

Atkinson, New Hampshire

Economy

KEY FINDINGS:

- 69% of Atkinson’s population is over the age of sixteen and is participating in the workforce in Atkinson and in the surrounding region.
- Atkinson’s resident workforce is largely employed outside of the community.
- The largest employers in Atkinson are located throughout the community, but mostly near NH 111, Sawyer Ave, and Country Club Road.
- The largest employer in Atkinson is the Atkinson Country Club.
- Atkinson’s commercial district is located in the northwestern part of town near NH111.
- Many of Atkinson residents travel to and rely on services in Salem, Hampstead, Plaistow, and Haverhill, Massachusetts.
- Majority of Atkinson’s workforce population works out of state, most likely in Massachusetts.

DATA SOURCES:

- 2011-2021 NH Department of Employment Security
- 2011-2021 NH Housing Data
- 2015-2021 U.S. Census’ American Community Survey Data
- Town of Atkinson
- Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce
- 2021 Atkinson Community Profile
- Plaistow Area Commerce Exchange (P.A.C.E.)

INTRODUCTION

This section summarizes Atkinson's existing businesses and economic activity. Understanding Atkinson's economic resources is vital to informing the future land use pattern of the community. The location of Atkinson's business districts and the types of business activity conducted has implications for infrastructure investments, transportation choices, and housing demand. While the community is primarily residential in nature, some residents work from home, operate home businesses, and require support infrastructure and services to support their personal and professional needs. Due to Atkinson's proximity to the growing employment centers in neighboring communities, Atkinson has also experienced continued residential development and some automobile dependent commercial activity. Today, many Atkinson residents rely on commercial development and services in Salem, Plaistow, Hampstead, and Haverhill, MA.

ATKINSON'S LOCATION

It is important to note that Atkinson's location is one of the town's greatest assets for economic development. Its central location gives the town access to Route 93 to the west in Salem/Windham, and to Route 495 in Haverhill, MA primarily via routes NH 111 and NH 121. Additionally, the southern portion of the community connects to Haverhill, MA by North Broadway, and NH 121 and contribute to the commerce and development patterns of Atkinson. Though Atkinson is primarily a bedroom community close to the Southern New Hampshire/Massachusetts state line, Atkinson is also unique in that residents can enjoy rural living while having easy access to shopping and urban areas elsewhere in the region. Atkinson's geographic location in southern New Hampshire on the Massachusetts state line has a significant influence on Atkinson's economy and Atkinson community member's reliance for services in surrounding communities. Many of Atkinson's working residents commute out-of-state and most of those that do are heading to Massachusetts. The Census has included Atkinson in the New England City and Town Area (NECTA) (a defined labor market area) identified as Haverhill-Newburyport-Amesbury Town, MA-NH. This designation further reinforces the economic connection Atkinson has with the communities and state to the south.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN ATKINSON

Currently, there are five areas in Atkinson with differing levels of economic activity, and other scattered businesses located elsewhere in town. These geographic areas of business activity are addressed below.

NH 111 Corridor

Atkinson's primary commercial and industrial development area is located along and off NH 111 in the northwest portion of the town, and this type of development activity extends into the neighboring communities of Hampstead and Salem. This area along NH 111 consists of businesses such as a gas station, Dunkin Donuts, automobile shops, and construction

companies. There are also a few commercial and industrial developments off NH 111 on local roads including a restaurant on Island Pond Road; Palmer Oil and Gas, Community Crossroads, a karate school, and Stanley Tree Service on Hall Farm Road; and Montes Marble & Granite, Atkinson Graphics, Wicked Sticky Designs, and



Above: Atkinson Village Center feat. Atkinson Fire Station, Town Garage, Cemetery, and Historical Society.

the former GEX, Inc. on Industrial Way. This existing industrial area located on Industrial Way also has space available for additional businesses. These areas fall within the Commercial/Industrial (CI) and Commercial/Professional (CP) zoning district.

