

## Key Issue Form:

1. **Issue Title:** Creative Solutions for Preserving Community Character and Meeting NH Residents' Needs for Housing, Jobs, Education, and Social Services.

*Alternate Title: Preserving Affordable Housing Opportunities and Community Character*

2. **Please describe the issue in 2-3 sentences** (i.e. craft an issue statement that describes what the issue at hand is and why it is important):

New Hampshire communities recognize that in order to remain vital socially, economically, and physically, they must commit to maintaining a strong agricultural and natural resource base, as well as provide affordable housing opportunities for diverse individuals and families. In spite of this inherent recognition, the predominant approach to land-use planning in New Hampshire over the past three decades has been the incorporation of large-lot subdivisions. This approach has done a disservice to conservation/agricultural preservation and affordable housing. The result is that conservation/agricultural interests and affordable housing interests often compete for the same lands and both parties claim that the other drives up the price of land and therefore makes acquiring land more difficult.

3. **In 2-3 sentences, please describe what the public value for Extension to address this issue is/would be.**

When decision makers understand the interconnections between conservation of natural resources, preservation of the working landscape and the provision of affordable housing to families, they are able to work collaboratively towards finding creative solutions for meeting the needs of diverse groups of residents which benefit the entire community by providing affordable housing without sacrificing key assets the community values.

4. **Identify and summarize key data that help make the case that this is a key issue**

- a. The following chart illustrates the pattern of population of growth in New Hampshire and the primary states where people are migrating to New Hampshire from:

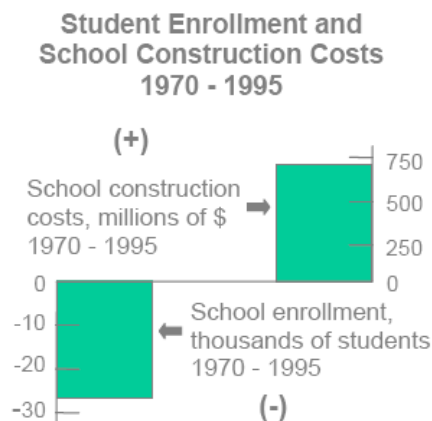
**New Hampshire Net Migration** (\* Data from the NH State Data Center)

	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	TOTAL
<b>MA</b>	8,956	10,035	10,361	10,359	9,675	49,386
<b>ME</b>	-423	-1,273	-1,450	-941	-696	-4,783
<b>VT</b>	140	-14	-68	2	7	67
<b>NY</b>	897	384	86	140	299	1,806
<b>CA</b>	73	214	14	-77	-133	91
<b>CT</b>	487	295	288	423	246	1,739
<b>FR</b>	469	414	187	82	-639	513
<b>PA</b>	192	4	-100	-139	1	-42
<b>NJ</b>	550	255	345	235	304	1,689
<b>RI</b>	125	16	137	70	139	487
<b>NET CHANGE</b>	10,681	7,851	5,852	3,187	2,646	30,217

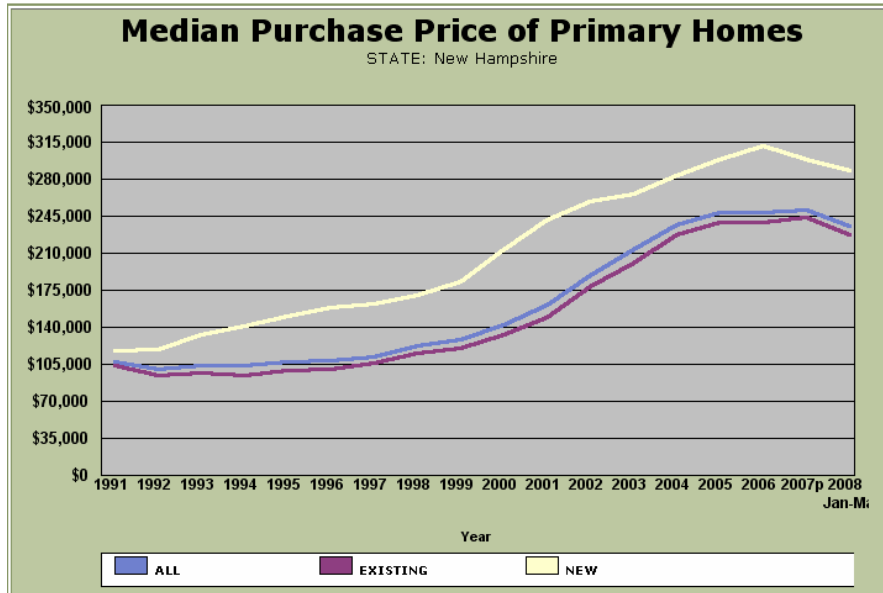
- b. According to the US Census, New Hampshire's population is expected to grow by 12.1% between 2004 and 2015 as compared to Massachusetts (5.3%), Maine (5.4%), Connecticut (3.8%) and Vermont (8.3%). In fact, New Hampshire marks the 10<sup>th</sup> fastest population growth rate in the country. Much of this growth is coming from individuals over the age of 65.
- c. Given the net in-migration of people into New Hampshire, and the high rate of population growth, the following link illustrates how residential growth in Southern New Hampshire has caused agricultural lands and forested lands to become increasingly fragmented. The link takes you to a time series showing land use change between 1962 and 2005: [http://extension.unh.edu/GDR/LandUseMap\\_RC/LandUseMap\\_RC.htm](http://extension.unh.edu/GDR/LandUseMap_RC/LandUseMap_RC.htm)
- d. Many communities perceive population growth as a major benefit, for it adds new people to the tax rolls. Yet, according to the publication, "Does Open Space Pay", taxes actually increased with residential growth in the towns sampled. The publication can be found at: <http://extension.unh.edu/forestry/Docs/nrgn1010.pdf>

