

Policy (in Comprehensive Plan, as adopted in 1993)	Proposed Action	Outcome
Downtown Character: History and Commerce		
<p>1) It is the policy of the Town to encourage the maintenance of the historic and attractive aspects of the downtown area without imposing unreasonable burdens on property owners. Aspects such as the material, design and layout of new and expanded structures, landscaping plans and signage all contributed to the aesthetics of the downtown area. Consultation with a Design Committee will be required, although compliance with the Committee's recommendations will be voluntary. This approach will be evaluated for its effectiveness by 1996 Town Meeting, with stricter measures considered at that time if felt to be necessary.</p>	<p>a) The Town will establish the Unity Design Committee. Require through land use ordinance that the design of proposed building and/or expansion of structures in the downtown district will trigger review by and discussion with the Unity Design Committee. c) Develop incentives to encourage property owners to comply with the Committee's recommendations.</p>	<p>a) No specific committee was ever appointed. Instead, the Planning Board has filled this role. B) The Land Use Ordinance was amended to include design guidelines. C) The guidelines are required for new construction in the downtown district.</p>
<p>2) It is the policy of the Town that the residential section of Depot Street, from the Unity Union Church parsonage and Unity Historical Society to the railroad tracks, be preserved as a primarily residential neighborhood. Parcels upon which existing commercial activity is located will be grandfathered.</p>	<p>a) Limit use and development in this area to those of a residential and public/quasi-public nature. Limited home occupations may be allowed, with suitable performance standards to be developed. Existing commercial uses within the district are to be grandfathered, including future similar uses in the same structures. Include in land use ordinance.</p>	<p>The Land Use Ordinance was amended so that Depot Street is not included in the retail zone. Non-residential uses are allowed, but most non large retail is not.</p>
<p>3) It is the policy of the Town to maximize the efficient use of the Unity Utilities District and support opportunities to keep the costs to users as fair and affordable as possible.</p>	<p>a) Maximize the use of land within reach of the existing sewer line by establishing a maximum lot size in downtown area for single family residences of 60,000 square feet. Include in land use ordinance. b) Conduct a cost/benefit analysis for new large system users to establish an appropriate impact fee structure. c) Maintain awareness of possible grant/loan programs to facilitate lagoon maintenance and/or system expansion.</p>	<p>a) The Land Use Ordinance was amended to include several provisions designed to maximize use of this district, including allowing for smaller lots and encouraging new commercial growth in this area. However, a 60,000 square foot maximum lot size for residents was not established. b) No such impact fee was developed. c) No such grant funds have been identified.</p>

