

Newmarket Growing into a 'bedroom community' has officials worried about the future

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NEWMARKET — Nothing is permanent except change. And although necessary, change often brings problems. Newmarket is facing its share of problems now. Homes and condominiums are masking the land and causing such a rate of growth in the town that many problems are cropping up.

"Acres and acres of open space are disappearing," said Board of Selectmen Chairwoman JoAnne Hauschel earlier this month.

The land is being hungrily gulped up by developers, and the town's tremendous growth is high on the list of priorities residents and officials are now trying to address because, according to officials, the housing boom is putting a strain on municipal services, including the school system.

In 1980 the town's main concern was the protection of its important natural, scenic and historic resources, and also that some action be taken to support the town's ethnic and cultural diversity and stable family life.

But by 1984, primary concern shifted to stabilizing and strengthening the local business economy and, in particular, the downtown business area. While earlier priorities are still important to residents, they are no longer the main focus.

"We need business and industry to balance off the residential building," Mrs. Hauschel said recently.

She said the town has, as of November, tightened up its zoning ordinance regulations to control residential growth. For instance, sewer and water access is now more difficult to obtain and addi-

tions to starter homes are limited to two bedrooms.

"It (action to implement a stricter zoning ordinance) is always after the fact and there is a limit to how strict the ordinance can be," Mrs. Hauschel said. "State laws leave very little room about what you can and cannot do."

Still, the need to regulate growth is obvious to most townspeople.

Selectman Ron Coker said Newmarket is not the same town he grew up in. "Going around town is like going from one little city to another," he said.

Coker remembers seeing only 20 cars pass on Main Street during a whole night some 20 years ago. "Now 20 cars go by in 20 minutes."

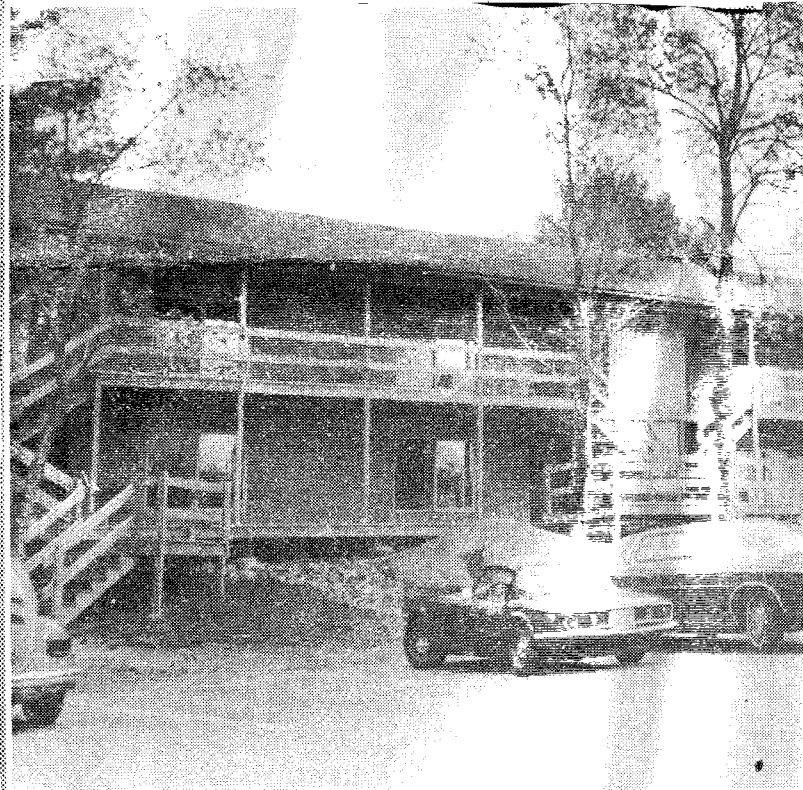
"The roads are overloaded and so are the town services," he said.

Planning Board Chairman Clarence Hodsdon said it is the type of growth, not the growth itself, that creates problems. "It's becoming a bedroom town and that's not good," he said, stating a balance between industry and apartment complexes is needed because of the strain put on town services.

