

EXISTING LAND USE

This Chapter is a portion of the Inventory and Analysis section of the York Comprehensive Plan. Its purpose is to provide information about how land is used and how land use has changed because understanding of this information is a foundation for formulation of land use policies elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan.

The text of this Chapter is organized into 4 sections: land cover (what is physically on the ground); land use (economic use of the land); new construction (buildings constructed since the adoption of the 1981 Comprehensive Plan); and unfragmented blocks (important habitat areas without roads or buildings). Following the text there is a series of appendices containing reduced-size maps. In plans, land use information is traditionally presented in map form. This chapter includes 5 large (22” by 34”) maps. These large maps convey the same information as that in the reductions, but at a scale that is more easily read and interpreted. A complete citation, with map title and date, is provided in the appropriate section of the text.

Comprehensive Plans in Maine must comply with the legal requirements of state law, specifically Title 30-A §4326. The law establishes that land use policy must be based on information and analysis, and accordingly the law establishes that comprehensive plans must contain an Inventory and Analysis section. This Chapter is one part of the Inventory and Analysis section of the York Comprehensive Plan. This Chapter, and others being prepared at this time, marks a change in format for the Plan. The Inventory and Analysis section is being converted to a series of technical reports on individual subjects (population, housing, land use, natural resources, etc.). Each is complete as a stand-alone report on its specific subject, but taken as a set they comprise the complete Inventory and Analysis section. This new format should encourage the Town to keep the Plan up to date, and should increase public access to information contained in the Inventory and Analysis. During the transition from a single Inventory and Analysis section to a series of single-subject reports, some degree of overlap of content and information is expected. For purposes of interpretation, the most current document shall supersede any earlier version or chapter of the Inventory and Analysis section. When the entire set of Inventory and Analysis chapters is adopted, the 1999 Inventory and Analysis section of the York Comprehensive Plan can be repealed.

Land Cover

Land cover is a description of physical cover of the ground. It is possible, though time-consuming, to manually interpret land cover from the aerial photography. Because of the size and terrain of the community, data for analysis of ground cover was derived from freely-available satellite data. This data is analyzed and displayed in the Town’s Geographic Information System (GIS).

Comprehensive Plan – York, Maine

The Land Use/Land Cover (LULC) data used for this analysis was collected by the United State Geological Survey (USGS) and is processed and classified in conjunction with other agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Forest Service (USFS). It is the GIS-industry standard to evaluate and quantify land cover over broad areas (typically larger than a single town) because up-to-date data is readily available and standardized methods of interpretation and analysis have been developed. The information is derived by satellite sensors' detection of changes in light reflection from the Earth's surface. The LULC data is generated in grids of 30 meters by 30 meters, which is a rather large area. The result is a very coarse level of information that does not reflect small areas or subtle changes in land cover. Aerial photography taken in April 2003 was used to verify and adjust the display of the data to reflect the real world features. Even as corrected, the satellite data is of limited accuracy and value for town-level analysis because York has more accurate data available.

The map entitled, “**Land Cover in 2003, York Comprehensive Plan, Inventory and Analysis, Existing Land Use Chapter**” with a date of January 5, 2004, is hereby incorporated into this document by reference. A reduced copy of this map is included in Appendix A. The following table describes the information displayed in this map.

Land Use By Type		
<i>Classification</i>	<i># Acres</i>	<i>% Area</i>
Developed	7,813	21%
Residential	5,356	14%
Commercial	492	1%
Urban or Built-Up	957	3%
Mines, Quarries, Gravel Pits	95	0%
Transportation	913	2%
Undeveloped	29,762	79%
Forest	24,680	66%
Cropland and Pasture	1,704	5%
Bare Rock/Sand	677	2%
Bays and Estuaries	267	1%
Streams and Canals	454	1%
Lakes	838	2%
Wetlands	1,142	3%
Total	37,575	100%

The land cover data shows 20% of the area of York as developed land. Residential use accounts for the vast majority of the developed land, and even where the satellites could only determine the land is “urban or built-up”, much of that area is residential as well. The majority of area in York is undeveloped, with forest being the most common land cover.