<p>4) It is the policy of the Town to attract additional commercial and clean industrial development to the downtown area and to encourage the use of remaining developable land for that purpose. This will serve combined purposes of nurturing the viability of the downtown business district, making a positive contribution to the tax base, and preventing development sprawl.</p>	<p>a) Discourage construction of large lot single-family residential development in the downtown district by establishing a maximum lot size of 60,000 square feet. B) Require commercial, industrial, multi-family residential and public land uses proposed for the rural area to demonstrate why they cannot locate in the downtown area. c) Develop incentives to encourage the location of commercial and industrial development in the downtown district. d) Require high-impact traffic developments that locate in the rural area to pay impact fees for necessary road improvements, sewer line extensions, and other identified costs in public facilities improvements.</p>	<p>a) See 3a above b) The Land Use Ordinance was amended to require all new retail activity (except home-based) to be located downtown. C) Unity used TIF funding to encourage downtown redevelopment. d) No impact fees were developed.</p>
<p>5) It is the policy of the Town to support the creation of an industrial and/or business/office park within the downtown area, offering utilities, land and other amenities at an attractive price.</p>	<p>a) Explore feasibility of available locations; research grants or loans available for park development.</p>	<p>Unity (through Unity Barn Raisers) actively explored grants and loans to help purchase the land around Hodges for this purpose, but without success.</p>
<p>6) It is the policy of the Town to support commercial agriculture and accepted farming practices as determined by the Maine Department of Agriculture. Unity residents should expect to encounter the normal noise, odor and traffic interruptions associated with commercial farming. New land use development abutting active or recent farm operations should be set back at least 100' whenever possible to minimize likely land use conflicts or well water threats from inadvertent over-application of fertilizers or pesticides.</p>	<p>a) Publicize official support for commercial agriculture in any promotional materials developed about Unity. B) Require new structures and/or wells built on parcels adjacent to actively or recently farmed land to be set back at least 100' from that property line to minimize the chance of conflicts. Exceptions may be developed for lots upon which this is not feasible. Include in land use ordinance.</p>	<p>a) Many steps have been made to support commercial agriculture through local groups, principally Unity Barn Raisers, Maine Farmland Trust, and MOFGA. B) New setbacks were incorporated into an amended land use ordinance.</p>
<p>7) It is policy of the Town to encourage the maintenance of tillable land for current and potential future food production. This will require a cooperative effort between landowners, developers, new homeowners and the Town. Development proposals that result in current or future farmland protection will be given higher priority than other land use objectives, such as the 60,000 square foot maximum single-family lot size in the downtown area.</p>	<p>a) Develop Incentives, such as density bonuses, to encourage farmland retention in subdivisions and other relevant developments. Include in land use ordinance. B) Require any subdivider or other relevant developer to demonstrate that the design of any development will have a minimal adverse impact on farmland. Include in land use ordinance. c) Require any subdivider or other relevant developer to consider the continued farming of productive fields within the proposed development before granting approval. Assist in making arrangements with neighboring farmers if appropriate. Include in land use ordinance.</p>	<p>a) A system of density bonuses was established in the land use ordinance. B) The amended land use ordinance requires large subdivisions (5 lots or more) to be designed creatively to minimize impacts on farmland. c) This is addressed through both 6b and 7b above.</p>

<p>8) It is the policy of the Town to provide flexibility in development options where the preservation of open space or other stated public objective may be achieved. Dimensional requirements (e.g. minimum lot size, frontage) may be waived, although overall densities should be maintained.</p>	<p>Make specific provisions in land use ordinance to allow for clustering of homes on less than the minimum lot size as long as overall densities for the district are maintained. Include in land use ordinance.</p>	<p>The Land Use Ordinance was amended to allow for greater flexibility in many ways, including some degree of clustering.</p>
<p>9) It is the policy of the Town to assess property values of large parcels in the rural district at the lowest legal level, including road frontage, to encourage their retention as open space. The Town supports efforts to increase municipal authority over property taxation policy.</p>	<p>Continue traditional assessing practice of minimizing premium for rural road frontage.</p>	<p>NOTE: Since the policy was adopted, it's become clear that a local municipality has little flexibility over how assessing can be done. Simply put, it is determined by state law.</p>

Town Wide Land Use

<p>10) It is the policy of the Town that long-term land use planning take place for the mutual interest of private landowners and Town as a whole. Random, cumulative, single-lot development generally results in an inefficient use of land and should be prevented.</p>	<p>Require landowners to design a tentative long-term development plan and review it with the Planning Board before a second new lot is created from the same parcel of record within a ten-year period. Include in land use ordinance.</p>	<p>No requirement for long-term plans were ever adopted. However, a new lot permit proces was adopted. This gets landowners in front of the Planning Board to disucss longer-term plans.</p>
<p>11) It is the policy of the Town to limit land use activities based upon their measurable impacts rather than presumptions of inherent incompatibility.</p>	<p>a) Develop performance standards for various types of land use activities in areas such as noise, traffic, odor, and visual, social or ecological impact. Include in land use ordinance. Develop a site review component of the land use ordinance to include provisions for larger developments.</p>	<p>a)The land use ordinance was amended to better regulate various impacts (noise, traffic, odor, etc.) in cases of larger developments that trigger "development review". b) Higher-impact developments trigger "development review" and thus get a higher level of review.</p>
<p>12) It is the policy of the Town to preserve access to scenic views from public viewpoints whenever possible through voluntary means. By 1996, the effectiveness of voluntary means will be reviewed and required approaches considered if appropriate.</p>	<p>a) Upon review of any development permit application potentially impacting the public's view of a scenic vista, the Planning Board will discuss this aspect of the proposal and suggest ways of minimizing negative suggestions is voluntary. b) The Planning Board will assess the effectiveness of the voluntary approach and report its findings in the 1995 Town Report. If other measures are recommended, the Board will prepare an article for the 1996 Town Meeting for consideration by the voters.</p>	<p>a) No visual impact guidance was ever included into the land use ordinance. b) N/A</p>

