

Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee Agenda
January 5, 2023; 7:00 PM
Council Chambers

1. Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Information Regarding Committee Charge and Work Completed
4. Information on Consultant
5. Information and Action on Proposed Path Forward
6. Discussion and Action on 2008 Executive Summary (See Attached Drafts)
7. Discussion on 2023 Key Policy Areas (See Notes)
8. Discussion and Action on Future Workshops
9. Discussion and Action on Committee Leadership
10. Future Meetings:
 - February 2, 2023
 - March 2, 2023

If Joining Through Web Access: Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81477794133?pwd=N1ZYM3U3S090bkJ3czRwTXNxYnhUQT09>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2008 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

To find where you are going, you must know where you are.

--- John Steinbeck

The State of Maine's Growth Management Act (GMA), M.R.S. Title 30-A, Chapter 187, is specific in what is required from a comprehensive plan:

1. Inventory and analysis addressing state goals and issues of regional or local significance that the municipality considers important.
2. Policies that relate the findings contained in the inventory and analysis section to the state's goals.
3. Implementation strategy with a timetable ensuring that the goals are met.
4. Regional coordination program.

Interestingly, in order for a comprehensive plan update to receive a finding of consistency from the State, a municipality is not required to report on, or even review, the status of efforts made to implement the existing comprehensive plan. The Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee ("Steering Committee") began their work in August 2019 with the belief that, as referenced in the above quote from the Nobel Prize winning American author John Steinbeck, to plan for the future of the Town of Brunswick an understanding of its past is necessary. In order to update the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update ("2008 Plan") the first step is to review the document to identify its successes and failures so that the lessons learned from previous experiences can be applied to the future.

Although adopted by the Town Council in 2008, work on the document began in 2003. Little did anyone know in 2003 that the next five (5) to six (6) years would be some of the most transformative in the lengthy history of the Town. During this time period, the Town faced two (2) significant economic setbacks so severe they may have been disastrous to a less resilient community. As a result of the United States Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission process, it was announced in 2005 that Brunswick Naval Air Station (BNAS), now referred to as Brunswick Landing, was to be closed by 2011. Acting quickly, the Brunswick Local Redevelopment Authority (BLRA) took the lead to produce a BNAS Reuse Master Plan in December 2007. Second, in 2007 the nation and Brunswick would begin to experience the worst economic downturn, now referred to as the Great Recession, since the Great Depression, nearly 80 years prior. Although their full impact would not be felt until after the adoption of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update ("2008 Plan"), the simultaneous experience of the BNAS closure and Great Recession would not appear to be conducive to optimistic long-term planning for the Town.

Despite the precarious economic situation at the time, the 2008 Plan can be described as confident and ambitious. Incorporating the BNAS Reuse Master Plan into the 2008 Plan, the Town expressed a strong belief that the BNAS property would be reintegrated into the fabric of the community and would ultimately be a catalyst for long-term economic growth. At a time when future housing needs were cloudy

at best, the 2008 Plan was confident in a recovery of the housing market as it took a strong position in regards to the Town's desired pattern of development by recommending higher density development in some part of the Growth Area and limiting the rate of residential development allowed in the Rural Area. Furthermore, the 2008 Plan benefitted from the vision of other long-range planning documents that had been developed since the last comprehensive plan update in 1993. These documents included the 1997 Downtown Master Development Plan, 1998 Cook's Corner Master Plan, 2001 Downtown Brunswick Parking Study, 2003 Brunswick Housing Study, 2003 Rural Brunswick Smart Growth Study, 2004 Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan, and 2005 Transportation Study.

Demonstrating its ambitious scope, the 2008 Plan established eight (8) key policy areas covering a broad spectrum of topics, refined the Town's land use policies in regards to growth management (which would later be used as a basis for the 2017 Zoning Ordinance Rewrite and Map Amendment), and provided an implementation and regional coordination strategy. The bulk of the 2008 Plan, and this analysis, focuses on the key policy areas. Each key policy area identified a vision, proposed objectives and actions necessary to achieve the objectives, and performance targets by which to evaluate progress. Specifically, the key policy areas are:

1. Maintain and financially support a quality public education system.
2. Require long range planning for municipal facilities including replacement and expansion.
3. Promote the desired Growth/Rural pattern of development.
4. Support the development and maintenance of infrastructure that promotes livable neighborhoods and the desired pattern of residential and commercial growth.
5. Encourage a diversity of housing types in the designated Growth Area and facilitate preservation and development of affordable and workforce housing.
6. Provide clear mechanisms and incentives to protect significant open space and natural resources.
7. Promote an economically viable, attractive downtown.
8. Promote a diverse and healthy local economy.

