

**RE: TOWN OF BRAINTREE, VERMONT
PLAN REVIEW
CASE # 24-3**

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A., Section 4350, the Town of Braintree, Vermont requested TRORC to review and approve the Braintree Town Plan adopted on September 5, 2023. The Plan encompasses all land in the Town of Braintree, and is referred to hereinafter as the Plan.

Section 4350 provides that prior to approving a Plan, the Regional Commission find that the Plan meets four tests. These tests are that the Plan is:

- A. Consistent (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(1)) with the planning goals in Section 4302 of Chapter 117;
- B. Compatible (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(2)) with the Regional Plan;
- C. Compatible (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302(f)(2)) with the approved plans of other municipalities within the Region; and
- D. Inclusive of all elements required of a plan as set forth in 24 V.S.A., Section 4382.

Staff have reviewed this Plan and offers the following information and staff recommendation to the Board. TRORC has scheduled and held a Public Hearing on this review on September 27th, 2023 in Woodstock, Vermont. Based upon the hearing and the Board's action, this review will be finalized as a decision for approval or disapproval.

This review is based upon the Town Plan as adopted.

FINDINGS

A. Is the Plan consistent with the planning goals?

NOTE: "Consistent with the goals" requires substantial progress toward attainment of the goals, unless the planning body determines that a particular goal is not relevant or attainable. If such a determination is made, the planning body shall identify the goal in the plan and describe the situation, explain why the goal is not relevant or attainable, and indicate what measures should be taken to mitigate any adverse effects of not making substantial progress toward that goal. The municipal determination of relevancy of a goal is itself subject to regional review.

General Goals

1. Is a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework established to guide decisions?

Yes, the 2023 Braintree Town Plan is a comprehensive planning document to guide municipal decision making that has been divided into 5 distinct chapters, encompassing

the requirements under V.S.A Title 24, Ch. 117, §4382. Required goals of the Plan are under V.S.A Title 24, Ch. 117, §4302.

2. Is citizen participation encouraged at all levels of the planning process?

Encouragement of citizen participation is not explicitly mentioned in this Plan. Though Planning Commission meetings during which the Plan was updated were open to the public. A description of how participation is encouraged should be included in the next Town Plan update.

3. Is consideration being given to the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development to the municipality, region, and state?

Yes, consideration is given in numerous sections of the Plan, including the Land Use Goals and Policies (p.24-25) by encouraging the preservation and conservation of forest blocks, and utilizing smart growth principles for village center development. Furthermore, the Plan recommends that the Goals, Policies and Recommendations in the Plan “reflect regional objectives and a spirit of cooperation with neighboring towns.”

4. Is the municipality working creatively together with other municipalities to develop and implement plans?

Yes, Section 1.4 (p.6-7) explains Braintree’s relationship with the surrounding region. Braintree shares many activities and services with neighboring towns, and the goals and policies in the Plan are aligned with those of the Regional Plan. Goals and policies throughout the Plan reflect the need and desire to coordinate with other towns for shared services, including:

P.14 Emergency Services Goal 4

P.24 Land Use Goal 4

P.36 Economic Development Goal 3

P.38 Economic Development Policy 5

Specific Goals

A plan for a municipality shall be consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A. Section 4302, and must be found to be consistent for regional approval.

1. Is development planned to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside?

P.21-22 Yes, the Land Use section of the Plan speaks to Village Areas as the areas where most growth should be focused. The Plan also has designated large Conservation Areas as areas to preserve large forest blocks and wildlife corridors. Numerous goals and policies in the Plan promote future growth in the village areas. The future land use map provides for several village areas and an expansion of the conservation areas in the southern portion of Town.

- a. Is intensive residential development being encouraged primarily in areas that are identified as community centers, and is strip development along highways being discouraged?**

Yes, higher density housing and mixed use development is encouraged in the Village Areas (p.38 Economic and Housing Development Policy 3). The Plan seeks to reduce the fragmentation and parcelization of land in Conservation and Rural Areas as well (P.25 3.6.1 Policy 1).

