

In 2007 the Sandgate Planning Commission received a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The objectives of the grant were to perform a study of the Sandgate Zoning Bylaws, to gain citizen input in the town's planning process and to create an inventory of historic sites in the town. The emphasis of the zoning study was to review the current Sandgate Zoning Map and, by conducting a build-out analysis, gain an understanding of the development prescribed by the current land use regulations. Citizen input was obtained through a direct mail survey based on grand list records and the creation of planning and zoning links on the website www.sandgatevermont.com. The overall goal of this planning exercise is the eventual adoption of land use regulations that are based on the most accurate geographic information as well as input from an informed citizenry.

Build-out Analysis

Build-out analyses allow planners to estimate the amount and location of development for an area. Performing a build-out analysis is the step in the community planning process that identifies the holding capacity of the land. Build-out calculations are based on assumptions for density, physical constraints to development, and land-use regulations that define the size and placement of structures for that area. A build-out analysis provides an answer to the question "how many buildings could be built in this area according to current land-use regulations?" A build-out analysis provides a convenient reference for future planning because it represents a theoretical maximum. It does not imply or forecast how many buildings will actually be built.

In order to gain the most meaningful projections through the build-out analysis it is imperative to use the most up-to-date and accurate parcel map and zoning map. A review of the existing

parcel and zoning maps revealed some deficiencies that needed to be addressed.

Russell Graphics, Inc. originally prepared the Sandgate Parcel Map in 1998. This map was updated in 2004 by BCRC. It was decided that another update was needed prior to running the build-out analysis. Working with the Sandgate Listers, the parcel data was updated to December 31, 2007. The Listers understood that the updated digital data was the crucial product of this task and that the production of paper parcel maps would not be included in this grant (paper maps will be produced at a later date through tax listing funds).

The current Sandgate Zoning Map was digitized from 1:24,000 U.S. Geologic Survey topographic maps in 1991 by BCRC. This data has never been updated, although major technological advances have occurred in the mapping industry through hardware and software upgrades and cartographic data sources such as digital imagery and GPS. The current Sandgate Zoning Map utilizes the standard practices of defining land use districts based on setbacks from roads, surface water features, elevation contours and parcel lines, however, these features, digitized from 1:24,000 topographic maps, are highly inaccurate compared to the geographic data which is readily available today. Of particular importance is the availability of digital orthophotographs prepared by the Vermont Mapping Program and the Sandgate Parcel Map prepared. A Draft Revised Sandgate Zoning Map, with precise land use district delineations, was prepared for use during the build-out analysis. Road setbacks were defined by the Vermont Enhanced 911 road database, district delineations based on surface waters were derived by the Vermont Hydrography Dataset and parcel data updated to December 31, 2007 were consulted. It should be clearly understood that the underlying land planning philosophies inherent in the existing Sandgate Zoning Map have not changed and that adoption of the

Draft Revised Zoning Map would require a duly warned public hearing process.

To perform the build-out analysis The Orton Family Foundation GIS software “Community Viz” was utilized. The software takes into consideration the underlying zoning district requirements such as minimum lot sizes and other dimensional requirements, existing house locations, lot lines and certain predefined “constraints to development”.

This example, which projected an additional 897 single-family houses, could be viewed as “the worst case” scenario. The only constraints to development that were considered are lands above 1600 feet in elevation, conserved lands and wetlands. No new houses were placed in these geographic locations. It should be clearly understood that “site specific” development constraints such as steep slopes, wet soils, shallow depths to bedrock, flood hazard areas, and septic system design were not considered in this build-out scenario.

All the maps utilized in this planning exercise as well as the final Build-out Analysis Map can be viewed at www.sandgatevermont.com.

Historic Sites Inventory

The Planning Commission sought to establish an inventory of historic sites through the use of GPS, digital orthophotography and the Vermont Enhanced 911 building database. Features that were identified and mapped include old cemeteries, schoolhouses, churches, mill sites and the Daniel Shay’s settlement. The Historic Sites Map can be viewed at www.sandgatevermont.com. Citizen’s suggestions for updates and additions to the Historic Sites Inventory are encouraged.

Citizen Input and Participation

Land use regulations should clearly implement the policies and recommendations of the town plan. A good town plan should be based on clear input from the town citizenry regarding land use, the conservation of natural resources, transportation infrastructure, public utilities and facilities and town services. The Sandgate Planning Commission sought to obtain public input and participation through the establishment of planning and zoning links on the website and through a direct mail survey using the grand list records. The Sandgate Zoning Bylaw, Town Plan and a variety of permit application forms can be viewed and downloaded from www.sandgatevermont.com. The survey and results are as follows:

Sandgate Planning Commission Survey Summary of Results

In 2007, the Sandgate Planning Commission received a municipal planning grant to do a study of the Sandgate Zoning Bylaws and to encourage public participation in the planning process. The Sandgate land-use regulations, zoning and town plan maps, a build-out map, and permit applications can be viewed and printed at www.sandgatevermont.com. Your input is important. Please take a few moments to answer the following community planning survey and return it by mail or drop off at the Town Office by April 15th. Thank you!

