

Units in Structure for Laconia, 2000



Units in Structure for Belknap County, 2000



Housing Occupancy and Tenure

As the region’s urban center, Laconia has a much higher percentage of renter occupied units than the County as a whole. In 2000, 43% of the occupied housing units in the City were occupied by renters. This compares with just 26 % of all housing units in Belknap County, where the homeownership rate is 74 %. These percentages changed very little from 1990 to 2000, as Laconia’s renter-occupancy rate stayed the same and the County’s fell slightly.

Laconia has a much higher percentage of rental units than the County as a whole.

Housing Age and Condition

Laconia's housing stock is considerably older than that of Belknap County as a whole. While these older homes contribute to community character and architectural interest, they can also bring along building code and maintenance issues.

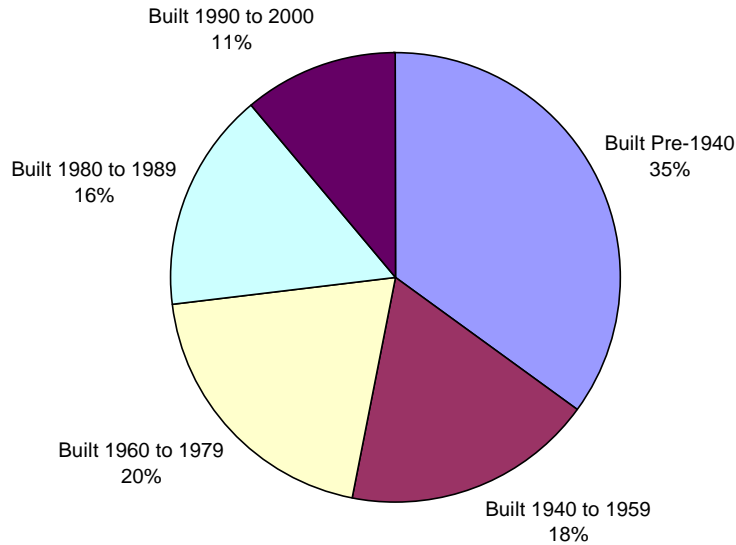
Housing Units in Laconia by:					
	Rental Units Tenure & Vacancy		and Owner Occupied & Vacancy		
	1990	%	2000	%	% Change
Total Units	8,201		8,554		4%
Occupied Units	6,176	75% of Total	6,724	79% of Total	9%
Owner Occupied	3,494	57% of Occ.	3,819	57% of Occ.	9%
Renter Occupied	2,682	43% of Occ.	2,905	43% of Occ.	8%
Vacant Units	2,025	25% of Total	1,830	21% of Total	-10%
Vacant For Sale	148	4.1% Vac.	40	1% Vac.	-73%
Vacant For Rent	469	14.9% Vac.	209	6.7% Vac.	-55%
Vacant Seasonal	1,216	15% of Total	1,477	17% of Total	21%

As an established urban center, Laconia's housing stock is considerably older than that of Belknap County as a whole. In Laconia, 35% of all units were built prior to 1940 and 53 % were built before 1960. Countywide, just 22 % of all units predate 1940 and 37 % are older than 1960. This implies that Laconia may encounter more building code related issues and that there is a greater need to repair and reinvest in the existing housing stock.

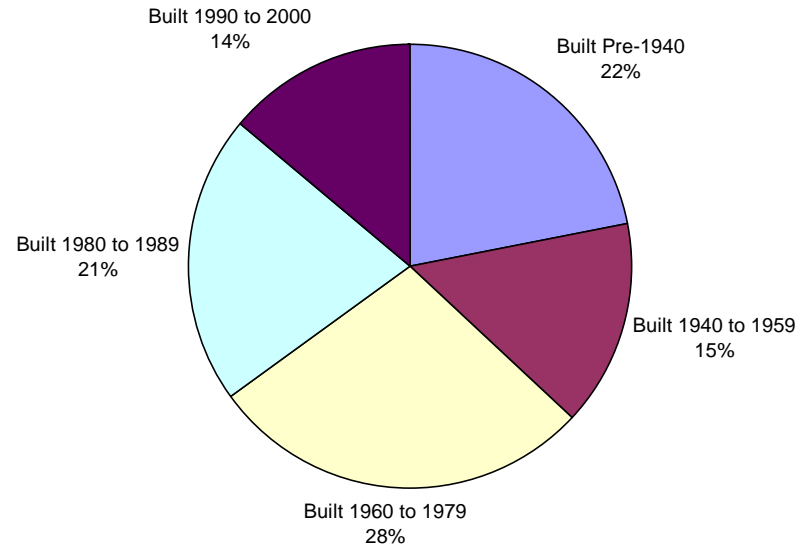
Laconia also presents many public safety challenges because of the age of the wood framed structures in the densely populated portions of the City. When a fire starts in one of these units it can spread more rapidly to adjacent structures. This is amplified by the many waterways and limited vehicular crossings creating frequent traffic congestion and potentially slowing the response of emergency vehicles.

Residential Growth Trends

Age of Housing Stock in Laconia



Age of Housing Stock in Belknap County



Since 1990, 21% of the new housing units in Laconia have been manufactured homes. In a State that relies heavily on the property tax, this is a significant number.

Building Permits

It appears likely that Laconia will need at least 7,400 year-round housing units by 2020. This would require the construction of approximately 700 units over the next fifteen years, which is less than the number of units that were constructed during the past fifteen years.

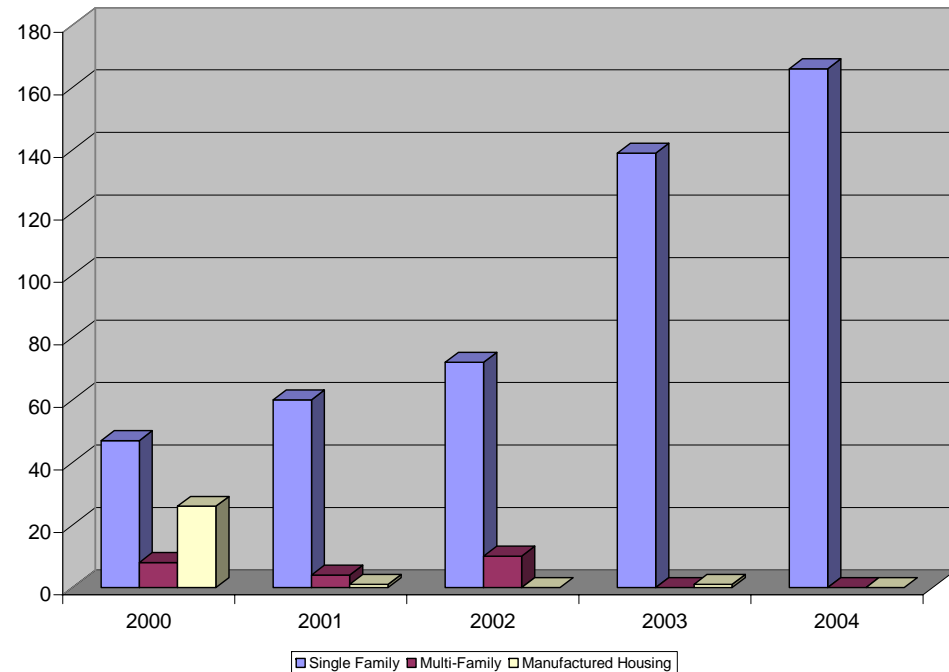
From 1990 through 2003, Belknap County added 5,045 housing units to its stock. Of this total, 79 % were single-family units, 5 % were multi-family units, and 16 % were manufactured units. In Laconia, a higher percentage of new units added since 2000 have been single-family homes.

Housing growth in Laconia has been strong over the past five years. Since 2000, the City has added more than 60 units annually. From 2000 to 2003, 368 residential units, 13 commercial units, and one industrial unit were constructed in Laconia. The year of 2004 was particularly active, as Laconia added 166 new units.

Housing Forecasts and Projections

It is agreed by observers of the housing market that, at the present, the demand for housing exceeds the supply in New Hampshire, in the Lakes Region, and in the City of Laconia. In Laconia, housing availability is low for all market segments except the very top of the market. Based on the population projection for Laconia in 2020, and the current household size, it appears that Laconia will likely need at least 7,400 year-round housing units by 2020. This represents an increase of approximately 700 units over the next fifteen years, or an average increase of 47 units per year.

Housing Units in Laconia Authorized by Permit



There are currently about 2,000 single-family housing units which have been approved, and could be constructed, as primary residences or vacation homes in the years to come.

Affordable Housing

Population increase and smaller household sizes are driving demand for new housing. These forces are driving up the prices of existing units, both owned and rented, in the City and making them all less affordable.

Definition and Need for Affordable Housing

The term affordable housing is typically used to refer to units that can be occupied by a family paying no more than 30 % of its gross monthly income, leaving an adequate amount of household income for other necessities. Low to moderate-income households in Laconia earn 45 % to 80 % of the area median income. Increasing demand for housing in Laconia has led to record low vacancy rates. Prices for both single-family homes and gross rental costs are at an all time high. Housing prices that have been driven up by the shortage of housing units in Laconia have an impact on the ability of current or future residents to secure housing that is affordable.

Supply of Affordable Housing

The high price of land and new construction has made creative approaches necessary in order to provide affordable housing. Utilization of renovations and adaptive re-use of existing buildings have been part of that approach. Realtors report that the fixer-upper market in Laconia is still attractive, as an older home in the Downtown area or in Lakeport can be bought for as little as \$150,000 and renovated over time. Additionally, two larger developments are re-using historic industrial buildings near downtown for residential uses. They are the Scott and Williams Building and the Allen-Rogers Building. These two projects will add more than 100 affordable rental and market rate units to the local inventory and could help relieve some of the pressure on existing units.



In Laconia two organizations are working to increase the supply of affordable housing so that a range of housing options can exist within the City for people of all income levels. The Laconia Housing Authority operates both within the City and within six miles of the City line. The Authority handles subsidized housing vouchers and manages 98 units in Sunrise Towers. The Laconia Area Community Land Trust purchases buildings in need of repair and rehabilitates them for housing units. They currently have an inventory of 97 units that are available to approved individuals for less than the fair market rent in Belknap County.



Barriers to Affordable Housing

Based on the 2004 report “Lakes Region Housing Needs Assessment” include:

- Wage and home purchase-price information indicates that increases in home prices are outpacing increases in income in Belknap County.
- Rental vacancies in the Region are at their lowest levels in over a decade.
- Community resistance to residential development can be a barrier to affordable housing.

Public and Assisted Housing

As of December 2004, there were 200 assisted elderly units and 158 assisted family units in Laconia. This is the highest concentration of assisted housing in the Lakes Region.

The Laconia Housing Authority administers Section 8 housing vouchers for residents of the City and the surrounding area. As of December 2004, the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority reported that there were 200 assisted elderly units and 158 assisted family units in Laconia.

The Laconia Housing Authority reports that 60 % of its voucher recipient’s are employed, and that many only use the vouchers during the off-season, living in cars or campgrounds during the summer. The reason for this phenomenon is that many cottage camps take vouchers in the off-season, but not in the summer. Laconia is overburdened with a demand for vouchers because it is the only City north of Concord and south of Lebanon and Berlin, and thus draws in many people searching for subsidized housing.

Homelessness

The Laconia Housing Authority reports that there is evidence of an emerging homeless population in Laconia. It is possible that the homeless population is larger than evidenced by people on the street because people are sharing units, living in cars, or sleeping on a friend's couch.

Special Needs Populations

The percentage of residents with disabilities in Laconia is very similar to the County and State overall. Currently, 3,133 Laconia residents report having at least one disability. The one population with disabilities that is higher in Laconia, than in the County or State, is the 21 to 64 year old residents. There are 4 % more people reporting disabilities in this population in Laconia than in this population within the County, and 5 % more than in this population within the State of New Hampshire. The population with the highest percent of disabilities is the 65 and over group, which shows 38 % of people reporting at least one disability. This is very similar to levels for the County and the State. Laconia is likely to have somewhat higher numbers of residents with disabilities because it is the County Seat and provides easy access to medical and social service providers.

Disabilities by Age in Laconia- Civilian Non-institutionalized Population 5 years and over

	5 to 15 Years		16 to 20 Years		21 to 64 Years		65 Years & Over	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
With one type of disability:	150	6.40%	83	8.60%	913	10.20%	451	17.80%
With two or more types of disability:	35	1.50%	32	3.30%	960	10.70%	509	20.10%
Total Disabled Population	185	7.90%	115	11.90%	1873	20.90%	960	37.90%

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal

Encourage and plan for a wide variety of housing types to accommodate people of all ages, incomes, lifestyles, and physical capabilities at appropriate densities and locations. As the hub of both economic opportunities and social services in the County, Laconia's population supports a diversity of income levels. As residential development expands, the City must allow for development in many varieties, types, and costs.^{clxxx}

Objective:

- 3.1 Encourage Housing Diversity - The City should strive to maintain a heterogeneous mix of residents in terms of income level and residence status. This will strengthen all segments of the economy and keep the housing market strong.^{clxxxix,clxxxii,clxxxiii}

Actions:

- a. Establish “neighborhood/village” zoning districts to encourage the development of mixed residential/commercial use, single-family and multi-family housing, and amenities like parks, playgrounds, village greens/parks, sidewalks, and pedestrian ways.^{clxxxiv,clxxxv,clxxxvi,clxxxvii}
- b. Amend the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to promote the development of mixed housing types/cluster development with an emphasis on maximizing high quality and function-rich green-space and natural resources.^{clxxxviii,clxxxix,cxc,cxci}
- c. Adopt and implement a strategic City-wide plan for the upgrading of existing public utilities and the extension of public utilities into areas where development of compact “village plan” growth is encouraged.^{cxcii,exciii,exciv,excv}

Objective:

- 3.2 Encourage Workforce Housing – Affordable, workforce housing should be provided for residents in the low to middle income bracket.^{cx cvi}

Actions:

