Pocket Neighborhood Information Packet

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Frequently-Asked Questions

1. What is a Pocket Neighborhood?

A Pocket Neighborhood is a type of residential development that is characterized by smaller homes on smaller lots. These homes may be situated on individual lots as in a conventional subdivision, or they may be arranged around a central, shared common space such as a common garden or courtyard; this type is commonly known as a cottage court.

Cottage courts typically are sized between no fewer than four (4) buildings and no more than 12; these numbers have been found – through experience with these types of developments, that these are right size to create a neighborhood; fewer than four is too few for a neighborhood, and more than 12 is more like a suburban development.

2. What are the benefits of this type of development?

- It is more environmentally friendly, as it uses less land and less infrastructure than a conventional development with larger lots and longer road frontages.
- Because the homes are smaller, they are more energy-efficient and are more affordable and easier to maintain.
- It allows for the creation of variable housing options that meet the needs of a changing household demographic, such as "missing middle" housing that bridges the gap between single-family home and apartment complexes
- The layout of the homes encourages more social interaction with neighbors, while at the same time ensuring that each home has private space. (May be a disadvantage for some.)
- Vehicles and traffic are typically kept to the periphery so there is minimal conflict between pedestrians or children playing and traffic.

3. What are some of the challenges/obstacles to this type of development?

- This type of development will not appeal to those who value more privacy, less social interaction, and/or a more homogeneous population.
- A key characteristic of this type of development is to locate houses on smaller lots in fairly close proximity to one another. This can more difficult in rural areas with no access to municipal water or sewer systems.

4. How is it administered?

This type of development is considered a subdivision under NH law. It is therefore administered by the Planning Board, and reviewed based on the zoning provisions that dictate the specific standards for the development.

Visual Examples

The examples presented here consist of built projects, some in New Hampshire and some elsewhere, and site plans of projects that are proposed but not yet built. Included here are examples from Peterborough housing developments, some of which were designed pursuant to the Open Space ordinance, but they are included here because the placement of the houses reflects the design principles of a pocket neighborhood. Also provided here are links to several developments in and around Utica, NY (Schickel Construction Co.) that also reflect these design principles.

