

BRUNSWICK, VT

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Adopted

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This plan was written with the assistance of Christopher C. Hamilton of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association in St. Johnsbury, VT.

1. VISION STATEMENT

The pace of life in Brunswick is quiet. There are lots of trees, open spaces, and farms down by the river. People walk, snowmobile and hunt freely on the vast stretches of open and forestland. The water quality and wildlife habitat are maintained. The Town relies heavily on adjacent communities for services, thus maintaining the low level of property taxes. But most of all, Brunswick maintains the quality of rural living where neighbors help neighbors and a real sense of belonging still exists.

2. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

1. Brunswick should preserve the scenic qualities of a quiet river-valley countryside which attracts sightseers with its charm and lovely views of pastures, woodlands and mountain scenery.
2. All landowner s will be urged to maintain their open fields, pastures and woodlands for their own personal enhancement and investment and further to seek the preservation of the natural plant life and the encouragement of wildlife.
3. Brunswick will endeavor to protect its streams and bodies of water as natural resources easily subject to pollution and infringement.
4. Flood lands are to be delineated and restricted from any residential or other development which would impose a financial or legal responsibility on Brunswick in the event of the next flood rampage. Structures on the flood plain shall be limited to recreational or agricultural purposes, other than housing for people or livestock.
5. All possible lawful aid will be encouraged to benefit and promote the active productive farms operating in the Town.
6. Brunswick will encourage development which is rural residential, farming, or recreational in character conforming to the limitations described in the Town land use plan.
7. Because of the proximity of commercial areas in Bloomfield, Vt., and North Stratford Colebrook, and Groveton N.H., it is not anticipated there will be a need for a commercial area within Brunswick. However, commercial uses should not be prohibited, but allowed as conditional uses requiring the approval of the Board of Adjustment. This does not preclude the active sale of natural products grown locally or the sale of craft products made by the residents in town.
8. Brunswick will strive to minimize property taxes within its control by avoiding developments which will require town services and/or town roads.

3. NATURAL AREA PROTECTION

In 1988 there was a comprehensive natural areas inventory completed for Essex County. Through that study, the most significant natural areas were identified. They included things like endangered plant species, special wildlife habitat, and nesting areas for rare birds. Several areas were identified in Brunswick (see attached map). Special care should be given to protecting these valuable resources.

4. WATER QUALITY

Protecting water quality is a high priority in the Town of Brunswick. Activities such as logging on steep slopes or down to the water's edge, building houses close to the water, and cutting all the vegetation along the shore all affect the quality of water.

Landowners are encouraged to follow the State of Vermont Erosion Control Standards and the Acceptable Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality of Logging Jobs in Vermont (AMPs).

5. UNDEVELOPED SHORELINE

In 1992 the Northeastern Vermont Development Association completed an inventory of the undeveloped lakeshore on lakes over 10 acres within northern Vermont. Undeveloped shoreline was defined as having at least 1000 feet of frontage and a 250 depth with no human structures, roads or railroads.

The inventory found that Brunswick has 39,321 feet of shoreline of which 22,275 (56.6%) feet were undeveloped. This compares to 44.3% in Essex county and 46.8% of the Northeast Kingdom shoreline being undeveloped.

Brunswick has many opportunities to protect these undeveloped shorelines which add greatly to enhancing water quality, wildlife habitat and the rural nature of the community.

6. FORESTS AND CLEARCUTTING

Forest land plays a critical role in supporting the regional timber economy, recreation, and hunting. Timber harvesting is a traditional way of life in Brunswick. Most of the land in town is owned by large landowners. There is increasing concern about clear-cutting throughout Essex County. People worry about the long-term implications of cutting large areas at a much faster rate than it is growing back. The residents of Brunswick support forest practices that follow a long term sustainable plan and discourage the use of large scale clear-cuts.

7. PUBLIC ACCESS TO PRIVATE LANDS

The citizens of Brunswick strongly commend the current landowner's policies of free public access to their lands. We recognize an individual's private property rights and respect their decisions to regulate access during certain times of the year or to particular activities. However, the commission strongly discourages "exclusive clubs" which would limit access to any particular group while denying equal access to all people. We are particularly concerned about the possibility of exclusive hunting clubs where a land owner would lease the hunting rights to a club and then restrict access to a large area of land. These arrangements would have a detrimental effect on the local economy as well as the traditional way of life.

