

CHAPTER 1 - POPULATION AND HOUSING

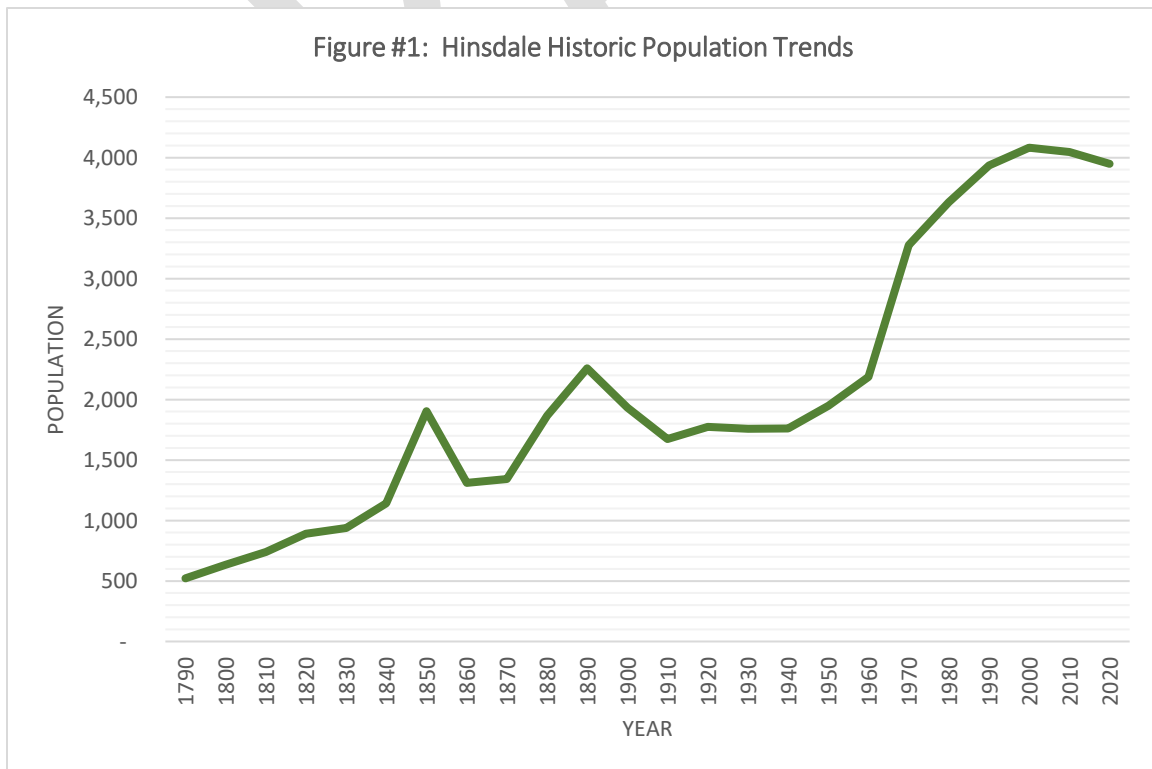
This 2024 update is part of a Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) grant received by the Planning Board to conduct an analysis of its existing land use regulations relative to housing, and to update certain chapters of the Master Plan that relate to housing opportunity. Details about this program can be found on the Town’s website at [Hinsdale, New Hampshire](#).

POPULATION

The purpose of a Master Plan Population Section is to serve as a flexible framework to guide the orderly growth of a community over a period of years. Since growth is dependent upon many factors, this plan and its components should be regularly reviewed to determine their applicability. The population study will alert the town to the possible future demands on schools, housing, public facilities and other forms of land use. Population growth is attributed to two factors: natural increase (the excess of births over deaths), and migration (movement of people in or out of the town).

Population Trends

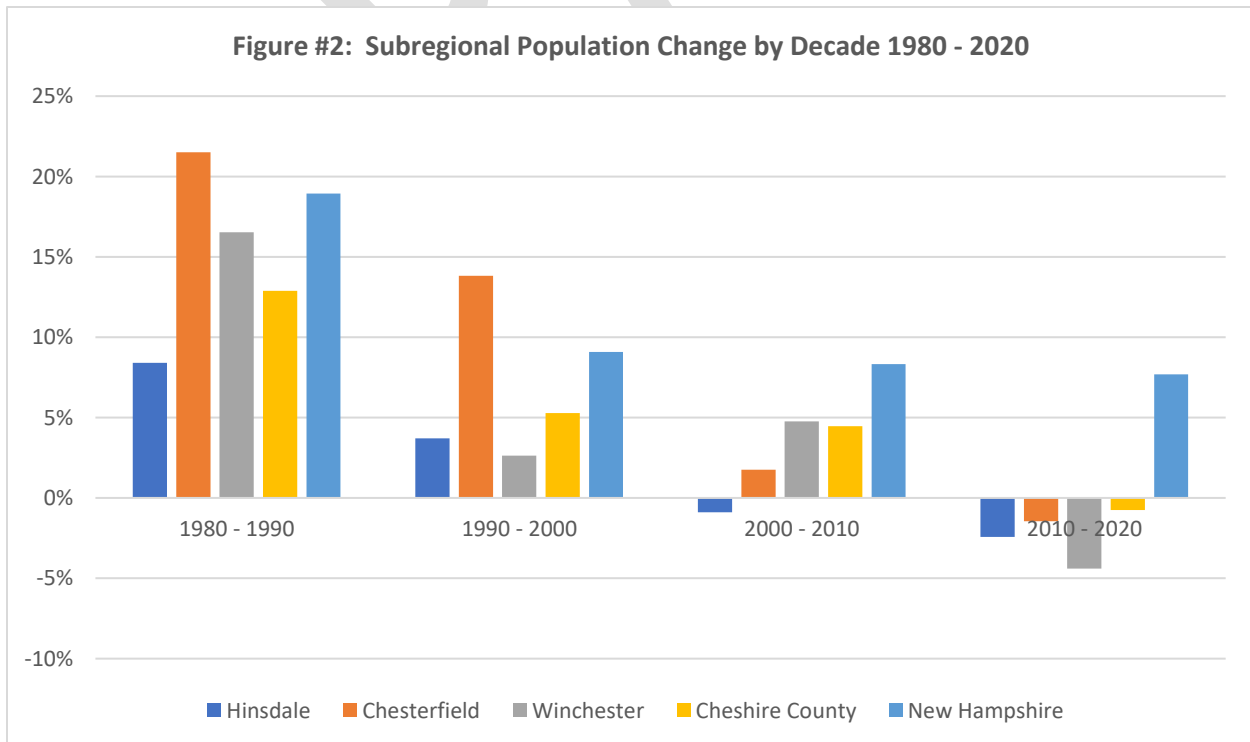
The figure below illustrates Hinsdale’s population from 1790 to 2020. The graph shows that there was quite a bit of fluctuation between 1850 and 1910, after which the population continued to increase until 2000, when it began to decrease slightly. The population decreased in the mid-1800’s, as many towns in New Hampshire did, as people left rural areas to seek jobs in industrialized urban areas, or to migrate west. More recently, the 50% increase in population from 1960 to 1970 reflects the latter end of the “Baby Boom” generation.



