

Bakersfield Town Plan Draft – Potential Changes based on Public Comments

For discussion on 10/19/2026

Minor Edits

The following minor edits are proposed based on comments received. These edits are already incorporated into the latest draft:

Community Services and Spaces

Page 28: The 2020 U.S. Census indicates that there are 213 children under the age of 14 currently living in Bakersfield. ~~Childcare in Bakersfield is provided by the Early Childhood Program at the Elementary School, with a capacity of 20 children, and the Bakersfield After School Program, which has a capacity of 25 children.~~ **There are currently no licensed childcare centers located in Bakersfield beyond the preschool and afterschool programs, which only run at specific hours during the school year.** Data on other childcare options, such as grandparents, siblings, stay at home parents, un-registered childcare homes or other opportunities is not available.

Transportation

Page 30: Adopt and implement the most recent (currently ~~2013~~ **2026**) VTrans Town Road and Bridge Standards, or stricter standards.

Energy

Page 35: Old policy restored: **“Support the development and siting of renewable energy resources in the Town that are in conformance with the goals, strategies, and mapping outlined in this plan. Development of generation in identified preferred locations shall be favored over the development of other sites.”**

Environment and Resilience

Page 46: Policy edited: **“Support the purchase and, protection and participation in land preservation measures** of natural or fragile areas by local or state conservation agencies.”

Page 46: Old policy restored: **“Protect and promote forestry as a valuable land use in Bakersfield through the creation of a town forest/natural area”**

Page 46: New policy: “Monitor and remove diseased and dying trees in town and implement a shade tree preservation program”. Implementation item also added in Chapter 10.

Page 47: Policy edited: “Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and explore participation in the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) to secure a discount on flood insurance “

Land Use

Page 60: Policy removed: Prohibit siting wind towers on specific scenic ridgelines identified in this plan (Environment and Resilience chapter).

Housing

Page 70-71: Language added to ensure compliance with Act 179: “Housing cost and supply are largely determined by large-scale economic forces outside of the Town’s control. For example, a shortage of contractors and a high cost of labor and materials are known issues at the state and regional levels. Bakersfield also has a number of town-specific constraints that are documented elsewhere in this plan, including wastewater disposal and issues with private wells. Working to implement solutions identified in the Town Plan to address these constraints will help to support housing in Bakersfield.”

Note: Based on NRPC staff review

Implementation

New item: “Consider adopting a Noise Ordinance” Responsibility: Selectboard

New item: “Monitor and remove diseased and dying trees in town and implement a shade tree preservation program.” Responsibility: Conservation Commission

Larger Potential Edits

The following topics are more comprehensive and require a larger discussion on how to address them. This section summarizes comments and gives some possible ways to address them.

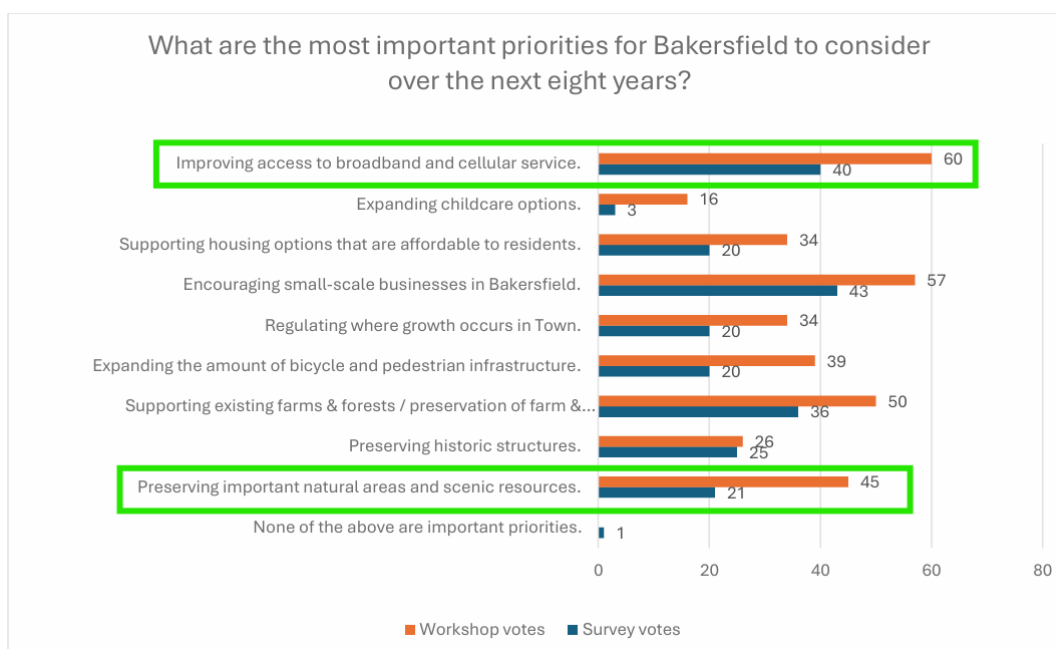
Scenic Resources

Amber Foote: *As I mentioned in a previous meeting, I would like to see the list of three scenic resources on page 56 of the new draft be consistently precise. The first resource lists two roads Route 36 and Cross Road, clearly a public view while traveling the road.*

However, the other two only reference 108, a ~15 mile stretch, without a cross-road, mile marker or lat/longitude. I would like to see them precisely name a particular spot as well, thus consistently a public view.

