

## I INTRODUCTION

The Colrain Town Comprehensive Plan identifies the means by which the Town proposes to guide its growth and development. The official adoption of the Plan represents a conscious community decision about the Town's future character, community and quality of life, its priorities for land use, including housing, and conservation of natural resources.

The goals, policies and recommendations in this Town Plan reflect the wishes of Colrain's residents and should be used along with the Town Plan Maps to provide guidelines to the Planning Board, Selectboard and other town committees and boards in developing local regulations and ordinances. The Town Plan should also serve to guide the regional planning commission and state agencies in their planning efforts; and to guide those persons interested in subdividing and developing land in the Town of Colrain. This Town Plan becomes effective upon adoption by the Planning Board after required public hearings.

### A. PLAN SECTION DESCRIPTIONS

The Town Plan is divided into **eleven** major sections:

1. Goals and Policies statement
2. Community Profile */Situational Analysis*
3. Land use - Public and private land use
4. Housing
5. Economic Development
6. Natural and Cultural Resources
7. Open space and Recreation
8. *Services and Facilities*
9. Circulation
10. Sustainability, Energy and Climate Change
11. Implementation Program

Each of these sections has a set of recommendations that correspond with the goals and the specific needs of the particular section.

*Suggestion: in many of the items below we start to go into how we are going to do it vs. what each section actional just is. If this is just for discussion and not to be written in the actual introduction fine, but if this is just the introduction....the 'how' we do it should separate. I began to make comments on this in some below but have decided just this note it best.*

**Commented [1]:** Please see 'CPTC Guidebook: Creating Master Plans', [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AbS6mZbg\\_E0qY0\\_uOZ\\_hB\\_Cjcp1RHEgFIMYM1k0YtY/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AbS6mZbg_E0qY0_uOZ_hB_Cjcp1RHEgFIMYM1k0YtY/edit)

This document has lots of useful information that will help us develop a solid plan.

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1. The Goals and Policies section describes the long-term goals as envisioned by the citizens of Colrain. For each element of the plan, goals describe ideal conditions that would result if the plan is successfully implemented. Policies are statements that identify preferred actions in relation to the goals of each element. They represent “operational” actions that Colrain will undertake to meet its goals. At the end of each section, goals and policies are described that can help address problems and ensure the orderly and sustainable growth in Town.

2. The Community Profile/ Situational Analysis section includes a brief history of the Town, a description of Community Facilities and Services, a description of the local topography, political boundaries and demographic data. This section is designed to give a brief overview of the physical, historical and human characteristics of the Town as well as describing how the community has grown over the years. It includes a description of the local economy, including employment opportunities available to residents Data - comparison to state/franklin county. An important element of the local economy has traditionally been the Agricultural sector - part of this section is specifically devoted to an analysis of the farms in Town and their contribution to the economy what has happened over the years compared to other local towns. We need to also include an analysis of condition of our facilities, capacity....needs for future.

3. The land use section is the centerpiece of the Plan. It describes the long-term plan for conservation and development, designating critical natural resources and open space as ‘protection areas’ and developable land as ‘growth areas’ for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Much of the history of Colrain has been shaped by the natural resources available in Town. This section describes the Town’s natural resources, including air and water, recreation areas, fish and wildlife, and the geological resources available for future development or preservation. This includes a description of the housing stock historically and issues affecting affordable housing today and in the future. Demographic data as it relates to housing is also discussed in this section. Particular attention is paid to the availability of, and potential for, affordable housing and the issues facing an aging population. If we expand our subsections, this section could be mostly a current land use and designations analysis of our town and interrelationship of public and private land uses. It would establish density of population and facilities (available or planned) and services in relation to land. Maps illustrating land use policies of town to be included. The long term plan for housing should be in a ‘housing’ section (which we should add as a separate section). It might be small but I think it is currently a big focus now for the community and may be a good place to analyze SF, MF etc....no only affordable housing

This section should analyze the tax base as it relates to land use as well.

4. The economic development section contains an analysis of Colrain’s labor force and employment base, and conditions that contribute in noteworthy ways to the community’s

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economy. Major employers, such as the Colrain Central School, the agricultural sector and the home-based craft businesses are analyzed. The potential growth opportunities offered by world-class broadband infrastructure is also discussed. Mention is made of the loss of a major manufacturer and the potential for brownfields development. This is the place were home-based businesses and art/craft sources of income should be analyzed. Farm income etc....Analysis of all current economic base for residents as well as what is possible can be evaluated to inform a long term plan

5. The natural and cultural resources section focuses on preserving and enhancing scenic, water, ecological, historical and cultural, and mineral resources. It examines the relationship between the natural environment and the built environment as the community has evolved, and documents conditions requiring special protective and preservation measures. A description of the historic district and of buildings of historical significance is included here.

