FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Harrison is one of the few communities in Cumberland County with no townwide zoning. Instead, the Town regulates development through a series of targeted ordinances. Shoreland zoning protects areas near protected waters, while separate aquifer and floodplain regulations address groundwater protection and flood hazards. Subdivision and site plan ordinances govern how larger development proposals are designed and reviewed, including issues such as roads, utilities, open space, natural resources, traffic, and compatibility with surrounding areas. Harrison also regulates building permits, construction standards, new roads, and telecommunications towers.

Together, these ordinances provide standards for particular areas and types of development, but they do not establish townwide districts that determine where residential, commercial, or industrial uses should be located. As a result, development outside these regulated areas and activities is not currently guided by a townwide land-use map.

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan laid the groundwork for directing future growth. It called for orderly growth in appropriate areas, protection of Harrison's rural character, and efficient use of public services. The Plan recommended identifying locations suitable for different types of growth, encouraging commercial and service development along Routes 117 and 35, retaining agricultural land and open space, and designating rural areas through future land-use regulations. However, it did not establish a detailed townwide land-use framework, and its supporting data and implementation approach now require updating.

More recent planning efforts provide additional direction. The 2023 Downtown Revitalization Plan offers a current foundation for the Village, while the 2026 Comprehensive Plan workshops and community survey provide updated guidance on where residents would like to see growth and where they would like to protect rural character, open space, and natural resources. Together, these efforts provide the basis for refining Harrison's growth, transition, rural, and resource areas while recognizing that some locations remain subject to differing community views.

The Future Land Use Plan brings these efforts together into a clear geographic framework for future growth, conservation, and investment. It provides the policy basis for later decisions about zoning, subdivision, capital improvements, conservation, and infrastructure.

Mission: To encourage orderly growth, make efficient use of public services, protect Harrison's rural character, preserve open space, and limit sprawl by directing new development to appropriate areas through local ordinances.

72.4% support guiding growth to designated areas	**4** conceptual place types	**Town vote** required for future zoning

Note. The Plan itself does not change what a property owner may do with their land. Any future zoning ordinance or map would require separate drafting, public notice, hearings, legal review, and voter action to take effect.

INVENTORY & STATE REQUIREMENTS

Existing Land Use Regulations.

Harrison regulates land use through a series of targeted ordinances that apply to specific areas, activities, and types of development. A more detailed description of these regulations is provided in the Current Land Use Chapter on page ??.

Conceptual Place Types

VILLAGE GROWTH AREA. The Village Growth Area was developed from public input gathered through workshops and surveys. Residents generally supported directing growth to appropriate areas rather than allowing it to spread throughout town. Support for focusing growth specifically in the Village was more mixed, but 39% of survey respondents agreed that new housing and businesses should be located mostly near the Village Center. The 2023 Downtown Revitalization Action Plan also identifies the Village as the focus of long-term investment. This approach supports Harrison's vision of allowing modest, intentional growth in suitable locations while protecting rural character, natural resources, and small-town identity.

The Village has both natural opportunities and constraints. Existing public water service, established roads, parks, public spaces, and the waterfront support continued investment and infill development. At the same time, development must take into account nearby shorelands, wetlands, and water resources.

The Village Growth Area is intended to accommodate a greater mix and intensity of development than other areas. Suitable uses may include small shops and services,

mixed-use buildings, smaller homes, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and appropriately scaled multifamily housing.

Long-term planning is already guiding municipal investment in the Village. The Downtown Plan calls for improvements to sidewalks, streetscapes, parks, building façades, utilities, broadband, and parking. It also recommends studying a central wastewater system, which could support additional housing and businesses while helping protect water quality.

The Village Growth Area should include all parcels within the proposed Downtown TIF District. The TIF could help fund eligible infrastructure, planning, streetscape, façade, and economic development projects. Including the full TIF area would better connect the Future Land Use Plan with the Town's ongoing downtown investment and infrastructure efforts. Final boundaries should be based on parcel and infrastructure analysis, natural-resource information, and public review.

TRANSITION & EMPLOYMENT AREAS. Transition & Employment Areas provide locations outside the Village Growth Area for small businesses, mixed uses, and housing. Public input identified Routes 117 and 35 as suitable locations for this type of growth.