Quantitative Analysis:

[INSERT STATISTICS AND PIE CHARTS]

Qualitative Analysis:

As the central focus of the first three (3) Steering Committee meetings, the 2008 Plan is generally viewed as a helpful document that helped guide the Town through a difficult period, but overall it could have been improved through the following:

1. Frequent Reviews and Updates

The 2008 Plan does not require any type of annual or even biennial reporting to the Town Council in regards to the progress made toward meeting established goals. Periodic updates to inventories and other data such as housing data, economic data, and demographics are not required. The Town Council and other Town boards and commissions are generally unaware of the status of the 2008 Plan's objectives and action items. Also, the 2008 Plan is not always thoroughly reviewed in conjunction with the Town's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Furthermore, due to the length of time between updates and the significant economic, environmental, and technological changes that have occurred in just twelve (12) years, the 2008 Plan is outdated and fails to address issues such as: an aging population; housing types such as "tiny houses," accessory dwelling units and homeless shelters; "sharing economy" uses such as short-term rentals; electric vehicles, Town-wide broadband, sustainability; and climate change.

Regularly scheduled reviews and updates to the new Comprehensive Plan Update would prevent the document from becoming outdated and would reduce the amount of work needed for the next update. Reviewing the new Comprehensive Plan Update annually during the CIP development process would also ensure a close alignment between identified Town goals and project funding.

2. Refined Implementation Strategy

The implementation timeline only uses general terms such as short-, mid-, and long-term goals without identifying what those terms mean in regards to the number of years associated with the goal's completion. Accountability for implementing the 2008 Plan was identified only by the Town board or committee that was most closely associated with the topic. For example, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was tasked with the action item, "continue implementing the improvements listed in the 2004 Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan relating to Downtown, particularly regarding crosswalks and sidewalks, on a regular basis." Although most action items are clear in direction, many action items were not implemented because the responsible boards and committee were simply unaware of their responsibility (see Item 1 above), do not have the resources to implement an action item, or there was a mismatch between the action item and the responsible board and committee. For example, the Planning Board was identified as the responsible party for the installation of benches, information kiosks, trash receptacles, and public toilets when they do not have jurisdiction over such improvements.

A stronger implementation strategy in the new Comprehensive Plan Update would provide an estimate for action item completion in months and/or years versus vaguely defined periods, go beyond assigning boards and committees primary responsibility and identify relevant Town departments and staff to be accountable for implementation of action items, and provide a rough estimate as to potential costs of action items to ensure their feasibility.

3. Recognition of Interrelated Topics

There was no effort made to synthesize the common elements within each policy area. The document contains several redundant action items that did not reference the other policy areas and objectives to which they were related. The new Comprehensive Plan Update should acknowledge the interrelatedness of many of the issues facing the community. For example, the Town Council recently approved a Climate Emergency Resolution. This climate emergency is the result of a myriad of policy decisions covering economics, energy, land use planning, and transportation.

Identifying how community issues can be addressed more holistically would be a strength of the new Comprehensive Plan Update.

4. Sharper Focus and Stronger Connections Between Policy Areas and Land Use / Growth Management

The 2008 Plan is overly broad at times and too narrowly focused at other times. For example, the inclusion of School Department and School Board academic, equity, and programming goals was found to be problematic in that they have no discernable relation to land use issues or growth management. Such topics are more appropriately discussed in the School Department's strategic planning documents, but topics such as growth projections and facilities planning are appropriate for the new Comprehensive Plan Update. Finally, growth projections and facilities planning are important not just for the Brunswick School Department, but also for other educational institutions such as Bowdoin College and Southern Maine Community College. The needs of these institutions should be considered for incorporation into the new Comprehensive Plan Update.

Another example of the 2008 Plan focusing too broadly is the frequent grouping of open space, natural resources, outdoor recreation, and wildlife habitat as if they were a singular topic. Each topic is distinctly unique and would best be defined and reviewed individually in the new Comprehensive Plan Update.

On the other hand, infrastructure was conceived of narrowly as it primarily referenced only sewer, stormwater, and water service. Topics such as roads, sidewalks, and street lighting were given little, if any, consideration within the document. Also, there was minimal reference to the potential environmental impact of such infrastructure and no guidance for, "green infrastructure." Other infrastructure-related issues such as traffic and public transportation were given minimal attention in the 2008 Plan.

Consideration of the Town, Brunswick Sewer District, and Brunswick-Topsham Water District's financial planning and capacity should be included in infrastructure-related action items within the new Comprehensive Plan Update. Similar to Item 3, a focus on how recommendations are interrelated, particularly to land use and growth management, would produce clear and concise action items in the new Comprehensive Plan Update.

5. Research-Based Quantitative Goals

Many action items and performance targets are tied to quantitative goals that are convenient for measuring progress. However, some of the goals associated with these items and targets do not provide any justification as to why the standard was selected and if it is reflective of best practices or other widely-accepted standards. For example, Policy Area 4, Performance Target 3 establishes a goal of a 50% reduction in vehicular and pedestrian accidents at high accident and injury locations, but how this target came to be is unknown as Patrol Commander Tom Garrepy has expressed his concern that this was an unreasonable expectation.

Ultimately, a review of the 2008 Plan has provided the Steering Committee with lessons that will guide the next step in the update process as it seeks to create a holistic vision, objectives, and goals in the new Comprehensive Plan Update that are informed by extensive public outreach, aspirational yet realistic,

flexible and adaptable to dramatic physical and economic change, and respectful of future generations of Brunswick residents.