Gary Foote: *[Gary's] comment is that he would like to see the language about the scenic viewsheds (Route 36 from Cross Road, Route 108 North, and Route 108 South) removed. However, if it had to remain, he would at least like language that states that up to two telecommunications towers (cell towers) would be excepted from scenic viewshed impact reviews. He has acknowledged that the language linking cell towers to scenic viewsheds at the beginning of the telecommunications chapter has been removed but he is still worried that just listing the viewsheds in the later chapter without specifically noting this exception will make it difficult for a cell tower to be built in Bakersfield.*

For additional perspective, during public outreach, improving cell service was rated as a higher priority than preserving scenic resources, though both were rated high.



Possible options:

1. Add language to the scenic resources section that makes the locations of viewsheds more precise
 - *Rt. 36 and Cross Road, looking east*
 - *Rt. 108 between Burnor Rd. and Lost Nation Rd., looking west* ~~*View of Mt. Mansfield looking south from Rt. 108*~~
 - *Rt. 108 to Enosburg looking north at _____*
2. Remove identification of specific scenic viewsheds from the plan.

Slopes

The plan received several comments where people did not approve of two specific policies that regulate development on slopes:

1. Prohibit all land development on slopes greater than 25 percent and maintain vegetative cover.
2. Regulate development on slopes greater than 15 percent to avoid environmental degradation and conditions that create health hazards.

Both of the current proposed policies reflect what's in your current development regulations. However, it is not a required plan element to regulate or restrict development on slopes.

A consideration here is if the Town wants to consider changing their existing zoning standard on this issue. If the Town has no interest in changing the zoning standard it makes sense to maintain the Town Plan policies to ensure compatibility between the Town Plan and bylaws.

Possible options:

1. Remove or soften the two policies
2. Remove the first policy while keeping the second policy. This would mean that development on steep slopes could still be regulated (slope stability, erosion, and drainage assessments, etc. during site plan review) but it removes the stronger language that prohibits development entirely on >25% slopes.

Natural Resources / Conservation District Concerns

Many people who commented were concerned about the regulation of natural resources on private land. This could be addressed with language that (1) clarifies that the plan does not propose any new restrictions based on natural resources, (2) clarifies that agriculture, forestry and related uses will continue to be exempt from development regulations, and (3) clarifies the relationship between the plan's policies and state law.

Possible Options:

1. Potential new info box at the start of the Environment and Resilience chapter:
"Bakersfield has a strong record of protecting natural resources at the Town level. The 2026 Town Plan does not expand the Town's regulation of natural resources on private land. Additionally, all agricultural and forestry uses will continue to be exempt from regulation at the local level. Some existing town policies designed to protect natural resources, such as large minimum lot sizes in the Rural and Conservation zoning districts, may have a detrimental impact by increasing fragmentation of farms, forests and working lands. Adoption of this Town Plan enables Bakersfield to update its zoning regulations and reevaluate standards that may negatively affect the Town's rural land. More information is available in the Land Use chapter."
2. New language on pg. 56 (Habitat Blocks section): "The Habitat Blocks map is required for inclusion in the Town Plan under 24 V.S.A. § 4382(2)(D) and 24 V.S.A. 4302(6)(C), which were updated in Act 171 of 2016. **The Town Plan does not propose any new regulations based on the Habitat Blocks map.**"
3. New Land Use policy: "Support working lands as part of Bakersfield's natural landscape. Agriculture, forestry, sugaring, and related infrastructure shall continue to be exempt from development regulations at the local level."
4. Updated language on pg. 63 (Current Land Use section): "As currently implemented, the Town has concerns about the Fixed Area Allocation system that is currently used for subdivisions, as well as large minimum lot sizes in Rural and Conservation districts. The Town should ensure that ~~this system is~~ **these policies are** not contributing to fragmentation and loss of farm and forest land. Other options for zoning in rural areas may be more appropriate to meet the Land Use goals of the Town Plan, and should be explored in future zoning updates."

5. Update implementation item: “Explore alternatives to large minimum lot sizes and fixed area allocation system for regulating density in rural areas”