Number of surveys returned: 94

Number of people: 137

Note: Many people did not answer all questions

1. How long have you owned property in the Town of Sandgate?

0-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	16-20 yrs	21-30 yrs	>31 yrs
23	14	6	5	20	24

Note: As high as 70 years reported

2. Are you familiar with the Sandgate Town Plan or Zoning Bylaws? These documents are available at the Town Office or can be downloaded at www.sandgatevermont.com.

Yes: 40

No: 41

3. If yes, are the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws clearly written and easy to understand?

Yes: 30

No: 10

4. If yes, do you agree with the underlying philosophies of the planning and development policies and recommendations?

Yes: 33

No: 6

5. Should a historic district with design standards be established in Sandgate Village in the vicinity of the Town Office, church, and old schoolhouse?

Yes: 56

No: 17

Maybe: 3

6. Would you support stricter development review and guidelines on ridgelines and steep hillsides?

Yes: 65

No: 20

Note: Several people questioned “over regulation”

7. Should there be an established commercial zone in Sandgate?

Yes: 16

No: 61

Note: One “yes” noted “but not near me”

8. Are there any particular resources or areas of Sandgate that warrant greater protection?

Yes: 37 – specific comments noted below

No: 23

Notes: Specific areas mentioned: Green River and access to it, streams, historic sites and structures, open fields, forests, the whole town, ridge lines, deer wintering areas, landscape and farmscape, riparian zones, mountain peaks, the notch, encourage large parcels, everything above 1500 feet, and similar.

9. What are the most important issues facing Sandgate in the next 10 years? (Check your top 3)

55 Development Pressure 83 Property Taxes 11 Schools

11 Employment 10 Affordable Housing 40 Roads

40 Loss of Natural Resources 10 Other (Please comment)

Other: School taxes, encroachment from Manchester, need development to have bigger tax base, need broadband, loss of community, intrusion on owner property rights, maintain rural nature.

10. Do you use your property for any of the following activities:

20 Agriculture 33 Forestry 33 Hunting 13 Fishing

64 Wildlife viewing 34 Other (please explain _____)

Other: Hiking/walking (6), camp (1), snowshoe (2), garden (2), swim (1), peace and quiet (11), nature preserve (1), food production (1), real estate investment (1), vacation (3), cross-country ski (1), ATV/snowmobile (1), recreation (3)

11. Is there anything that you would like to see changed in the Town of Sandgate?

Notes: road and guardrails (5), too much hunting pressure from outsiders (2), high-speed internet (5), cell phone service (2), no more giant houses (2), events for the whole community (1), closer watch on budget (1), term limits for town officials (1), more police presence (2), 45 mph on Sandgate Road except town center (1), zoning too strict near water (1), July 4 parade impedes traffic (1), tighter reins on budget (1), more hours for Town Clerk (1), monitor conflict of interest for town officials (2), zoning too lax regarding vehicles on property (1), have a green-up day (1)

12. Please rank the adequacy of existing facilities and services.
(5-Excellent, 4-Good, 3-Adequate, 2- Poor, 1-Bad, 0-No opinion)

Town Administration	___	Outdoor Recreation
Town Roads	___	Community Programs/Events
Fire Protection	___	Schools
Police Protection	___	Emergency Medical Services
Child Care Services	___	Adult/Senior Services
Phone Service	___	Internet Service
Electric Service	___	Trash/Recycling Services

Note: Please see following Table:

Issue	5	4	3	2	1	0
Town Administration	9	26	27	8	2	16
Town Roads	6	32	34	8	4	4
Fire Protection	2	22	27	9	5	20
Police Protection	4	12	33	13	5	22
Child Care Services	2	1	2	4	8	70
Phone Service	7	21	22	17	3	15

Electric Service	8	25	26	13	6	6
Outdoor Recreation	24	18	14	4	1	27
Community Programs/Events	5	15	14	7	2	35
Schools	4	13	13	2	2	48
Emergency Medical Services	6	15	13	7	1	39
Adult/Senior Services	2	7	2	3	5	59
Internet Service	0	2	2	3	42	38
Trash/Recycling Services	3	9	17	4	10	44

13. Please rank the importance of the following Sandgate attributes:

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Rural character	<u>71</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>
Scenic Beauty	<u>71</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>
Natural Resources	<u>67</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>
Remoteness	<u>50</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>7</u>
Recreation	<u>30</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>15</u>
Community	<u>41</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>8</u>

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Notes: Keep it “Sandgate” (13), Encourage open space (1), Increase lot zoning lot size to 5 and 10 acres (1), Build sense of community with second home owners (3), have alternates for town officials who miss meetings (1), need town Newsletter giving updates on issues (1), high taxes discourage young people (1), two town meetings/year (1), more flexibility with schools and costs (3)

How many people contributed answers to this survey?

Signature (optional):

What Next?

It is important that the products of this Municipal Planning Grant are put to good use. During the course of this planning grant the Sandgate Town Plan expired. The historic sites inventory, the survey results and public reaction to the Build-out Analysis should be taken into consideration as the Planning Commission begins the process of re-adoption or amending the Town Plan. The updated parcel data should be utilized to produce new paper maps for the Listers, the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Finally, the increased accuracies of Draft Revised Zoning Map represent a document that is much easier to regulate and enforce. However, the existing Sandgate Zoning Map will remain in effect until the Planning Commission initiates the required adoption process.