To find where you are going, you must know where you are.

--- John Steinbeck

Executive Summary

The State of Maine's Growth Management Act (GMA), M.R.S. Title 30-A, Chapter 187, is specific in what is required from a comprehensive plan:

1. Inventory and analysis addressing state goals and issues of regional or local significance that the municipality considers important.
2. Policies that relate the findings contained in the inventory and analysis section to the state's goals.
3. Implementation strategy with a timetable ensuring that the goals are met.
4. Regional coordination program.

Upon their review of a Maine municipality's comprehensive plan the State may issue a letter stating that the plan is consistent with the GMA. This "finding of consistency" is important to the Town because State Law and various agencies have established incentives, such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Department of Environmental Protection State Revolving Loan Fund, for communities with GMA-consistent comprehensive plans. Additionally, a consistent comprehensive plan offers legal protection for the Town's ordinances and allows the Town to impose its zoning ordinance, create an impact fee ordinance, or create a rate of growth or building cap ordinance.

The Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee ("Steering Committee") began their work in August 2019 with the tenet that to plan for the future of the Town of Brunswick will require an understanding of its past and present status. This report explores the objectives of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update ("2008 Plan") and the progress made, or not made, relative to implementing the actions that were recommended. The Steering Committee hopes that analysis of the successes and setbacks of the 2008 Plan, along with an understanding of what conditions have changed since the 2008 Plan was written, will allow the incorporation of the lessons learned from previous experiences into its future planning efforts.

Although adopted by the Town Council in 2008, work on the document began in 2003. During this time, the Town faced two (2) significant economic challenges. In 2005, the President of the United States and U.S. Congress accepted the recommendation of the U.S. Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission that Brunswick Naval Air Station (BNAS) be closed by 2011. BNAS was commissioned in 1943 and except for a brief period of deactivation between 1947 and 1951, had operated continuously. At the time of the closure announcement, BNAS occupied a land base of approximately 3,300 acres and was the employment center for over 5,200 military and civilian personnel. The closure announcement was followed in 2007 by the worst national economic downturn, now referred to as the Great Recession, since the Great Depression. Although the full impact of these economic events would not be felt until after the adoption of the 2008 Plan, the simultaneous experience of the BNAS closure and the Great Recession created a degree of uncertainty about the Town's long-term planning initiatives.

Despite the precarious economic situation at the time, the 2008 Plan was confident and ambitious. Shortly after the BNAS closure announcement, the Brunswick Local Redevelopment Authority (BLRA) was established to create a BNAS Reuse Master Plan. In December 2007, within two (2) years of the closure announcement

the BLRA had a plan for the conversion of the BNAS to civilian reuse. Incorporating the BNAS Reuse Master Plan into the 2008 Plan, the Town expressed a strong belief that the BNAS property would be reintegrated into the fabric of the community and would ultimately be a catalyst for long-term economic growth while also providing for recreation and conservation opportunities. At a time when future housing demand was cloudy at best, the 2008 Plan was confident in a recovery of the housing market as it took a strong position regarding the Town's desired development pattern by recommending higher density development in some parts of the Growth Area and limiting the role of residential development allowed in the Rural Area. Furthermore, the 2008 Plan benefitted from the visions of other long-term planning documents that had been developed since the last Comprehensive Plan update in 1993. These documents included the 1997 Downtown Master Development Plan, 1998 Cook's Corner Master Plan, 2001 Downtown Brunswick Parking Study, 2003 Brunswick Housing Study, 2003 Rural Brunswick Smart Growth Study, 2004 Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan, and 2005 Transportation Study.

Demonstrating its ambitious scope, the 2008 Plan established eight (8) key policy areas covering a broad spectrum of topics, refined the Town's land use policies in regards to growth management (which would later be used as a basis for the 2017 Zoning Ordinance Rewrite and Map Amendment), and provided an implementation and regional coordination strategy. The bulk of the 2008 Plan, and this report, focuses on the key policy areas. Each key policy area identified a vision, proposed objectives, actions necessary to achieve the vision, and performance targets by which to evaluate progress. Specifically, the key policy areas of the 2008 Plan are:

1. Maintain and financially support a quality public education system.
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3. Promote the desired Growth/Rural pattern of development.
4. Support the development and maintenance of infrastructure that promotes livable neighborhoods and the desired pattern of residential and commercial growth.
5. Encourage a diversity of housing types in the designated Growth Area and facilitate preservation and development of affordable and workforce housing.
6. Provide clear mechanisms and incentives to protect significant open space and natural resources.
7. Promote an economically viable, attractive downtown.
8. Promote a diverse and healthy local economy.