- a. Work with regional and municipally based private, quasi-public, and public agencies to develop a regional Master Plan for development and construction of workforce housing.^{cx cvii, cx cviii, cx cix}
- b. Work with financial institutions, State and Federal agencies, and local non-profits to develop a revolving loan fund to provide down payments and security deposits for eligible recipients.^{cc,cci}
- c. Continue to apply for Community Development Block grants, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants, and other grant based funding opportunities for the rehabilitation of existing buildings for workforce housing.
- d. Continue to support the Laconia Housing Authority efforts to provide and manage workforce housing opportunities.^{ccii}

- e. Continue to support the Laconia Area Community Land Trust via property acquisition and sponsorship of grant opportunities.^{cciii}
- f. Continue to focus redevelopment efforts on the neighborhoods that could benefit from refurbished housing.^{cciv,ccv}

Objective:

3.3 Encourage Community-focused housing - A community focus in housing encourages neighborhood connections and further strengthens community character.^{ccvi}

Actions:

- a. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to encourage the development of “front-porch” housing including such things as reduced front setback, parking and garages in rear of property, sidewalks, and traffic calming mechanisms.^{ccvii,ccviii}
- b. Provide for small neighborhood parks as a part of new development (“pocket parks”), funded through impact fees or other innovative funding means.^{ccix,ccx,ccxi}
- c. Develop and implement an outreach program for developers, contractors, financing institutions, schools, and the public to highlight the benefits of energy efficient and low-impact housing construction.^{ccxii,ccxiii}
- d. Develop and implement incentives for the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing housing units in developed commercial areas.^{ccxiv,ccxv}
- e. Complete an inventory of abandoned, derelict buildings in order to make strategic decisions on grant opportunities, special districts, etc.^{ccxvi}
- f. Encourage and possibly offer incentives for “in-fill” development in existing urban and densely populated residential zones.^{ccxvii, ccxviii}
- g. Draft and implement a Recreational Vehicle (RV) section of the Zoning Ordinance in order to address the use of “park model RVs” and distinguish between RV parks and campgrounds.^{ccxix}

- h. Connect neighborhoods by developing and publicizing pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle connections among residential neighborhoods, and between residential and commercial areas, to allow for safe and efficient movements throughout the City.^{ccxx,ccxxi,ccxxii}
- i. Develop and implement mixed-use zoning to provide connections between zones.^{ccxxiii, ccxxiv}

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 clxxxi City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 57,58
 clxxxii City of Laconia, Housing and Community Development Plan, 1998
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 cciii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002, 32
 cciv Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002, 19,41
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- ccxv Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002, 66
- ccxvi Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 20
- ccxvii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #2,3
- ccxviii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,64
- ccxix Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002, 30,58
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TRANSPORTATION

Roadways

Laconia is located at the intersection of NH Routes 106, 107, 11, and 3, and some 8 miles east of Interstate 93. The City’s transportation system weaves around several water bodies and includes a mix of rural arteries and urban streets. The structure of the local roadway network requires local and regional travelers to share, to a significant degree, the major arterials in Laconia. There are nearly 100 miles of roadways in Laconia that fall into the functional classifications found in the table on the right. Approximately 8 miles of the City’s roadways have a gravel surface; the remainder is paved.



Annual Average Daily Traffic

Traffic circulation in and through Laconia is probably the most important transportation issue facing the community. Congestion during peak periods is widely known to residents, but the total number of trips on major roadways has not increased much in the past decade. There are a number of reasons why the congestion may

Functional Classification of Roadways in Laconia

Limited Access Highways

Laconia Bypass

Arterial Highways

Beacon Street East

Beacon Street West and Veterans Square

Church Street

Court Street

Daniel Webster Highway (Weirs Boulevard) Route 3 (Endicott Street North)

Elm Street

Gilford Avenue/Gully Road

Messer Street

North Main Street

Parade Road

South Main Street

Union Avenue

Collector Streets-

Academy Street

Blueberry Lane

Fair Street (north of Court)

Gale Avenue

Highland Avenue

Holman Street

Lexington Drive

Morrill Street

New Salem Street

Pleasant Street

Scenic Drive

Stark Street

White Oaks Road

Local Streets – all streets in Laconia not listed in one of the other three categories are considered local streets.

have worsened during the past decade without a significant increase in traffic volumes:

- Pre-existing congestion problems from the 1990s and Industrial Park traffic;
- No major roadway corridor improvements related to capacity or managing access;
- Changing travel patterns;
- Increasing numbers of vehicles entering and exiting the roadway to access new land uses;
- Conflicts and delays created by increased numbers of vehicles entering and exiting the roadway; and
- The number of large trucks and sport utility vehicles on the roads has increased.

Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts for Laconia

One aspect of Laconia’s transportation system that is important to consider is the seasonal fluctuation. The summer and winter traffic volumes have their own unique characteristics and weekend traffic volumes and patterns are often quite different.

LOCATION	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
MEREDITH CENTER RD WEST OF PARADE RD	4000	*	*	*	4400	*	4300	*	*	4300
NH 107 (UNION AVE) NORTH OF BRIDGE ST	*	18000	*	18000	*	18000	*	17000	*	17000
UNION AVE SOUTH OF WINTER ST	12000	*	11000	*	*	11000	*	*	12000	*
COURT ST SOUTH OF BAY ST	*	15000	*	*	17000	*	*	16000	*	*
US 3 EAST OF SCENIC RD (WEIRS BEACH)	*	15000	*	15000	14000	*	13000	*	*	*
PARADE RD SOUTH OF ELM ST	9700	*	*	*	11000	*	8000	*	*	11000
US 3 & NH 11 BYPASS AT BELMONT TL	*	6800	*	7200	*	*	8300	*	*	9000
US 3 SOUTH OF WHITE OAKS RD	10000	*	*	*	10000	*	10000	*	*	8800
NORTH MAIN ST NORTH OF PLEASANT ST	13000	*	*	*	16000	*	17000	*	*	15000
PARADE RD AT MEREDITH TL	*	5600	*	6300	*	*	6800	*	*	7000
NH 11A EAST OF UNION AVE	*	7800	*	7800	*	*	7400	*	*	8800
NORTH MAIN ST EAST OF PARADE RD	13000	*	*	*	15000	*	15000	*	*	14000
NH 107 EAST OF NH 106 (SOUTH MAIN ST)	*	3000	3200	*	*	1600	*	*	3800	*
US 3 & NH 11 BYPASS BETWEEN NH 106 & 107	11000	*	*	*	11000	*	8700	*	*	12000

Level of Service

Along the posted State highways, Laconia residents are experiencing a moderate to significant level of congestion.

Level of Service scores are simply letter grades (A-F) which categorize how a roadway or intersection is functioning. The score indicates the significance of vehicle delays at intersections and the ability of a roadway to handle existing levels of congestion. Sections of the State Highways in Laconia, outside the Urban Compact Area, have been evaluated by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for congestion and given a Level of Service score. The scores are as follows:

- Route 3 (from the Meredith Town Line to the Weirs)
 - (Level of Service E and F)
- Route 106 – Moderate Congestion
 - (Level of Service C and D)
- Route 107 - Moderate Congestion
 - (Level of Service C and D)
- Route 11B - Moderate Congestion
 - Level of Service C and D)
- Route 11C - Moderate Congestion
 - (Level of Service C and D)
- Route 3 and Route 11 - Congestion
 - (Level of Service E and F)

Level of Service scores have also been created for some of Laconia’s intersections as part of traffic impact assessments for new developments. Some of the most recent traffic impact assessments completed by Stephen G. Pernaw and Company, Inc. have been included in the table below.

Intersection Level of Service Scores in Laconia

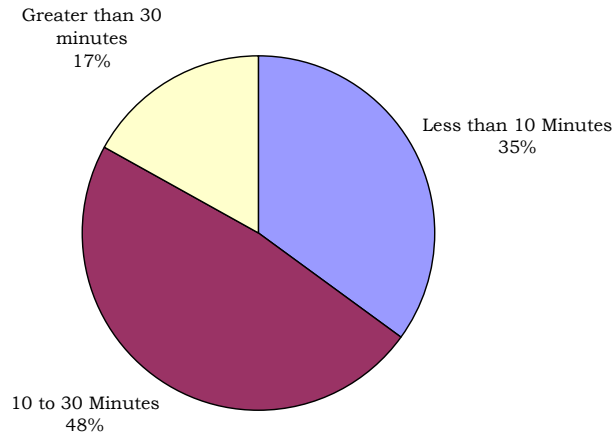
Intersection	Year	Based on AM/PM Volumes	Intersection Capacity Utilization LOS
Route 106 & Rollercoaster Rd.	2003	PM	A
White Oaks Road & Mentor Ave.	2003	PM	A
NH Route 11-B & US Route 3	2004	AM	A
NH Route 11-B & US Route 3	2004	PM	A
NH Route 11-B & Woodvale Drive	2004	AM	A
NH Route 11-B & Woodvale Drive	2004	PM	A
South Main Street & Driveway (now Meredith Village Savings Bank)	2004	AM	A
South Main Street & Driveway (now Meredith Village Savings Bank)	2004	PM	A
US Route 3 & Lakeside Ave.	2003	PM	B
Elm Street & US3/Union Ave.	2004	AM	B
US Route 3 & Rollercoaster Rd.	2003	PM	C
Strafford Street & US Route 3	2004	AM	D
Strafford Street & US Route 3	2004	PM	D
Elm Street & US3/Union Ave.	2004	PM	E

Commuting Patterns

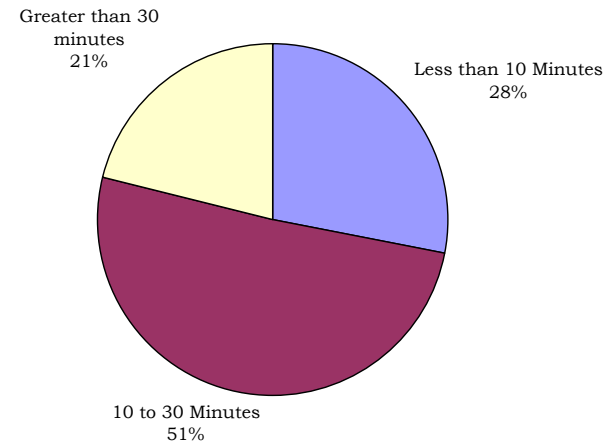
The mean travel time to work for Laconia citizens is now 21.3 minutes. This has been increasing steadily, as more residents are now working outside of the City.

From 1990 to 2000, two key trends marked the commuting patterns of residents of Laconia and New Hampshire alike: longer commutes and more commuters relying on single-occupant vehicles. The percentage of Laconia residents commuting more than 30 minutes to work increased to 21% in 2000, and the percentage commuting less than 10 minutes dropped to 28%. The mean travel time to work for Laconia citizens is now 21.3 minutes, which reflects the fact that more residents are now working outside of the City.

Time of Commute to Work in Laconia, 1990



Time of Commute to Work in Laconia, 2000



The City of Laconia completes an average of 6 to 7 miles of roadway repairs annually.

Highway Improvements

The City of Laconia’s Department of Public Works has administered annual road improvement analyses since the early 1990s. The program utilizes data secured in a survey of every road section in the City. The survey evaluates each road section based on several factors, including existing conditions, drainage factors, traffic volumes, importance (higher priority is given to main arteries, school, and emergency routes), and the anticipated cost of repairs. The program also has a bias toward saving streets that are in fair to good condition before they reach a stage of rapid deterioration and therefore gives these streets a higher priority in the suggested repair priority listing.

Mode of Travel for Commuters, 2000

Mode of Travel	Laconia Workers	New Hampshire Workers
Drive Alone	78.9%	81.8%
Carpool	12.1%	9.8%
Public Transportation	0.8%	0.7%
Walk	3.7%	2.9%
Work at Home	3.0%	4.0%
Other Means	1.6%	0.8%

Once the suggested priority list is generated from the program, much judgment is required on the part of Department of Public Works staff in administering the proposed annual repairs, keeping in mind budget limitations and the need to consider distributing the work in various sections of the City. Since 1999, the Department of Public Works has received an average of approximately \$ 1.1 Million per year for roadway repairs. The Department of Public Works completes an average of 6 to 7 miles of roadway repairs with the annual appropriation. Their experience has shown that a roadway that is fully reclaimed and resurfaced will give approximately 12 to 15 years of service life before requiring another surface treatment.

The State of New Hampshire’s Ten Year Highway Improvement Plan calls for the following projects to be completed for Laconia:

- Fair Street – Bridge Rehabilitation over the Winnepesaukee River.
- US Route 3 and NH Route 11B – Sidewalk construction along Route 3 between Route 11B and Lake Side Avenue.
- US Route 3 – Rehabilitate and add shoulders from NH Route 104 southerly 3.7 miles to Weirs Beach.
- NH Route 106 – Reconstruct road from .4 miles north of the US 3/NH 11 Bypass southerly into Belmont.

Sidewalks

The City of Laconia has made a concerted effort over the past few years to provide the citizens with a system of sidewalks and pedestrian pathways in order to provide alternative methods of linking residential and commercial areas. There are recognizable areas of seasonal, heavy pedestrian flow in areas such as Lakeport Square, Union Avenue, Weirs Boulevard, and Lakeside Avenue.

The current Zoning Ordinance requires that sidewalks be built on any lot being improved by a new development proposal and on all new lots within a new proposed subdivision. Additionally, the Cluster Ordinance requires sidewalks and/or walking trails be provided both within the development and along existing roadways. This has resulted in sidewalks either proposed or built on Elm Street, Endicott Streets North and East, Union Avenue, and Weirs Boulevard.

The City has recently finished a sidewalk project on Elm Street and is in the process of finalizing a joint effort with the State to provide sidewalks for several thousand feet of Endicott Street on either side of its intersection with Weirs Boulevard. The Planning Board has recognized Weirs Boulevard as a priority area to provide sidewalks.



In addition to moving vehicles, people, and goods, the transportation system should preserve the scenic, historic, and environmental resources of the places it serves.

Roadway Design Best Management Practices

On State routes, Laconia works with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to ensure that the designs of any proposed improvements are “Context Sensitive Solutions”. The intent of Context Sensitive Solutions is to ensure that roads are not designed solely for the requirements of motor vehicle traffic. Transportation should preserve the scenic, historic, and environmental resources of the places it serves, and allow for a variety of modes beyond motor vehicles. In some locations, this may include shared roadway corridors with provisions for multiple modes of travel (pedestrian, bicycles, and motor vehicles).