When planning for future town needs, an overall look at the surrounding towns, as well as county and state information, is useful since the need for adequate housing and employment opportunities can be influenced by the economy beyond the town line. Table #1 on the following page presents this information for Hinsdale’s only two directly abutting towns, as well as Cheshire County and the state of New Hampshire, for the years from 1980 to 2020. The three towns are similar in size, although Chesterfield is much more rural in its overall nature than both Hinsdale and Winchester, which both have built-up downtown areas with municipal water and sewer and a variety of business enterprises.

Table #1: Subregional Population 1980 - 2020					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Hinsdale	3,631	3,936	4,082	4,046	3,948
Chesterfield	2,561	3,112	3,542	3,604	3,552
Winchester	3,465	4,038	4,144	4,341	4,150
Cheshire County	62,116	70,121	73,825	77,117	76,541
New Hampshire	924,802	1,100,000	1,200,000	1,300,000	1,400,000
% Change 1980 - 2020					
	1980 - 1990	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2010	2010 - 2020	1980 - 2020
Hinsdale	8%	4%	-1%	-2%	9%
Chesterfield	22%	14%	2%	-1%	39%
Winchester	17%	3%	5%	-4%	20%
Cheshire County	13%	5%	4%	-1%	23%
New Hampshire	19%	9%	8%	8%	51%

Source: U.S. Census



The graph above provides a visual illustration of the percent change in population by decade for each of the towns, the county, and the state. Since there are wide-ranging differences in the absolute population numbers between the towns and the county and the state, it is more meaningful to look at the percentage of change experienced by each of the entities.

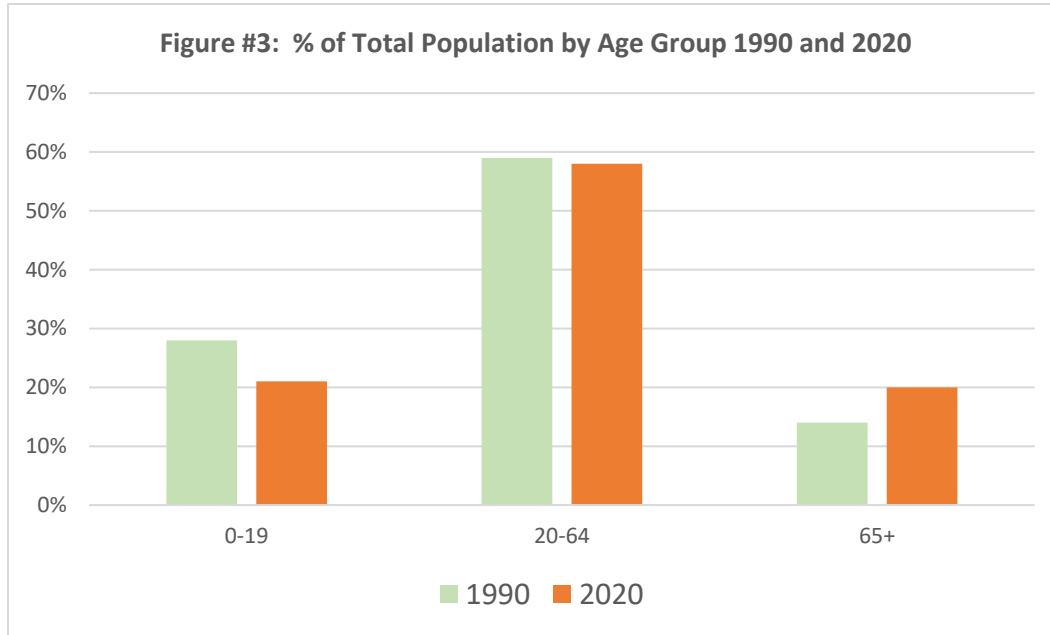
The graph makes clear that all five entities experienced the greatest growth during the 1980s, with population growth declining in each decade after that, up to the last decade in which all three towns and the county lost population; only the state gained population. Over the 40-year period, Hinsdale had the lowest percentage increase, at only 9%.

Age Distribution

An important statistic for community planning is the age categories of the residents. The percentage of the total population for the age groups can provide valuable indicators for planning the needs of a community. This helps provide a “looking glass” of the potential services needed by the residents in the upcoming years. For example, combining the four blocks showing the age categories between 0-4 through 15-19 will help plan for school enrollment needs. Another group with specific needs is the older population. Combining the blocks showing the age categories that are 65 and greater can help the community prepare for housing needs and services of that population. Observing the trends of the blocks showing the age categories of 55-59 and 60-64 is also beneficial for similar potential needs within the next 10 years. Following trends in this way can assist the town with planning and budgeting for projects that may be necessary to meet the growing demands of the public.