Figure 1: Cottages at Back River Road/Dover, NH

Figure 2: Briston, VT

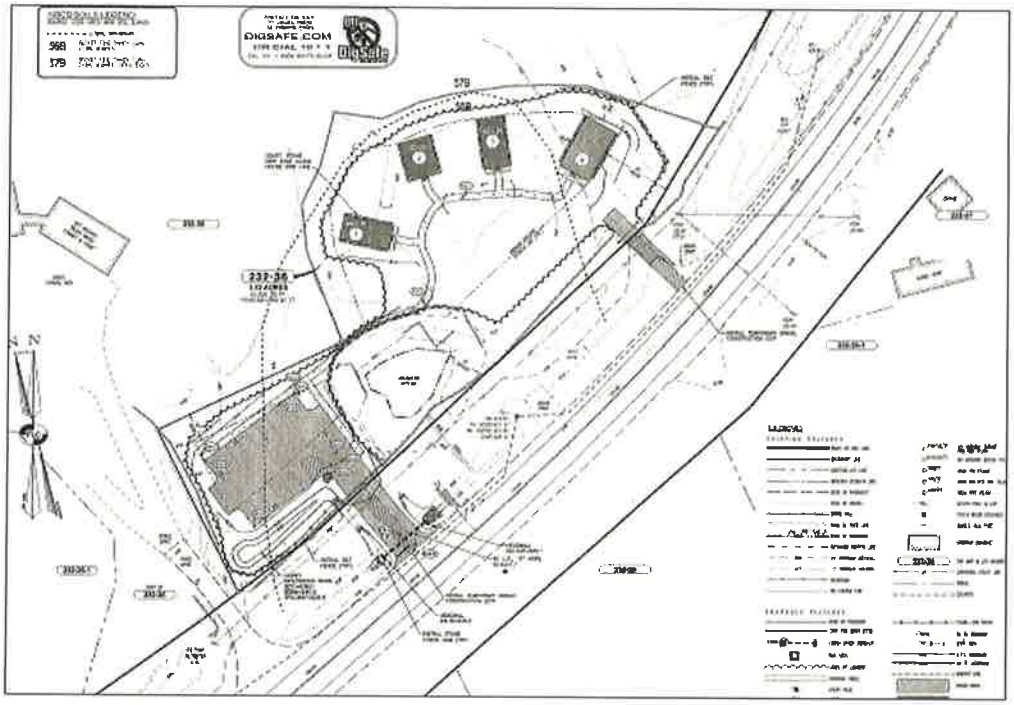


Figure 3: Antrim Approved 4-unit Cottage Court/Not Yet Constructed

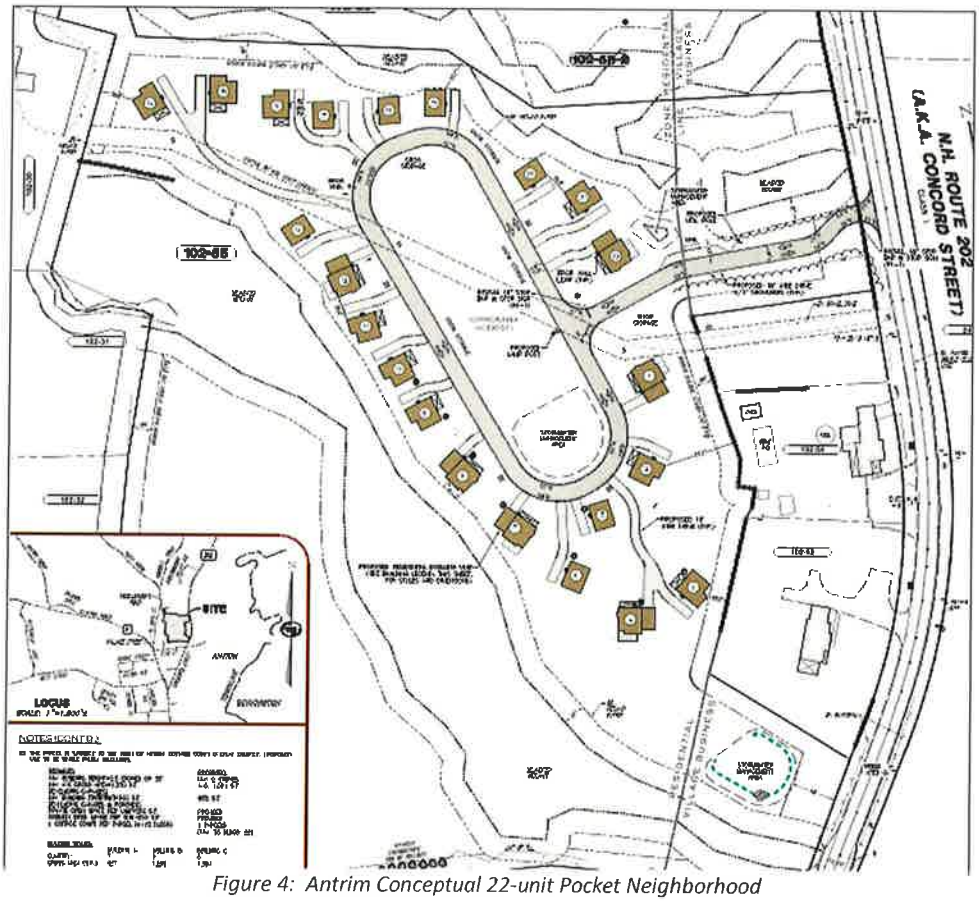


Figure 4: Antrim Conceptual 22-unit Pocket Neighborhood

EXAMPLES of INFILL & CLUSTER HOUSING – PETERBOROUGH, NH

1. East and West Ridge Drive

Parcel Size: East – 22 acres/West – 55 acres

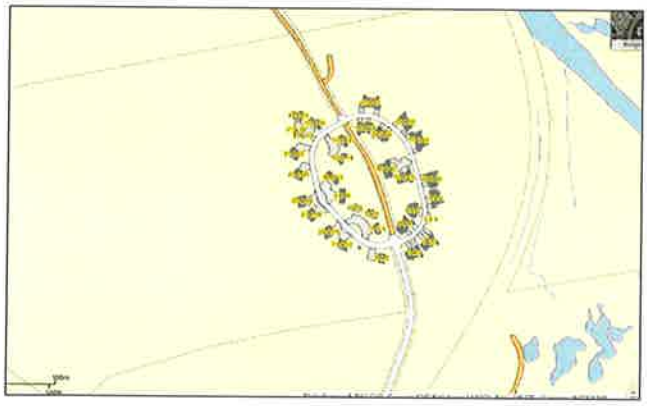
# of Structures/Units: East – 13
Duplex/West – 16 Duplex