Land Use

Land use is a description of the economic activity being conducted on the land. Land use differs from land cover because land use refers to how land is either currently or potentially to be utilized while land cover defines the vegetation, water, natural surface, and cultural features on the land. Land use information for this analysis is derived from the Tax Assessor’s database of information about properties in York. Data is current as of November 6, 2003. While there are certainly some errors in the data, it is the best available for these purposes. The definitions of use are those made by the Assessor to determine the level of taxation on each parcel. The criteria used to define developed or undeveloped land was based upon whether or not there was a structure greater than or equal to 700 square feet. The 700 square feet figure was chosen because this is the Zoning Ordinance’s required minimum floor area for a new residence.

The map entitled, “**Land Use in 2003**, York Comprehensive Plan, Inventory and Analysis, Existing Land Use Chapter” with a date of January 5, 2004, is hereby incorporated into this document by reference. A reduced copy of this map is included in Appendix B. The following table describes the information displayed in this map.

Land Use				
<i>Classification</i>	<i># Parcels</i>	<i>% Parcels</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>% Area</i>
Residential - Developed	6,086	68%	10,856	33%
Residential - Undeveloped	2,208	25%	11,963	36%
Commercial	315	4%	2,006	6%
Industrial	26	0%	212	1%
Government	145	2%	1,605	5%
Tax Exempt	20	0%	60	0%
Church/Charitable	46	1%	194	1%
Forestry	4	0%	201	1%
Open Space	63	1%	1,003	3%
Utilities	71	1%	5,027	15%
Total	8,984		33,127	

Just over 2/3rds of the parcels in York are utilized for residential use, and another 1/4th of the lots are classified as being residential but undeveloped. Over 90% of all parcels are used for, or potentially could be used for residential use. Less than 10% of the remaining parcels comprise all other land uses. Because most house lots are small, the breakout by parcels alone does not present a complete picture. Acreage figures break out differently, with a reduced proportion of residential land use and an increased proportion of utility use (the watersheds owned by the York and Kittery water districts). Clearly, though, residential use remains predominant with 69% of the total area.

New Construction

New construction is analyzed to determine the type of changes that have occurred in recent years. Both residential and non-residential construction have occurred, and each is accounted for separately. The years 1981, 1999 and 2003 have been selected for this analysis because 1981 and 1999 represent years in which the Comprehensive Plan was revised by the voters, and 2003 reflects current conditions. Data for the analysis was taken from the Assessor’s database and the criteria used was similar to the previous ones where parcels with construction of structures that are 700 square feet or greater took place within the allotted time frame.

The map entitled, “**New Construction, 1981-2003**, York Comprehensive Plan, Inventory and Analysis, Existing Land Use Chapter” with a date of January 5, 2004, is hereby incorporated into this document by reference. A reduced copy of this map is included in Appendix C. The following table describes the information displayed in this map.

New Construction		
<i>Type of Construction</i>	<i>1981 - 1999</i>	<i>1999 - 2003</i>
Residential Buildings	1,944	365
Non-Residential Buildings	99	28
Total	2,043	393

The statistics show that residential construction comprised the vast majority of change in York with 95% of construction between 1981 and 1999, and 93% of construction after 1999. The data, as displayed on the map, show a pattern of construction disbursed throughout Town, with concentrations in a few larger subdivisions, and virtually surrounding the region of Mt. Agamenticus and the watersheds of the York and Kittery water supplies.

Unfragmented Blocks

In 2001, RKG Associates out of Durham, NH was contracted to produce a Build-Out study for the Open Space Committee. One product of this study was the definition of un-fragmented blocks of land that were determined to be areas of value to the Town. These un-fragmented blocks are used to show where development has not affected those areas to any great extent. These blocks are of great importance for biodiversity, recreation, quality of life, and other such values, and their protection has been made a priority. The un-fragmented blocks of land range in size from 12 acres to nearly 7000 acres and are

Comprehensive Plan – York, Maine

spread out all over the Town of York, with significant blocks, each over 1,500 acres, in the vicinity of Mt. Agamenticus.