- b. Is economic growth being encouraged in locally-designated and any state-designated growth areas, and/or employed to revitalize existing urban or village centers?**

Yes, higher density housing and mixed use development is encouraged in the Village Areas (p.38 Economic and Housing Development Policy 3). The Plan also seeks Village Center designation (p.24) of several Village Areas in Town. An additional land use policy (p.26) focuses housing and business development in South Braintree and designated Village Centers.

- c. Do plans for public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area?**

P.26. Yes, Scenic, Historic, Cultural, and Land Use policy 6 states to “Pursue public investments, including construction or expansion of infrastructure, to reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area.”

- d. Does the plan support development being undertaken in accordance with smart growth principles (as defined in 24 V.S.A. Section 2791(13))?**

Yes, throughout the Plan makes reference to concentrating growth in the village areas while minimizing development in conservation and rural areas. Land Use Goal 1 (p.24) explicitly encourages development in South Braintree using smart growth principles. The Plan also promotes development in Village Areas as this “can make the most use of existing and anticipated public services.” (p.21)

- 2. Does the Plan support providing for a strong and diverse economy with satisfying and rewarding job opportunities that maintain high environmental standards; and expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes?**

Yes, The Economic Development Goals and Policies provide for the support of the agricultural and forest economy, as well as facilitating home-based occupations. Furthermore, the Plan is explicit in seeking Village Center Designation to bring

“financial incentives, training, and technical assistance needed to attract new businesses and vitality.” (p.29).

3. Does the Plan support broadened access to education and vocational training opportunities sufficient to realize the full potential of residents?

This could be more explicit. On page 11, the Plan references that the school district “offers technical education through its Technical Career Center.” The Plan should mention whether there are vocational training opportunities for adults nearby, such as at Vermont Technical College or other programs.

4. Does the Plan support the provision of a safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.

P.31 – The Plan includes that “Systems of public transportation can greatly reduce... environmental and financial impacts.”

P.37 Transportation Goal 2 supports “a safe, energy-efficient, cost-effective, integrated, and multi-modal regional public transportation system.”

P.38 “The Development of an energy-efficient and multi-modal transportation system shall be supported.”

Tri-Valley Transit is mentioned as a convenient option for residents with limited means of transportation. The Plan also mentions there is a Park & Ride lot available to residents at the Town Hall.

a. Does the Plan provide that highways, air, rail, and other means of transportation be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated?

Yes, in part.

P.31 The Plan mentions that rail service is not present in Braintree, though service is offered by Amtrak in nearby Randolph. Public bus service provides residents along Route 12 and 12A with access to White River Junction and Barre.

The Plan should note that air transportation is not available in Braintree.

5. Does the Plan identify and support the protection and preservation of important natural and historic features of the community’s landscape, including: significant natural and fragile areas; outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands; significant scenic roads, waterways, and views; and important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas?

Yes, there is language in several parts of the Plan that support the protection of these areas.

P.23 “Protect the natural habitats in Braintree, especially those that support diverse populations of fauna and flora, including native fish and the migratory routes of endangered species.”

“Protect the quality of water from ground and surface pollution, including private wells and springs from development pollution and agricultural runoff.”

P.24 “Protect the unique rural, scenic, and historic qualities of the Town that are central to its identity...”

P.20 “Braintree is fortunate to have a significant wetland in its Mud Pond area that plays this role for a large part of our community. It is protected by its own Conservation overlay district in the Town’s Zoning Ordinance.”

P.23 “Encourage the use of flood and fluvial erosion hazard areas as open space, greenways, non-commercial recreation, and agricultural land.”

P.26 Action 5 of Natural Resource and Hazard actions seeks to identify and protect wetlands and vernal pools in Town.

6. Does the Plan seek to maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources?

Yes, the Natural and Scenic Resources and Land Use Goals and Policies (pp.23-26) support the preservation of forest blocks and wildlife corridors, the protection of agricultural land, the identification and protection of wetlands and vernal pools, and the prioritization of floodplains as recreational, agricultural, or open land. Prioritizing the conservation of these resources while focusing growth in village areas positively impacts air quality (though air quality is not specifically mentioned).

a. Are air, water, wildlife, mineral and land resources being planned for development and use under the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A section 6086(a) (Act 250)?

