

Brandon Town Plan

Adopted _____, 2024



Fireworks Above Brandon – Photo Credit Louis Pattis

*Prepared by
the Brandon Planning Commission
under the authority of
the Vermont Statutes Annotated
Title 24, Chapter 117*

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The area where Brandon is now located was originally home to indigenous tribes including the Abenaki, Mohican, and their ancient ancestors. When the first European settlers came to the area in the mid-1770s, they established the village of Neshobe. The area was rich in natural resources with excellent farmland along the rivers and abundant supplies of timber and minerals. The historic Crown Point military road came through Brandon to connect Lake Champlain to the east coast. The Town grew and flourished during the 1800s with several industries relying on the key resources of waterpower, iron ore and marble. The coming of the railroad in 1849 enabled the manufacture and shipping of iron-based products such as the Howe scale, as well as Brandon paints, wood products and marble.

During its century of rapid growth, Brandon Village evolved a unique village plan. The Congregational and Baptist churches were built on either side of the Neshobe River, each with its own green laid out at a bend in the road. In the ensuing decades, government, commerce, and prominent individuals developed commercial streets at the core which radiated out from the greens lined with residences leading to farms, mines, and quarries in the Town.

As the early industries began to decline, dairying, stockbreeding and tourism became increasingly important and ensured the vitality of Brandon in the 20th century. Today Brandon is a thriving, diverse community offering a full range of services for its citizens.

OVERVIEW

The Brandon Town Plan is the primary, if not definitive, statement of the Town's values, especially regarding how future growth and development should proceed in order to promote the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. In general, the objectives, policies, and action steps found in the Plan are meant to preserve and protect the town's assets while providing for improvements and growth that support the community. The findings and action steps contained in this Plan influence the Town's budget and capital expenditures, community development, historic preservation, economic development, and wise use of resources. The Plan is the basis for Brandon's zoning and other ordinances relating to development, local economy, and quality of life. The Plan is to be readopted at least every eight years to reflect changing circumstances and the achievement of short-term goals.



Vision for the Future

Brandon is an intimate, warm, and walkable small town. Brandon residents have a strong sense of place and are proud of Brandon's significant community and historic assets, including a settlement pattern of dense villages surrounded by farm and countryside that has been lost in all but a handful of Vermont communities. Brandon, especially its downtown, provides essential goods and services that have moved to the outskirts of many other Vermont towns. Our town also provides local residents and residents of surrounding towns with jobs, retail goods and services, and the social and civic benefits of an active and diverse community. This vision will be achieved through the goals, policies, and action steps contained within each section of the Plan.

Use of the Plan

The Plan is intended to be the foundation for community programs, policy setting, and decision making. The findings and recommendations will influence the Town's budget and capital expenditures, community development efforts, and natural resource protection initiatives. The Plan is the basis for the local land use controls such as those in the Brandon Land Use

Ordinance. The Plan is intended to be read and used in its entirety. Interested people are encouraged to study the whole plan rather than just the Overview and readers should consider individual policies and recommendations in the context of the whole Plan rather than as stand-alone concepts. Because the Plan is not able to fully address every important local issue, it should also be used as a source of topics for further study. The Plan is to be given full effect in all appropriate regulatory proceedings such as Act 250.

Statutory Authority

The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (V.S.A., Title 24, ch 117) (the “Act”), guides the preparation of town plans in the state. The Act specifies how a Plan should be developed and what it should contain. This Plan was prepared, adopted, and approved in conformance with the Act. It is consistent with the Rutland Regional Plan and is compatible with the approved plans of surrounding communities of Sudbury, Chittenden, Pittsford, Hubbardton, Goshen, and Leicester. Under the authority of the Select Board, the Brandon Planning Commission, in concert with other interested parties, prepared the Town Plan and submitted it for final approval by the Select Board. The Planning Commission provided a copy to the Rutland Regional Planning Commission and all surrounding towns.

Preparation of the Plan

The Brandon Town Plan was last rewritten and adopted in 2016. In 2019, the Town Plan was amended to expand the Energy section. The current version, adopted in February 2024, updates all sections.

This update has been drafted by members of the Planning Commission with input from residents, town government, and Brandon community organizations. Public facilitation and technical assistance were provided by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

Information on the Plan development and drafts of the Plan have been made widely available both in hard copy and via the Town’s website. A public hearing was held in accordance with statute. Several open meetings were conducted by the Planning Commission while updating the Plan, and many elements reflect implementation of the ideas and information received. The public has been encouraged to participate at every meeting, and more public input was solicited during the approval process.

Planning and Property Rights

The purpose of this Plan is to maximize the quiet enjoyment and productive use of private property while maintaining the highest standards of health and safety and promoting the general welfare through the coherent, shared, and comprehensive community vision expressed in its pages.

Through Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, municipalities are given the power to create a Town Plan and regulate land use. Implementation of this Plan will necessarily involve a balancing of public and private interests, and all members of the Brandon community are encouraged to participate in ongoing constructive dialogue to achieve the common good.

Objectives, Policies, and Action Steps

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (1): 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;

Each section of this Plan contains objectives, policies, and action steps that shall guide the Town in the Plan's implementation through both regulatory and nonregulatory means. In addition, this Plan incorporates accomplished objectives and action steps from past plans.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Physical Characteristics and Location

The Town of Brandon encompasses 25,152 acres, or 41 square miles, and is bisected by US Route 7. Included within the Town are the villages of Brandon and Forest Dale. Brandon is located at the north-central border of Rutland County. Rutland City, the county seat, sits to the south, and Middlebury, shire town of Addison County, sits to the north. Brandon is thus a gateway between the two counties and is considered a “sub-regional center” by the Regional Planning Commissions in Rutland and Addison Counties.

Government

In 1947, Brandon adopted the Select Board/Town Manager form of government, which delegated general supervision of the affairs of the Town to an employed Town Manager. The Select Board remains the governing body of the Town. Three of the five Select Board members are elected for three-year staggered terms, while two are elected annually. Other municipal bodies include the Brandon Fire District, which serves the town’s water needs. Brandon’s schools are governed by the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, and Brandon also elects members to the Otter Valley Unified Union School Board, a consolidated district that serves schools in the towns of Brandon, Pittsford, Leicester, Sudbury and Whiting.

Socioeconomic Information

An analysis of a community's population, housing, and economic activity is an important feature of a municipal plan. This socioeconomic information allows the Town to estimate future population growth or decline, anticipate impacts on community services and land use, and respond to the changing needs and demands of citizens. The following information is a highlight of recent trends in the Town of Brandon. Most of the data is based upon the 2020 Census.

Population

According to the 2020 Census, Brandon has the third highest population of the 27 communities in Rutland County: 4,129, behind only Castleton and Rutland City.

Age and Social Characteristics

Brandon's median age rose from 44.7 in 2010 to 47 in 2020, largely as a result of increases in the middle-age segment of the population. Brandon's population by age is in most cases similar to the county. The school-age demographic makes up a slightly larger percentage of the total population within Brandon than it does at the county level.

The aging of the population creates potentially significant planning implications. For example, it suggests that the town should anticipate increased and changing demands for community and health-oriented services, and should ensure town services and amenities remain accessible. It also suggests the need to attract workers to replace people who retire from the workforce.

Households

The average household size in the community, which shrank somewhat between 1990 and 2000, has remained steady, comprising 2.28 persons in 2010, and 2.38 in 2020. The overall number of households has also remained steady, increasing 1 percent from 2000 to 2010 and decreasing by 1 percent from 2010 to 2020¹.

Brandon has a higher percentage of families relative to total households (59.1%) than the county (57.7%), even with a 4.7 percent decrease between 2010 and 2020. This decrease resulted in Brandon now having a slightly lower percentage of families relative to total households than the state (59.7%), which historically has not been the case. In addition, Brandon has seen a decline in the number of single-parent families with children under the age of 18 as a percentage of all families, with children under the age of 18 comprising 24.9 percent in 2020, 33 percent in 2010, 27.2 percent in 2000 and 26.3 percent in 1990. Single-female-parent families dominate this category, representing 78 percent of the single-parent families in Brandon.

Income and Employment

Median household and family incomes have risen dating back to 1989 but have been rising especially quickly this past decade. While Brandon incomes historically were lower than those for Rutland County and the state, from 2010 to 2020 median household income rose by 50%, resulting in Brandon incomes now following county and state averages, except for median family income.

According to the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the 2022 general poverty rate in Brandon was 10.9 percent (albeit with a 5.3 percent margin of error), down from 11.2 percent in 2010. The percentage of families in poverty has reached record lows, being 3.5 percent in 2020, compared to 12.7 percent in 1990, 6.8 percent in 2000 and 8.8 percent in 2010. The level of education for persons over the age of 25 has greatly increased. These poverty and education numbers indicate a significant shift in the overall economic well-being of the community.

Brandon, like county, state, and national trends, has record low unemployment, with a 0.3% unemployment rate in 2020. In 2010, the unemployment rate was 9.6 percent. In 2000, Brandon residents were primarily employed in the manufacturing, retail trade, and education sectors. By 2010, following a national pattern, residents were primarily employed in the education, sales, and service sectors. The largest increases from 2000 to 2014 were in the building and construction trades, leisure and hospitality, and financial sectors. The largest increases since 2014 have been in manufacturing and retail; however, residents are primarily employed in educational, health, and social services, art, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services.

Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in 2020 and with it came changes in the town of Brandon. One big impact was the increase in the cost of a home. Brandon's median housing sales price rose from \$160,000 in 2019 to \$315,000 in 2023. With an economic slowdown in 2020, the number of Brandon renter households paying 30% or more of total household income towards rent increased from 42 percent in 2019 to 51 percent in 2021. The population in Brandon also increased in 2020, as in Rutland County and statewide, and the labor market tightened, with an unemployment rate of 0.3%. These trends mirror county, statewide, and national trends and are compounded by national inflationary pressures that increased the price of food and other goods and services, putting additional economic stress.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (4) 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 method of financing.

Introduction

This section contains information on services provided directly by the Town, by other government agencies, and by non-governmental organizations. The services are provided for wholly or in part by general budget allocation or by specific vote at Town Meeting.

Objectives

- Promote, support, maintain, and improve high-quality, safe, and affordable municipal infrastructure and services, including services offered by community/regional organizations, the school district, and private providers, so Brandon can attract and retain a diverse population and workforce.

Policies

- The Town of Brandon will maintain public facilities and services infrastructure to satisfy the current demand and accommodate additional growth consistent with growth rate patterns and this Town Plan.
- When constructing, expanding, or providing public or private community facilities and services, the Town government of Brandon shall ensure consistency with the goals and policies of this Plan including whether or not it would contribute to the desired land use pattern of a central, compact town center and clustered development.
- Town government will work collaboratively with local departments and agencies such as the School Boards, Prudential Committee, Police Department, and Trustees of Public Funds, and with the Brandon community to ensure an open communication process that effectively identifies and addresses issues and opportunities.
- The Town Highway Department shall work with the Town Manager to plan for anticipated costs involved in maintaining facilities, buildings, roads, equipment, and vehicles to minimize unanticipated deferred maintenance and lack of planning/budgeting.
- The Town of Brandon shall develop an integrated and efficient infrastructure system to provide the services required by residential, commercial, and industrial members of the community while minimizing adverse fiscal impact.

Action Steps

- Improve and extend affordable high-speed internet and cell phone service to all Brandon residents and businesses.
- The Town shall continue to encourage appropriations to the Brandon Area Rescue Squad, the Brandon Free Public Library, and the Senior Center, as well as other worthy community organizations, in order to meet local needs and to provide a broad base of cultural and recreational activities to attract increased population, industry, businesses and to support tourism.
- The town shall provide strong protection measures for the aquifers that are the water source for the fire district wells. Any new development in the aquifer zones must be connected to the town sewer system and priority should be given to extending sewer lines to residences within the aquifer protection area that are not currently connected.
- Locate new site for 1908 water tank that ties into Town's development strategy; recommend new site to Fire District Prudential Board for approval.
- Expansion of water service areas shall be made where existing wells have low volume or poor water quality.
- Expansion of sewer service areas shall be made to areas of failing in-ground disposal systems.
- Replace Town's sewer lines (approximately 22 miles of sewer lines dating back to early 20th century). Develop overall strategy to replace lines as other development occurs.
- Create an inventory of all building sewer lines connecting to municipal system.
- Identify and upgrade wastewater treatment services not addressed by current upgrade.
- Expansions to serve new development shall be carefully coordinated with land use constraints so that development is directed into the most suitable areas. Developers will be expected to bear all or part of the cost of the expansion.
- Continue to increase size of volunteer Fire Department.
- Reduce Fire Department fleet to fewer vehicles that are better equipped.

Water System

Domestic water is supplied in the villages of Forest Dale and Brandon by Fire District #1. In 2022, Brandon Fire District No 1 connected to serve Brandon Fire District #2. This loop system serves over 50 residences in the Forrestbrook housing development north of Forest Dale in the Aquifer land use district. Final consolidation of the fire districts is expected to be completed by an act of the Legislature in 2024.

Sources	Safe Yield (Permitted)
<i>Emergency Source:</i> Well #1	40 gallons per minute
<i>Secondary Source:</i> Well #2	75 gallons per minute
<i>Primary Source</i> Well #3	630 gallons per minute
Storage	
Glass-lined storage tank (1989).	928,000 gallons
Earth-covered, concrete reservoir. (1908)	500,000 gallons
Water tower (1969)	750,000 gallons
Distribution	
Loop System with a 12" main from the storage tanks through an 8" & 14" main interconnected at three points to provide higher fire flows.	

Well #3 became operational in 2002 and supplies 630 gallons per minute. Well #2, rebuilt in 2008 provides redundancy as well as a secondary well. The Fire District owns the land and can control development in close proximity to the wells at this location. Well #1 is an 'unconfined aquifer' meaning there is no layer of clay between the bottom of the well and possible sources of pollution on the surface. To ensure the quality of the water, the Fire District owns land surrounding this well head.

In December 2011, Brandon Fire District #1 was the first public water system in Vermont to receive a Class II Groundwater Reclassification from the Agency of Natural Resources. Class II groundwater is suitable for public water supply use, has uniformly excellent character, is in use as a public water supply source or has a high probability for such use, but—unlike Class I groundwater—is exposed to activities which may pose a risk to its current or potential use as a public water supply source.

Brandon Fire District #1 has water to supply the Town of Brandon well in excess of current demand. The maximum daily demand for the systems is 1,072,800 gallons per day (GPD), while the current average daily demand is 330,000 GPD. The combined storage facilities, excluding the water tower, hold a three-day supply of water.

The system is metered with usage billed quarterly. Connection fees are placed in a capital project fund for major improvements and repairs, while user fees are charged to fund operating expenses. Major expansions to the service area are not currently planned, but extensions to serve pockets of land or development near existing lines are considered. Connections within

the District are routinely made upon payment of a connection charge based on projected usage.

The public aquifers from which the well water is drawn have been identified and mapped. Land use regulations are in effect to protect the water sources. Because the community water system is heavily dependent upon ground water, it is essential that development near the aquifers be strictly controlled to protect the quality of the water. Water outside District boundaries is supplied by individual wells. Areas with a large concentration of wells should be considered for future aquifer protection.

EPA and the VT Geological Survey have done some assessment work in 2008 to identify additional areas for water supply. There are good sand and gravel layers on McConnell Road that are indicative of an aquifer. This study was a key factor for Brandon in obtaining the Class II water district designation in 2011. Some seismic studies were conducted to identify gravels and the top of bedrock, and the assessment work looks promising for the potential to develop more water supply capacity if needed. Currently, a long-range plan for the system is being conducted, which includes replacement of the 1908 storage tank. This work has identified several areas in Brandon that are at the suitable elevation for construction but there are no current plans for replacement or expansion.

Sewer

The Town of Brandon owns and operates a secondary treatment sewage plant for the treatment of household waste within the collection system. Treated effluent is discharged into the Neshobe River and flows adjacent to the site. Sludge from the aerobic digester is trucked to Rutland City, at a current (2023) rate of 720,00 gallons of sludge per year at 1% solids. The sewer plant serves areas of Brandon and Forest Dale.

The plant has a design-capacity and permitted flow of 700,000 gallons per day. The normal dry-weather flow is about 350,000 gallons per day.

Since 2013, there have been 21 instances where the plant has authorized discharge of partially treated disinfected effluent or discharged effluent with e. Coli levels above permitted concentrations into the Neshobe River, according to Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Sewage Overflow data. All instances were resolved and reported to the state as soon as possible.

Approximately every 20 years, the wastewater plant, pump stations and collection system are evaluated for their condition. Major improvements in the 2023-2024 upgrade include: an additional secondary clarifier; an electricity upgrade from 208 volts to 480 volts; a plant-wide Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system; installation of 1600 gallon bulk tanks for sodium hypochlorite and sodium bisulfate; replacement of the North Ditch aeration, influent pumps, and frequency drives; grit system; and installation of a mechanical trash rack and mechanical skimmers on all the clarifiers.

The sewer system is user-fee based. Connections are made within the service area upon payment of the connection fee. Several improvements have been made to the sewer system including dechlorination of the effluent, repair of the Forest Dale pump station, installation of electrical code explosion-proof circuitry, and separation of the storm water drainage from the sanitary system. The current type of treatment process is oxidation ditch and extended aeration with phosphorous removal. The sewer system has been extended to a pump station in the Industrial Park to Carver Street and the Neshobe House. Removing roof drains, sump pumps, and building drains as well as repairing aging lines and infrastructure remain the department's priority.

