

Here is the Planning Commission's **PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION** of **Appendix B: Consolidated 'PLANNING PRINCIPLES'** section of the **Bethel Town Plan**. By State Statute, the Town Plan is revised every five years. The Planning Commission will hold a duly warned public hearing in mid-June on this and, depending on comments received then, will transmit it to the Select Board, which will hold a hearing at the end of July. Public comments are appreciated. Formal adoption by the Select Board is anticipated by August 13, 2006.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONSOLIDATED PLANNING PRINCIPLES**

[Planning Principles: Statements and strategies that direct possible courses of action to implement Bethel's goals.]

#### **V. HOUSING**

1. The timing and rate of new housing construction or rehabilitation should not exceed the community's ability to provide adequate public facilities.
2. The Town should help to keep housing affordable by planning for appropriately sized lots, accessory apartments, and clustered developments.
3. The provision of housing for special needs populations, such as the elderly and physically handicapped, is encouraged.
4. The location of future housing should complement existing or planned employment patterns, travel times, and energy requirements.
5. Affordable housing should not be directed exclusively into selected areas.
6. Developers and town officials are encouraged to work toward strategies that promote mixed income housing.

#### **VI. PUBLIC UTILITIES & FACILITIES**

1. Major public investments in schools, libraries, sewage treatment works, and water facilities should be located within existing or planned settlement areas identified in this Plan and designed to complement the recommended future land use patterns expressed in this Plan.
2. Upgrade and improve the existing water supply systems and wastewater treatment facilities when such proposals enhance the viability of the Village to function as the community center.
3. Land development within public wellhead protection areas should be prohibited when it would pose a threat to potable water supplies.
4. Public investments in highways, water and wastewater treatment systems which prompt sprawl, strip development, or scattered development inconsistent with this Plan are discouraged.
5. Water conservation measures and programs to reduce the water demand, thereby extending the useful life and efficiency of water and sewer facilities are encouraged.

#### **VII. TRANSPORTATION**

1. The Town should maintain existing highways, bridges, and related facilities as necessary to ensure the current level of service.
2. The Town should retain Class 4 roads for recreational use.
3. If improvements to Class 3 roads are needed to accommodate increased traffic or utilities such as electric or telephone lines, the relationship of these improvements to the contributing

features of immediate landscape should be evaluated. These improvements should be designed to be compatible with the setting and enhance aesthetic quality, whenever practical.

4. Any plan for changes to Routes 12, 14, and 107 should not unduly compromise the historic, scenic, rural, and cultural characteristics of these routes. Economic development objectives or new growth, creating increased demand for upgrading of these routes need to be balanced with the preservation of Bethel's downtown, other built-up areas or planned expansion areas.

## **VIII. ENERGY**

1. New generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas should be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this Plan.
2. Design plans for development or subdivisions should work towards the goal of locating structures and buildings on the site to reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation and protective wind barriers.

## **IX. LAND USE:**

1. The Town should:
  - continue to support growth where it can adequately provide services and maintain them;
  - support residential and business use in older and under-utilized buildings;
  - encourage development and access along the edges of active farmland and open fields;
  - encourage passive outdoor recreation and forestry uses as the foremost use of the Resource Conservation District provided that these uses do not unduly harm significant resources on the site;
  - discourage large scale or large tract development or subdivisions in areas where steep slopes, wet, or shallow soils are predominant;
  - discourage development, other than forestry, above 2,000 feet in elevation;
  - encourage development of trails for recreational activities;
  - discourage any new development within 100 years floodplain;
  - encourage the continued recreational and agricultural use of the Flood Hazard District.
2. The Town Municipal Offices and any other governmental offices should be within the Village.
3. If new development is proposed, the Town should prohibit any that is not compatible with the character of the Village.
4. Encourage development to be clustered to minimize building driveways, roads, curb cuts, and sprawl.

## **X. NATURAL RESOURCES:**

1. Major water withdrawals should be evaluated to ensure that aquifers are not significantly depleted and that water is allocated equitably between users.
2. Land use activities, which have a relatively high risk or threat to groundwater quality, must be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they are located, designed, and maintained in a manner that minimizes their impact on groundwater quality.
3. All new, expanded, or altered sewage disposal systems shall be evaluated using technical standards and permitting requirements promulgated by the State and Town.