6. The open space and recreation section identifies existing recreational areas and sites and outlines strategies and actions to preserve and enhance open space areas in the community in order to meet the recreational needs of residents. What facilities could the Town develop that would address quality of life issues? For example, is there the possibility of developing an official swimming area? Could the historic forts in town be made more accessible through trail improvements and signage? If the Community Preservation Act is adopted by Colrain, how could it support open space and recreation priorities?

7. The services and facilities section describes the municipal services offered to residents. Municipal and school services attract residents and businesses to town and keep residents and businesses over the long term. Civic buildings contribute to a sense of community and should provide public gathering places, yet Colrain is sorely lacking in this kind of space. Neither the school nor the library are ideal community spaces due to usage and size respectively. Going forward, how can the Town address this issue? What additional services could the town offer? One example might be a 'swap and trade' section at the Transfer Station. How can the town support the development of the new wood bank, help the Council on Aging find a permanent place in town and address the Griswoldville sewer problem? Could the town build a community solar array that could benefit residents who are unable to install solar panels on their homes? Some of the items outlined here are getting in to 'what' we should plan to do and those should be left for after we analyze and with the community set goals. We should not at this point, lead the plan.....that can come later. This happens in other areas too of this doc. So we can discuss at our meeting and hold them for the community goal setting if agreed.

8. The circulation section addresses current transportation- related issues and future challenges associated with growth and change. This also includes our Roads and what we may plan such as paving, private ways, obsolete roads general maintenance, long term needs.. What improvements do we envision to help citizens get around town more effectively? What role does the PVTA play, if any? Can we make cycling more attractive to residents and visitors?

9. The sustainability section addresses the challenges of climate change. A SWOT this

is a strategy not an explanation of what the section is. should it go later on.) analysis can be done to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats posed by climate change. Colrain has put time and energy into developing a Municipal Vulnerability Plan. Colrain also has a flood plan. These plans, and related maps, should be reviewed and updated as necessary and included in this planning document. The town Energy Committee should be consulted to determine what actions can be taken to propel Colrain towards fossil-free energy self-sufficiency. Consulting the document created by The Office Of Climate Innovation And Resilience, *Recommendations of the Climate Chief*, will also provide valuable insight into addressing climate change and sustainability. Let's make a separate document listing the resources available I offer to start that as i have already collected many.

10. The implementation program summarizes the policies of each section and outlines implementation strategies and actions that each board in Town will undertake to ensure that the policies are executed and the goals are met.

11. A section that outlines how the plan is to be updated in the future. So that it is not left for 30 years.

## B. SECTION 1: GOALS AND POLICIES

The statements listed below represent the overall goals of the Town of Colrain as established by a community visioning process and further establish a foundation upon which specific Town Plan policies and recommendations will be based. Policies are statements which define a settled course to be followed to achieve the Town's goals. Recommendations are suggestions for further work to be conducted by the town; regional, state and federal entities; and the general public.

This section is very much out of date. And we should start fresh from community input session the analysis we will do, recent work done on specific things such as my plan green communities etc. what the State and Regional Plands have indicated our goals should take into account. dramatic growth and development which has swept through the Pioneer Valley and Southern Vermont, Colrain has remained a small and fiscally challenged agricultural community, but with greater numbers of people being forced to leave town to find work - making it more of a bedroom community year by year. With this development trend expected to continue, Colrain is ill-equipped to have control over how, when, and where development occurs. Presently our only tools in managing Colrain's growth lie with the Zoning Bylaws which do not reflect the patterns of development people in Colrain would like to see. In addition, some Colrain citizens have expressed a strong interest in bringing industry and commerce to the currently

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impoverished Town to add to the tax base. Though large parcels of land have been zoned for industrial development, specific guidelines relating to what types of industry would be allowed and restrictions therein have largely been overlooked. Managing growth is a conscious process of directing development to appropriate locations and on a manageable timeline. The process requires a commitment on the part of a community to set a course for its future and to employ all of the tools available to stay that course. This Town Plan should provide the framework for managing Colrain's future growth.

**GOALS** of the Town of Colrain... Take of the information in this section out these are old and will be developed anew.

**Commented [5]:** These are, after all this time, still pretty accurate but need to be validated by citizens. I did some minor editing.