On all of the other roadways in Laconia, the City currently applies an urban or rural cross section as the minimum standard to guide construction and reconstruction activities. The typical urban cross section includes two travel lanes which vary in width depending on the roadway, granite curbing, and sidewalks (which are typically five feet wide). The rural cross section includes a minimum right-of-way width of 50 feet, and two 11 foot travel lanes; paved shoulders may also be required.

General Traffic Access and Circulation Issues

General traffic access and circulation issues are a concern within the City. This is especially true in the Weirs, Lakeport, Downtown, and points in between.

General traffic access and circulation issues are a concern within the City. This is especially true in the Weirs, Lakeport, Downtown, and points in between. This has been an important issue for City staff, merchants, shoppers, and citizens for some time, and was identified in the 1991 Master Plan. In 1998, a design charette was held in Lakeport to address some of these issues prior to the construction of the new bridge.

The Transportation, Circulation & Parking Committee was created in 2002 as an outgrowth of the Main Street Program and has worked to define and address some of these long standing issues in Laconia. The Committee is comprised of representatives from the Laconia Main Street Design Committee, the City Planning Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Police Department. The Transportation, Circulation & Parking Committee has:

- Implemented some traffic calming and parking solutions on Beacon Streets East and West with the introduction of approximately 30 parking spaces and the marking of travel lanes down from three to two.
- Developed some pedestrian connection solutions from Downtown to the proposed Allen Rogers redevelopment site.
- Held a design charette to start looking at creative uses for the old Police Department property, the US Post Office property, the Municipal Parking lot, and the streets abutting the area.
- Worked with the Department of Public Works to add better signage informing people where downtown and City Hall are located.

Corridor Access Management Planning

“Access management” involves looking at traffic from the perspectives of capacity, vehicles entering and exiting the roadway, and safety. It also includes the process of managing the placement of driveways on roadways, especially on those roadways classified as

arterials. Arterial highways are similar to limited access freeways in that their primary function is to move people and goods over long distances quickly and efficiently; however, arterials do not have the benefit of strict access controls to adjacent parcels that limited access highways have. The speed, volume, and safety of traffic on an arterial is greatly reduced by vehicles entering and exiting side streets and driveways. In general, access management policies involve the regulation of the number of driveways, the design and placement of driveways, and the design of any roadway improvements needed to accommodate driveway traffic. The result is a safer roadway that can more efficiently handle the existing and projected traffic volumes. There are no access management guidelines or policies in place in Laconia currently.

The speed, capacity, and safety of traffic on an arterial is greatly reduced by vehicles entering and exiting side streets and driveways.

Scenic and Historic Roads

A viewshed is an area of land, water, and other environmental elements that is visible from a fixed vantage point. The local population values the many viewsheds in Laconia, but these resources have not been inventoried or included with any protective language in the Zoning Ordinance. A future effort to inventory Laconia’s viewsheds would be a valuable planning tool for the City. Laconia’s scenic roadways fall into several classifications and can benefit from higher levels of protection and funding based on their designation. The two main designations are scenic byways (State routes) and scenic roads (local roads).

Lakes Region Tour Scenic Byway

The Lakes Region Tour Scenic Byway circles New Hampshire's largest lake, Lake Winnepesaukee, and offers tremendous views of the surrounding mountains and lakes. As the Byway passes through Laconia it includes several routes: NH Route 3 from the Meredith Town line to Downtown Laconia; New Hampshire Route 106 (Parade Road) from the Meredith Town line to Downtown Laconia; Rollercoaster Road; Scenic Drive; White Oaks Road; and New Hampshire Route 11B from the Weirs to the Gilford Town line.



Scenic Road Designation

Scenic Roads are substantially different from Scenic and Cultural Byways. Scenic Roads are local, city designations. These roadways are only recognized locally and can only be on City maintained roads. Scenic road designation can be applied to paved and gravel local roads to provide additional oversight at the local level. The character of the roadway and its roadside attributes can be better protected if this tool is used appropriately. The application of this tool takes a strong commitment by the municipal boards and departments, and the public. No local roads in Laconia have been designated as scenic roads, but there are many that exist with rich history, roadside scenic views, and rural character.

Rural Road Issues

White Oaks Road, Parade Road, Meredith Center Road, and the smaller Rollercoaster Road and Hilliard Road are considered to be the best remaining “rural” roads in Laconia. Residents like the character of these roadways in general and do not want to see commercial strip development or other changes alter them or their scenic nature. Some of these roadways fall within the Lakes Region Tour Scenic Byway, but that does not ensure protection of their resources or character. In order to preserve the character of these roadways into the future, the City may need to tighten up some of the existing land use regulations to protect them.

Gateways

The City of Laconia has several “Gateways” into the community. There are several main transportation routes that bring people into the City in several different locations. Route 3/Court Street from Belmont, Route 106/South Main Street from Belmont/Gilford, Route 11B/Endicott Street East from Gilford, Route 3/Endicott Street North from Meredith, and Parade Road from Meredith. Each of these transportation corridors moves traffic from outside of Laconia into its borders and potentially into its economic centers. In almost all of these “gateways” the traveler has scenic views of the lake and mountains as he or she nears Laconia, yet there is virtually no identifying marker or welcome signs once he or she crosses into Laconia. These areas have been targeted as “gateways” for improvement and beautification.

Public Transportation

The Community Action Program transit service (formerly known as the Greater Laconia Transit Authority) is currently the only available public transportation in Laconia. Long distance connections are only available in Tilton, New Hampton, and Meredith.

The Community Action Program in Laconia purchased the Greater Laconia Transit Authority's operation in July 2005 when they were slated to close and end transit service within Laconia. The routes and services within the City, and the routes to Belmont, Tilton, and Franklin have remained the same. Buses continue to run on a Monday through Saturday schedule.

The closest long distance bus service is Concord Trailways, which stops in Tilton, New Hampton, and Meredith, and connects to Concord and points south.

The rail line through Laconia is not currently being used for public transportation. The line is part of the State-owned Concord to Lincoln line operated by New England Southern Railroad. Currently, the line is being used for tourist excursions and short line freight. If the role of rail changes at some point in the future, and more passengers were moved on this line, it would change the dynamic in Laconia.

Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

The City currently has poor bike and pedestrian infrastructure and has been taking steps to correct that. Laconia generally requires sidewalks in new developments, unless they are in a rural location. The City has also been actively pursuing the construction of new bike and pedestrian facilities throughout the City, including the Court Street Bike Path, the proposed Winnepesaukee Opechee Winnisquam Trail, the bike and pedestrian bridge on Bridge Street, and other links and spot improvements. The City network will also become part of the Lakes Region Bikeway, which is proposed to stretch from Meredith to Franklin. The Laconia Trails with Rails Exploratory Committee has been a driving force on these issues in the City.

Airport Facilities

The nearest airport is the Laconia Airport, which is located in Gilford and operated by the Laconia Airport Authority. This facility handles a range of operations for pilots, but does not serve a commercial airline.

The nearest airport is the Laconia Airport, which is located in Gilford and operated by the Laconia Airport Authority. The airport is equipped with a 5,200 foot long lit runway, a terminal with a passenger waiting area, a weather briefing room for pilots, a conference room, wireless internet access, and other amenities. The operating expenses of the airport are funded 100% by a tax on fuel sales, as well as the lease income generated from tenants who rent space from the airport. Currently, the Laconia Airport has only one full-service fixed based operator, Emerson Aviation, which provides a full line of services to resident aircrafts, as well as visiting planes and jets. Emerson's extensive facilities offer refueling services staffed by highly trained line crew personnel with both 100LL and Jet A fuel. In addition, Emerson Aviation also offers flight training, scenic flights, aircraft rental, charters, hangar storage, tie-downs, and maintenance and repair facilities, with a staff of highly qualified personnel. Two seaplane bases operate on Paugus Bay; one is a commercial operation and the other is private.



Freight Facilities

Presently, freight trains continue to serve customers in Laconia in a limited fashion on the existing Concord to Lincoln rail line. The majority of commercial shipping in and out of Laconia is accomplished by commercial trucking, but there is little data available about this mode of freight movement. One known truck terminal is operated by United Parcel Service, off of Parade Road. This facility serves many Lakes Region communities.

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal: Design and implement a transportation system that serves the comprehensive mobility needs of residents and businesses, and enhances quality of life. Laconia's transportation corridors are critical for movement around three major water bodies, as well as the connecting rivers and channels. The harsh winter conditions and high seasonal volume cause wear at a fairly rapid pace. There is an increased need for alternate modes of transportation as the City's population grows and the congestion of existing roadways increases.^{ccxxv}

Objective:

4.1 Plan for the City's Long-Range Transportation needs – Laconia should maintain an active role in data collection and analysis to identify and meet its transportation needs. These data and analyses are essential because funding mechanisms are hard to leverage and scheduling of construction is often several years into the future.^{ccxxvi}

Actions:

- a. Work with the Lakes Region Planning Commission's transportation programs and the Regional planning process to advance projects of local and regional importance. Implementing an effective and cost efficient public transit system should be an integral component.^{ccxxvii,ccxxviii,ccxxix,ccxxx}
- b. Enhance coordination with Lakes Region Planning Commission on gathering and sharing traffic data.^{ccxxxi}
- c. Work cooperatively with New Hampshire Department of Transportation and increase involvement in the regional Technical Advisory Committee to promote important Regional transportation projects through the 10-Year Transportation Improvement Program.^{ccxxxii}
- d. Develop a comprehensive Roadway Capital Improvement Program to determine a baseline goal of City road conditions and to integrate road construction and improvements with development and impact fees.^{ccxxxiii,ccxxxiv}



- e. Update the “Road Surface Management System Priority List” and the “Proposed Major Roadway Improvement Projects” reports.
- f. Complete a City-wide comprehensive study of traffic flows and intersection movements. Analyze high accident locations and determine draft design specifications for safety upgrades and improvements.^{ccxxxv}
- g. Implement annual roadway improvement projects based on the Capital Improvement Program. Utilize the Pavement Management System to identify and prioritize strategic roadway improvements for maintaining serviceability of City streets.^{ccxxxvi,ccxxxvii}
- h. Update the "Road Surface Management System Priority List" for roadway improvements and/or establish a new road surface management program using more recently developed evaluation methods. This will require considerable input of the Department of Public Works staff and attention to ensure the “local understanding” feature of the program remains intact; however the assistance of engineering consultants may be required to determine best roadway repair alternatives.^{ccxxxviii}
- i. Based on the information provided from these program reports, develop a system for long-term maintenance of roadways to maximize their longevity and make the most efficient use of Roadway Improvements/Re-Construction funds.^{ccxxxix}
- j. With the assistance of Professional Engineering/Planning consultants, use the existing collection of site specific studies on file at the Department of Public Works and the Planning Department to accomplish a City-wide comprehensive study of traffic flows that would include a “functional assessment” of critical intersections. Use this plan to further design a comprehensive improvement plan to include location priorities and budget estimates to assist in future Capital Improvement considerations.^{ccxli}

Objective:

- 4.2 Protect the Character of Rural and Scenic Roads – Several of Laconia’s roadways provide magnificent views of the lakes and mountains.^{ccxli}

Actions:

- a. Review and revise municipal ordinances and regulations to design and manage access points from major roadways to increase safety and maintain rural character.^{ccxlii,ccxliii,ccxliv}



- b. Maintain existing infrastructure to improve traffic flow and preserve existing infrastructure without major roadway changes.^{ccxlv,ccxlv,ccxlvii}
- c. Develop specifications to define rural character and scenic roadways in the Zoning Ordinance to protect and maintain the defined qualities.^{ccxlviii}
- d. Recognize and protect Scenic and Cultural Byways.^{ccxlix,ccl}

Objective:

4.3 Manage Access on Commercially Zoned Streets - As the commercial corridors undergo revitalization and increased patronage, the flow of traffic must be addressed.^{ccli}

Actions:

- a. Ensure adequate on and off-site traffic circulation at commercial development sites.^{cclii,ccliii}
- b. Continue to improve the traffic flow through the Downtown Business District.^{ccliv,cclv}
- c. Develop a Transportation Plan for commercial corridors to better manage access points and to identify the most efficient use of the existing rights-of-way. Institute guidelines for location of site access and driveways to preserve capacity, increase safety, and improve traffic flow.^{cclvi}
- d. Incorporate development requirements to mitigate traffic impacts. Use Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) and impact fees to finance street and utility improvement work.^{cclvii,cclviii,cclix,cclx}

Objective:

4.4 Expand Laconia’s Walkable/Bikeable opportunities – Alternate modes of transportation are vital to decreasing traffic congestion and improving quality of life, and are attractive to tourists and residents.^{cclxi}

Actions:

- a. Invest in and support non-motorized transportation systems such



as the Rails with Trails program, the Riverwalk, and sidewalks.^{cclxii,cclxiii,cclxiv,cclxv}

- b. Encourage development of public transit that reduces automobile usage.^{cclxvi,cclxvii}
- c. Collaborate with the Rails With Trails Program to incorporate their activities into a City-wide trails network..^{cclxviii,cclxix,cclxx}
- d. Develop comprehensive guidelines for sidewalks, trails, and crosswalks in all construction that ensures neighborhood connectivity to schools, community centers, and open space.^{cclxxi,cclxxii,cclxxiii}
- e. Discourage through traffic in residential areas.
- f. Revise Zoning Ordinances and Regulations to allow a variety of parking designs and options to better address the varying types of development within the City.^{cclxxiv,cclxxv}

Objective:

4.5 Wayfinding on the City's Streets – Providing business and street signage is increasingly important.^{cclxxvi}

Actions:

- a. Maintain street signs.^{cclxxvii}
- b. Install creative and eye-catching Gateway signage to welcome visitors and promote Laconia's businesses and attractions.^{cclxxviii}
- c. Install a network of tourist attraction signs. Investigate possibility of promotional signs on the States major throughways such as Routes 3, 106, 11 and Interstate 93.^{cclxxix}
- d. Mark and promote Laconia's scenic vistas.

