

The town of Winslow currently contains over 10 development zones (see zoning map at end of chapter). The Rural Zone covers the vast majority of the town. The zoning is traditional Euclidean, meaning the town is separated into distinct zones, and each zone has a required minimum lot size and other lot dimension standards that must be met. Below is a table of the current zoning districts and some of their basic standards (excluding the conservation zone, in which development is generally not allowed, and the shoreland zoning districts).

Zone	Minimum Requirements			
	Lot Area	Lot Width (ft.)	Street Frontage (ft.)	Front Setback (ft.)
High Density Res.	9,000 sq. ft.	90	90	25
Medium Density Res.	15,000 sq. ft.	125	120	25
Multi-Family Res.	7,000 sq. ft.	100	100	25
Low Density Res.	2 acres	200	200	50
Rural	2 acres	200	200	50
Commercial	10,000 sq. ft.	100	100	30
Highway Commercial	10,000 sq. ft.	100	100	30
Industrial	1 acre	N/A	150	25
Highway Industrial	1 acre	N/A	150	25
Seasonal Residential	2 acres	200	200	50

Approximately two-thirds of recent residential development, as detailed in the Housing chapter of this Plan, has occurred in the Rural Zone. There have been very few commercial and industrial developments over the last decade, and those few that have occurred were placed along major commercial corridors, such as the Augusta Road. Mobile home parks are treated as multi-family developments, and are therefore only allowed in the Multi-family residential zone. In recent years, on average, one to two mobile homes per year have been placed in existing mobile home parks; though no new mobile home parks have been developed in the last decade.

As highlighted earlier in this Plan, natural resources should be a constraint on development. Eastern Winslow - parts east of the Outlet Stream and Sebasticook River - generally contain the most natural resources (see map at end of chapter entitled “Development Constraints”). Winslow has shoreland zoning regulations, basically matching the guidelines of the state. The town also has a floodplain management chapter in the Town Code, meant to regulate and restrict the type of development occurring in floodplains. The town also has subdivision, street, and other specific development review requirements.

The Planning Board is active and thorough, and there is a full-time Code Enforcement Officer to advise the Planning Board. The regulations, following the Euclidean zoning model,

are “prescriptive,” meaning they provide quantified standards, such as a minimum 2 acre lot size. The Subdivision Ordinance does contain a provision allowing the Planning Board to require some land for recreation in some instances. Other than that small provision, there are no other “performance” regulations, meaning rather than a minimum lot size regardless of underlying conditions the regulations would allow for design flexibility and the eventual effect on the land of the development is what’s regulated. Modification of the zoning ordinance is basically the only tool the town has used to manage growth.

As highlighted in earlier chapters of this Plan, the expectation is that Winslow’s commercial and industrial expansion will occur within a regional context. This means that large non-residential development is unlikely to occur in Winslow, and therefore there is sufficient land in the growth area to accommodate projected future development. Residential dwelling unit construction will continue to expand, but from smaller average household size, as opposed to population growth. The key, then, is putting those dwelling units in the growth area, hooked up to municipal services, and offering easy non-motorized transportation options. There is sufficient supply of undeveloped land in western Winslow, in the future growth area, to accommodate this type of higher-density smaller-unit-size development.

Analysis and Key Issues

Winslow’s vision of being a residential town within a larger region has played out over the last decade. With the closing of the Scott Paper mill, Winslow residents no longer expect major industrial development to occur in town. Typical suburban sprawl strung out along rural roads has been the recent practice for residential development. Some commercial development has occurred in the growth area along major arterials, but no large employers. Winslow is a member of the FirstPark regional development project, as well as numerous other regional economic development organizations. The expectation, and desire, is for major developments to be appropriately located within the region – perhaps in Winslow, but not necessarily.

Recent land use patterns have been detrimental to the natural environment and rural character in eastern Winslow. Continued sprawl along rural roads will exacerbate shrinking wildlife corridors, reduce open spaces, cause increased costs to the town with school busing, fire protection, road maintenance, trash pick-up, and increase traffic throughout. When Winslow first developed a Comprehensive Plan, residents recognized the importance of planning. They knew that sprawl, though the term was as-yet-unknown, was incompatible with their future vision. However, “sprawl” in the 1960s was interpreted differently from “sprawl” in the 2000s.

From the 1964 Winslow Comprehensive Plan, Proposed Land Use section:

“The open, undeveloped character of the rural area should be continued in the future and farming and forestry should be encouraged. Scattered residential development and dwellings on small lots should be prevented through large lot zoning in order to avoid any possible future need for the extension of urban types of services to the rural area. Residential subdivisions should be permitted in the rural area under the zoning ordinance only in such cases as when a developer has adequate plans for a sizable compact off-highway subdivision which is well located on land suitable for septic tanks with sufficiently large lots and where a large enough development can be foreseen to warrant provision of certain necessary municipal services.”

Below is a discussion of how the town reacted to four characteristics discussed above, and how residents today might react to those same characteristics:

1. Scattered residential development on small lots

1960s: Small lots were 50 ft. x 100 ft. lots typically found in dense downtown areas, such as northwest Winslow. Requiring 200 feet of road frontage in the rural area would prevent these types of lots from being developed.

2000s: Though it is still true that 50 ft. x 100 ft. lots are considered small, we now believe that 200 ft. x 200 ft. lots are also considered small in rural areas. Lot size should be viewed in the proper context. One and two acre lots in rural areas are small, relative to large farm and forestry operations, and therefore are considered scattered and sprawling.

2. Large lot zoning

1960s: Based upon the interpretation of what a small lot was (see #1 above), minimum 2 acre lots were thought to be large lots.

2000s: Two-acre lots are no longer considered large lots in rural areas. See #1 above.

3. Subdivisions on land suitable for septic tanks

1960s: The science recommended approximately one acre of land for proper infiltration of effluent from individual septic systems. Town officials thought they were playing it safe by providing for an extra acre of infiltration in requiring minimum 2 acre lots.

2000s: The science of septic systems has advanced dramatically. Soils are the key, and a general 2 acre requirement does not address the details of individual parcels. We have discovered that proper installation and maintenance can reduce septic system failure, thus reducing lot size requirements. Community septic systems have been developed and prove to be effective. There are more options available, and therefore land suitable for septic tanks is much more nuanced than simply 2 acres.

4. Subdivisions large enough to warrant provision of municipal services

1960s: The town never really addressed this issue.

2000s: Curbside municipal services such as school buses and trash pick-up is very costly. To make curbside services more manageable in rural areas there should be a provision requiring all subdivisions to be at least 10 lots. Related to this is the issue of #1 above, meaning scattered 2 acre individual lots should also be prevented. Curbside municipal services should not stop every 200 feet along long rural roads; rather, they should stop at dense clusters of development in between long undeveloped open spaces of rural roads.

Winslow residents acted using current knowledge and assumptions about development. Now, however, we have a broader body of knowledge regarding development, and new techniques for managing growth. To preserve the wonderful town that is Winslow, residents need to continue looking forward, and use modern planning tools to manage growth in the future.

There are currently over 80 parcels in town each containing 50 acres or more, including 31 parcels over 100 acres each. The total acreage of these large parcels is approximately one-third of the total acreage of the town. The conclusion, then, is that there is still time to preserve the large open spaces and natural beauty of Winslow. But residents must act soon.