At the first public workshop, residents placed residential and commercial growth points on maps of Harrison to show where they thought future growth would be appropriate. Residential growth points were somewhat more common along Routes 117 and 35. Commercial growth was focused mainly in the Village and along Route 117, with some interest along Route 35. These results helped form the basis for this conceptual place type.

Additional public input showed a preference for limited or small- to mid-sized business growth rather than large commercial or industrial development. Residents favored stand-alone small businesses and home-based businesses, with little support for strip-mall development. Residential development in these areas should generally remain lower in intensity than in the Village Growth Area and result in low- to moderate-density neighborhoods.

Routes 117 and 35 provide good access for businesses and employment uses, but development must account for road safety, access management, parcel size, utilities, and nearby natural resources. Growth should be concentrated in defined nodes rather than continuous roadside development.

Major public investments may include road and intersection improvements, access management, broadband, stormwater systems, and other utilities needed to support business and residential growth. Survey respondents identified parking, broadband, sewer, and roads as major limits on future business growth, so infrastructure capacity should help determine the final location and size of these areas.

RURAL AREAS. Most land outside the Village Growth Area and Transition & Employment Areas should remain rural. These areas are intended for low-density housing, farming, forestry, recreation, and small rural businesses. Rural Areas should include, where practical, working farms, woodlots, land enrolled in current-use tax programs, prime agricultural soils, and other lands that support Harrison's rural economy. This approach supports Harrison's vision of preserving the town's rural character, open space, and natural resources.

Development would continue to be allowed in Rural Areas, but at a lower density and intensity than in the Village Growth Area or Transition & Employment Areas. New homes and small businesses should fit the rural landscape.

Rural Areas contain important assets, including Harrison's forests, undeveloped lands, and farmlands. At the same time, wetlands, streams, wildlife habitat, steep or poorly drained land, and other natural features may limit where development is appropriate. The State also requires rural development patterns to be compatible with rural character and to avoid strip development along roads.

Public input supports this approach. Residents favored preserving rural character, open space, farmland, trees, and access to nature. Workshop participants preferred smaller-scale development and expressed concern about large, spread-out subdivisions and developments without tree buffers.

Municipal infrastructure is not intended to encourage growth in Rural Areas. Town investment would generally focus on maintaining existing roads, public safety, and other services rather than extending infrastructure to support higher-density development.

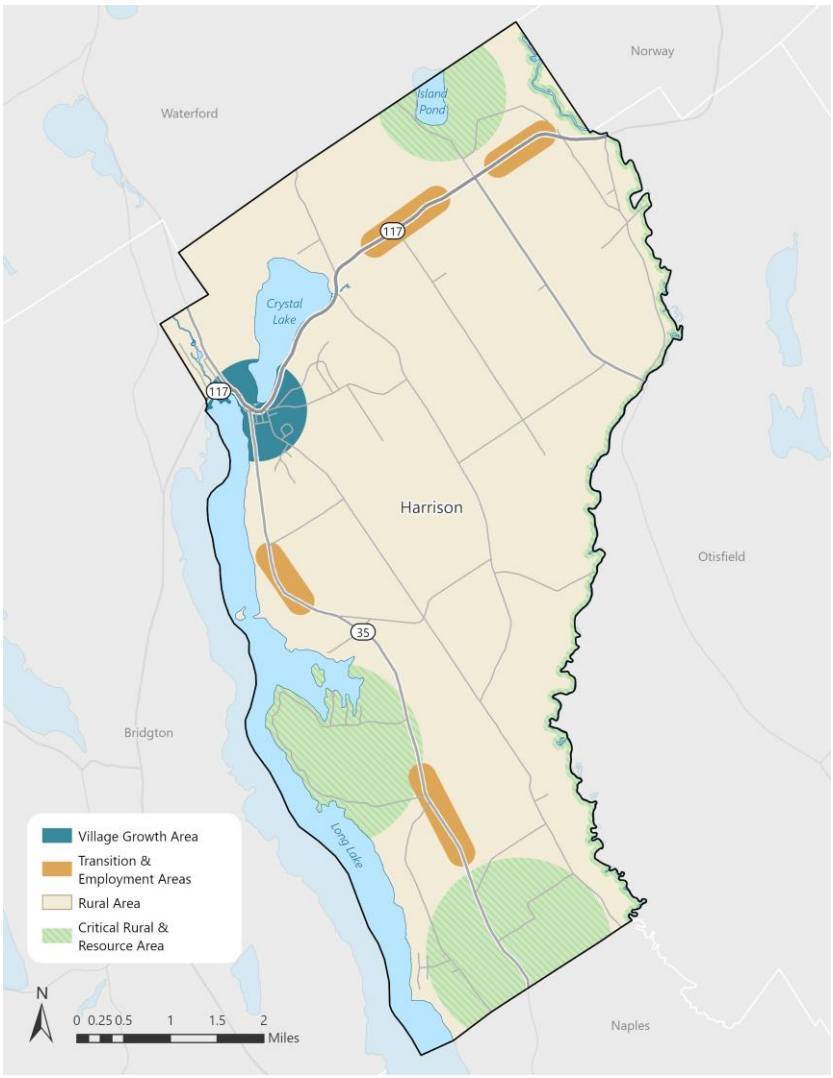
CRITICAL RURAL AND RESOURCE AREAS. State rules allow communities to designate Critical Rural Areas where high-value habitat, forest land, vulnerable natural resources, or other important rural lands warrant greater protection. Harrison has shaped its Critical Rural and Resource Areas around the Crooked River corridor, the Jugtown Plains Focus Area, mapped Significant Wildlife Habitat, large habitat blocks and connections, and areas where several important natural resources overlap. Designating them as a specific conceptual place type within the comprehensive plan helps advance Harrison's vision of preserving its rural character, open space, water quality, and natural resources.