Forestry and Wildlife Protection		
<p>19) It is the policy of the Town to encourage the use responsible forest management and harvesting practices, as determined by the State Bureau of Forestry, without adding unnecessary red tape at the town level. The Town will endeavor to make relevant compensation available to landowners to assist them in complying with State laws. Healthy forests provide healthy wildlife habitat.</p>	<p>a) Request Bureau of Forestry to send copies of all permit requests, harvesting reports, etc. relevant to Unity to the Code Enforcement Officer. b) compile summary of various State regulations applicable to land use in forested areas and make available in Town Office. If affordable, consider mailing out with tax bills. c) The Code Enforcement Officer will monitor harvesting activities informally and make a report to the 1996 Town Meeting as to the adequacy of existing education programs and regulations in promoting best management practices.</p>	<p>a) This is done as a matter of state policy. b) not done c) not done</p>
Affordable Housing		
<p>20) It is the policy of the Town to encourage the provision of diverse housing opportunities that meet the various needs of its residents at affordable cost.</p>	<p>a) The Town will continue its tradition of supporting private efforts to build quality, subsidized rental housing units in the downtown area. B) The Town will set a maximum lot size of 60,000 square feet in the downtown area for single-family residential units. Include in land use ordinance. c) The Town will allow mobile home parks throughout town. Include in land use ordinance. d) The Town will review and possibly revise its road frontage and lot size requirements to ensure that they serve Town objectives. This should enable multi-unit housing to be developed using no more land than necessary and odd-shaped lots to be fully utilized.</p>	<p>a) Done b) See 3a c) The land use ordinance was amended to both allow for and adequately regulate mobile home parks. D) The land use ordinance was amended to remove traditional lot size and road frontage requirements.</p>
Historical and Archaeological Resources		
<p>21) It is the policy of the Town to encourage the retention of colonial architecture in the downtown area through voluntary compliance with a required consultation with the Design Committee. The effectiveness of this approach will be evaluated by 1996 Town Meeting.</p>	<p>Establish Design Committee, develop structural and landscaping guidelines and require consultation on advisory basis (see Downtown policies above).</p>	<p>See 1 above</p>
<p>22) The Town should explore the possibilities for acquiring the old depot and its parcel of land primarily for the fire department but also for historic preservation.</p>	<p>a) Contact Unity Historical Society to gauge its interest in maintaining the depot. b) Contact Belfast and Moosehead Railroad or subsequent owner for possible donation of property and depot with arrangements for coordinated use in the future.</p>	<p>This building was bought and renovated privately.</p>

<p>23) It is the policy of the Town that anyone discovering what might prove to be an archaeological resource should contact the Maine Historical Preservation Commission for advice on how to proceed before disturbing the site.</p>	<p>Publish policy in any relevant land use documents.</p>	<p>Not done</p>
<p>24) It is the policy of the Town to coordinate efforts with private organizations to serve the community's needs cost-effectively as possible.</p>	<p>a) Continue cooperative efforts with Unity College regarding the Athletic Complex. Further develop plans for use of Kanololus Beach. c) continue policy of turning Town share of snowmobile registration fees to Snow Dusters Snowmobile Club for trail maintenance.</p>	<p>a) done b) done c) This occurs as a matter of local policy.</p>
<p>Facilities and Fiscal Capacity</p>		
<p>25) It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with surrounding communities in providing the most efficient supply of appropriate services, such as solid waste management.</p>	<p>Continue regular communication with neighboring communities regarding solid waste management options, including membership in Unity Area Solid Waste Committee and the Regional Recycling Committee.</p>	<p>Done</p>
<p>26) It is the policy of the Town to plan to cover its sand and salt pile in a cost-effective, environmentally manner.</p>	<p>Hold existing funds that have been raised for salt/sand shed, awaiting State decision on mandated facilities.</p>	<p>Done (project completed)</p>
<p>27) It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with the Department of Environmental Protection in capping the landfill in the most cost-effective, environmentally sound manner.</p>	<p>Continue ongoing negotiations with DEP and potential contractors.</p>	<p>Done (project completed)</p>
<p>28) It is the policy of the Town to maintain road maintenance as cost-effectively as possible. This implies roads will be upgraded to the point at which they can be efficiently maintained.</p>	<p>Continue traditional informal decision-making process regarding road maintenance priorities.</p>	<p>Road maintenance continues to be a major local issue.</p>
<p>29) The Town should pursue acquisition of the old depot or obtain easement rights to ensure contiguous access to the fire pond.</p>	<p>Contact Belfast and Moosehead Railroad or subsequent owner for possible donation of property or easement rights to the fire pond.</p>	<p>see 22</p>
<p>30) It is the policy of the Town to eventually move the Town Office to a location with better parking and meeting space, once an extremely cost-effective opportunity presents itself. An ideal long-term solution would be a combined Town Office and Fire Station, with rented space to the Post Office when it outgrows its current space.</p>	<p>a) Continue current practice of pursuing opportunities as they arise, both in changing land uses downtown and state/federal funding. b) Maintain regular communication with the Fire Department and Postal Service to coordinate efforts.</p>	<p>Need for a new town office diminished for several years, while a rent-free site was provided at Clifford Commons. With that agreement over, the Town has taken steps to build a new office.</p>