After a review of the 2008 Plan, the Steering Committee intends to incorporate the following elements into the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update ("2021 Plan"):

1. Frequent Reviews and Updates

The 2008 Plan did not suggest or require any type of annual or biennial progress report to the Planning Board or Town Council. The Steering Committee found that the Town Council and other Town boards, commissions, and committees were generally unaware of the status of the 2008 Plan's objectives and action items. Also, it was discovered that the 2008 Plan was not usually reviewed in conjunction with the Town's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Finally, the length of time between updates coupled with significant economic, environmental, and technological changes made the 2008 Plan outdated in some areas

and made it difficult to address emerging issues such as: an aging population; innovations in housing such as “tiny houses,” accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and homeless shelters; “sharing economy” uses such as short-term rentals; electric vehicles; Town-wide broadband; sustainability; and climate change. Also, impactful projects such as the train station redevelopment were ideated and constructed after the 2008 Plan was adopted. Finally, the 2020 emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic impact has emphasized the need for the 2021 Plan to incorporate resiliency planning.

Regularly scheduled reviews and updates to the 2020 Plan will prevent the document from becoming outdated and will reduce the amount of work needed when it is time for the next update. Reviewing the 2021 Plan annually during the CIP development process will also ensure a close alignment between Town goals and project funding.

2. Refined Implementation Strategy

The 2008 Plan’s implementation timeline used general terms such as short-, mid-, and long-term goals, but did not identify what those terms mean in so far as the number of years associated with the goal’s completion. Accountability for implementing the 2008 Plan was identified by the Town board, commission, or committee that was most closely associated with the objective. For example, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was tasked with the action item, “continue implementing the improvements listed in the 2004 Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan relating to Downtown, particularly regarding crosswalks and sidewalks, on a regular basis.” Although most action items are clear in direction, some action items were not implemented because the responsible boards, commissions, or committees were unaware of their responsibility, or consisting entirely of volunteers, did not have the time or budgetary resources to implement the action item. Other times there was a mismatch between the action item and responsible party. For example, the Planning Board was identified as the responsible party for the installation of benches, information kiosks, trash receptacles, and public toilets when they do not have jurisdiction over such improvements.

The implementation strategy in the 2021 Plan will provide an estimate for action item completion in months and/or years, identify relevant Town departments and key staff positions to be accountable for implementation of action items, and provide a rough estimate as to potential costs of action items, when applicable, to ensure their feasibility for the Town Council, who is ultimately responsible for their funding.

3. Recognition of Interrelated Topics

The 2021 Plan will acknowledge the interrelatedness of many of the issues facing the community. For example, in 2019 the Town Council approved a Climate Emergency Resolution. This climate emergency is the result of a myriad of policy decisions covering economics, energy, land use planning, and transportation. Identifying how community issues can be addressed holistically will be a strength of the 2021 Plan.

4. Focus on Connections Between Policy Areas and Growth Management

The 2008 Plan is overly broad at times and too narrowly focused at other times. For example, the inclusion of School Department and School Board academic, equity, and programming goals was problematic in that these educational policy goals have no discernable relation to land use issues or growth management. Such topics are more appropriately discussed in the School Department’s strategic planning documents, but topics such as growth projections and facilities planning are appropriate for the 2021 Plan. Not only are

growth projections and facilities planning important for the School Department, but for all municipal facilities and other educational institutions such as Bowdoin College and Southern Maine Community College. The needs of these institutions will be considered for incorporation into the 2021 Plan.

The 2008 Plan grouped open space, natural resources, outdoor recreation, and wildlife habitats as if these varied categories were a singular topic. For land use planning and management, each of these areas pose unique challenges. Although the proposed holistic approach to the 2021 Plan will acknowledge the interrelatedness of each of these elements, it will be important to provide an indepth analysis of each distinctive element.

As opposed to the broad focus on open space, natural resources, etc. described above, the discussion of infrastructure was narrow in focus as it primarily referenced only sewer, stormwater, and water service.

The 2021 Plan will include the consideration of other infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, street lighting, and public transportation. The 2021 Plan will also address the environmental impact of such infrastructure and provide guidance for “green infrastructure.”

Consideration of the Town, Brunswick Sewer District, and Brunswick-Topsham Water District’s financial planning and capacity will be included in infrastructure-related action items within the 2021 Plan. Similar to Item 3 above, a focus on how recommendations are interrelated, particularly to land use and growth management, will produce clear and concise action items.

5. Incorporate More Data-Based Quantitative Goals

Many action items and performance targets in the 2008 Plan were tied to quantitative goals that made them convenient for measuring progress. However, some of the goals associated with these items and targets did not provide the basis as to why the standard was selected and if it is reflective of best practices or other widely accepted standards. For example, Policy Area 4, Performance Target 3 established a goal of a 50% reduction in vehicular and pedestrian accidents at high accident and injury locations, but the origins of the 50% goal are unknown and a member of the Police Department expressed concern that it was an unreasonable expectation.

Ultimately, a review of the 2008 Plan has provided the Steering Committee with insight that will guide the next step in the update process. Building on this analysis and with an understanding of the 2008 Plan, the Steering Committee will seek to create a holistic vision, objectives, and goals in the 2021 Plan that are: informed by extensive public outreach; data-driven; aspirational yet realistic; flexible and adaptable to the dramatic economic, environmental, physical, and social changes in the decade ahead; and are respectful of future generations of Brunswick residents.