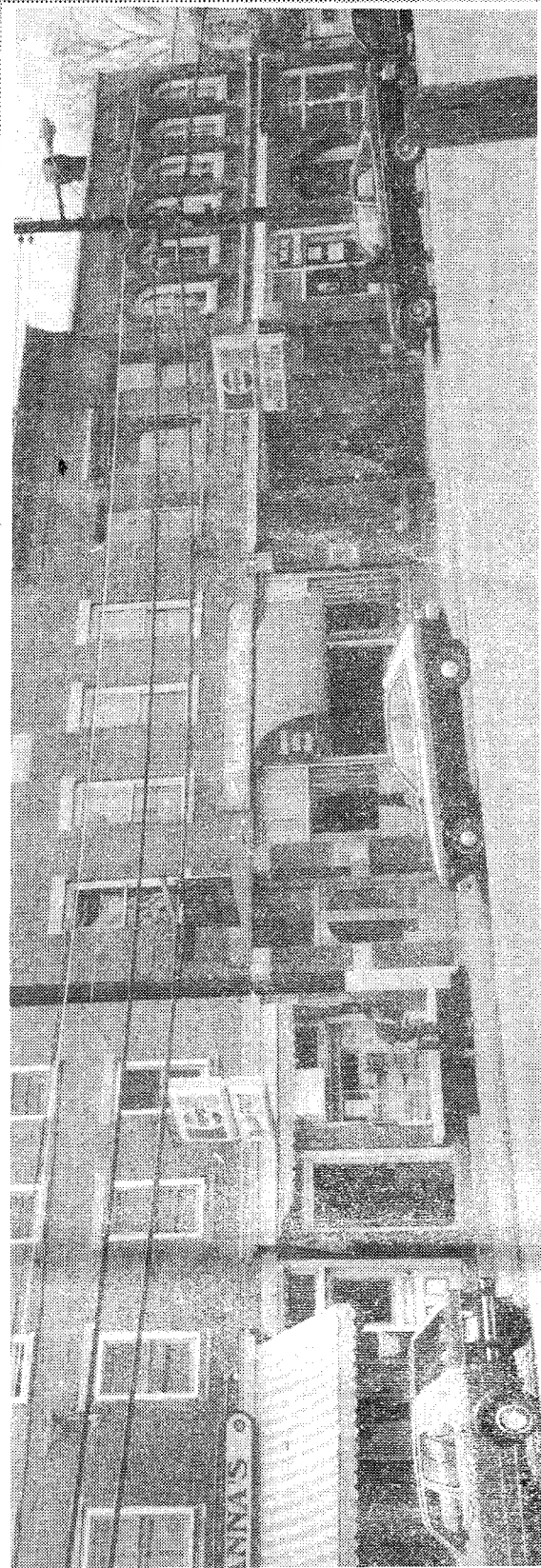
Police Chief Paul Gahan said he is "pretty sure" another full-time policeman will have to be hired as a result of Newmarket's rapid expansion.

Mrs. Hauschel said the largest area of growth has been in the construction of apartments and condominiums. "It's grown tremendously in the last 10 years and the last five have been even worse," she said.

Water permits and housing permit requests have been flooding in. "We're booked two to three months in advance now," said Mrs. Hauschel, who was secretary



The Twin River condominiums, left photo, less than a year old, are an example of the many units of housing constructed in Newmarket in recent years. The Town Hall, center photo

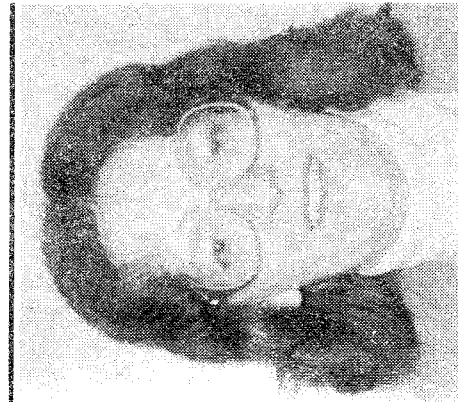


Newmarket's downtown is its only business district.

(Democrat photo — Consalvi)

“We need business and industry to balance off the residential building.”

— JoAnne Hauschel



of the Planning Board until early May.

Has anything other than the passage of a zoning ordinance been done to address the problems of explosive growth in Newmarket?

Sarah James, director of the Community Development Corp., said although a new firm has moved into the Newmarket Industrial Park on Route 108, little else has been done in following through on a 1984 plan developed by the corporation to increase industry in Newmarket.

According to Ms. James, there are insufficient guidelines, techni-

est in business development among the community as well.

“Thirty-three percent (of 152 polled) said they thought businesses would be positive for the community; 33 percent said they did not think it would be helpful and 33 percent said they were not sure if it would be helpful,” Ms. James said.

Nicholas Popov, a member of the Citizens Policy Advisory Committee, said he has two spaces on Main Street to rent but has hesitated because he is not sure what type of businesses the community desires.

“I’m looking for more than the money value,” he said, adding he wants a business that would benefit the town.

Barbara Carpenter, another advisory member, said one reason for lack of action and interest could be the unwillingness elderly townspeople express toward change. “People don’t like to be told what to do. The elderly seem satisfied with the way things are,” she said.

Ms. Carpenter added that those over age 65, who comprise some 12 to 14 percent of Newmarket’s population, are very independent.

Advisory committee member Edna Deane said the small amount of time selectmen and other officials can contribute to the town adds to problems of deal-

ing with growth.

“Selectmen are overloaded,” she said. “Newmarket is getting too big; it is not realistic to expect three people to be able to do such a large job.”

Mrs. Hauschel said the amount of time town officials contribute is not for the sole purpose of addressing town growth. “We’re really not here to beat the bushes and bring industry in, although we’re working hard to encourage it.”

She said it is the job of the Community Development Corp. to “tunnel things into the town.”

Now, however, a limited number of townspeople are interested in attracting industry.

These citizens, over the past month, have been holding public meetings with a hired town planner to outline impending problems and possible solutions. Among the issues they are addressing are severe overcrowding in the school system and the need for better housing for municipal services. They are also focusing attention toward the zoning and site-plan review regulations.

According to advisory committee member Pat Manley, it is the urgency of these problems that has spurred these people to organize.

“People have to see things as an absolute crisis before they do anything about it,” she said.