

INTRODUCTION

The Greensboro Planning Commission prepared this Town Plan over an 18-month planning process. The Town Plan should be an important document for the community.

"The local 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, American Planning Association

This planning process can be defined as:

- A process that helps a community prepare for changes, rather than reacting to change.
- An opportunity to retain the values that make Greensboro a truly special place
- An approach to manage growth in a way that preserves Greensboro's natural resources and rural character while supporting a vibrant economy that provides many benefits to our community.

The purpose of this Plan is to ensure that change is consistent with the Town's vision and goals for the future, as they were articulated in the 2016 Community Survey results, and to provide a framework for defining the future of Greensboro through the next eight year planning period.

The Town Plan should be used in a variety of ways. For example:

- A document that the Planning Commission uses to update and revise, as appropriate, the Town's Bylaws and zoning regulations
- A guiding document for use by the Selectboard for deciding and implementing policy
- Input to the Selectboard's capital budgeting process
- The Conservation Commission uses the Planning Commission's prioritization of natural resource protection to inform their actions
- A document the Development Review Board uses to understand the reasoning behind the Bylaws and the Town's priorities for preserving its rural character and natural resources
- A reference to be used by the Town to determine eligibility for state grants
- A source of and justification for recommended actions for studies or other activities that address community issues

History

The history of Greensboro began with the building of the Bayley-Hazen military road ordered by George Washington in 1776 for an anticipated invasion of Canada. By 1779 the road had reached Greensboro and continued through to Montgomery before the project was abandoned. Blockhouses, including one at Greensboro, were erected at intervals for protection. Because of Indian raids on Peacham in 1781, four scouts, all young boys, were sent to man the blockhouse near the southwest corner of Caspian Lake. The four were surprised by Indians who killed two and took the other two to Quebec, where they were later traded for some Indian prisoners in Vermont.

On August 20, 1781 the town received its charter from the Vermont colony. It was granted to Harris Colt and 66 associates and was called Coltkiln. However, later the name was changed to Greensboro in honor of Timothy Green, another of the petitioners. [Green never settled in Greensboro and he forfeited his 300 acres for non payment of of a \$24.00 road tax.] In the spring of 1789, Ashbel Shepard and his brother Aaron arrived in Greensboro with their wives. Ashbel and his wife moved into the blockhouse, and Aaron and his wife built a cabin near what is now Randolph Road at the south end of the lake. The following year Timothy and Joseph Stanley arrived, starting a sawmill and blacksmith shop in what is now Greensboro village. Timothy Stanley built a house near where the McIntyre house now stands in the village.

In 1791 Vermont became the 14th state to become a member of the United States; by 1793 there were enough inhabitants in Greensboro to organize a town and the first town meeting was held in Ashbel Shepard's new home. Many more settlers arrived in the newly formed independent state and by 1795 there were twenty-three families with a total of 108 persons in town. School was being taught in Aaron Shepard's barn, while a suitable building was being erected near the golf course road. Settlement of North Greensboro and East Greensboro had begun. Greensboro Bend remained largely a cedar swamp with only two farms until the coming of the railroad in 1872. The years following the railroad's arrival were prosperous as the Bend began building. A large sawmill and box factory employed many men and numerous stores; a foundry/tin shop and a granite shed were also in operation.

The perimeter of Caspian Lake was originally settled as a farming community by settlers from lower New England. They were followed in the early 19th century by Scottish immigrants and then, in the late 19th century, by French Canadians. Other immigrants, notably from Portugal, followed to work in the sawmills.

Accompanying the flow of permanent residents who moved to Greensboro in the late 19th century were a number of summer campers whose families spent summers on the lake. Many of them purchased lots from the farmers in order to build summer homes. Thus began the intertwined relationship of summer people and permanent residents--a defining quality of the character of the community that abides today.

In the first half of the 20th century those summer visitors who enjoyed months of summer vacation were largely college professors and clergymen. They brought with them a summer culture of thoughtful reserve and mutual respect with the year round residents. Subsequent multigenerational devotion to the community grew deep roots and that loyalty has benefited the town. Had it not been so, exploitation into a resort town could have overwhelmed the community's unique character.

Act 60, a 1997 Vermont tax law, has altered the ease with which families could keep their camps by imposing increasingly heavy tax burdens on summer camp owners. Many summer residents struggle to save their summer homes by commercializing them into rentals. Others have sold their family summer camps, opening the doors to new summer community members. The low key, lazy, long summer days at the lake are challenged not only by the tax burden but by the changes to America's family life in general---summer long holidays are the exception.

An example of the community culture, focus and priorities is the work of the Greensboro Land Trust--a partnership of both summer residents and year round community members. Together they strive to protect and preserve irreplaceable productive agricultural land, healthy forests and shoreline so as not to be squandered to development forever.

Greensboro's population is now a mix of many groups which historically peopled the town – the English of the 1790's, Scots of the 1830's, Irish of the 1870's, Portuguese and French Canadians of the early 1900's. Other descendents from the original summer community members have contributed to the year round population as well. In the 1970's, the national discord generated a counterculture, with some participants electing to settle in Vermont and to bring their independent thought with them. Greensboro was no exception to this immigration--some people settled in town to add to the year round population of free thinking individuals.

For years the summer people sustained the economic life of the town as the number of dairy farms declined and economic opportunities narrowed regionally. But Greensboro has been fortunate. Local residents, members of the eighth generation of the Hill farm family, and two summer residents, quietly started two small manufacturing businesses, replacing the original dairy farms. They have since flourished. Hill Farmstead Brewery, an internationally celebrated craft brewery, opened in 2010. Their mission statement reads: "To hand craft succinct, elegant beers of distinction and to revive and diversify the farmscape of the Hill Farmstead in Greensboro." The Cellars at Jasper Hill, a renown cheese manufacturer, opened in 2003. Other larger local businesses are an international youth circus school, Circus Smirkus, which opened in 1987; and a regional theater, Highland Center for the Arts, which opened in 2017. Willey's Store, the bedrock of the community, endures.

Insert for Chapter 1 of Town Plan

Community Survey

The Planning Commission engaged UVM to conduct a Community Survey in Greensboro. The entire survey is included in Appendix A. An overview is presented here, and we refer to the survey in other chapters as appropriate.

The survey asked “what I never want to change in Greensboro”. The top five issues were:

- Water Quality
- Willey’s and other establishments
- Rural Character
- Open Space\Cultural Opportunities

Then the survey asked “what I would change in Greensboro”. The top four issues were:

- Taxes
- Bicycle and Walking Amenities
- Unite the Community
- Restaurants

The survey also asked “what are the top priorities for the Planning Commission? The key answers are as follows:

- Protect the rural character of the community
- Protect natural resources
- Maintain the Lakeview School
- Attract new families with children
- Develop a recreational trail network
- Attract new small businesses

A Vision for Greensboro

Greensboro residents aspire to see a future for the community where:

- The Town's rural character is viewed as a significant benefit that should be preserved.
 - As a community, there is a strong sense that conservation of our natural resources, including Caspian Lake, should be a high priority.
 - Greensboro continues to attract and enjoy vibrant and unique small businesses that sustain tourism, support our economy, and are gathering places for local residents.
 - Greensboro is attractive for both retired families as well as new families raising young children. This balance is what makes us a special community.
 - Greensboro, a small New England town, is the home of many cultural opportunities typical of larger towns.
 - The community offers a multitude of recreational activities for young and old.
 - The community strongly supports maintaining the Lakeview School, with the important benefits it provides to the community.
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