2008 Brunswick Comprehensive Plan Report - Executive Summary

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan focused on eight policy areas. Within each area are key objectives and corresponding action items. This review report looks at each of these objectives and action items and discussed community efforts that pursue each. Each policy area is considered separately.

Policy Area #1 – Public Education

Objective 1 - Facilities

Since 2008, the town has consolidated four elementary schools into two, addressing concerns about disparities in the quality of and access to public education in Brunswick. The two new schools, Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary and Kate Furbush Elementary opened in 2011 and 2020, respectively. Renovations and improvements are also underway at both the Brunswick Middle School and Brunswick High School. These investments are in line with the plan's goals for school facilities.

Objective 2 – Programming

Objective 3 – Equity

The remaining objectives in this area were to pursue programming that exceeds state standards, and to ensure equal opportunity to all students. Brunswick schools have implemented new programming including pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, a Community Connections program, new technology, and new options for adult education.

Policy Area 2 – Municipal Facilities

Objective 1 – Pursue opportunities at BNAS/Brunswick Landing

The town has a history of cooperation with Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRRA), and has reached out to them regarding the potential for using space at the former Brunswick Naval Air Station (BNAS), now known as Brunswick Landing. Offices for the town's Parks and Recreation Department moved into existing space at the former BNAS in 2013. The town's conservation commission has preserved undevelopable areas, now known as the Kate Furbush Preserve, and Capt. Fitzgerald Recreation and Conservation Area. Additionally, the town has issued notices of interest (NOI) for various properties that were not ultimately awarded.

Objective 2 – Develop 10-year plan for facilities use, reuse, maintenance or disposition

The town hall and police stations were relocated to new facilities in 2014 and 2013, respectively, and as mentioned above, the Parks & Recreation Department moved to space at Brunswick Landing in 2013. The town hall relocation was facilitated through a property exchange with Bowdoin College, which also dispossessed the town of the former Longfellow School, now used by the college as a center for art and dance. The town continues to explore options to satisfy future needs for the fire department, library, visitor center and for parking. Many of these needs are being addressed in the town's capital

improvement plan. For example, the town hall, police station, parks and recreation offices, Kate Furbush Elementary school and other improvements were all completed in accordance with the town's CIP.

The 2002 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan concluded that the town's existing outdoor and indoor recreation facilities were inadequate to meet its needs. Recommendations for addressing this shortfall as it relates to indoor facilities include a new/remodeled Recreation Center, and a multigenerational community center. The town acquired the former U.S. Navy fieldhouse and relocated the recreation center in 2013, and People Plus and the Teen Center moved in to the Brunswick School Department building in 2010.

Objective 3 – Pursue other options for funding other than tax dollars

The action items under this objective recommend exploring regional partnerships, TIF funding and impact fees. The town has pursued TIFs and has funded some capital projects with TIF revenues. The town has also entered into partnerships with developers, utilizing credit enhancement agreements for new infrastructure development. Impact fees have been collected for their specific uses, and can be spent as made necessary by new development. The town collects impact fees for wastewater collection and treatment, municipal water facilities, solid waste facilities, public safety equipment, roads and traffic control devices, recreational areas and other open space, and school facilities.

Objective 4 – Educate the public about long range planning

While the town does not produce a comprehensive 10-year strategic facilities plan, as recommended by the 2008 comprehensive plan, it does incorporate facilities needs into their 5 year capital improvement plan and has been successful in implementing facilities improvements through this plan, as mentioned above.

Policy Area 3 - Promote the Desired Growth and Rural pattern of development

Objective 1 – Ensure BNAS zoning includes evaluation of off-site impacts

As noted above, town officials and MRRRA representatives have worked collaboratively on issues related to Brunswick Landing. In 2017, as part of the Brunswick zoning ordinance re-write, new zoning defined uses were created for "Recreation/Open Space" and "Natural Areas," and property in Brunswick Landing were designated as each and placed within "Growth – Natural Resources" and "Rural Natural Resources" zoning district designations. With regard to on-site infrastructure, MRRRA is responsible for its maintenance and replacement, but the town has been involved in the evaluation of roads and stormwater. In 2010, the town adopted a resolution endorsing certain capital improvements for transportation at Brunswick Landing, and has also been involved in discussions around stormwater improvement efforts.

Objective 2 – Encourage development in the growth areas, and limit development in the rural areas.

The 2017 zoning re-write made changes to the maximum densities in line with this objective.

Approximately 60% of new units built between 2009-2019 were located in the rural area. Still, over that time, 149 units were built over 89 acres (0.6 acres per unit) in the growth area, versus 223 units built over 1,148 acres (5.15 acres per unit) in the rural area. Thus, density increased in the growth areas, and the average unit per developed acre increased in the rural area since 2008. It is also likely that the release of over 1,000 units of housing from the base closure satisfied some of the local demand for new housing.

