

**Date:** May 14, 2009

**To:** Brattleboro Planning Commission Chair  
Brookline Planning Commission Chair  
Marlboro Planning Commission Chair  
Newfane Planning Commission Chair  
Putney Planning Commission Chair  
James Matteau, Windham Regional Commission Executive Director  
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs

**From:** Dummerston Planning Commission

**Re:** Dummerston Town Plan Amendments

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Enclosed please find a copy of the proposed Dummerston Town Plan which is intended to replace the existing Town Plan which expires on August 11, 2009. The Dummerston Planning Commission welcomes your comments on the proposed Plan either in writing or at the **public hearing** to be held at **7:00 p.m., June 16, 2009 at the Dummerston Town Office** located at 1523 Middle Road in Dummerston, VT. As required by 24 V.S.A. §4384(c), we solicit comments from the planning commissions for towns abutting Dummerston and the Windham Regional Commission with respect to the compatibility of our proposed Town Plan with your Town Plans.

***Background and Summary of the Amendment***

The proposed Town Plan amendments seek to replace in their entirety the existing Dummerston Town Plan which will expire in August 2009. The focus of this Town Plan includes bringing data contained in the 2004 Town Plan up to date; revising the goals, policies and actions steps; and reevaluating the future land use districts based on four years of community input and an analysis of land capability and development trends. The Planning Commission is proposing a new Future Land Use Map that is substantially different than the one in the 2004 Town Plan. The full impact of the redesignation of some land into these classifications will depend on any subsequent changes to the town's Zoning Bylaw.

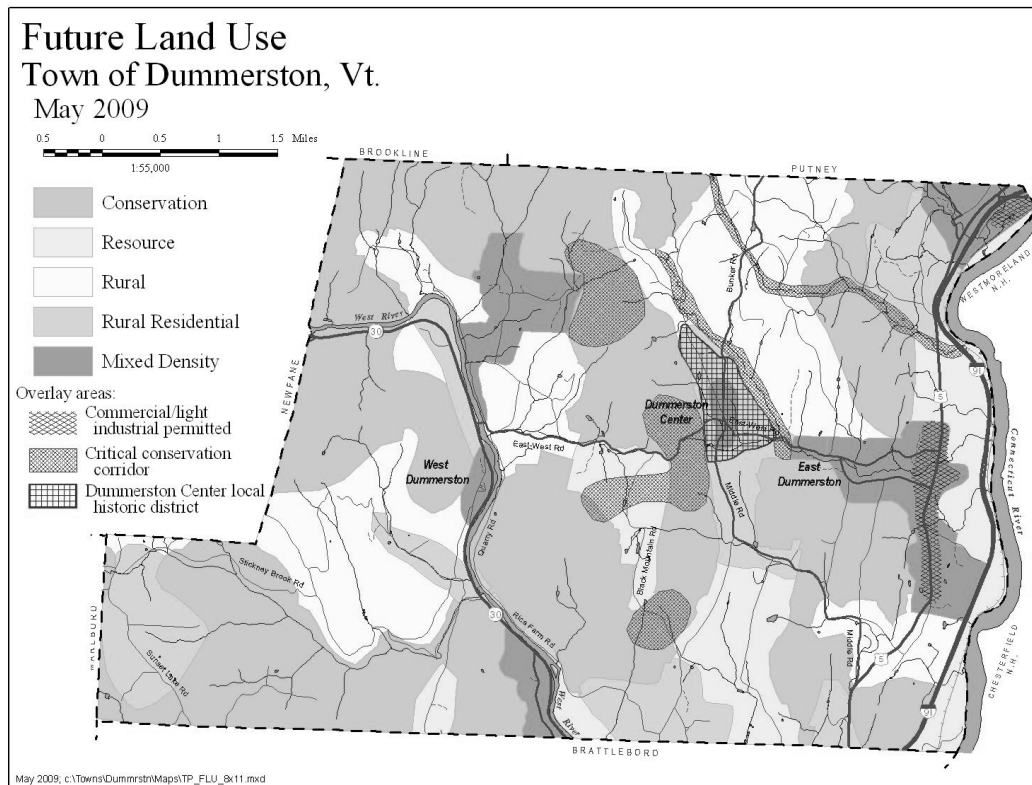
The proposed Town Plan is consistent with the goals established in 24 V.S.A. §4302. The changes are a direct result of community input via forums and public meetings as well as extensive Planning Commission discussions. The Plan outlines the community's vision for the future of Dummerston and proposes initiatives and regulatory changes to accomplish the vision.