Town Center

Atkinson's town center is located on Academy Avenue and consists of municipal, institutional, and residential uses. The Town Offices, Kimball Library, Atkinson Academy, Historical Society, Police Station, Fire Station, Town Garage, Dow Common, and



Above: Atkinson Village Store

Cemetery are located within the town center. This area falls within the town center zoning district and is home to many community events which are held most often at the Kimball Library

or the Dow Common. For more information on Atkinson's Town Center Zoning District, visit the Land Use and Zoning Profile of this Existing Conditions Report.

NH 121 (Main Street) Corridor

NH 121 (Main Street) is a part of Atkinson's Old Stage Coach Scenic Byway designation, and only a few commercial developments exist along this route. Starting at the Haverhill, Massachusetts state line, there are some public uses including the Atkinson Community Center and the Post Office. There is also a former restaurant and building which currently houses several small businesses. Further north along Main Street there is the Atkinson Congregational Church, and adjacent to Atkinson Avenue is Atkinson's general/convenience store. On Main Street in the northern portion of town near the Hampstead town line, there are a few additional businesses including a truck repair shop, and a lumber company. NH 121 lies within the Rural Residential-2 (RR-2) and Town Center (TC) zoning districts.

East Road Corridor

There are also a few commercial developments along East Road close to the Plaistow town line including a nail salon, a dog day care, a flower shop, and the Pentucket Baptist Church. Many Atkinson residents also access Plaistow's services through this area. East Road falls within the Town Residential-2 (TR-2) and the Rural Residential-2 (RR-2) zoning districts.

Southwestern Portion of Town

Atkinson also has a few commercial developments located in the southwestern portion of town along Providence Hill Road, Country Club Road, and Sawyer Avenue. These include Lewis Builders Development Inc., Hampstead Area Water Company, an auto body shop, and the Atkinson Country Club (which includes a pro shop, golf academy, and restaurant). This part of town lies within the Rural Residential-2 and Sports Complex Overlay (RR-2/SCR) Zoning District. For more information on the RR-2/SCR Zoning District, visit the Land Use and Zoning Profile of this Existing Conditions report.

Atkinson Agricultural Activity

Atkinson was once dominated by agricultural operations and was considered an agricultural community early on. Over time the community transitioned to more of a residential community as new homes superseded the agricultural activity and active farms in Atkinson. There are still a few farms that remain today and contribute to the agricultural activity in the community. Below is a table of active farm operations in the community which have a commodity and/or service they provide. In addition to the farms listed in Table 1 on the following page, there are several small hobby farms located on residential properties throughout town that are unknown. Some examples of what these small hobby farms have include goats, eggs, and honey. Additionally, in Atkinson, there are three properties that have Barn easements on them, two of which are located on Main Street, and one located on Maple Avenue.

Table 1: Active Farms in Atkinson	
Name	Location
Lewis Farm	Salem Road
Woods Farm	Main Street
Atkinson Riding Academy	Meditation Lane
Stewart Tree Farm	Main Street
29 Main Street Horse Stables	Main Street
Winchell Flower Farm	East Road
Shannon Trails Horse Farm	Backland off Shannon Road
Murphy Family Farm	Westside Drive

Home Occupations and Remote Workers

Atkinson residents are also working from home. The U.S. Census' American Community Survey reported that in 2021, 10% of Atkinson's workforce population worked from home however, due to the pandemic, there may be more remote workers than reported. The town has a permit process for home businesses operating in a residential zone. It is likely that most of the existing Atkinson workforce who work from home do not meet the threshold requirements of having to seek a special exception from the Zoning Board. The exceptions from the permit application requirements include home occupations in which no customers or vehicles come to the location and no sign is present, no agricultural activity is grown and sold on the premises, and home occupation permits that were previously granted by the Planning Board prior to March 8, 1984 are "grandfathered". For the specifics on home occupation permits in Atkinson, refer to Section 450 Accessory Uses: Home Occupations of the Atkinson Zoning Ordinance, Planning and Land Use Regulations.

