

TOWN OF BRAINTREE, VERMONT

TOWN PLAN

**Adopted by the Selectboard
February 28, 2006**

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INTRODUCTION

The Braintree Planning Commission is appointed by the Selectboard, and is responsible for the preparation of the Braintree Town Plan. In working on the revision to the Town Plan adopted by the voters in 2000, the Commission collected, reviewed and analyzed information provided by the 2000 census, from which it then updated the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations for the appropriate development of the Town of Braintree stated herein.

THE TOWN OF BRAINTREE
Direct excerpts from
The History of Braintree by H. Royce Bass

The Town of Braintree is situated in the western extreme of Orange County, forming a projection bounded in part by the counties of Windsor, Addison, and Washington. It is more particularly bounded, north by Roxbury and Brookfield, east by Randolph, south by Rochester, and west by Granville. The center of Braintree is about fifteen miles due south from the geographical center of Vermont, about twenty-five miles from Montpelier, the capital, and about twenty miles east of the ridge, or principal range, of the Green Mountains.

By the terms of its charter, signed on August 1, 1781 by Gov. Chittenden, Braintree is about six and one-half miles long by about five and one-half miles wide. By act of the legislature, Nov. 10, 1824, ten lots and four gores in the southwest corner of the town, about two square miles in area, were annexed to Rochester, leaving the present area of Braintree about 35.5 square miles.

The valley of the third branch of the White River, known as the “Branch”, through which runs the Central Vermont Railroad, divides Braintree into two principal divisions. That part south and west of the branch is rough, rocky, with many bold and precipitous peaks, much of it incapable of tillage. Riford’s brook and Thayer’s brook, both tributaries of the branch, are its largest streams. The branch flows southeasterly through the whole width of the town. The part north and east of the branch is nearly equally divided by the high ridge, commonly called Braintree hill, extending north and south through the town, just east of its center. Spurs jut out eastward and southward from it, diversify the surface. The chief points in this ridge are Neven’s hill, Belcher hill, Oak hill, and Quaker hill. Its highest point is also called Alban’s hill. Its largest streams are Ayer’s brook, through Snowsville, and Spear’s brook, its tributary. Spear’s brook is the outlet of Mud pond, the only natural pond in Braintree.

The position of Braintree is not favorable to the growth of large villages within it, though the railroad might contribute thereto but for two or three large, thriving business places near by or not far away, like West Randolph and Northfield. West Braintree is a rail road station on the branch, has a postoffice, a hotel, two groceries, and a lumber mill doing quite an extensive business. Hutchinson’s village, now known as “Peth”, is situated on Spear’s brook. Here were formerly the Braintree postoffice, a church, a dry goods store, and oil, clover, and saw mills. In 1840 all business except that of the mills was transferred to East Braintree, or Snow’s village, now Snowsville. It seemed quite probable that the road up Ayer’s brook through Snowsville would be one of the main thoroughfares between Boston and Burlington; that Snowsville, aided by its favorable site and abundant waterpower, would thereby get a

large business and population. The promise of this met with no disappointment till that business magnet, the railroad, pushed its way up the branch, and drew all business into its line.

Few localities afford a view of so many points of interest as the hill tops of Braintree. From the top of Quaker hill can be seen, to the east Mt. Washington and other principal peaks of the White and Monadnock Mountains in New Hampshire, fifty to sixty miles distant; to the south, Mt. Ascutney in Windsor, forty miles away; to the southwest, Killington and Shrewsbury peaks of the Green Mountain range; to the west, a section of that range; and in various directions, numerous less elevated prominences within a radius of twenty to thirty miles. Oak hill commands a view no less extensive and interesting. A broad, beautiful landscape view ten miles in extent, checkered with forest and field and dotted with farm-houses, are seen from the belfry of the Braintree hill meeting house.

As described above by H. Royce Bass, Braintree is located in a very beautiful section of Vermont and its residents are blessed with a high quality of life attributable to its rural scenic environment. This updated plan continues the protection of that quality of life that the residents required of the previous plan while providing guidance for appropriate growth and development.

ARTICLE I – AUTHORIZATION

The Town of Braintree is authorized to develop a town plan by 24 Vermont Statutes Annotated (VSA), Chapter 117.

ARTICLE II- PURPOSE, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. PURPOSE

The Braintree Town Plan represents the first and basic step of a continual planning process. The purpose of this plan is to encourage the appropriate development of the land in Braintree in a manner that will promote the health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience and general welfare of the residents of the town. The plan is a general statement that maintains the philosophical direction of the previous plan. By expressing the intent and desires of the residents of Braintree as established in that plan, it serves as a guide for Braintree's future growth and development. As the intent and desires of the residents of Braintree change, this plan can be modified to express those changes and to address the administrative and financial needs and concerns that accompany municipal growth. It is the intention of this planning process, utilizing the purposes set forth in 24 VSA §4302, to encourage the protection of the special scenic and rural quality of life that Braintree residents value through appropriate development based on the capacity of the land and of the Braintree Town budget to support that development. A basic premise underlying this plan is that future growth and development not impose undue financial burdens upon Braintree's taxpayers.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Braintree is a beautiful, scenic rural and village community that provides the opportunity of a lifestyle valued by its citizens. The citizens of Braintree desire to preserve that lifestyle through a town plan that

provides for growth in a manner that will sustain and protect the rural and village environment that supports it.

1. In pursuit of the preservation goal and to promote a safe, healthy, pleasant and manageable environment, the plan addresses the following community concerns:

- (a) Housing: affordable and energy efficient housing;
- (b) Public health and safety: water resources, sewage and solid waste disposal;
- (c) Education: affordable, high quality school system;
- (d) Transportation: adequate and efficient road network, protection of scenic corridors;
- (e) Recreational: public facilities and parks;
- (f) Economic: small scale businesses; and
- (g) Resources: the ability of the resources, facilities and services of Braintree and the surrounding areas to support a rate of development.

2. In further pursuit of the goal to preserve Braintree's rural character and conserve Braintree's natural, scenic, historic and cultural resources, the plan addresses;

- (a) The use of land in Braintree, including maintaining protection of agricultural, forest, wetlands, soils, water, natural features and open space, giving first priority to agricultural and forest uses of suitable land and encouraging their efficient management while discouraging the conversion of prime agricultural and forest lands to other uses;
- (b) The appropriate location of future residential, commercial, recreational and public and semi-public facilities development;
- (c) The protection of scenic roads, ridgelines and vistas;
- (d) The preservation of open space and providing a sound economic basis for its maintenance; and
- (e) Ensuring that the rate of growth does not exceed the ability of Braintree and the area to provide facilities and services.

ARTICLE III - DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A. DEMOGRAPHICS

Statistically, population is an important element in the overall type and rate of development of the community and in community land use. Increased population within a community results in increased demand for municipal services and the ability of a town to provide for them. Through the implementation of this Town Plan, Braintree may coordinate its ability to support the need for increased services with population growth projections .

1. Population Patterns

Figure 1 below shows Braintree's population growth rate compared to its neighbors over the last decade. Braintree's rate of growth during the period of 1980-1990 was 10.2%. Between 1990-2000 Braintree's growth rate slowed to 1.7%. Neighboring Randolph, an economic hub employing a relatively large labor force from surrounding communities, including Braintree maintained a steady growth rate at nearly 2%

from 1980 - 2000. Despite maintaining a steady growth rate for that time period, however, Randolph lost a significant portion of its industrial base. This loss of industry in an important local economic hub affected job availability for Braintree residents as most Braintree residents are employed in Randolph and the surrounding areas.

