


MEMORANDUM

TO: Tom Poirier, Town Planner

CC: Comprehensive Plan Amendment Committee

From: Ben Smith, AICP, North Star Planning 

RE: South Gorham Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Date: June 25, 2020

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This first meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Committee will be focused on project background, understanding the existing Comprehensive Plan guidance for the South Gorham area and thinking about the process for updating the plan in a manner that is both consistent with the state Growth Management Act and reflective of local needs.

This memo will provide more information on:

- specific work from last year and
- plan amendment considerations for going forward.

**Background from 2019**

The focus of work from 2019 was on drafting ordinance language to implement the vision of the South Gorham Crossroads area as described quite specifically in the adopted plan.

South Gorham Crossroads Area is categorized as a Mixed Use Growth Area on page 47 of the Comprehensive Plan. The Development Standards for this zone outline a “high-intensity pattern of development,” with a minimum residential density of 5 units/acre and a maximum residential density in the 12-15 units/acre range. Within the Allowed Uses description on page 52, the plan states, “in addition to residential uses, a range of non-residential uses should be allowed as part of a planned, mixed use development.” As discussed at previous Ordinance Committee meetings, a “mixed use development” could be a single mixed use building, or a master plan for a single property that includes both residential and non-residential elements in separate buildings.

### Models for South Gorham Crossroads Area, based on this vision

We pulled together several examples within the region of higher-intensity residential development and mixed use projects. The Blue Spruce Subdivision off Spring Street in Westbrook, the Scarborough Downs development in Scarborough, the Chamberlain project on Route 1 in Scarborough, and the project in Falmouth. Once the Ordinance Review Committee started looking at these, there was some consensus that the vision in the plan was weighted too much toward residential development, and that there should be more consideration given to commercial/non-residential uses in the vicinity of a future Turnpike spur and along South Street.



**Figure 1 - Blue Spruce Subdivision, Westbrook. Single-family, two-family, and multi-family buildings.**



**Figure 2 - Blue Spruce Subdivision, Westbrook. Multi-family buildings with single-family in background.**



Figure 3 - Scarborough Downs Project, multi-family buildings.



Figure 4 - Scarborough Downs, multi-family courtyard.





Figure 6 – Dunstan Crossing multi-family with courtyard



Figure 7 – Dunstan Crossing. Dunstan Tap & Table restaurant (left) and multi-family building (right)





Figure 9 - Tidewater, Falmouth. Offices on floors 1 & 2, residential above.

