

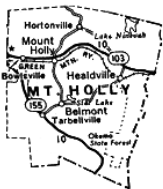
What is the purpose of the town plan?

The town plan is the tool municipalities use to set broad goals and objectives for the community, and to guide land use, growth and development. More importantly, the town plan is an opportunity to express community vision and values and to provide a tangible representation of what a community wants to look like in the future.

The town plan is one of the most important documents a community can develop.

"The local comprehensive plan is not simply a rhetorical expression of a community's desires. It is instead a document that describes public policies a local government actually intends to carry out. If it were otherwise, why bother to complete and adopt one?"

Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook, 2002 Edition, American Planning Association



The town plan is both a research document and a guide that helps give direction to local leaders, the business community, and private citizens. It helps them to make informed decisions about a broad range of issues and to create the type of community that they envision. The town plan is also the key to implementing municipal regulations and is the basis for decision making on a local and regional level. The best town plans are developed through a collaborative and inclusive community participation process, which ensures that the plan not only demonstrates the local needs in a clear and concise manner, but also provides a comprehensive representation of the goals and desires of the community as a whole.

Four important purposes of the town plan:

- It allows towns to participate in certain state programs and receive grant contributions and external funding for municipal projects
- It supports land use controls;
- It allows the town to participate in Act 250 permit processes; and,
- It provides a database of pertinent information about the town and inventories of town resources.

What is the purpose of the town plan? (continued)

The town plan must contain ten specific “elements.”

Ten elements of the town plan:

1. statement of objectives, policies and programs
2. land use plan
3. transportation plan
4. utility and facility plan
5. policies on preservation of resources
6. educational facilities plan
7. recommended implementation program
8. statement of how the plan relates to neighbors and region
9. energy plan
10. housing element

The town plan must contain ten specific sections, or "elements," which encompass various aspects of land use issues such as transportation and housing. All ten elements, which are established in 24 V.S.A. § 4382(a) of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (the Act), must be included for the plan to meet the requirements of the Act and to be considered a legal document. Otherwise, the town would not be able to use the plan in Act 250 or as a basis for local zoning. The planning commission is responsible for preparing and distributing the town plan, for holding public meetings about the plan, and submitting it to the Selectboard for adoption.

Meaningful plans are those that become the basis for implementing decisions.

A community needs to include objectives and policies that are more detailed than the general goals. Thus, the basic elements of town plans often include three distinct sub-elements:

Goals - the general, long-term aims of the community, such as preserving rural character

Objectives - more specific sub-elements of goals, usually providing measurable, mid-range strategies.

Policies - operational actions, usually with the purpose of relatively short-term implementation of the goals and objectives.

How can I get more information?

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Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30am - 4:00pm

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