

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of a municipal plan is to help guide decision-makers to chart the future of a community. A plan is a town's vision for the future. It states related goals and objectives based upon a brief reflection of the past and an analysis of existing conditions. A plan is developed from an established planning program. This planning program has involved the public in a variety of ways. Through this collective effort the vision and recommendations have developed with the best interests of the Town as a whole in mind. In other words, a Town Plan is a calculated vision which is put together by the residents of the Town.

A Town Plan will help Montgomery control its future by providing it with the means to control change. A Town Plan does that by providing the community with a plan of action, or blueprint, which shows a community what it will be like in the future. A Town Plan shows a community what things are going to stay the same and what things are going to change. It defines how those changes are going to happen, and how quickly, or slowly, they are going to take place. A Town Plan gives Montgomery the power to guide change, and the pace at which change will occur, so that change does not control the Town's future. If the recommendations of the plan are implemented, the quality of life in Montgomery can be positively affected.

Montgomery Town Officials engage in an ongoing planning program for additional reasons including:

- Providing additional information and data to guide decision-makers in developing new policies.
- Identifying areas where additional study is needed.
- Providing a foundation for developing a capital program and amending the zoning and subdivision bylaws.

Recommendations within the municipal plan are based on an analysis of current conditions, the input of many residents, housing and population projections, and development trends in the Town and the surrounding region. Though the goals and recommendations of this plan are long-term, it is expected that Montgomery will re-examine them periodically and amend the Plan as needed and as required by law.

Authority

The Town of Montgomery is authorized to prepare and adopt a Municipal Plan via Chapter 117, Title 24 of the VSA (Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act). Section 4382 of the Act dictates what needs to be included in a plan. The intent of the law is to

encourage a municipality to "engage in a continuing planning process that will further several stated goals." The Act further states that municipal plans shall be re-examined, updated, and re-adopted every five years. This process should be ongoing, whereby the Plan is continually reassessed and revised to meet the changing needs of the community. Consequently, there will be future opportunities to review and amend the plan. Residents, community groups, or anyone with an interest in the Town is encouraged to provide input into this ever-continuing process to the Montgomery Town Planning Commission at any time.

Planning Process

A Montgomery Town plan was developed and adopted in 1974. The plan was later amended in 1987, 1994, 2000 and 2005. The Town began this latest revision in 2009, with some assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

Under current law, Act 200, a municipality must address ten (10) elements in its plan development which are the following: a statement of objectives, policies, and programs of the municipality to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment; a land use plan; a transportation plan; a utility and facility plan; a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources; an educational plan; a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan; a statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title; an energy plan; and a housing element that shall include a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income person's housing needs. In order to develop regulatory mechanisms (by-laws) appropriate to guide development, a plan must first be adopted by the Town Selectboard. Once adopted, the Plan becomes the basis for development and enactment of zoning and subdivision regulations.

Role of the Montgomery Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is empowered to formulate goals and objectives toward Plan development. The Commission is responsible for the review and revision of the town plan and to propose amendments to the zoning bylaws and regulations in an effort to implement the plan, and nominates the zoning administrator with appointment by the Selectboard. The Commission also works on community development programs, grant applications and other projects that further the goals of this town plan.

The role of the Commission is ongoing. Changing community conditions, preferences and priorities call for consistent monitoring of plan objectives. Amendments to the plan may, from time to time, be necessary and the Commission has responsibility for this task.