^{ccxxv} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 71,73,74

^{ccxxvi} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 70,71

^{ccxxvii} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002, 14,19,23,29,11,26

^{ccxxviii} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,6

^{ccxxix} Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #3, 4

^{ccxxx} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,9

^{ccxxxi} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,7,18

^{ccxxxii} Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,8,16-18,48,58

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 - ccxxxv Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,17,18
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 - ccxxxvii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,4
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 - ccxxxix Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002, 6,7
 - ccxl Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002, 6,7
 - ccxli City of Laconia Master Plan 2006, 75,76,77
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 - ccxlv Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #2, August 22-23,2003,4,12,13,10,19
 - ccxlvi Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 1,2,4
 - ccxlvii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Summary, November and December 2002,48
 - ccxlviii Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Laconia Master Plan Update: Community Forum #1, December 10-11, 2002,2,3,6,11,26
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 - ccclvii Jeff Taylor Associates, Public Forum On Growth #1, 6
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NATURAL RESOURCES

Overview of Physiography, Topography, and Geology

Laconia's topography, like the entire Lakes Region, is the result of glaciers and long periods of weathering and erosion.



Laconia is located within an area known as the “Central Highlands” to local geographers. Drainage is typically well developed and relief is moderate to high. Elevations are typically between 500 and 2000 feet above sea level. Laconia's topography, like the entire Lakes Region, is the result of glaciers and long periods of weathering and erosion. As glaciers advanced and retreated, they helped shape the many lakes and valleys within the Laconia area. Further erosion in post-glacial times has created the general rolling nature seen regionally in the Lakes Region and locally in Laconia. There are areas with steep slopes throughout the community, generally in places where the land is rising up from an adjacent water body.

Surficial Deposits, Their Uses, and Quality in Laconia

As the glaciers retreated, various materials held within the ice were deposited. These deposits have formed the soil surface, or surficial geology, of Laconia. The surficial geology of the Laconia area was mapped in 1946 and 1966 by Richard Goldthwait and updated in 2002 by John A. Brooks and Daniel Tinkham. These maps are on file at City Hall. These maps indicate that the majority of surficial materials within Laconia are a mix of clay, silt, sand, and rocks, known as till.

The hard rock geology of Laconia consists of two main groups. The first group consists primarily of metamorphosed sedimentary rocks of Devonian age known as the Littleton Formation. The second group consists of intrusive igneous rocks known as the New Hampshire Plutonic Series including granites of Middle Devonian age.

Surface Water Resources

Laconia's economy has always been derived from its surface waters. Initially, the attraction was fish and transport, then the mills and power, and now recreation and tourism.

Laconia depends on its water resources for its very existence. Its economy, tax base, recreation, quality of life, and water supply are all derived from its surface waters. There are five major bodies of water that have a portion of their surface area within the City's boundaries. They are: Lake Winnepesaukee, Lake Winnisquam, Paugus Bay, Opechee Bay, and Pickerel Pond. The 2 major water bodies located completely within Laconia are Paugus Bay and Opechee Bay.

Paugus Bay, Laconia's source of drinking water, is a 1,234-acre water body with a mean depth of 31 feet and a maximum depth of 82 feet. The bay is long and narrow with a length to width ratio of 4:1. The bay has a total shore length of 51,480 feet, which is heavily developed, particularly on the east side. There are 3 small islands, two of which have structures on them. The bay is a natural water body that is controlled by the Lakeport Dam.

Opechee Bay is 492 acres in size. It is also long and narrow, with a maximum depth of 56 feet and a mean depth of 25 feet, with a shore length of 23,750 feet. The bay is fed from an outflow from Paugus Bay, which enters on the east side. The bay is 6 feet lower in elevation than Lake Winnepesaukee, which is the result of the Lakeport Dam.

Watersheds

The City is located within the larger Lake Winnepesaukee Watershed and locally the Paugus Bay Subwatershed, the Weirs Subwatershed, the Opechee Bay Subwatershed, and the Winnepesaukee River Subwatershed.

The Weirs Subwatershed - The Weirs direct drainage area includes land that drains directly into Lake Winnepesaukee. All of the drainage area is within the City of Laconia. There are no perennial streams within the drainage area, but substantial development in the lower portions along the Lake have caused the drainage to be directed into the lake via several culverts. The area is fairly steep, with a high percentage of impermeable surfaces.

Paugus Bay Subwatershed - The Paugus Bay direct watershed is 6,230 acres and contains land from Laconia and the surrounding Towns of Meredith and Gilford. The watershed ends at the dam at Lakeport and begins at the Weirs. However, the entire drainage area of Winnepesaukee and the Weirs drains into Paugus Bay. The watershed contains 4 perennial streams, which are small in size.

Opechee Subwatershed - Opechee Bay's direct watershed is measured from the Messer Street Bridge and totals 2,072 acres. The watershed is narrow and relatively steep along the lake itself, but extends 3 miles to the northwest. There are only 2 perennial streams that drain into the lake.

Winnepesaukee River Subwatershed - The Winnepesaukee River subwatershed drains the area from the Avery Dam to the outlet of Opechee Bay, a distance of about 0.6 miles. The watershed contains Jewett Brook, which drains steep upper portions of the watershed. The remaining portions of the subwatershed are within downtown Laconia and drain directly into the river via storm drains.

Water Quality

Because the entire Winnepesaukee drainage area drains through Paugus Bay, the opportunities for the quality of this water to be negatively impacted is high due to the size of the watershed. Paugus Bay is Laconia's source of drinking water.

Water quality data, collected by the Department of Environmental Services, indicates that all the key chemical and physical parameters for waters in Laconia are good to excellent. The pH is generally above 7, with high alkalinity, indicating that the water bodies are well buffered against acidifying agents. The phosphorus levels are not indicative of "troubled waters". Although the data provided above is dated to 1990, recent monitoring programs in 1998 and 2003 indicate that the water quality is still very good overall.

Paugus Bay is the source of drinking water for the City of Laconia. Because the entire Winnepesaukee drainage area drains through Paugus Bay, the amount of water available for use is very high, but the opportunities for the quality of this water to be negatively impacted by a range of activities is also high due to the size of the watershed. Currently, there is a small restrictive area around the Water Department's intake pipes, which reduces human impacts near the intakes, but little control exists



over land use or fuel spills in the larger watershed. Water quality is monitored by the Laconia Water Works at 12 locations around Paugus Bay on a regular basis. In addition, the EPA requires testing of drinking water for over 50 potential contaminants.

The Laconia Watershed Advisory Committee collected and tested samples from 13 locations around Paugus Bay during storm events from 2001-2003. To determine baseline data, the Laconia Watershed Advisory Committee added Pickerel Cove to the list of sampling locations during the summer of 2003. Sampling focused on three general areas:

- Paugus Bay near the water works;
- Runoff outfalls draining directly into the lake; and
- Tributaries that drain into Paugus Bay.

The sampling indicates that Laconia needs to educate residents about the use of fertilizers and other contaminants that can drain into the lake in runoff, and also needs to treat runoff from paved areas to reduce the potential for excess nutrients and chemicals flowing into Paugus Bay. Because there are many factors that can affect water quality before it reaches a lake, it is necessary to address water resource protection from a broad perspective.

Sources of Pollution

The urban, suburban, agricultural, and recreational uses that exist within Laconia have the potential to significantly affect water quality. That is the same water that most City residents drink.

The urban, suburban, agricultural, and recreational uses that exist within Laconia have the potential to significantly affect water quality. Pollutants can also be introduced elsewhere in the large Winnepesaukee Watershed outside of Laconia's boundaries and then drain into Paugus Bay.

Point sources of pollution, which discharge directly into surface waters, are regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Water Supply Engineering Bureau of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. This is accomplished through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, which regulates the characteristics and quality of municipal and industrial wastewater discharged into surface waters. There are 6 sites in the City of Laconia which are regulated under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System.

The other broader category of potential pollution sources are referred to as non-point sources. These sources are somewhat more subtle in that there may not be a pipe that leads directly to a water body, but their potential effects can be just as significant as point sources of pollution. The Water Supply and Pollution Control Division has identified a number of these potential pollution sources in the Inventory of Groundwater and Surface Water Potential Nonpoint Pollution Sources. This inventory for Laconia identifies 200+ areas that have the potential to be Nonpoint sources of pollution.

Not all potential pollution sources are on land. Some exist on and in the water itself. The potential pollution sources include contamination from fuel from combustion engines on boats, litter, and sanitary waste from both boating and fishing activities.

The water quality analysis indicates that Laconia needs to educate residents about the use of fertilizers and other contaminants that can drain into the lake. In addition runoff from paved areas needs to be addressed to reduce the potential for excess nutrients and chemicals flowing into Paugus Bay, the City's drinking water source.

Wetlands

Wetlands have been discovered to be one of the most fertile and productive ecosystems in the world. Wetlands in Laconia are protected by a 30 foot buffer requirement.

Wetlands, the interface between terrestrial and aquatic environments, have been discovered to be one of the most fertile and productive ecosystems in the world. Wetlands are important for numerous socio-economic and environmental reasons. These include flood and storm damage control, erosion control, water quality improvement, fish and wildlife values, recreation, and aesthetics.

Wetland Types Located in Laconia

Wetland Type	Description
Riverine	Wetlands and deepwater habitats contained in a channel
Lacustrine	Permanently flooded lakes and reservoirs
Palustrine	Vegetated wetlands such as ponds, marshes, swamps, and bogs.

The Laconia Conservation Commission has spent the past 10 years evaluating the wetland areas within Laconia. As part of the process, the Conservation Commission has selected 11 of the most significant wetland areas to be evaluated using the 1991 Method for the Comparative Evaluation of Nontidal Wetlands in New Hampshire. The results of the study have been compiled in a report entitled “Laconia Wetland Evaluations Summary Report.” This report will be used to designate “Prime Wetlands” in Laconia in the next few years.

State and City Wetland Regulations

The 30 foot buffer requirement in the City is a positive step, but a larger buffer requirement would better protect most wetlands and provide upland habitat for wetland species.

The City currently regulates activity within a wetland as prescribed by Section 235-17 of the Zoning Ordinance entitled “Wetland Conservation and Water Quality Overlay District.” The ordinance addresses the criteria of soils, hydrology, and vegetation for wetlands one acre or larger, or of any size if they are adjacent to surface waters. Wetlands in Laconia are protected by a 30 foot buffer requirement. Disturbances to this buffer require a Conditional Use Permit.

Major Wetland Descriptions

- Maiden Lady Cove Wetland- Located in the northern tip of the City of Laconia, Maiden Lady Cove Wetland is approximately 20 acres in size. This wetland is mainly forested and contains two small ponds.
- Pickerel Cove Wetland- Located south of Weirs Beach, northwest of Pickerel Cove, on Paugus Bay, this 53 acre wetland is composed of a large number of wetland classes and includes forested and grassy areas, as well as open water.
- Durkee Brook Wetland - Located in the southeastern section of the City, the Durkee Brook Wetland is 10 acres in size. This wetland resides in a highly developed section of the City, surrounded by numerous roads and buildings.

- Hamel Wetland- Approximately 73 acres in size, Hamel Wetland is located in the northwestern region of the City. This wetland exhibits a large number of classes including grassy, forested, and open water. Out of the 11 wetlands evaluated in Laconia, Hamel Wetland ranked highest in ecological integrity, flood control, and ground water recharge.
- Pickerel Pond Wetland - This 71-acre wetland is located in the northwestern region of the City. Exhibiting 4 different wetland classes, including marsh, open water, shrubs, and grass, this wetland provides a valuable habitat for a wide range of wildlife.
- White Oaks Wetland - The White Oaks Road Wetland is comprised of 60 acres of seasonally flooded, shrub filled wetland. The presence of thick bushes and forested cover create important wildlife habitat within this wetland.
- South Down Wetland - This 16-acre wetland is located within the South Down residential development. Composed of mainly grasses and shrubs, this wetland drains into Lake Opechee.
- Old North Main Wetland - The Old North Main Street Wetland is located approximately 1.5 miles northwest of Laconia’s Downtown region. This wetland is divided into two distinct areas by the intersection of Main Street running north south.
- Pleasant Street School Wetland - The Pleasant Street School Wetland is comprised of 8.2 acres of forested, shrubby wetland. Direct access to this wetland is available from an established nature trail located behind Pleasant Street School, thereby increasing this wetland’s educational potential.
- Lily Pond Wetland - This 74-acre wetland contains Lily Pond, as well as forested and shrubby areas. Although it lies in the Town of Gilford, this wetland is the source of Black Brook, which flows into Paugus Bay in the City of Laconia. The Lily Pond Wetland acts to filter the runoff from development surrounding the wetland, cleansing the water before it reaches Laconia’s drinking water source.
- Black Brook Wetland - While the majority of the Black Brook Wetland lies within Town of Gilford, its lower portion lies in Laconia and empties into Paugus Bay, the City’s source of drinking water. The total length of the brook is approximately 2.5 kilometers from Lily Pond to Paugus Bay.



Floodplains

Laconia's Flood Insurance Rate Maps do not exhibit any particularly large areas that are prone to flooding, but do indicate a general fringe flood area around the City's lakes.

With the passage of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, Congress created the National Flood Insurance Program in an attempt to mitigate future flood damage and to provide protection for property owners against potential losses. In conjunction with this program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development mapped the location of Laconia's Flood Boundaries and Floodways and created Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the City. The effective date on these maps is August 15, 1980.

The maps illustrate the boundaries of the 100-year flood (also referred to as the base flood) within the City, which is defined as having a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. The maps do not exhibit any particularly large areas that are prone to flooding, but do indicate a general fringe flood area around the City's lakes. There are other relatively narrow flood hazard areas identified adjacent to Pickerel Cove Brook, Jewett Brook, and Durkee Brook. Those areas are typically coincident with some of the City's wetland areas.

These maps have been incorporated into Laconia's Zoning Ordinance under Section 235-18, "Flood Plain District." This Ordinance prohibits any development or encroachment in a flood hazard area that would result in any increase in flood levels during the base flood discharge. It also requires floodproofing of structures that are located in a hazard area.

Groundwater Resources

There are 4 aquifers within the City of Laconia, as identified by the United States Geological Survey. The United States Geological Survey, in conjunction with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Water Division, has studied 2 of these aquifers in greater detail.