<p>31) It is the policy of the Town to make regular use of the Budget Committee to assist the Selectmen with the ongoing financial challenges and changing circumstances that require additional research and/or interim decisions throughout the year.</p>	<p>Hold quarterly Budget Committee meetings with the Selectmen.</p>	<p>The budget committee has not been utilized as envisioned.</p>
<p>Policy (in Comprehensive Plan, as amended in 2001)</p>		<p>Outcome</p>
<p>1) Unity should explore the creation of one or two exclusive commercial zones where adverse impacts (such as odor, noise, dust) would be measured at the zone boundary rather than the property line. Any such zone would be located where there is direct access to a state highway, in order to minimize traffic burdens on local roads. At least one such zone would be located along the state-owned rail line, in order to keep open the possibility of moving freight by rail.</p>	<p>1) This was explored by Comp Plan Committee, but given the level of complexity, no firm plan was developed or brought to town meetings for consideration.</p>	
<p>2) Larger new developments (i.e., any residential development over 10 units or any high-impact commercial development that triggers "development review" under Unity's existing ordinance) should be designed and located so as to minimize adverse traffic impacts on the broader community. In addition, any such development located within the growth district should provide convenient access and circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists. No goods or services should be provided through an automobile drive-through that are not also available in the same facility to walk-up customers. Beyond these measures, Unity should adopt other "transportation oriented development" strategies that will help it retain its small town character in the face of growth.</p>	<p>2) This policy, as part of the approved Comprehensive Plan, comes into play in all relevant development review applications, since one of the standards of approval is consistent with comprehensive plan.</p>	

<p>3) Unity should explore new incentives and other measures that will help ensure that more of the growth occurring within Town is occurring within Unity's designated "growth district" rather than in outlying areas. The goal of this exploration process (perhaps unreachable: we'll only know after the exploratory work is done) is to develop a set of measures that aim to channel 90% of new non-agricultural commercial growth and 70% of new residential growth into the growth district. As part of its work, the committee pursuing this task will also consider whether the current growth district is of adequate size to accommodate likely growth for the next ten years, and if not, to recommend an expansion to that district or the creation of another growth district.</p>	<p>3)The land use ordinance was amended to require all new retail growth (other than home businesses) to locate downtown. The Comp Plan Committee (in 2002) reflected on whether the existing growth district was large enough to accommodate adequate new growth and determined that it was at that time and would be for the foreseeable future. (The feeling is that there are large tracts of undeveloped land within the growth district and expanding the district could add to sprawl for no good reason.)</p>
<p>4) All new retail businesses (except home based-businesses) that locate in the "growth district" should be located along School Street, Depot Street, or Main Street between Sandy Stream and the railroad tracks. However, no new retail business involving a building footprint greater than 2,000 square feet may locate in the historic "village district" (which includes portions of Maine Street and Depot Street). Where possible, all new retail businesses should be located and designed to minimize vehicular traffic and to facilitate a person's ability to park in one location and conveniently access different stores and services. Unity would develop a set of incentives to encourage small and medium-sized retail businesses in this direction. Large retail businesses (i.e., with more than 10,000 square feet of space or more than 250 customers/day) would need to serve community goals of minimizing traffic and enhancing downtown convenience and walkability.</p>	<p>4) The land use ordinance was amended to include a "retail growth district".</p>
<p>5) Unity should explore the creation of a system of "development impact fees" for all larger developments that trigger "development review" under Unity's existing ordinance. These impact fees shall be designed to approximate the net cost to Unity of providing services to that new development (after factoring in expected tax revenues). A system of fees should be developed for consideration by Town Meeting no later than March 2002, and if approved, these fees would be applied retroactively to any Development Review Application submitted after April , 2001.</p>	<p>5) The Comp Plan Committee explored impact fees, but decided to not develop the idea further.</p>