Objective 3 – Maintain the character of the rural area

The 2002 Parks and Recreation and Open Space Plan included recommendations for maintaining Brunswick’s “natural character,” and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan made implementing these recommendations a part of its strategy towards preserving the town’s rural character. Pursuant to this, the zoning ordinance rewrite in 2017 included options for a private landowner to create an open space subdivision with a density bonus, but the town has not yet taken the additional recommended step of establishing a mechanism to allow for transfer of development rights (TDR).

The town adopted a Tree Care ordinance in 2016, and undertook studies and reports to evaluate the town’s natural resources. These include studies of shellfish, Mare Brook management and improvement, vernal pools, and sea level rise. The town has also participated with Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust to conserve hundreds of acres of land since 2008.

The Amtrak Downeaster layover facility, completed in 2016, was located in accordance with studies to demonstrate minimal noise impacts, but resident complaints about the facility prompted the creation of a quiet zone stretching from Park Row south to Freeport.

Policy Area 4 – Infrastructure that promotes livable neighborhoods and desired patterns of growth

Objective 1 – Utilize sewer, water and stormwater systems to promote the desired pattern of growth

The Brunswick Sewer District Strategic Plan (2016) and the Brunswick and Topsham Water District Master Plan (2020) have many goals that are in line with the town’s comprehensive plan. Specifically, they align in prioritizing services in the growth area. However, there is no consensus on whether connections should be required and who should bear the cost of connections. Pursuant to a goal in the Sewer District Strategic Plan, the district and the town delegation extension decision authority to the district and the district developed a policy and procedure for assessing a “readiness to serve” charge that could help offset the cost of expansion.

The comprehensive plan included a goal of connecting seventy-five percent of residential dwelling units to sewer and water after 2015. It is estimated that sixty-five percent of the town’s residential units are currently served by sewer, and sixty-eight percent are served by water. However, while new construction has been likely to connect (where connections are available), the sewer district estimates that only 1 or 2 units of existing housing are converted each year.

Objective 2 – Use transportation initiatives to promote the desired pattern of growth and pedestrian safety

The comprehensive plan calls for the creation of a traffic master plan, which has not been developed. However, the town made many transportation improvement projects between 2008-2020, utilizing funding opportunities with state and regional partners (MDOT, Bowdoin College, Brunswick-Topsham Water District, Brunswick Sewer District and others) and municipal funding options (TIF, grants, capital planning).

Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) crash data shows that total accidents in Brunswick have been stable between 2008-2019, but 2017, 2018 and 2019 saw the highest number of reported crashes over that entire time period.

A number of improvements have been made pursuant to the 2004 Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan. This plan's recommendations were adopted into the 2008 comprehensive plan. Many other pedestrian and bicycle upgrades were made by the town, Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BBPAC), and other organizations. BBPAC is also updating the 2004 plan.

The town continues to participate in many regional planning efforts related to roads, sidewalks, pathways and public transportation.

Objective 3 - Reduce environmental impacts from existing development and new growth

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan set as one of its action items to incorporate stormwater management system. Since 2008, each capital improvement plan (CIP) has funded stormwater management projects. The town council and planning board have also made policy changes designed to improve stormwater management. Coordinated infrastructure developments have been conducted by the water and sewer districts and public works departments on Lincoln Street, College Street, and Landing Road.

Policy Area 5 – Encourage a Diversity of Housing Types in the Growth Area

Objective 1 – Support Transition of BNAS associated housing to meet workforce/affordable housing needs

In 2010, Affordable Midcoast Housing acquired the housing units at Brunswick Landing, and sold over 100 units in the McKeen Street neighborhood to low and moderate income households. Many units at the former base are still available.

Zoning changes as part of the 2017 rewrite increased allowable density on BNAS property, and in 2019, different types of homeless shelters were established as conditional uses in several zoning districts.

Objective 2 – Preserve the current stock of affordable and rental housing

Funding options have been identified and pursued by the town Department of Economic Development, and the Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative. Grant funding through community development block grants helped fund redevelopment of the Lemont Block, which included 5 units downtown. Measurements of the number of total units and their increase or decrease since 2008 are clouded by the lack of available public data, and by the influx of units from the BNAS closure and how those units were categorized (affordable v. unaffordable) prior to 2011.

Objective 3 – Create an environment that supports the development of new affordable housing

The 2017 zoning rewrite eliminated minimal residential lot sizes in all growth area districts, and adjusted the density to allow for greater density in most growth zones. Market factors and the impact of COVID-19 are contributing to housing becoming overall less affordable in Brunswick and beyond.

Objective 4 – Facilitate development of affordable housing

Objective 5 – Educate the public about housing issues.

The town has limited financial options for participating in the development of new affordable housing, but has not yet implemented an affordable housing TIF, which is one of the few options available.