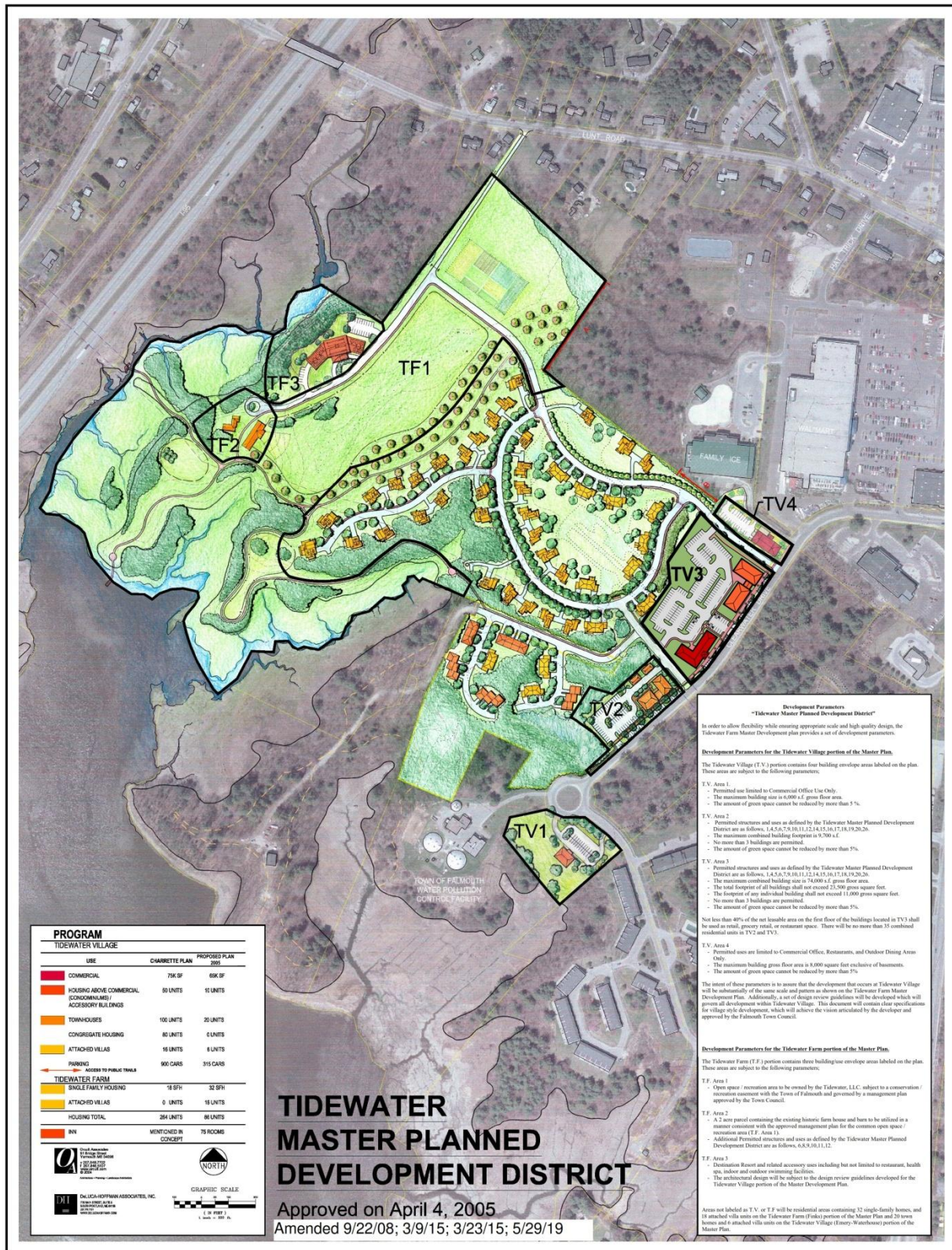


Figure 10 - Tidewater Master Plan, Falmouth. Images on previous page labeled TV2





### Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

Based on the charge from the Town Council, this group will be looking at the plan sections related to the South Gorham Crossroads and South Gorham Commercial areas. The amendment work should be focused on the vision and right mix of uses for these areas, and what it will look like to live and work in these areas in the future. Key to remember is that this is not a planning effort specific to this area of Gorham, it is an amendment process for a town-wide plan, and must involve both stakeholders in these areas as well as the community at large.

The state's Growth Management Program statute (M.R.S.A 30-A, Chapter 187) governs the process and other requirements for comprehensive planning in Maine. It states, "When amending an adopted comprehensive plan, a municipality or multimunicipal region shall follow the same procedures for citizen participation, public notice and public hearing that are required for adoption of a comprehensive plan."

This means that this amendment process will need to be a public process that incorporates public input. This process is going to be focused on a small geographic area of the community and small portion of the approved plan, but it must take place in the context of the whole community and the rest of the current comprehensive plan.

This group will need to make decisions on how to reach out to the town and stakeholders in these areas in order to solicit input on an updated vision for these areas. These decisions will need to be made in the context of the current public health crisis we are in, where there will be limits on larger group gatherings from the state and more practical considerations about using meeting spaces with enough room to accommodate social distancing and perhaps residents with low comfort levels for attending public meetings.

Options to consider incorporating into a public participation plan include:

- Workshop style in-person meetings v. Evening meetings at the town office, to spread out attendees
- Project videos and maps with ability to comment online or email comments
- Online polling
- Small group meetings or individual meetings with property owners in these areas