



# Town of Bowdoinham

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[www.bowdoinham.com](http://www.bowdoinham.com)

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## Memo:

**To:** Planning Board

**Date:** February 16, 2022

**From:** Jenn Curtis, Director of Planning  
& Development;

**Reference** Proposed Amendments to  
the Residential Agricultural  
District

### History:

#### Timeline:

- The first round of proposed language was shared with the Comprehensive Planning Committee in December 2021. The Committee was in favor of the proposed allowances for modest increases in accessory dwellings and subdivision density. They want to have a broader discussion about lot sizes and residential density for single lot development in the R/A. As a result, staff have tabled the proposal to decrease the minimum lot size of single lots.
- The Planning Board reviewed the proposed language on January 27, 2021 and wanted to discuss the potential impacts of a density bonus for cluster development. Staff considered the discussion and feel the current proposal will incentivize cluster development in order to maximize current density. Where subdivisions require conservation open space be assigned to areas most suitable for conservation, it will be easier to build the maximum number of lots if they can be smaller.

### Basis Statement:

The Town of Bowdoinham, and the State of Maine are currently facing a housing shortage crisis. The desire for a variety of adequate housing options far exceeds the demand. In 2020, the Maine State Housing Authority Affordability Index for Maine Cities and Towns indicated that the median home price in Bowdoinham was \$310,000 and the income needed to afford the median home (\$85,561) was more than \$10,000 per year higher than the median income (\$74,309), illustrating the problem with availability of adequate housing. The website, Realtor.com states that the median listing home price in Bowdoinham, ME was \$347,500 in October 2021.

Smart Growth economic and community development principles encourage residential developments to be more dense, to allow for more users per the amount of infrastructure required to serve them. Housing that is closer together and shares infrastructure such as water, wastewater disposal, and vehicular and pedestrian access is not only more efficient use of land, but also less



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expensive for the town and the resident, per dwelling unit.

Diverse and cluster types of housing are supported by the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, as noted below, and, based on data from the first public forum held by the Comprehensive Planning Committee to revise the vision for an update to the plan, it is still strongly supported in 2021. For these reasons staff propose

- ~~- Decreasing the minimum lot size in the Residential District to 30,000sf.~~
- Allowance of an Accessory Dwelling on every lot of record legally existing as of April 1, 2022 to allow for a modest and efficient increase in allowable dwelling units on existing lots. Those containing enough land to satisfy the residential density are already allowed to do so. This measure would mostly effect lots between 1 and 2 acres in size.
- Decreasing the minimum lot size in a subdivision to 20,000 sf, the minimum road frontage to 75 feet on internal subdivision roads, and the front yard setback to 20 feet on internal subdivision roads, without changing the net residential density. These changes, taken together, would allow for a smaller footprint of development in a subdivision, while still requiring the same overall amount of land be included, per lot, thereby allowing for a lower cost of development per unit and increasing the likelihood that all of the allowed density can be used. If small lots are allowed, it will be easier to design a subdivision that has the maximum number of allowable lots, while avoiding placing lots near required primary and secondary conservation areas. The net effect would be allowing for a less-expensive, more efficient development that can more easily avoid impacts to high value natural resources.

### **Compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan:**

The 2014 Comprehensive Plan housing goals call for allowing diverse housing types, and the recommendations include to allow diverse housing types including cluster and co-housing. The Land Use Recommendations include “Allow for smaller lot sizes, but limit the residential density in the Rural Area.”

A subdivision ordinance change that incentivizes more open space is supported by goals to promote forest management, safeguard agricultural resources, manage and protect critical natural resources, and manage and protect water resources.

TOWN OF BOWDOINHAM

LAND USE ORDINANCE

Definitions

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Dwelling: Any building or structure or portion thereof designed or used for residential purposes.

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5. Accessory dwelling: An independent dwelling unit that has been added onto, or created within, a single-family detached dwelling, or is an accessory building to a single-family detached dwelling.

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Residential/Agricultural District-

1) Dimensional Requirements:

a) For All Lots Which Do Not Meet Subsection b below.

- (i) Minimum Lot Size – 1 acre
- (ii) Maximum Residential Density – 1 acre<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) Minimum Road Frontage<sup>2</sup> - 150 feet
- (iv) Minimum Setbacks for Buildings<sup>3</sup> –
  - (A) Front Yard - 50 feet

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<sup>1</sup> An accessory Dwelling that meets the standards of Article 4 shall be allowed on all lots of record legally existing as of April 1, 2022

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<sup>2</sup> The Minimum Road Frontage requirement may be waived by the Code Enforcement Officer if the property meets the Back Lot Performance Standard in Article 4, Section B.

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<sup>3</sup> The setback shall be the minimum horizontal distance from a lot line to the nearest part of a building, including porches, steps and decks. Except that, ramps needed for disability access into a principle dwelling shall be exempt from the minimum setbacks.

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**TOWN OF BOWDOINHAM**

**LAND USE ORDINANCE**

(B) Side Yard - 10 feet

(C) Rear Yard - 10 feet

b) Lots Which Are Within A Subdivision (which is created after June 10, 2009).

(i) Minimum Lot Size – ~~20,000sf~~ 1-acre

(ii) Maximum Net Residential Density – 1 acre

(iii) Minimum Road Frontage - 150 feet on existing roads, 75 on internal subdivision roads

(iv) Minimum Setbacks for Buildings –

(A) Front Yard - 50 feet on existing roads, 20 feet on internal subdivision roads

(B) Side Yard - 10 feet

(C) Rear Yard - 10 feet

(v) Open Space Requirement - 25% of Net Residential Area

c) Structures shall not cover more than 20% of any lot. <sup>4</sup>

**D) Village I District-**

1) Dimensional Requirements:

a) Minimum Lot Size – 20,000 sq. ft.

b) Minimum Lot Size for Subdivisions with Community Subsurface  
Wastewater System – 10,000 sq. ft.<sup>5</sup>

c) Maximum Residential Density – 20,000 sq. ft.

d) Minimum Road Frontage - 75 feet

e) Minimum Setbacks for Buildings –

(i) Front Yard - 20 feet

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<sup>4</sup> Structures may cover up to 30% of lots that are legally non-conforming due to lot size.

<sup>5</sup> A subdivision shall not exceed the maximum residential density for the district.

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**LAND USE ORDINANCE**

- (ii) Side Yard - 10 feet
- (iii) Rear Yard - 10 feet
- f) Maximum Building Height – 35 feet
- g) Structures shall not cover more than 30% of any lot. Lots legally non-conforming due to lot size may have up to 50% structure coverage.

**E) Village II District-**

- 1) Dimensional Requirements:
  - a) Minimum Lot Size – 30,000 sq. ft.
  - b) Minimum Lot Size for Subdivisions with Community Subsurface Wastewater System – 10,000 sq. ft.<sup>6</sup>
  - c) Maximum Residential Density – 20,000 sq. ft.
  - d) Minimum Road Frontage - 100 feet
  - e) Minimum Setbacks for Buildings –
    - (i) Front Yard - 30 feet
    - (ii) Side Yard - 10 feet
    - (iii) Rear Yard - 10 feet
  - f) Maximum Building Height – 35 feet
  - g) Structures shall not cover more than 30% of any lot.

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<sup>6</sup> A subdivision shall not exceed the maximum residential density for the district.