Table #2: Age Distribution 1990 - 2020								
	Age Distribution				Age as % of Total Population			
	1990	2000	2010	2020	1990	2000	2010	2020
0-4	305	217	204	186	8%	5%	5%	5%
5-9	306	303	240	247	8%	7%	6%	6%
10-14	265	348	239	217	7%	9%	6%	5%
15-19	224	287	280	197	6%	7%	7%	5%
20-24	249	218	229	168	6%	5%	6%	4%
25-29	318	217	188	267	8%	5%	5%	7%
30-34	373	296	225	262	9%	7%	6%	7%
35-39	283	359	264	249	7%	9%	7%	6%
40-44	298	366	293	184	8%	9%	7%	5%
45-49	260	276	349	245	7%	7%	9%	6%
50-54	184	289	357	273	5%	7%	9%	7%
55-59	167	235	311	331	4%	6%	8%	8%
60-64	171	173	283	323	4%	4%	7%	8%
65-69	174	128	215	278	4%	3%	5%	7%
70-74	148	131	143	236	4%	3%	4%	6%
75-79	115	103	91	153	3%	3%	2%	4%
80-84	62	79	78	71	2%	2%	2%	2%
85+	34	57	57	61	1%	1%	1%	2%

Using the Census methodology of breaking out ages in five-year increments shows that there is very little difference between all of the age groups, with none of them surpassing 9% of the total population. If age groups are combined, and compared over time, the picture looks a bit different. While the largest (58%) group is the 20 – 64 years, more interesting are the other ends of the spectrum: the 0 – 19 group as declined since 1990, and the 65+ population has increased from 14% to 20% of the population. This is important information for planning purposes, as the needs for new school facilities will likely diminish, and the need for senior services and facilities will increase.



Natural Increase

Natural increase is a factor in population change. It refers to the difference between the number of births and the number of deaths within a population over a specific period of time. It is calculated by subtracting deaths from births, and it represents the net growth or decline of a population due solely to births and deaths, without taking into consideration migration. The following two tables illustrate how natural increase information can offer insight into migration into or out of a community.

Table #13 shows the birth and death data for each year from 2010 to 2023. Over the course of these 24 years, Hinsdale had a net loss of population every year, except for one when it was zero (16 births to 16 deaths).

Table #14 on the following page demonstrates migration as a factor in population change. (Note that Table #13 shows birth and death statistics through 2023, but Table #14 uses 2020 as an end point, in order to maintain consistency with the population data.)

Year	Births	Deaths	Natural Increase
2010	23	45	-22
2011	13	31	-18
2012	12	50	-38
2013	14	36	-22
2014	15	41	-26
2015	16	16	0
2016	2	6	-4
2017	11	20	-9
2018	10	38	-28
2019	2	30	-28
2020	3	35	-32
2021	7	37	-30
2022	14	36	-22
2023	7	37	-30

Source: Hinsdale Annual Town Reports

The table illustrates that between 2010 and 2020 Hinsdale lost 227 people to death. If there had been no migration into town, the population in 2020 would have been 3,819; in fact, the 2020 population was 3,948, meaning that Hinsdale gained 129 people from in-migration.

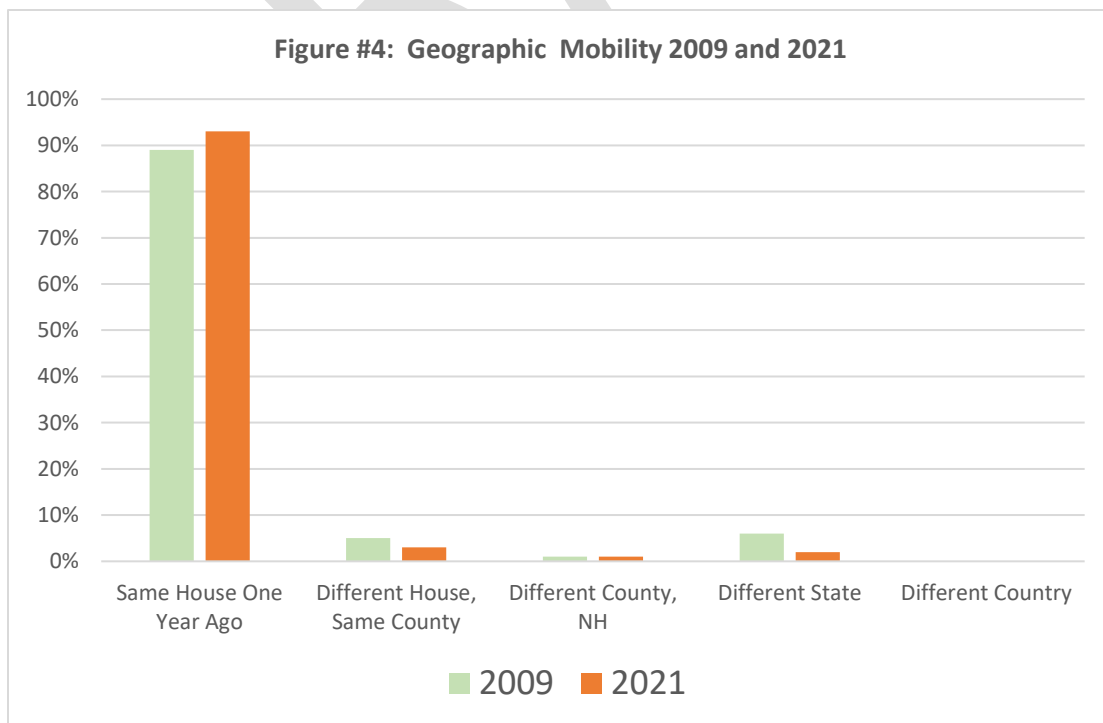
Actual Population 2010	4,046
Natural Increase from 2010 - 2020	-227
Population in 2020 based on Natural Increase	3,819
Actual Population 2020	3,948
Population Change due to Migration	129

Geographic Mobility

Geographic mobility refers to the movement of people into and out of a place of residence. This information is useful in providing a foundation for accurate data collection and informing policy decisions. For many years the Census collected this information by asking people where they lived five years previously; that question has been revised to asking where they lived one year previously. This information for Hinsdale is presented in Table #15 and Figure #4, which show a relatively stable population, although the percentage of people in the same house increased from 89% in 2009 to 93% in 2021.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE	2009	% of Total	2021	% of Total
Same House One Year Ago	3601	89%	3683	93%
Different House, Same County	185	5%	136	3%
Different County, NH	24	1%	51	1%
Different State	258	6%	95	2%
Different Country	0	0%	0	0%

Source: U.S. Census



HOUSING

This section of this chapter discusses the current status and future needs of housing in Hinsdale. The current status of housing is described by examining a number of factors and characteristics that are collected by the U.S. Census. The future housing needs for Hinsdale are estimated based on other factors including projected population, the size of the workforce, the existing housing supply, and housing affordability metrics that consider incomes and average rents and home purchase prices.