8. LAND CONSERVATION PROJECTS

The Planning Commission recognizes a growing interest in land conservation in Essex County. While in general placing large blocks of land under conservation easement would work toward to town's overall vision for the future, there are several areas of concern:

- a) **Local Taxes.** Land in Brunswick is currently assessed at a relatively low value per acre. Therefore, it is the opinion of the Planning Commission that in the near term, the amount of taxes generated from a piece of forest land would not change if the development rights were removed. If it were found that this were not the case, the opinion on large scale conservation would change.
- b) **Public Ownership.** Because of concerns over rising property taxes, large amounts of public ownership are not encouraged.
- c) **Traditional Uses.** Any large scale conservation easements or public ownership should include the continuation of traditional uses such as maintaining seasonal camps and access for snowmobiling, hunting, and walking.
- d) **Landowners Rights Maintained.** A landowners rights should not be diminished. Eminent domain should not be used and just compensation given to the landowner in all cases of transferring land from one party to another.

9. HOUSING

A housing study was completed as part of this town planning effort. It concludes that due to the overall low price of the housing in Brunswick, there is no need for additional affordable housing. a copy of the study is available from the Town Clerk or Planning Commission.

10. TRANSPORTATION PLAN

State highway 105 in Brunswick is projected as a regional arterial

highway designed to link larger communities and move increasing traffic to and through Brunswick. Direct access to Route 105 from private properties should be minimized because of dangerous traffic hazards arising from turning movements on a major artery.

State Highway 102 is classified as a regional collector designed to provide access within the region and to adjacent towns of Bloomfield and Maidstone. Route 102 will carry the burden of local traffic arising from activities of residents.

The town of Brunswick has no local roads and therefore has no need of any type of road building or maintenance equipment. No development should be permitted to alter this status because any change would impose an undue burden upon the taxpayers of the town.

11. EDUCATION PLAN

It is hoped that the educational needs of the students from Brunswick can continue to be met by an accredited school system outside of the Town of Brunswick. Tuition expenses and transportation will of course be provided by the Town.

Currently there are approximately 30 students from Brunswick. They attend Stratford Public Schools. The school recently completed an addition so the facilities should be adequate for the foreseeable future.

12. ENERGY

There is a growing awareness of the long-term costs - economic, environmental and social - of our energy choices. The use of energy is an important consideration in local decisions about land use, building standards, and our local economy.

Brunswick citizens buy their electric power from Citizen utilities. Due to the slow growth rate, no new supplies of energy are anticipated.

13. UTILITY AND FACILITIES

In keeping with the rural nature of the town, Brunswick does not contain a library, hospital, sewer treatment facilities, power generating stations, public water supplies or the like. Brunswick is a very rural town and should remain so into the future.

14. MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS/PROPERTIES

The Town of Brunswick only has one building, the Town Hall. The Town Hall should be maintained and its historic character preserved. Since there are no town roads, facilities or other buildings, Brunswick does not own any other equipment.

The Town of Brunswick owns a 75 acre woodlot. It was cut over within the last decade and has no significant timber at this point.

15. CEMETERIES

There are two public cemeteries in the Town of Brunswick. One is full while the other one was recently expanded and has capacity for the foreseeable future.

16. IMPACT ON ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Brunswick is very closely linked to the adjacent communities in both Vermont and New Hampshire. Brunswick supports the adjacent communities by providing labor for their jobs, by supporting community endeavors such as medical services and schools. In turn, the adjacent communities provide shopping facilities, medical services, fire protection, schools and so on. We rely on each other and maintaining a positive relationship is important. Keeping communication open between communities is critical to maintaining the quiet rural lifestyle that is important to all the residents of the area.

17. EXISTING LAND USE

The Town of Brunswick has always been primarily forested, with no settlement outside of the lowland areas of the Connecticut and Nulhegan River valleys. In early years, this settlement was primarily subsistence farming, but the historical regional decline of agriculture has also happened here. There now remain four active dairy farms, all in the Connecticut River valley. Accessible areas along existing highways have gradually developed as low-density rural residential properties, with most residents commuting to employment elsewhere.

The vast bulk of the forest land in the town is actively managed by the landowners for the production of timber products which are marketed elsewhere. Privately owned forest roads provide a variety of seasonal access potentials to these lands, and there have been many individually owned seasonal-recreational camps located in many areas, particularly on the shores of the various bodies of water in the town. These camps were all originally for hunting and fishing purposes, and with easier seasonal access provided intermittently by forest management activities, some have in recent years been used as a seasonal-vacation type of camp.

18. LAND USE PLAN

The land use plan appears relatively simple on first examination, but is the result of many inputs. Existing land use is the starting point. Then topography, soils and their capabilities, building and environmental conditions, transportation, the need of community facilities and the economy of the town are factors too.

