

The Shutesbury Zoning Proposal in a Nutshell

Shutesbury completed and adopted its first master plan in 2004. Since then the Planning Board has worked to overhaul the Shutesbury Zoning Bylaw in order to help implement the master plan. The zoning revisions can be described as having the following themes:

Diversify Housing Choices

To meet the needs of individuals and families of all ages and means, the proposed zoning bylaw allows more housing types than most rural zoning bylaws in Massachusetts. Accessory apartments within single-family dwellings, which are already allowed in the current zoning, are made easier to permit. Two-family dwellings will require less area and frontage, but are subject to site plan review. For the first time, three- and four-family dwellings are possible by special permit. Additional area and frontage are required for each additional dwelling unit proposed, and for two-, three-, and four-family dwellings an owner-occupancy requirement has been added.

Support the Local Economy

The zoning proposal encourages local businesses appropriate for Shutesbury. In addition to customary home occupations, a new category of home business has been added—Major Home Occupation. These more extensive home-based businesses are available with a special permit. Many new stand-alone businesses types are offered in the zoning proposal such as vehicle repair station, barber or beauty shop, craft workshop, light industry, recreational business, and office.

Increase Design Flexibility

Most zoning actually inhibits good design, even though people can be very creative if given the opportunity. This zoning proposal includes new options for designing and accessing residential neighborhoods. The Open Space Design process is much more flexible in terms of lot sizes, frontages, setbacks, and roadways/common driveways than is conventional subdivision. A new Flexible Frontage option allows greater use of shared driveways to keep Shutesbury's roadsides green while offering density bonuses for the landowner.

Protect Natural Resources and Open Space

The current Shutesbury zoning bylaw makes no provision for the retention of open space; all land is programmed for development. The new zoning proposal links open space conservation to land development to help conserve Shutesbury's large blocks of forest land and what is left of the Town's undeveloped roadsides.

Create Zoning Districts that Make Sense

The present zoning map has only one district, treating the entire town the same way. This ignores the real differences and qualities of various areas in Shutesbury. The new zoning proposal envisions four, character-based zoning districts—Town Center, Lake Wyola, Roadside Residential, and Forest Conservation—with uses and dimensional requirements tailored to each.

Fix Problems in the Current Zoning

Many small fixes and clarifications were made, including correction of a serious problem for homeowners living on lots with less than 90,000 square feet of area and/or 250 feet of frontage. Currently, Shutesbury's zoning does not allow for the construction of detached buildings on these undersized lots (such as garages, sheds, or barns) without first obtaining a difficult zoning variance. The new zoning proposal alleviates this problem for homeowners.

For questions and info contact the Planning Board at (413) 259-1764 or planning@shutesbury.org
The complete text of the proposed bylaw and additional explanatory materials are available at the Town Hall and Library, and on the Town's web site.