The problem is not necessarily the growth in population and new residences, but rather, the pattern of disperse development that municipal regulations foster.

- e. One of the main fiscal costs of 'sprawl' is the costs incurred for building new schools. As communities expand outward into the hinterlands, new schools need to be constructed to service the increasingly disperse population. In a study done in Maine between 1970 and 1995, the costs for the construction of new schools came to nearly \$750 million dollars, in spite of the fact that the school-age population decreased by approximately 27,000 (see chart below).



- f. Housing costs have also escalated over the past ten years, partly as a result for the increase in population and secondly due to the current pattern of land use (i.e. large lot zoning) which is fragmenting lands and forcing development to occur further and further from town/city centers (i.e. sprawl). According to the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, the median purchase price for homes nearly doubled between 2000 and 2007 (see chart below).



According to the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (NHFA), a main cause of rapidly escalating housing prices is the expansion of residential development that incorporates large-lot zoning, thus limiting the amount of land available for future housing. This trend is manifest in Rockingham County (as illustrated by the link to the land use change maps in item “c”). For more info on housing trends, go to: [http://www.nhfa.org/demographic\\_housing.cfm](http://www.nhfa.org/demographic_housing.cfm)

- g. According to the US Census of Agriculture, acreage dedicated to agriculture in New Hampshire decreased from approximately one million acres in 1964 to 415,000 acres in 1997. Part of this loss is a result of expansion of residential development into lands formerly used for agriculture. The following table, derived from a publication of NH’s Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, shows illustrates a trend towards consolidation of farms in New Hampshire



To conclude, the data suggests that the current pattern of land use in New Hampshire – sprawl – is contributing to higher housing prices, loss of natural and agricultural lands, increased costs for schools and other services and out migration of youth from the state. The solution to these problems lies in wiser use of lands that seeks to integrate the human, social, and natural services inherent in New Hampshire communities.

**5. How does/would addressing this issue tie into UNH Cooperative Extension's Mission?**

UNH Cooperative Extension's vision statement suggests that Extension is a key agent for helping New Hampshire residents to make "...informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities, sustain natural resources, and improve the economy."

This issue, as outlined above, happens to cut across *all* of the elements outlined in the mission statement and is, in fact, a systemic issue. Ultimately, Extension's role is to assist decision-makers to make informed decisions pertaining to community, youth, and family; decisions aimed at strengthening social services, decisions aimed at providing opportunity for youth and families, and decisions aimed at strengthening the economy. Furthermore, addressing each of these elements necessitates a holistic approach that must involve *all* program areas. This issue, framed above, is simply one approach to addressing a systemic issue.

**6. What programs/activities, if any, currently address this issue? For each, please succinctly describe how the program/activity addresses the issue.**

- a) Community Profiles: The Community Profile is a planning process that helps communities take stock of where they are today and develop an action plan for how they want to operate in the future. This program is critical to helping communities find creative solutions to addressing community issues which include land conservation, affordable housing, schools and preservation of agricultural lands.
- b) The New Hampshire COVERTS Project trains volunteers to promote wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship. The goals of the project are to enhance, restore and conserve habitat and increase the amount of NH's public and private land managed with a stewardship ethic. This program addresses one of the main elements of the issue as framed above – fragmented lands. Thus, the expertise of Extension staff and volunteers will be needed to address the issue in a holistic manner.
- c) Through the Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP), UNH Cooperative Extension is assisting a limited number of NH communities with land and water conservation planning projects. The expertise maintained by program staff and collaborators will be greatly needed as communities work to balance affordable housing, economic growth, conservation and preservation of the working landscape.
- d) The Citizen Planner Collaborative is developing web-based curriculum to help communities make informed decisions about all of the issues inherent in this issue proposal. Furthermore, the intent is to give lay planners (i.e. members of planning boards, conservation commission, etc.) the tools and resources to make decisions that integrate the many needs of communities.

**7. If Extension does not currently address this issue, is there capacity to address this issue?** Yes – this is an interdisciplinary issue that needs the expertise from individuals from ALL program areas. The sub-issues inherent in the one outlined above include youth retention, family health, economic development, land conservation/preservation, etc.