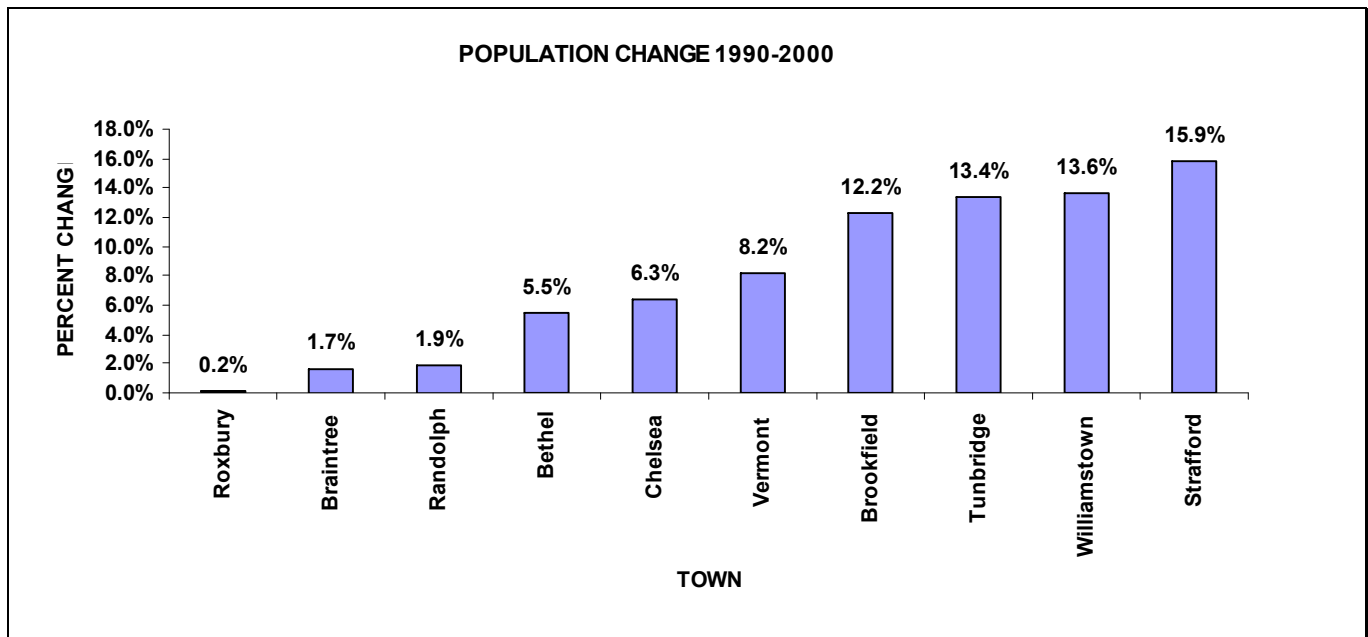


Figure 1 - Population Change 1990-2000

2. Population Projections

Population projections are functions of two components: an estimate of natural changes in population that considers births and death, and an estimate of migration. The Vermont Department of Aging & Disabilities contracted with the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst to produce population projections for the state of Vermont for 2000-2020.

Future growth in Braintree is predicted to continue growing slowly over the next 20 years. One principal reason for this is the aging of the baby boom generation out of its prime childbearing years.

Policy

To take population and changes thereto into consideration during official town deliberations concerning development and other community issues that affect the Town financially.

Recommendation

1. That the Planning Commission work with state and local officials to estimate the age breakdown of the expected population increase to determine: a). what demands will be placed on the school system and other public services; b). housing needs; and c). the effect on the tax base.

B. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Economic Base

Economic growth and change is another factor that affects community development and future land use. During the early nineteenth century, Braintree evolved as a small community, largely independent of economic forces from the outside. There was a strong dependence on the local agriculture-based sheep farming economy. Most persons worked within the Town as roads were unimproved and traveling was often difficult. Most manufacturing and small mills were located along the major streams where waterpower was readily available. Life was one of large families and self-subsistence.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and on into the early years of this century, the trend of prosperity and economic stability began to change. The once successful hillside sheep farmers could no longer be assured of a market for their wool. The people of Braintree became frustrated with working the rocky soil hillside of the farm and headed for more fertile land in the Midwest. Once open land then began to revert to brush and, finally, to trees. At this time, there was a massive migration of people leaving Braintree and Vermont for better economic opportunities.

This trend of population decline lasted until about 1970, when, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, population just about equaled the 1900 census count. During this period of population decline, land values remained relatively stable. In the mid-1960's, however, the construction of the Interstate system made Vermont more accessible to outsiders interested in relocating or purchasing vacation homes.

With the loss of many of its farms, and the small mills and manufacturing enterprises, Braintree is no longer an independent community. Due to the complexities of modern society and the strong influences of state and national economic policies and activities, Braintree's economic future will continue to be determined largely by factors outside of its direct control. Therefore, an effort to predict with any degree of accuracy the economic future is speculative at best.

The economic changes that the Town of Braintree has experienced have had a direct affect on the ability of Braintree to raise tax dollars in order to provide basic municipal services. This is due largely to the system of property taxation which is based upon the 100 percent fair market value of real estate in Braintree.

a. Location of Economic Activity

As stated previously, historically Braintree has not served as an economic hub for commercial and industrial activity for area towns and Orange County in general. Randolph is the primary location for many services, including banking, professional, and health services, for the area towns of Bethel, Braintree, Brookfield, Chelsea, and Royalton. Vermont Routes 12, 12A, 66 and Interstate 89 are the primary highways leading to and from the Braintree area. In addition, New England Railroad provides freight rail service to Randolph and there is an Amtrak passenger stop in Randolph. Braintree is now a bedroom community in that a major portion of its working resident population is employed outside of the community. Despite this fact, there are several small business enterprises within the Town that employ area residents. These enterprises are located throughout Braintree and are found in the village areas as well as on the farms and in private homes.

b. Employment Characteristics

Population, employment characteristics, and housing trends are factors that are considered when planning for economic development. The general employment characteristics of Braintree's residents in the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census Reports indicate that the development of jobs in the White River Valley impact housing and population growth in Braintree. Braintree is not the self-sufficient employment center that it was in the 19th century. Even though the advance of the technological age of computers, automobiles, telecommunications and other conveniences have allowed for some residents to work from their homes, many Braintree residents commute to surrounding communities.

The total number of workers age 16 and over living in Braintree decreased from 625 in 1990 to 614 in 2000. Of these workers, 14% work in Braintree, 46% work in Randolph, and 7% working Bethel. The remaining 33% of the work force commutes to other areas throughout the region and beyond. Due to the loss of several large employers in Randolph in the last few years, however, the 2000 census employment figures are likely inaccurate.

c. Future Economic Development

Future economic investment in Braintree or area communities can have a significant economic impact on the community. The type, location, and size of a business, its overall economy, and the timing of the investment can substantially impact the service ability of municipal facilities and transportation networks, housing availability and affordability, and surrounding land values. These future impacts are unpredictable.

2. Employment

The economy of Braintree and the resulting land use patterns have been directly related to the availability of jobs for its residents. Since the 1930's, the most apparent economic change has been the shift away from agricultural employment. During the 1950's and 1960's, farm population dropped very rapidly, although since 1970, the decrease has slowed somewhat to approximately four full-time operating farms. Even so, agriculture may still be considered the largest single in-town employer.

a. Occupations

Of Braintree's resident work force 16 years and older, 614 reported their occupations as part of the 2000 U.S. Census. Nearly three quarters of the reports indicated employment in one of three categories: 27% worked as executives, administrators, managers and other professionals; 25% worked in production, transportation and material moving; and 23% worked in sales and office occupations. The remaining workers reported having jobs in service industries (12%), construction, extraction and maintenance occupations (11%), and farming, fishing and forestry occupations (2%). Based upon an analysis of occupational types, Braintree's work force profiles closely the typical work force for the State. (2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing)

b. Employment Sectors

The private employment sector is the largest employer for persons residing in Braintree. Of all workers, 80% percent are employees of private businesses or non-profit organizations, 12% work in government, and the remaining 8% are self-employed. (U.S. Census 2000). From 1990 to 2000 Braintree's resident work force decreased by 1.7%. This decrease is not unreasonable considering the slow population growth in Braintree. The percentages for each of the three sectors remained relatively unchanged.

Policy

To foster an economic environment favorable to the establishment of local business enterprises such as farming, forestry, and small clean business endeavors.

Recommendation

1. That discussion and coordination between the community and economic development interests regarding future land use development options in the village areas be encouraged.
2. That review and analysis of proposed economic developments consider community-wide impacts as well as the financial capacity of government to service the economic development.
3. That local tax rebates be considered to support local business enterprises that hire Braintree residents.

ARTICLE IV - LAND USE

A. EXISTING LAND USE

Braintree is a scenic rural area situated in Orange County and contains a total land area of approximately 22,700 acres or 35.5 square miles. The town is located in the northern part of the Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission's planning boundary and is bounded by six towns: Randolph, Rochester, Granville, Roxbury, Brookfield, and Bethel. As is the case with most of Central Vermont, Braintree's physical setting consists of rather steep mountains rising to an elevation in excess of 3,000 feet interspersed in the lower elevations with streams and valleys that are less steep and contain deeper soils. Braintree currently has two unincorporated village areas, namely West Braintree, and East Braintree (also known as Snowsville), which serve as small community centers. The Third Branch of the White River runs south through Braintree and eventually joins the White River in Bethel.

1. Grand List as Land Use Indicator

Braintree's tax base is the land use within the town. The local tax base and tax rate are important factors in determining the financial capacity of the town to reasonably accommodate new growth. In addition, the State Act 60 (the "School Tax") has an effect on tax rates and therefore new growth.

In general, in Vermont year round residences are fiscal drains on towns in that they generate less in taxes or income to the town than it costs to provide services to them. In 1992, the average listed value of a residence on six acres or less in Braintree (permanent residence only) was \$70,283. This residence yielded typically \$1,380 in taxes to the town. Average values listed for a primary residence with more

than six acres was \$142,622 yielding about \$2,482 in taxes per unit. With the cost per pupil in Vermont estimated at \$5,200 in 1992, it is evident that the average property tax bill Braintree did not pay the cost of one student. These figures will be affected by the 2004 – 2005 town wide reappraisal, the results of which are not available at this printing.