- **The Crooked River corridor** is a major priority because it provides significant spawning habitat for Landlocked Salmon and supports Wild Brook Trout. It is also part of a larger network of wetlands, wildlife connections, and conserved open space.

- **Jugtown Plains**, in southern Harrison, contains a concentration of important natural resources and is part of a larger Focus Area shared with Casco, Naples, and Otisfield. Its sandy soils can make parts of the area especially sensitive to certain types of development and land disturbance.
- **Other important resources** include several habitat blocks larger than 500 acres, two mapped Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitats, one known Significant Vernal Pool, two proposed Deer Wintering Areas, and habitat for Blanding's Turtle, Wood Turtle, and Small-whorled Pogonia.

Development would not be prohibited in these areas, but it should remain low density and low intensity. Appropriate uses may include low-density housing, forestry, agriculture, recreation, and other rural uses that can be located without significantly affecting sensitive resources.

Major municipal infrastructure should not be extended into these areas to encourage growth. Public investment would instead focus on protecting existing infrastructure and natural systems, such as improving stream crossings, maintaining road resilience, supporting habitat connectivity, and pursuing conservation projects when funding and willing landowners are available. Final boundaries should be based on current Beginning with Habitat data, parcel analysis, conserved lands, adjoining municipal designations, and public review.



<u>State Requirement</u>: Is the configuration of the growth area(s) shaped by natural opportunities and/or constraints (i.e. the physical suitability or unsuitability of land for development)? The location of public facilities? The transportation network?

The Village Growth Area is shaped by both natural opportunities and constraints. It already functions as Harrison's town center and is supported by established roads, parks, public spaces, public water, and other community infrastructure. The proposed Downtown TIF District and possible future wastewater service identified in the 2023 Downtown Revitalization Plan could further support housing and business growth. At the same time, nearby shorelands, wetlands, water resources, Crystal Lake, and Long Lake limit where and how development can occur.

<u>State Requirement</u>: How can critical natural resources and important natural resources be effectively protected from future development impacts?

Critical and Important Natural Resources can be protected by directing higher-intensity growth away from sensitive areas and using development standards that reduce impacts where development does occur.

Within the Village Growth Area and Transition & Employment Areas, development near sensitive resources can use setbacks, buffers, stormwater controls, and careful site design to protect shorelands, wetlands, water resources, and other mapped resources.

Within Rural Areas, conservation subdivisions, open-space protection, buffers, shared driveways, and careful placement of buildings, roads, and driveways can reduce clearing, fragmentation, and impacts on forests, farmland, streams, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

The strongest protections would apply within Critical Rural and Resource Areas. Development should avoid the most sensitive resources, maintain large habitat blocks and wildlife connections, protect stream and wetland buffers, and limit unnecessary clearing and fragmentation. Possible tools include conservation design, larger buffers, shared access, habitat-connectivity standards, conservation easements, and voluntary land protection. State-defined Critical Natural Resources should be clearly mapped and protected from incompatible development to the greatest extent practicable. Public investment can also support resource protection through improved stream crossings, road resilience, habitat connectivity, and conservation projects.