An analysis of the population and housing statistics enables the Planning Board to estimate the level of Town services necessary to serve the expected growth and to see that it happens in an orderly manner; and to determine whether amendments to the zoning ordinance might be required in order to address any needs made apparent through the analysis. Following two important NH Supreme Court cases,¹ the concept of equal opportunity housing is now firmly established in the master plan process. In short, every town must, through its Master Plan, address the current and future housing need of all its residents; and in doing so must consider the housing situation in its neighboring towns as well.

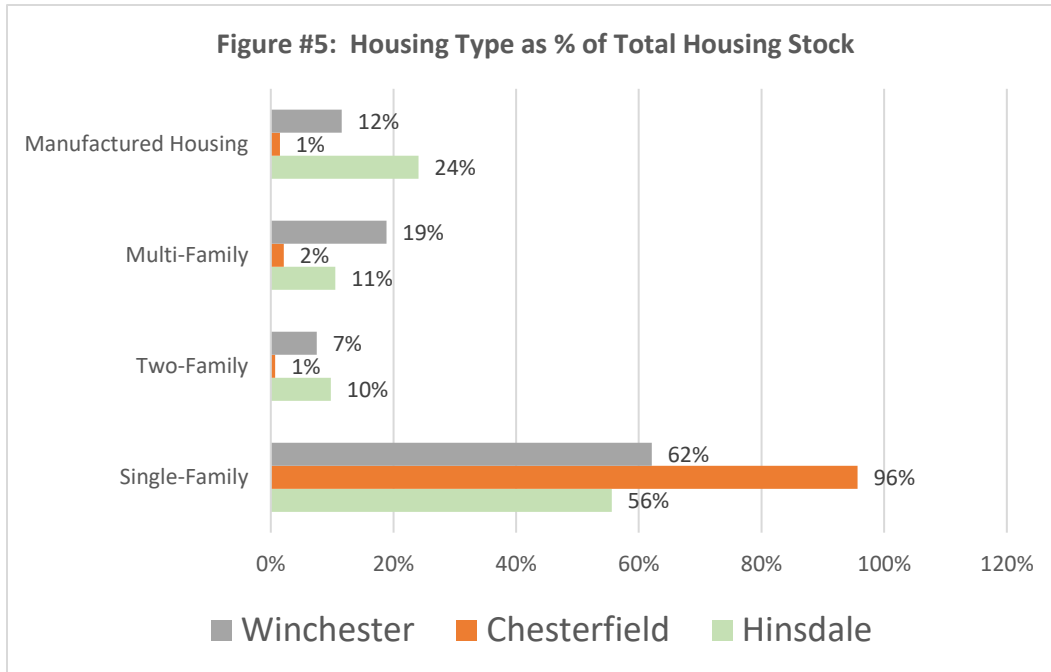
Housing Characteristics

The tables and graphs below depict aspects of Hinsdale’s housing supply along with a comparison to its immediate neighbors Chesterfield and Winchester. Table #16 presents the housing stock by type for the three towns as of 2022 based on Census estimates.

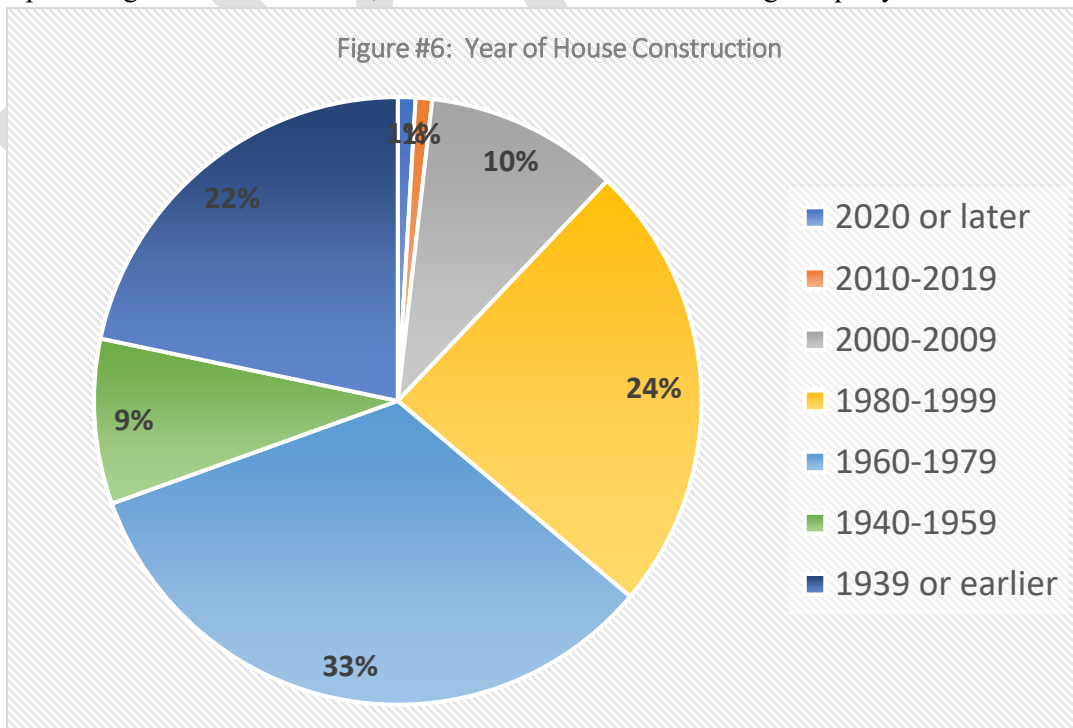
Table #16: 2022 Housing Stock for Hinsdale and Region			
	Hinsdale	Chesterfield	Winchester
Single-Family	898	1,307	1,004
Two-Family	158	10	121
Multi-Family	170	29	305
Manufactured Housing	389	20	187
Total	1,615	1,366	1,617
<i>Source: U.S. Census/American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>			