- Durkee Brook Aquifer - The Durkee Brook Aquifer extends from the Laconia-Gilford-Belmont Town line northward to Lake Winnepesaukee. The saturated thickness exceeds 20 feet for most of the aquifer, but is generally less than 40 feet. The transmissivity of most of the aquifer is less than 1,000 ft²/d but slightly greater than 1,000 ft²/d where the saturated thickness is greatest. Development of this aquifer is not limited to the hydrologic properties of the aquifer, but by the amount of water available to potential wells.

- Black Brook Aquifer - The Black Brook Aquifer is at the southern end of Paugus Bay, immediately west of Lily Pond. The estimated thickness of the stratified-drift aquifer is estimated to be greater than 20 feet, but may be as much as 100 feet. Aquifer transmissivity estimated from logs of domestic wells exceeds 1,000 ft²/d, where the saturated thickness is the greatest.

Groundwater Quality

Groundwater quality from Laconia's aquifers is generally suitable for drinking and other domestic uses. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services requires a groundwater discharge permit for any operations which may have the potential to impact water quality due to direct discharge to groundwater. There are currently no permitted groundwater discharges within the City of Laconia.

Groundwater Use

Currently, the City of Laconia gets its drinking water and other domestic water from Paugus Bay. Throughout the rural portions of the community there are also many properties being served by private wells which tap into the groundwater. No City wells have been pursued at this time.

Soils

The soils in the City of Laconia fall into 6 general types, which can be grouped based on the location, drainage, and the types of development they are suited for. These groupings take into consideration limiting factors that could create problems for the proper operation of septic tank absorption fields, shallow excavations, dwellings with basements, commercial and industrial buildings, and the construction and safe functioning of local streets.

- (1) Well drained, compact glacial till (hardpan soils)
This group consists of loamy soils that have slopes of less than 15%. In most places, stones and boulders are on the surface of the soil. Major soil features that affect development include a dense layer at a depth of about two feet, slow movement of water through the lower part of the soil, susceptibility to frost heaving, and short duration wetness.
- (2) Moderately well drained soils (seasonal high water table)
This group consists of sandy and loamy soils that have a seasonal water table at a depth of about two feet. Slopes are less than 15%. Major soil features affecting development include wetness in all soils, slow movement of water in some soils, and poor filtration of effluent in other soils.

(3) Poorly drained and very poorly drained soils (wetlands)

This group consists of organic and mineral soils that have a seasonal high water table, have water at the surface, or are ponded for a significant portion of the year. They are nearly level soils occurring in depressions and drainage ways, with slopes typically less than 3%. Major soil features affecting development include seasonal flooding, standing water and wetness, poor filtration of septic tank effluent, and high frost action potential. Also included in this category are somewhat poorly drained soils.

(4) Deep, moderately deep, and shallow glacial till (bedrock complex)

This group consists of soils that are more than 40 inches to bedrock, 20 to 40 inches to bedrock, and less than 20 inches to bedrock. These soils are so intermingled that it is not practical to map them separately at the scale of the soil survey. Slopes are less than 15%. Although some areas have bedrock at shallow depths, in other areas the soils are deep to bedrock. Major soil features affecting development include bedrock close to the surface and in some places, where the soil is deeper, sloughing or caving of excavation walls.

(5) Soils with slopes greater than 15 %

These soils have the same characteristics as the bedrock complex soils, with the additional feature of steeper slopes. Along with the potential to have a shallow depth to bedrock, these soils are susceptible to erosion during excavation, present difficulty for locating leach fields and in the engineering of desirable roadway grades.

(6) Well drained to excessively drained glacial outwash and well drained, loose glacial till. These 2 categories comprise the remaining soil types within the City. They consist of sandy and gravelly soils, as well as sandy, loamy soils. With the exception of some surface stones, they present few limitations for development.



According to a build-out analysis currently being prepared by the Lakes Region Planning Commission for the City, 1,926 acres of Laconia (15%) are constrained by wetlands, steep slopes over 25%, and shoreland protection areas.

Farmland Soils

Prime farmland soils are defined as land being best suitable for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. The land must also be available for agricultural uses. According to 1991 estimates, the total acreage of prime soils in Laconia is estimated to be around 400 acres.

Important local farmland areas include State Forest lands that support agricultural activities and other agricultural operations identified by the Laconia Land Conservation Task Force. These include a portion of the Prescott State Forest tract, the Opechee Bay tract, and areas around Parade Road, Meredith Center Road, and Eastman Road.

Vegetation and Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat

Six species of vascular plants and 4 species of birds in Laconia have been reported by the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Program to be threatened or endangered.

General Habitat Types

Within Laconia there are many types of habitat ranging from forestland and fields, to wetlands and open water. These habitats are capable of supporting a variety of wildlife species.

Designated Terrestrial Species of Federal, State, and Local Concern

A number of plant and bird species found within the City of Laconia are recognized at the State and Federal level as threatened and/or endangered.

Six species of vascular plants and four species of birds have been reported by the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Program to be threatened or endangered. The exact locations of these species are unavailable due to the fragile nature of the surviving populations.

Species with Significant Populations in Laconia

Species	Habitat
Deer	Forest habitat
Fox	Open field habitat
Beaver, otter, mink	Water and wetland habitats
Canada geese, black ducks, mergansers, mallards, wood ducks, ring-neck ducks, golden eyes, buffalo heads	Surface water habitat

Endangered and Threatened Plants in Laconia

Species Name	Status
Arethusa	Endangered
Fringed Gentian	Threatened
Rams-Head-Lady-Slipper	Endangered
Sago Pondweed	Threatened
Small Whorled Pogonia	Endangered
Three-Birds Orchid	Threatened

Endangered and Threatened Birds in Laconia

Species Name	Status
Bald Eagle	Endangered
Purple Martin	Endangered
Common Loon	Threatened
Osprey	Threatened

Aquatic Wildlife Habitat and Designated Species

Freshwater Fisheries

According to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, the water bodies in Laconia, including all of Lake Winnepesaukee, are productive fisheries for both warm and cold-water species.

Warm water fisheries consist of shiners, perch (yellow and white), bullheads, suckers, bass (smallmouth and largemouth), pickerel, eels, and a variety of sunfishes. These fish reproduce naturally in the large lakes.

Cold-water fisheries include lake whitefish and round whitefish, salmon, rainbow trout, and lake trout. The lake whitefish and round whitefish are native, but have been augmented by past historical stockings. Due to limited natural reproduction by landlocked waters, 24,000 salmon are stocked into Lake Winnepesaukee annually. Rainbow trout, which require high alkaline waters for successful incubation, are stocked upwards to 10,000 due to the Lakes' below preferred levels. Lake trout are native and reproduce naturally on the reefs in late fall.

Designated Aquatic Species of Federal, State, and Local Concern

There are wildlife that depend on aquatic species: loon, osprey, and bald eagle (winter roost sites). There is a record historical (1938) for lake whitefish from Lake Winnisquam. There is also a historical record (1948) of a State-Endangered aquatic plant, the Sago Pondweed, from Paugus Bay.

Air Quality

Existing Air Quality Conditions and Trends

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services operates a network of air quality monitors throughout the State, including one in Laconia, to measure levels of ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter. The State has monitored air quality since the early 1960s.

New Hampshire's 1972 State Implementation Plan, required by the Clean Air Act, established a permit system to ensure that ambient quality standards would be achieved and maintained at the required levels. The 1977 amendments to the Clean Air Act required states to revise its State Implementation Plan to ensure that all areas would be in compliance with air quality standards by 1982, or with an extension by 1987.

Laconia's Ambient Air monitoring station located on Green Street (moved from the airport in 2000) measures ozone, particulate matter, and mercury, as well as meteorological data. There have been no recorded violations.

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal: Protect and preserve the City's natural resources and natural beauty. Natural Resources are the foundation of Laconia's community and economy. These resources are especially critical since Laconia obtains its drinking water from Paugus Bay.^{cclxxx}

Objective:

- 5.1 Protect Water Quality –The biggest threat to Laconia's natural resources is the effect development has on water quality, specifically, to Paugus Bay. There are many ways to reduce the impacts from development in and on the City's waterbodies.^{cclxxx}

Actions:

- a. Incorporate Best Management Practices identified in the Planning Study for Weirs, Paugus Bay, Opechee Bay, and Winnepesaukee River Watersheds (Watershed Study) into the Planning Board's project review process, including:^{cclxxxii}
 - new technologies for stormwater control and treatment at new developments with the goal of removing 80% of suspended solids for new developments and reduction and control of phosphorous; and
 - standard best practices for logging, agriculture, golf courses, and marinas.
- b. Reduce impact of non-point pollution in accordance with the Watershed Study by reducing impermeable surfaces in new developments, requiring oil, grease, and sediment traps in catch basins, and requiring maintenance of erosion/sediment controls and buffers.^{cclxxxiii,cclxxxiv}
- c. Strengthen Shoreline Protection Overlay District with regulations to reduce pollution and runoff, especially in to the Paugus Bay Watershed. Treatment solutions may include shoreline and wetland restoration, maximization of quality green spaces, and use of vegetated buffers. Preventive solutions may include expansion of the sewer network, curtailing direct outfall of the storm drainage system into surface waters, and limiting petroleum distribution and storage in the shoreline zone.^{cclxxxv,cclxxxvi}
- d. Analyze the feasibility and benefits of the City assuming enforcement responsibility for the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act.^{cclxxxvii}
- e. Implement impact fees specifically to be used for storm water management and control.^{cclxxxviii cclxxxix}
- f. Clarify the City's mission to protect the undeveloped area in the watershed that directly impacts Laconia's water supply.^{ccxc}
- g. Expand Laconia Water Works' water quality sampling to include phosphorous and total suspended solids within the Paugus Bay Watershed.^{ccxcii,ccxciii}
- h. Encourage and provide logistical support to volunteers for water quality sampling and City-wide outreach and education efforts.^{ccxciii}

Objective:

5.2 Protect Wetlands – Protect the wetlands that buffer and clean the source waters to our large lakes.^{ccxciv}

Actions:

- a. Establish a means to review the functional aspects of wetlands and buffers in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Site Plan Regulations.^{ccxcv,ccxevi,ccxcvii}
- b. Ensure that development considers wildlife movements, breeding habitats, and wetland functions and values.^{ccxcviii}
- c. Require high intensity soil mapping (HISS) for development proposal submittals that would involve wetland areas so that storm water infrastructure can be designed for maximum functionality.^{ccxcix}
- d. Identify and designate prime wetlands for critical watershed areas that serve as natural filtration up-gradient of Laconia’s lakes and rivers.^{ccc}
- e. Identify the percentage of wetlands to be counted toward the green space calculations for conservation/cluster developments.^{ccci,cccii}

Objective:

5.3 Protect and Preserve Natural Areas and Scenic Resources – Laconia’s natural and scenic resources, including lakes and rural areas, deserve Laconia’s greatest protection.^{ccciii}

Actions:

- a. Complete a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), including forest resources, and use the NRI to further guide and refine local decision making.^{ccciv}
- b. Complete an inventory of the City’s scenic resources and viewsheds and use to further guide and refine local decision making.^{cccvi,cccvi,cccvi}
- c. Develop a system of trails for passive recreation that complement preservation of critical natural areas, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas.^{cccviii,cccix,cccix,cccxi}

Objective:

5.4 Lessen the Environmental Impacts of Development – Laconia should encourage development that is protective of our natural resources.^{cccxi}

Actions:

- a. Integrate sewer and water expansions with the goal of protecting open space, water quality, and wetlands.^{cccxiii,cccxiv}
- b. Identify areas for higher density development and direct the expansion of water and sewer to those areas.^{cccxv,cccxvi,cccxvii}
- c. Encourage and provide incentives for “in-fill” development.^{cccxviii,cccxi}
- d. Encourage development that conserves high-value natural areas, wetlands, and other natural resources, and preserves the function of those natural resources.^{cccxx,cccxxi,cccxxii,cccxxiii}
- e. Ensure erosion control and storm water standards in the City reflect the most up-to-date knowledge and technology.^{cccxxiv,cccxxv}
- f. Consider incentives for pervious parking, sidewalks, and walkways.

Objective:

5.5 Create Greater Environmental Awareness and Resource Conservation –Community support to preserve and protect natural areas must be built through outreach and education.^{cccxxvi}

Actions:

- a. Improve cooperative relationships between City Departments and local Boards. Educate City Boards and officials so they are aware of the importance and protection of natural and scenic resources.^{cccxxvii}
- b. Collaborate with neighboring towns on planning and conservation concerns and issues by holding and participating in “issue meetings” workshops for the Regional community, including but not limited to, environmental landscaping, pollution prevention, volunteer monitoring and outreach, and joint meetings when permit applications have effects outside of Laconia.^{cccxxviii,cccxxix}
- c. Develop education and outreach strategies to involve local neighborhoods, lake and condominium associations, business groups, and landowners in resource protection and conservation.^{cccxxx,cccxxxi}

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CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Cultural Resources Overview

Working to preserve the character of Laconia’s buildings, and incorporating complimentary design features into new construction, will reinforce Laconia’s image for years to come. From the Belknap Mill, to the newest commercial construction, this is an important issue.

Historic structures contribute to the character and culture of the City. Structures, sites, and districts of important historical or architectural significance may be nominated to be listed on the National Register (a Federal listing of such structures, sites, and districts). Such a listing provides protection to the property relating to Federally approved or licensed actions. Structures typically need to be at least 50 years old before being eligible for National Registry status. They must also be architecturally distinguished or be associated with a famous person. Several buildings within Laconia are on the National Register.

National Register of Historic Places - Laconia

Structure/District Name	Date Added
Belknap-Sulloway Mill	added 1971-Building
John w. Busiel House	added 1994-Building
Busiel-Seeburg Mill	added 1971-Building
Endicott Rock	added 1980-Site
Evangelical Baptist Church	added 1985-Building
Gale Memorial Library	added 1985-Building
Goss, Ossian Wilbur, Reading Room	added 1986-Building
Laconia District Court	added 1982-Building
Laconia Passenger Station	added 1982-Building
New Hampshire Veterans Association Historic District	added 1980-District
US Post Office-Laconia Main	added 1986-Building
United Baptist Church of Lakeport	added 1985-Building
The Weirs	added 1975-Site



Laconia is located within an archaeologically rich area. The New Hampshire Archaeological Society has identified 33 sites of importance in the United States Geological Survey, Winnepesaukee quadrangle, many within City boundaries. Two of these areas are on the National Register.