Access is a consideration in that areas remote from existing centers of development usually should not be developed at all or should be developed non-intensively. Soils are important in determining the advisable density of potential settlement as related to the land's toleration of building and subsurface sewage disposal.

Economic and population considerations enter into the land use plan in that there must be thought given as to how much of each land use category is needed to support a specified population in the future. It would seem likely that the population will increase in future years. Economic goals and the tax base must also be considered.

The land use plan represents a policy document because of the many considerations that have gone into the plan and the number of policies that must flow from it when it is implemented. A major tool in implementing the land use plan is the zoning ordinance which will set forth controls and standards for using the land, including subdivision regulations.

In accordance with Act 250 the Town Planning Commission can advise the Regional District Environmental commission as to whether or not proposed land development in the town is or is not in conformance with a duly adopted town development plan. Before the District commission grants a permit it must be found that the land development is in conformance with a duly adopted town development plan. The adopted land use plan can be an important part of Act 250 hearings.

The proposed land use plan has several different districts which are listed below. The following pages describe each with its general location and purpose.

Low Density Rural Residential District	(R)
Shoreland Districts	(S)
Forest Conservation	(F)
Flood Plain District	(FP)

Low Density Rural Residential District (R)

In the foreseeable future the Town of Brunswick will remain strictly rural and will support agriculture and commercial forestry. With the predominant low tax rates within the town it is important to have low density rural residential development. Because of obvious limiting factors of topography and the necessity of having access to Routes 102 or 105, this district (R) is closely associated with these two highways and is limited in depth by steep slopes, ledge outcroppings, marshlands and bogs. The area extends the full length of both state highways within the town boundaries and with varying widths of suitable land from the public road.

In this district (R) the minimum lot size is two (2) acres per dwelling and each lot should have direct access to a state highway, with a minimum 350 foot frontage on the highway. No off-lot sewer or water will be provided by the town at any location.

The primary uses of this area will be agriculture, forestry and single family dwellings, all of which should be widely spaced and non-intensive uses which will protect the open character intrinsic to the area. It is intended to prevent development where it would cause an undue burden upon the town, such as the creation of a road or trail which would imply any town responsibility for maintenance and accessibility.

Shoreland Districts (S)

The purpose of this district is to protect the qualities of the waters of the State and their shores and banks within our town. It includes all lands within 100 feet of any of these bodies of water. The natural character of these areas are important not only to the scenic and natural beauty of the area, but also to the preservation of the water quality.

No development should be allowed within this area other than agricultural or forest management activities, and these should be managed by the landowner such that erosion is prevented by preservation of vegetative cover. An exception would be necessary stream-crossings and associated structures, so long as they do not cause siltation, divert the stream, alter the stream banks or impede the natural flow of water in any season.

Forest Conservation District (F)

This district includes all of the balance of the Town which is not included in the (R) or (S) districts.

The permitted uses in this district should be agricultural and forestry uses, outdoor recreation, seasonal recreational camps and accessory uses. In this district the minimum lot size shall be such as to preserve the open character of the area, preventing the pollution of ground water by avoiding unsuitable soils, and avoiding the costly provision of public services.

Flood Plain District (FP)

This district includes lowlands adjacent to the Connecticut and Nulhegan Rivers and lies below the "100 year flood" levels as delineated on the maps of the National Flood Insurance Program.

This district is in effect an overlay which further restricts development in those portions of the other three districts which fall within its limits.

19. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Planning issues and initiatives happen slowly in Brunswick. The Planning Commission meet when required. The current strategy has worked fine over the last few years and has been deemed an appropriate way to implement this plan.

Brunswick currently has a zoning by-law in effect. This by-law also works to implement the vision set forth in this town plan.

APPENDIX #1 Ten Elements of Chapter 117.

Vermont Statute Title 24, Chapter 117 (the enabling legislation for or local land use planning and regulation in Vermont) requires the ten elements in section 4302 be address in a municipal plan. Each has been addressed within the plan; the following list gives its location.

- (1) A statement of objectives, policies and programs
* entire document presents policies and objectives
- (2) A land use plan, consisting of a map and statement
* pages entire document especially 9 - 13
- (3) A transportation plan
* pages 7, 13
- (4) A utility and facility plan
* pages 8, 9, 13
- (5) Policies on the preservation of natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources
* pages 4
- (6) An educational facilities plan
* pages 8
- (7) An implementation program
* pages 12
- (8) Adjacent municipalities
* page 9
- (9) An energy plan
* page 8
- (10) A housing element
* page 7