

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

1. What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A statement of a community's vision for the future, a base for capital improvement plans, and a legally defensible foundation for community actions, policies, and regulations. In Maine, a Comprehensive Plan is also influenced by the State's Growth Management Act which focuses on preventing sprawl and directing development to desired "growth areas" and discouraging development within "rural areas." A successful Comprehensive Plan identifies the interconnectedness of planning for the future and making wise land use and growth management decisions in the present.

2. I am not on the Steering Committee, but I want to be a part of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update. How can I help?

Successful comprehensive plans welcome public participation at any level. There are a variety of ways in which Brunswick residents can participate in the update process. Steering Committee meetings (see calendar) are open to the public. The project timeline calls for a minimum of six (6) meetings where the public will be able to participate in discussion and various interactive activities. You can also contact Department of Planning and Development staff directly via email (mpanfil@brunswickme.org), phone (207.725.6660), or stopping by Town Hall in person (appointments preferred). Technical expertise in the eleven (11) inventory areas listed below is especially appreciated. If you feel you have something to contribute to the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update let us know.

3. What is in a Comprehensive Plan?

Per M.R.S. Title 30-A §4326, The State of Maine requires three (3) specific elements that are required in a Comprehensive Plan. A municipality may provide additional elements, but must provide the following:

1. Inventory and analysis of existing conditions and ten (10) year projections of local and regional growth in population and residential, commercial, and industrial activity; the projected need for public facilities; and the vulnerability of and potential impacts on natural resources. The inventory and analysis is reviewed to identify any necessary changes to the existing Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Plan should, at minimum, clearly designates rural areas and appropriately sized growth areas and includes actions that will be taken to direct development away from the rural areas and into the growth areas.
2. Policy development that related to the findings contained in the inventory and analysis section.
3. Implementation strategies including a timetable for the implementation program ensuring that the goals are met. The strategies and timetable must guide the subsequent adoption of policies, programs, and land use ordinances and periodic review of the comprehensive plan.

4. *What are the inventories and existing conditions to be analyzed?*

Per M.R.S. Title 30-A §4326, the inventory and analysis section must include, but is not limited to:

- a. Economic and demographic data describing the municipality and the region in which it is located;
- b. Significant water resources such as lakes, aquifers, estuaries, rivers and coastal areas and, when applicable, their vulnerability to degradation;
- c. Significant or critical natural resources, such as wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitats, significant plant habitats, coastal islands, sand dunes, scenic areas, shorelands, heritage coastal areas as defined under Title 5, section 3316, and unique natural areas;
- d. Marine-related resources and facilities such as ports, harbors, commercial moorings, commercial docking facilities and related parking, and shell fishing and worming areas;
- e. Commercial forestry and agricultural land;
- f. Existing recreation, park and open space areas and significant points of public access to shorelands within a municipality;
- g. Existing transportation systems, including the capacity of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, secondary routes, pedestrian ways, and parking facilities;
- h. Residential housing stock, including affordable housing, and policies that assess community needs and environmental effects of municipal regulations, lessen the effect of excessive parking requirements for buildings in downtowns and on main streets and provide for alternative approaches for compliance relating to the reuse of upper floors of buildings in downtowns and on main streets;
- i. Historical and archeological resources including, at the discretion of the municipality, stone walls, stone impoundments and timber bridges of historical significance;
- j. Land use information describing current projected development patterns; and
- k. An assessment of capital facilities and public services necessary to support growth and development and to protect the environment and health, safety, and welfare of the public and the costs of those facilities and services.

5. *Are there specific policies that must be addressed?*

Yes, at a minimum, policies established in a comprehensive plan must:

- a. Promote the state goals of the Growth Management Program;

- b. Address any conflicts between state and local goals;
- c. Address any conflicts between regional and local issues; and
- d. Address the State's coastal policies.

6. *Is there a difference between policies and strategies? If yes, what is it?*

Policies are general statements of intent.

Example: Protect significant historic resources.

Strategies are specific descriptions of actions.

Example: Work with the Pejepscot Historical Society to develop a comprehensive survey of historic resources.

7. *What else might be included in a Comprehensive Plan?*

Although the State of Maine has specific minimum requirements, some communities may opt to include topic-specific plans within the plan. For example, local neighborhood plans, sustainability plans, design guidelines, affordable housing plans, etc. may be a part of the same Comprehensive Plan document. Other communities may opt to use the Comprehensive Plan as the means to identify and prioritize the need for topic-specific plans to be developed later as subsequent appendices or amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Due to timelines (See Question 9) and the size of the Town, staff recommends the latter approach, creating additional topical plans as appendices and amendments, for this Comprehensive Plan Update.

8. *What is a Finding of Consistency?*

A finding by the *Municipal Planning Assistance Program in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry* that a comprehensive plan is consistent with Maine's Growth Management Act (Title 30-A, Chapter 187).

9. *How long does a Finding of Consistency last?*

A Finding of Consistency is valid for twelve (12) years from the date of issue.

10. *Did the Town of Brunswick receive a Finding of Consistency for the Brunswick 2008 Comprehensive Plan? If so, when does it expire.*

Yes, the Town of Brunswick received a Finding of Consistency which expires on November 20, 2020.

11. *What happens if the Town's Finding of Consistency expires before the next update to the Comprehensive Plan is completed?*

Negative consequences of not having a Finding of Consistency include, but are not limited to:

- a. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will not award grant funding for growth-related capital investments to a town without a consistent plan;
- b. Some agencies, such as the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), give priority in funding their own projects to towns with a consistent plan;
- c. Other grant programs award point priorities to towns with consistent plans; and
- d. Potential legal challenges to the Town's Zoning Ordinance or impact fees as the law requires them conform to a plan which meets the requirements of the GMA;

12. How long does it take for the State to review a comprehensive plan for consistency?

Provided the State determines the comprehensive plan submittal to be complete and no additional information is requested, it takes up to 45 days to issue a Finding of Consistency.

Within 35 business days of receiving the plan submittal, the State will either issue a Notification of Completeness or notify the Town in writing if there are any missing elements. A Notification of Completeness means that portions of the comprehensive plan other than the Future Land Use Plan have been accepted and the State will begin a focused review of the Future Land Use Plan. Within ten (10) business days of the issuance of Notification of Completeness, the State will notify the Town whether the plan has been found consistent with the Growth Management Act.