Laconia's community character is also created by many structures that are not on the National Register. Working to preserve the character of these buildings, and incorporating complimentary design features into new construction, will reinforce Laconia's image for years to come. This can be encouraged, or required, to varying levels through site plan review regulations and architectural design guidelines.



Preservation

In 1982, a report entitled "Historic Preservation Plan: Laconia, New Hampshire" was prepared by the Lakes Region Planning Commission. The study recommended 5 areas for at least local historic district consideration including Weirs Beach, South end, North Main Street, Church Street, and Lakeport. In addition, the study recommended that Parade Road be designated as a rural preservation area. Currently, more action must be taken to implement these proposals. Additional information on Laconia's history and preservation efforts can be found through the Laconia Historic and Museum Societies, Inc.

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal: Preserve the historic character of the City. Laconia's architecture and artifacts reflect its cultural history as one of the oldest economic centers in the State. The character of these historic resources adds to the City's vitality and, as such, should be preserved.
cccxxxii

Objective:

6.1 Gather information to support and assist historic preservation.
cccxxxiii

Actions:

- a. Encourage collaboration among local and regional groups who work with Laconia's history and heritage.
cccxxxiv

- b. Identify and catalog structures and sites of historic importance and significance in the City.^{cccxxxv, cccxxxvi}

Objective:

6.2 Facilitate historic preservation^{cccxxxvii}

Actions:

- a. Encourage the continued preservation of historic structures by allowing incentives within municipal ordinances for reuse and renovation to include historical architecture.^{cccxxxviii, cccxxxix}
- b. Allow for more flexibility in re-developing historic structures, including but not limited to, greenspace allowances and/or parking requirement exceptions.^{cccxl, cccxli}
- c. Establish architectural standards for new development and restoration that incorporates the historical and existing architecture of the neighborhood.^{cccxlii, cccxliii}

Objective:

6.3 Promote historic preservation through education and outreach.^{cccxliv}

Actions:

- a. Develop a curriculum based on Laconia’s heritage and history for use in local schools and for the tourism industry.^{cccxlv, cccxlv}
- b. Incorporate historic resources into tourist brochures and market the region as a tourist destination.^{cccxlvii, cccxlviii, cccxlix}
- c. Develop, and publicize interpretive walking historic tours and trail systems, such as the Riverwalk, the Meredith Parade Historic Trail, or an industrial waterway trail.^{ccccl, ccccli}
- d. Encourage and assist in collecting, cataloging, studying, and displaying of artifacts, records, collections, and papers of historical significance to the City.

^{cccxxxii} City of Laconia Master Plan 2006,99,100

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Cost of Community Services

In 2002 the City of Laconia released a Cost of Community Services Report. The Report found that in general year-round residential uses cost the City more than they pay in taxes. The assessment of a developed parcel, and thus the tax revenue, may be higher than an open space parcel, but a developed parcel demands more services. Therefore the gross revenue is cancelled by the cost of services. This study was valuable in showing that land use planning for a balanced community is a challenge, and understanding the fiscal impacts of various land uses is important.

Community Facilities

The City of Laconia is comprised of several departments. Each of these departments provides a service to the taxpayer and may of these departments contain substantial infrastructure and facilities. Because each of these departments serves the taxpayer, accessibility is important and walkability is a key feature of creating transportation choice. The future growth of a department is also discussed, as this is an important planning tool for future capital planning in both infrastructure and staffing. Each of these ideas is discussed department by department in the following chapter.

Water Department

Location: The Water Department office complex is conveniently located at 988 Union Ave, midway between the Downtown and the Weirs. The office complex includes a garage for vehicles, a boathouse and dock for both fire rescue boats and the Water Department maintenance boat.

Traffic, Parking: Sufficient on site parking is available at the office complex. Union Ave is a busy commercial street and access on and off the site is at times difficult.

Pedestrians: Sidewalks exist on the Union Ave frontage of the site.

Services: The water department maintains the City network of water line including 489 hydrants, 5908 water meters, 1250 main gates and 400 ECR Radio read water meters. Additionally, the water department operates and maintains the Water Treatment Plant, 5 Booster Stations and 6 Water Storage Tanks

Growth: Residential growth increases have put increased pressure on the Water Department Staff. The water treatment plant currently carries two full shifts and two additional full shifts are desired. Design review Engineers may be required in the future if growth trends continue.

Estimated infrastructure requirements to meet the increase in demand include additional tanks in the Eastman Shore Road area and the Parade Road/Meredith Center Road Area, as well as the replacement of the tank in the Weirs with a larger tank.

Sewer and Public Works Department

Location: The public works garage is conveniently and centrally located on Bisson Ave between downtown and Lakeport. The office location is served by several secondary streets, making access very easy from all areas of the city. The surrounding properties are commercial with a sprinkling of residential occupancies. It was secured by the City from a car dealership in 2002 and revamped to serve as the Department Office as well as the central Garage location for all DPW highway and sewer maintenance personnel and equipment.

The DPW has also maintained the former garage site at 257 Messer Street which serves as our vehicle maintenance facility. The site was recently supplemented with a new 60 ft x 100 ft storage building. Other improvements to the Messer St. site, including granite curbing and sidewalks, expanded greenspace and drainage improvements will be accomplished in FY 06-07.

Traffic, Parking: On-site parking is adequate for all staff as well as department vehicles and equipment.

Pedestrians: Pedestrian is twofold. Firstly, Bisson Ave heading south turns into Strafford Ave which is a direct access to Busy Corner. Secondly Bisson Ave heading North intersects with Messer Street which accesses Union Ave as it approaches Lakeport. There are no sidewalks on Bisson Ave; inclusion of sidewalks would increase pedestrian use. Creating a sidewalk and allowing pedestrian traffic along the side of Messer Street may be important as well.

Services:

Solid Waste:

Laconia is a member of the Concord Regional Solid Waste Resource Recovery Cooperative (CRSWRRC) which currently provides a secure solid waste disposal program (compliant with State and Federal requirements) to meet Laconia's needs at least through 2014 with options to 2019 and beyond. The DPW actively manages the daily activities at the Transfer Station on Meredith Center Road and maintains communication with the contractor. Waste from this facility is transported to a co-op facility in Penacook through contractor

services. The transfer station includes a recycling drop-off point and a limited hazardous waste disposal program. In addition, the DPW operates a brush dump at Hilliard Road.

Sanitary Sewer Fund:

The city of Laconia’s sanitary wastewater (“sewage”) is collected through gravity and force-main sewer pipe systems throughout the city. The system includes 16 pump stations and larger interceptor sewers measuring 24” to 42” in diameter that are managed by the State of New Hampshire – Winnepesaukee River Basin Program (WRBP). Laconia is one of 10 Lakes Region communities that participates in the WRBP with all of the sewage being transported to a regional sewage treatment plant in Franklin, NH.

There are currently 6380 connections to Laconia’s sewer system. Several of these connections serve multiple living units. All living units within 250 feet of a public sewer are required by the Laconia Sewer Ordinance to connect to the sewer system. Those living in units in the City not connected to the sewer system are required by state law to discharge sewage into state approved on-site subsurface (septic) systems. The DPW staff oversee all connections to the city sewer system through the permit and inspection program and oversee all new plumbing installations through the permit and inspection program.

Public Works:

The DPW maintains over 100 miles of year-round public roadways and oversees and manages implementation of street repair requirements on all street excavations (approximately 250 annually) through the permit and inspection program. Winter maintenance includes plowing, salting, and sanding 202 lane miles of roadway and 50 miles of sidewalk. Annually, they repair approximately 60 drain basins; clean and repair extensive stormwater collection systems, remove approximately 20 trees and trim additional hazard trees as needed and replace or install approximately 90 street and road signs. The City participates in an urban compact and so is responsible for maintaining all traffic lights within the urban compact zone.

The DPW is an integral part of the Planning Board process and perform all drafting, surveying and project estimates for DPW projects, and performs reviews on all site plan and subdivision proposals submitted to the City to evaluate impact on DPW infrastructure. In addition DPW perform all site work inspections on newly approved private development projects that have been approved through the Planning Board process

Growth: The public works department has experienced significant increases in work demands and in all areas of infrastructure maintenance. The downsizing of the department in keeping with State and National Trends in the 1980’s and 1990’s resulted in a reduction in employees from 42 in 1978 to 29 at present. This has resulted in a greater number of demands on a smaller number of people. Coupled with the reduction of the work force, there has been a significant growth in the City’s highway, sewer and drainage system maintenance requirements. The DPW expects to add 2 technical staff in the Office and 2 maintenance staff in the sewer and highway divisions in the next several years.

Police Department

Police Department -126 New Salem Street

Location: The Police Department is located at 126 Salem Street. The new Salem Street location is newly constructed and located at the southern end of Laconia's geographic area but within the central business district and well situated with respect to the densely developed portions of the city with convenient and quick access east or west of the lakes. The facility has 18,000 sq. feet of operational space and an additional 900 sq. feet of storage space in a separate carport storage building.

Traffic, Parking: New Salem Street was observed to be a moderate traffic thoroughfare. The police station parking lot is served by to access points to the street, as such entry and exit of the parking lot is not an issue.

Parking on site is deemed sufficient for both employee and civilian use.

Pedestrians: Good access to main entry from sidewalk on New Salem Street.

Services: Since 1999 the City of Laconia has experienced a 37% increase in total reported crimes and a staggering 298% increase in reported felony crimes. In addition, the Police Department has seen a 55% increase in arrests and a 36% increase in the calls for service from citizens over the same time period. The Department has made a number of significant adjustments to its operation in an effort to respond to these increased demands including: a complete department reorganization which reduced the number of management positions, increased reliance on computer technology to boost efficiency and expanded the use of volunteers and part time employees to augment the paid staff.

The Department has an authorized strength of 47 full-time employees and 7 part-time employees. The staff of the department is organized in the following scheme; One chief, two captains, two lieutenants, five patrol sergeants, twenty-three patrol officers, four detectives, one attorney-prosecutor, five dispatchers, four administrative civilians, four part-time officers, one part-time animal control officer and two part time secretaries. The department also employs two seasonal non-sworn community resource officers during the summer months.

Unfortunately, due in part to the increasing call volume, the nature of the calls received and the need to devote more time to certain types of calls has left this critical time period short staffed. A recent analysis comparing Laconia's 2004 crime statistics against communities with greater population (Concord, Salem, Portsmouth, Keene) indicate that Laconia has a greater per capita violent crime rate these comparison communities.

Growth: Despite best efforts the resources of the Department fails to keep pace with the public safety responsibilities. The Police Department continues to operate at manpower levels below our 1989 authorized strength. The Police Commission believes that a personnel increase is well justified and essential to meet the growth in service demands and to provide an adequate level of police protection for citizens in this community. Limited defined growth is anticipated in Laconia Police Department force size. The facility, built in 2003, has been designed to serve the needs of the Department for the foreseeable future.

Fire Department

Central Fire Station – North Main Street

Location: The site for Central Fire Station on North Main Street is on a busy arterial route opposite Opechee Park. This allows good access to points north, south and west, but one way streets in the central business district and non-orthogonal street alignments make access to points east, towards Lakeport, somewhat more difficult.

Traffic, Parking: North Main Street was observed to be very heavily traveled. Warning or traffic control signals on the street may be warranted for fast emergency vehicle access.

On-site parking is available for approximately 20 cars and is reported to be very limited at shift changes and when on-call firefighters respond. Public parking for Opechee Park, diagonally across North Main Street, and private parking for the American Legion, directly across North Main Street, functions as overflow when needed and as available.

The single, virtually full site-width drive is conveniently located for equipment using the east (front) doors with good sight lines up and down North Main Street. Where the drive continues along the south side however, to parking area behind the building, it is narrow, and severely constricted by parallel parked vehicles, which limits use of south equipment bay to small vehicles.

Additional space for parking is not available on site without further restricting the access to the apparatus floor. Additional property at south could most easily be developed for increased on site parking. Alternatively, more parking at Opechee Park could be developed without property acquisition by the city.

The existing freestanding box truck storage is used for yard items and inactive equipment.

Site lighting seems to be adequate for safe circulation.

Pedestrians: Sidewalk along North Main Street combined with wide driveway, which is typically kept clear for emergency response, and provides convenient access to the facility.

Weirs Fire Station - Endicott St E (11B) & Lucerne Avenue

Location: The Weirs Fire Station is located remotely from downtown Laconia in an area of the city that is densely populated during warm months when nearby seasonal lakefront dwellings are occupied. This location allows typical emergency response times to remain between three to four minutes throughout the weirs service area.

The sloped site is well adapted for the two level access and differing building functions accommodated.

Traffic, Parking: Both (11B) and Lucerne Avenue were observed to be lightly traveled during the March visit. Traffic volume increases significantly during summer months.

On-site parking is reported to be tight when a large number of on-call firefighters respond but adequate for everyday use by Community Center. Drives in and out are conveniently located on both streets with good sight lines.

Asphalt paving at parking area is cracked and broken in wide areas, settled catch basin, and the grade transition at Community Center drive causes long vehicles to bottom out. Repaving offers an opportunity to warp grade at upper drive for a less abrupt transition. The LFD drive at equipment bays is in need of repair and repaving.

Treated wood guardrails at upper parking area are badly deteriorated and most would not offer much resistance to errant vehicles. Treated wood posts are in better condition but at least one was observed to be broken at grade.

Site lighting seems to be adequate for safe pedestrian circulation.

Pedestrians: There are no sidewalks at surrounding streets. On-site walks are located for convenient entry access from parking areas.

Outside stairs west of the building between parking areas were built with railroad ties that have deteriorated and displaced enough to make them dangerous. They are closed with warning signs. Since pedestrian access is not required along this route, the existing steps should be removed, repaved and planted with grass or ground cover.

Accommodating this growth at Weirs Fire Station, from the current level of three to four on duty firefighters, will not be any problem since the current facility has three sleeping rooms that could house as many as six firefighters.

Lakeport Fire Station - Elm Street

Location: The Lakeport Fire Station site provides quick access to adjacent Union Avenue, a major north/south arterial street. Elm Street itself provides primary access to neighborhoods both sides of Lake Opechee.

