

## III - HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

Housing is a basic component of a community's development process, influencing and influenced by the natural environment, regional development, public services, the community's economic base, transportation, energy patterns and social development. Plainfield and Sunapee in NH and Thetford in Vermont attract newly retired families looking for a more rural life experience. In addition Plainfield has attracted Dartmouth Hospital and College families in part due to the schools.

The population of the Town of Plainfield is projected to grow by 162 people to 2,526 people by the year 2020. To accommodate this growth, some 65 additional housing units will be needed, an increase of up to 7%. This growth has modest implications for the quality of human life and the character of this community, its housing and local environment.

Plainfield is, above all, a residential town with a high percentage of its developed land area put into residential use (see Land Use Chapter). The current chapter reviews the results of the 2006/1993 Community Surveys and examines housing characteristics. The chapter then concludes with goals and recommendations for future residential development to meet the needs of Plainfield residents.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

In 2006 the Planning Board conducted a community survey in conjunction with 2007 Master update. The survey results generally re-confirmed community attitudes toward development. Following are key questions and respondents positions:

**Q. 28.** In an effort to increase the number of local jobs, the development of 'light industry' should be encouraged in the town (e.g. contractor's office and storage, equipment sales, laboratories for research, assembly of computers or electronic equipment)

*Agree 52% Disagree 31%*

**Q. 29** Zoning regulations should be adjusted to protect the residential and historic nature of the village centers and discourage further commercial development in those centers.

*Agree 47% Disagree 38%*

**Q. 31** Plainfield should be kept residential. New businesses, other than home based or cottage businesses should be discouraged.

*Agree 31% Disagree 56%*

**Q. 32** In order to insure that Plainfield remains a residentially based community, the Town should continue to place strict restrictions on lighting, noise and hours of operation of any new business proposed for a residential neighborhood.

*Agree 72% Disagree 20%*

**Q. 33** Zoning regulations should be amended to create a new zone, Village Center (VC) designed to protect the residential character of villages by further restricting the size and type of businesses allowed.

*Agree 45% Disagree 40%*

**Q. 34** Current VR zone regulations are least restrictive on business development in village centers in the belief that Town services can best be provided there and that concentrating development in the village centers will best preserve the rural nature of the overall community, Regulations for the VR zone should continue to permit business development in village centers.

*Agree 68% Disagree 13%*

The Plainfield Planning Board had also conducted community attitude survey during the spring of 1993 as a basis for preparing guidelines for the future development of the Town. The following provides a brief summary of the 1993 survey results that relate to attitudes toward new housing in Plainfield.

- *Most respondents would prefer to see Plainfield remain, as it is now - a rural/agricultural town that serves as a bedroom community to the surrounding business areas.*
- *The un-crowded, quiet conditions (88%), scenic quality (74%), and friendly people (61%), were what many survey respondents liked about Plainfield.*
- *Single-family homes were the type of residential development desired throughout Town by 85% of survey respondents. Respondents felt that multi-family dwellings (59.9%), manufactured housing (49.3 %), and manufactured housing parks (66.9%), should not be allowed in Town.*
- *Most respondents would like Plainfield to address its responsibility to accommodate affordable housing by permitting accessory apartments and conversion of large homes to apartments in village centers, rather than encouraging construction of new multi-family housing.*

## **HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS**

As noted in the preceding section, Plainfield residents find Plainfield to be a great place to live. There are a variety of settings in which residential development can occur. The Zoning Ordinance permits residential use in most areas of Plainfield. Each zoning district defines a different housing pattern, based on density or minimum lot size. There are five zoning districts and one overlay district. The districts are described in detail in the Zoning Ordinance, but range from Village Residential, where land is to be used as a residential center and should serve as a nucleus for community activity, to the Wetland-Floodplain Overlay Zone, where no permanent residences are allowed.