Farms, forests, vacation homes, and most commercial properties, on the other hand, generally pay more in taxes than their cost for services. Ironically, however, communities that lure industrial and commercial property into their jurisdiction may experience higher property taxes. The higher taxes are often due to the secondary impacts from the resulting residential growth that requires more municipal services and sees more children entering the schools.

2. Tax Rate as Function of Land Use

Historically, land in Braintree has been used mainly for residential, agricultural and silvacultural/forestry purposes. These historical land uses have continued through to the present although in changing percentages. In 1992, about 81% of Braintree's tax base was residential property, the remainder or 19% was non-residential, including farms and woodland. The most significant component of the residential tax base was permanent residences (54%) and the balance mainly vacation homes (16%). Mobile homes represent 7.1% of the total tax base in Braintree. Farms, woodland and undeveloped land represent 14% of the total dollar Grand List.

During the period 1982 to 1992, Braintree's tax base changed. Residential properties assumed a greater proportion of the tax base (up 6.7%). In addition, the relative contribution of farms and forest lands decreased 7.8% while other tax base components such as vacation and commercial properties increased. Compared to the neighboring town of Brookfield, Braintree vacation homes contributed a large portion of the tax base. Brookfield's vacation homes contribute 18% to the Grand List. Braintree's Listers determined in 1992 that there were 107 vacation homes in Braintree and 278 year-round residences.

In 1992, about 81% of the land was in residential use. The remaining 19% of the tax base was non-residential property, including farms and woodland. The most significant component of the residential tax base was permanent residences (54%) and the balance mainly vacation homes (16%). Mobile homes represent 7.1% of the total tax base in Braintree. Farms, woodland and undeveloped land represent 14% of the total dollar Grand List.

3. Projected Tax Implications

Based upon the foregoing information, changes in the Grand List and tax rate over the next few years can be expected to be as follows:

- a. Growth in the Grand List will continue at a slow pace due to lack of available building sites and high costs of new construction.
- b. Tax rates will continue to increase more rapidly than the Grand List due largely to increased operating costs such as new capital expenses for schools and highway equipment and maintenance.
- c. The personal property tax was repealed and had only a small effect on the tax rate for Braintree.

d. The value of listed real estate will increase rapidly in areas afforded ease of access and services.

Commercial and industrial land will not likely be in high demand in rural Braintree.

B. FUTURE LAND USES

The Town of Braintree has a distinct pattern of settlement which has emerged over time in response to cultural and social attitudes and changes, as well as to natural processes and formations of the land. This pattern features the establishment of two small and localized village centers with relatively high-density development and limited commercial uses. The villages are surrounded by very sparsely settled rural, agricultural and forest lands. Over the years, this pattern of settlement worked well for the sociological, psychological and aesthetic benefit of Braintree, while simultaneously supporting an economic system which is both efficient and desired.

This Plan is designed to perpetuate this pattern of settlement and to fit the needs and desires of people living in Braintree. The Plan is designed to be used by Braintree's decision makers to guide growth to the most appropriate locations. The citizens of Braintree have both a need and a right to review and assess proposed development, and to regulate new building to insure appropriate location and that too rapid expansion of Braintree does not unreasonably and adversely affect the rural scenic quality of the town or its ability to pay for the services that increased development requires. It is the intent of this Plan to provide for the maintenance of the high quality of life in Braintree by protecting the rural, scenic quality of the town through the appropriate use of land for residential, agricultural/forestry, small business and recreational use. Future development within Braintree should be guided by and related to the existing settlement patterns and the citizens' desires to maintain the rural scenic quality of the town, as well as by natural environmental constraints, and the ability of the taxpayers and the land to support the proposed growth.

To assist regulators in the implementation of this Plan, Braintree has established and mapped the following land use areas:

1. Floodplain

Adjacent to the branches of the White River and its tributaries are lands subject to periodic flooding and erosion. A natural part of the river ecosystem, floodplains are nearly level areas bordering the banks of streams that serve to retain excessive amounts of water during periods of heavy rains or spring thaws. Floodplains often provide excellent, though impermanent, agricultural soils.

Policy

To protect the environment and private property in current and potential flood plain areas.

Recommendation

1. That only open space uses within federally designated flood hazard areas be permitted.
2. That a town official flood erosion hazard area map be established.

3. That the flood plain district be changed to an overlay district.

2. Village

Braintree has two recognized village areas, West Braintree and East Braintree. They are the only existing high concentration settlement areas of Braintree. These two areas, to varying degrees, serve as the focal point to their respective locations in Braintree, in contrast to the outlying countryside. Their more concentrated density of development, the mix of private, public and community facilities, and their location give residents a desirable "sense of place" and add immeasurably to the social well-being of the community.

Although their role as community centers has changed due in large part to improved transportation, these hamlet settlements continue to provide desired community facilities and services, such as churches, town meeting hall, country stores, and commercial services, to the residents. Any growth in Braintree should encourage the villages to continue to function as the centers of Town activity.

Their higher density of buildings and people, however, poses a problem in balancing the requirements of safely disposing of wastewater without endangering water supplies on adjacent lands. Despite this potential problem, the Village areas are appropriate for development that increases density. Uses allowed in the villages include agriculture (where it does not pose health risks), residential, retail stores of a type that will primarily serve the Braintree community, professional offices, schools, government buildings, light industry and churches.

Policy

To protect and maintain the village quality of East Braintree and West Braintree.

Recommendation

1. That the establishment of small scale commercial uses in the existing villages while taking into consideration balancing the requirements of safely disposing of increased volumes of wastewater and septage without endangering water supplies on adjacent lands be encouraged.

3. Rural Areas II

Much of the land in this category borders existing State and Town highways and generally features soil and slope conditions which will provide for easier installation of on-site wastewater facilities. Also, the Rural Areas II sections of Braintree are located along the public utility networks where there are fewer impediments to development activities.

Uses allowed in Rural Area II include residential, light commercial, agriculture, forestry, public utilities, and outdoor recreation.

Policy

To maintain the rural character of Braintree and preserve agricultural and open space features.

Recommendation

1. That when economically viable agriculture is adjacent to low to moderate density residential growth within Rural Areas II, clustered development techniques be utilized for larger project development to maintain the rural character of Braintree, and preserve agriculture and open space features of these areas.
2. That affordable housing be encouraged in this district.
3. That agricultural and forestry lands be protected by discouraging the fragmentation of large land blocks through flexible zoning.

4. Rural Areas I

This area includes those lands that exhibit limitations for development based principally on physical criteria, such as steeper slopes, typically more shallow soils, or poor drainage. Access and proximity to existing utility services is limited or non-existent in these areas.

The land contains physical limitations which hamper the ability of Braintree to provide services to them at reasonable costs, particularly road maintenance. Non-intensive land uses such as agriculture, forestry, low-density residential development and outdoor recreation are allowed in this area.

Policy

To discourage development in Rural Areas I.

Recommendation

1. That low density residential use that does not adversely impact the environment be considered while commercial and industrial uses in Rural Areas I be discouraged.

5. Rural Scenic

One of Braintree's most valuable resources is the exceptional scenic quality of some of its upland areas. The attractiveness of these areas is derived from and directly attributable to a variety of elements which make up the land use pattern of the area. These factors, both natural and manmade, provide a rich visual experience for both residents and visitors in Braintree. Characteristics that attribute to such scenic values include the mixed pattern of open spaces to wooded areas, the prominence of clear unobstructed panoramic views of distant ridges and ravines, the back road byways and roadsides, and the non-intensive nature of the use of the land.

Indeed, the back road byways and roadsides are an integral element comprising the scenic features of this uniquely beautiful area. These byways consist of narrow gravel roadways with roadsides of diverse and

contrasting features. The byways are not intended to act as high-speed highways, but are intended to provide for the safe traveling and enjoyment of the scenic beauty. Their back road features, combined with the sequence of openings and closings in the roadside canopy, provide an experience which is not obtainable on high speed and more efficient highways.

Policy

The designation of these areas as Rural Scenic ensures the maintenance and modification of the landscape and byways in a manner which will not cause unnecessary or irreparable damage to or change the rural scenic quality of these features. Their destruction would serve to degrade the scenic, economic and cultural values that Braintree resident seek to preserve.

Recommendation

1. That an ordinance requiring that the exceptional scenic quality of the rural scenic areas be protected by limiting Residential development and other types of development within this area to a manner that serves to maintain:

- the visual focus on important scenic features through the screening of aesthetically displeasing objects,
- the visual diversity and contrast through the placement of structures that will not adversely modify the sequences and views to and from other areas, and
- the back road byway features

be adopted.

6. Conservation

It is the goal of this Plan to provide for the conservation of certain natural areas which have been identified as relatively undisturbed, consisting of large tracts of quality timber and serving as home for a variety of wildlife. Such areas of the community are currently not serviced and intentionally lack such facilities as roads and utilities. Generally, location and sub-soil conditions within these areas impose great limitations on development. In order to provide a fair level of community services within these areas, large amounts of public investment would be necessary with little public return but resulting in high costs to the scenic beauty of these natural areas.