Implementation Relationship

A comprehensive plan that is consistent with state law provides the policy basis for future land-use ordinances. Any townwide zoning should remain simple, with a limited number of districts, clear standards for allowed uses, lot size and building height, and an administrative system the Town can reasonably manage.

Before adoption, the final zoning map should be tested against existing lots and uses, housing capacity, infrastructure costs, natural resources, property rights, and regional responsibilities. Existing lawful uses should be treated fairly, and the ordinance should include clear procedures for nonconforming uses, appeals, amendments, and enforcement.

TRENDS

Harrison has strengthened its development review through updated shoreland, subdivision, site-plan, floodplain, building, and permitting rules. The Future Land Use Plan adds a townwide framework for guiding where different types and levels of development should occur and can begin guiding capital investment, conservation efforts, and grant applications before any future zoning ordinance is adopted

***State Requirement*: How does the Future Land Use Plan relate to recent development trends?**

Recent development in Harrison has been mostly residential, low-density, and dispersed throughout town. From April 2018 through March 2025, the Town reported 184 permits for new homes, along with additional mobile and modular homes. Subdivision activity has also continued to create new residential lots, roads, and other infrastructure.

Harrison property data from 2016 to 2026 shows a similar pattern. New development has occurred in many parts of Harrison, including along Routes 35 and 117, near lake shorelines, and on rural roads, rather than being concentrated in one area. Planning Board activity over the same period also shows a mix of subdivisions, new roads and driveways, shoreline construction and reconstruction, commercial and home-based uses, campsites, solar development, and other projects on developed and previously undeveloped land.

The Future Land Use Plan responds to recent development trends by providing clearer direction for where future growth should occur. It builds on the existing concentration of development in the Village and along Routes 117 and 35, while seeking to reduce scattered development in rural and environmentally sensitive areas.

***State Requirement*: Given current regulations, development trends, and population projections, estimate how many new residential units and how much commercial, institutional, and/or industrial development will likely occur in the planning period? Where is this development likely to go?**

Based on projected population change and declining household size, Harrison is estimated to need about 63 additional owner-occupied homes and 15 to 20 rental units during the planning period, for a total of roughly 78 to 83 new housing units. Actual housing production may differ from this population-based estimate, particularly if demand for seasonal homes continues. The Town should therefore track new housing by type and location throughout the planning period.

Future housing is expected to be distributed across several areas rather than concentrated in one place. The Village Growth Area is intended to accommodate the largest share of new housing through multifamily, mixed-use, and other higher-density development. Transition & Employment Areas are expected to accommodate the next largest share through low- to moderate-density neighborhoods that may include duplexes and modestly sized single-family homes. Some low-density residential development is also expected to continue in Rural Areas, while future growth in Critical Rural and Resource Areas should remain the most limited.

Available data do not support a reliable numerical estimate of future commercial, institutional, or industrial development. Recent trends and public input instead suggest continued small-scale commercial and employment growth, concentrated mainly in the Village and designated nodes along Routes 117 and 35.

No major institutional or industrial development is currently projected. Institutional uses may expand as community needs change, while industrial development is expected to remain limited in scale.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Public input showed strong support for managing and directing growth, although there was less agreement about exactly where that growth should occur. At the 2026 community workshop, about 40% of the 117 residential mapping points identified places where participants wanted growth, while about 60% identified places where they did not. Residential growth points were somewhat more concentrated along Route 35, Route 117, and Bolsters Mills Road. Denser multifamily development was most often associated with the Village, while participants generally favored a mix of mid-density and lower-density development elsewhere. Areas identified for little or no growth included locations around Crystal Lake and the northern portion of Long Lake, including Cape Monday. Considerable overlap between growth and no-growth points in some locations indicates that additional neighborhood-level discussion will be needed when boundaries are refined.