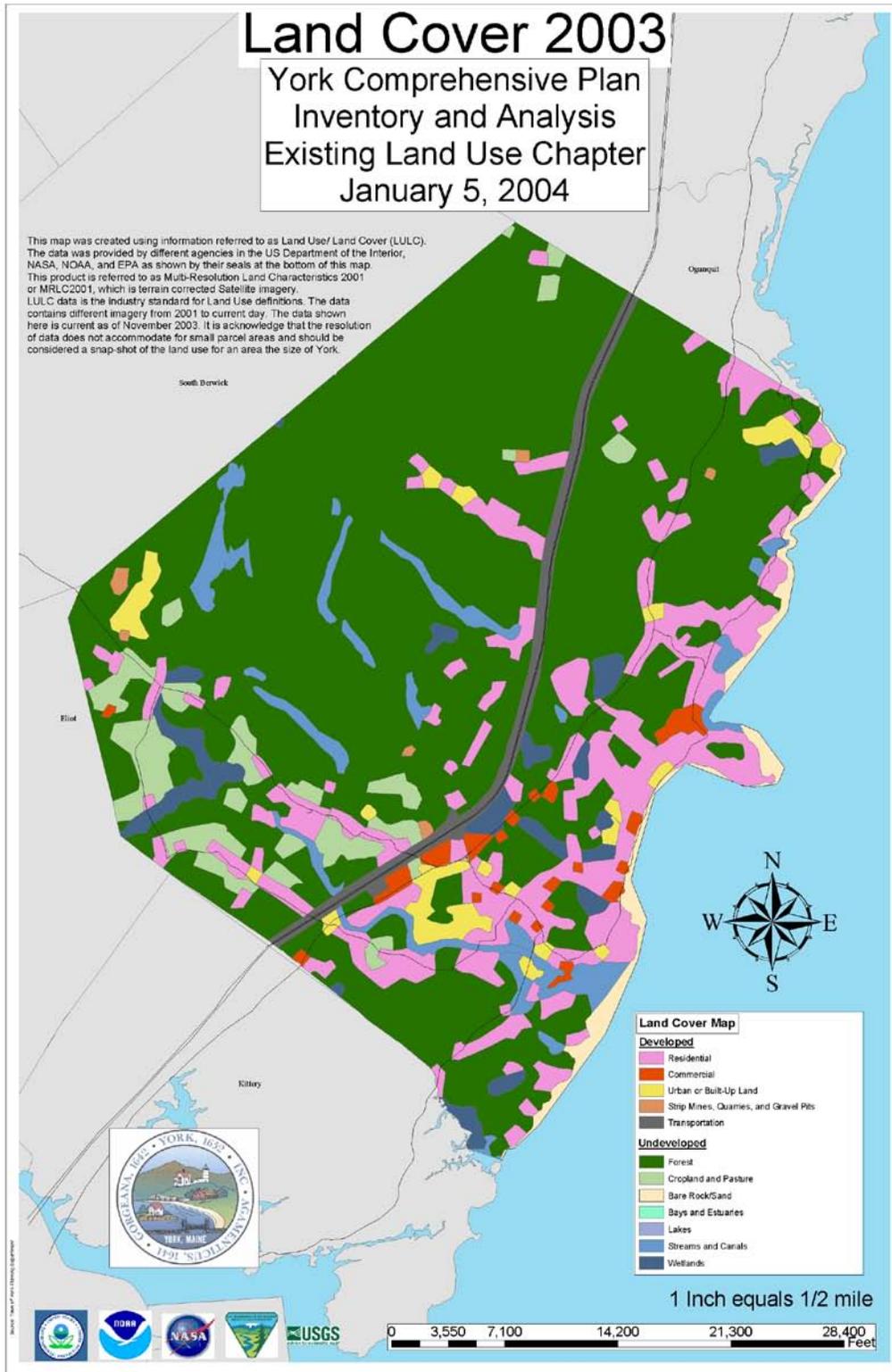
The map entitled, “**Unfragmented Blocks in 2001**, York Comprehensive Plan, Inventory and Analysis, Existing Land Use Chapter” with a date of January 5, 2004, is hereby incorporated into this document by reference. This map is simply a re-printing of the mapped data from RKG Associates, with the format adjusted to match other maps in this Chapter. The data has not been amended, revised or corrected, and it reflects conditions as of early 2001. A reduced copy of this map is included in Appendix D.