ATKINSON'S LARGEST EMPLOYERS

The largest employers in Atkinson are located throughout town off of NH 111, Country Club Road, and Sawyer Ave respectively. One observation based on Table 2 is that it appears that these businesses were established across several

Table 2: Largest Employers in Atkinson Source: U.S. Census' American Community Survey Profile			
Business	Product/Service	Employees	Established
Atkinson Resort & Country Club	Resorts/Country Club	227	2002
Palmer Gas Company	Propane Gas	109	1969
Lewis Builders, Inc.	Builder	94	1953
Busby Construction	Contractor	70	1979
Atkinson Academy	School	50-60	1787

decades from the 1950's – early 2000's. This suggests that Atkinson has had sporadic periods of economic development activity which attracted these businesses.

ATKINSON'S LABOR FORCE

According to the NH Department of Employment Security in 2020, approximately 4,891 workers or 69% of Atkinson's population is over the age of sixteen and part of the available civilian work force in Atkinson and the surrounding region.

Table 3: Atkinson's Labor Force		
Source: NH Department of Employment Security		
Annual Average Labor Force	2011	2021
Civilian Labor Force	3,743	4,013
Employed	3,510	3,872
Unemployed	233	141
Unemployment Rate	6.2%	3.5%

The U.S. Census' American Community Survey reported that in 2021, 10% of Atkinson's workforce population work from home. Atkinson's resident workforce is largely employed outside of the community, but since the pandemic, a larger number of residents may be working remotely from their homes resulting in more hybrid and remote workers than reported. This presents a potential that these workers may have an unmet need for local services within Atkinson. However, it should be noted that many of Atkinson workers currently travel to Salem, Hampstead, Plaistow, and Haverhill, MA for most of their service needs.

ATKINSON'S EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE STATISTICS

Table 4 identifies the most recent employment and wage data available for jobs within Atkinson as collected by the NH Department of Employment Security. The table includes both private sector jobs and government positions. Table 5, from NH Housing, compares the private sector employment numbers in Atkinson for a variety of different industries. During this decade, there was an increase in employment in all categories, however the private sector had the most significant increase.

Table 4: Employment and Wages in Atkinson – October – December 2021					
Source: NH Department of Employment Security					
Percent of Working Residents	Units	Oct. Employment	Nov. Employment	Dec. Employment	Weekly Wage
Total, private plus government	128	1,258	1,263	1,231	\$1,349
Total private	126	1,191	1,191	1,197	\$1,374
Goods-producing industries	36	374	393	389	\$1,800
Service-producing industries	92	884	879	842	\$1,149
Total government	2	70	68	64	\$2,137
Federal government	1	9	10	10	\$1,320
Local government	1	61	58	54	\$817

Table 5: Annual Average Covered Private Employment

Source: NH Housing

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total Change
Goods-producing industries	286	404	416	413	381	386	407	386	374	355	372	86
Service-producing industries	608	641	682	716	733	742	818	783	823	742	808	200
Total private employment	893	1,046	1,098	1,130	1,114	1,128	1,226	1,169	1,197	1,097	1,180	287

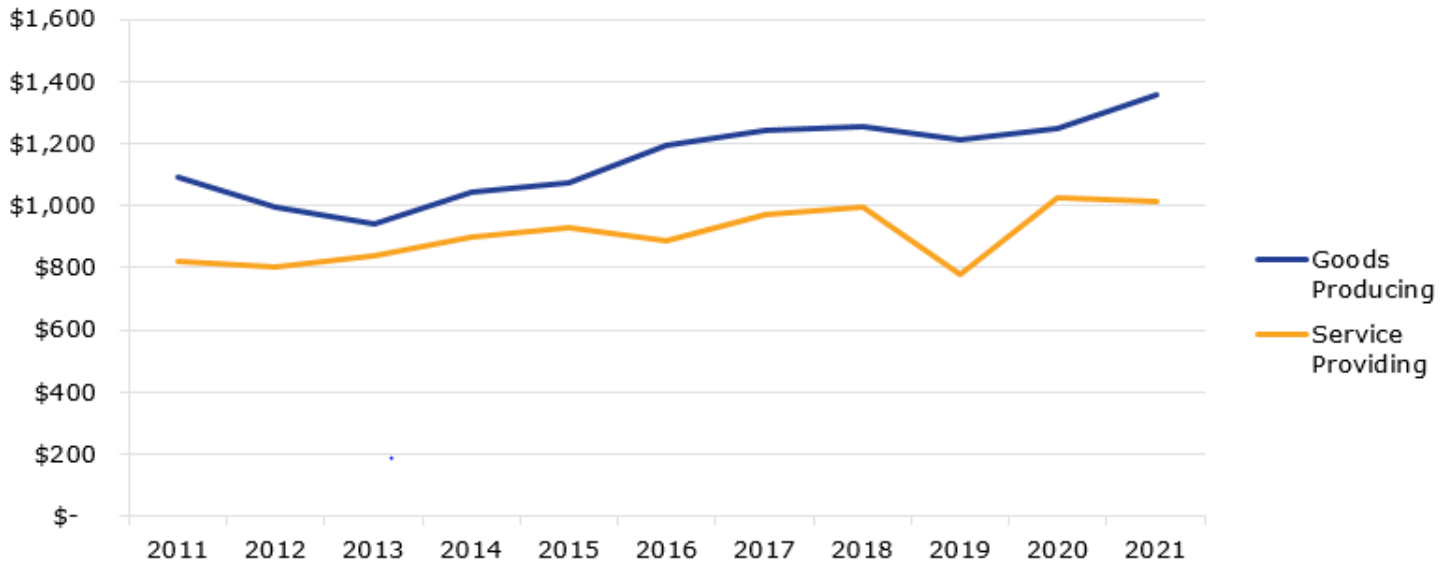
Table 6: Covered Private Employment Wages