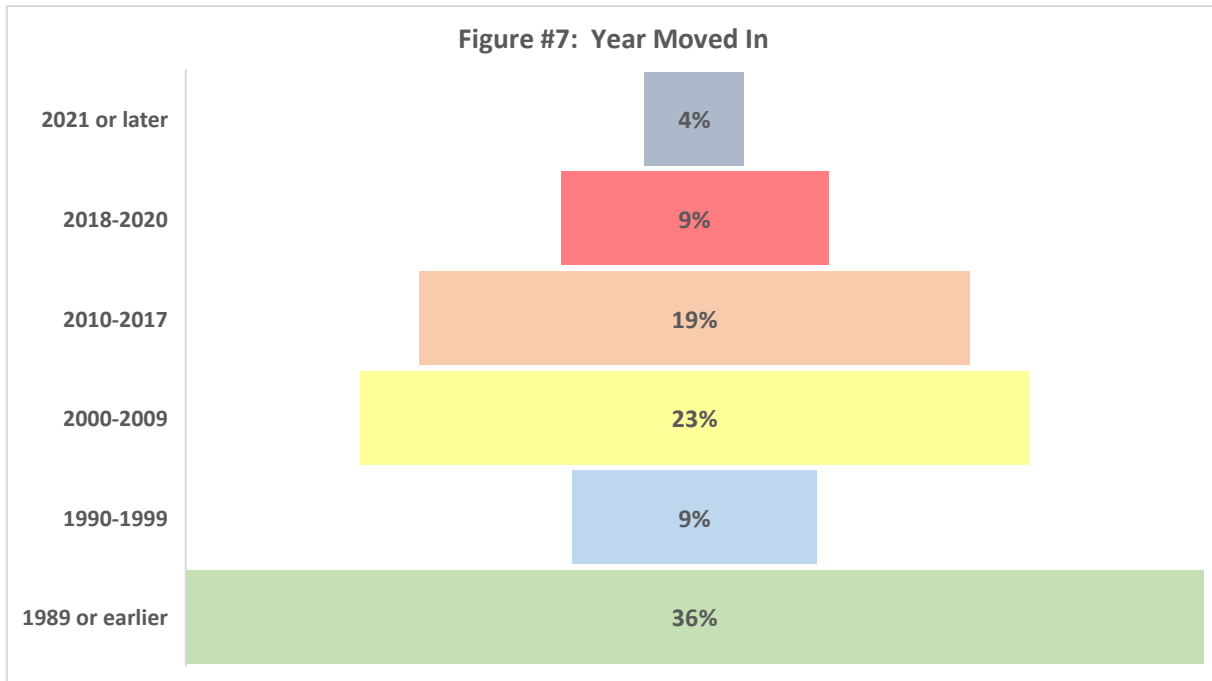
These three towns have similar populations and similar number of housing units. Where they differ is in particular housing types. Single-family homes are the predominant housing type in all three towns, however the percentages are quite different: Chesterfield’s housing stock is nearly 100% single-family, while Hinsdale’s and Winchester’s are 56 and 62 percent, respectively. Regarding duplex, multi-family, or manufactured housing, Hinsdale has the highest percentage of these housing types. [Note that for manufactured housing, if such a unit has been added onto, the Census no longer counts it as manufactured housing, but rather as a single-family dwelling.

¹ *Soares v. Atkinson*, 128 NH (1986) and *Britton v. Town of Chester*, 134 NH (1991). In both cases, the court held that the local zoning ordinance did not provide reasonable housing opportunity for low- and moderate-income residents.



The age of housing is included in a housing analysis because age can be an indicator of its condition. Generally, homes built prior to 1940 (or even later) are less energy-efficient and may have outdated heating, plumbing and electric systems – including some systems that would not pass today’s building codes. Even without system updates, older homes tend to be more expensive to maintain and to heat, adding to the cost of living for the home owner. In Hinsdale only 22% of its housing stock was built prior to 1940, and 57% was built between 1960 and 1999. While data on the condition of these particular houses are not available, the Census does show that there are no housing units in Hinsdale that lack complete plumbing or kitchen facilities, which is one indicator of housing adequacy.

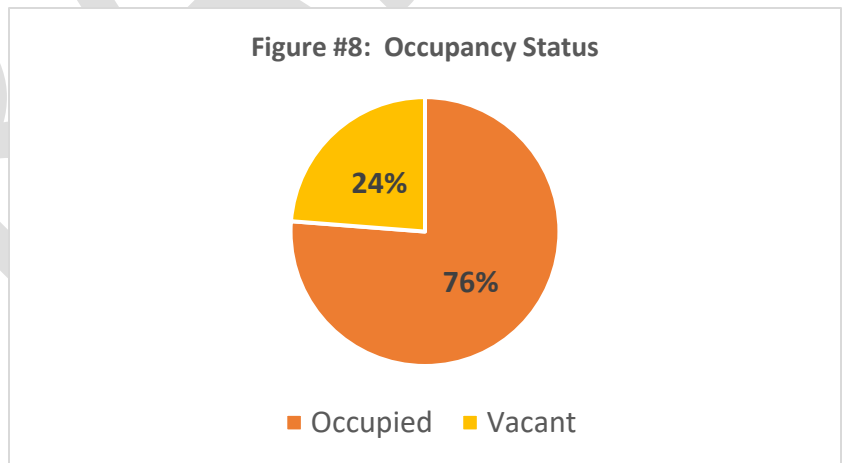




Census data on occupancy of Hinsdale’s housing units show that a majority (76%) of the housing units are occupied; nevertheless, the Town still has a surprising number of seasonal units, even though it isn’t typically associated with vacation destinations.

**Table #17:
Occupancy Status**

Occupied	1366
Vacant	426
For Rent	58
Seasonal	300
Other	68



**Table #18:
Occupancy Density**

Persons Per Unit		Persons Per Room	
1	326	1 or less	1,336
2	563	1.01 – 1.50	20
3	218	1.51 or more	10
4+	259		

Future Housing Need

The enabling statute relative to the development of Master Plans (RSA 674:2) requires that the housing section address current and future housing needs of all residents, at all income levels, of the town and the region in which it is located. The approach for addressing these needs has historically relied largely on population projections and person-per-unit ratios. The assessment utilized in this document deviates from that approach in that it is based on a broader methodology employed by the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) in its 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) ([Southwest New Hampshire regional housing needs assessment \(swrpc.org\)](https://www.swrpc.org)).

In preparing the RHNA, SWRPC worked with the other regional planning commissions in the state, the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), and the NH Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA). The methodology for developing the current and future housing needs was developed by Root Policy Research, an economic and planning consulting firm that specializes in housing issues, that was contracted by the BEA to develop the models and analyses.