<p>6) Unity should develop a booklet entitled "Building in Unity," which would offer: a) general examples showing how to best locate, design, and build structures to help retain local character and protect the environment; and b) specific examples helping to illustrate Unity's downtown design standards. This booklet would be provided solely as a guide. It would not impose any requirements not already included in state law or local ordinance.</p>	<p>6) The ideas for the booklet was shot down at a Comp Plan Committee and then dropped.</p>
<p>7) Unity should develop a pamphlet intended for people who are thinking of moving to Unity (to be distributed through local realtors and at the Town Office). The pamphlet would describe what it's like to live in a small, rural community, noting both the positive side of this experience and some realities that some people may consider negative, such as recognizing that farms produce odors and chainsaws are noisy. The pamphlet will describe some of the things you can expect in Unity (such as slow moving farm equipment of roads) and some of the things you can't expect (such as prompt snow removal on back roads).</p>	<p>7) Though no specific pamphlet was ever developed, much of this information is currently disseminated through the web.</p>
<p>8) Unity should encourage active farming, where possible, through ordinance changes and other measures. At the same time, Unity should help protect and preserve farmland for the future, but always in a manner that respects the landowner's right to a fair financial return. In particular, any subdivision involving 10 acres or more of commercial farmland should be designed creatively to retain as much of this resource for farming as practical, without diminishing the number of allowable lots. Beyond this, Unity should explore and consider a broader strategy for helping to protect farmland and farming.</p>	<p>8) Unity has taken many steps to encourage active farming. Much of this has been pro-active steps taken by Unity Barn Raisers and Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) to support farmers, while MFT and Sebecook Regional Land Trust have preserved over 1200 acres of farmland. Unity amended its land use ordinance so that new subdivisions need to be configured to preserve farmland (to different degrees, depending on the proposed scale of development).</p>

<p>9) Unity should pursue strategies to encourage voluntary land preservation by property owners, in ways that do not diminish local tax revenues. This includes: a) encouraging local farming (which preserves farmlands in the best way possible, by helping it remain economically viable); b) encouraging land to be enrolled in the State's "tree growth" or "open space" program (NOTE: Under these programs, land owners pay fewer taxes, but the difference is reimbursed to the Town by the State); and c) encouraging land owners to consider placing conservation or agricultural easements on their property (which preserves land in a way that can provide land owners with federal tax deduction, but does not reduce local property taxes).</p>	<p>9) Between Maine Farmland Trust and Sebecook Regional Land Trust, many landowners have been informed about preservation options and several have preserved their land with easements that do not reduce the tax valuation of properties below what is allowed under "current use taxation" programs (like "tree growth" and "open space"). In addition, the town has helped spread the word about current use taxation programs.</p>
<p>10) Unity should develop a comprehensive downtown parking plan that will: 1) identify areas where on-street parking should be allowed and where it should not (after a thorough review of MDOT's standards for parking along state highways); and 2) make recommendations on other related issues, including an enforcement strategy.</p>	<p>10) No such plan has been developed.</p>
<p>11) Unity should seek grant funds so that it can hire a consultant to update the key data contained in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan, including the socio-economic profile and information about existing housing, land use, and community facilities.</p>	<p>11) Town meeting authorized funding for that process in 2013.</p>