**Land Area Designation Considerations**

As mentioned above, the 2009 future land use plan represents a comprehensive change to the future land use designations proposed in the in the 2004 Town Plan. The 2004 Town Plan contained eight future land use districts and one overlay area. The 2009 Town Plan has five future land use districts with three overlay areas. It is difficult to compare the changes because there are substantial differences in both boundary locations and recommended densities. The map below shows the Future Land Use as

The proposed Town Plan changes are permissive only. They permit the Town to establish various land use districts but do not determine the final detail. A brief characterization of the Future Land Uses is described below:

a. **Conservation District:** In most locations, undeveloped land, conservation corridors, large parcels, low impact recreation, and habitat protection are maintained. There are some low to very low density residential areas located in this district. The Plan proposes to limit permitted uses to agriculture, forestry, individual recreational hunting and fishing camps, seasonal or occasional use camps, and



accessory uses to the permitted uses on the same lot. A very low density of 1 unit per 27 acres is desired.

b. **Resource District:** The resource district contains most lands that are currently used for farming and/or forestry. The Plan seeks to protect these areas for continued economic use and therefore desire low to very low density development. Creative development techniques are encouraged to protect the valuable land.

c. **Rural District:** These are areas with existing low density housing that is generally located a distance from facilities and services. The desire is to provide for modest levels of housing while maintaining the ability to use the land for forestry and agriculture.

d. **Rural Residential:** As in the 2004 Town Plan, this area is designated to accommodate moderate density housing. These areas are residentially developed and have easy access to the road system.

e. **Mixed Density Districts:** Mixed density districts replace the Village and Hamlet districts in the 2004 Town Plan. There are also some new areas classified as Mixed Density. High density development is desired and commercial development compatible with the primary residential uses may be permitted.

In addition to the above future land use districts, there are three special areas to deal with commercial/light industrial development, Dummerston Center, and conservation corridors.

***The probable impact on the surrounding area, including the effect of any resulting increase in traffic, and the probable impact on the overall pattern of land use (24 V.S.A. §4384(c)(1)):***

The proposed classifications of land will improve the overall pattern of land use by directing development towards land that is capable of handling development and protecting those areas and resources that have been identified as being important to the cultural and environmental character of the town. The changes are expected to have little impact on traffic.

***The long-term cost or benefit to the municipality, based upon consideration of the probable impact on (24 V.S.A. §4384(c)(2)) the municipal tax base and the need for public facilities.***

It is difficult to predict how unknown future development might impact the municipal tax base. Much of the land in the Conservation District will either be difficult to develop because of the physical limitations on the land or it is already conserved. Therefore, there may not be a large impact to the tax base. The mixed density areas might improve the Town's tax base by allowing for commercial development that is compatible with residential uses.

Regardless of where it occurs, any future development may result in a need for increased capacity of public services and facilities. However, concentrating development in appropriate areas may help lessen the burden on public services. The need for any new facilities or increased capacity would be mitigated by the potential for private infrastructure as part of the development approval process.

***The amount of vacant land which is already subject to the proposed new designation; actually available for that purpose, and the need for additional land for that purpose***

Over half the land in Dummerston is vacant or undeveloped. Each future land use district contains vacant land. It is not feasible to undertake a comprehensive Build-Out Analysis study at this time. However, the future land use plan will allow growth in each district.

***The suitability of the area in question for the proposed purpose, after consideration of appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the proposed change on other areas similarly designated***

The 2009 Future Land Use Plan allows growth but directs it to locations that are more reflective of Dummerston's traditional settlement pattern and unique landscape features. It also provides for the preservation of Dummerston's natural resources, biodiversity, and rural character. The suitability of the area, size and boundaries are appropriate given the population and development trends, community input that was received over the past several years, Conservation Commission knowledge of the town's biodiversity, and capability of the land.

***The appropriateness of the size and boundaries of the area proposed for change, with respect to the area required for the proposed use, land capability, and existing development in the area (V.S.A. §4384(c)(5)):***

See above.