With RKG’s un-fragmented blocks as a starting point, it is informative to look at recent construction and see where new construction has occurred in or near the 11 largest (350+ acres) unfragmented blocks. Only 3 of the 11 blocks have escaped intrusions. Of the 8 blocks potentially impacted, some have been significantly impacted with new structures entering into the unfragmented areas as new islands of development, while others merely represent the development of the road-front portions of lots, with no impacts in the back land. This is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of unfragmented blocks, but is provided merely to demonstrate the vulnerability of large blocks to continued intrusions and divisions.

The map entitled, “**Intrusions Into Unfragmented Blocks, 2001-2003**, York Comprehensive Plan, Inventory and Analysis, Existing Land Use Chapter” with a date of January 5, 2004, is hereby incorporated into this document by reference. A reduced copy of this map is included in Appendix E.

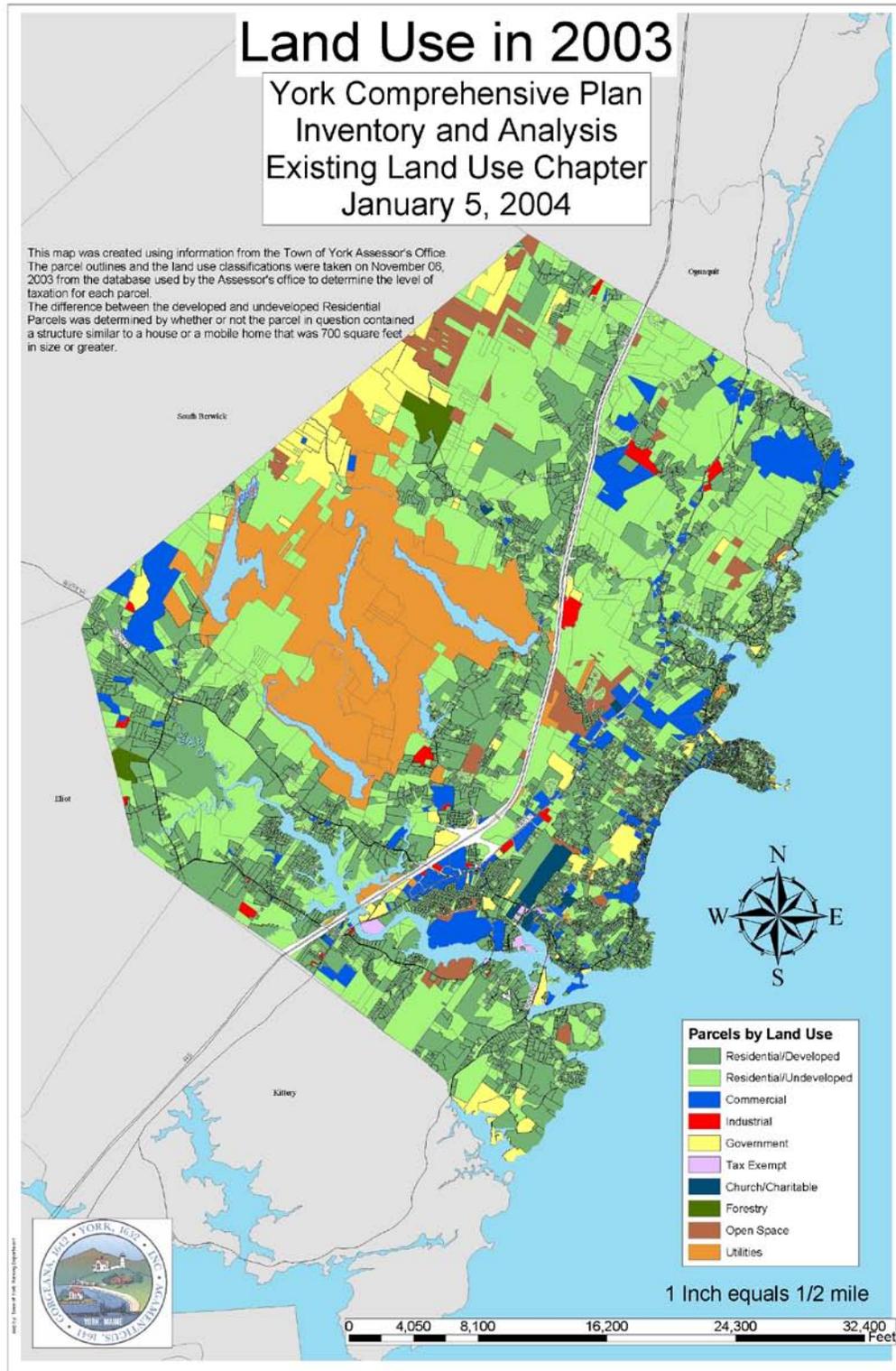
Appendix A

Land Cover in 2003



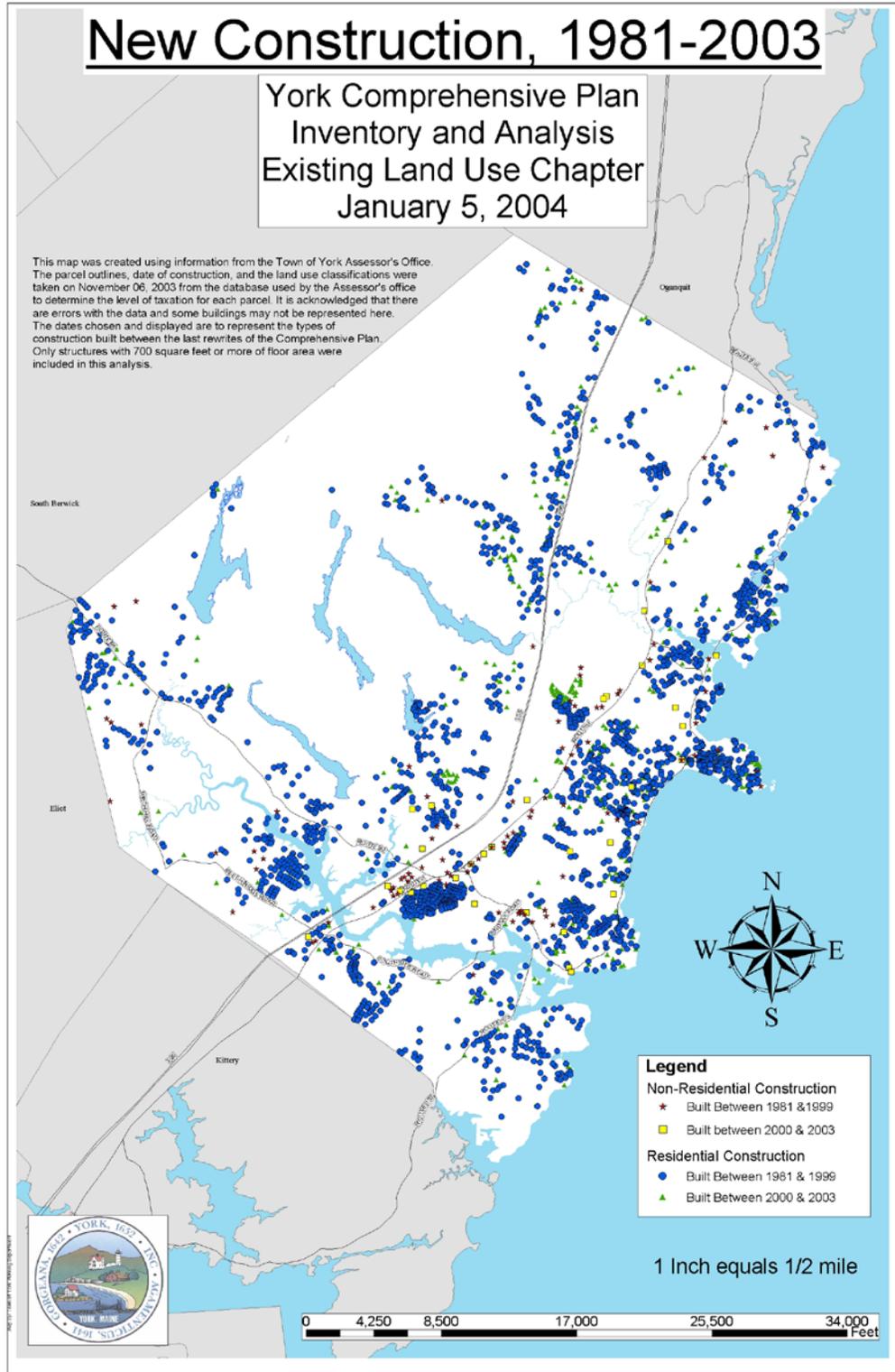