Municipal Services

Brandon is governed by an elected Select Board. Day-to-day administration is provided by a Town Manager employed by the Board. The Town Manager administers the budget, supervises various town departments, serves as the spokesperson for the town, and represents the town. The Manager also coordinates other functions of government that are not under the Manager's direct supervision, such as tax assessment and records.

Town Offices

The Town Offices are located at 49 Center Street, in downtown Brandon.

Fire Protection

The Brandon Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency response to the town of Brandon. The Brandon Fire Department is a department under the Brandon Fire District #1 (BFD1), a municipal fire district incorporated under Vermont state statute. The Brandon Fire Department is funded primarily through a town-wide fire tax, and is governed by an elected Prudential Committee, consisting of five members.

The Brandon Fire Department's mission is to save lives and protect property in order to provide a quality of life consistent with the requirements of the residents of the Town of Brandon. To ensure that the Brandon Fire Department can perform its mission, it is responsible for the preparation of officers, firefighters, and equipment so that together they are ready to provide cost-effective resolutions to emergencies that threaten or will threaten life and property in our community. The Brandon Fire Department is the lead agency for fire suppression, fire prevention, vehicle rescue, control of hazardous materials emergencies and rescue of trapped or injured persons. The Brandon Fire Department takes a subordinate role in the rescue of lost persons, evacuation or relocation of civilians, and response to natural or man-made disasters. In addition to serving the Town of Brandon, the Department also provides service to the Town of Leicester and the Town of Goshen, under fire protection contracts. This constitutes a total coverage area of 82.8 sq. miles.

The current fire station was constructed in 1998 and will continue to serve the needs of the

department into the future. The department is in the process of an apparatus replacement plan, to be able to replace our fire apparatus on a scheduled basis. There are currently 23 members on the fire department that responded to 172 calls in FY22 and 160 calls in FY23.

The system of fire hydrants that is maintained by the Water Department of Brandon Fire District #1, provides a high degree of firefighting capability. Many improvements and upgrades to the water system have been completed during recent construction projects in town.

Although the Fire District currently operates independently of the Town, it is in the public interest that the organization remains knowledgeable and aware of future growth trends and development patterns in Brandon. Location, access to, and density of a new development should include provision for effective fire protection. Cooperation between the Fire District, the Town, and the Planning Commission in the mutual assessment of growth in relation to equipment and manpower needs will continue to ensure superior quality fire protection service in Brandon.

Police Protection

The current strength of the Brandon Police Department is five full-time officers (with Select Board authorization for a sixth), two part-time/special officers, a chief and a full-time office administrator. The department routinely assists the Vermont State Police from the Rutland and New Haven barracks. On occasion, VSP assists the Brandon Police Department. The department also provides law enforcement response on request to the towns of Goshen, Leicester, and Sudbury.

The Police Department is located at 301 Forest Dale Road (Route 73).

Solid Waste Disposal

The Brandon Transfer Station, located at 31 Corona Street, is operated by a contractor. They staff the transfer station and are responsible for directing the disposition of solid waste materials, as well as assisting individual citizens and private waste haulers who deposit solid waste and recyclables during the transfer station operating hours. The contractor also coordinates the disposition of other recyclable materials including batteries, waste oil, scrap metal, tires, and yard wastes. The town presently contracts with a private contractor for removal of solid waste, construction and demolition debris, and certain other recyclable materials from town property. The Town of Brandon owns and maintains a closed landfill which ceased operation on July 11, 1992. Citizens voted to join the Rutland County Solid Waste District in 1992.

The transfer station and recycling center operation is a separate enterprise from the Town of Brandon. Charges for the disposal of solid waste are calculated by weight. These fees are the primary revenue source.

Brandon Free Public Library

In 1827, local resident and inventor Thomas Davenport urged the residents of Brandon to invest in a library. In 1900, the Brandon Free Public Library Association was formed and in 1901 it set up operation in the front room on the lower floor of the Parmenter Block, the building it now occupies. Since its inception, the Brandon Free Public Library has been a vibrant, vital hub of the Brandon community.

The library is staffed by two full-time and three part-time librarians. In addition to Brandon, the library serves the communities of Sudbury, Leicester, and Goshen. The library provides meeting space for a wide variety of local organizations and programs.

In 2021, the library embarked on a large ADA accessibility renovation project. The vision for the library is to provide accessibility for all persons to all library spaces, expand usable spaces to better serve the needs of the community, to improve energy efficiency, comply with safety standards, and to preserve the historic integrity of the building. These upgrades and improvements will enable the library to better serve the needs of all community members to access all library spaces and resources.

About half of the library's budget comes from a town appropriation that is voted every March after Town Meeting. Each year the library must meet the remaining budgetary needs through fundraisers, donations from the non-profit Friends of the Library, direct donations from patrons, grants, apartment rents, and, when needed, distributions from endowments.

Brandon Area Rescue Squad (BARS)

BARS serves the towns of Brandon, Leicester, Sudbury, and Goshen. The agency has more than 25 members including volunteers, part time staff members and 1 full time Operations Chief. BARS maintains a fleet of three state of the art ambulances staffed by members licensed at the following levels: Vermont Emergency First Responder (VEFR), Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), EMT, and Advanced EMT (AEMT). Volunteers sign up for shifts to provide coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and paid staff fills any gaps in the schedule. BARS responded to a total of 857 calls in FY 2023 in the four covered towns as well as calls for mutual aid from neighboring communities. All members and staff are required to complete a minimum of 20 to 50 hours of training every year to remain licensed at their level. The agency routinely provides training for Emergency Care Attendants. Training for Emergency Medical Technicians and Emergency Medical Techniques Intermediate Level (I.V.) is provided by the Rutland Regional Medical Center.

Funds are raised through billing, a subscription program, and appropriations collected from each town BARS covers.

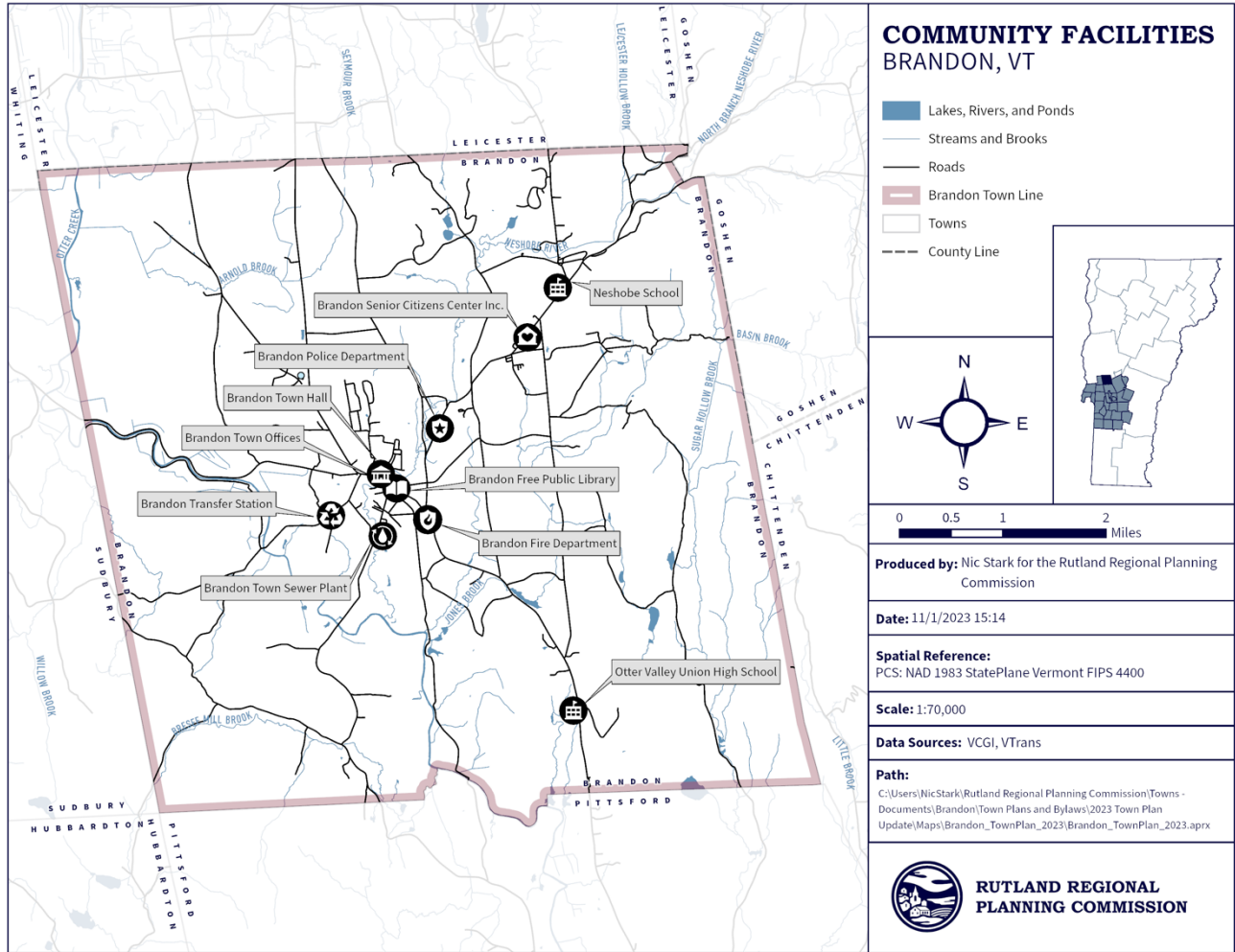
Brandon Senior Center

The Brandon Senior Center is a non-profit service organization that began as a one-room club in the 1930s. The building has gone through many transformations over the years, with additions built on to the original building. In the past the Center was perceived as a closed up "hall," but

the recent Board of Directors changed that way of thinking and has since created a warm and friendly atmosphere where all are welcome. The Senior Center has a Meals on Wheels program; and serves a free community lunch on Fridays. The Senior Center also provides health and exercise programming like the Bone Builders exercise classes and Tai Chi and hosts a VNA Toenail Clinic once a month. On the first Tuesday of every month, the Center hosts a Community Dinner sponsored by various businesses/individuals in town, and a free community brunch co-sponsored by SW Vermont Council on Aging. The Thursday men's coffee club and card club is also ongoing. Folks usually come in early or stay after a meal to work on a jigsaw puzzle, which is always changing. The Center is also available for various civic groups to meet for Board meetings on a monthly basis. The Brandon Senior Center raises funds through an active fundraising program, grant programs for senior citizens, and through town appropriations.

Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District

Brandon is a member town in the Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District, along with the towns of Leicester, Salisbury, Goshen, Pittsford and Proctor. Brandon's share of costs is included as a budget line item. The District owns equipment and hires a coordinator. Each member town has a spot on the District's Board of Directors. The goal of the District is to provide an integrated pest-management program to reduce mosquito populations and prevent the spread of mosquito-borne disease. The District uses volunteers to aid with sampling and treating. They also run a Mosquito Hot Line, so residents can call in troublesome spots.



EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLAN

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (6) An educational facilities plan consisting of a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system;

All elementary education (grades pre-K-6) in Brandon is provided by The Neshobe School. A comparison of enrollment figures since the 2015-2016 school year is shown below. The Town of Goshen also sends students to Neshobe School.

Neshobe School: General School Information

Neshobe School Participation Information							
School Participation Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Total School Enrollment	398	423	424	428	406	406	386
Attendance Rate	91%	94%	72%	94%	95%	94%	94%
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.03	15.42	10.98	16.06	14.61	15.44	14.9

Source: <https://www.education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard>

Secondary education, grades 7-12, is provided by Otter Valley Union High School (OVUHS) which also serves Brandon, Pittsford, Goshen, Leicester, Sudbury, and Whiting. In addition, students have the option of choosing Stafford Technical Center in Rutland for specialized technical training in a wide variety of fields.

Otter Valley UHS #8: General School Information

School Participation Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Total School Enrollment	565	556	552	521	529	547	526
Attendance Rate	68%	96%	92%	93%	95%	94%	94%
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.86	13.46	12.36	12.83	12.15	12.9	12.4

Source: <https://www.education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard>

The school-aged populations served by both the Neshobe and Otter Valley schools are likely to remain steady over the next decade. Therefore, capacity of existing schools to serve the need is deemed to be adequate. Both Neshobe and Otter Valley adjust staffing levels each year.-

Funding for education comes from a mix of state and local sources. A statewide property tax for education is collected and distributed according to the number of students per district and their demographic needs. The local share of funds is raised predominately through the local property taxes to cover tuition, special education, transportation, and administration.

ENERGY

24. V.S.A. § 4382 (9) An energy plan, including 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, a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy.



Overview of Vermont Energy Goals

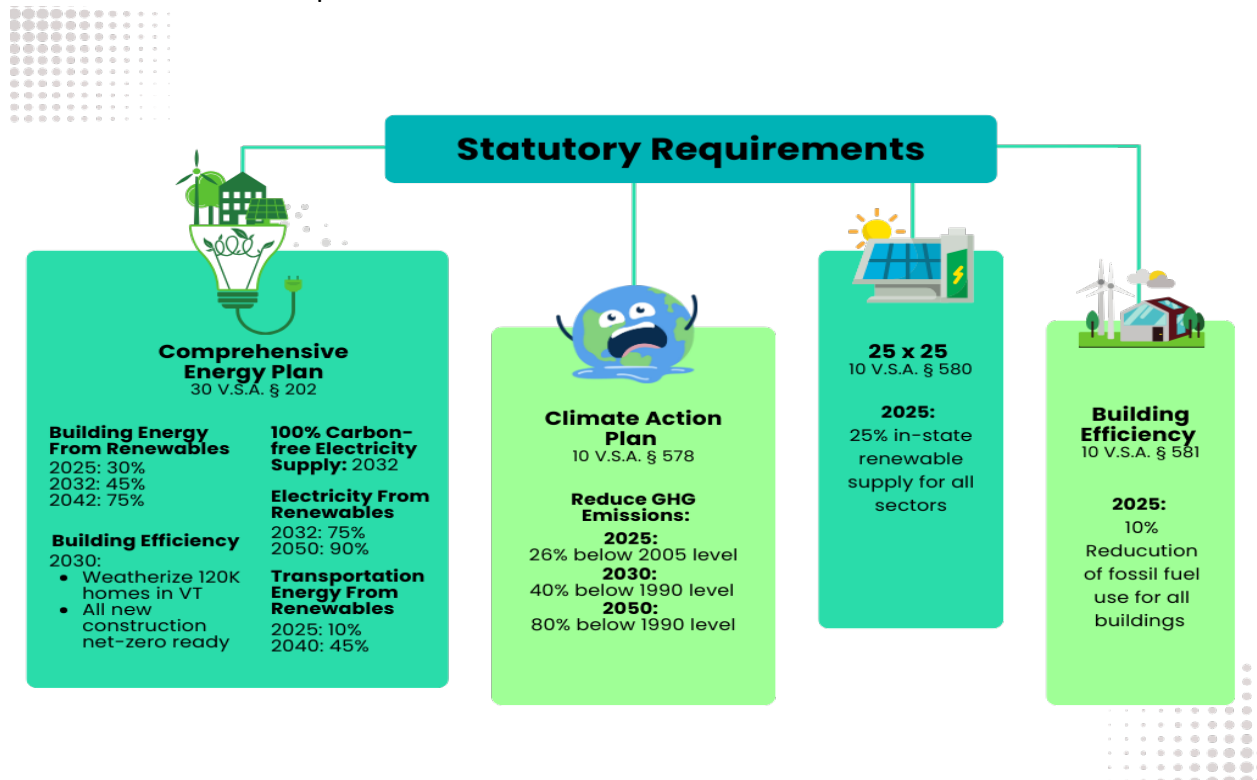
The State of Vermont has adopted a set of ambitious energy goals through statute and the Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP), which was last updated in 2016. To help communities reach the sustainable energy future envisioned by the CEP, the state's central goals include:

- Meeting 90% of Vermont's total energy needs with renewable sources by 2050.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the following amount:
 - 40% reduction below GHG levels in 1990 by 2030, and
 - 80% to 95% reduction below 1990 levels by 2050.

The town of Brandon has adopted an Enhanced Energy Plan to create a pathway for the town to encourage appropriate growth, save residents money, and ultimately improve the quality of life for residents.

The purpose of the Brandon Enhanced Energy Plan is to conduct comprehensive energy planning at the local level while also achieving state energy goals – most importantly, the goal to have renewable energy sources meet 90% of the town's energy needs by 2050. We believe in the value of meeting the state energy statutes required in Act 174 as a way to improve the local economy while decreasing pollution.

The graphic shown below outlines mandated state statutes and their component goals which the town must meet in this plan.



One can see that the primary focus of these goals is to **decrease** total energy usage, **increase** the use of energy from renewable sources and **reduce** greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To achieve these goals, we will focus on broad efficiency measures and a comprehensive program of fuel switching.

As an early signer of the Vermont Declaration of Inclusion, Brandon is committed to ensuring all residents receive fair and equal treatment. This includes the principle that all residents should have access to reliable and affordable sources of energy; should be protected from deleterious effects of energy production and distribution; and share equally in distribution of the benefits provided by town-supported generation and conservation projects. Brandon’s energy use continues to evolve in response to growing demand, new energy solutions and more affordable technologies. The updates to the town enhanced energy plan are intended to address energy inequities and positively impact every segment of the community.

