

# Stratham, Our Town

## *An Initiative to Save our Open Land*

Issue 1, December 14, 2001

Stratham Conservation Commission

### *Why?*

Seacoast New Hampshire is booming. People attracted to our lovely rural town see that we live in an ideal setting: we enjoy the beauty of the ocean nearby; the easy access to Boston, Portland and Concord; the recreational opportunities offered by New Hampshire's mountain ranges and clear deep lakes. Stratham is an attractive place to call home. It is no wonder that people want to move here.

But the peaceful country flavor we all love is slipping away. Have you noticed how much busier the roads are? How many more incidents require police intervention? How much longer you wait in line at the grocery store? And have you seen fields on your street turned into asphalt, or old trees cut down? Stratham is changing. What do we want to do about it? We can watch it happen, or we can try to address it, now.

Studies show that residential development creates tremendous town costs that will eventually be reflected in our property taxes:

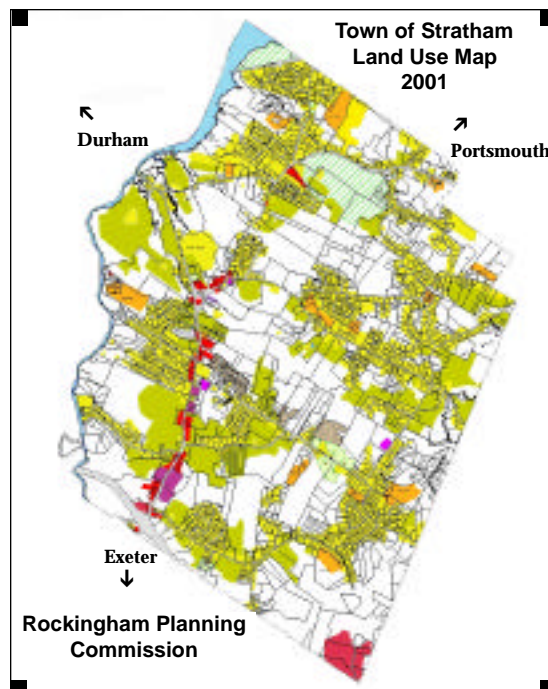
- a new elementary school
- new roads
- increased police protection
- a paid fire department
- a town water and sewer system

We can choose now to invest these tax dollars in the preservation of our open spaces, or wait until we have to invest them in town services.

### *Where?*

Today there are about 1800 developable acres of open space in Stratham. If you squint at the Land Use Map below, you can see a white "S" shaped pattern of largely undeveloped land beginning below Stratham Hill Park, then traversing to the south of town to Parkman Brook, near Shaws.

Imagine trails leading into places in this "S" where one could



explore without ever seeing a house; where wildlife could pass through on migration, demonstrating an ecosystem that is healthy and intact; and where families could hike, bike and picnic. Imagine places where farmers could lease fields to graze animals or grow crops for sale at local farmstands. We can still do this.

### *How?*

Our 1996 Master Plan clearly revealed a town consensus to preserve and enhance open spaces in Stratham, for the beauty they bring to our daily lives.

We can do this by balancing the rate of residential growth. While growth is fundamental to our economy, we feel that Stratham needs to grow in a more prudent way.

One of the most simple and direct solutions is to purchase development rights from willing landowners on the open market. This way, landowners are able to benefit from the value of their land without having to move from it. Another solution is to place the land in conservation easement with a local land trust, in exchange for a tax deduction. Again, the landowners remain as stewards of their own land. Both matching funds and tax deductions are available from our state and federal governments.

Are these radical ideas? No. Nationwide last year, voters passed 174 bonds providing \$7.5 billion for land conservation.

In New Hampshire alone, the towns of Hollis, Chester, Kingston, Londonderry, Bow, Northfield and North Hampton have done so.

### *And When?*

We propose that the residents vote at the March Town Meeting to fund a bond issue, details of which will be presented in the upcoming newsletters and public forums.

### ***Here is what you can do to help.***

For more information or to offer assistance, please contact Gordon Barker at 778-1039, Pat Elwell at 778-1659 or Anne Sloan at 778-9018.

Stratham Conservation Commission  
*Stratham, Our Town*  
 Town Offices  
 Stratham, NH 03885

Bulk Rate  
 US Postage  
 PAID  
 Stratham, NH  
 Permit #1

Resident  
 Stratham, NH 03885

*Stratham, Our Town* is the name of a new initiative of the Conservation Commission. A number of interested citizens, appointed to a Subcommittee by the Commission, are exploring the means available to protect some of our remaining open spaces in Stratham. The *Our Town* initiative is a bond issue which will be presented to voters on the ballot in the March election. We're calling this project "*Our Town*" because it must belong to everyone. Read about it in this newsletter. Talk to your friends and neighbors. Think about it. Throughout the winter, we will mail you newsletters to explain in more detail what it is and why it's good for our town.

# Open Space in Stratham: A New Initiative

American Farmland Trust	ww.farmland.org	413-586-9330	Farmland Conservation
American Planning Association	ww.planning.org/	312-431-9100	Land Use Planning, Zoning
Citizens for NH Land and Community Heritage	ww.specialplaces.org	603-230-9729	Support for NH Projects
Land Trust Alliance	ww.lta.org	202-638-4725	Land Conservation
NH State Land Conservation Investment Program	ww.state.nh.us/osp/ospweb.htm.....	603-271-2155	.....Monitoring Conservation Easements
NH Wildlife Federation	ww.nhwf.org	603-224-5953	Dollars and Sense of Open Space
Seacoast Land Trust	(no web site)	603-433-0963	Conservation Easements
Trust for Public Land	ww.tpl.org	802-223-1373	Land Protection

\*This list of organizations is provided for informational purposes only. It does not imply an endorsement by the Town of Stratham of the views, positions and/or services of the organizations. The list does not specifically reflect any policy position of the Town.

*Want to Know More?  
 Check out these organizations\**