Policy

The land in current and proposed conservation areas must be protected from development as its physical limitations are great and difficult to overcome without adversely affecting and degrading its environmental quality.

Recommendation

1. That conservation lands be protected and that only those recreational land uses that will not impact or affect the environmental and scenic quality of these areas be allowed.

C. GENERAL LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the above stated specific recommendations, the Plan sets forth the following general Land Use recommendations:

1. That enrollment of properties in Current Use Taxation and sale of gift to the State of Vermont, Vermont Land Trust, Nature Conservancy and other preservation organizations to reduce the tax burden on large holdings and to preserve farms and large tracts of land be encouraged.
2. That the continuation of land use for low density housing and viable farms and woodland through appropriate zoning regulations be encouraged.
3. That the protection of operating farms through local and state tax policy or the purchase of development rights be encouraged.

ARTICLE V - NATURAL PROCESSES AND FORMATIONS

The residents of Braintree are blessed with abundant wildlife, beautiful scenery and a rural character that must be preserved if the way of life that chosen by them is to be maintained.

Human activity modifies the landscape and, in recent times, at an ever increasing rate. Modification takes place at an accelerating rate as urban areas expand, suburban areas spread out and rural areas become the homes of more and more people. With human activities, as with the natural processes of change, there seems to be an organic consequence of the changes caused by the human activity. Changes here cause changes there; what one person does effects what happens to other individuals; and what one person does influences everyone else's actions.

Our human activity can cause disastrous changes in the environment and create major adverse impacts on our neighbors. As we enter the third century of the Industrial Revolution, we are learning what the real costs of cavalier disposal of our trash, the burning of untold tons of fossil fuels and the industrial creation of miracle-like chemicals are to our planet and our way of life.

It is essential to be conscientious of the effects human activities have on the natural environment. Inappropriate activities can foul the drinking water and degrade the soils upon which everyone depends to sustain life. If many people are to live together in a community, each person has to be aware of and considerate of our natural, as well as social, environment, and to direct his or her activities accordingly.

As residents struggle to solve environmental problems such as "where to dump the trash" and "where to put a septic system on a rocky ledge," the limitations of the natural landscape have to be considered and respected. A septic system "here" may pollute a well over "there." A home on this hillside may have a nice view, and ruin the view of a beautiful hillside from the village or from Braintree's unique scenic roads.

Development in certain places - where the soil is shallow, or the hillside steep, or the land is wet much of the time – is inappropriate and causes problems the natural environmental processes may not be able to

cure. We are learning that restraints are needed in dealing with the natural environment and that similar restraints are needed in dealing with the social landscape.

It is the intent of this plan to provide for the continual protection and maintenance of the integrity of the wild, natural and historic resources of the Town in furtherance of the way of life valued by the citizens of Braintree. This Plan provides for the preservation and protection of the integrity of existing natural features, including wetlands, well head protection areas water bodies, brooks and streams, scenic points and roads, open meadowlands, trees and forest resources, rock outcroppings, prime agricultural soils, and critical habitat areas, as well as of the special and historical areas of the Town.

A. WETLANDS

The identified and mapped wetlands in Braintree are important to wildlife (plant and animal), surface water purification, flood and erosion control and aquifer recharge, and education and recreation.

Policy

Wetlands are highly valuable and necessary to healthy ecosystems and shall not be drained, filled or altered to accommodate development or for any other purpose.

Recommendation

1. That no development be allowed in any wetland area
2. That wetlands will not be allowed to be filled in or altered in any way.
3. That adequate setbacks be required for all construction, including but not limited to construction of roads, buildings and sewage systems.

B. WELL HEAD PROTECTION AREAS, BROOKS AND STREAMS

The vast majority of Braintree residents obtain their drinking water from underground sources. It is vital, therefore, to protect the resource for all residents and for those using the same aquifer in surrounding towns. Development in Braintree shall not result in the pollution of ground or surface waters or cause an unreasonable reduction in supply.

Policy

To protect the ground and surface waters in Braintree for all residents.

Recommendation

1. That development in Braintree shall be permitted only if it does not cause any environmental degradation and does not result in the pollution of ground or surface waters or cause unreasonable reductions in supply.
2. That no detrimental development of any kind be allowed by any brook, stream or tributary or in a well head recharge area.
3. That all proposed development be reviewed for appropriate location away from brooks streams, tributaries and well head recharge areas and for adequate protection of the recharge environment of these resources.
4. That no septic system, tank or leach field, be allowed within 150' of a brook, stream, or tributary or within a well head recharge area.
5. That the Town monitor all large water withdrawals in the regional area that have a potential to effect the private water sources of Braintree residents and enter into negotiations with the withdrawer of large quantities of water to protect resident water supplies if necessary.

C. SCENIC ROADS

The Town of Braintree is served by over thirty miles of scenic gravel back roads and byways. Development proposals on those Braintree roads that are designated as scenic shall be reviewed by the Town to ensure that the location of any proposed structure and any site alteration, including grading, filling, removal of trees, stonewalls or other existing landscape features does not degrade the scenic quality of the road or roadside. The intent is to minimize any interference with views or vistas afforded from the scenic road and to maintain the rural scenic byway quality.

Policy

To maintain the rural and scenic character of the back roads and byways thereby protecting the rural scenic quality of the town.

Recommendation

1. That all development proposals on all Town roads be reviewed by the Town to ensure that the location of any proposed structure and any site or roadside alteration, including grading, filling, removal of trees, stonewalls or other existing landscape features does not degrade the scenic quality of the road or roadside.
2. That in keeping with the Town's desire to maintain its rural and scenic character, efforts to add additional lanes for vehicular traffic to scenic routes and to increase the speed limits on scenic roads should be vigorously opposed.

D. RIDGELINES AND SCENIC VISTAS

Braintree is fortunate to have miles of open and forested ridge tops that form an aesthetically significant ridgeline and ridgeline vistas that enhance the scenic beauty of the town. The ridgelines are highly scenic

due to their natural undeveloped beauty of the many ridge-tops and their visibility from public roads throughout Braintree. These natural ridgelines and the significant scenic vistas around Braintree contribute in large part to the quality of life that Braintree residents enjoy.

Policy

To protect the natural scenic beauty of the ridge-tops and the scenic vistas from the adverse aesthetic and environmental impacts of development.

Recommendation

1. That all development proposals or applications for work to be conducted on or near ridgelines be reviewed for consistency with the policy to protect the scenic beauty of ridge-tops and vistas.

E. MEADOWLANDS AND PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS

The open spaces and meadowlands that are indigenous to farming in Braintree are those features that most importantly define rural character and set Vermont apart from other northern New England states. Therefore, any proposed development or subdivision should not be permitted in these areas if the proposed development or subdivision disrupts the scenic quality of the site or removes agricultural or forestry lands from their original use. Any proposed meadowland development must retain the maximum possible meadowland for agricultural use through such means as clustering under Planned Unit Development provisions, reduction in allowable density or the sale or donation of development rights.

Policy

To discourage the removal of agricultural and forestry lands from their primary use.

Recommendation

1. That a bylaw be adopted that requires that a proposed development or subdivision maximize the use of the least productive land, protects prime agricultural soils, and utilizes alternative development models that protect the environment.

F. TREES, FOREST RESOURCES AND ROCK OUTCROPPINGS

Forests, tree stands and rock outcroppings all contribute to the serene scenic beauty of Braintree. There are acres of forested land in Braintree and within those forested acres are found unique rock outcroppings.

Policy

To manage the forests in a sustainable manner that will provide for logging and recreation activity for years to come while protecting the beauty of the forest and the natural rock outcroppings.

Recommendation

1. That all forestry operations be conducted using the Acceptable Management Practices as defined by the State of Vermont Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation.
2. That a bylaw be adopted that provides for the protection of forest rock outcroppings and other irreplaceable forest features.

G. CRITICAL HABITATS; DEERYARDS, BEAR HABITAT, RARE SPECIES

Braintree is home to many species of wildlife, and for many residents of Braintree, the opportunity to view this wildlife is one of the pleasures of living in the town. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife has identified and mapped areas that are known to be deeryards, bear habitat and rare species locations within the Town. Significant deer wintering areas have been located in Braintree. It is recognized that the deeryards change in shape and size and that constant field verification is necessary for accurate depictions. The same remains true for bear habitat and rare species location.

Policy

The Town desires to protect and maintain these special critical habitat areas and to discourage development near or within them.

Recommendation

1. That a bylaw be adopted that strongly supports the necessity that all development in Braintree be reviewed with consideration for the integrity of the areas of deeryards, bear habitat and rare species locations, and that development be prohibited in those areas.
2. That in situations where development has already impacted these areas, the remainder of the area must be managed in a manner compatible with the continued viability of each area.
3. That a bylaw be adopted that requires that when development is proposed on a lot involving or adjacent to an existing deeryard, known bear habitat or rare species location, it shall be reviewed for critical habitat location with representatives of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

H. INVASIVE SPECIES

In the last decade, Braintree has experienced the invasion of various non-indigenous plant species that are taking hold along its back roads and byways, and in its fields and open meadows. These non-indigenous species are crowding out the native plants and are interfering with established ecosystems. Eradication initially required the efforts of every resident in Braintree who found the offending species taking root on his/her land. Unfortunately, individual efforts have proven to be not enough in the fight against the invading species.

