

5. Town Green Stewardship and Enhancement Policy DRAFT 2025-10-30

Town Green Stewardship and Enhancement Policy

DRAFT for Selectboard Review - October 30, 2025

PURPOSE

The Bristol Town Green has served as the community's civic heart since the town's founding, hosting band concerts since the Civil War, Vermont's oldest Fourth of July parade, and countless gatherings that define Bristol's character. This policy establishes a framework for managing changes to the Town Green that balances preservation of its historic character with the evolving needs of the community.

This policy outlines the process by which structures, plantings, amenities, and infrastructure on the Town Green will be considered, approved, and maintained. Per V.S.A. § 2291, the Selectboard has the power to provide for the location, protection, maintenance, and removal of trees, plants, shrubs, buildings, or other structures on or above public highways, sidewalks, or other property of the municipality.

DEFINITIONS

Town Green: The public space bounded by the edge of pavement on School and Park Streets and the inside edge of sidewalks on North and West Streets, encompassing approximately 63,830 square feet.

Permanent Structure: Any building, monument, memorial, hardscaped feature, or installation intended to remain in place year-round for more than two years.

Seasonal Amenity: Equipment or facilities installed for specific high-use periods (typically Memorial Day through Labor Day) and removed during off-season.

Utility Infrastructure: Equipment serving public needs including but not limited to electrical vehicle charging stations, water fountains, lighting, and underground utilities.

Minor Amenity: Small-footprint public service features under 25 square feet including benches, bike racks, repair stations, trash receptacles, and similar items.

Temporary Structure: Tents, stages, vendor booths, or other facilities erected for specific events or programs, not exceeding 14 consecutive days.

CURRENT INVENTORY

The Town Green currently contains the following permanent structures totaling approximately 9,062 square feet (14% of total green space):

- Peace Garden: 872 square feet
 - Fountain: 415 square feet
 - Bandstand: 540 square feet
 - WWII Memorial stone: 35 square feet
 - Veterans Memorial: 2,500 square feet
 - Playground: 4,700 square feet
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APPROVAL PROCESSES BY CATEGORY

Category 1: Temporary Event Structures

Examples: Tents, stages, vendor booths, portable sound systems, event fencing

Approval Authority: Recreation Department Director

Process: No Selectboard approval required for structures erected for specific events not exceeding 14 consecutive days and removed immediately following the event.

Requirements:

- Must not damage green space or existing features
 - Must be fully removed within 48 hours of event conclusion
 - Must comply with any applicable state or local safety regulations
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Category 2: Seasonal Amenities

Examples: Portable restroom facilities, seasonal seating, holiday decorations, temporary signage

Approval Authority: Recreation Department Director in consultation with Town Administrator

Process: No Selectboard approval required for seasonal installations meeting the following criteria:

Requirements:

- Installed during defined season (typically Memorial Day - Labor Day for restrooms)
- Removed and stored during off-season
- Placed in locations that minimize visual impact and do not interfere with programmed uses
- Total footprint does not exceed 100 square feet per amenity

Annual Review: Recreation Department shall provide Selectboard with annual summary of seasonal amenity usage and placement.

Category 3: Minor Amenities

Examples: Benches, bike racks, bike repair stations, trash/recycling receptacles, small interpretive signs, pet waste stations

Approval Authority: Selectboard vote

Process:

1. Recreation Department or other requestor submits proposal including:
 - Description and dimensions of proposed amenity
 - Specific location with site plan
 - Rationale for placement and community benefit
 - Visual rendering or product specifications
 - Maintenance plan and responsible party
2. Proposal included on Selectboard agenda as action item
3. Selectboard votes to approve, approve with modifications, or deny
4. Public comment accepted during Selectboard meeting per normal procedures

Requirements:

- Individual amenity footprint not to exceed 25 square feet
 - Total of all minor amenities not to exceed 200 square feet combined
 - Design must be compatible with historic character of green
 - Clear maintenance responsibility assigned
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance where applicable
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Category 4: Utility Infrastructure

Examples: Electric vehicle charging stations, upgraded lighting, water fountains, underground utility lines, irrigation systems

Approval Authority: Selectboard vote following public input period

Process:

1. Requestor submits detailed proposal including:
 - Complete project description and specifications
 - Site plan showing location and any ground disturbance
 - Utility connections and trenching requirements
 - Visual impact assessment with renderings
 - Installation timeline and contractor information

- Long-term maintenance and cost responsibilities
 - Funding source
2. Proposal posted on town website and announced at Selectboard meeting at least 14 days before vote
 3. Public comment period of at least 14 days
 4. Selectboard discussion and vote at duly warned meeting
 5. If approved, project proceeds per approved plan

Requirements:

- Must serve clear public benefit
- Installation must minimize disruption and restore affected areas to prior condition
- Long-term maintenance responsibility must be clearly established
- Funding must be secured before approval
- For infrastructure serving adjacent facilities, location at green edge preferred
- Projects requiring trenching must include restoration plan for affected areas

Special Considerations for EV Charging Stations:

- Preferred location at green perimeter adjacent to parking areas
 - Electrical service routing must minimize green space disturbance
 - Station design must be compatible with village character
 - Consideration of future expansion needs
 - Clear policy on public vs. restricted use and any associated fees
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Category 5: Permanent Structures

