

The Purpose of Enhanced Consultation

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission's contract with the Department of Economic, Housing, and Community Development (Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development), and Vermont Statutes require the Commission to carry out consultation meetings with all of the towns in the region. The goals are to develop a more consistent and meaningful relationship between the RPC and the Municipality, and to improve the effectiveness of municipal and regional plans, and planning programs by achieving the goals of Title 24, §4302.

Outcome of Consultation

Through this consultation process we hope to better understand the needs of our communities and to have our communities understand how we can work together to advance better planning. Consultations will involve the discussion of important local and regional issues, local planning and training needs, new statutory requirements, planning programs and opportunities available through the TRORC, and importantly, consideration of how effectively the municipal plan addresses Vermont's statutory planning goals.

This consideration will include a qualitative review of the municipal plan, with suggestions as to how the plan might be improved to more effectively satisfy the statutory goals referenced above. Specific findings are reported on each of the following questions:

1. Which parts of the plan are particularly effective in implementing the statewide goals?
2. In which areas do we believe the plan falls short in advancing those statewide goals?
3. What specific opportunities exist to improve the town plan so that it more effectively addresses the statewide goals?

This consultation and plan review is separate and distinct from the formal municipal plan approval process carried out pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4350, but it does contribute to the municipal confirmation action specified under that section of the Planning and Development Act.

Enhanced Consultation Agenda Items for Thursday, January 10th, 2013

- Important local & Regional issues
- Local planning and training needs
- New statutory requirements
- Planning programs and opportunities
- TRORC services
- Qualitative review of Municipal Plan

Braintree Town Plan Review

The Braintree Town Plan was adopted on August 25, 2012. The Plan was drafted with assistance from the Regional Planning Commission using funding from a Municipal Planning Grant from the Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development.

Required Elements

1. **Statement of Objectives, Policies, and Programs:** The Plan contains goals, policies and recommendations for action. Policies contain varying degrees of language in terms of strength. This is based on the community's determination that specific occasions warrant strict language (such as "shall" or "must").
2. **Land Use Plan:** The Braintree Land Use Plan is well defined, containing generally clear guidance on the location, amount and intensity of development. Character of land use areas is addressed, but could perhaps be more thoroughly described.
3. **Transportation Plan:** The present-day road system is discussed. Access management policy, multi-modal transportation and public transport are addressed.
4. **Utility and Facility Plan:** Where data is available, the Utilities/Facilities chapter contains information regarding the needs of facilities. There is little information regarding potential costs, but the Plan acknowledges the need to collect that information and to create a Capital Budget and Program.
5. **Natural Areas, Scenic and Historic Features:** Throughout the Plan, Braintree makes it clear that they seek to preserve the natural and scenic landscape of their community. They clearly indicate which natural, scenic and historic features should be preserved.
6. **Educational Facilities Plan:** Education is addressed, including a discussion regarding the future of the Elementary School and possible uses of the building should the school close.
7. **Implementation Plan:** The Plan contains an inventory of potential implementation methods, but has fairly limited specific information on implementation.
8. **Relationship to adjacent towns and the region:** The Plan acknowledges the similarities between Braintree and other communities in terms of preferred patterns of land use.
9. **Energy Plan:** The Energy element adequately provides an analysis of resources, needs and scarcities. Costs of energy are not addressed.
10. **Housing Element:** The Plan addresses the need for low and moderate income housing, encouraging , multiple methods of expanding the availability of such housing.
11. **Economic Development Plan (new):** The Plan addresses the location, type and scale of development and contains policies related to economic growth.

Statewide Planning Goals

1. **Land Use:** The Braintree Land Use Plan is clearly designed to encourage a pattern of development that is consistent with the goals of 4302. Language that more clearly defines specific uses, such as "light industrial" or "small scale" should be considered.

2. **Economic Development:** The Plan establishes locations in which it is appropriate to allow economic development in a fashion that is consistent with state planning goals..
3. **Transportation:** Transportation is adequately addressed.
4. **Natural, Scenic, and Historic Resources:** The Plan clearly addresses natural, scenic and historic resources and outlines policies for their protection. There are a limited number of policies with strong language, but they are present.
5. **Air, Water, Wildlife, and Land Resources:** The Plan includes language that adequately discusses how these resources will be maintained and enhanced.
6. **Energy:** The energy plan addresses renewable energy and energy conservation.
7. **Recreation:** The pattern of growth proposed in the Braintree Town Plan is designed to encourage outdoor recreational activities.
8. **Agriculture and Forestry:** Agriculture and Forestry are discussed, including the need for Ag and Forestry to maintain good standards for development.
9. **Efficient use of natural resources/extraction and restoration of earth resources:** Mineral resources are minimally addressed.
10. **Safe and affordable housing:** Affordable housing is adequately discussed.
11. **Community Facilities and Services:** The Plan seeks to maintain a pattern of growth that does not exceed the community's ability to provide services.
12. **Child Care:** Child care is acceptably addressed.

Regional Plan - There are no apparent conflicts with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan.

Summary

Strengths

- The Plan does an excellent job addressing the elements required in statute with regard to land use, energy and utilities and facilities.
- The Utilities and Facilities chapter contains good information and identifies areas where more information is needed.
- Important natural, scenic and historic resources are clearly identified.

Weaknesses

- More information with regard to the needs of facilities and potential costs should be included in the Utilities/Facilities chapter.
- Clearer definitions of terms like "small-scale" and "light industrial" should be included in the Plan.
- Plan policies could be stronger and less general.

Opportunities

- Utilize information in future Capital Budget and Program to update the Utilities and Facilities chapter.
- Identify areas where policies can be strengthened.
- Create a more specific implementation plan using recommendations for action in the Plan.