Policy

To protect the diversity of the environment and the local flora from ruination by the plants and seeds of the offending invading species

Recommendation

1. That the Town work to contain and/or eradicate invasive species through accepted scientific and environmentally sensitive means.

I. SPECIAL AREAS

The planning survey conducted in 1993 identified five "special areas" or features that make Braintree especially unique. These are:

1. Braintree Hill - (scenic beauty, views of the mountains)
2. Rolling Rock - (peacefulness, serenity)
3. Mud Pond - (peacefulness, serenity)
4. Town Hall - (historical value)
5. Meeting House - (historical value and scenic location)

Policy

To protect the special and unique historical and natural places in Braintree.

Recommendation

1. That it is strongly recommended that the integrity of the environmental and social landscapes of Braintree be highly regarded and protected when development of any kind is proposed within the Town.
2. That a bylaw protecting these special natural and historical places be adopted.
3. That permanent protection of these special natural and historical places be encouraged through acquisition of land or conservation restrictions by public agencies or private land trusts.

ARTICLE VI - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A. SCHOOLS

Braintree is a member of the Orange Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) along with Brookfield and Randolph. Each town, through its School Board, governs its own elementary school. A High School Board, containing members from each of the towns, governs the High School and the Junior High School. Randolph Technical Career Center is governed by an Interlocal Board, consisting of three representatives from Randolph Union High School, one representative from each of the sending towns and three other representatives from the business community. The members of these four boards

constitute the OSSU Board. Several functions have been consolidated within the OSSU, such as accounting and purchasing. Curriculum is coordinated through the OSSU office.

1. Elementary School

A new elementary school was built on Bent Hill Road near Route 12A and was occupied on January 2, 1992. The school was designed for a capacity of 150 students.

Elementary school enrollment has been relatively stable over the last few years, ranging from 100 to 115 students.

2. Secondary Schools

Secondary school students attend a school in Randolph. This facility was erected in 1956 and a Junior High School for grades seven through nine was added in September 1968. Costs for this school are apportioned to each town according to the number of students from each town. For the 2004-2005 school year Braintree sent 113 students to Randolph Union High School, making up 20% of the school's enrollment. The Randolph Technical Career Center was added to the above facility in 1971 and serves as the Vocational School for 19 towns in the Central Vermont area.

The secondary school buildings are modern facilities and are adequate for the near future. While the high school experiences growth, the elementary school populations decline.

Policy

To provide the children of Braintree with the best education possible within the financial means of the town.

Recommendation

1. That due diligence is performed prior to expending funds on the school facility for repairs or obtaining capital items.
2. That an emergency generator be installed in Braintree Elementary.

B. SEWER AND WATER SYSTEMS

1. Sewer

There are no publicly owned sewer systems in Braintree, and none are recommended at this time. Each property owner provides his/her own disposal system. These are predominately of the septic tank and leach field type.

A permit application is required for new systems or repairs to existing failed systems. In an effort to detect and rectify failing systems, Braintree requires an inspection of private systems whenever a change in ownership occurs. Because of the potential for growth in terms of increased concentration of homes and businesses in Braintree, sufficient land area is required for each lot so as to enable proper functioning of private on-site systems, plus provide space for a back-up system as required by State law. Private on-site systems are the most likely scenario for the foreseeable future due to the high construction and operating costs of public sewage treatment plants and lack of feasibility in rural Braintree.

The village areas of Braintree, however, have a higher concentration of homes and businesses than the rest of the town. This concentration increases the likelihood of problems caused by failed or inadequate septic systems and could pose a danger to nearby water supply sources.

Policy

To ensure the proper design and functioning of private on-site systems as required by State law.

Recommendation

1. That installation of engineered septic systems providing for adequate spacing between septic systems and water sources even though this may require larger lots than would be otherwise desired in some instances be required.
2. That the requirement of inspections of septic systems before transfer of ownership be continued until 2007 when the State acquires control of septic system review within the State.
3. That the town repeal its existing Sewage Ordinance in favor of State regulations.

2. Water Systems

Braintree does not own or maintain a public water system and does not anticipate acquiring or creating a public water supply system in the foreseeable future. Water throughout Braintree comes from privately owned wells or springs, except that in the villages of East Braintree and West Braintree there are small privately owned cooperative water systems. Current water quality and sources are adequate to service the present and anticipated needs of Braintree.

Policy

The protection of safe potable water for the residents of Braintree is of the utmost importance.

Recommendation

1. That land use regulations ensuring the protection of safe potable water for the residents of Braintree be adopted.
2. That the Town require applicants for all large water withdrawals in the area that have a potential to effect the private water sources of Braintree residents to conduct studies to determine the impact on surface and ground water.

C. PUBLIC UTILITIES

Electricity is provided by the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation. Telephone service is provided by Verizon. Adelphia Cable TV serves a portion of Braintree. None of these utilities is owned or operated by the Town of Braintree. Service and maintenance responsibilities lie with the individual companies.

There are towers, dishes, and poles used by these utility companies and they have significant impact on the scenic beauty of Braintree. Additionally, there has been concern over the erection of high voltage transmission lines over populated areas.

Policy

Public utility installations within the Town of Braintree must be installed with consideration for the protection of the health of the residents and the protection of the scenic and rural quality of the town.

Recommendation

1. That the erection of high voltage transmission lines as far away as possible from schools, churches, and sites of public congregation as well as from private homes be encouraged through site location land use regulations.
2. That a bylaw be adopted requiring the removal of unused and unsightly towers from public and private lands.

D. TOWN OFFICES

The Town offices are located at 932 Route 12A adjacent to the Town Garage, near the Braintree-Randolph town line. The building, erected in 1978 and enlarged in 1995, has a walk-in vault for the storage of town records, a Town Clerk and Town Treasurer office area, an office used by the Lister, and a meeting room for the town officers used by the Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard and the Highway Supervisor.

Policy

To maintain the Town Offices in good repair.

Recommendation

1. That the town organize a committee to identify the current deficiencies of the Town Offices structure and create a plan for future renovation, expansion and/or new construction to meet the town’s building space needs.

E. TOWN HALL

The Town Hall is located on Route 12A in West Braintree. It was deeded to the Town in 1877. The first floor is used for town meetings and other community functions. In 1981, a new foundation was built and rotted sills were replaced and the downstairs windows were replaced with double-glazed windows. After much frustration over the need for water and sewage and more additional land for the Town Hall, the voters approved the purchase of an adjacent house and land in 1985. The house, being in a very dilapidated condition, was razed and the land used for a well and parking facility.

In 1987, the voters approved the spending of \$40,000 to erect an addition to the Town Hall for modern kitchen and bathroom facilities. Braintree has been most fortunate to have had the Building Trades students of the Randolph Technical Career Center do this construction, which began in the Spring of 1988. The project was completed in the fall of 1990 by the Hearth and Heath Extension Homemakers Club funding for painting and floor covering. The Town Hall is currently in need of a significant amount of repair and restoration.

The Braintree Hill Meeting House basement formerly served as a town hall. The building is presently owned and used by the Braintree Historical Society as a museum, meeting place and site for Old Home Day.

Policy

To restore the entire building to its original condition and to preserve and properly maintain this historic building.

Recommendation

1. That the Town organize a committee to be created to identify the restoration needs and the ongoing maintenance needs of the Town Hall.

F. EMERGENCY 911 SYSTEM

An enhanced Emergency 911 system went into effect on 2 December 1998. The Town of Braintree, through its appointed E911 coordinator and an agreement with Verizon, maintains and updates the listing of residents in town for local emergency service purposes.

Policy

To support the opportunity of residents for access to an active emergency contact mechanism.

Recommendation

1. That the current E911 system agreement established with Verizon be maintained.

G. POLICE PROTECTION

Security for Braintree residents is provided by a Constable who is elected each year at Town Meeting. The elected Constable is not a Vermont certified law enforcement officer. Accordingly, the Constable may perform limited functions such as responding to dog complaints calls, assisting the State Police with traffic control at the scene of an accident, and providing pre-State Police involvement warnings for minor traffic violations such as the use of four wheelers on a town road. On occasion the Constable may be requested by the State police to perform a non-law certification required function on their behalf.

The Vermont State Police force at the Royalton station on Vermont Route 107 is the town’s first line of law enforcement protection. Full time law enforcement services are to be provided to Braintree residents by the State Police from the Royalton Station.

Policy

To ensure the protection and safety of the citizens of Braintree against crime and violations of law.