Examples: Monuments, memorials, buildings, permanent shelters, major hardscaping, new playground equipment

Approval Authority: Selectboard vote following public hearing

Process:

1. Requestor submits comprehensive proposal including:
 - Detailed description, dimensions, and materials
 - Site plan with precise location
 - Visual renderings from multiple perspectives
 - Historical or commemorative significance (if applicable)
 - Design compatibility assessment
 - Installation plan and timeline
 - Funding source and amount

- Perpetual maintenance plan and responsible party
 - Community support documentation
2. Proposal posted on town website, published in local newspaper, and announced at Selectboard meeting at least 30 days before public hearing
 3. Public hearing held at duly warned Selectboard meeting with opportunity for community input
 4. Selectboard discussion and vote at subsequent meeting (allowing time for consideration of public input)

Requirements:

- Must demonstrate significant community benefit or commemorative value
- Design must be compatible with historic character and existing features
- Total footprint of all permanent structures not to exceed 18% of total green space (approximately 11,500 square feet)
- Perpetual maintenance funding or commitment required
- Significant community support demonstrated
- For memorials: adherence to any separately adopted memorial policy
- ADA accessibility compliance

Removal or Replacement:

- If a new permanent structure is proposed and total footprint would exceed 18%, an existing structure of similar or greater size should be considered for removal or relocation
 - Removal of any existing permanent structure requires same approval process as installation
 - Historical significance must be considered in removal decisions
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TREE AND PLANTING MANAGEMENT

General Tree Policy

The Town Green contains numerous mature trees that contribute to its character and provide environmental benefits. Tree management shall balance preservation with safety, health, and community use needs.

Routine Maintenance: The Town Tree Warden has authority for routine maintenance including pruning, treatment, and removal of dead/diseased trees.

New Plantings: Proposals for new trees or significant plantings follow Category 3 (Minor Amenities) or Category 5 (Permanent Structures) process depending on scale.

Peace Garden Exception: The Peace Garden area may include plantings at the discretion of the Peace Garden committee in coordination with the Recreation Department, provided they do not exceed the defined Peace Garden footprint.

MAINTENANCE AND CONDITION STANDARDS

Ongoing Maintenance

All structures, amenities, and plantings on the Town Green must be maintained in good condition. The Recreation Department shall:

- Conduct quarterly inspections of all green features
- Maintain a maintenance log
- Report concerns to Selectboard and appropriate responsible parties
- Coordinate seasonal setup and removal of amenities

Responsibility Assignment

Each approved addition must have a clearly designated maintenance responsibility assigned to:

- Town Recreation Department
- Town Public Works Department
- Volunteer organization or committee
- Private donor (with backup town responsibility)

Condition Standards

Features must be maintained to these minimum standards:

- Structurally sound and safe for public use
- Clean and free of graffiti or vandalism
- Functional for intended purpose
- Visually compatible with surrounding features

Removal for Non-Maintenance

If any feature falls into disrepair and the responsible party does not remedy the situation within 60 days of written notice, the Selectboard may vote to remove the feature at the responsible party's expense.

EMERGENCY PROVISIONS

The Town Administrator, in consultation with the Selectboard Chair, may authorize immediate removal or modification of any green feature that poses an imminent safety hazard, including but not limited to:

- Storm-damaged structures or trees
- Equipment failure creating dangerous conditions
- Public health emergencies

Such emergency actions shall be reported to the full Selectboard at the next regular meeting.

SIGNAGE

All permanent signage on the Town Green requires Selectboard approval following the process for Category 3 (Minor Amenities) or Category 5 (Permanent Structures) depending on size and scope.

Temporary event signage may be approved by the Recreation Department for periods not exceeding event duration plus 48 hours for setup and removal.

FUNDING AND COSTS

Proposals must identify funding sources before approval. Acceptable funding sources include:

- Town appropriations through annual budget
- Grant funding
- Private donations with maintenance endowments
- Fundraising by community organizations

The Selectboard may approve projects contingent on securing identified funding.

APPEALS AND AMENDMENTS

Appeals

Denials of Category 3 or 4 proposals may be appealed to the full Selectboard for reconsideration. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 days of denial with new information or changed circumstances.

Policy Amendments

This policy may be amended by Selectboard vote following the same public input process required for Category 4 (Utility Infrastructure) approvals: posting, 14-day comment period, and vote at duly warned meeting.

Annual Review

The Selectboard shall review this policy annually as part of budget preparation to ensure it continues to serve the community's needs while protecting the character of this historic space.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER REGULATIONS

This policy operates in conjunction with:

- Bristol Zoning Bylaws and Regulations
- Bristol Development Review process
- Vermont Agency of Transportation permits (for work near state highways)
- Americans with Disabilities Act requirements
- State and federal historic preservation requirements (if applicable)

Where requirements conflict, the more restrictive standard applies. The Selectboard may waive provisions of this policy when necessary to comply with state or federal law.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is adopted by the Selectboard of the Town of Bristol, Vermont on [DATE]. It supersedes the Town Green Development Policy adopted November 16, 2015, and is effective immediately upon adoption.

It shall remain in effect until amended or repealed by subsequent Selectboard vote.

SIGNATURES

Selectboard Chair

Selectboard Vice Chair

Selectboard Member

Selectboard Member

Selectboard Member

Date: _____