Commercial mapping showed a somewhat clearer preference for directing growth to established corridors and centers. 57% percent of the 87 commercial mapping points identified locations for growth, concentrated primarily in the Village and along Route 117, and to a lesser extent Route 35. Participants generally favored stand-alone small businesses, home-based businesses, and mixed-use Village development, while few supported strip-mall-style development. Growth and no-growth points again overlapped in some areas, particularly the Village and Route 117 corridor, although growth points outnumbered no-growth points in both locations.

The community survey reinforced the broader preference for guiding growth rather than allowing it to occur without direction. 77% of respondents favored directing growth to specific areas rather than limiting regulations, and 72% said Harrison should guide future development. At the same time, support for concentrating housing and businesses specifically in the Village was more mixed: 39% supported that approach, 35% opposed it, and about one-quarter were neutral. Focusing growth near the Village also ranked relatively low when respondents were asked to rank eleven community priorities. For business development, however, 30% preferred the Village Center and another 23%

preferred designated commercial or industrial areas, while only 19% favored limiting new business development townwide.

Taken together, the results support a measured approach that directs growth to appropriate locations while preserving rural character, open space, and natural resources. The Future Land Use Plan therefore identifies areas where somewhat greater development may be appropriate while maintaining most of Harrison as rural or resource-focused land. This approach is consistent with the workshop's broader themes of conservation, rural character, and slow, intentional growth, rather than establishing a rapid growth target.

Vision Statement

> *Harrison will guide modest, intentional growth to places that can support it while preserving clean waters, open lands, historic village character, and the friendly rural qualities residents value. The town will expand year-round housing and small business opportunities, maintain reliable public services, and make transparent investments that future generations can afford.*

State Requirement: Does the Future Land Use Plan align and/or conflict with the community's vision statement?

The Future Land Use Plan closely aligns with Harrison's vision. It directs greater development toward the Village and selected areas along Routes 35 and 117, while keeping most of the town rural and providing stronger protection for important natural-resource areas.

It also emphasizes protecting Harrison's waters, open lands, historic village character, and rural qualities. The Future Land Use Plan reflects those priorities by designating most of the town as rural and identifying Critical Rural and Resource Areas for stronger protection. Future ordinance work can build on this framework by determining how development should be limited or managed within and near these important resources.

GOALS & ACTIONS

1. **Adopt a Future Land Use Plan to guide growth and conservation efforts.**
    - Town Staff will refine the proposed growth, transition, rural, and resource areas using parcel, infrastructure, service, and natural-resource data; conduct neighborhood map reviews; and document public and agency input. (By 2027)
    - The Planning Board will develop conservation, siting, buffering, and connectivity standards to protect designated Critical Rural and Resource Areas from incompatible development.

- The Selectboard will advance the Future Land Use Plan after state, legal, mapping, and public review. (By 2027)

2. **Align Town ordinances and investments with the Future Land Use Plan.**
   - The Planning Board will propose amendments to existing land-use ordinances and standards to reflect the desired uses, scale, density, and intensity identified for each Future Land Use area. (Within two years of adoption)
   - The Selectboard will use the Future Land Use Plan to guide financial commitments by prioritizing infrastructure needed to support designated growth areas, along with conservation, housing, economic development, and grant projects. (Ongoing)
   - The Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee will report on the Town's progress in carrying out the Future Land Use Plan. (Annually)
3. **Implement the Future Land Use Plan through simple townwide zoning.**
   - The Planning Board will draft a limited zoning ordinance and map based on the Future Land Use Plan that establishes clear, predictable, and efficient permitting procedures, particularly within designated growth areas. (2029–2031)
   - Town Staff will evaluate the proposed zoning's effects and coordinate public notice, neighborhood meetings, hearings, and revisions. (Before a zoning vote)
   - The Selectboard will submit the zoning ordinance and map to voters and fund administration if adopted. (After public review)

STATE-REQUIRED GOALS & ACTIONS

4. **Coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.**
   - The Planning Board will review neighboring comprehensive plans and zoning when developing or amending Harrison's land-use ordinances to reduce conflicts along municipal boundaries.
   - The Town will participate in regional planning and conservation efforts involving shared resources, including the Crooked River, Jugtown Plains, transportation corridors, and other cross-boundary resources.
   - The Town will coordinate with neighboring communities on shared infrastructure and natural-resource issues, including roads, culverts, water resources, and habitat connections that cross municipal boundaries.