In-depth energy planning helps ensure energy security for the Town of Brandon, while pursuing the economic opportunities inherent through conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy alternatives. All while protecting the beautiful environment in and around the town of Brandon.

Brandon recognizes that as conventional fuel resources are phased out, future energy resilience relies on lowering dependence on imported, non-renewable fuels by tapping local energy sources in order to maintain a standard of living to which residents are accustomed.

A critical piece to improved efficiency will be greater reliance on electricity to power everyday needs. Electricity can be generated from renewable resources and electric-powered technologies such as using heat pumps and switching to electric vehicles will help lower overall energy consumption. Currently nearly all energy sector-related money flows out of Brandon and Vermont; redirecting expenditures for heating and transportation to local energy alternatives will keep more wealth in the community.

This energy plan is intended to provide the residents and local leadership of Brandon with the information and strategies needed to maintain a vibrant community in coming decades while the energy sector is transformed to better preserve the environment, lower energy costs, promote local renewable energy development, and enhance the town's self-reliance.

The specific statistics and targets for the town of Brandon are detailed in the *Enhanced Energy Plan* as most recently document located on the town website at www.townofbrandon.com/resources/general policies, and fully incorporated by reference herein.

HOUSING

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (10) 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 subdivision 4348a(a)(9) of this title. The program should account for permitted accessory dwelling units, as defined in subdivision 4412(1)(E) of this title, which provide affordable housing.

Introduction

Along with its unique downtown streetscape, Brandon has a large number of architecturally significant single-family homes, several planned development areas with more modern style cape and ranch homes and, throughout town, a variety of home styles ranging from late 18th century to modern. The Brandon Village Historic District, which is listed in the National Historic Register, contains 245 notable structures, many of which are single family homes.

Goals

Maintain, preserve and, when appropriate, revitalize the unique architectural assets of the town, many of which are residential. Provide a wide selection of accessible and affordable housing types and styles to encourage a diverse population. Housing should be encouraged to meet the diverse needs of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for low- and moderate-income citizens.

Policies

- New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.
- Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.
- Accessory apartments within or attached to single-family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives, elders, or persons who have a disability should be allowed.
- Encourage the preservation and renovation of existing resources for residential use, especially unique and historic properties.
- Encourage infill development.
- Encourage private homeownership and support the efforts of volunteer organizations to assist property owners in the maintenance and improvement of residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage a housing balance with an appropriate mix to meet all market needs.
- Continue to support safe and affordable housing.
- Promote cluster development that minimizes consumption of land and allows for conservation of farmlands, forests, and open space.
- Encourage energy efficiency upgrades and development.

Action Steps

- Motivate developers to preserve, renovate, and weatherize existing housing.
- Educate property owners as to available tax credits and other incentives for the rehabilitation of historic, old, or substandard housing.
- Update land use ordinances to allow for a wide range of housing units and smaller lot sizes to encourage private-sector creation of housing that is affordable and accessible to all income and ability levels.
- Create incentives to encourage private developers to include affordable, senior, or accessible housing in any new construction.

Background

Existing Conditions

Brandon has an existing settlement pattern typical of New England towns. Most of the commercial activity and higher density residential development is in and near the historic core of the community. The density of residential development decreases radiating out from the center of town and transitions to a mix of industrial, commercial, agricultural, and recreational uses. Development is also concentrated along the main arteries radiating from this center. New development typically occurs toward the perimeter of the village area, although the potential for infill development exists. The two largest residential concentrations are in the Brandon Village area and Forest Dale community, but there are a large number of homes spread throughout the more rural parts of town as well.

While the majority of Brandon residents live in single-family homes, there is a wide variety of housing options in town, including multi-unit dwellings, mixed-use developments, senior housing, and condominiums. Brandon has a wider variety of housing options than its neighboring communities. In 2020, 77 percent of occupied housing was single-family detached units, 5 percent mobile homes, and 18 percent were structures containing two or more units.

In 2020, 71 percent of Brandon's housing units were owner-occupied, and 29 percent were renter-occupied. According to the 2023 Rutland County Housing Needs Assessment, Brandon's rental housing supply is average for towns of comparable size in the region, with a higher percentage of rental units than Castleton, but a lower amount than Rutland Town.

Seasonal or vacation housing units, common in other Rutland County communities, are less than 2 percent of the housing in Brandon according to the 2020 Census. The absence of a significant summer or winter recreation area, such as a ski area or lake, within the town's borders, has lessened this type of development in town.

Brandon's population is composed predominately of family households. According to the 2020 Census, there were 1,770 households in Brandon and a total population of 4,129 persons. Families made up 59 percent of the households in 2020, and the average household had two

members. Of the families with children under the age of 18, a large portion, 75 percent, are two-parent households. Households with one or more people 65 and over accounted for 33 percent of Brandon's households¹.

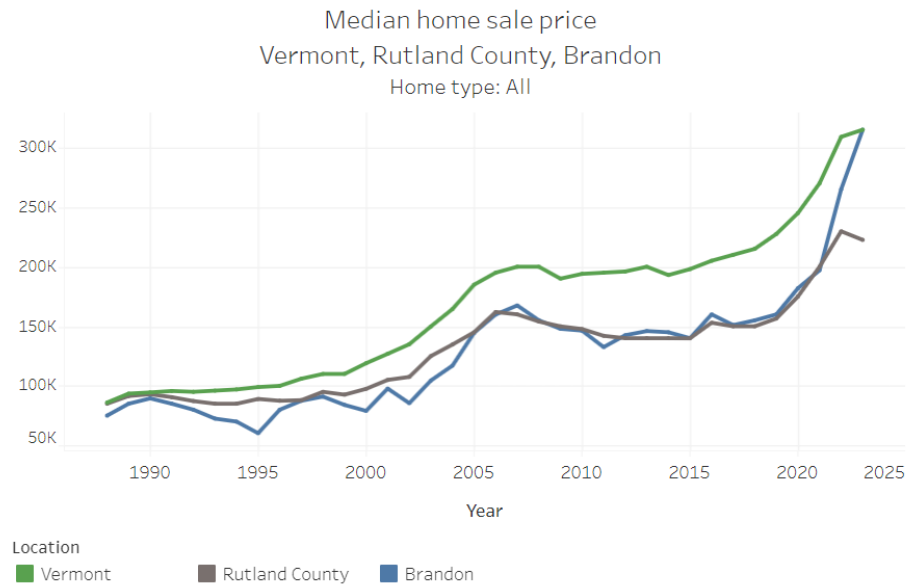
Brandon has a significant proportion of senior and affordable rental housing units in multi-family buildings. Most of them were developed by renovating existing institutional buildings (Park Village) or commercial buildings (several downtown locations). Under Vermont law such housing is granted special tax consideration, which affects municipal revenues.

Along with being something of a bedroom community for Rutland and Middlebury, Brandon has always been attractive to people purchasing second or retirement homes. Since 2000, land values have appreciated significantly in Brandon and that fact, combined with the cost of permitting and improving building lots, has led builders and developers to target households with higher incomes for new construction. The Brandon Land Use Ordinances are currently being updated to allow for construction of affordable residences to attract more first-time home buyers.

Housing Market

The Brandon market has mirrored the national trends over recent years, with a steep increase in housing sales and price appreciation. A decrease in the inventory of properties has had a great impact on housing prices. Brandon, like the rest of Vermont, lacks affordable housing with fewer new homes being built than are going out of stock.

Brandon had a moderately priced housing market prior to the COVID pandemic. From 1990 to 2020, Brandon median home-sale prices followed Rutland County, which historically is lower than the state. But following the 2020 pandemic, housing prices in Brandon rose precipitously; between 2019 and 2023, the median sale price of a home in Brandon almost doubled, from \$160,000 in 2019 to \$315,000 in 2023. This mirrors the overall state and national trends of increasing housing prices.



Source: housingdata.org/profile/homeownership-costs/primary-home-sales

Affordable Housing

Homeownership in Vermont is difficult for many households due to the high upfront costs of purchasing a home, the increase in sales prices in recent years due to limited number of houses for sale, and the rapid rise in mortgage rates beginning in 2022 due to the Federal Reserve's drive to reduce inflation. Brandon has a considerable number of rental housing units dedicated to low-income residents and seniors that have been developed in recent years by non-profit organizations such as the Rutland County Community and Trust and NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, but there is a limited amount of market-rate or workforce housing available. An ongoing concern for the State of Vermont is the gap between wages and rent, but Brandon is currently bucking that trend. The 2023 Rutland County Housing Needs Assessment found that countywide rent increased at a faster rate than wages, but Brandon was the exception, with wages increasing 9% faster than rent from 2011 to 2021, according to *HousingData.org*.

Aside from housing specifically set aside for lower income residents, the Town should encourage additional units to be created at affordable prices by allowing a wide range of housing types. For example, accessory dwelling units, as defined in State Statute and the Brandon zoning ordinance, are a permitted use and represent a simple way of encouraging new rental units while maintaining the general character of existing single-family neighborhoods. Other options such as allowing duplexes or multi-family houses in areas where growth is desirable, will generate more rental housing while allowing smaller lot sizes will generally translate into more affordable prices for people seeking to own.

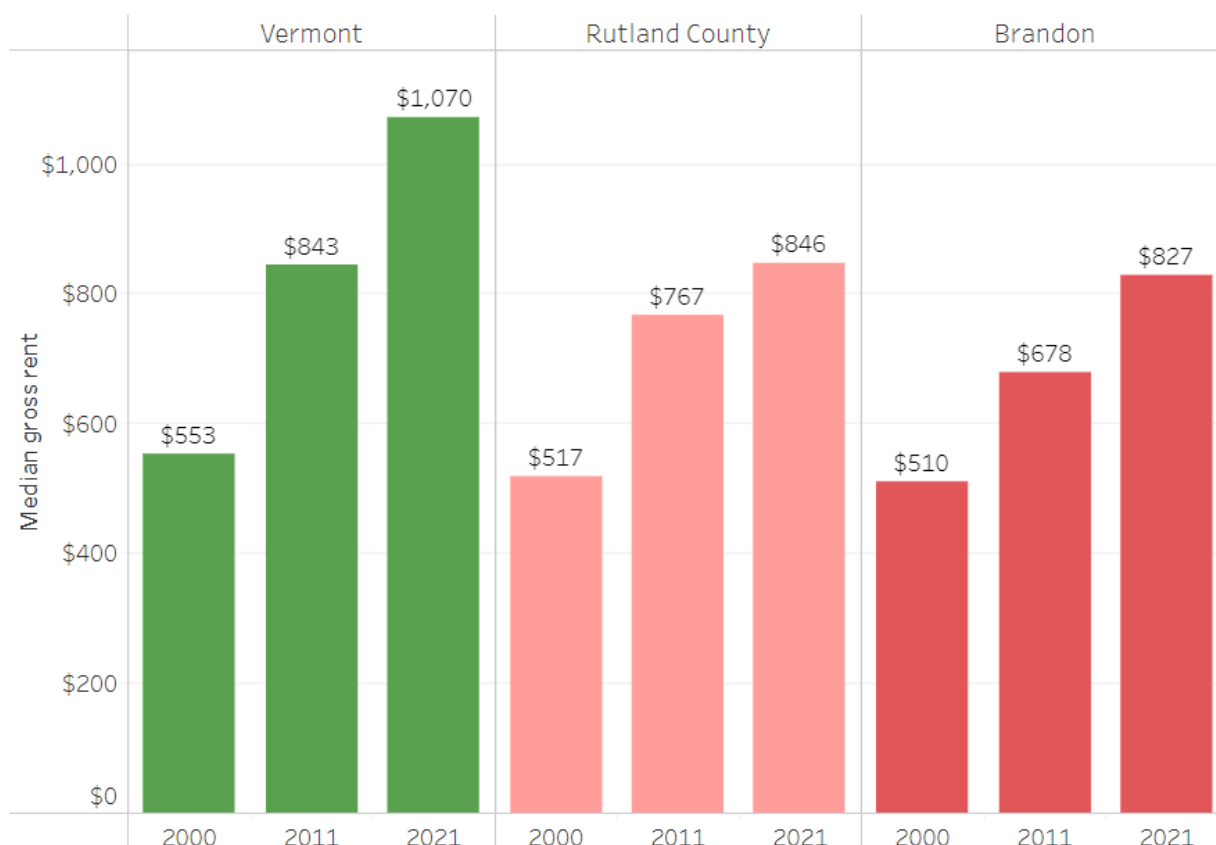
Housing affordability can be tied directly to a number of other factors such as heating efficiency, whether or not automobiles are necessary based on location, maintenance costs for the building and the land, and taxes. Therefore, encouraging a diverse housing stock is one way of helping to meet the overall need.

Rental Housing

A large portion of affordable housing is usually in the form of rental units. The Town of Brandon adopted a Rental Housing Code in 1983 and updated it in 1999. Since all “non-owner-occupied housing facilities” and “owner occupied housing facilities wherein two or more rooms are rented” are required to be inspected prior to occupancy, an accurate inventory of rental units is readily available. The Rental Code, in addition to enforcing a higher standard of rental housing, gives the town a fairly accurate picture of available rental units. A Certificate of Occupancy must be issued prior to occupancy by a new tenant and indicates the number of rental units that come onto the market in a year.

From 2011 to 2021, average rent in Brandon increased 22%, from \$678 to \$827, similar to the state and county during this time period (during that same time period, median annual wages in Brandon increased by 31%, from \$32,418 to \$42,424).

Median gross rent estimates



Source: housingdata.org/profile/rental-housing-costs/median-gross-rent

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development defines cost-burdened families as those “who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing” and thus, “may have difficulty affording necessities.” In 2021, 51% of Brandon renter households were paying at least 30% of

household income towards rent, up from 42% of renter households in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHILDCARE

24 V.S.A. § 4302 (13) To ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare and to integrate childcare issues into the planning process, including childcare financing, infrastructure, business assistance for childcare providers, and childcare work force development.

Introduction

As more households have more than one income per family, parents of young children need safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options. There currently are six childcare facilities in Brandon, four of which are licensed centers (two of which are located at and run by schools). The remaining two facilities are registered residential operations. Information about existing providers is available on-line on the Bright Futures Provider Directory from the Vermont Department of Children and Families.

In addition to its importance to working parents, childcare is a big part of Vermont's economy. Current supply in Brandon does not meet the demand for childcare, especially after-school care. Thus, Brandon offers a prime opportunity for motivated, enthusiastic, and entrepreneurial childcare providers to open up shop and contribute both to Brandon's bottom line and to its livability.

Goal

Support and expand the number and variety of childcare providers, with an emphasis on meeting gaps in current availability.

Policies

Encourage a mix of childcare facility types to meet the needs and wants of families.

Action steps

- Continue to permit the use of single-family homes in Brandon for small-scale family childcare facilities as home occupations.
- Review regulations and assess potential barriers to entry.
- Encourage the establishment of a child and teen center like the former Boys' and Girls' Club.
- Support efforts by the Neshobe School to provide high-quality preschool service.

Background / Analysis

Children under 15 years of age in Brandon comprised about 17 percent of the population according to the 2020 Census figures, the same as in 2010. Of those children, 242 were under the age of five, and 260 were five to nine years old. Households with children under the age of 18 formed 25 percent of Brandon households (a decline from 31 percent in 2010¹). 5 percent of Brandon's families were listed with poverty status.

While the benefit of affordable childcare is widely acknowledged as a boost for the economy and workforce, it is especially important to the survival of families working to make ends meet. It is difficult to assess the need for childcare facilities in Brandon because of the high proportion of adults who commute to other communities to work. It is expected that many parents choose to have their children near to their places of work, thus potentially reducing the need for facilities in Brandon. Even so, it is reasonable to assume that childcare is an important issue to Brandon residents. In addition, attention to the issue of affordable childcare may also help promote Brandon as a favorable location for young families.

RECREATION

Introduction

Recreation is an important aspect of Brandon's community and family life. Brandon's proximity to a variety of outdoor activities provides a wealth of individual opportunities for recreation, while group activities are coordinated by several different organizations.

Brandon's recreational infrastructure serves as an attraction to residents and friends in nearby towns. Many activities for people of all ages are organized by Brandon's Recreation Department. The Brandon Senior Citizen Center coordinates activities for area residents in the upper age brackets. Devoting resources to recreation will contribute to a healthy living environment for the current and future community of Brandon residents.

Goal

To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Brandon residents and visitors.

Policies

Create an accessible, affordable, and welcoming physical and social environment in which recreation is a key aspect of healthy community life and daily activity for all Brandon's residents.

Support growth patterns that do not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.

Identify, provide, and protect public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, wherever appropriate.

Work with regional municipalities to benefit from economies of scale to provide better recreation activities.

Action Steps

- Inventory current recreational assets and create a 10-year plan for improvements and maintenance.
- Develop a capital budget for the Recreation Department that will continue to seek grant funding for programs and facilities improvements.
- Maintain, enhance, and expand existing public parks, recreational facilities, activities, events, and programs.
- Develop promotional materials for recreational programs to draw participants from throughout the Brandon region.
- Create a volunteer Recreation Committee to assist the Recreation Department in managing existing activities and brainstorming ideas and resources for new activities.