▪ **Current Needs Assessment**

The first step in determining the future housing need is to determine what the current need is, in terms of housing that is affordable under the federal guidelines for affordability. An analysis developed by Root Policy Research examined gaps between housing demand and supply for both renters and home owners, presented in Tables #19 and #20 below. The tables include the information for Hinsdale’s two neighboring towns, since any town’s assessment must also consider the region in which it is located.

In this analysis, demand is represented as different ranges of household income, and supply is represented as different ranges of housing cost. Gaps are determined by comparing the number of households that could afford up to a certain price point (but no more than 30% of their income) to the number of housing units that are actually available to them. Note that area median income (AMI), as opposed to average income is used in these analyses, since an average can be skewed by very low or very high incomes.

Table #19: Rental Gap Analysis							
Income Level - Percent of Area Median Income							
	0-30%	31-50%	51-60%	60-80%	81-100%	101-120%	120%+
Hinsdale	-71	63	49	15	12	-15	-51
Chesterfield	-98	101	39	-18	-6	0	-19
Winchester	-98	205	-6	-16	-29	-11	-44

Source: Root Policy Research

This analysis shows that for Hinsdale and its neighbors, there are rental housing deficits at the lowest income level and at the three highest income level, and surpluses in the range above 30% and below 101% of the AMI. (The use of the term “surplus” is in the context of there being a “perfect” housing market where every household is matched with their ability to pay for housing at an affordable price.) In addition, the higher income ranges are almost all showing deficits, which reflects a lack of available rental units more than a lack of affordability. In the lowest income range, all three towns have deficits, which reflects both affordability and availability.

Table #20 presents the same analysis that was conducted for owners. The ownership gaps analysis compares renters, renter income levels, the maximum monthly housing payment they could afford, and the proportion of units in the market that were affordable to them. Renters are used for the demand side of

the ownership gaps analysis to capture renters’ ability to purchase a home (as opposed to measuring existing owners’ ability to buy and sell). The negative numbers represent housing deficits at each income level.

The analysis shows that Hinsdale has a lack of affordable homes to purchase in income ranges up to 60% of AMI; above that range, there is a surplus of affordable units. This distribution is roughly the same for Chesterfield, except at the highest income level, which as a deficit. Winchester shows a deficit for every income level except for the 81 – 100% of AMI.

Table #20: Ownership Gap Analysis							
Percent of Units Sold at or Below Maximum Affordable Home Price							
Income Level							
	0-30%	31-50%	51-60%	60-80%	81-100%	101-120%	120%+
Hinsdale	-49%	-25%	-10%	3%	31%	0%	50%
Chesterfield	-21%	-28%	-5%	9%	19%	28%	-3%
Winchester	-15%	-25%	-18%	-22%	96%	-2%	-13%

Source: Root Policy Research

▪ **Wages and Affordability**

Part of the RHNA was to examine the relationship between occupations and the ability to afford median housing costs – for both renters and owners. The two charts below are taken from the report and illustrate the findings from an examination of 15 occupations that are customarily found in the region.

Figure 50 illustrates, using the (at the time the report was prepared) 2022 median home price of \$295,500, there is not a single one of the 15 occupations that could afford to buy a home, at 30% of income, on a single income. The two highest earners – engineers and registered nurses, could afford a home priced at \$271,000 and \$236,000 respectively. *As of July 2024, the median sale price of homes in Hinsdale was \$298,000 ([Hinsdale Housing Market: House Prices & Trends | Redfin](#)). Even assuming an increase in wages since 2022, it is unlikely these wages would have increased enough to support buying a house today at a 30% affordability level.*

Figure 51 presents the same analysis conducted for renters. Renters fare slightly better than potential home owners. Using the median gross rent in 2022 of \$1,147, four of the 15 occupations would be able to afford the monthly rent on a single income. As of this writing, there are four rental units posted on Zillow, ranging from \$1350, \$1550 and \$1580 for three two-bedroom units, and \$1250 for a one-bedroom unit. These all exceed the median monthly affordable rent for the southwest region.

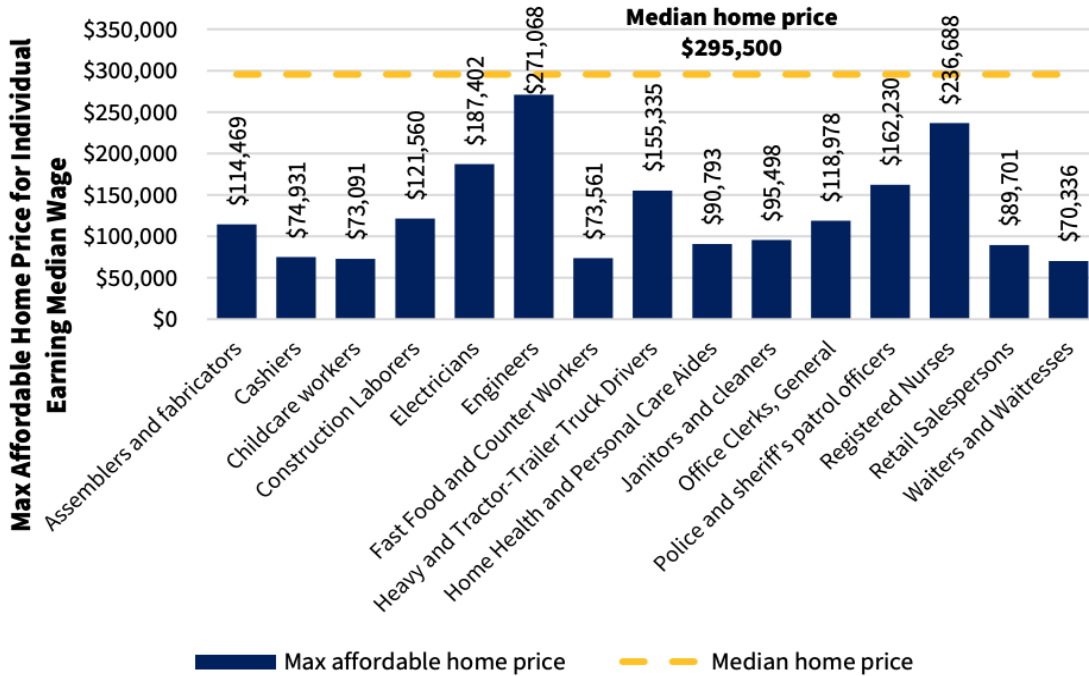


Figure 50: Affordability by Occupation, Southwest Region. Sources: MLS Data (Median Sold Price, Southwest Region 2022) and Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau (Employment and Wages)