Source: NH Housing

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total \$ Change
Goods-producing industries	\$1,090	\$994	\$944	\$1,042	\$1,075	\$1,194	\$1,242	\$1,256	\$1,213	\$1,247	\$1,354	\$265
Service-producing industries	\$820	\$800	\$837	\$897	\$932	\$889	\$971	\$994	\$779	\$1,025	\$1,016	\$196
Total private employment	\$906	\$875	\$877	\$950	\$981	\$993	\$988	\$1,009	\$1,005	\$1,097	\$1,122	\$216

Tables 5 and 6 and the Covered Private Employment Average Wages Graph on the following page, all identify the number of private sector Atkinson workers and earnings by workers over the last decade. These results, as reported by NH Housing, are based on Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program files extracted from Quarterly Employer Tax and Wage Reports. In Atkinson, the earnings by workers over time have increased slightly over the last decade with a sharp decrease in service producing wages in 2019 that have since increased and plateaued in 2020 to 2021.

Covered Private Employment Average Wages



HOME OCCUPATIONS AND REMOTE WORKERS

As indicated in Table 7, almost 100% of Atkinson's population has a computer and internet access within their homes. This infrastructure and access to technology is necessary for many people working from home.

Table 7: Computer and Internet Use Source: U.S. Census' American Community Survey	
Computer and Internet Use	2017-2021
Households with a computer	97.8%
Households with a broadband internet subscription	95.4%

The Town of Atkinson's Zoning Ordinance defines home occupations as *"the accessory use of a dwelling for a business nature conducted by the residents thereof which is clearly secondary to the dwelling use for living purposes and which does not change the character thereof or adversely affect adjacent properties or the neighborhood. Home Occupation includes Family Group Day-Care home facilities and professional, business office uses, such as a small office, doctor's, stockbroker's, bookkeeper's, designer's, manager's and other professional consultants' offices"*.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit 501(c)(6) organization that promotes and supports business relationships and community involvement in the region. The Chamber is organized to provide businesses advocacy, information, visibility, networking, and community. The Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce includes five towns in southern New Hampshire. More information on the Chamber is available at: <https://www.gschamber.com/about-the-chamber>

Plaistow Area Commerce Exchange (P.A.C.E.)

P.A.C.E. is a non-profit 501(c)(6) organization that was established in 1988 to establish a close working relationship and communication with the local business economy in southern New Hampshire. The organization brings businesses and professional people together to address issues of common interest, to get to know each other better, and work toward a more structured direction for the future growth and prosperity within the community. The Plaistow Area Commerce Exchange includes seven towns in southern New Hampshire: Atkinson, Danville, Hampstead, Kingston, Newton, Plaistow and Sandown. More information on P.A.C.E. is available at: <https://www.pacenh.com>.