

COMMENTS ON WELLS' DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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1. The data regarding population growth should be upgraded to include current data and projections of **construction of new residences and summer cottages**. Because of the large percentage of vacation and retirement homes, population per se is insufficient marker to realize the extent that the built environment will change, currently at a much faster rate than surrounding towns. Among other sources, reference comparative data created by Great Works Regional Land Trust and published in their spring Newsletter.
2. Given the comparatively high numbers of already approved (permitted) construction, and the projections that follow from Wells' position at first exit on the Maine Turnpike and its regional rail transportation hub, the comprehensive plan **should actively envision the problems created for the rural quality of life that will inevitably accompany too rapid and too numerous construction of homes**. Whether construction is for year-round residences or second homes or vacation cottages, all impact the environment and its natural resources in many ways, and also impact traffic and fire protection. As much as a first residence.
3. The survey data on which assumptions are based is evidently inadequate. In 1990 the Comprehensive Plan update began by mailing a substantial survey to every property owner in the town; the rates of return were strong, providing an enormously better understanding of residents' values than the survey accompanying the current draft.
4. The draft mentions, but overall insufficiently emphasizes maintaining the "rural nature" of Wells. The Plan should further envision policies concerning home construction to restrain dangerously rapid development, in order to ensure rates equitable compared to neighboring towns.
5. The draft should direct planners to map wetlands in the town and consider means to ensure that they retain integrity in their ecological systems, especially the ability to fill and create "islands" that allow building in inappropriate sites.
6. Protection of the Merriland River corridor should be clearly prioritized because of its enormous environmental and economic asset to the town, from its origins to its outlet at the town's beaches, and should mention specific policy alternatives, such as purchase of easements along river shore and more effective zoning setbacks. Property owners along the Merriland have clearly stated their support of such policies in the survey conducted recently by the Wells Reserve.
7. The Comp Plan should state clearly that land reserved from development in approved clustered developments should be permanently categorized as legally unbuildable, regardless of further changes in specific ordinances. These were contracts between builders/owners and the people of Wells, and should not be considered malleable to provide future lucrative gain by individuals.
8. The Natural Resource Overlay areas to the Zoning Map that are present in the current Comprehensive Plan should by all means be retained in concept and updated in the new Comprehensive Plan. These overlays provide protection to sensitive areas such as the shores of the Merriland River by modifying certain standards for construction. These maps should be updated by staff or consultants to enhance their accuracy.