- Improve connectivity and access between downtown Brandon and Estabrook Park.
- Work collaboratively with neighboring towns and communities to create connected recreational and social programs for people of all ages and abilities.
- Study the feasibility of creating an indoor multi-purpose, multi-generational recreation facility.
- Investigate the acquisition or construction of a recreational facility that could potentially include a gymnasium and swimming pool.
- Continue to provide appropriate staffing to support recreational programs and opportunities for residents of all ages.
- Work to secure and maintain public access to the Otter Creek and the Neshobe River for recreational uses such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.
- Clean up lower Carver Street and Syndicate Road to provide for more attractive recreational opportunities.
- Develop town-owned riverfront properties for public use, including green spaces acquired through the FEMA buyout program.
- Pursue opportunities to construct paths and trails for biking, walking, hiking, and skiing. Develop maps that promote these areas and opportunities.
- Link existing and future recreational facilities and resources to further extend and integrate the system (for example between the village and Estabrook Park).
- Work with public and private entities such as the US Forest Service, Moosalamoo Association or the Ridgeline Outdoor Collective to promote recreational activities in wilderness areas.

Background

There are numerous opportunities for recreation in Brandon provided by a mix of public and private organizations. The Brandon Recreation Department is continually developing new opportunities for Brandon residents and to draw visitors to the town. The Police Department, Brandon Fire Department, and the Brandon Area Rescue Squad (BARS) organize the annual Safety Day, which includes information on bike safety. Free bike helmets for children are available through the Police Department and BARS. The Town maintains several outdoor parks and facilities. Active recreational facilities include Estabrook Park, just north of the Village, and the Seminary Hill playground, located in the Village. These facilities combined have basketball courts, a ball field, and playground equipment. A fenced dog park is located next to the Seminary Hill playground. Passive recreational spaces include Central Park, Kennedy Park, Green Park, and Crescent Park. In addition, the recreational facilities and fields at Neshobe Elementary and Otter Valley Union High School are available for limited use and activities. The Brandon Town Forest offers great back country hiking and snowshoeing opportunities along the eastern boundary of the town line. Brandon is also located within 10 miles of numerous trail systems, including the Appalachian and Long Trails.

Brandon's Recreation Program

Brandon supports a Recreation Department that provides a full array of recreational opportunities for town residents. The Recreation Department has been directed to provide a variety of year-round programs, which are publicized in a seasonal brochure. The Recreation Department sponsors programs for people of all ages from Brandon and surrounding communities and include a variety of sports activities as well as community gatherings and field trips. Many local groups and citizens contribute to the efforts of the Recreation Department and events are often a collaborative effort of many organizations. A mix of town funds, fees, grants, and individual and business contributions support the Recreation Department.

Recreation Infrastructure

There are also many informal recreation opportunities in and around the Town of Brandon. Popular outdoor recreational activities include hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, birding, and hunting. The Vermont Association of Snowmobile Travelers (VAST) maintains a trail system for snowmobiling in Brandon and Forest Dale, much of which is on private land with owner permission.

A portion of the Green Mountain National Forest is located in Brandon and offers access to an extensive trail system. Brandon serves as a gateway community to the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area located within the National Forest boundaries. The Moosalamoo Association works to conserve the physical landscape in a way which preserves the spiritual and recreational experiences that draw visitors and residents to the area.

The Neshobe River and Otter Creek are excellent waterways for recreational activities, although the absence of public access points inhibits their use. In order to assure their recreational value, maintenance of their water quality should be a consideration when making decisions about adjacent and upstream land uses and activities.

While they are not within Brandon's boundaries, Lake Dunmore, Fern Lake, and Silver Lake offer exceptional recreational opportunities. Branbury State Park at Lake Dunmore has camping, picnicking, boating, and swimming facilities. Lake Champlain is within 20 miles of Brandon. These lakes have a positive impact on Brandon and its businesses. Many visitors to Brandon stay in our inns and bed-and-breakfasts because of their close proximity to our lakes, ponds, and rivers, and local stores and eateries benefit as well.

Privately-owned facilities for camping, golfing, and fitness round-out the recreational options in Brandon. The 18-hole Neshobe Golf Club is one popular, privately-owned recreation center.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (5) A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable . . . scenic and historic features and resources.

Introduction

Brandon and Forest Dale possess an architectural legacy, a cultural history, and a unique visual identity that contribute to the creation of community, historic pride, and economic advantage. These assets must be carefully managed.



Goals

Protect the town's historic settlement pattern and architectural assets as a significant, non-renewable resource that creates a sense of place and community wellbeing.

Promote cultural advancement and civic engagement.

Policies

- Ensure the preservation, restoration, and adaptive re-use of historic public buildings and privately owned structures.
- Encourage the compatibility of new commercial construction within the Town with the historic character of the community.
- Support the protection and preservation, where appropriate, of significant historic structures, sites and districts, the townscape and landscape, as well as prehistoric and

significant archaeological sites in the Town of Brandon.

- Encourage Heritage Tourism.
- Encourage community art projects, cultural events, festivals, and cultural tourism.
- Encourage cultural resource groups to collaborate and coordinate with the Town and other interested parties.
- Encourage partnerships with local community organizations for various projects (such as park improvements, downtown redevelopment, and events).
- Utilize public facilities and space as venues for artists, historical exhibitions, and cultural events.
- Support the Brandon Public Library, Brandon Senior Center, and other partner organizations in Brandon.
- Support the Town Hall improvement efforts for more comfortable use for public events and meetings.
- Support the growth of arts, cultural, and civic organizations in Brandon.
- Support public and private efforts to preserve and restore historic resources with the help of organizations such as the Brandon Historical Society and the Brandon Historic Preservation Commission.
- Support municipal and private efforts to preserve the Brandon Town Hall and the Stephen A. Douglas Birthplace as important historic and current cultural resources.
- Encourage partnerships with local community organizations for various projects (such as park improvements, downtown redevelopment, and events).
- Promote Brandon's status as the home of Thomas Davenport in relation to current interest in electric energy as an alternative to fossil fuels.

Action steps

- Leverage Brandon's Certified Local Government (CLG) and Downtown Designation status by participating in programs for downtown improvements and pursuing grant opportunities, in collaboration with community organizations, to continue to protect and preserve Brandon's historic resources.
- Obtain a state Village Center designation for Forest Dale to access state grant programs, tax incentives, and other resources.
- Develop and maintain a complete inventory of historic structures, sites, and settlement patterns in support of Brandon's planning and zoning, which could be used in support of preservation over demolition in the zoning ordinance.
- The Historic Preservation Commission shall train the Select Board, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, and Zoning Administrator in the management of historic information and documentation and preservation of historic resources.
- Update History of Brandon, a book written and published by the Town of Brandon in

1961.

- Create a walking tour of the Village Historic District.
- Develop zoning regulations and development guidelines to promote and preserve Brandon's historic resources.
- Pursue a heritage byway designation from the Green Mountains to Lake Champlain.
- Encourage partnerships with local community organizations for various projects (such as park improvements, downtown redevelopment, and events).
- Create a map and walking tour of local artist studios and invite local artists to participate in Brandon-specific Open Studio weekends.
- Pursue grant opportunities, in collaboration with community organizations, to continue to protect and preserve Brandon's historic resources.
- Allow the use of public facilities and space as venues for artists, historical exhibitions, and cultural events.

Background

Brandon has a rich prehistoric and historic legacy as is evident in the settlement and land use patterns, residential structures, remains of old commercial and industrial businesses, cemeteries, archaeological sites, and community gathering places throughout the town. Brandon is rich in the historic artifacts of the 19th century, particularly in buildings and structures. Early 19th century industrialization is also very evident in Brandon. Many aspects of modern life in Brandon are touched by the past. Brandon's magnificent Greek Revival town hall is the most prominent public example of this legacy.

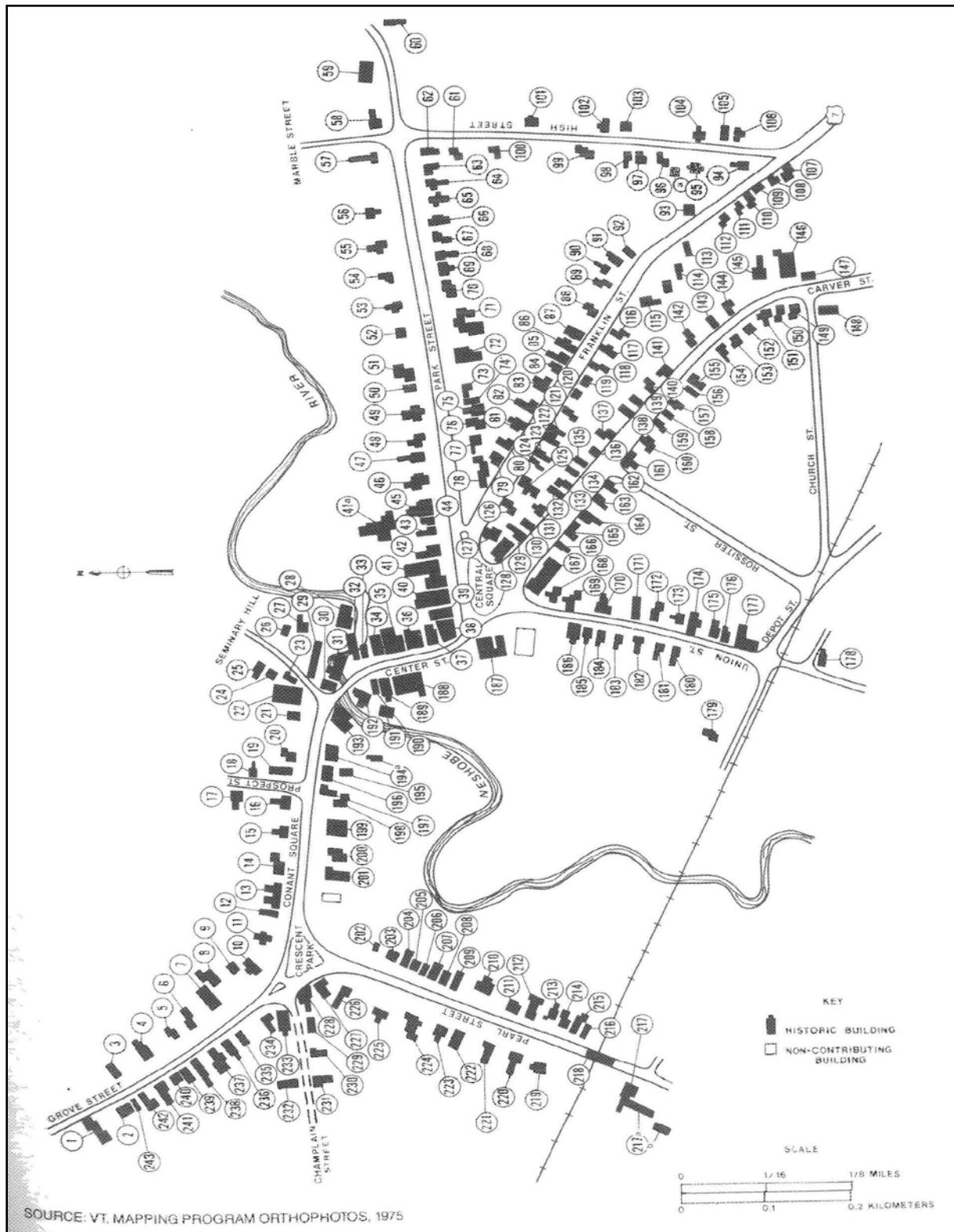
In addition to being the birthplace of the acclaimed 19th century orator Stephen A. Douglas, Brandon was also the home of Thomas Davenport, father of the electric motor. Davenport, a blacksmith and inventor, lived in Forest Dale, where there was an iron industry. He invented the first DC electrical motor in 1834 and made a small model of an electrical railway in 1835. He received the world's first patent for an electric motor in 1837. Beginning in 2022, an annual festival celebrates Davenport's contribution to science and manufacturing, with an eye to the future of electric alternatives to fossil fuels.

Several organizations in Brandon are dedicated to the preservation of the town's historic resources as well as public education. They include the Friends of the Brandon Town Hall; the Stephen A Douglas Birthplace Community Center, Inc., which includes the Brandon Museum; the Lake Dunmore Chapter Daughters of American Revolution; and the Brandon Historic Preservation Commission. These groups are mainly supported through grants and private resources along with some public funding.

Brandon Village, which encompasses the majority of downtown, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other sites on the Register include the Green Mountain Iron Furnace in Forest Dale, and the Sanderson Covered Bridge on Pearl Street.

The State of Vermont also has a Register of Historic Places and lists three historic districts in Brandon: Brandon Village, Rossiter Street and Church Street.

There are many prehistoric archaeological sites within the Town of Brandon, some documented and others yet-to-be examined.



Brandon Village Historic District map (source: Vermont office of Historic Preservation)

Brandon also benefits from a strong set of cultural resources. In addition to the recreational opportunities and historic charm, Brandon has a thriving arts community. Brandon residents lend energy and enthusiasm to cultural organizations, religious groups, and social service initiatives. Brandon has many active organizations working to enhance the community with cultural events. These organizations promote fundraising, ancestral heritage, economic development, youth, social services, and education. The churches contribute many social and community services as well as serve as historic resources. The Brandon Artists Guild provides space for member artists to display and sell their art. In addition, the "artists' space" at the Granary on Union St. provides affordable rental studio space for local artists. Brandon is also home to The Barn Opera, an innovative, operatic organization that brings the joy and beauty of accessible opera to the local community, housed in a historic post-and-beam barn. This Plan supports the growth of arts and cultural organizations in Brandon.

Civic organizations as the Lions Club, Masons St. Paul's #25 Lodge, Downtown Business Alliance, and Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, among others, also make valuable and regular contributions to the civic and cultural life of our Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

24 V.S.A. §4382 (11): 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;

Introduction

Planning for economic development presents challenges in a small community but is an important part of a town's planning goals. Economic development, once the sole province of the private sector, is the process by which the community sets out to improve the climate for retaining established and attracting new businesses that support jobs and sustain tax revenues. Brandon derives most of its revenue from the taxation of local property to support municipal services. Brandon needs to be active in managing economic growth to ensure the future of its tax base and quality of life.

Brandon has many valuable assets including water and sewer capacity, available commercial buildings and land, a pre-permitted industrial park, an excellent school system, a vibrant historic downtown, a well-educated workforce, proximity to fiber optic, and a range of social and community services, which make it an attractive location for businesses as well as a desirable place to live and work.

Brandon also has significant recreational, historical, cultural, and natural resources, as discussed elsewhere in this Plan. These add substantially to the quality of life and can influence businesses and individuals considering locating or investing in Brandon. These resources are necessarily part of a fully integrated strategy for economic and community development.



Goal

To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes; create an economic climate that retains and attracts businesses that contribute to our quality of life.

Policies

- Maintain and enhance a diversified local economy.
- Encourage improvements to the visual appearance, accessibility and character of downtown which accommodate both the historical integrity and modern needs of the village area.
- Encourage targeted economic growth in designated development areas, specifically at Park Village, downtown Brandon, and Forest Dale.
- Maintain infrastructure to support existing development and economic growth.
- Include Brandon's Recreational, Historical and Cultural assets as a strong element when planning for development.
- Create a welcoming environment for economic development that preserves the character of Brandon but allows for growth.
- Build upon Brandon's existing assets and business strengths and encourage growth of existing local businesses.
- Encourage commercial growth within the area easily accessible to pedestrians from the central business district and served by current municipal infrastructure, including water, sewer, and sidewalks.
- Support appropriate growth in all the neighborhoods of Brandon including downtown Brandon, Park Village, Forest Dale, and the Brandon Industrial Park.
- Support businesses which maintain the working landscape, such as agriculture and forestry.
- Encourage and support efforts to promote Brandon as a tourist destination
- Encourage businesses to utilize vacant space in downtown Brandon and consider joint public and private investments to upgrade existing buildings.
- Ensure a strong workforce in Brandon.

Action steps

- Maintain an active Downtown Development Corporation as required by VSA Chapter 24, Title 76A for Designated Downtown status.
- Reapply for Designated Downtown status in calendar year 2025 and continue to actively use this designation in seeking grants and other economic development activities.

- Create a capital improvement plan for the downtown development district as required by VSA Chapter 24, Title 76A for Designated Downtown status.
- Retain the role of Economic Development Officer.
- Actively market the Brandon Industrial Park and other appropriate locations to financially stable, future-focused manufacturers in growth industries.
- Actively market Brandon to telecommuters, creative freelancers, and internet-based businesses.
- Create a standard set of tax incentives for businesses operating in or moving to Brandon.
- Plan and pursue state recognition of designated growth centers adjacent to and including the Designated Downtown district.
- Partner with regional municipalities to market Brandon and the surrounding area for recreational, cultural, and historic tourism as well as commercial development.
- Target employers who pay a livable wage and sustain or enhance the quality of life in Brandon.
- Support the active involvement and efforts of residents in obtaining Designated Village Center status for Forest Dale.
- Partner with schools to create internships or entry-level positions with local businesses for students.
- Access state programs to support workforce development.
- Support opportunities for students to obtain experience in the trades, such as school-to-work programs, including training opportunities in Town departments and local businesses.
- Continue to offer financing to businesses through the revolving fund; research and implement strategies to endow the revolving loan fund to allow for future benefit.