Yes. These criteria are primarily addressed in the Land Use and Natural Resources sections of the Plan. Section 3.1.4 “Water and Minerals” provides language on the water and mineral resources present in Braintree. the Plan states that “of the eleven priority waters identified for remediation in the Tactical Basin Plan, none are located in Braintree. This is further evidence that Braintree has good water quality that should be maintained.” Water resources are planned for in the Natural Hazards and Resilience Goals and Policies, Land Use Goals and Policies, and Natural Resource Policies (pp.23-25). Gravel extraction is provided for so long as it is extracted “in a manner consistent with the Natural Resources Goals in section 3.5.1.

b. Is the maintenance and improvement of water quality supported in accordance with the policies and actions set forth in the basin plans?

Yes, p.18 includes a section on the 2018 White River Tactical Basin Plan (Basin 9), and describes four major stressors on the health of the White River watershed. . the Plan states that “of the eleven priority waters identified for remediation in the Tactical Basin

Plan, none are located in Braintree. This is further evidence that Braintree has good water quality that should be maintained.” Actions to protect the town’s water resources are provided as Actions in the Natural Resources section 3.7.1.

c. Are forestlands proposed to be managed so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors?

P.23 Yes, this is covered in the Natural Resources and Land Use chapter, goals, and policies.

Particularly, Natural Resource Goals 1 and 3.

7. Does the Plan support the development of renewable energy resources, efficient use of energy, and reduced emissions of greenhouse gases?

a. Does the plan list any general strategies for achieving these goals, such as: increasing energy efficiency of new and existing buildings; identifying areas suitable for renewable energy generation; encouraging the use and development of renewable or lower emission energy sources for electricity, heat, and transportation; and reducing transportation energy demand and single occupancy vehicle use?

Yes, the Plan mentions weatherization of homes, upgrading to more energy-efficient homes and appliances (p.37), and the siting of wind, solar, biomass, and hydroelectric projects (p.39). Strategies are primarily given in the energy chapter, but are provided in the housing (p.37) and transportation (p.37) goals and policies as well.

b. Does the plan list any specific strategies and recommendations for achieving these goals, such as those identified in the State energy plan?

Yes, this is covered in the energy chapter (chapter 4.5) and in the Energy Policies and actions (p.39-42). The Plan incorporates specific energy targets in order to meet state goals.

8. Does the Plan seek to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors?

a. Is growth being planned so as not to significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities?

Yes, one of the Plan’s Overarching Goals is to “Balance the development of a recreational economy with the protection of our natural resources.” (p.7). Two of the Plan’s Land Use Goals (p.24) include conservation of rural areas to preserve, among other things, their recreational uses. The Plan also includes actions to limit fragmentation

and preserve the Rural and Conservation Areas for recreational use (p.27).

- b. Has public access to non-commercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, been identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate?**

Yes, this is addressed in the Land Use Goals, Policies, and Actions (pp.24-26)

- 9. Does the Plan encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries?**

- a. Does the Plan encourage strategies to protect long-term viability of agriculture and forestlands, including maintaining low overall density?**

Yes, the Plan includes Goals, Policies, and Actions to protect agriculture and forestlands (p.24-27).

- b. Has the manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products been encouraged?**

Yes, in part. On page 16, the Plan includes that Braintree has benefited from the small, diversified farms that offer a range of locally sourced foods. Under Economic Development Goals (p.36), the Plan supports the “continuation of our agricultural and forest economy.” However, the encouragement of the manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products should be incorporated more explicitly in the next Plan update.

- c. Is the use of locally-grown food products encouraged?**

Yes, in part. on page 16 the Plan states that Braintree has benefitted from “locally sourced foods and beverages.” The next iteration of the Plan should include more direct language *encouraging* locally grown food products.

