

FAQs on Land Use

8-22-19

At the direction of the Selectboard, the Planning Commission is rewriting the Town Plan this year. Plan chapters include Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Municipal Facilities and Services, Transportation, Energy, and Resilience.

Last spring the Commission gathered input and data from community interest groups, Selectboard-appointed committees, and others. A variety of public forums have been held since June, with more scheduled into the fall.

In response to questions that have come up in a number of forums, a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) has been developed on land use, a key chapter in the plan.

How many zoning districts does Norwich have today?

- There are currently five districts in Norwich.
 - Village Business
 - Village Residential I
 - Village Residential II
 - Rural Residential
 - Commercial Industrial

How is Route 5 South zoned today?

- Route 5 South on the eastern side is zoned Commercial Industrial (Foggs side)
- Route 5 South on the western side is Rural Residential

What is Mixed Use zoning?

- Mixed Use zoning allows complementary uses such as residential, retail, and office space within a single development or building, where these uses can be functionally integrated and developed at a pedestrian scale. The Village Business District is an example of a Mixed Use district. In contrast, strip mall development is an example of so-called ‘single-use zoning,’ and is typically auto- vs. pedestrian-oriented.

What portion of Norwich is zoned Rural Residential?

- 97 percent of the land area in Norwich is currently zoned Rural Residential.

What types of development are permitted in the Rural Residential district?

- One or two-unit dwellings, bed-and-breakfasts, agricultural and forestry uses.

What types of development are permitted in the Commercial district?

- Commercial-Industrial allows for retail, light industry, multi-unit housing, and various forms of institutional use

What is the purpose of the different zoning districts?

- The purpose of different zoning districts is to maintain key attributes of the built form and landscape. Broadly speaking, this is achieved by varying dimensional standards:
 - Minimum lot size
 - Minimum frontage
 - Setbacks controlling the distance between boundaries and structure
 - Height of structure
- Zoning districts also control uses (the kind of development)
 - Broadly, the center of the village (Village Business) allows for a mix of uses, commercial, institutional and residential (including denser development)
 - Village Residential allows for single and multi-unit housing with a minimum parcel size of 20,000 square feet
 - Rural Residential allows for rural uses (agriculture, forestry, etc.) and single or two-unit housing with a minimum parcel size of 2 acres
 - Commercial-Industrial allows for retail, light industry, multi-unit housing, and various forms of institutional use

How does Norwich control development?

- Norwich uses Zoning and Subdivision regulations to control development. These regulations control the uses of a structure, the height, minimum parcel size, and position of the structure on the parcel. The intent is to foster a distinct development pattern in each district.

Where can Norwich grow?

- Development in Norwich is limited by high land values, the complexity and cost of obtaining a state wastewater permit, and natural resource constraints (steep slopes, mapped wetlands etc.). This limits future growth to parts of Norwich adjacent to already developed areas where there may be potential for community or municipal wastewater system service.

To see a map of the different zones, visit <http://norwich.vt.us/town-plan-2019/>