Background

Economic Characteristics

Brandon has been identified as a Sub-Regional Center located between Rutland, one of Vermont's largest cities, and Middlebury, an educational and cultural focal point. A Sub-Regional Center is a place that exerts a market pull over a multi-town area but does not have a sufficient business concentration to be truly regional in scope. Brandon has several large businesses as well as numerous smaller establishments, many working in niche markets. Brandon has a diverse economic base; a thriving, attractive and pedestrian-friendly central business district; and a skilled labor pool. Recent decades have been characterized by steady growth in all aspects, from tourism and service businesses to industries selling products both nationally and internationally.

Businesses

The key to Brandon's economic stability and growth lies in the diversity of its economy. As a business center for surrounding communities, Brandon enjoys a greater number and variety of commercial and professional services than its local population demands. Brandon is home to several of the larger employers in Rutland County. Important employers in Brandon include manufacturers, banks, builders, the public school system, and medical facilities.

Other major contributors to Brandon's economy are the numerous smaller businesses operating in Brandon. These employers are in a variety of sectors and provide steady employment opportunities. According to the Small Business Administration, small firms represent 99.7 percent of all employer firms nationwide, and employ about half of all private sector employees. In Vermont, small firms employed 60.2 percent of the state's labor force in 2022. Brandon's businesses confront the same challenges which businesses everywhere face in a global economy.

Workforce

In 2010, Brandon, with 3,966 residents, was the fourth largest town in Rutland County and held 11.8 percent of the county's population. In 2020, with 4,129 residents, Brandon is now the third-largest town in Rutland County but holds a smaller percentage of the total county population, at 6.8 percent, similar to the proportion in 2000.

The annual average unemployment rate in Brandon was 0.3 percent in 2021, a record low when compared to 4.1 percent of the population in 2010, and 12.4 percent of the population in 2000. According to the 2020 Census, a majority of the employed residents of Brandon work in educational, health, and social services (30%), retail (18%) and art, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (11%). Manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, and utilities, and professional, scientific, and technical services accounted for most of the other employment sectors where Brandon residents were employed.

The decline in unemployment has come with a fundamental shift away from manufacturing as an economic driver. In 2000, manufacturing employed 40% of Brandon residents, in 2021 it was only 9%. This shift, as well as the shift away from government, employing 23% in 2000 compared to 8% in 2021, and a shift towards educational, social, and health services has kept the average wage of employees in Brandon relatively stagnant compared to the median-income growth rate in Vermont and Rutland County. Significantly affecting many areas of planning, it has been estimated that about 62 percent of the Brandon workforce, (1,336 people), commuted out of town to work in 2021. In 2021, 1,240 people commuted into Brandon, while 798 lived and worked in Brandon.

Economic Development Activities

The Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, one of four chambers in Rutland County, works to support local businesses as well as coordinate and promote tourism marketing in the region.

The Brandon Chamber has over 150 members and is active in community-wide initiatives. Both the Chamber and the Town of Brandon have developed websites to promote the town and provide information to both residents and visitors.

Park Village, site of the former Brandon Training School, has been developed commercially, industrially, and residentially. Some of the growth at Park Village has been caused by the relocation of businesses formerly located in downtown Brandon, creating more available commercial space in the village. Filling the vacant retail and office space in downtown Brandon with compatible businesses is a high priority for the Town and Chamber of Commerce. The Brandon Industrial Park, located off Arnold District Road near the Park Village complex, is pre-permitted for industrial use, and offers lots suitable for a variety of uses.

Brandon's central business district and surrounding core is a Vermont Designated Downtown. This designation makes available a number of tax credits and other incentives designed to strengthen the downtown area. The Downtown Brandon Alliance helps to oversee this program and promote Brandon's downtown.

The Town of Brandon funds an Economic Development Officer position. This position is charged with retaining and recruiting new businesses and organizing municipal projects aimed at improving facilities and infrastructure that are vital to new economic development initiatives.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (5) A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic . . . features and resources.

The Town of Brandon has an abundance of valuable natural resources. The environment has played an important role in shaping Brandon's image and provides a continuing public and economic benefit to the community. Economic activities dependent on natural resources, including agriculture and forestry, are described below with policies related to their use and conservation.



Goal

Identify, protect, and preserve Brandon's natural resources for future generations.

Policies

- Protect and retain surface waters, wetlands, floodplains, fluvial erosion hazard areas and groundwater resources identified on the Natural Resources and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area maps.
- Preserve significant woodland, agricultural, and other large blocks of undeveloped or open land, and maintain connected wildlife corridors.
- Support conservation of undeveloped land through public or private entities.
- Encourage clustering of development in order to allow viable amounts and patterns of undisturbed and/or open land.
- Encourage proper woodland management, reduce fragmentation of large forest blocks, and encourage connection/linkages of woodland areas.
- Preserve farm and forest lands and maintain the working landscape through conservation, easements, tax incentives, and land acquisition.

- Discourage development within significant agricultural and forested areas. Development of lands with resource value for woodland or agriculture should occur in patterns and densities that will not substantially reduce the productivity of the land. Clustering or other innovative techniques are strongly encouraged to reduce the impacts of development.
- Require forest management plan development and implementation where significant land conversion is proposed.
- Agricultural land should remain open for future agricultural operations.
- Encourage development that complements or enhances the scenic quality of the Brandon landscape.
- Discourage removal of healthy mature trees on construction, public works, highway, or redevelopment sites.
- Development shall not have an undue, adverse impact on scenic resources.

Action steps

- Prohibit development in areas where the slopes exceed 20 percent and avoid development in areas where the slopes are greater than 15 percent.
- Protect elevations above 1,500 feet from intensive uses and development.
- Develop regulations to protect the scenic value of mountaintops and ridgelines.
- Protect unique geologic areas from uses that would destroy their natural resource, scenic, or recreational value.
- New sand and gravel operations may be permitted in certain districts subject to appropriate conditions. When a sand and gravel operation ceases, the land shall be properly reclaimed in accordance with state or local regulations.
- Future development shall protect prime agricultural soils to the greatest extent possible.
- Companies or contractors engaging in transportation and extraction of resources should pay their fair share of infrastructure costs associated with the activity.
- Protect surface waters and ground water from development and uses that would negatively impact water quality.
- Retain wetland areas in their natural state for the provision of wildlife habitats, retention areas for surface runoff, recreation, and resource value.
- Protect shorelines and streambanks, including buffer strips, from uses, reclamation, and development which would cause erosion, prohibit public access, or reduce scenic qualities.
- Include low-impact development incentives and requirements in zoning for the built environment.
- Review and update the Neshobe River Corridor Plan and use the Plan's identification of potential riparian easement sites to identify and work with willing landowners to

establish conservation sites along the river to prevent future development in flood-prone locations.

- Protect and buffer wildlife habitats such as wetlands, deer yards, and surface water, from uses and development that would reduce their vital function.
- Identify and protect a functional, interconnected system of habitats. Minimize the impacts of development on the system of interconnected habitats as well as on individual areas of biological significance.
- Revisit the writing and implementation of a Brandon Town Forest Management Plan.
- Inventory, protect, and maintain scenic and aesthetic resources.
- Evaluate the location of utility lines and facilities, encourage burying of lines in public rights-of-way, and require screening of energy production facilities to the extent allowed by law.
- Discourage light pollution from exterior lighting of streets, parking, and signage by requiring energy efficient, shielded non-glare lights.
- Update the inventory of the trees that line the streets of the villages, including their type, size, and health. Assist and encourage the maintenance of these trees and develop a program to fund the replacement of those that are diseased and/or dying.

Physiography

Topography

Brandon is composed of four major physiographic regions each influencing the town's geologic, climatic, and vegetative characteristics. The south-central and western portions of the town are within the Champlain Lowland and are dominated by the Otter Creek Valley. The southwest corner of Brandon is the extreme northern reach of the Taconic Mountains. From the summit of Stiles Hill (1,301 feet), the land descends abruptly to 400 feet in one mile, demarcating the perimeter of the lacustrine plain. The lowest elevation in the town is 357 feet at the downstream extent of Otter Creek in the northwest part of town.

The most dominant physical feature is the ridgeline of the Green Mountains that forms Brandon's eastern boundary. The Birch Hill promontory and several marshy depressions in the immediate area characterize the lower slopes. Slightly eastward is Sugar Hollow, which parallels the ridgeline peaks, a narrow, steep walled ravine with slopes generally exceeding 25 percent. The Hollow broadens somewhat in the southeast corner where it is interspersed with small peaks and plateaus. At elevations above 900 feet, the landscape rises more sharply with severe slopes. Three peaks in Brandon exceed 1,500 feet in elevation with the maximum elevation at 2,345 feet.

The northeast corner of Brandon is characterized by the distinct Brandon Gap along Route 73 which provides the only paved access from Brandon to Goshen and Rochester. The Neshobe River formed and continues to shape this dramatic gateway into Brandon. The

upper-central and central-northern regions of the town are of a gentler terrain with rolling topography and several plateaus characteristic of the Champlain Lowland. With the exception of the eastern face of Lion Hill, slopes are generally moderate. Elevations range from 500 to 700 feet above sea level in this region.

Elevations

The Green Mountains, along the eastern border of Brandon, contain the town's most severe topography and highest elevations including the highest point in town -- 2345 feet. In addition to their scenic and recreational value, these areas provide a constant supply of fresh surface and groundwater. Because soils are usually shallow, the amount of surface runoff is high and restoration of vegetative cover is slow, the environment in areas above 1500 feet is very sensitive. Above 2500 feet it is considered extremely fragile. Slopes greater than 15 percent are found in the Green Mountains and in the Taconic Mountains in the southwestern portion of the town (Miller Hill is the northernmost point of the Taconics). Development in these areas usually results in erosion and stream siltation and can contribute to groundwater degradation because the potential for septic system failure and subsequent pollution is much greater. Development that can disturb fragile natural resources through removal of soil and vegetative cover on these slopes is incompatible with the sensitive water bearing qualities of this area. The Brandon Land Use Ordinance section on Slopes and Erosion is meant to prevent soil loss and protect natural and man-made critical features such as neighboring properties, water courses, storm drainage systems, wetlands and natural areas from unstable slope/soil conditions, erosion and sedimentation resulting from construction earthwork.

Geology and Soils

The bedrock formations underlying Brandon consist of slates, phyllite and layers of marble and quartzite in the southwestern quadrant of the town. In the Champlain and Vermont valleys, carbonate rocks including sandstone, dolomitic limestone, and marble make up the bedrock, with bands of quartzite and marble in the foothills of the Green Mountains and schists and phyllites in higher elevations. Over the bedrock, the composition and depth of surface materials varies greatly and is primarily related to glacial action and topographical features. Glacial till makes up much of the present surface cover. In the lowland area adjacent to Otter Creek, most of the original till material has been overlain with silt-clay alluvium, or lake sediment which was deposited during the post-glacial period. The maximum depth of this material is estimated at no more than 20 feet. In addition, the Brandon Delta is composed entirely of sand. Other sands and gravels were also deposited along the lower slopes of the upland region. The distribution of soils in Brandon has been mapped by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the data is available to the public.

Mineral Resources

Brandon has a long history of quarrying and mining activities. Mineral resources include

iron ore, marble, kaolin and lignite. In the early 1800s, the extraction and processing of iron and marble were important Brandon industries. As many as six marble quarries operated in Brandon and produced rock with several distinct patterns. A rare paint stucco pink marble quarry once existed in this marble vein. Omya Inc. and Rock of Ages, both mineral extraction companies, own several properties in town. The sites are not currently active, but the companies maintain updated permits for purposes of potential future activity. At this time, the only actively extracted resources in Brandon are sand and gravel deposits.

The inactive Dram-Lead-Zinc Mine located south of Forest Dale contains galena, sphalerite, and pyrite. Kaolin and lignite deposits are a rare occurrence not only in Vermont, but also within New England. Fossils were found in the McConnell Road mine. This area is now owned by the state.

Water Resources

Water Quality

Protecting the quality of the water, including both groundwater and surface waters, is an important part of the Town Plan. Water quality is protected in numerous ways including protection of groundwater source areas, regulation of on-site sewage systems, surface water setback requirements, floodplain regulations, vegetated buffer requirements, erosion control measures on steep slopes, and protection of wetlands.

Aquifer and Wellhead Protection

Brandon has established an Aquifer Protection area to protect its water supplies. Protection of the groundwater sources used for clusters of private drinking water supplies is also an important consideration. As additional aquifer(s) are identified and mapped, particular care should be given to protect them as well. Brandon Fire District #1 has won the American Water Works Association (AWWA) Exemplary Source Water Protection Award for medium-sized systems during its Annual Conference & Exposition in Denver, Colorado, recognizing our source-protection efforts.¹⁹

In December 2011, Brandon Fire District #1 was the first public water system in Vermont to receive a Class II Groundwater Reclassification from the Agency of Natural Resources. Class II groundwater is suitable for public water supply use, has uniformly excellent character, is in use as a public water supply source or has a high probability for such use, but is exposed to activities which may pose a risk to its current or potential use as a public water supply source.

Hydrology/Watersheds

Topography, geologic, and climatological factors greatly influence the hydrologic events of watersheds and drainage basins. A watershed is a specific area of land that drains water,

sediment and dissolved materials into a river system or other body of water. A drainage basin is a watershed that collects and discharges surface stream flow through one outlet or mouth.

Brandon is located in the Otter Creek Watershed, a major tributary to the Lake Champlain Basin. The Lake Champlain Basin drains areas covering approximately one-third of the state and includes towns in northern Bennington County, Rutland County, Addison, Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties, as well as parts of Quebec and New York State. The Otter Creek watershed includes Otter Creek, the Neshobe River, Jones Brook, Watershed, and the Sugar Hollow Brook, which all drain the western slopes of the Green Mountains.

Surface Waters

The Otter Creek, approximately 100 miles in length, is the longest flowing body of water in the state. Approximately nine of those miles are in Brandon, entering the town from Pittsford a mile west of Route 7, flowing north-northwest until it leaves the town near Route 73 in Sudbury. After a short stretch in Sudbury, the Creek reenters Brandon and flows north into Leicester. The stream gradient is extremely low between Proctor and Middlebury, hence a low flow rate for the Otter Creek along these reaches.

The Neshobe River, a tributary of Otter Creek and the second largest stream in Brandon, meanders southwesterly from headwaters in Goshen. Entering the town near Route 73 north of the center of Forest Dale, the river passes through the Village, cascading over two falls and continuing until its confluence with the Otter Creek. Brandon has adopted a Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area bylaw and map, which regulates development adjacent to Neshobe River Corridor.

Sugar Hollow Brook is the third largest stream in Brandon. It originates in the Green Mountain western slopes along the eastern border of the town. Flowing south, it collects water from numerous smaller tributaries before leaving Brandon and passing into Pittsford. There it joins with Furnace Brook before entering the Otter Creek in Pittsford.

There are several other smaller brooks and streams which flow intermittently throughout the year. Included among them are Arnold Brook and Bresee Mill Brook. Several small ponds exist in Brandon. Spring Pond and Burnell Pond are located in the Forest Dale area, while Jones Mill Pond is situated between McConnell Road and US Route 7. Sugar Hollow Pond is greater than 20 acres in surface area, and one-half of it is located in Pittsford.

Wetlands

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated with water at least part of the year and include marshes, swamps, sloughs, fens, mud flats and bogs. Wetlands provide important wildlife habitat, but also provide other benefits such as storing storm water runoff, purifying surface and groundwater supplies, recharging aquifers, controlling erosion, and providing

areas for recreation.

Brandon has extensive, significant wetlands. In recognition of the importance of wetlands, the State of Vermont has adopted Wetland Rules governing activity and development in designated wetlands. The Vermont Wetland Rules classifies wetlands into Class I, Class II, or Class III wetlands, as defined at 10 V.S.A. § 902 and Section 2, with Class I wetlands identified as being the most significant. Class II wetlands are wetlands that provide a significant function or value while Class III wetlands are those wetlands that do not have significant functions or values. Scanlon Bog, a Class II wetland, is located east of Town Farm Road and should be considered for Class I designation. A portion of this natural area is owned by The Nature Conservancy, an organization dedicated to the protection of important natural resources. It is an exceptional and irreplaceable example of bog habitat (quaking bog), providing easy access for public viewing and educational research.

Class I and II Wetlands are unsuitable for building construction and onsite septic systems, but they protect and enhance water quality and shoreline areas. Wetlands buffer shorelines from wave impact, slow stormwater runoff from uplands, remove phosphorus from the water during spring and summer growth periods and provide wildlife habitat. Wetlands slow and capture stormwater runoff storing it for recharge of springs and streams or the wetlands themselves at a later time. Wetlands should be included in a conservation or resource protection district and no development should be allowed in, or adjacent to, these areas.

Wildlife and Vegetation

A large variety of wildlife and native vegetation inhabit the land and waters in Brandon. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has produced inventories and maps of the significant natural areas. The various species and their habitat include black bear production and seasonal habitat, deer wintering areas and deer yards. Rare plant and animal sites native to Vermont have been identified by the Natural Heritage program. Important wildlife corridors will be protected or conserved from encroaching development and incompatible activities, such as road expansion or development of new roads. These resources will be given high priority in considering lands for acquisition or other long-term conservation efforts.

The Brandon Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA), a 278-acre parcel owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, is located in the towns of Brandon and Leicester, with the majority of the land being in Brandon. The WMA is bordered by Otter Creek to the east and the Brandon-Sudbury, Brandon-Whiting town lines to the west. Brandon Swamp WMA is a large floodplain swamp with cedar ringed by red maple-black ash hardwoods. It is one of the State's larger wetland complexes. The red maple-northern white cedar swamp is mossy and hummocky, with hidden pools. Cedar is dense in the center. In the riparian areas, there are silver maple, willow, elm, basswood, and cottonwood. Former agricultural fields lay alongside Otter Creek. Approximately 1.5 miles of the Otter Creek streambank is included in this WMA.