## HOUSING STOCK

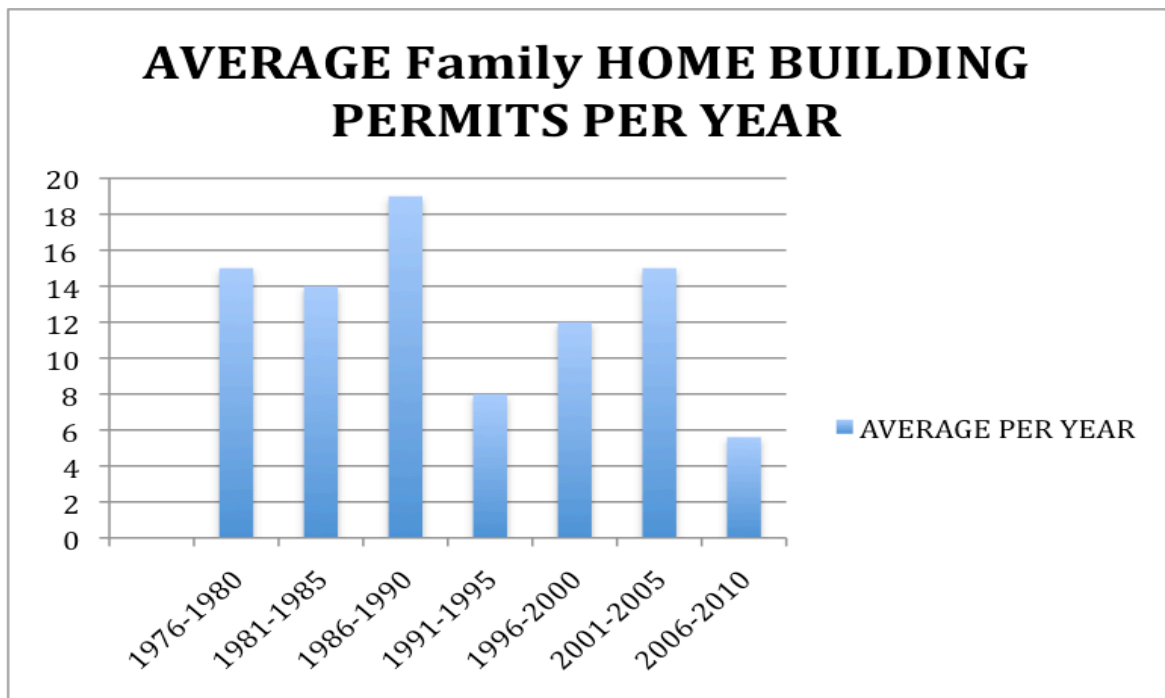
Plainfield has a stock of old colonial farms and homes which have been well preserved, in addition to a substantial stock of more recently built, large homes sequestered in the countryside.

## PLAINFIELD HOME STOCK

YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT		
Total housing units	1,003	1,00
Built 2005 or later	13	1.3%
Built 2000 to 2004	25	2.5%
Built 1990 to 1999	172	17.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	310	30.9%
Built 1970 to 1979	165	16.5%
Built 1960 to 1969	41	4.1%
Built 1950 to 1959	4	0.4%
Built 1940 to 1949	41	4.1%
Built 1939 or earlier	232	23.1%

Recent residential development is tracked on the following graph, which shows the number of residential building permit trends between 1976 and 2010. While in the late seventies and early eighties the number of permits issued was relatively stable, peaks occurred in 1983, 1986 and 1988. The 1976 to 2006 period residential permits averaged 16 per year. In the 2006-2010 period this has dropped to about six per year as development has increased in neighboring communities. .

**FIGURE III-1-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS**



The trends measured by building permits are reflected in the Census information collected decennially. As shown in Table 111-1, the increase in year-round units was very significant between 1970 and 1980, Residential growth tapered off to 26.9% between 1980 and 1990.

The seasonal housing stock was cut in half in the 1980's most likely by conversion to year-round use. Interestingly, vacancies have increased almost threefold between 1980 and 1990 and appear to have stabilized at about 3%.

**TABLE III-1-HOUSING UNITS and OCCUPANCY**

NUMBER	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>1003</b>
Occupied	391	606	769	844	915
Seasonal	25	30	15	19	No counted
Vacant	1	8	23	33	88
Owner Occupied					828
Renter Occupied					87

Source: U.S. Census Data

### HOUSING TYPE

The profile of housing type in Plainfield has changed slightly over the past thirty years. Single-family residences have grown in popularity, now representing 84.7% of the housing stock in Town. There were gains in the proportion of manufactured housing and a decrease in the proportion of multi-family units.

**Table III-2-DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING STOCK BY TYPE**

### PLAINFIELD HOUSING STOCK BY TYPE

TYPE	1980	1990	2000	2010	Total
Single Family	507	678	743	891	8.8
Multi-Family	67	56	53	59	.9
Manufactured OTHER	35	48	76	53	.3

Meaningful development of multi-family dwellings is one of the few good options in planning low and moderate-income housing.

## Age of Housing Stock

The 2010 Census data, show that 23% of the housing stock was built pre-1940 between 1940 and 1970. 65 of the housing stock have been built between 1970 and 2000. Only four units per year have been added through the last decade.