Recommendation

1. That the law enforcement needs of the town and its citizens be reviewed and assessed on an annual basis by town officials with input from the citizens to determine the adequacy of police protection provided and to provide greater protection if determined to be inadequate..
2. That a partnership with the state police be formed to ensure adequate citizen protection within a timely and, if necessary, exigent manner.
3. That the need for additional equipment or facilities for the elected Constable be considered as an important part of the annual assessment.

H. FIRE PROTECTION

Braintree has an agreement with the Randolph Village Fire Department (RVFD) for it to provide fire protection services to the town. The RVFD is staffed with volunteers fire fighters who are notified of a needed response by a paging system maintained by the department. It appears that sufficient fire protection services are available to the residents of Braintree.

Burn permits for all outdoor burning are required by State Law. Burn permits are available from the Town Forest Fire Warden. These permits do not relieve the applicant from any liability should the fire damage public or private property, and are good only for the date and time stated on the issued permit. There is a fine for burning without a permit.

Policy

To guarantee the residents of Braintree adequate fire protection services.

Recommendation

1. That Braintree provide for adequate fire protection services for its residents by maintaining its agreement with the RVFD and by conducting an annual review of the service contract for adequacy.
2. That road and driveway access to proposed developments for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles be evaluated as part of the permit review process.

I. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE

Emergency Medical Service is provided by White River Valley Ambulance, Inc. (WRVA) located on Route 12 in Bethel. The availability of this service is 24 hours, seven days a week. This service is adequate for Braintree's current needs.

Policy

To provide the Town with a level of advanced emergency medical services in a rural setting.

Recommendation

1. That the Town continue with its membership within this eight town non-profit organization which provides excellent emergency medical care at the most affordable cost to the Town.

J. SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Since the 1970's, Braintree and Brookfield have had an agreement with Randolph to use the Town of Randolph's municipal solid waste landfill. In 1992 these three towns established a district and required mandatory mechanisms for recycling. Recycling and trash is collected in Randolph and trucked by a contractor outside the district for disposal.

1. Existing System

a. Transfer Station or Private Collection

Braintree and Brookfield have participated in the past with Randolph in solid waste matters. About 20% of the population of the three towns drops off their wastes and recyclables at the Randolph transfer station. The remaining 80% contract for collection of their solid waste through one of the eight independent haulers that serve the area. It is assumed that the majority of the commercial, institutional, and manufacturing activities in the region also contract for waste collection. At the Randolph transfer station it costs \$1.50 per small bag and a minimum of \$3.00 per large bag to dump household trash.

b. Recycling Services

Some of the independent waste haulers offer curbside collection of recyclables and some do not. Casella Waste Management offers a weekly curbside pick-up services for recyclables to all its customers. Casella's pick-up service charge is based on a maximum number of bags that may be left at the curb each week. A bag of recyclables may be substituted for a bag of garbage under the contract.

Recycling drop-off is also available to residents and businesses at no charge at the Town of Randolph transfer station. Containers are leased from Casella Waste Services for use at the transfer station. Aluminum is managed separately by the transfer station attendant who collects it for the salvage value and applies it to the transfer station's operating budget. Newsprint and paper is also recycled. All other recyclables (glass, HDPE and PET, ferrous, and office paper) are handled by Casella Waste Management that picks up the materials when the containers are full. Collection of corrugated cardboard at the transfer station is also available.

c. Septage

Septage generated by residents of Braintree is collected by private haulers and is disposed of through land application at certified sites in the region.

2. Special Wastes

Special wastes, defined as bulky wastes (such as appliances), scrap tires, and construction and demolition debris, are all collected at the Randolph transfer station. These wastes are either dropped at the transfer station by the generators or picked up by one of the eight private haulers that serves the region and then

dropped off at the landfill. Lead acid batteries and used oil are both collected at the Randolph transfer station. The lead acid batteries are picked up regularly for their salvage value.

There is no regular program for household hazardous waste collection at the Randolph transfer station. Watch the local paper for dates when household hazardous waste is to be collected.

3. Future System

It is anticipated that Braintree residents will continue to have the option of bringing waste to the facility or continue relying on private contractors for collection services.

All other services at the Randolph transfer station site will remain the same.

Policy

To provide the residents of Braintree with the opportunity to legally and safely dispose of their household and all other trash.

Recommendation

1. That Braintree continue to participate in the three town agreement allowing use of the Randolph facility.
2. That Braintree support regional hazardous waste collection and establish a local means to collect Braintree's hazardous waste and transport it to a regional location.
3. That Braintree support its residents' participation in all "Amnesty Days" held in the area.
4. That Braintree continue to support recycling efforts to decrease the impact on the existing landfill and reduce the amount of waste that will ultimately need to be transported to a regional site
5. That Braintree develop a comprehensive junk and solid waste ordinance to promote their proper disposal and to protect Braintree's rural scenic quality from degradation from abandoned junk and solid waste.

K. LIBRARY

Local borrowing of books is offered through either Kimball Public Library located in Randolph, Vermont or the library located in Randolph Center on the campus of Vermont Technical College.

Policy

To provide for a lending library opportunity for the residents of Braintree.

Recommendation

1. That Braintree residents be made aware of these libraries and that use of these facilities be promoted.

L. TOWN GARAGE

The town garage was built in 1973 and is located at the site of the former Town Barn on Route 12A near the Braintree-Randolph town line. This facility provides storage for highway equipment. The former town barn is used for storing additional supplies.

Policy

The Town provides adequate storage facilities to protect the town road maintenance equipment and supplies from weather and vandalism.

Recommendation

1. That the town garage be maintained and adequate cover and protection be provided for equipment.
2. That the Town Garage shall be maintained in compliance with Federal and State regulations regarding labor and industry health and safety, hazardous waste storage and disposal, wastewater disposal, fuel/oil storage.

M. RECREATION

The rural character of Braintree lends itself most readily to outdoor recreation. Excellent hiking, hunting, mountain biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and fishing are available within the Town and in much of the surrounding region. Braintree does not own or maintain any recreation facilities or provide any organized recreational activities.

Policy

To support land use proposals that enhance a recreational model.

Recommendation

1. That the possibility of greater participation by Braintree in the Town of Randolph's recreational park, which includes swimming, ice-skating and ball fields, be examined.
2. That public access to private land for non-intrusive recreational uses be encouraged while seeking assurances outside of town government for the private landowner of freedom from liability.

3. That the purchase of special lands within the town for a town park be considered.

N. CHILD CARE

In 2003, the Vermont Legislature added a thirteenth goal to Chapter 117. “To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.”

There are presently four licensed child care providers in town and some of the children in their care come from outside of Braintree. Finding available childcare services is a problem for many local families and may limit the ability of both parents to obtain employment.

Braintree’s present zoning regulations pose little or no hindrance to persons who wish to provide daycare within the town and the Braintree Planning Commission should support any efforts to expand the availability of local child care.

Recommendations

1. Collect available information and any data to accurately assess the need for additional local child care services.
2. Develop a plan that would create guidelines and support for the development of additional child care facilities and services.

O. CEMETERIES

Braintree has eleven Town-maintained cemeteries. An elected Cemetery Commission is made up of five Commissioners with staggered terms of office. The Commissioners are responsible for compliance with the numerous State rules and regulations regarding the maintenance of cemeteries. The specifics can be found in 18 V.S.A., Section 5378. Adequate space does exist in the Town-maintained cemeteries.

Policy

To provide for the adequate maintenance of all town cemeteries and to provide for the future needs of land for creation of new Town cemeteries, and to limit the creation of private cemeteries as they create a potential financial burden to the Town.

Recommendation

1. That the Cemetery Commission draft a proposal to form a committee to identify and recommend the acquisition of additional cemetery lands to the Selectboard.
2. That the town adopt a bylaw limiting the creation of new private cemeteries.

ARTICLE VII - HOUSING

A. HOUSING TRENDS

Many towns in New England have experienced rapid economic growth and residential sprawl over the last 30 years. Quite often, their present appearance bears little resemblance to the historical development of the town. While Braintree has not yet experienced a great deal of dislocated development, the potential pressures for such development are present. A key element in the character of the Town is its housing - the quality, availability and variety of places for its residents to live. Housing has a large influence on the rate and direction of business and industrial growth.

A major function of planning is to meet two important community objectives: First, safe, adequate, and affordable shelter for present and future populations, and second, suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the town. Although the provision and maintenance of a town's housing stock is primarily a private sector activity, the growth and development of housing affects the environment of the town and the facilities and services it provides or will provide. Housing constructed in the absence of adequate planning for public facilities can overburden schools, soils important to safe sewage disposal, roads, and other municipal services. Poorly located housing can pollute a water supply or destroy an important wildlife habitat. Housing that is inadequate to meet the demand in a town or region can strain adjacent towns and prevent people from living close to their jobs.

1. Number of Housing Units

According to the U.S. Census data, there were 570 housing units in Braintree in 1990. In 2000 there were 567 housing units. This is a loss of 3 units or a 1% loss in the number of housing units during the 10-year period. A housing unit as defined by the U.S. Census includes houses, apartments, mobile homes, and rooms for occupancy.