Utilized Cluster Ordinance

Developed Area:

Building Lot: @1600 – 1900 square feet

Dwelling Unit: @ 1,000 square feet



2. Wilson Farm (Church Street)

Parcel Size: 7 acres

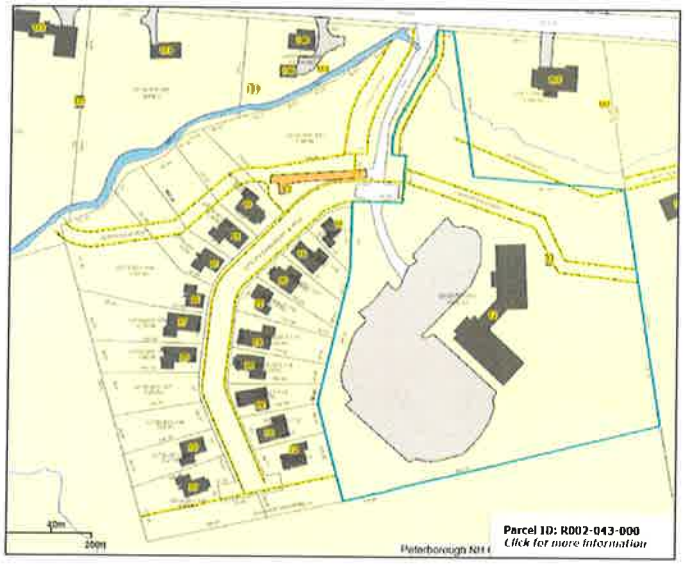
# of Structures/Units: 19 Single-Family

Developed Area: @ 4 acres

Utilized Infill Ordinance

Building Lot: @5,800 – 20,000 square feet

Dwelling Unit: @ 1,400 – 1,800 square feet



3. Vine Street

Parcel Size: 1 acre

Developed Area: 1 acre

# of Structures/Units: 8 Single-Family

Utilized Infill Ordinance

Building Lot: 4,791 – 7,841 square feet

Dwelling Unit: @1,646 square feet

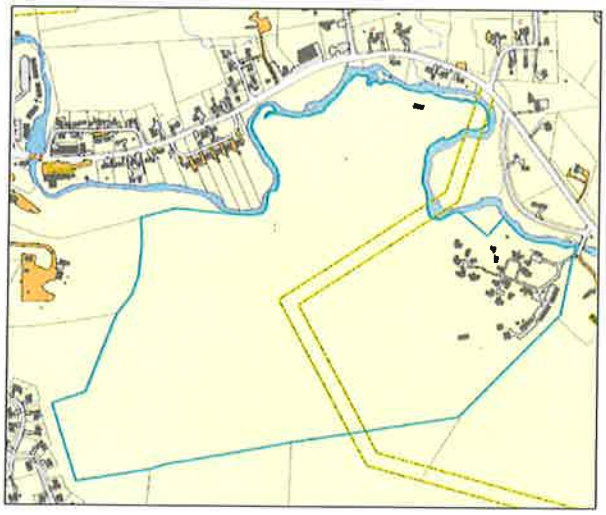
4. Nubanusit Neighborhood & Farm

Parcel Size: 113 acres

Developed Area: @ 6 acres

Building Lot: 4,791 – 7,841 square feet

Dwelling Unit: @1,646 square feet



Utilized West Peterborough Ordinance

# of Structures/Units: 29 Units:

- 7 Four-BDR Single-Family
- 7 Three BDR Single-Family
- 7 Duplexes
- 4 Two BDR Quad
- 4 Three BDR Quad

5. Legacy Woods (Robbe Farm Road)

Parcel Size: 42 acres

Developed Area: @8 acres

# of Structures/Units: 39 Single-Family

Utilized Cluster Ordinance

Building Lot: 5,967 – 16,161 square feet

Dwelling Unit: @1,600 – 1,900 square feet

Links to Schickel Construction Projects

https://images.app.goo.gl/VUcCQdyaqZdMeUCs9

http://boicevillecottages.com/

https://www.google.com/maps/place/Boiceville+Cottages/@42.387281,-76.361903,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x89da7dd77f3514e5:0xc9ae9f6904f84308

http://www.facebook.com/boicevillecottages

Ordinance Examples

As of this writing, there are eight (8) known municipalities in New Hampshire with ordinances that permit pocket neighborhoods/cottage courts. Links to these ordinances are listed below, along with a brief summary of the salient features of the ordinance. Features that are foundational to all ordinances are: a limitation on the size of the unit (no greater than X); individual and common open space; parking location; and some design and architectural standards. Some of the ordinances also allow limited non-residential uses, while the others only allow residential use.