- d. Are sound forest and agricultural management practices encouraged?**

Yes, as one of the Natural Resources actions, the Town “will support State programs and the efforts of not-for-profit organizations seeking to restore or improve natural habitats and to reduce the vulnerability of agriculture and flora and fauna to invasive species.” Pages 16 and 17 also include Current Use and forest management language.

- e. Are public investments planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land?**

Yes, the Plan includes actions for limiting the fragmentation of agricultural and forest lands (p.27). Development is promoted in specific village center areas throughout the Plan. One Land Use element goal is to “Pursue public investments, including

construction or expansion of infrastructure, to reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area” (p.26).

10. Does the Plan provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetics of the area?

Yes, there is discussion of mineral extraction on page 18, and that the need for gravel “may need to be met by more local sources in a manner that does not negatively impact water quality and restores any such site upon completion of extraction.”

11. Does the Plan ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing?

a. Is housing encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income?

Yes, one of the Plan’s housing goals is to “encourage the development of a variety of energy-efficient housing types, including rental and accessory units, that meet the needs of all income, age, and family situations (p.37).

b. Does the plan provide for new and rehabilitated housing to be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities?

Yes, this is provided in the Housing section of the Plan (P.31) and in the Housing Goals and Policies (P.37-38).

c. Does the Plan support sites for multi-family and manufactured housing that are readily available in similar locations to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings?

Yes. One action of the Plan is to “revise the Unified Bylaw to permit greater density and design flexibility in the modernization of existing homes; in the addition of accessory dwellings; and in the development of new single-family and multifamily housing types” (p.41). The Plan also considers many housing types, including manufactured and mobile homes, when updating Braintree’s Unified Bylaw (p.31).

d. Does the plan allow for accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences allowing close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons?

Yes. In Housing Goals; “Encourage the development of a variety of energy-efficient housing types, including rental and accessory units, that meet the needs of all income, age, and family situations” (p.37).

12. Does the Plan for the provision and financing of an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs?

- a. Does the Plan include services as fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal in its planning for facilities and services?**

Yes, fire, emergency medical, and state police services are included on page 13. Language on solid waste services and water supply are given on page 32. A description of school services are provided on page 11.

- b. Does the planned rate of growth exceed the ability of the town and the area to provide facilities and services?**

P.21 While the Plan indicates that some residential growth has occurred along Route 12A, it does not indicate that growth and development exceed the Town's ability to provide facilities and services.

13. Does the plan work to ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and integrate child care issues into the planning process, including childcare financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development?

Yes, goals, policies, and actions on pages 14-15 support and encourage child care.

14. Does the Plan encourage flood resilient communities?

- a. Is new development in identified flood hazard, fluvial erosion, and river corridor protection areas avoided? If new development is to be built in such areas, are polices in place to not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion?**

Yes, the Natural Hazards and Resilience Goals (p.23-25) include language limiting new development in flood hazard and river corridor areas. Policy 4 of Natural Resource and Hazard Policies (p.25) speaks to this: "In approving new development, the risks of flooding and fluvial erosion to private property and municipal facilities shall be addressed;..."

- b. Is the protection and restoration of floodplains and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion encouraged?**

Yes, the Plan includes policies and actions that will limit forest fragmentation as well

as the relocation of vulnerable dwellings from mapped floodplain areas (p.26). On page 16, there is language on the regionally significant forested land in Braintree and how this land, much of it along the ridgeline, reduces flood potential by “filtering rainwater and snowmelt runoff.”

c. Are flood emergency preparedness and response planning encouraged?

Yes, this is addressed in the Natural Hazards and Resilience section (pp.19-20). There could be additional language on the importance of emergency response and the use of the Local Emergency Management Plan.

B. Is the Municipal Plan Compatible with the Regional Plan?

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan was adopted on July 15, 2020 and it will remain in effect until August 19, 2028.