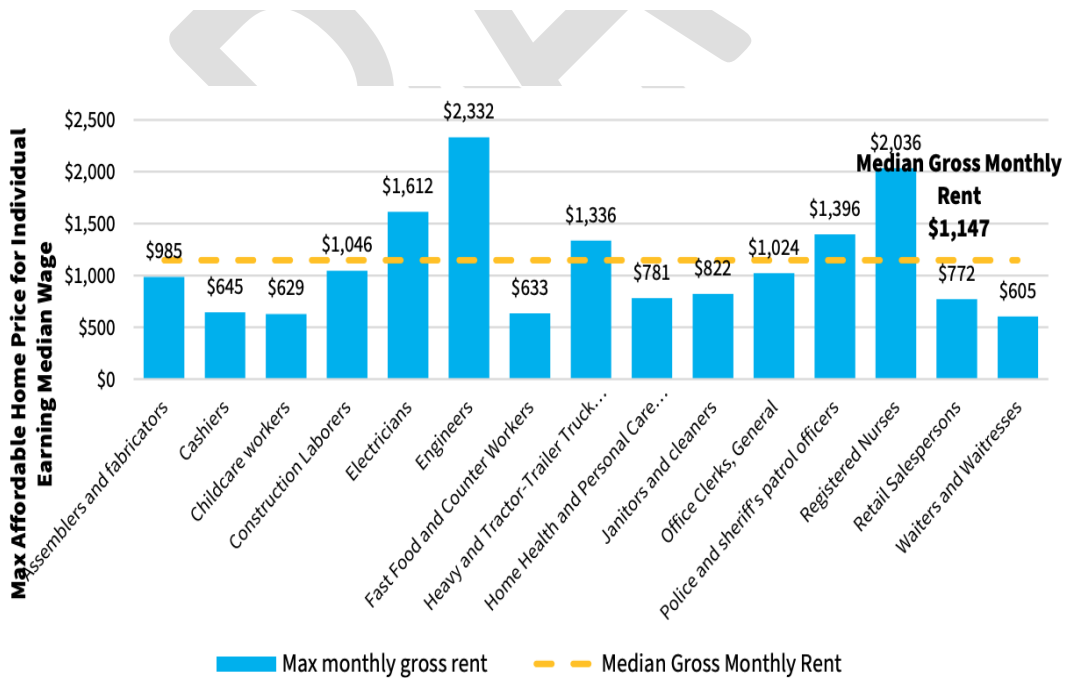


Figure 51: Affordability by Occupation, Southwest Region. Sources: New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (Median Gross Rent) and Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau (Employment and Wages)

▪ **Fair Share and Workforce Housing**

The SWRPC’s report notes that, since the previous regional assessment was completed in 2014, several new housing policies and laws have been enacted that were taken into consideration for the 2023 update. Furthermore, the regional housing needs assessment is intended to help the local municipalities determine whether they are in compliance with RSA 674:58-61, (the Workforce Housing statute) which says that all municipalities must provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for the development and their “fair share” of workforce housing.

▪ **Fair Share Distribution**

The housing production targets, in addition to facilitating housing analysis, are also viewed as addressing a town’s “fair share” of housing distribution within its region. Fair Share Analysis is a set of statistics that help illustrate regional housing needs projected into 2040, taking into account the current shortfall of housing units, a balanced market, and both rental and for-sale housing. Fair share housing needs are not a legal requirement, they are intended to show what is needed to have a balanced market across income levels. This assessment is not a mandate for communities to build such units; the assessment is intended to be used as a tool for individual communities to plan for future housing needs. Lastly, there is no penalty for a community that is unable to meet the housing unit target goals. It is important to bear in mind that the model represents a high-level planning exercise rather than a state-sanctioned legal test. The housing production targets should be viewed as aspirational and not mandated requirements. They are intended to facilitate a town-wide discussion on housing needs.

▪ **Future Housing Needs Projections**

The future housing needs projections presented in this section were developed by Root Policy Research. These projections take into account not only population growth, but also housing that would be needed to support workers that are anticipated from projected economic growth. This methodology differs from previous projections in that those projections were based largely on past population trends.

The housing unit projections in the report are offered as targets, as opposed to specific goals. It is important to bear in mind that the model represents a high-level planning exercise rather than a state-sanctioned legal test.² The housing production targets should be viewed as aspirational and not mandated requirements. They are intended to facilitate a town-wide discussion on housing needs.

Table #21 on the following page presents the housing targets for Hinsdale and its two neighboring towns in five-year increments, from 2025 to 2040. The targets are broken down by owners and renters and by Area Median Income (AMI), for those above and below the AMI.

Based on this methodology, Hinsdale would need 103 housing units by 2040 in order to meet the target for its proportion of the southwest region’s housing shortage. When looking at Table #21, note that the total for each of the five-year increments includes the number from the previous increment; for example: in 2025, the target is 46; in 2030 the target is 80 (46 + 34); in 2035 the target is 98 (80 + 18); and in 2040 the target is 103 (98 + 5).

Note that with each five-year increment, the number of additional units decreases because the methodology assumes the need for more units in the earlier years to compensate for the existing housing deficits. The data show that there is as much need for housing for those above the AMI – both owners and renters, as below, which illustrates the lack of availability as well as affordability.