Another shared feature is that all of these ordinances were adopted under the Innovative Land Use Control statute (RSA 674:21) that authorizes the planning board to grant special, or conditional use permits. This approach allows the planning board to grant waivers from any of the provisions of the ordinance, thus eliminating the need for zoning relief if a proposal does not exactly comply with the terms of the ordinance.

Given that all of these ordinances are either newly-adopted or relatively new – within the past 2-3 years, there are only a few examples of completed projects.

#1: Antrim (Passed at 2025 Town Meeting)

antrim_2025_zoning_ordinance_002.pdfantrim_2025_zoning_ordinance_002.pdf

This ordinance is called the Connected Village Overlay District, which is described and defined by a map that overlays the downtown area of Antrim and extends beyond the downtown area. This covers most of the town that is served by town water and sewer, but also covers areas that are not served.

The ordinance allows for two types of development: (1) smaller lots (as small as 5,000 square feet) for a conventional subdivision; or (2) a cottage court of between four (4) and 12 buildings, either single-family or duplex.

As of this writing, the Planning Board has approved a four-unit cottage court and has had a preliminary consultation for a 22-unit pocket neighborhood.

#2: Bedford (Passed at 2025 Town Meeting)

Article III: Use and Dimensional Regulations - Town of Bedford, NH

This ordinance permits Cottage Courts in residential as well as commercial zoning districts. A development must be served by a public water supply, and must be a condominium form of ownership. This ordinance includes standards for private and common open space, architectural standards, and limitations on building height, density, and building coverage. As of this writing, the Planning Board has approved two applications: one for 21 units; and one for 30 units.

#3: Hampton (Passed at 2026 Town Meeting)

Article-03-Amendment-2_Cottage-Court-Ordinance

This permits cottage courts on most, but not all zoning districts. The ordinance allows single-family, two-family, and multi-family residential uses, as well as some commercial uses. There is no limitation on the number of buildings, rather this is determined on a case-by-case basis.

#4: Hinsdale (Passed at 2025 Town Meeting)

CURRENT_Zoning_Ordinance.pdf

The ordinance is designed as an overlay zone that allows cottage courts in any district that permits residential uses. The ordinance permits single-family units, including manufactured housing, and duplex units. It also allows the units in a cottage court to count toward the Town's obligation to offer workforce housing.

#5: Keene (Adopted by City Council in May of 2024)

O-2024-01_Signed.pdfO-2024-01_Signed.pdf

This ordinance permits a range of housing types, some in all zoning districts, others in limited districts. Six categories of non-residential uses are also permitted, in all districts, subject to specific standards. The ordinance includes architectural guidelines that list design features that would be "easier to approve" and those that would be "more difficult to approve."

As of this writing, the Planning Board has approved a 29-unit project in the northern section of the city, near the hospital and clinic.

#6: Lebanon (Adopted by City Council 2023)

Barrows Street Cottage Development Project | Lebanon, NH

This ordinance permits cottage court development in all of its residential zoning districts. Cottage developments must have a minimum of three (3) cottages, and a maximum of 16, located in one or more clusters; each cluster must have a minimum of three cottages.

As of this writing, the Planning Board has approved a five-unit single-family development. This project is City-initiated, in that it owns the land and has hired the developer/builder. Upon completion, the units will be sold through a lottery and will include covenants and deed restrictions to maintain long-term affordability. The lottery will be available to employees of the City, the school district, and the Housing Authority.

#7: Meredith (Passed at 2026 Town Meeting)

Draft-Cottage-Court-Housing-Ordinance

This ordinance permits cottage courts in all residential zoning districts and some commercial districts. It allows only single-family and duplex residential use; in addition, it prohibits short-term rentals within a Cottage Court. Density is based on the availability of public water and sewer, with a maximum allowance of 12 units per acre. The ordinance includes standards for private and common open space, and site and building standards.

#8: New London (Passed at 2026 Town Meeting)

Updated__Cottage_Court_Housing__1-16-2026.pdf

This ordinance permits cottage courts in residential and commercial zoning districts. It allows only single- and two-family residential uses. The ordinance includes standards and guidelines for private and common open space, site and building design, yard standards, and architectural guidelines.