The Braintree Town Plan is found to be compatible with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan. As used in this review, the term "compatible with" has been defined (in Section 4302) as meaning: that the Plan in question, as implemented, will not significantly reduce the desired effect of the implementation of the other plan (emphasis added). If a Plan, as implemented, will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other Plan (in this case, the Regional Plan), the Plan may be considered compatible if it includes the following:

- (a) a statement that identifies the ways that it will significantly reduce the desired effect of the other Plan;
- (b) an explanation of why any incompatible portion of the Plan in question is essential to the desired effect of the Plan as a whole;
- (c) an explanation of why, with respect to any incompatible portion of the Plan in question, there is no reasonable alternative way to achieve the desired effect of the Plan; and
- (d) an explanation of how any incompatible portion of the Plan in question has been structured to mitigate its detrimental effects on the implementation of the other Plan.

C. Is the Plan Compatible with Approved Plans of other Municipalities in the Region?

At the time of review of this Braintree Town Plan, the following municipalities have Plans approved by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission that are in effect:

Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Chelsea, Corinth Fairlee, Granville, Hancock, Hartford, Hartland, Norwich, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Pomfret, Randolph, Rochester, Royalton, Strafford, Thetford, Tunbridge, Vershire, West Fairlee, and Woodstock.

These approval decisions and Plans have been reviewed in the context of the above question. Based on this, we find the Braintree Town Plan to be compatible with these Plans.

D. Municipal Plan Elements - Are They Included?

A plan for a municipality shall include the following required elements. These elements or components are, in summary:

- (a) a statement of overall objectives and policies;
- (b) a current and future land use plan and maps;
- (c) a current and future transportation plan and maps;
- (d) a current and future utility and facility plan and maps;
- (e) a statement of policies for "special resources";
- (f) a current and future education plan and maps;
- (g) an implementation program;
- (h) a statement on relationship of plan to trends and plans for adjacent towns and the region;
- (i) an energy plan; and
- (j) a housing plan.
- (k) an economic development plan
- (l) a flood resiliency plan

1. Does the Plan include a statement of objectives, policies and programs of the municipality, to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment.

Yes, each section includes a set of goals, policies, and recommendations that guide growth and land development while protecting the natural and scenic resources of the Town. Several of the overarching goals and policies speak to this (p.7-8).

2. Does the Plan include a land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land use, that:

- a. indicates those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture, (using 6 VSA Section 8), residence, commerce, industry, public and semi-public uses and open spaces; areas reserved for flood plain; and areas identified by the State, the regional planning commission, or the town that require special consideration for aquifer protections, for wetland protection, for the maintenance of forest blocks, wildlife habitat, and habitat connectors, or for other conservation purposes?**

Yes, the Plan includes a Land Use element, which indicates a mix of residential and small-scale commercial in the Village areas, and encourages protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors, as well as minimizing fragmentation and parcelization of land in the Conservation and Rural districts. The Plan indicates Mud Pond as the only conserved wetland area, and one Natural Hazards and Resilience goal is the protection of natural catchment and wetland areas (p.23). The Plan includes Current and Future Land Use Maps. The Future Land Use map is compatible with the Regional Future Land Use Map.

- b. **sets forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and services?**

Yes, The Plan indicates the shared policy with the Regional Plan in “the need for development that does not overburden services.” Several of the overarching and land use goals reflect this (p.6, p.24).

- c. **identifies those areas, if any, proposed for designation under chapter 76A of Title 24, together with, for each areas proposed for designation, an explanation of how the designation would further the plan’s goals and the goals of 24 V.S. A. section 4302, and how the areas sought meets the requirements?**

Yes, the Town is currently pursuing Village District Designation for East Braintree and Snowsville. The Plan includes reasoning, such as business and land use incentives for doing so in the Economic Development section (p.29).

- d. **and indicates those areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests?**

Yes, this is indicated in the land use and natural resources elements of the plan.

3. **Does the Plan include a transportation plan, consisting of a map and a statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities showing existing and proposed highways and streets by type and character of improvement, and where pertinent, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, with indications of priority of need.**

Yes, pp 31-32. Also map depicting streets and facilities.