Traffic, Parking: Elm Street was observed to be heavily traveled. The nearby intersection with Union Avenue, which is very heavily traveled, has a traffic signal and is crowded at times. A planned bridge reconstruction project that will better align Elm and Clinton Streets at this intersection should help relieve waiting traffic and improve safety. This realignment work will allow a longer driveway which will be a benefit in maneuvering and parking large firefighting trucks. There may also be benefit in a fire department control/override of this intersection's traffic signal.

On-site parking is not well defined. It seems to accommodate 6-10 vehicles east and north of the building, and is reported to be insufficient when on-call firefighters respond or when meetings are held. Additional space is reportedly available west of the building for 10-12 vehicles along Railroad Avenue but is used largely by adjacent businesses. Better definition of the right-of-way with signage would help keep these spaces available for the fire department use. Currently, use is made of a privately owned undeveloped lot south of Elm Street when needed. This property includes former industrial buildings that are reportedly about to be redeveloped as a large lakefront convention and meeting center with over 500 parking spaces. It would be in the city's interest to formalize in some way this occasional but important use as this neighboring project is developed.

Pedestrians: Sidewalks provide convenient access to the facility; there are no defined walks on site.

Services: Total on-duty firemen include- 2 officers and 6 firefighters

In 2008 the fire department predicts the emergency calls will reach 3,300. The fire department feels that it is progressively falling farther and farther behind in reaching its goals. A direct result of multiple calls and inadequate staff is longer response times. Another result is an increase in fire loss. They report that there are 3 times a day where they are responding to multiple calls.

The City has seen a 72% increase in housing units since 1970. There are close to 3,000 additional homes in the planning or construction phase. Several projects are quite large – Scott Williams, Taylor Home Assisted Living, Allen Rogers, and several large apartment complexes. The emergency response problems have increased with the growth and will only get worse as new growth continues. The Fire Department cannot, and have not been capable of, respond adequately to a fire in any of our high hazard buildings – LRGH, St Francis Nursing Home, 25 Union Avenue, Stafford House, and Lakeside Apartments. Many of the new buildings being built are over 2 stories high and several are 3 and 4 stories high.

Growth: Laconia Fire Department expects number of full time firefighters to increase by three full time position/shift in the foreseeable future.

Accommodating this growth at Central Fire Station; from the current level of five to seven on duty firefighters, will present a significant problem since the current facility has limited living quarters for more than 5 firefighters and no separate accommodations for woman firefighters. Neither the kitchen nor meeting room would limit this projected growth.

Library Department

Library 695 Main Street

Location: The site for the Library is on the corner of the busy intersection of Main Street and Church Street in the center of Laconia's downtown. This allows for good visibility and a centralized urban location for ease of pedestrian access. The library recently completed an expansion in 2005 and the new building is currently 18,000 square feet.

Traffic, Parking: The building's vehicular access is off Church street, located only several feet from a signalized intersection. Although site lines are good, queuing traffic makes turns both into the site and off of the site difficult. Church street is a heavily traveled street.

On site parking is available for approximately 50 cars, and offsite parking exists on Main street. Parking is adequate for the new facility.

Pedestrians: Pedestrian access is very good with access both off of Main Street and Church street. In addition a garden exists behind the building for pedestrian access and use. The proposed WOW trail is directly behind the property and adjacent to the garden area. It is the hope of the library to have additional bike and pedestrian patrons from the WOW trail.

Services: The library houses a collection of several thousand books, periodicals, DVD's, VHS tapes, books on tape, EBSCO Host, WiFi, and historic artifacts. In addition the Library houses 37 computers for public use. The check out rate has increased 35% since the opening of the addition. The Library offers several programs a week all of which are posted in the Laconia Sun, and on the Library's website. The programs range from Children's story hour, and Children's Yoga to movie nights, adult book discussion groups. The Library offers a public meeting room for meetings and programs. Organizations such as the garden club use it on a regular basis.

Growth: The Library does not anticipate any staffing needs in the near future. They do anticipate technologically driven updates such as downloadable books and expanding the WiFi capability to the garden area, as well as additional funding to maintain the historical aspects for the building such as the slate roof and

Planning, Building, and Welfare Department

City Hall - 45 Beacon Street E

Location: The City Hall site is in a prominent downtown location. Interior facilities should be updated to properly facilitate the sensitive case material and improve security and emergency egress. The adjacent river and walking path are attractive amenities.

Traffic, Parking: Beacon Street East was observed to be heavily traveled.

On-site and adjacent municipal parking is reported to fall short of demand during normal business hours due to overlapping use by shoppers at nearby retail areas. If this shortfall persists, one possible solution is an elevated parking deck to multiply available at grade parking. Further study, including a parking demand study and evaluation of feasible sites is warranted.

Drives in and out are conveniently located with good sight lines.

Site lighting seems to be adequate for safe pedestrian circulation except along the north face of the building. Wall mounted light fixtures would increase visibility and security.

Pedestrians: Sidewalks and crosswalks provide convenient access to the facility.

Welfare Department

Services: The Welfare Department administers approximately 900 local public assistance grants. On a daily basis staff is taking applications, verifying information, making decisions based upon circumstances & state law, managing case load matters, offering counsel, and making referrals to other agencies. On occasion the department has to administer a legally required applicant disciplinary process. The welfare department operates a work-fair program and works in support of responsible local public assistance law reform. Finally, the department has a role in represent the City regarding welfare matters in court & at fair hearings.

Building Code

Services:

Code Enforcement activities continue to increase with regard to the review and processing of permit applications due to the current favorable economic climate the Lakes Region enjoys. By example, subdivisions already approved or currently before the Planning Board number over 2,000 new dwelling units. This does not include the escalating trend of seasonal motel/hotel unit conversions to seasonal cottage condominiums.

Each application, whether for new construction or for an addition, alternation or conversion of use requires review & approval of the application documents before the permit may be issued. There are now additional reviews for seismic loads in addition to wind & snow. Once issued, each permit for new construction requires not less than 6 compliance inspections.

There has been a significant rise in requests for meetings with the Planning Director for preliminary review with the applicants. In addition, there is a rise in requests for meetings during the actual construction of the larger projects.

Planning Department

Services: The Planning Department is responsible for updating the Master Plan every 5 years. The Department administers land use applications including major & minor site plan review, subdivision, street acceptance, conditional use permits, zoning amendments, as-builts, log mergers, variances, & special exceptions including review, research & site visits. They prepare packets, including agendas, submission materials, staff reports & minutes for the Planning Board & its various sub-committees including the pre-submittal Technical Review Committee and the Capital Improvement Committee.

The Motorcycle Technical Review Committee is administered through the Planning Department. The Planning Department maintains the meeting schedule, permit applications, meeting minutes and final application filing as well as being part of the enforcement during motorcycle week itself.

The Conservation Commission, including the Conservation Technician is housed within the Planning Department. Conservation Commission reviews every wetlands application including dock permits per the State RSA. In addition the Conservation Commission is required to review wetland buffer Conditional Use permits and is a member of the pre-submittal Technical Review Committee

The Zoning Board of Adjustment is administered through the Planning Department. The department enforces zoning ordinance including building permit applications, shoreland ordinances, signs, and reviews building permits, sign permits, as well as site & subdivision plans for zoning compliance

Additionally, the department provides the public with access to records & assists applicants in the land use permitting process. They coordinate & initiate activities & provide city liaison functions with other governmental units, adjacent communities, regional entities & community based organizations.

The Department participates in regional planning efforts through the Lakes Region Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee and New Hampshire Planners Association.

The Planning Department anticipates a full zoning and regulations rewrite within the next five years including significant changes to the cluster ordinance, density requirements, natural features preservation, and drinking water protection. The Conservation Commission anticipates additional work on prime wetlands designation and increases in conservation lands. The Zoning Board anticipates additional work on enforcement of the zoning ordinance.

Growth: No significant growth is projected in most department workforces. Code Enforcement anticipates the need for one more full time staff person.

Recreation Department

Location: The Recreation Department offices, Community Center & Garage are centrally located in downtown Laconia at 306 Union Ave, across Union Avenue from Laconia High School.

The site accommodates the program well with the exception of parking availability. There is little room available for growth.

Traffic, Parking: Union Avenue (NH Route 11) was observed to be heavily trafficked. Surrounding properties on Union Avenue are commercial, with Laconia High School across the street.

Parking is very tight. There is on-site parking for 25-30 cars and considerable public parking available nearby on street at High School and an adjacent municipal lot.

Pedestrians: There is direct pedestrian access to the building and a concrete ramp to the main floor level. There is a ramp to the lower level at the rear of the building.

Services: The recreation Department serves approximately 7,198 adults in 23 City sponsored programs and approximately 8,529 children in 19 City sponsored programs. The Community center provides a meeting space for city youth & adult programs.

In addition the Recreation Department maintains 15 parks, 5 beaches, the Community Center, 4 sit parks, City Hall, District Court; maintains 7 cemeteries; maintains islands and rights of way throughout the City of Laconia; and maintains and schedules all school department athletic facilities.

Growth: Growth of recreation facilities is not planned at this time but plenty of opportunity exists.

School Administrative Unit # 30

Location: The Laconia Schools operate and maintain programming in five different buildings. They are:

1. Elm Street Elementary School – Kindergarten – Grade 5
2. Pleasant Street Elementary School – Kindergarten – Grade 5
3. Woodland Heights Elementary School on Winter Street – District-wide Special Education Preschool (ages 3&4) Kindergarten – Grade 5
4. Memorial Middle School on North Main Street– Grades 6-8
5. Laconia High School on Union Ave– Grades 9-12
Huot Vocational & Technical Center
Adult Education and Diploma Program

Elm Street Elementary School

Square Footage: 37,260

Site Size: 33 acres

Enrollment: 300

Traffic: Elm Street is one of the busiest roads in Laconia and as a result dismissal is often congested. With the improvements made during the building project, busses and cars are separated and the on site traffic pattern works well.

Parking: (70 spaces) There are adequate parking spots to accommodate the staff during the school day. When ESS has a function with parents and community the parking spills over onto Elm Street.

Pleasant Street Elementary School

Square Footage: 36,290

Site Size: 6.25 acres

Enrollment: 280

Traffic: Pleasant Street is a residential area and traffic is usually light around the school. As with Elm Street, dismissal provides a level of congestion, especially in inclement weather when less students walk home and are rather picked up cars.

Parking: (63 spaces) There are adequate parking spots to accommodate the staff during the school day. When PSS has a function with parents and community the parking spills over onto Pleasant Street.

Woodland Heights Elementary School

Square Footage: 65,520

Site Size: 18 acres

Enrollment: 420

Traffic: The new traffic design provides the best flow of all the elementary schools. There is a challenge of the speed of vehicles going up Winter Street Extension from a safety perspective.

Parking: (140 spaces) The new parking area can accommodate all staff and a significant number of parents when WHS has school functions. WHS also is the designated voting area for Ward 5 and this has worked well.

Memorial Middle School

Square Footage: 103,900

Site Size: 20 acres

Enrollment: 540

Traffic: McGrath Street is challenged to handle the influx of traffic at both arrival and dismissal. The new building project will change the traffic pattern in an attempt to develop more room for the staging of busses and cars waiting to pick up students.

Parking: (109 spaces) There is currently enough spaces to accommodate staff. The new parking design will expand the number of spaces to better support community events that are held at Opechee Park.

Laconia High School

Square Footage: 172,925

Site Size: 12.18 acres

Enrollment: 820

Traffic: The location of LHS on Union Avenue makes this site congested. Busses from both Laconia and Lakes Region schools sending students to the Huot Center compete for spaces to stage and drop off students. LHS students driving their own vehicles to school create more traffic.

Parking: (217 spaces) LHS does not have adequate parking for staff and students on site. Currently, the Department of Public Works offers student parking in their Bisson Avenue location. Between the Laconia Adult Education program and Co-Curricular evening events, Laconia High Schools parking is constantly overextended.

School Administrative 30

Square Footage: 9,516

Site Size: .88 acres

Enrollment: N/A

Traffic: The SAU is located on Dartmouth Street, which has little traffic.

Parking: (19 spaces) Adequate for daily work schedule and evening School Board Meetings.

Services: The Laconia School District provides educational services for students from age 3 to 21. The District has an extensive Adult Education and Diploma Program. The District is also the site for the Lakes Region's High School Vocational-Education Program. The District is led and supervised by School Administrative Unit 30 in conjunction with the NH Department of Education. All our schools provide programming that meets the requirements of the NH Public School Standards. Laconia High School is a member of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEAS&C) and is accredited. The District has had the resources of an extensive afterschool program called Project EXTRA! as the result of a federal grant. This has resulted in extending the learning of students daily as well as providing summer programming. Finally, in this section, the Laconia School District has been recognized by the NH Department of Education as a "Follow The Child" District. This designation identifies a NH School District that has demonstrated a commitment to personalizing the education of all students Academically, Physically, Socially, and Emotionally. For more information on the Laconia Schools the website is www.laconia.k12.nh.us.

Elementary Level: All three schools provide the same core program. A classroom teacher is responsible for Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Special Education Teachers provide instruction for students with special needs and there are additional Teachers who provide personalized instruction for students who are below grade level. Music, Art, Physical Education, and Library/Technology classes are provided for students on a weekly basis. Each elementary school has a Certified Guidance Counselor and Nurse. Breakfast and Lunch are available to all students and there is currently an extensive afterschool program that is in place at each school.

Middle School Level: There are Two-Person Teams in Grade 6 to provide a transition from the single classroom model of the elementary level. These two teachers provide Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Grades 7 & 8 are aligned in Four Person Teams with each teacher specializing in one of the four content areas. Special Education Teachers provide instruction for students with special needs. An expanded offering of Exploratory classes include, Music, Art, Physical Education, Health, Family Consumer Science and Tech Ed. All Exploratory are offered on a quarterly basis with the goal of having all students experience this range of options in their middle school education. As students prepare for high school there are offering such as World Languages and Algebra. Our middle school provides a co-curricular program of band, chorus, and sports. Opechee Park provides a great outdoor setting for our students. There is a student government and several clubs and organizations that are supported through the Project EXTRA! program.

