

# Pathways to a Vital Economic Center

Executive Summary  
March 2018

BRADFORD BUILDOUT  
ANALYSIS, CAPACITY  
STUDY AND  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
ANALYSIS

*Funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Department of Housing and  
Community Development and the Town of Bradford*

## A. Background

The Town of Bradford has completed a planning project that investigates the development potential and capacity to accommodate new development relative to the Lower Plain Area. The Lower Plain is located immediately adjacent to Interstate 95, just south of Bradford's Downtown. Balancing the need for economic growth with the sustainability of commerce in the downtown has always been a focus for the community. This project, which included five distinct components has identified specific details that will provide insight for the Planning Commission as they move forward to implement their plan for economic development. The resulting information provides the town with empirical data that enables thoughtful long term planning that will support the economic sustainability of the town in conjunction with state and town goals of maintaining existing compact settlement patterns.

The components of this project include:

- **Public Survey** – This survey collected information from Bradford residents and individuals located within Bradford's greater economic area. It focused on the types of businesses frequented, shopping habits, opportunities for new businesses and a gauge of preferences for particular styles and patterns of development.
- **Economic Development Study** – This market analysis looked at Bradford's local economy and the greater economic region surrounding the community. Potential opportunities to recapture lost revenue and opportunities to enhance economic development were identified.
- **Buildout Analysis & Capacity Study** – An analysis was conducted using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to determine potential spatial barriers or other constraints that may be limiting future development potential. Ultimately, there were limited regulatory barriers outside of Act 250, but limitations to the existing sewer system will eventually need to be addressed.
- **Demonstration Designs** – Based on information collected from the public, potential avenues for new land use regulations were identified and demonstrated on two parcels in the lower plain. These techniques will allow Bradford's planners to guide development in the lower plain in a way the meets the

community's vision.

- **Implementation Recommendations** – The primary deliverable for this project is a list of action items that the Planning Commission can use to implement the municipal vision for the Lower Plain. Actions are summarized in section C.

## B. Path to a Vital Economic Center

The analysis and public input collected point toward a new approach to land use planning in the Lower Plain. Survey responses and visual preferences indicate that there is a desire to have a more “village-style” pattern of development occur in the Lower Plain. Characteristics of village-style development include:

- **Homes on narrow lots.** In many Vermont villages and downtowns, homes are on lots that are narrow, but deep. Public interaction and activity is often centered on the street.
- **Building design that is context sensitive and oriented to the street.** A neighborhood is in part defined by its architecture. Buildings often have similar design characteristics, and in villages and downtowns, they face the street.
- **Mixed Use.** Villages and downtowns always contain a dense mix of residential, civic and commercial uses. Housing types often vary in villages as well.
- **Designed for People.** In traditional villages, design is focused on the human environment, rather than on automobiles. Building scale, streets and sidewalks are generally designed in a way that enhances pedestrian safety and public interaction.
- **Encourages Social Interaction.** The nexus between private spaces like porches and yards and the streetscape provide people with opportunities for interaction.
- **Streetscaping.** Public spaces often have a specific design, including landscaping, where plants, trees and shrubs provide visual interest, shade, and other aesthetic benefits.

When considered in relation to the results of the market analysis (which identified some opportunities for new commercial development) and the limited capacity constraints on the Lower Plain, there are clearly a number of ways that Bradford can work to actively encourage sustainable economic growth that balances the vitality of the Downtown with the Lower Plain.

### C. Action Item Summary

Action items are divided into planning and policy activities, and economic development activities. Planning and policy activities relate directly to actions that can be taken by the municipality with limited involvement from the public, consultants (excluding the Regional Planning Commission) or grant funds. Economic Development activities are more likely to involve community groups, other economic organizations, private consultants or the State to implement.

Policy and planning actions include:

- **Revise the Town Plan** to incorporate the results of this study
- **Adopt an official map** to improve road circulation over time
- **Adopt subdivision regulations** to improve oversight of the locations of internal roads, open space, utilities, etc., and to make Bradford a 10-acre town under Act 250.
- **Revise and adopt zoning regulations** to include a design control overlay in the Lower Plain that addresses building form, placement, coverage and design. Would also include improved parking standards and better access management.
- **Work with the Regional Planning Commission** to revise the RPCs Future Land Use areas in Bradford.

Economic development actions include:

- **Improving economic outreach** for residents and businesses through education and communication.
- **Develop a wayfinding plan** to direct visitors to important locations and improve public awareness of Bradford's assets – particularly its natural resource assets.
- **Enhanced Bradford's gateway** by working with the Agency of Transportation to improve circulation in the Lower Plain.
- **Build on Farm-Way as a destination** by developing businesses that complement and enhance its offerings.
- **Conduct a housing inventory** to determine what types of housing are most needed, and what kinds would be most economically viable, particularly if located in the Lower Plain.
- **Help Downtown businesses access Village Center benefits** by communicating what is available to them.
- **Conduct a sidewalk/Bike Path study** in the lower plain.