YEAR BUILT	NUMBER OF HOMES	%
TOTAL	1,003	100.0%
2005-2009	13	1.3%
2000-2004	25	2.5%
1990-1999	172	17.1%
1980-1989	310	30.9%
1970-1979	165	16.5%
1960-1969	41	4.1%
1940-1969	45	4.9%
Pre 1940	232	23.1%

## OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS

As can be noted in the Table III-1, Plainfield owner occupancy runs at 83%. Renter Occupancy is just under 9% Overall vacancy rate runs at 8%, mostly in non-owner occupied units.

**TABLE III-3- Distribution (Owner/Rental) of Units**

	Total Occupied Units	Owner Occupied	%	Renter Occupied	%
<b>Plainfield</b>					
<b>1980</b>	606	481	79.3	125	20.7
<b>1990</b>	726	630	87	96	13.0
<b>2000</b>	844	729	86.4	115	13.6
<b>2010</b>	915	828	90.5	87	9.5

## Persons Per Household

The following table tracks the number of persons per household in 1980 and 1990.

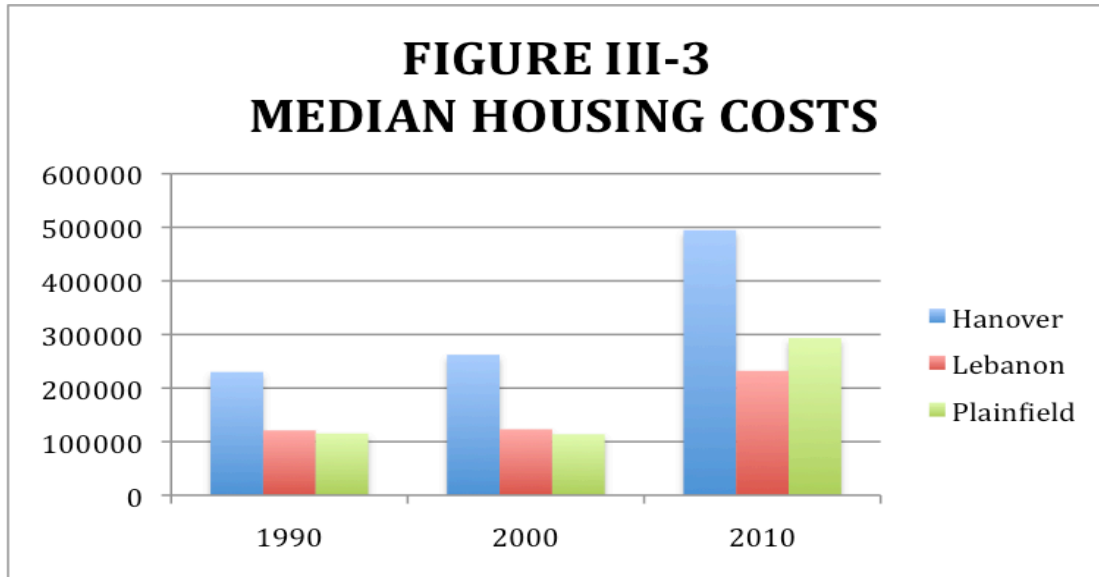
**TABLE III-4-PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD**

Year	Number of Households	Number of People	Persons per Household
<b>1980</b>	606	1749	2.89
<b>1990</b>	726	2056	2.83
<b>2000</b>	844	2241	2.98
<b>2010</b>	915	2364	2.58

## Housing Costs

The following graphs compare the costs of the median value of a house and the median monthly rent in Plainfield with the comparable values in other towns in the UVLS Region. The median house cost in Plainfield (\$293,300 is considerably higher than the 1990/2000 value of \$115,000. In contrast, the median monthly rent in Town (\$1295), is 78% higher than it was in 2000 and ranks third highest after Norwich and Hanover) in the Region.

**FIGURE III-3-MEDIAN HOUSING COSTS**



## GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Housing Goals

1. Preserve the rural character of Plainfield, in general, as well as the village character of Plainfield and Meriden.
2. Preserve the historic and aesthetic qualities of Plainfield's built environment.
3. Create a climate in which available, affordable housing is possible.
4. Prevent development, which jeopardizes the natural areas, health, safety or prosperity of the Town, or necessitates an excessive expenditure of public funds for supply of municipal services.

### Housing Recommendations

1. Enact some form of 'grow housing' ordinance that permits low cost high-density development and redevelopment in the Village areas.
2. Re-invigorate and extend multi-unit development ordinance to permit higher density development in RR zone.
3. Through zoning ordinance, encourage conversion of large houses to apartments.

4. Discourage inappropriate commercial and industrial intrusions into residential neighborhoods.

5. Require new multi-unit structures and developments should be located close to existing public services/village centers.