Policy Area 6 – Protect open space and outdoor recreation

Objective 1 – Ensure that BNAS development is consistent with Brunswick’s overall natural resource values

As addressed above, the town has preserved open space and natural resource areas at Brunswick Landing, including the Kate Furbush Preserve and the Capt. Fitzgerald Recreation and Conservation Area. New zoning at the site also designated areas as “Rural Natural Resource” and “Growth – Natural Resource” zones. This was discussed above in greater detail above in Policy Area 2, objective 1, and Policy Area 3, objective 1.

Objective 2 – Limit growth outside the growth boundary relative to growth inside the boundary

Efforts toward this objective are the same as those addressed above in Policy Area 3, Objectives 2 and 3.

Objective 3 - Improve mechanisms for protecting high value open space and natural resources

The Brunswick Town Council established Land for Brunswick’s Future in 2007, but did not fund or provide other assistance as recommended by the comprehensive plan. Other mechanisms do exist for protecting high value open space, including the recreation impact fee. The town and other organizations (BLT and MCHT) have made efforts to protect high value open space, as mentioned above.

Objective 4 – Protect Natural Resources from harmful development activities

The town has taken responsibility for water quality monitoring, focusing on shellfish growing conditions and the Mare Brook Watershed, which is classified as an urban-impaired stream. The town has a Harbor Management Plan (2014) and the Mare Brook Baseline Management Report (2016) with strategies for the improvement of both.

As noted above under Policy Area 3, the zoning ordinance made it easier for the town to maintain development within unfragmented forest blocks and corridors, but additional protection is still a work in progress. Likewise, the town has been learning more about vernal pool locations, especially through the Brunswick Conservation Commissions' Town Oriented Open Space Inventory (2014) and the Riparian Habitat Assessment Report, which was completed as a part of Mare Brook Watershed Assessment in 2016. The town has also explored the impact of light pollution in town, although recommended zoning ordinance changes were tabled by the council in 2020.

Objective 5 – Provide adequate recreational facilities for current and future needs

Implications of the recreation impact fee, and the recreation facility opportunities available at BNAS were discussed in Policy Area 3, Objective 3, and Policy Area 2, Objective 1 respectively. It is also expected that the updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan currently underway (as discussed

above in Policy Area 4, Objective 2) by the BBPAC will address accessibility and other issues at Brunswick Landing.

The 2002 Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan, mentioned above under Policy Area 1, Objective 2, also includes recommendations for outdoor recreation. Some of these recommendations have been implemented (create wayfinding system for parks, create all-tide access at Mere Point), and some have not (develop an interpretive park on the Androscoggin River at the site of the former Merrymeeting Park), but most are in the process of being explored and implemented.

Objective 6 – Protect and maintain cultural and scenic open space resources

The 2002 Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan also identified cultural, historic and scenic assets. Most of these have not been substantially disturbed since 2008, with the exception of some former farmland which has been developed (i.e.: Granite Farm).

Objective 7 – Set protection goals for identified significant natural resources

Various efforts to inventory natural resources have been underway, including the BNAS RE-use Master Plan, Mare Brook Stormwater Management Plan. The town has partnered with adjacent communities to create the New Meadows Watershed Partnership. Town ordinances include regulations for the protection of significant resources, and the town participates in experimental programs to help develop more efficient and effective natural resource management standards.

Policy Area 7 – Promote an Economically Viable, Attractive Downtown

Objective 1 – Use redevelopment of Maine Street as a catalyst for Downtown

Improvements

Key components of the 2007 Brunswick Station Master Plan have been substantially implemented, including Amtrak service, and the development of new retail, office, hotel and residential space.

Objective 2 – Make the downtown district safer and more pedestrian friendly

Traffic and pedestrian infrastructure improvements were completed in 2011 and 2013 on Route 1, Lincoln Street, Bank Street, Cumberland Street and Center Street intersections at Maine Street. Downtown Streetscape Enhancement and Maine Street Bridge, Frank J. Wood Bridge and Androscoggin Bridge are being explored. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan includes recommendations for crosswalk and sidewalk improvement, and projects at Spanish Square, Fort Andross, Cumberland Street and Mill Street have been completed.

Objective 3 – Increase housing options in the Downtown

Only three new dwelling units were built between 2008-2015. By 2019, that number had increased to 31, and as of December 2020, projects had been approved that would add at least 43 more units to the downtown.

Objective 4 – Make the downtown more attractive and inviting and the “hub” of community activity

The Brunswick Downtown Association has added amenities since 2008, including benches, flowerpots, and an informational kiosk. The Village Improvement Association has also called attention to trees and flowering plants. A Veterans Plaza at the mall was constructed and dedicated on Veteran’s Day, 2020.

Further, the town retained a consultant to complete a Downtown Streetscape Enhancement Project, that will look at sidewalks, signage and amenity improvements for downtown. This consulting work is currently in progress.

The town has made efforts to promote the development of a local “creative economy,” including zoning that encourages artisan/craft businesses and the promotion of arts events.

Objective 5 – Increase awareness and supply of public parking downtown

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan suggested implementation of the recommendations in the Brunswick Downtown Parking Study (2001). Aside from some informational materials about available parking, the recommendations were not implemented. However, parking spaces in the area have increased, and there is discussion about development of a municipal parking garage. The town is also in the process of building a new park-and-ride facility with approximately 100 spaces.

