

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is a document to help guide the town as it looks forward to the next ten years and beyond, with recommendations for how to get where we want to be.

2. Does a Comprehensive Plan establish ordinances or regulations of any kind?

The plan does not establish ordinances, statutes or regulations. It may suggest actions, but these recommendations would have to be developed by the Planning Board or some other town-appointed group. The minor ones (such as providing information) can be acted on at the committee or SelectBoard level; the major ones must be approved by voters at Town Meeting.

3. If the voters pass a Comprehensive Plan, does that mean that everything in it must be enacted as written?

No. The goals and strategies listed in a Comprehensive Plan are intended to provide direction, not dictate an inflexible course of action for the town. The plan is supposed to be evaluated and revised by the town in five years and completely updated in ten years to stay abreast with changing times. Additionally, it can be amended as situations arise.

4. Was this plan imposed by the State?

The state has mandated that all municipalities in Maine conduct a process of comprehensive planning, but has not mandated what the product should be. Each community is encouraged to develop its own goals and strategies that respond to its particular needs and planning issues.

5. Why is having a Comprehensive Plan beneficial?

A Comprehensive Plan:

- sets forth a coherent plan for the town's future, based on the desires of the citizens and an assessment of current and anticipated need and issues;
- provides valuable background information on the town's natural, fiscal and economic resources, and its growth trends;
- enables eligibility and/or preferred status for state grants such as Community Development Block Grants to support town projects such as Community Center improvements, road improvements, and village center enhancements such as landscaping and business façade improvements.

6. Who produced this Comprehensive Plan and how did town residents provide input?

A committee of town residents appointed by the Select Board drafted the Comprehensive Plan. Over the course of 4-5 years, input was solicited from residents through surveys, open meetings, and informational sessions.

7. Will having a Comprehensive Plan increase my taxes?

A Comprehensive Plan does not commit a town to expending any resources. It does not mandate anything. Any proposed expenditures would have to go through the normal budget process and many would have to be approved by voters at town meeting.

8. Why can't our town just use our 1991 Comprehensive Plan?

The contents of the 1991 plan are outdated – all data, analyses and conclusions are based on information that is over 30 years old. A plan is considered no longer "consistent" with the ME State Growth Management Act after 12 years, and must be updated. Also, our town's population has increased from 1160 to 1631 since the 1991 plan. Recent surveys and informational meetings provide an opportunity for current residents to have a say in their town's future.

9. Can the suggested strategies be revised during the 10 year period?

Yes. During the 10 year life of the plan, strategies may be revised, eliminated, pursued, adopted or enacted.

10. Does the State require municipalities to designate a Growth Area?

The State expects municipalities to have a designated Growth Area but it also will issue exemptions. These exemptions can be granted if the municipality has one or more of the following conditions:

- a) Severe Physical Limitations (water delivery/sewage disposal limitations; soil - ledge or steep slopes; or critical natural resources);
- b) Minimal or No Growth (residential growth area exemption; commercial/residential growth area exemption; industrial growth area exemption);
- c) Lack of a Village or Densely Populated Area.

12. Was Brownfield granted an exemption for the Growth Area?

Yes. It was granted a Growth Area exemption because it does not have centralized systems for water delivery or sanitary disposal nor a village.

13. How does this exemption benefit Brownfield?

Brownfield will not be required to dedicate 10% of its capital improvement funds to a Growth Area. These dedicated funds would be used to expand or improve water and sanitary systems, roadways, sidewalks, site lighting, etc.