

Chapter 2 – Population Policies and Strategies

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan's Population Policies and Strategies section includes goals, policies, standards, and implementation strategies related to the amount and timing of population growth. The Land Use Policies and Strategies then address the location ~~of~~ and character of development to accommodate future population growth.

Wells' population growth is shaped in part by regional and national growth trends. An understanding of population trends within a community is important for developing policies to accommodate change, and will help Wells establish an appropriate direction for the future. Wells' population changes and characteristics are due in part to its geographic location. It is easily accessible from the Maine Turnpike, making it an attractive location for individuals to live in the town and commute to jobs in other communities elsewhere. Businesses in Wells also provide employment opportunities for individuals that live elsewhere in the region. In addition, Wells' waterfront location also makes it attractive to summer visitors who are a significant portion of Wells' seasonal population. See Appendix A for recent trends and analysis ~~of~~ related to the population and demographics of the community.

The population of Wells is increasing at a higher rate of growth than any other municipality in York County. From 2010 to 2020, the population increased by 26%. As the population of Wells increases it is also aging, and the median age of residents is now 52 years old. On top of this, the seasonal population in Wells is also increasing. The peak seasonal population of Wells is estimated to be 48,409, a 44% increase since 2004.

Goals

State Goal:

Encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of ~~each~~ the community, while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl. ~~(Growth Management Act)~~

Regional Goal:

No goal specific to population is available at the regional level.

Wells Goals:

1. Manage the rate of residential and non-residential growth in a manner that maintains the Town's ~~rural~~ network of open spaces, small town and coastal community character, and is consistent with the Town's ability to accommodate it.
2. Provide opportunity for a variety of individuals to live in Wells including young families, seniors, and people of diverse backgrounds and income levels. While ensuring that new

housing units do not deter from the character and function of the community.

Policies

To achieve these goals, it is the policy of the Town of Wells to:

1. Ensure that residential growth in rural areas west of Interstate 95 is accommodated in suitable locations that are properly zoned, have appropriate environmental conditions and allow for provision of proper access and public services exclusive of water and sewer.
2. Provide opportunity for higher density residential development in areas that have appropriate community facilities and services, including public water and sewer, and that have low risk of exposure to natural hazards (e.g., flooding) and that are not environmentally sensitive.
3. Continue to monitor and manage the rate of residential growth to ensure that such growth does not unduly strain public facilities and services and does not damage the environment.
4. Encourage the creation and growth of commercial establishments and services that will serve a wide variety of residents. This should include childcare, youth programs and activities, family-oriented activities and entertainment, and senior programming and support.

Standards

To achieve these policies, the following are Town of Wells' standards to guide development:

- ~~1. Limit population growth to 132 dwelling units per year set forth in the existing Wells Residential Growth and Land Use ordinances.~~
- ~~2.1. Direct the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board to monitor and create a legal means to regulate the rate of growth and development. This does not mean to stop all new growth; rather, it means to direct new growth to appropriate areas of the community and over time reduce the impact and rate of growth so that it more closely matches the rates of growth of surrounding communities.~~
- ~~3.2. Identify available, allowable, and appropriate Establish different growth limits management strategies for areas identified as growth and non-growth areas in the Future Land Use Plan this Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. (see Chapter 6).~~

Implementation Strategies

- ~~1. Revise the zoning districts in Rural Areas and requirements for these districts as identified and described in the Land Use policies in Chapter 6 of this Plan.~~
- ~~2. Adopt the proposed zoning district changes and requirements for the higher density Growth Areas that are identified and described in the chapter on Land Use policies.~~

~~3. Amend the Residential Growth Management Program to support the growth and non-growth designations in the Future Land Use Plan (see Chapter 6).~~

1. Establish a standing Growth Management Committee to review the ~~growth management ordinance~~ tools available for managing growth in the Town of Wells on an ongoing basis and make recommendations to the Selectmen. The previous Growth Management Committee was sunsetted in 2008 and if re-established should ~~The Committee shall consider~~ monitor regional growth trends, ~~similar research and provide examples of ordinances~~ and other growth management techniques ~~in from~~ surrounding communities, and ~~consider~~ the long-term capacity of Wells' municipal facilities and services.
2. Coordinate the growth and development related implementation strategies identified in this Comprehensive Plan to ensure that Wells also addresses other housing, development, natural resource, and land use objectives in keeping with the community's Vision for the future.