5. **Does the Plan include a utility and facility plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective community facilities and public utilities showing existing and proposed educational, recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage and other similar facilities and activities, and recommendations to meet future needs for community facilities and services, with indications of priority of need, costs and methods of financing.**

Yes, the Plan indicates the utilities, facilities, and services available in Utilities and Community Facilities element, the Education element, the Energy element and the Natural Resources element. The Plan indicates priority actions on pages 41-42. The Plan includes a Utilities and Facilities map, and combines this map with Education facilities.

5. Does the Plan include a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.

Yes. The policies are provided in the natural resources element.

6. Does the Plan include an educational facilities plan consisting of a map and a statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system.

Yes, the Plan states present uses in the Education element (p.11). One of the Plan's goals is to retain the elementary school (p.14).

7. Does the Plan include a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan?

Yes, the Plan provides for an implementation of the objectives in Chapter 5.

8. Does the Plan include a statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under Title 24?

Yes, the Plan includes a policy in Chapter 1, that the "Goals, Policies, and Recommended Actions of this Plan shall reflect regional objectives and a spirit of cooperation with neighboring towns."

9. Does the Plan include an analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems within the municipality, a statement of policy on the conservation of energy (including programs, such as thermal integrity standards for buildings, to implement that policy), a statement of policy on the development of renewable energy resources, and a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.

Yes, A statement of policy on energy conservation is provided in the Energy Element (pp. 34-35, 42) a statement of policy on the development of renewable energy resources can be found in the Ener8gy policies (p.41-42) and a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use can be in the land use element (p.21-25). Analysis of energy resources, needs, and scarcities is provided on page 34. More detail could be given to energy costs and problems.

10. Does the Plan include a housing element that shall include a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs as identified by the regional planning commission pursuant to Section 4348a (a)(9) of Title 24, including the permitting of accessory dwelling units?

Yes. On page 30, the housing section cites Keys to the Valley and some of the housing challenges that make housing unaffordable for residents. The Plan mentions that allowing for diverse housing options could make it easier to build more housing, especially along

Routes 12 and 12A, however barriers such as zoning restrictions and costs make new housing difficult. Housing goals and policies support making it easier to build at higher density in village areas, explore shared water and sewer services, and support the viability of Mobile Acres mobile home park as an option for affordable homeownership. The Plan also includes actions on revising the zoning to make it easier to build new housing with greater density in village areas.

12. Does the Plan include an economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.

Yes, the Economic Development element (p. 28) describes present conditions and the desired economic development within the Town. Policies, projects and programs for this are provided as well on pages 37-41.

13. Does the Plan include a flood resilience plan that:

identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas based on river corridor maps provided by VT ANR or other maps recommended by the Secretary of Natural Resources, and designates those areas to be protected, including floodplains, river corridors, land adjacent to streams, wetlands, and upland forests, to reduce the risk of flood damage to infrastructure and improved property?

Yes, the Plan indicates several goals and policies in the Natural Resources element for the protection of flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas (p.23-25)

and recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments?

Yes, the Plan incorporates goals policies, and actions to address this on pages 23-26.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the above findings, it is the conclusion of TRORC that the Braintree Town Plan be approved. This approval shall remain in effect until the date that the Plan expires, or until it is amended or readopted and reviewed pursuant to these provisions, whichever occurs first.

DISCUSSION

Prior to issuing a Permit under Act 250, the District Environmental Commission or Environmental Court must find that the project is in conformance with the duly adopted Town Plan, where this Plan includes clear, unambiguous mandatory language regarding development that can be reviewed by these bodies as part of an Act 250 project application.

Comments and suggested improvements for the next iteration of the Braintree Town Plan:

1. More clarity should be provided in terms of what vocational education options are available to residents.
2. Provide a more direct statement encouraging the manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products.
3. Include more direct language encouraging locally-grown food products.
4. Include mention of air transportation options (i.e. Burlington Airport, Lebanon Airport).

Dated this 27th day of September, 2023 at Woodstock, Vermont.

By: Peter G. Gregory
Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director