4. Class One groundwater resources will be permanently protected from incompatible land uses including subsurface waste disposal systems, underground storage tanks, toxic wastes, and similar hazards. Class One groundwater consists of the areas identified in the Town's Source Protection Plan (SPP) for its public water supply system and other areas identified as suitable for a public water supply by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Uses deemed acceptable within Class One areas are winter outdoor recreational activities, low density pasturing of livestock, forestry, and similar passive uses with limited human activity.
5. Water based recreation, fisheries, and aquatic habitat are high public priorities for conservation.
6. The Town supports efforts to limit and abate pollution adversely impacting water quality in the rivers, streams, and ponds in Bethel: such as agricultural runoff, sedimentation and erosion resulting from construction, pavement runoff, improper road maintenance, logging, and recreational vehicles.
7. Vegetated riparian buffer strips should be maintained along rivers and streams to filter runoff, stabilize banks and otherwise protect and maintain water quality and aquatic habitat.
8. Upland watersheds should be mostly maintained in forest or passive recreational use to ensure high water quality within streams and the White River.
9. The creation of intermittent or diverted stream flows will be allowed only upon finding that these actions do not adversely impact aquatic communities, and stream functions.
10. Development will be prohibited within Class 1 and 2 wetlands and an undisturbed buffer strip of vegetated cover maintained around the delineated edge of the wetland to prevent direct discharges into these wetlands. The width of the buffer strip should be determined using the standards and practices developed by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.
11. Development should be designed and sited to preserve contiguous areas of critical wildlife habitat, such as productive bear habitat and deer wintering areas, and to maintain connecting links between such blocks.
12. Large contiguous tracts of forest should be managed so as to maintain a diversity of ages and species of trees necessary for shelter and food supply for deer, black bear, and other mammals as well as birds.
13. Evaluate new commercial and industrial projects to insure that Bethel's air quality is not degraded.

## **XI. AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY:**

1. Construction of utilities, driveways or roads should skirt tracts of productive agricultural land rather than to divide them.
2. Resources for land owners to identify options and priorities for land conservation include private non-profit conservation organizations such as land trusts. .

## **XII. HISTORIC & SCENIC RESOURCES:**

1. Future development within or adjacent to historic buildings or sites of recognized significance should be permitted when the design of the project:
  - fits the context of the dominant character of the immediate area.
  - does not significantly diminish the distinguishing qualities of the buildings or sites
  - does not unnecessarily remove recognized or documented historic buildings, structures, or sites.
2. Public improvements such as bridge replacement or rehabilitation, street widening, roadway reconstruction, signage, utility distribution systems, and outdoor lighting should be designed to avoid unnecessary degradation of historic places or sites. Such public investments should be planned in consultation with local and state officials, including the

Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, to ensure consistency with its planning objectives and programs.

3. An integral scenic element of the Bethel's countryside is the extensive network of roads. These roads, particularly Class 3 town roads, are characterized by relatively narrow roadways of diverse and contrasting features in close proximity to the road itself. These features combined provide a unique visual experience and an awareness of the landscape. With some exception for arterial roads, it is goal of the community to retain these special features. Improvements to roads of high scenic value should be undertaken with consideration of the special scenic qualities inherent to the roadway and roadway fringe. Substantial modifications or off-alignment options that unnecessarily destroy the special characteristics of such roadways are not consistent with the Plan. Use of design standards appropriate to the functional classification of the road is encouraged.

4. Archeological resources in town should be maintained as key components of our heritage.

5. As a means of maintaining our scenery, the following design elements should generally be employed in planning for development, and especially for areas immediately adjacent to Route 107 and Route 12:

- design buildings or structures so that they are reasonably compatible with the traditional patterns, scale, size, bulk, and form of existing building or structures;
- locate buildings and structures away from highly visible ridgelines to a lower backdrop on a hillside;
- break up large parking areas into smaller lots with ample landscaping or screening from off-site views, and locate the project on less scenic areas of the site.
- place street trees which act as buffers between traffic arteries and internal drives;
- layout the project site to allow for coordinated future use of the entire parcel;
- employ screening plans for visually objectionable features on the site; and
- minimize curb cuts onto public highways and promote the use of access drives.

6. Outdoor lighting should be designed to minimize glare, incorporate light shields, and to not directly light beyond the boundaries of the area to be illuminated or onto adjacent properties. Excessively high lighting levels in rural or very low residential areas are discouraged. Project planners should give due consideration to the guidelines set forth in the "*Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities*" published by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1996) and available at the Bethel Town Office.