The growth rate for new housing in Orange County was 9% for the period 1990 - 2000. Communities surrounding Braintree experienced slow rates of increase in housing units in this period as well. Housing units in Granville and Randolph increased 4%, Brookfield 7%, Bethel and Roxbury 8%. Williamstown was the exception with a greater increase of 16%. Total increase in housing units for Orange County was 1060, a change of 9%, while overall growth in units for Vermont was 17%.

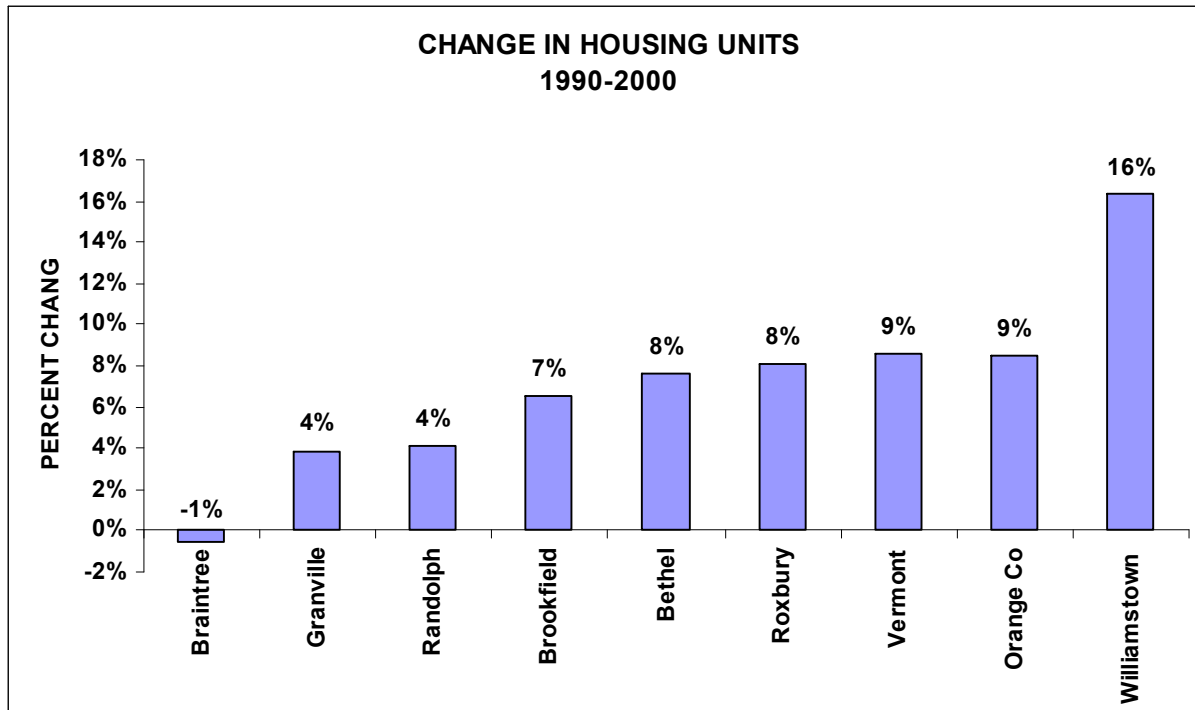


Figure 2 - Change In Housing Units 1990-2000

2. Affordability

The lack of affordable housing has become an urgent problem facing Vermont and all its towns. Many low and moderate income families are being driven out of growing towns or have been forced to live in substandard housing. What was once a problem only for lower income Vermonters, is now a problem that affects teachers, policemen, town managers and other middle-income Vermonters.

The definition of affordable housing varies by household, whereby housing is affordable if the household pays no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs. Although some households choose to allocate more than 30 percent of their income to housing, the vast majority of people who pay more than 30 percent are forced into doing so.

B. PROJECTIONS

Based upon housing trends on a regional level, housing trends for Braintree can be summarized as follows:

1. Average housing value or acquisition cost will continue to be beyond the means of most low and moderate income families.
2. More Braintree housing will continue to be purchased by persons residing outside of Braintree and Vermont.

Policy

To encourage safe, decent, adequate and suitable housing for all of Braintree's residents, including the sons and daughters of Braintree residents, while preserving the maximum amount of open space possible to ensure continuation of a valued way of life.

Recommendation

1. That the quality of existing residential neighborhoods be conserved and protected.
2. That obsolete and deteriorating dwelling units and neighborhoods be renewed or rehabilitated.
3. That private sector development of new dwelling units compatible with existing neighborhoods be encouraged.
4. That affordable housing needs on a regional level be studied and Town officials cooperate and participate in any regional efforts at addressing this problem.
5. That a plan of action to provide affordable housing be adopted before affordable housing is permanently out of reach of our citizens.
6. That expansion of the village areas which allow for dense residential development be encouraged and more dense residential development within current village boundaries be promoted as long as adequate sewage treatment can be accommodated.
7. That large-scale housing developments in out-lying areas be discouraged.
8. That allowing conversion of large houses to apartments when adequate water and sewage disposal are available on-site and when other zoning requirements can be satisfied be considered.
9. That large-scale residential growth be directed away from prime agricultural and open space areas and encouraged to cluster in only one portion of the total developable area.
10. That the structural condition of Braintree's existing housing stock be inventoried and recommendations for strategies to maintain, conserve, and rehabilitate existing housing be made.
11. That future housing needs based on population projections be assessed and design incentives to promote private sector appropriate residential development be developed.

ARTICLE VIII - TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Because of increased population levels, and increased demands for mobility, an effective transportation network is paramount for the community. It serves an integral role in determining Braintree's economic well-being and future growth patterns.

Obviously, such a system should provide relative ease and safety for its users, both for through-traffic and for the residents of the community. While there can be many elements in a transportation plan, Braintree's Plan presently is limited to its networks of roads.

The official 2000 Road Classification Map for Braintree shows a total mileage of all systems, State and Town, of 61.81 miles. Of this mileage, 53.06 miles are Town Highways serving primarily existing residential and farm areas. Their condition ranges from hard surfaced gravel roads to untraveled rights-of-way. The location and class of each road is provided on the map attached to the Plan. A breakdown of the Town Highway mileage follows:

Class 1 Town Highways.....	0.00 miles
Class 2 Town Highways.....	9.32 miles
Class 3 Town Highways.....	32.79 miles
Class 4 Town Highways.....	10.95 miles
Vermont Route 12A.....	7.19 miles
Vermont Route 12.....	1.56 miles
TOTAL.....	61.81 miles

In 1973, the State classified all town highways into one of the following still relevant four principal classes:

Class 1 town highways are those town highways which were, on June 30, 1973, considered by the State Highway Board to be state aid connecting links and were designated as such on a map entitled "Vermont State Aid Highways" as of January 1, 1975, as revised and filed in the Office of the Secretary of State.

Class 2 town highways are those town highways which were on June 30, 1973, considered by the State Highway Board to be state aid highways and were designated as such on a map entitled "Vermont State Aid Highways" as of January 1, 1975, as revised and filed in the office of the Secretary of State. These roads generally are major collector roads within the town.

Class 3 town highways are those town highways that were certified by the selectmen after conference with a representative of the State Highway Board as traveled town highways during the year beginning July 1, 1973. This road classification describes the bulk of Braintree's back roads. They generally lead to or connect with a Class 2 or state highway.

Class 4 town highways are all town highways that are not classified as town 1, 2 or 3 highways. Class 4 highways are generally in poor condition and are limited in maintenance due to their relative low level of use or seasonal nature.

Maintenance and improvements to the Town Highway System, aside from the operation of the schools, is the largest single portion of the Braintree own budget. In 1991, Braintree realized expenditures in excess of \$176,418 for maintenance of Town roads at an average cost of about \$3,325/mile. In 1991, actual state aid received for highways accounted for approximately \$71,669. No state aid money can be expended on Class 4 highways.

Policy

Due to high costs of construction and major improvements to existing highways, it is in the best interests of the citizens of Braintree that future/further road improvement and development be reviewed and approved by Braintree officials with citizen input and review prior to the commencement of any work to ensure a safe and adequate transportation network.

Recommendation

1. That all new road projects resulting from a proposed subdivision or development be reviewed carefully by the Planning Commission to assure that such development does not unreasonably affect the surrounding community areas and by the Board of Selectmen to determine that the existing or potential financial capacity of Braintree can provide for the road improvements and maintenance.
2. That the Braintree Traffic Ordinance, which establishes construction standards for upgrading existing Town roads, and standards and procedures for accepting new roads into the Town highway system, be used by Braintree officials to specify construction standards and cost responsibility for construction of access roads to residential single family homes or developments that will eventually be incorporated into the Town's highway system or will affect the existing town highway system in any way.
3. That road maintenance services be performed with consideration for the protection of the rural and scenic beauty of the town's byways as well as for the protection of private property along those byways.
4. That efforts to widen or add additional lanes for vehicular traffic to scenic routes and to increase the speed limits on scenic roads should be vigorously opposed in keeping with the Town's desire to maintain its rural and scenic character and to ensure safety on its roads.

