

# PLANNING IN BRUNSWICK AND WHY IT MATTERS



**The goal of planning is to maximize the health, safety, and economic well-being of all people living in our communities. This involves thinking about how we can move around our community, how we can attract and retain thriving businesses, where we want to live, and opportunities for recreation. Planning helps create communities of lasting value.**

- American Planning Association

Planning is everywhere you look. From where your house sits on its lot to protecting our coast, planning is involved. The Department of Planning and Development conducts a broad range of municipal activities:

- Comprehensive Planning
- Development Review
- Downtown and Neighborhood Planning
- Natural Resource Management
- Building Permits
- Enforce, Maintain, and Update Zoning Map and Ordinance



**Do you want the character of your community to shape new development or do you want new development to shape the character of your community?**

- Ed McMahon, Senior Fellow  
Urban Land Institute

Planning is essential to creating, protecting, and enhancing a community's character. A community's character can be a direct expression of residents' values and desires, resulting in a sense of place and belonging. One of the best ways to maintain character is through growth management. Guiding where and what type of development may occur allows for a well-balanced, more stable community.

Good planning anticipates a community's future needs and can maximize the efficient use or protection of resources, including natural resources, such as wildlife habitats, and financial resources, such as tax funds.

Planning provides a means to align the public's vision and their local government. Consensus planning makes sure that all participants are working towards achieving the same goals.



**Everyone!** Planning is a participatory process that involves the entire community.

Residents elect our Town leaders, vote on referendums, participate in public meetings, and serve on the Town's boards, commissions, and committees such as the Conservation Commission, Marine Resources Committee, Planning Board, Village Review Board, and Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee.

Businesses' decisions to invest in our Town shape its character, bring vibrancy to our commercial centers, and add jobs to our local economy. A well planned town is attractive to business.

Technical professionals, public or private, such as architects, engineers, and environmental scientists help assure that development will be safe to our residents and environment.

Town staff help residents and businesses through the project approval process and provide information and analysis to the Town's boards, commissions, and committees.



Planning can be both a short-term activity and a long-term activity. For example, when preparing a comprehensive plan, planners may look 10 to 20 years into the future. It is inevitable that communities change over time. Long-term planning helps a community anticipate change and develop policies for responsible growth. Similarly, when making changes to the Future Land Use Map, Zoning Ordinance, or Zoning Map, planners are anticipating that these regulations will guide development over years or even decades.

On the other hand, short-term planning may look only a few months into the future. Once a developer has prepared a project for Town review, if it meets the Town's Zoning Ordinance and other codes, it may receive approval within weeks or a few months, depending on the scale of the project.

Finally, planners also look backwards sometimes to help identify trends and the successful and unsuccessful elements of a project.



A planner's "toolbox" is generally made up of carrots (incentives) and sticks (mandatory compliance). Examples of policies and regulations that reward the development community for meeting Town goals include:

- Density Bonus (more dwelling units on a lot allowed than would normally be allowed) for providing Affordable Housing
- Density Bonus for Habitat Mitigation and/or Protection
- Density Bonus for Open Space Developments
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Funds

Zoning ordinances are the most common planning tools to require compliance with specific standards the community has established. Working together and consistent with a Future Land Use Map and Zoning Map, zoning ordinances control the character and type of development and acceptable land uses. Failure to comply with a zoning ordinance may require costly revisions to a project. Always ask the Town Department of Planning and Development about zoning before starting a project!