High School Level: Laconia High School offers an accredited program of studies as outlined through the NH Public School Standards. The transition from middle school is supported through a summer program where students who struggle academically can gain support and credit before their freshman year. Grade 9 operates as a Freshmen Academy where the same core group of teachers instructs all Grade 9 students. There are several levels of instruction at Laconia High School. This includes classes for students with special needs, college preparation classes, honors, and advanced placement classes for high achieving students. Laconia High School offers the Running Start Program in conjunction with the NH Technical College System so that students can gain college credit for approved high school courses. LHS also is a site for the NH JAGS (Jobs for America's Graduates). Laconia High School also offers a competitive and impressive co-curricula program. The variety of options offers each student the opportunity to belong to a club, team, or organization. These connections enhance and improve the education of all students at our high school.

The Huot Technical Center offers a variety of programs including Building Trades, Culinary Arts, and Pre-Engineering. Six sending high schools send students and Laconia students have access to these programs. The Huot Tech is engaged in extensive community service and learning opportunities. Examples include the buildings that the Tech Center has completed at the Robbie Mills Sports Complex and the Laconia Police Station.

The Laconia Adult Education program runs a wide spectrum of educational offerings to the Lakes Region. There are apprenticeship programs for trades like Plumbing and Electrical. There are computer software classes, wine tasting, and dog obedience just to highlight the diversity of programming. There is also an evening high school program that awards a diploma from the Laconia Academy.

Growth: The three elementary schools have gone through extensive renovations and additions during the 2001-2003 time period. The result is three "brand new" schools that will provide us long term solutions to support the educational program for all students.

The middle school building project has been approved and when completed will also result in a brand new school that will be able to deliver the educational program of the future.

The high school, vocational-technical center and SAU buildings are in need of facility upgrades. There is a desire on the part of the School Board to work with the City Council to find the best long-term solution for these remaining facilities. We have five schools and four will be in the brand new category once the middle school project is complete. It is important to note that the Huot Vocational – Technical Center is eligible for 75% state building aid in the 2010-2011 biennium.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions

Goal: Provide facilities and services that meet the needs of the City’s population. There is a need to balance the services provided to the citizens of Laconia with the associated costs.

Objective:

7.1 Provide Potable Water – Preserve and protect the waters and watershed of Paugus Bay which is the drinking water source for the City.

Actions:

- a. Identify the lands within the Paugus Bay watershed to determine which parcels are crucial to the protection of Laconia’s drinking water.
- b. Create a Paugus Bay Watershed Overlay District to provide additional protection for the City’s drinking water source.
- c. Limit the development and expansion of oil and gasoline sales and services facilities in the Paugus Bay watershed.
- d. Continue to provide sufficient infrastructure to the water department to maintain high drinking water quality.
- e. Prioritize construction of new sewer infrastructure in areas within the Paugus Bay watershed.
- f. Investigate the needs and ramifications of expanding the municipal water system to unserved areas within the City.

Objective:

7.2 Manage Wastewater - Maintain the efficient and high-quality wastewater treatment that the regional Winnepesaukee River Basin Project provides while expanding local service to high priority areas.

Actions:

- a. Update the 1976 Sewerage Plan for Prioritization to protect waterfront districts and areas with large amounts of wetlands.
- b. Design and distribute an operation and maintenance pamphlet for septic system owners.
- c. Review Shoreline Protection Overlay District septic system installation standards to ensure they reflect current technology and are consistent with the state’s requirements.
- d. Continue to provide funding for sewer system expansions as needed including the high priority stations on Pendleton Road and Route 11B; Hilliard Road, Pickerel Cove and Moulton Cove; and Eastman Shore Road and Leighton Ave.



- e. Continue to support Pump station motor control center building upgrades as needed including the high priority stations of Old North Main St., Massachusetts Avenue and Edgewater #1.
- f. Prioritize new sewer infrastructure in areas within the Paugus Bay Watershed including the pump station at Moulton Cove.
- g. Complete a feasibility study of the sewer collection main infrastructure in order to assess and develop a priority list for maintenance and upgrades.

Objective:

7.3 Manage Solid Waste – Provide cost-effective options for waste management.

Actions:

- a. Establish functional and economically feasible recycling and composting programs in the City and as part of the proposed Transfer Station Facility Upgrade.

- b. Allocate funding to redesign and rebuild the transfer station for optimal use and efficiency. Support the proposed transfer station facility upgrade (part of the new 2005 contract) through the Planning Review and development process.
- c. Research the various solid waste disposal options including pick-up, drop-off and Pay-as-you-throw. Determine which program is the most feasible and economically viable for the City’s current and future needs.
- d. Collaborate with the University of New Hampshire and/or other members of the Solid Waste Cooperative to perform a solid waste cost analysis study.

Objective:

7.4 Enhance Police Protection – Provide sufficient street officers, supervisory staff, and administrative personnel to respond to the increase in service and activity levels.

Actions:

- a. Cooperate with other municipal police departments to locate, design and build a regional practice firing range.
- b. Locate, design, and develop a larger City impound lot to decrease the current costs of using a private garage.
- c. Maintain more proactive adult and children’s education programs including DARE, bicycle safety, and self defense.



- d. Increase the force by at least three to four detectives and four to six patrol officers over the next ten years.
- e. Maintain a cost-effective vehicle replacement program where vehicles are taken offline at 75-80 thousand traveled miles consistent with Federal recommendations.
- f. Continue to manage the increased demand for services for Bike Week efficiently and cost effectively.

Objective:

7.5 Provide Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services – Provide sufficient resources to meet the increased demand for fire protection and emergency medical and rescue calls.

Actions:

- a. Increase the on-duty staff to 12 to provide adequate firefighter response throughout the entire City.
- b. Inspect and maintain the existing fire alarm system on a regular schedule and provide funding for proper maintenance equipment.
- c. Replace the 1989 ladder truck with a vehicle that can reach at least a 6 story building.
- d. Establish a GIS map of hydrant locations and feeder sources.
- e. Place hydrants in densely populated areas that currently have no hydrants. Obtain and maintain access to water supplies for firefighting purposes throughout the City.
- f. Evaluate the possibility of a new fire station in the North end of the City to cut the response time to that end of town to less than 10 minutes.



Objective:

7.6 Provide Library Services –Support and maintain the City libraries and their ten-year plan to grow collections to achieve recommended professional standards.

Actions:

- a. Increase the current circulation to 78,000 books. Increase the number and variety of self-help, education, health and training books.
- b. Draft a master plan for the Lakeport branch.
- c. Continue the cooperative relationship with local historical societies. Increase the amount of technologically advanced archival documentation of historic resources.
- d. Increase the offering of adult activities such as discussion groups, author signings and lectures.

Objective:

7.7 Provide Social Services (Youth Services, Housing Authority, Housing Trust, Elderly services, Welfare services) - As the Belknap County seat Laconia must provide a variety of social services to meet the needs of the population.

Actions:

a. Expand the activities of the health inspector to provide periodic inspections for all multi-family dwelling units in the City.



b. Develop a program of senior volunteers to work in City Hall, the library and the schools.

c. Create a cooperative effort among the Laconia Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the Laconia Area Community Land Trust, and the City to provide middle-cost housing options.

Objective:

7.8 Provide adequate Code Enforcement - Adoption of new building codes, and current and future construction requires adequate resources to conduct necessary site and building inspections.

Actions:

a. Support and maintain adequate staff and training in the Code Enforcement Department to allow complete and efficient inspections within 48 hours of a phone call.



b. Support implementation of the International Property Maintenance Code adopted by the 2004 City Council to revitalize and rebuild vacant or dilapidated structures.

c. Conduct a series of outreach sessions to engage the public, and the design and construction industry on quality construction, energy efficient building, and natural resource preservation.

Objective

7.9 Support and maintain comprehensive strategic planning for the City - Balance the needs of the community with smart growth concepts, redevelopment, revitalization and resource conservation to maintain quality of life.

Actions:

- a. Maintain a database of current demographics for the community including economic and population trends.
- b. Revise the zoning ordinance including but not limited to the following: 1) rewrite the cluster portion of the zoning ordinance to better reflect the purpose of hi-quality open space; 2) incorporate RV parks into the dimensional standards chart, table of uses, list of definitions and other applicable sections, incorporate condo conversions into the definitions and other applicable sections; and, 3) address a more comprehensive drinking water supply protection zone.
- c. Make the permitting process and applications more efficient and user friendly.
- d. Obtain software, hardware and training to integrate a Citywide GIS system into everyday planning activities and analysis.
- e. Support professional development of planning staff.
- f. Coordinate the strategic planning across all departments to meet the goals and objectives of the Master Plan.

Objective:

7.10 Provide Parks and Recreation Opportunities and Programs – The parks and Recreation serves both adults and children in a wide diversity of programs, and also maintains park areas, beaches, cemeteries, islands and school recreation facilities.

Actions:

- a. Develop an equitable distribution of maintenance costs for all fields and facilities, including all interscholastic sports as well as adult and youth programs within the City.
- b. Explore the possibility of establishing a central location that would maintain all the background checks for all the staff using the City facilities.
- c. Increase the diversity of programs particularly for the senior population and



provide staff and training to implement and administrate the programs.

- d. Develop and design a park renovation program including maintenance and renovation priorities for each park.
- e. Continue to improve water access.

Objective:

7.11 Maintain a comprehensive education system – Providing educational programming and facilities for all citizens promotes personal development, economic growth, and enhances the quality of life.



Actions:

- a. Continue to update and maintain the public schools facilities.
- b. Encourage community discussion about the value of education in enhancing the lives of all our citizens through a focus on life-long learning.
- c. Maintain the Huot Technical Center as the regional host for career and technical training and encourage the support of our local business and industry partnerships and the State for upgrading the program.
- d. Continue to challenge and support all students by providing a rigorous and up- to- date curriculum that is implemented by faculty who are engaged in their own professional development.
- e. Capitalize on technological advances that offer tools for teaching and learning in tomorrow’s world.
- f. Maintain a community commitment to safe schools and extend learning into co-curricular opportunities for pursuing the arts, athletics, and community service.

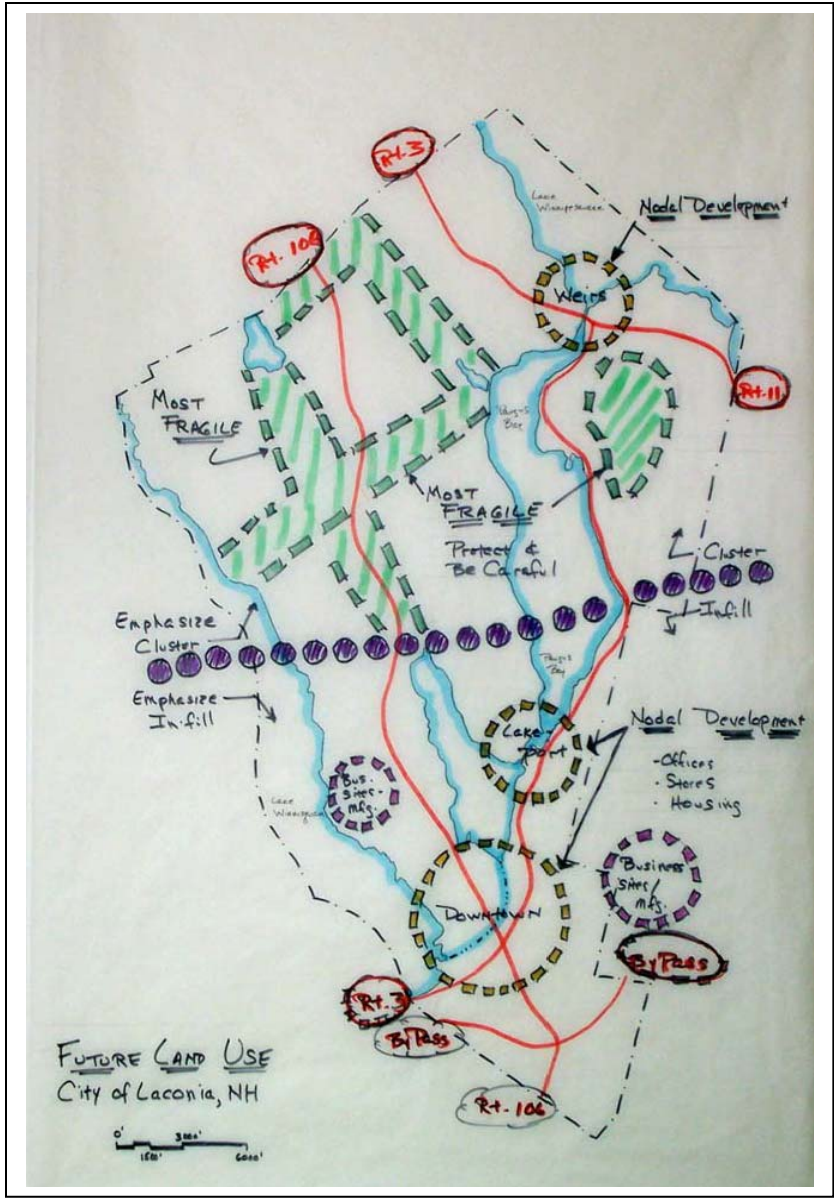
FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The following is the Future Land Use Map. This section of the Master Plan is one that is required by Statute. The Future Land Use Map is intended to give the long-term vision of the City in map form. The map is a foundation on which all future zoning redistricting is built.

This particular map was compiled from information gathered at both the 2003 forums and the 2005 Growth forums.

Map Key

Red lines	Major transportation corridors
Blue	Major Waterbodies
Purple	Line bisecting Laconia into the densely populated area of existing infrastructure where “in-fill development” and redevelopment is encouraged
Green	Fragile areas to be protected
Pink	Manufacturing and Industrial Zones
Yellow	Nodal Developments, economic centers, area where mixed use and is encouraged



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The City of Laconia wanted to include a working document that details how action items as outlined in the Master Plan get implemented.

The following chart identifies the City Department or non-governmental organization responsible for overseeing implementation of a specific action item. The document is intended to be updated frequently at a recommended rate of no less than once a year in order to reassess the party responsible for implementation and the progress of implementation.

In all cases where the Administration and Council is cited it implies that the item may need to be included in the Capitol Improvements Plan and supported at the Council in the Budget discussion.