Mosquitoes are dense in season. Access across the WMA is difficult, and by foot or boat only.

The old Silver Mines site, off Birch Hill Road, is a significant natural area. Early unsuccessful mining operations in the 1800s left many caverns or pits which now support diverse fern colonies. The area represents one of the prime natural areas in the northeast for fern habitat. Some of the numerous species it sustains are rare or endangered. Owned in part by The Nature Conservancy, it is an exceptional and valuable natural area both for preservation and education/research.

Agricultural and Forest Land

Agriculture and silviculture are not only important economic activities in Vermont, but also are the foundation of a highly valued rural lifestyle and a significant factor in the shaping of the landscape.

Land capable of supporting agricultural uses requires prime agricultural soils as well as moderate slopes, adequate parcel size, and access. There are few farms left in Brandon. The Vermont Land Trust holds conservation easements in several parts of Brandon that are used for various agricultural purposes. Brandon has several agritourism businesses, which feature animals as diverse as goats and alpacas.

Like agriculture, forestry is an important activity in the state and region. Lands capable of supporting forests are critical to the support of silviculture as well as providing wildlife habitat and places for recreation. Brandon has a considerable number of preserved forestlands.

Part of the Green Mountain National Forest is located in Brandon along Leicester Hollow Brook where it joins the Neshobe River. A portion of the forest north of Forest Dale was designated a Management Area in the 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Green Mountain National Forest and earned Congressional designation as the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area in 2007.

The Brandon Town Forest is located along Brandon's eastern border with Goshen and Chittenden and contains about 291.2 acres. The forest provides protected wildlife habitat, dispersed and relatively undeveloped recreational opportunities (such as hiking and hunting), and also serves to protect the watershed. A management plan was written for the forest which promotes this valuable resource's long-term sustainability and productivity.

The High Pond Nature Reserve, close to the western border with Sudbury, also contains protected woodlands and is now conserved by The Nature Conservancy.

Scenic and Aesthetic Resources

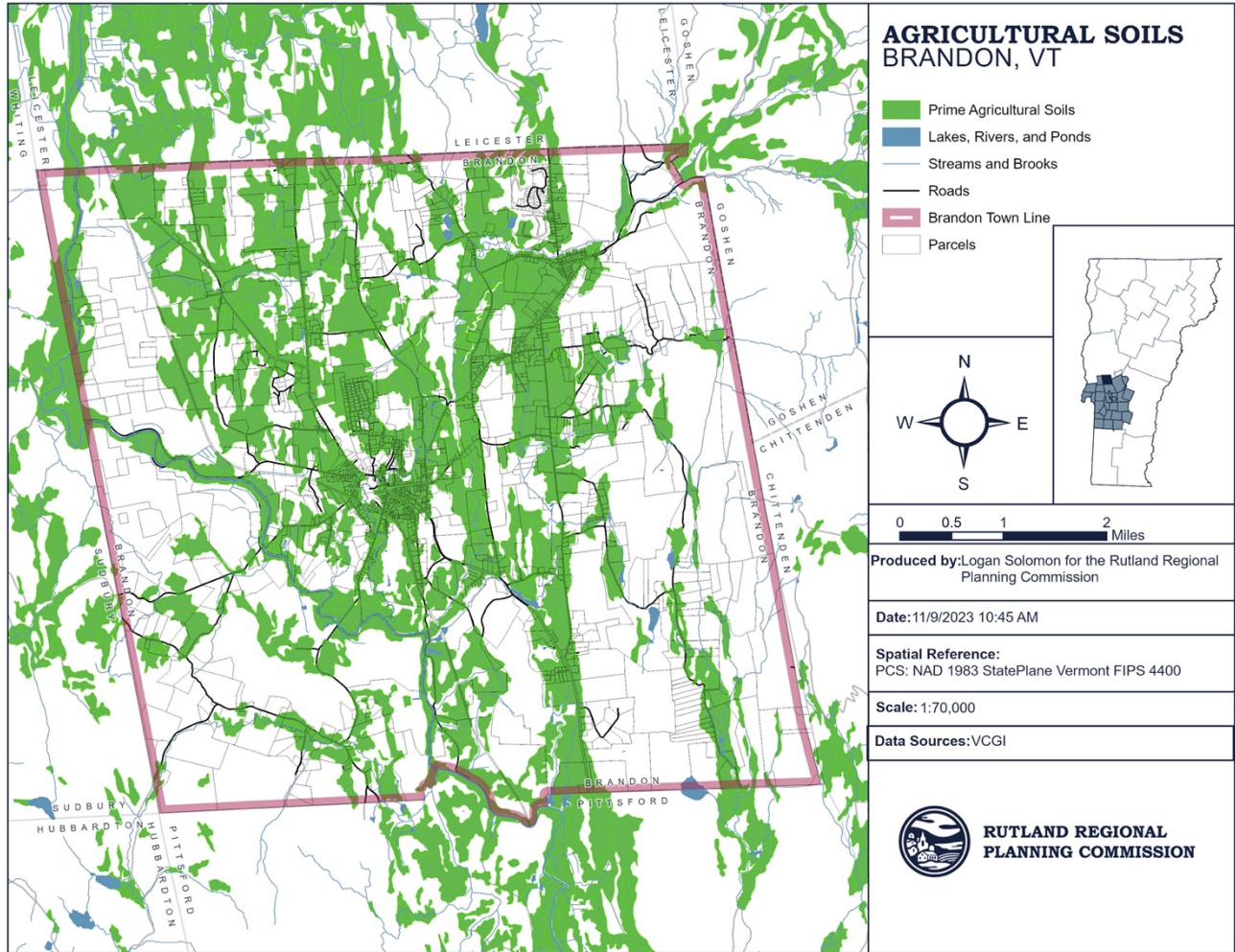
The Brandon “streetscape” is a combination of natural and human-made scenic resources and a significant source of community identity. Scenic resources, including farms, open pastures, woodlands, and streams, as well as historic homes, barns, inns, and towering church spires, have aesthetic, historical and economic value to the community. A number of elements, such as tree-lined streets, green space and parks, sidewalks, flower gardens, and park benches all add to the quality of life in Brandon.

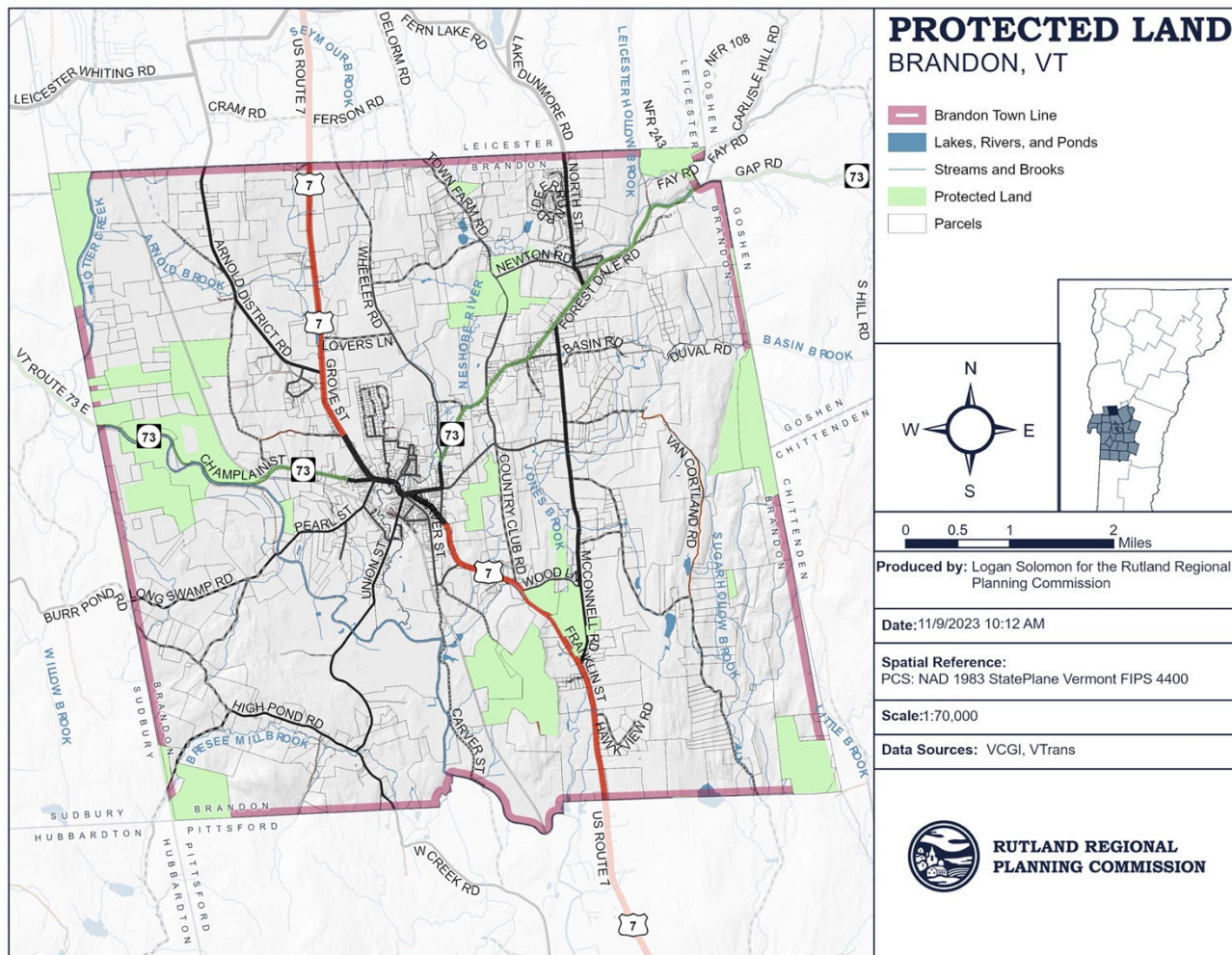
Conservation Areas

Conservation areas within Brandon are those lands that contain natural features or natural limitations that reduce the ability of the land to support extensive development.

Because of the severity of their limitations or natural significance, some conservation areas are more sensitive to disturbance than others. The areas identified as being most severely limited are: Scanlon Bog, Smalley Swamp, Arnold Brook Swamp, Long Swamp, and Brandon Swamp; the Otter Creek and Neshobe River floodways; habitat of flora or fauna which are designated as threatened or endangered; and all lands above 1500 feet in elevation. It is recommended that these areas remain as open land. Allowable uses should be: agriculture (with Acceptable Agricultural Practices at a minimum, and preferably with Best Management Practices); forestry (with Acceptable Management Practices); recreation uses which do not require the use of pesticides or herbicides; and non-structural public uses. New residential, commercial, and industrial uses, including solar arrays, are strongly discouraged in these areas.

Conservation areas outside of the above have constraints on development such as steep slopes, shallow soils, wetlands, prime agricultural soils, and floodplain outside the floodway. Some are constrained by distance from good roads or other poor access issues. The town’s policy is to orient growth toward areas that can best accommodate development (for example, with good access and few if any environmental limitations), and therefore these areas are envisioned to retain their open character. Environmentally sensitive, clustered development may be reviewed for conditional approval based upon its ability to incorporate the conservation design concepts noted below.





FLOOD RESILIENCE

24 V.S.A. §4382 (12)(A): A flood resilience plan that:

(i) identifies flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard areas, based on river corridor maps provided by the Secretary of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1428(a) or maps recommended by the Secretary, 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; and

(ii) recommends policies and strategies to protect the areas identified and designated under subdivision (12)(A)(i) of this subsection and to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and municipal investments.

(B) A flood resilience plan may reference an existing local hazard mitigation plan approved under 44 C.F.R. § 201.6.



Background

Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and major flooding events both before and after prompted the Legislature, Regional Planning Commission, and others to re-examine Vermont's relationship with water and how development can cause, increase, or decrease the effects of flooding and fluvial (river) erosion. General information regarding Brandon's watershed topography and response to flooding threats is contained in the Natural Resources section of this Plan, in addition to the following.

After much of Brandon's central downtown suffered severe flood damage from Tropical Storm Irene, the Brandon Select Board voted to fund the installation of a large overflow culvert for the Neshobe River, which runs through the heart of town. The culvert has demonstrated its success over four or five flood events, including a recent July 2023 flood when some surrounding towns were devastated by flood waters, but Brandon was spared.



In another perennial hotspot for flooding—Newton Road in Forest Dale—the town has been working with the State of Vermont, the federal government (FEMA), and landowners to reduce the risk of flood damage to homes and properties. During the July 2023 rain event, quick action and communication with state officials allowed town foreman to reinforce a riverbank in Forest Dale, protecting homes and town infrastructure.

Floodplains

A floodplain is the flat land adjacent to rivers and streams that is periodically inundated to varying depths during periods of high water. Small floods tend to be more frequent than large ones. The 100-year flood frequency is used as the standard for delineating flood hazard areas by the Federal Insurance Administration. The 100-year flood will have a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1927 flood is estimated to be a 100-year frequency and was used as a standard for mapping Rutland region floodplains. Extensive floodplains exist in Brandon in the central and western portion of the town and have been mapped by the federal government.

Response

Flood Hazard Areas are identified on Natural Resources Map 1 of 2.

The town also has revised and adopted a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (approved by FEMA in January 2023) which identifies all hazards, including specifically flood hazard areas and fluvial erosion hazard areas and includes recommended policies and plans, programs, projects, and activities, including mitigation and preparedness actions, and strategies to protect these areas. The town has adopted comprehensive floodplain management and fluvial erosion hazard policies. The most cost-effective way for the Town of Brandon to mitigate flood hazards is avoidance: limiting building and other investments in river corridors. In addition to preventing future flood losses to structures built in hazardous areas, this approach avoids constraining a river, allowing the stream or river, over time, to become more stable. Statute 24 V.S.A. §4424 specifically authorizes towns to adopt zoning for shorelines, floodplains, and other hazardous areas, including fluvial erosion zones.

Goal

Mitigate and eliminate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures, and

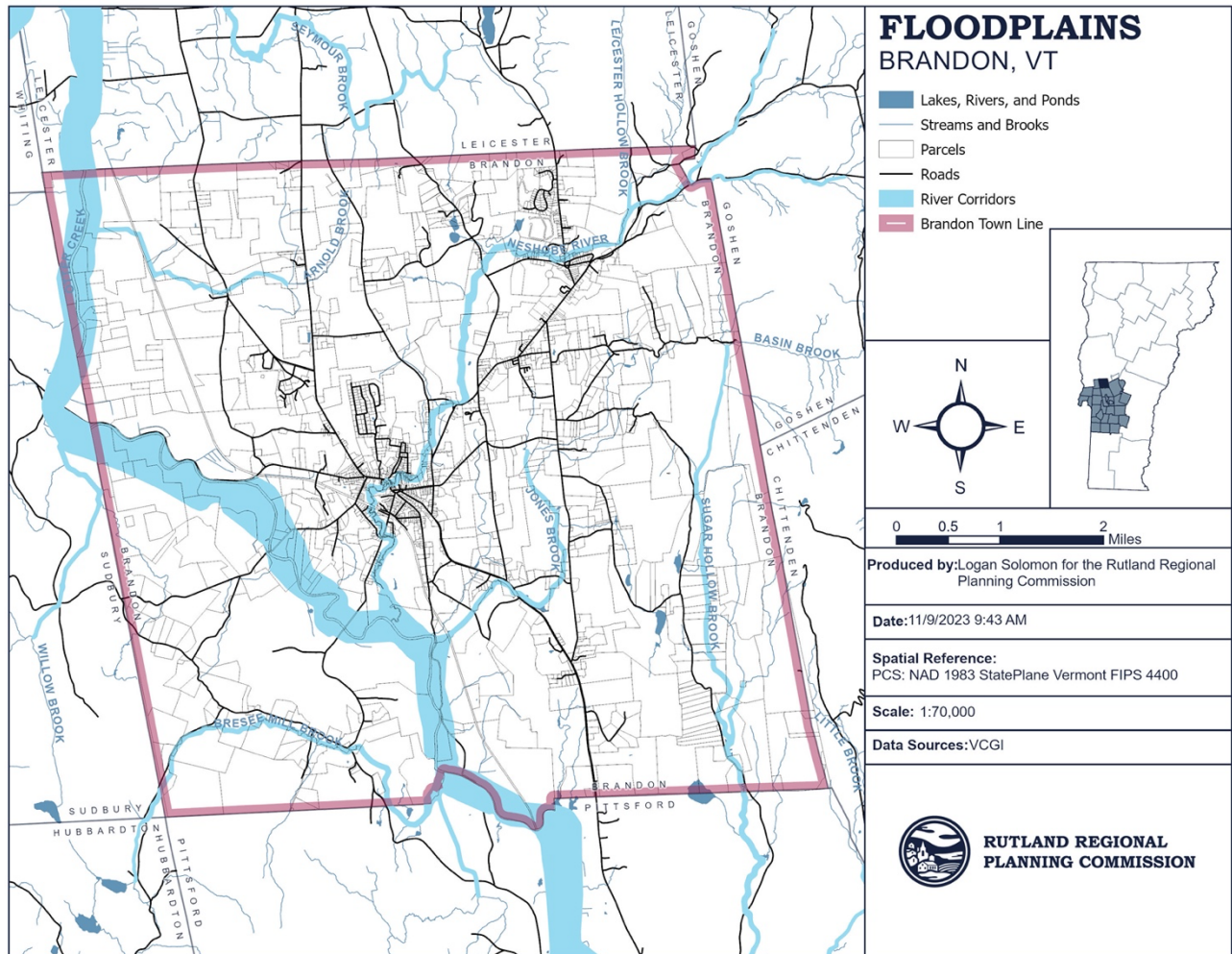
municipal investments posed by flooding and fluvial erosion.