- 1) To protect rural/agricultural character and existing open space.
  - a) continued availability and good management of lands for agriculture forestry, and earth/mineral extraction and thus;
  - b) assure adequate income for existing and new farmers;
  - c) conserve and protect valuable natural resources.
- 2) To preserve and enhance the community's cultural, historical, architectural, recreational and scenic resources;
  - a) to revitalize and create a true "downtown" in the Town Center of Colrain
  - b) to provide Town residents with opportunities for passive and active recreational and cultural opportunities consistent with the character and public capacity in Town.
  - c) to protect historic landmarks and buildings.
- 3) To ensure that any land development proceeds in an orderly fashion consistent with the best interests of the community as a whole and to discourage uncoordinated and incompatible development that may jeopardize or overburden public and private investment, or damage the Town's resources and rural character.
- 4) To plan for minimal population growth through guided residential development which will promote affordable housing for residents of different ages and income levels yet not overburden town resources.
- 5) To ensure that the basic needs of health, safety, education, and welfare of the Town's residents will be met and maintained at optimum levels;
- 6) To provide the highest quality education for the children in Town.
- 7) To promote and support appropriate local economic development, increase the

tax base and the development of adequate infrastructure for industry in order to provide good jobs at good wages.

- 8) To provide a safe, convenient and scenic road network capable of accommodating traffic for the benefit of the residents of Colrain.
- 9) To foster the recycling of waste materials as far as possible.
- 10) To ensure that decisions and policies made at the local, regional, and state levels are implemented in harmony with the needs and concerns of the Town and existence of a continuous planning process in order to accommodate the changing needs of the Town.
- 11) To gradually work towards environmental sustainability goals by eliminating fossil fuel use in municipal buildings and by supporting residents to do the same.

Commented [6]: New goal.

#### POLICIES of the Town of Colrain...

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Effective implementation of policies described in each section of the Town Plan requires careful consideration and action by the townspeople, Selectboard, Planning Board, and other boards and organizations. The following available methods for instituting policies should be considered:

I think when we get to the Implementation plan it should be done in a spreadsheet/grid format. The information below is helpful but not part of the introduction and has many assumed goals/policies for the town. Let's just describe the section not the suggested ways we could figure it out or what we should do.

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1. Land Use Regulation: Land use regulation at the local level is most effective when it is specifically directed to public health and safety, the prohibition of unsuitable uses, and the protection of water and air quality and highly valuable natural resources. The Massachusetts General Laws specify three mechanisms for implementing the goals and policies of the Town Plan:
  - \* zoning bylaws
  - \* subdivision regulations
  - \* an official map
2. Capital Budgeting: Budgeting provides for control of development pressure by providing public services and facilities according to projected need and the

Town's ability to fund improvements. Capital budgeting also increases the efficiency and economy of town government by foreseeing and planning needed capital expenditures well in advance. A capital budget and program lists and describes capital projects to be undertaken during the next five fiscal years, their estimated costs and proposed methods of financing. A comprehensive long term capital plan allows for the town to vote once at town meeting not on each item and it would also plan for what free cash might be used for is available. A capital plan includes more than just vehicles and equipment. A comprehensive capital plan would also cover facilities and could include green energy plans. I will share an excellent example when we get to this.

3. Land Acquisition: The most certain methods for protecting and assuring controlled public use of valuable recreational resource and scenic lands are via gift, purchase in fee simple, lease, or by acquisition of easements or development rights. Land being taken out of Chapter 61A should be closely reviewed for preservation as agricultural land. TBD after analysis.
4. Taxation: Massachusetts G.L. Chapters 61, 61A and 61B enable landowners who choose agriculture or forestry as long term uses of their property to have that land taxed accordingly. The Program encourages the maintenance of undeveloped land for farming, forestry and public recreation. Towns are directly reimbursed by the State for lost tax revenue. Towns may also provide property tax relief for qualifying farm, forest and open space landowners by adopting tax stabilization programs to reduce local property tax burden. This is still a goal that our town may/may not decide is best. This can be analyzed when we analyze all types of land use and taxes and determine what is best for our town.
5. Voluntary Action: The following methods would help to ensure Town Plan implementation: its is again assuming....a goal/policy and we are not there yet.
  - ★ privately-agreed covenants binding on purchasers of land;
  - ★ special attention and consideration given by private landowners to the objectives of the Town Plan and its policies when they decide to build or subdivide;
  - ★ formation of non-profit conservation land trusts to acquire resource lands; and
  - ★ participation in the town planning process by organizations and citizens concerned with the future of Colrain.

6. Economic Development Initiatives:

- ★ Infrastructure Planning
- ★ Coordinating all boards
- ★ Marketing Plan
- ★ Public/private partnership building
- ★ Exploring regional options for economic development

7. Public Consensus Building:

- ★ Holding public meetings and hearings
- ★ Coordinating various public and private interests
- ★ Creating community events
- ★ Publishing a local and regular newsletter