Appendix B

Land Use in 2003



Appendix C

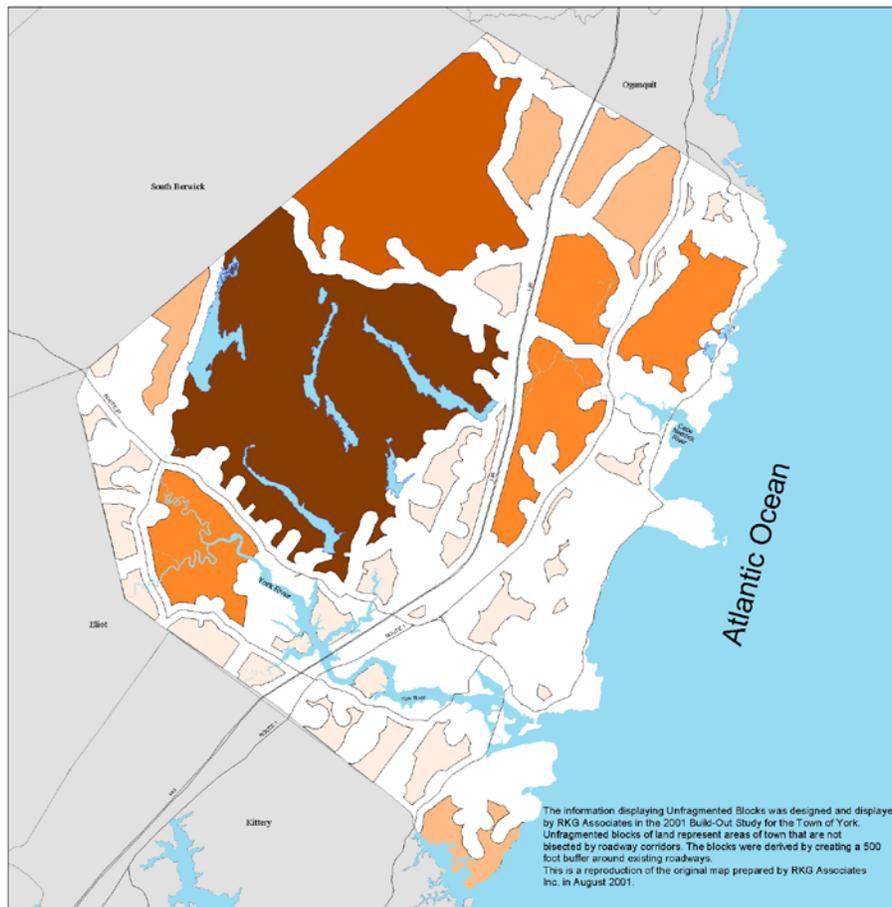
New Construction, 1981 – 2003



Appendix D

Unfragmented Blocks in 2001

York Natural Resource Inventory and Build-Out Analysis Town of York



0 4,850 9,700 19,400 29,100 38,800 Feet

Locus



Legend	
Unfragmented Blocks By Acreage	
Lightest Orange	<250
Light Orange	250 - 550
Orange	550 - 1,500
Dark Orange	1,500 - 3,500
Dark Brown	3,500 - 7,000

Planning Department
York, Maine
March 19, 2004



Appendix E

Intrusions into Unfragmented Blocks, 2001 – 2003