Policies

- Minimize development in river corridors.
- Protect and restore river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and upland forested areas that attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion.
- Stormwater retention practices should be required of any new development that creates more than an additional one-quarter acre of impervious surface.
- New development in floodplains and river corridors (fluvial erosion hazard areas) identified on the Natural Resource and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area Maps shall not exacerbate flooding and fluvial erosion and is to be avoided.

Action steps

- Maintain, update, and implement the Local Emergency Operations Plan that encourages flood emergency preparedness, including Incident Command System trainings.
- Continue to comply with the National Flood Insurance Program and work to achieve Community Rating System classification.
- Maintain, update, and implement policies and recommendations in the Town of Brandon All-Hazard Mitigation Plan specific to flooding and fluvial erosion.
- The Select Board and Planning Commission shall work together to identify project recommendations from the Vermont Economic Resiliency Initiative (“VERI”) report to be implemented via amendments to the Town of Brandon Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Create guidelines for development in flood-prone areas.



TRANSPORTATION

24 V.S.A. § 4382(3): A transportation plan, consisting of a map and 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.

Introduction

A good transportation system, facilitating accessibility and the movement of people and goods within and through Brandon, contributes to a high quality of life. The transportation plan must be considered in terms of its environmental and social impacts and in conjunction with other elements of this Town Plan. Transportation is vital to economic development, as well as being a significant user of energy. Any planning associated with transportation should take into consideration and make efforts to facilitate economic development and minimize energy consumption.

Accomplishments

- Additional downtown parking and Park and Ride facilities through the voter-approved purchase of a lot near Town Hall, including charging stations for electric vehicles (4-vehicle capacity).
- Addition of buffered bicycle lanes as part of grant-funded Complete Streets upgrade to Park Street.
- Construction and installation of bicycle racks throughout downtown.
- Installation of lighted crosswalk signal on Center Street near crossing to Park Street businesses.
- Brandon has received a grant for a scoping study for a multi-use connecting path between downtown and Forest Dale.

Goal

To provide for 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.

Policies

- Plan for and encourage the development of transportation facilities designed for multiple modes of transportation.
- Improve traffic flow and parking capacity in Brandon while balancing other objectives such as maintaining downtown's historic character and vitality.
- Maintain and improve conditions of and access to existing transportation infrastructure.

- Support regional efforts to provide public transportation to all, for example, with bus routes and passenger rail service.

Action steps

- The Town will encourage use of the Municipal Park-and-Ride lot and Electric Vehicle Charging Stations located near Town Hall (behind Dunkin) through visible and appropriate signage.
- The Town will support the inclusion of bike paths and sidewalks in all new development to encourage multimodal transportation and require sidewalks and other pedestrian and bicycle friendly improvements as a condition of future planned residential and other major development.
- The Town will designate and maintain safe crosswalks, with appropriate signage and warning at all appropriate locations.
- The Town will continually assess the safety of existing crosswalks and need for additional crosswalks or signage.
- The Police Department will enforce speed and weight limits on all roads.
- The Planning Commission will promulgate regulatory and nonregulatory strategies to ensure that planning and development are coordinated with regard to the link between land use and transportation.
- New development along Class IV highways and unmaintained roadways should be discouraged unless there is a roadway improvement and maintenance plan with funding for the plan in place.
- The Town will seek to implement an in-town shuttle service.
- The Town will support the development of multiuse paths.
- Maintain and update road bridge and culvert inventory with emphasis on safety.
- Develop a way-finding system for parking and study the need and feasibility of additional parking areas.
- Erect new, energy-efficient Town Garage.
- Erect new, larger salt shed for Highway Department use.

Background

The evolution of Brandon's transportation system mirrors that of many towns in Vermont. Trails created by wildlife, Native Americans, and early settlers became roadways. Railroad service blossomed and faded, and 20th century society became heavily dependent on automobile and truck transportation.

Transportation is one of the highest areas of energy use in Vermont. In order to lessen the adverse impact of car and truck use, more choice and diversity in transportation modes is necessary. The highway and bridge system upon which society depends needs to be

maintained.

Highways and Roads

Highways constitute the most significant component of Brandon's existing transportation system, providing paths for public transportation and bicycles and pedestrians as well as automobiles and trucks. They are identified by their functional classification (major arterial, minor arterial, collector, local street, etc). US Route 7, a principal arterial, is the most heavily traveled road in Brandon. It serves the western side of the State for long distance through-traffic as well as local trips. Roads such as Arnold District Road and Country Club Road are considered to be local streets, providing access to individual parcels of land, although they also function as secondary through roads. Town highways are, by State legislation, also categorized by their administrative class. There are 71.14 miles of traveled roads (Classes I through III) in the Town of Brandon, 12.68 miles of which are State or US highways as of 2022. The function and administrative classification of roads should be a consideration when planning for growth.

Highway Traffic Volumes

The number of vehicles using a highway affects many decisions about the highway itself as well as land use planning for adjacent land. The most common way to describe traffic volumes is the Average Annual Daily Traffic or AADT. The AADT represents the total traffic volume passing a point of a highway for one year divided by the number of days in the year (total both directions). In Brandon, the highest volume is on US Route 7, especially in the village area (approximately 10,000+). Lower volumes occur on VT 73 (1,300 – 4,000 vehicles). Town highways, such as Arnold District Road and McConnell Road, show much lower volumes, close to 1,000 vehicles or less. In general, none of the volumes, with the exception of those on US Route 7 in the village, appear excessively high, and all are below design capacity.

Infrastructure Conditions

In general, paved town highways in Brandon are adequately maintained and the town maintains gravel roads to a satisfactory standard. However, several roads in Brandon need better maintenance. Overweight vehicle traffic, both on Route 7 and on town roads, is causing premature deterioration of road surfaces. Whenever gravel roads begin to carry heavy traffic, in the AADT range of 400 - 1,000 vehicles, they should be considered for paving. This should be done depending upon other factors, such as availability of funds, and provision of an adequate base and drainage.

The Town has a computerized, graphic information-based inventory of culverts. It is important for capital planning that this be maintained and kept up to date.

High Accident Locations (HAL)

Another way to identify deficiencies in the highway network is to examine accident records to ascertain locations where there appear to be more accidents than would normally be expected.

US Route 7 in the village was identified as a primary site, in addition to less frequent and severe locations on McConnell Road and Carver Street. Geometric features at those locations are often deficient and should be considered for improvement. The configuration of US Route 7, with its sharp turns, vertical curves, and limited sight distances, all contributed to accident rates, but those deficiencies were addressed in the Segment 6 upgrade discussed below. Since reconfiguration was complete in November 2019, crashes on Route 7 in the village are down.

Brandon US 7 Upgrade (Segment 6)

The 30-month Segment 6 upgrade entailed re-routing Route 7 around Central Park on the Carver Street and Union Street side, creating a parking area between the park and the line of businesses along the Brandon Inn portion of Park St. Central Park was extended to the Civil War monument, and a traffic light was installed at the intersection of Route 7, Carver, and Union Streets and a second traffic light was added at the intersection of Park Street and Route 7. Utility lines were moved underground, all sidewalks were replaced, and new trees and shrubbery were planted throughout. The project cost \$20.8 million, with the Federal Highway Administration funding 80 percent, VTrans funding 15 percent, and the town of Brandon contributing 5 percent of the cost. It was the largest municipally managed road project in Vermont history.

Bridges

The ownership of bridges determines responsibility for their maintenance. Bridges with spans of 20 feet or more are generally eligible for federal support, while bridges or culverts with spans greater than six feet but less than 20 feet are generally eligible for state funding. Brandon has a total of 22 bridges and is responsible for the maintenance of 13 (see chart). Bridge conditions are scored on a scale of 0-9 scale, but Vermont uses only the scale from 3-8 for bridges open to traffic. The LOWEST rated component is the bridge's OVERALL score. 3 or 4 is rated poor; 5 or 6 is rated fair; 7 or 8 is rated good.

Bridge #	Location	Low Component	Overall Condition	Last Inspected
5	Union Street (Neshobe River)	6	Fair	27 Oct 2021
8	North Street by Post Office	6	Fair	14 June 2022
9	Pearl Street over Railroad	8	Good	27 Oct 2021
10	Florence Road at Union St	8	Good	27 Oct 2021
11	Union Street (Otter Creek)	7	Good	27 Oct 2021
12	Sanderson covered bridge	7	Good	27 Oct 2021
21	Stone Mill Dam Road	7	Good	22 Oct 2021
22	Churchill Road	8	Good	22 Oct 2021
23	Wheeler Road	5	Fair	22 Oct 2021
24	Town Farm Road	6	Fair	27 Oct 2021
25	Lower Carver Street	6	Fair	27 Oct 2021
113A	Overflow Relief Structure Downtown	8	Good	1 Dec 2020
114	Center Street at Town Office	8	Good	15 May 2023

Parking

Additional parking areas created by the reconfiguration of Route 7, municipal parking added behind the Center Street stores, as well as the voter-approved purchase of a lot near Town Hall, mean an increased number of available spaces in the downtown area. Nevertheless, the perception of a lack of sufficient and convenient parking areas remains high on the list of citizen complaints. As the town works to encourage greater economic development and affordable housing, parking requirements contained in zoning regulations should be aligned to reasonable expectations and necessity for availability of parking downtown and elsewhere, but the Town should also take every opportunity to identify and promote the availability of ample existing parking.

Park and Ride

Brandon's first municipal Park & Ride was established at Estabrook Field in 2008. A new Park & Ride was opened in downtown Brandon in 2022, and the Estabrook facility was discontinued. The downtown facility serves as the pick-up/drop-off location for Tri-Valley Transit and Marble Valley Regional Transit. Two electric vehicle charging stations, with capacity for four vehicles at a time are located at the downtown Park & Ride, along with racks to secure bicycles.

Development of New Roads

No new town highways are expected to be adopted in the near future. In addition, the current road infrastructure adequately serves Brandon's residential and commercial needs.

Access Management

Almost all roads serve two important functions: the provision of access to adjacent land, and as travel-ways for through-traffic going past the land adjacent to the road. The two functions conflict because the turning movements necessary to access adjacent land impede through-traffic, and through-traffic reduces the ability of local traffic to get on and off the roadway.

The goal of access management is to achieve a safe and efficient flow of traffic along a roadway while preserving access to abutting properties. When carried out properly, access management balances mobility and access. In Vermont, access design standards and regulations are ideally a cooperative effort between local zoning and planning officials and the state's Agency of Transportation for State roads. Control and regulation of the spacing and design of driveways and streets, medians and median openings, and traffic signals are the primary means by which access management is carried out.

In Brandon, the need for access management is most clearly visible along US Route 7 as it carries the heaviest volumes of traffic. This is particularly important in the vicinity of intersections such as McConnell Road where a variety of uses exist, and therefore curb cuts have been developed. Consolidation of access points is needed and where appropriate,

measures should also be designed to improve pedestrian access.

Other Transportation Modes

Although highways and personal automobiles dominate the local transportation network, other modes of transportation are increasingly important in providing access to the people of Brandon.

Air

Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport is located south of Rutland in North Clarendon, 23 miles south of Brandon. It is one of the largest state-owned airports in Vermont and the only state-owned airport with scheduled passenger service. The airport has two runways (1-19 and 13-31) and offers three daily flights to Boston. There are also major commercial passenger and cargo services available at Burlington International Airport in Vermont, Albany International Airport in New York, and Manchester Airport in New Hampshire.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian travel are critical elements in creating a balanced and sustainable transportation system. Health, safety, and energy conservation are just a few of the benefits of these alternative means of transportation. Brandon's schools participate in the Safe Routes to School Program, which educates and encourages walking and biking to school.

Before 2019, there were no designated bike paths or bike lanes in Brandon. As part of the repaving of Park Street in 2019, the town added bike lanes with traffic buffer zones on the stretch of Park Street between Route 7 and Marble Street. Bike paths have been proposed to connect Otter Valley Union High School and Neshobe School but have yet to be constructed. Such a path should be part of future transportation planning. All significant future development should require bike lanes within the development which connect to existing transportation infrastructure. Brandon has received a grant for a scoping study for a multi-use connecting path between downtown and Forest Dale.

The most heavily used pedestrian area is downtown Brandon. Safe pedestrian routes are needed between neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas, and community centers. Existing sidewalks should be connected and upgraded, and additional sidewalks should be promoted. Visibility at all crosswalks should be maintained. All significant future development should require sidewalks and appropriate crosswalks with curb cuts for handicap accessibility. This type of infrastructure should be created as a requirement of new planned residential developments.

Public Transportation

Public and private transit services are an important component of the transportation system. Not only does public transportation decrease the number of vehicles on highways, but it also provides an essential service to the elderly, disabled and handicapped. The Marble Valley Regional Transit

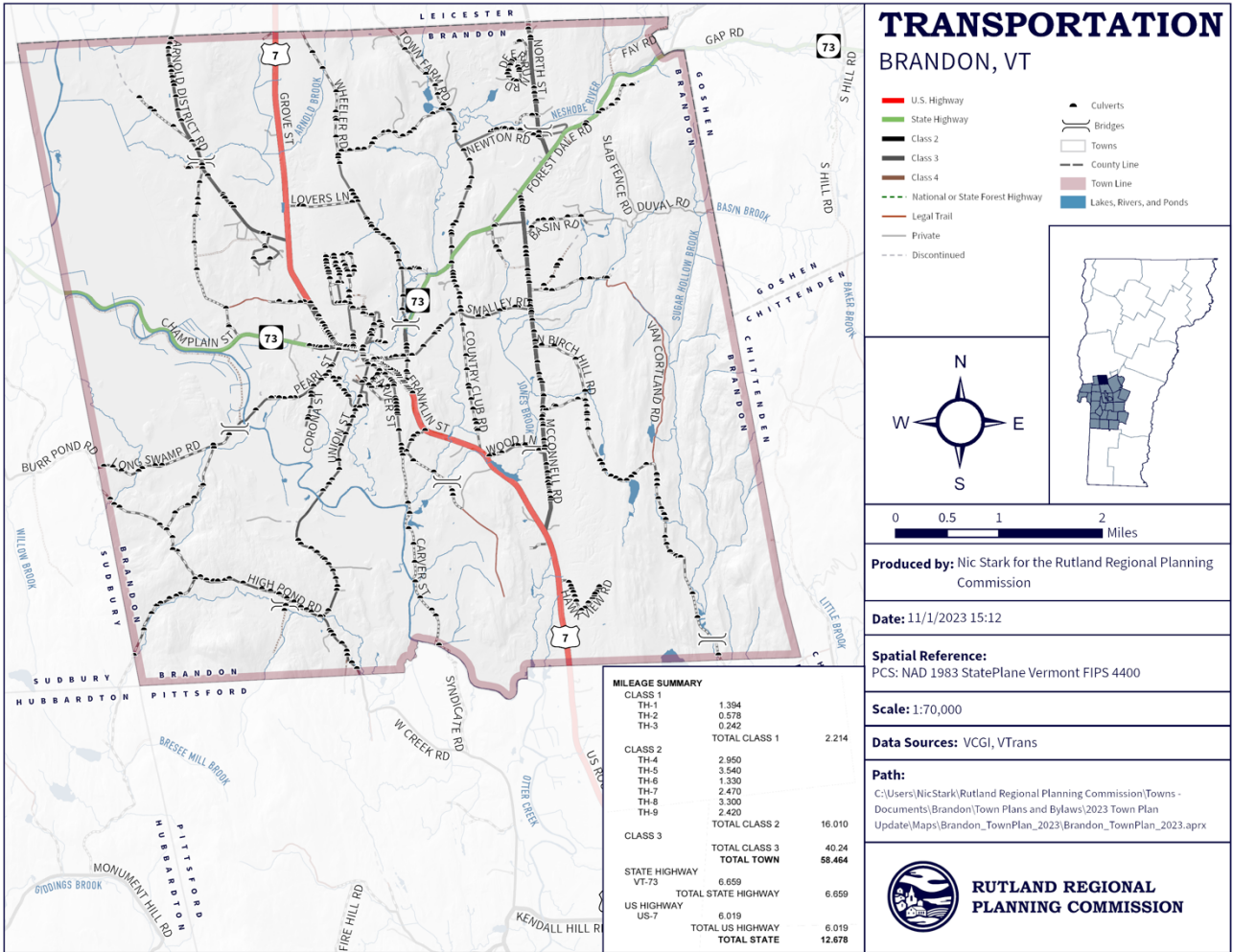
District (MVRTD or, “The Bus”) in the Rutland region in conjunction with Addison County Transit from Middlebury currently provides fixed-route service to Brandon from the north and south. The Town directly participates with MVRTD and human service agencies in the public transportation program, assuring that bus and paratransit service is provided for the elderly, disabled, and all residents. Efforts to coordinate and expand transit service, especially to citizens who are dependent on public transit, should continue to be supported.