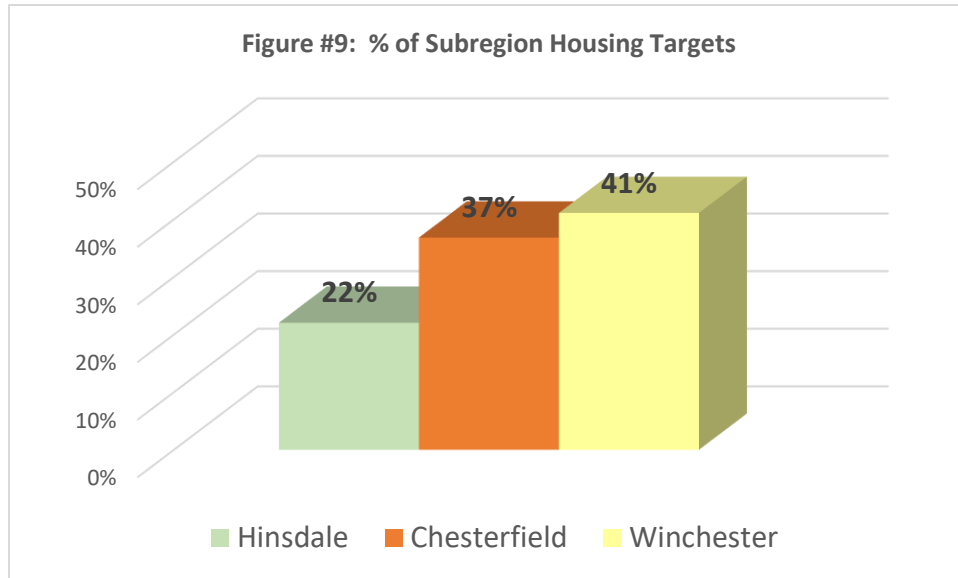
² Southwest New Hampshire Regional Housing Needs Assessment 2023; page 79.

Table #21: Housing Production Targets, 2025 - 2040 Hinsdale and Subregion							
	2025 Total	Owners Total	Below 100% AMI	Above 100% AMI	Renters Total	Below 60% AMI	Above 60% AMI
Hinsdale	46	30	25	5	16	6	10
Chesterfield	70	47	19	28	24	8	16
Winchester	79	53	24	28	27	7	20
	2030 Total	Owners Total	Below 100% AMI	Above 100% AMI	Renters Total	Below 60% AMI	Above 60% AMI
Hinsdale	80	52	43	9	28	10	18
Chesterfield	126	83	34	49	43	14	29
Winchester	141	93	43	50	48	12	36
	2035 Total	Owners Total	Below 100% AMI	Above 100% AMI	Renters Total	Below 60% AMI	Above 60% AMI
Hinsdale	98	62	52	10	36	13	23
Chesterfield	158	102	41	61	55	17	38
Winchester	177	115	52	63	62	15	47
	2040 Total	Owners Total	Below 100% AMI	Above 100% AMI	Renters Total	Below 60% AMI	Above 60% AMI
Hinsdale	103	63	54	9	40	14	26
Chesterfield	172	109	43	66	63	19	44
Winchester	192	122	54	68	70	16	54

Source: Root Policy Research

▪ **Subregional Housing Targets**

It is also interesting to compare the allocation of projected housing targets across the subregion. For example, Hinsdale is projected to have 22% of its subregion’s housing targets, the lowest of the three towns (see Figure #9 on the following page). By comparison, Hinsdale currently accounts for 35% of the total housing stock for the three towns.



Housing Opportunities in Hinsdale

Opportunities for housing production in Hinsdale is regulated by Hinsdale’s land use regulations: primarily by the Zoning Ordinance, with Subdivision and Site Plan Review Regulations also playing a role. The Zoning Ordinance prescribes what uses are allowed and where (by zoning district), standards related to lot sizes and setbacks, and any other supplemental regulations that might affect housing construction or reconstruction. The Subdivision Regulations dictate how new lots are developed; and the Site Plan Review Regulations address the development of multi-family units. These three documents have undergone an audit relating to housing opportunity and can be found under separate cover (Town of Hinsdale Regulatory Audit, August 2024).

Hinsdale has five distinct zoning districts, of which three permit housing as a use by right: Rural Agricultural; Residential; and Business. Table #22 on the following page presents each of the three zoning districts in Hinsdale that permit housing, along with the housing types that are permitted, and the accompanying lot and yard standards. Note that all of the districts also permit tourist homes and nursing homes, but these are not included in the table; a tourist home is not considered to be a typical full-time, permanent housing option, and a nursing home is more of a commercial-type facility than a customary home.

The three districts that permit housing allow three housing types: single-family; two-family; and multi-family. Single-family housing includes manufactured homes on individual lots. New manufactured housing parks are not permitted in Hinsdale, nor are the existing parks allowed to expand.

Table # 22: Housing Opportunities in Hinsdale		
Zoning District	Permitted Housing Types	Requirements
Rural Agricultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single-Family ▪ Two-Family ▪ Multi-Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 Acre ▪ 200-foot Frontage ▪ 35-foot Front Setback ▪ 20-foot Side & Rear Setback
Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single-Family ▪ Two-Family ▪ Multi-Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ½ Acre ▪ 100-foot Frontage ▪ 35-foot Front Setback ▪ 10-foot Side & Rear Setback
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single-Family ▪ Two-Family ▪ Multi-Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5,000 square feet ▪ 41-foot Frontage ▪ 0 Front Setback ▪ Party Walls for Side & Rear Setbacks
<i>Source: Hinsdale Zoning Ordinance 2024</i>		

Development Potential Under Current Zoning

Overall, housing availability in Hinsdale is broad. The three most common housing types are allowed in all zoning districts, and the lot and yard standards are not onerous. That being said, the lot standards for a Planned Residential Development are cumbersome and make it unlikely that such a project could be developed. Another issue is that the zoning ordinance does not permit new or expanded manufactured housing parks. This prohibition will need to be examined relative to state law that requires towns to allow reasonable and realistic expansion of existing manufactured housing parks.

Hinsdale is currently ‘missing’ housing units; by 2025 the Town is projected to be missing 46 units. At the current rate of housing growth, it seems unlikely that the town will add sufficient units between now and 2040, when the town will have needed to add 103 units, at least some of which should be available at workforce housing prices.

A factor not to be overlooked is not just the lack of housing units, but diversity in housing units. Hinsdale is quite diverse, as it has nearly 40% of its housing stock in other than single-family housing.

As part of this master plan update, an audit of the Zoning Ordinance was conducted to identify potential gaps or weaknesses in the ordinance relative to housing opportunities (available under separate cover).

GOALS & OBJECTIVES – from the 2014 Master Plan

Goal: To continue to provide areas in Hinsdale to allow for a diversity of housing opportunities while striving to enhance the visual and aesthetic qualities of both existing and proposed housing.

Objectives:

1. Support the preservation and maintenance of the existing and future housing stock through public and private actions.
2. Ensure the housing stock and residential development opportunities support the needs of residents and Hinsdale’s economic development goals.

DRAFT