Policy Area 8 – Promote a Diverse and Healthy Local Economy

Objective 1 – Redevelop in-fill sites in the Growth Area

The town turned its growth strategies towards Brunswick Landing once the closure of the base became a certainty. The BNAS Reuse Master Plan, Master Plan for Downtown Brunswick and Outer Pleasant Street Corridor both include recommendations for infill, and for other measures which would help attract infill development to the areas. The BNAS Reuse Master Plan also includes funding or financial assistance opportunities for supporting infill development, including CDBG, Foreign Trade Zone Status, Maine New Markets Capital Investment Program, Pine Tree Development Zone and TIF.

Objective 2 – Ensure BNAS zoning includes evaluation of off-site impacts

This is the same as Policy Area 3, Objective 1.

Objective 3 – Develop and implement opportunities to attract desirable employment opportunities to Brunswick

The town's economic development department and MRRRA have been using a combination of funding opportunities and strategies to attract new businesses and jobs to Brunswick. As of November 2020, more than 2,200 jobs had been created at Brunswick Landing, far exceeding the number of civilian jobs lost from the base closure.

Objective 4 – Ensure that as Bowdoin College grows and changes, its facilities fit into the community

Town and College leaders meet regularly to discuss projects and events that may impact each other. The college hosts public meetings to give the public an opportunity to give input to upcoming projects on campus.

Objective 5 – Enhance the economic viability of small, locally owned businesses

The town did not develop a strategy for attracting new emerging sector businesses. However, MRRRA's "TechPlace," a technology accelerator and incubator provides for the business development needs of early stage companies. As of January, 2020, it was home to 38 businesses with 80 employees. Other businesses which started at TechPlace expanded into larger spaces at Brunswick Landing.

The town has leveraged other partnerships to provide funding and business assistance to local businesses or those seeking to relocate to Brunswick. These partners include the Brunswick Downtown Association, Brunswick Development Corporation, Coastal Enterprises, Inc, MidCoast Economic Development District, and the Southern Midcoast Chamber of Commerce.

The town has benefitted from the support of local farmers, and from the presence of farmer's markets. A report on the working rural landscape identified Brunswick's strengths and weaknesses for agriculture and horticulture. The town has also sought to support marine harvesting, and particularly for shellfish. They have explored options for to protect shellfish harvesting in Brunswick, including aquaculture, license lottery, and Marine Resource Committee authority.

Objective 6 – Promote Expansion of passenger rail service

The town has coordinated with partners (MDOT, NNEPRA and others) on creation and support for improvements to the existing Amtrak Downeaster service. In 2011, NNEPRA selected a site for a new

layover facility in Brunswick, which increased the number of trains available in and out of Brunswick. However, it generated resident complaints about noise at the facility and resulted in the creation of a quiet zone. A pilot project expansion of the line beyond Brunswick to Rockland via Bath, Wiscasset and Newcastle has been discussed but is not yet operational. The town and MDOT are also partnering on increased parking for transit riders on state-owned property south of Cedar Street and east of Spring Street.

May 2/21

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2008 Key Policy Areas

Topic	Framing Statement
EDUCATION	MAINTAIN AND FINANCIALLY SUPPORT A QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM
FACILITIES	REQUIRE LONG RANGE PLANNING FOR MUNICIPAL FACILITIES INCLUDING REPLACEMENT AND EXPANSION
GROWTH	PROMOTE THE DESIRED GROWTH /RURAL PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT
DEVELOPMENT	SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE THAT PROMOTES LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE DESIRED PATTERN OF RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH
HOUSING	ENCOURAGE A DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES IN THE DESIGNATED GROWTH AREAS AND FACILITATE THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE AND WORKFORCE HOUSING.
NATURAL RESOURCES	PROTECT SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROVIDE OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
DOWNTOWN	PROMOTE AN ECONOMICALLY VIABLE, ATTRACTIVE DOWNTOWN
LOCAL ECONOMY	PROMOTE A DIVERSE AND HEALTHY LOCAL ECONOMY

2023 KEY POLICY AREAS

Framing Statement

Topic

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

NATURAL RESOURCES

**CONSERVATION/PRESERVATION/OPEN
SPACE**

CLIMATE CHANGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HOUSING

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

PUBLIC FACILITIES/SERVICES

CULTURAL/HISTORIC/ SOCIAL RESOURCES

PREVIOUS KEY POLICY AREAS

education
municipal facilities
growth and patterns of development
infrastructure
housing
open space and natural resources
economic development downtown
local economy

Common Themes Throughout:

Regionalization
Climate Change
Sustainability

PROPOSED KEY POLICY AREAS

Subcommittee 1: KW, JS, FK, TS

growth management
natural resources
conservation / preservation / open space
climate change

Subcommittee 2: CW, MM, AH, CF, LD

economic development
housing
transportation and infrastructure
public facilities and services
cultural, historic, and social resources (?)

March 2, 21