Rail

An active rail line, operated by the Vermont Railway, runs parallel with US Route 7 through Brandon on the west side. Both freight and Amtrak passenger rail service (the Ethan Allen, connecting Burlington to New York City) use the line.

Impact of Regional Transportation Element

The transportation element of the Rutland Regional Plan influences and is influenced by local transportation decisions. In addition, State funding and projects within the town of Brandon are prioritized on regional and statewide levels. The Town’s continued participation in development of the regional transportation plan and priorities is very important.



FUTURE LAND USE

24 V.S.A. § 4382(2): A land use plan:

(A) consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land uses, indicating those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture (using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8), residence, commerce, industry, public, and semi-public uses and open spaces reserved for flood plain, wetland protection, or other conservation purposes;

(B) setting 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 service; and

(C) identifying those areas, if any, proposed for designation under chapter 76A of this title, together with, for each area proposed for designation, an explanation of how the designation would further the plan's goals and the goals of section 4302 of this title, and how the area meets the requirements for the type of designation to be sought;

Introduction

The Town of Brandon must balance preservation of its community and character and conservation of its resources with support of opportunities for economic growth in order to sustain the town's citizens and services. This Plan provides guidance for future growth and development. Brandon encourages planned growth and concentrated development in those areas of the town which provide for higher density, and which can develop the necessary infrastructure to support development more readily than other sections of town. This policy is consistent with the direction provided in Vermont's planning laws (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117). Future growth should be concentrated in existing areas of development; as well as being oriented toward infill areas, making maximum use of existing infrastructure.

Goal

To encourage strategic growth and economic development while protecting existing natural, scenic, and historical resources.

Policies

- Recognize the town's cultural resources and historic settlement pattern as a significant, non-renewable resource that creates a sense of place and community wellbeing.
- Maintain a land use pattern of relatively densely settled villages and clustered development radiating from the town center which may be efficiently served by community facilities and services. Residential development should be clustered using smaller lots for development in order to maintain a range of other open space uses.
- Promote conservation design by organizing development outside the villages around the characteristics of the landscape.
- Protect the integrity of the community and existing neighborhoods by encouraging the preservation and renovation of existing housing stock.

- Preserve and revitalize existing historic streetscapes.
- Identify, protect, and preserve the valuable natural areas within Brandon. Support and ensure the long-term protection of natural resources.
- Recognize the links between land use, energy consumption, and transportation and coordinate their planning and development.

Action steps

- Update the Brandon Land Use Ordinances (BLUO) to conform with development goals and priorities, and to bring into compliance with the Vermont HOMES Act of 2023 (Act 47).
- Consider nature of permitted development on Route 7 approaches to Brandon.
- Require future development to include the cost (borne by the developer) of infrastructure and streetlights.
- Develop a vision for future development of Forest Dale.
- Encourage greater infill development within Park Village.
- Continue incentives to promote reuse of existing buildings, through land use regulation, permitting, and tax incentives such as tax stabilization.
- Continue revitalization of downtown Brandon.
- Maintain improvements to the visual appearance of downtown that accommodate both the historical and modern needs of the village area.
- With reference to the Vermont Economic Resiliency Initiative report and other sections of this Plan, the Planning Commission and Select Board, in consultation with appropriate town staff, will develop and implement a capital budget plan.
- Consider creating aquifer overlay district for zoning to allow for greater protection of water sources.

Existing Development

The Town of Brandon contains a distinct, historic downtown or ‘village’ area that straddles the Neshobe River. In or adjacent to the Designated Downtown, there are four greens, several churches, municipal buildings, a variety of stores, offices, restaurants, and several inns. Another long-standing cluster of development exists northeast of downtown in Forest Dale. There, businesses, the town's elementary school, two churches, the Senior Citizen’s Center, a golf course, and a general store are interspersed amidst residential development, much of which is historic. Just northwest of the downtown is Park Village, a campus of mixed business and residential uses. It is adjacent to the Industrial Park. These clusters of development are surrounded by generally open, rural, and forested land with residential and non-residential uses.

Brandon's current land use districts include Aquifer, Central Business, High Density Multi-Use, Neighborhood Residential, and Rural Development. For zoning purposes, the boundaries of each District are indicated on the official Land Use District Map posted in the Brandon Town Offices. Full explanations and requirements of each district are outlined in the Brandon Land

Use Ordinance.

The Aquifer District encompasses those lands that provide the water sources and storage for wells maintained by municipal fire districts.

The Central Business District serves as the commercial center of the Town by providing a wide variety of small shops and commercial uses within convenient walking distance. This historic core of the village, along US Route 7, is an area labeled the Central Business District. It is recommended that the current mix of retail shops, public facilities, and institutions (for example, town offices and churches), offices and some residential uses on upper levels, be continued and supported. Appropriate reuse of vacant or underused existing structures is the preferred means by which new growth should be accommodated and is strongly encouraged. New infill development should respect the historic character and function of the area. Efforts to enhance the pedestrian-friendly character are encouraged. The existing density should be maintained or slightly increased in order to support the vitality of the Central Business District.

Neighborhood Residential Districts are those set aside primarily for residential and other uses that are compatible with and which contribute to the viability of such neighborhoods. They surround the village core, generally along the roads which radiate from the center of town such as Park, Union, Pearl, Seminary, Carver and Prospect Streets. They are served by public water and sewer and have good access for emergency services. Non-residential uses such as corner stores and small offices that can rely primarily on foot traffic rather than generating new traffic and parking needs may be allowed subject to public review. Infill development and non-residential uses should support the residential character of these areas.

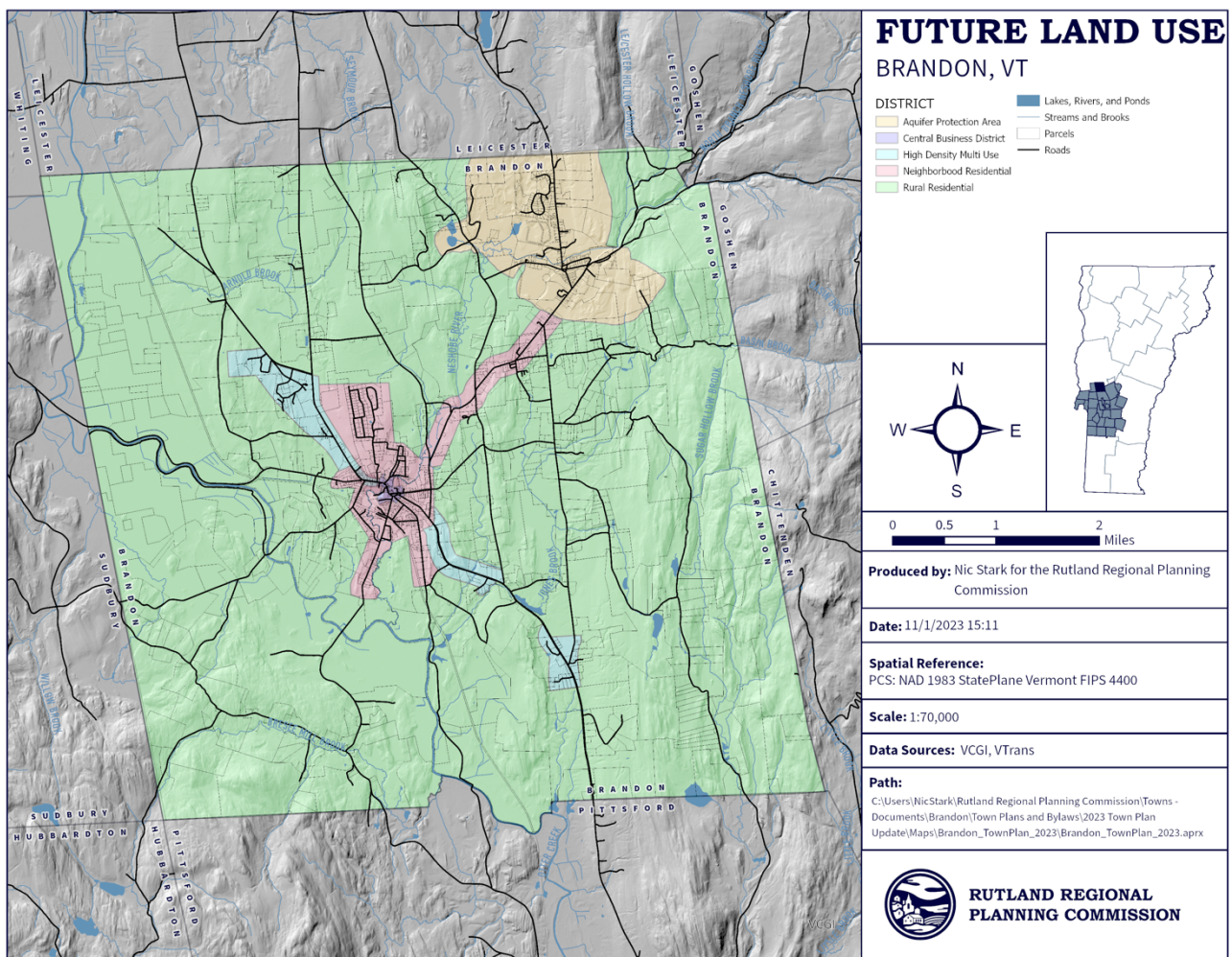
High Density Multi-Use Districts (HDMU) are designated for concentrated mixed use development. Uses that require a large amount of space or those that could compromise the viability of allowed development are either prohibited or subject to the conditional use process. HDMUs are areas that are served by public water and sewer and also have direct access to arterial or major collector streets. They are primarily located outside but connected to the village, along Grove Street and Forest Dale Road/VT 73. There are six smaller areas in the village: off Union Street in the vicinity of the railroad tracks, on the west side of Carver Street just east of the industrial area, in the general vicinity of the Hannaford supermarket, along Conant Square just west of Prospect Street and between Seminary Street and the river northeast of the Town Hall. In these areas, a variety of residential, commercial, agricultural, recreational, and public uses are allowed. Design measures to assure peaceful coexistence between differing uses should be employed; these should include landscaping, access consolidation, building design details, noise and lighting management and other methods to promote compatibility.

Rural Development Districts include those lands that have been determined to be unsuitable for extensive development because of their ecological or topographical characteristics, the unavailability or inadequacy of public infrastructure, or reduced growth planning considerations.

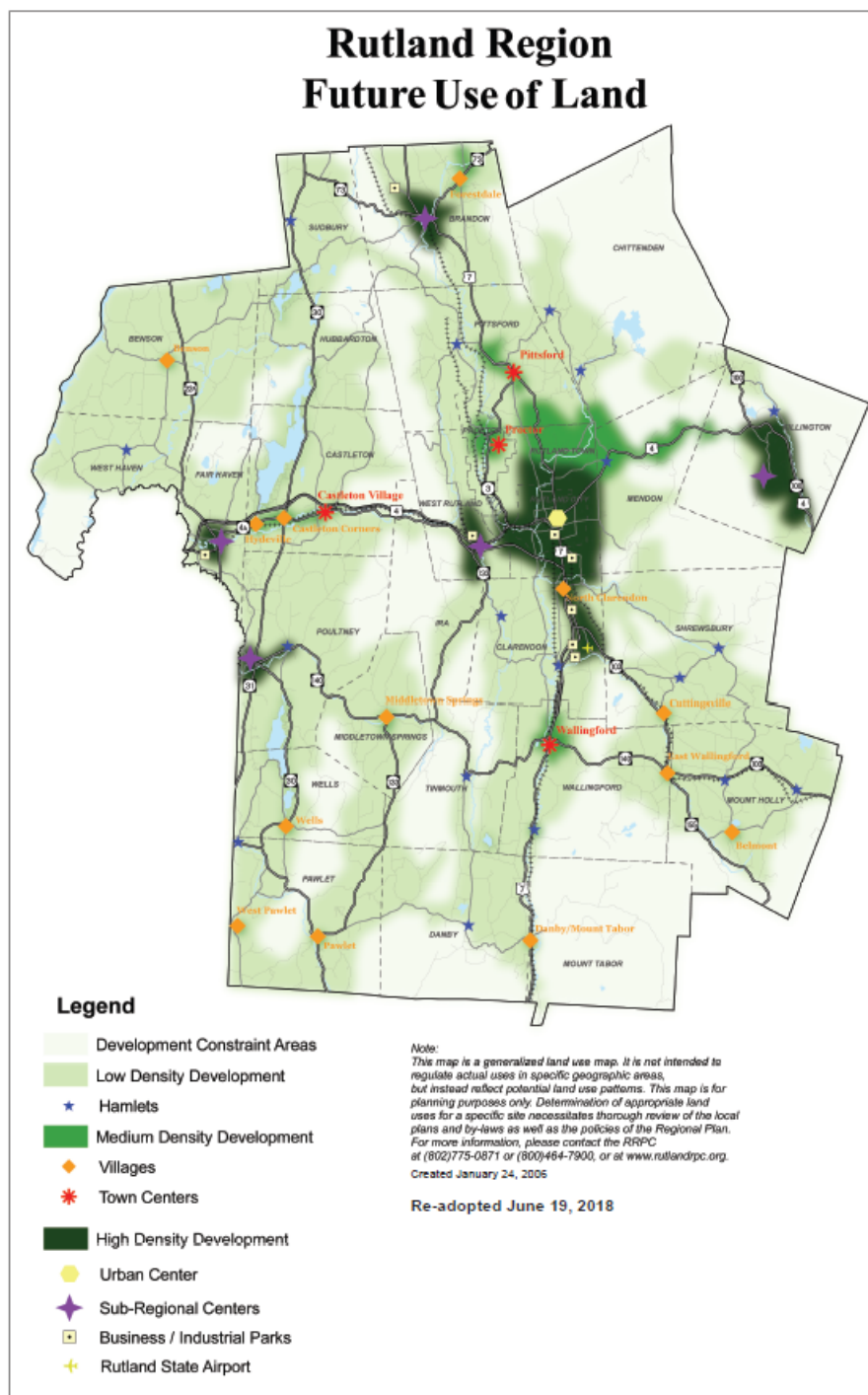
Future Development

To be consistent with the goals outlined in this Plan, future growth shall be guided into already developed areas as much as possible. Brandon has a Downtown Designation from the State of Vermont. The designation is up for renewal in 2025 and it is the intent of the town to actively seek and maintain this designation. Working together with residents, the town should seek a Village Designation under 24 V.S.A. § 4404 for Forest Dale. Village Designations are a means for building on such existing patterns of development.

Land that contains natural constraints on development (steep slopes, floodplain, aquifers, etc.) shall not be developed unless adverse impacts can be adequately prevented or mitigated. In developed areas, the appropriate reuse of existing buildings is the preferred method of accommodating new uses. Redevelopment may be appropriate where existing structures are unsound or unsuitable. If new construction is proposed, it shall be of a location, scale, site plan, and design that complements and enhances existing, conforming development. The Future Land Use Map shall be a blueprint of future growth in Brandon.



Future Land Use map adopted in the Rutland Regional Plan (2018)



CONSISTENCY WITH ADJACENT TOWN PLANS

24 V.S.A. § 4382 (8): A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title;

Brandon's future land use plan is consistent with plans developed by adjacent communities in the following ways:

To the west, the Town of Sudbury's land use plan acknowledges the presence of existing environmental conditions (i.e. extensive floodplain and wetlands in the vicinity of the Brandon/Sudbury boundary) and therefore also recommends low density residential and/or conservation uses.

To the North, the plan for the Town of Leicester (in Addison County) is similar to Brandon's in that it generally recommends conservation lands in the far eastern and western portions of the town and low density residential and/or agricultural uses in the central part. Leicester's town plan map also designates both sides of US Route 7 as planned for residential, agricultural, and commercial uses.

The Town of Goshen, to the northeast (in Addison County), plans forest and conservation uses in the area adjacent to Brandon.

Chittenden, to the southeast, is currently considering adoption of a new town plan.

To the south, the Town of Pittsford recommends conservation uses in the western and eastern portions of the town and rural uses in the central portion.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLEMENTATION

A number of themes emerge when considering the various action steps made in this Plan. In several instances, action steps require infrastructure (sidewalks, traffic lights, bike paths) as a condition of new construction. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings is another theme that appeared in several functional areas (for example, as a historic preservation strategy, as an economic development strategy, and as a future land use recommendation). Protection of natural assets (aquifers, forest management, wildlife habitats, and conservation areas) is a priority in terms of the Town's cultural, recreation and natural resources. Clustered housing development is yet another common theme in several functional areas. In terms of housing and future land use, for example, clustered housing development is an efficient way to protect open spaces, increase densities in existing developed areas and promote the adaptation and reuse of existing homes and structures.

Finally, greater emphasis on the connection between land use and transportation is a priority in several areas. Cited in the energy, economic development, transportation and future land use sections, stronger linkages between land use and transportation will facilitate greater density and energy efficiency in developed areas, while protecting conservation lands and natural assets. These reoccurring themes, combined with the action steps made throughout the Plan, are a template for the future.

Implementation of the Plan will require both public and private sector involvement and cooperation. Analysis of existing ordinances for their consistency with the goals and Policies in this Plan is the next step, followed by modification of any regulation that may need adjustment. The Select Board may choose to develop a workplan outlining the time frame during which specific actions will be carried out.

A well-defined work plan will operationalize the recommendations of this Town Plan. Public participation will ensure success.