ARTICLE IX - ENERGY ELEMENT

The electric utility power, supply, transmission and distribution for Braintree is franchised to the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (CVPS) of Rutland, Vermont. This power supply comes from a mix of hydro, nuclear, and fossil fuel. Currently, the mix of power supplied to Braintree residents is derived as follows: Nuclear - 36%, hydro - 42%, fossil fuels - 3%, other renewable sources - 5% and 14% coming from short term purchases from the New England Power Pool. Energy rates, and therefore, costs are increasing in every energy category. (2004 Vermont Comprehensive Energy and Electric Plan)

Some residents of the Town of Braintree utilize wood to heat their homes. The use of wood for heat may be either the sole source of heat or a back-up source coupled with an alternate source of heat. Accordingly, the amount of wood used may vary depending upon the costs of other fuels.

Policy

To actively participate in the provision of energy resources at reasonable costs while ensuring public health, aesthetic quality and environmental safety.

Recommendation

1. That new building owners and contractors in the Town of Braintree be encouraged to go through a voluntary no-charge CVPS analysis to learn if the designed electric energy load for the building is the most efficient within economic reason.
2. That State and Federal programs aimed at conservation and the development of alternative forms of energy be monitored and that this information be made available to residents and the development community, and be considered in all permit review processes where applicable.
3. That the conservation of energy resources and the use of solar power be encouraged.
4. That a compact, land efficient form of development emphasizing development in the Village area and discouraging energy wasting strip development be promoted.
5. That building design and subdivision standards that maximize solar exposure be encouraged.
6. That a bylaw be adopted discouraging commercial wind generation within the town.

ARTICLE X - PLAN COMPATIBILITY

Braintree is bounded by six towns, one that shares only a small segment of common border (Bethel). The five principal adjacent towns are Randolph, Granville, Rochester, Brookfield and Roxbury. At this writing, all towns have adopted Town Plans, some under revision and some newly revised. Randolph, Rochester, Bethel and Brookfield have both municipal plans and zoning regulations in effect. Zoning Districts along common borders are generally compatible. District names may differ, but the intent of each is consistent.

For the most part, the suggested land use areas within the Land Use Element of this Plan seem compatible with land use districts and zones within abutting communities. These conditions may of course change as new growth takes place and communities find it necessary to update their plans and periodically make amendments to existing zoning and subdivision bylaws. It is hereby recommended that in any future planning or implementation effort, careful attention be paid to adopted policy of all adjacent communities. An understanding of the regional impacts of how decisions in our town affect our neighbors and vice versa will in the long-run benefit us all.

Braintree is an active participant in the meetings and work of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. The Regional Commission's charge is to provide support and guidance to member communities on land use planning, municipal management and most recently, transportation planning. The increasing complexity of state, regional and local planning as well as running a town, require active participation in regional planning forums.

The Two Rivers - Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has implemented a decentralized transportation planning process with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). The planning process has

culminated into a prioritized list of transportation projects for this Region. Braintree has actively participates in this process. It is important to continue active involvement to ensure compatibility between the plans and desires of Braintree with those of the Vtrans.

Policy

To plan for the harmonious development of the region and to work with neighboring towns to address mutual concerns.

Recommendation

1. That participation in the Two Rivers-Ottawa-Quebec Regional Commission continue.
2. That planning information and development trend data be exchanged with neighboring communities.
3. That regional and local permits issued for large scale withdrawals effecting the local water supply be monitored pre-approval and that withdrawal effects be monitored after approval if appropriate.
4. That Braintree participate in the development of regional solutions to problems that transcend town borders.

ARTICLE XI - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES

A. BYLAWS

After the Braintree Board of Selectmen has adopted the Braintree Town Plan, the Planning Commission may move to implement the Plan and its policies by presenting for consideration one or more of the following bylaws. It should be stressed that in order for any of these bylaws to be adopted, voter approval at a regular or special town meeting must be obtained. All of these bylaws can be used to implement the goals, policies and objectives of this Plan.

1. Zoning Ordinance

Braintree has adopted and will periodically amend zoning ordinance after a town meeting vote to permit, prohibit, restrict, and determine land development. Zoning is a legal process designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of a community by control of the use of its land. Zoning bylaws usually involve the division of a community into districts, each having specified uses permitted as well as area, dimensional and performance standards to control the uses.

2. Subdivision Regulations

Braintree has adopted subdivision regulations setting forth the procedures, requirements and specifications for the division of land into two or more parcels. Such things as design of streets and lots,

installation of utilities and septic systems, provisions for the supplying of potable water, and reservation of park or school land are normally contained in a subdivision regulation.

3. Official Maps

Braintree has adopted the following official maps to assist in the implementation of town directives: Current Land Use, Future Land Use, Transportation, Utilities & Facilities. The town will consider pursuing the adoption of additional useful maps containing information on, but not limited to, soils, wetlands, flood overlay areas, and deeryards and habitat areas.

4. Design Control District Ordinance

This ordinance would safeguard the town's heritage and preserve the natural beauty. Such an ordinance acknowledges public interest in preserving the general architectural and landscape features within an area and will indicate the desire of a town to maintain the appearance and use of the area.

5. Flood Hazard District Bylaw

This bylaw is designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to prevent increases in flooding caused by the uncontrolled development of lands in flood hazard areas, and to minimize losses due to floods.

B. ALTERNATIVES

While bylaws, most commonly zoning and subdivision ordinances, are the primary means of implementing recommendations in this Town Plan, it must be emphasized that there are other directions that can be taken to achieve this plan's expressed goals and objectives. Private initiatives and non-regulatory approaches such as tax stabilization agreements, and gifts of land can supplement the remaining four previously mentioned tools. Groups that might get involved in these kinds of programs would include the Town of Braintree, a special interest group such as a conservation commission or historical society, or a non-profit private land trust.

1. Land Trusts

While local government has an important role in conserving open land, private groups and individuals have much of the control over the future of this resource. Increasingly the private sector is driving the conservation process. Land trusts - non-profit organizations dedicated to the protection of land resources - have developed several techniques for helping individuals to conserve their land. The process begins with the identification of the landowner's conservation objectives and financial needs. The final plan will be a balance of these factors.

Because of their non-profit status, most land trusts can receive contributions that are deductible from federal income taxes. This tax incentive has been a major attraction of the land trust process. Donations of land or conservation easements have improved the overall financial picture for some landowners. Cash contributions (which are also tax deductible) equip the land trust to manage the lands it receives.

Besides being advisors to land owners and recipients of donations, land trusts have become financial packages, organizing conservation-minded individuals to finance or to pledge their credit to secure an important property. Often this is a holding action while the trust seeks a permanent solution for the property. The trust may create a land use plan for the property, and seek to protect important resource lands and provide for limited development of the portions of the property that have low resource value. The revenues generated by the limited development offset the conservation costs.

An individual operating alone can achieve the long-term conservation of land through deed restrictions or covenants. However, such restrictions may prove difficult to monitor and enforce over time. The original title holder's control of the covenant is extinguished when the property changes hands, but the covenant restriction runs with the land and so resides in the control of the new owner.

Because Vermont municipalities obtain most of their revenue from property taxation, reducing the development potential of property in the town will eventually reduce the town's tax base. Land with conservation restrictions often is assessed at a lower value, and so the owner pays less in taxes. However, there are two countervailing factors here. First, protected land often enhances the market value - and, therefore, may increase the tax value - of surrounding property. Second, conservation restrictions prohibit the type of development that could add to the tax base in the form of additional need of services. The disadvantage of reduced property tax revenues may be offset by the advantage of avoiding the costs of development

2. Community Land Trusts

In the same way that conservation land trusts respond to protection of precious natural resources, community land trusts now actively work to protect housing for traditional Vermont residents. As non-profit organizations, community land trusts obtain private and public funds to purchase land and sometimes buildings. Normally, land ownership is retained by the trust - thus reducing the cost of maintenance of existing or construction of new housing. Long-term leases of the land are made to individual homeowners.

Unlike normal subsidized housing, which remains affordable only as long as the subsidies continue, the community land trust approach ensures long-term affordability by limiting the resale price of a house to the original construction or purchase price, improvements and sometimes a factor for inflation. Thus, the original homeowner recovers his/her investment and new buyers whether they be a young couple, elderly persons on fixed incomes, or persons with limited finances can obtain housing within their price range.

C. ACT 250 REVIEW

Although this Plan cannot by itself regulate growth but merely guide growth, it will enable Braintree to legally address the impact of large scale development proposals that fall within the jurisdiction of Vermont's Land Use and Development Control Law - Act 250. In cases where Act 250 applies, all proposed projects must be in conformance with this duly adopted Plan and the Regional Plan.

APPENDICES

A. CURRENT LAND USE MAP

B. FUTURE LAND USE MAP

C. TRANSPORTATION MAP

D. UTILITIES & FACILITIES MAP