



To our March Bulletin!

Conscious, Creative Development and Conservation in Bermuda's Future

2018 is a pivotal year in terms of our aspirations for land use in Bermuda. Every 10 years or so, the Bermuda Government, led by the Department of Planning, undertake a review of the Bermuda Plan that "provides for the land use and development requirements of the Island". The island's sixth development plan will essentially reflect the way we position ourselves in terms of development versus conservation potential. The process is a kind of environmental census that will shape the future of Bermuda. Options for land use are roughly grouped under:

- (i) development zones which include the categories of: Rural, Residential 1 and 2 (denoting more or less dense residential areas), Tourism, Institutional, Commercial, Mixed Use and Industrial, or
- (i) conservation zones/areas which include the categories of: Nature Reserve, Park, Coastal Reserve, Open Space Reserve, Recreation, Woodland Reserve, Agricultural Reserve.

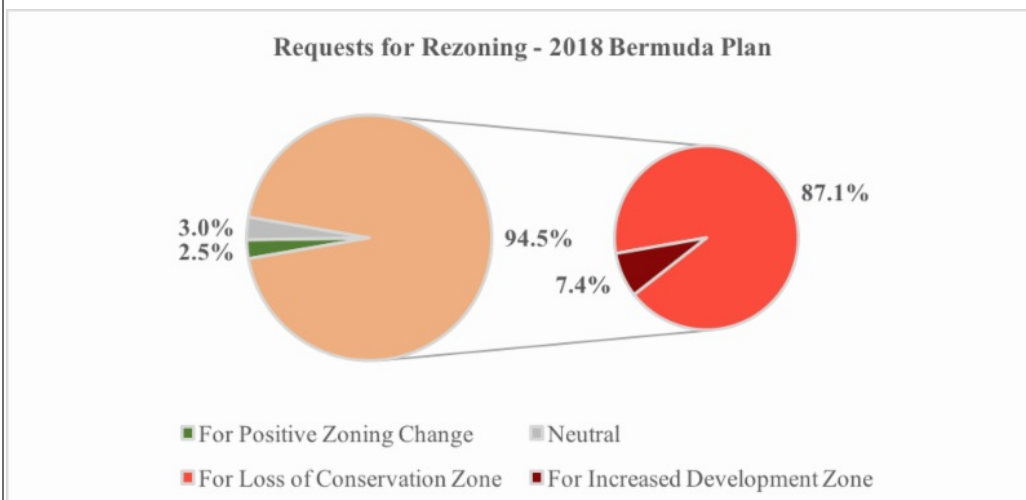
The Draft Bermuda Plan 2018 will be released before the summer with, for the most part, decisions already made regarding zoning. Those decisions will determine the future of development and conservation in Bermuda. The Bermuda Environmental Sustainability Taskforce (BEST) believes it is in our collective best interest to raise awareness so that we, as the residents of this small island, understand the implications behind the process and are happy with how it works.

To give you some perspective, in the early 1900s, arable land available for agricultural use stood at approximately 3,000 acres, dropping to 1,500 in the mid-1900s, and now stands at just over 700 acres available today. This is a reduction of 77%. Furthermore, as a 2010 study found, 'only 360 acres are being actively farmed' and, between 1995 and 2007, '28% of planning appeals to the Minister involved residential development on agriculturally zoned land'^[1]. These are statistics worthy of concern: the increase in development zones means a decrease in the amount of land protected for conservation. Our limited open spaces are clearly at serious risk.

Another example of the threat is the number of 'Requests for Rezoning' (202) submitted ahead of the 2018 Draft Bermuda Plan. BEST's analysis shows that 191 of those (95%) appeal to *either have a conservation area rezoned to a development area (e.g., rezoning an area of Agricultural Reserve on a property to Residential 1 - from the least developed state to potentially the most developed - or are pushing for development zone increases in density and/or building types (e.g., rezoning Residential 1 to Industrial).*

[1] McKittrick, A. (2010) The Role of Agriculture in Bermuda's Future. Pg 3 & 13.

Further scrutiny shows that of the 191 requests that are pushing for development zoning, 176 (87%) of those involve the loss of conservation zones (see Figure 1 below). This is a worrying trend that needs to be examined and considered in light of concerns around food security, population density, urbanisation, impacts on tourism, among others.



As the 2008 Bermuda Plan mission statement highlighted, there is "the need to strike a balance between economic growth and the conservation of scarce and finite natural resources" and, ultimately, "the general aim for the Plan will continue to be one of 'sustainable development'." While we appreciate these noble

statements, we feel that more needs to be done to counter the relentless push for development. For instance, a commitment to addressing brownfield sites as well as empty and/or derelict buildings before sacrificing more virgin land to development.

BEST appreciates that balancing the momentum of development with preserving our conservation areas is a difficult task, but it is paramount that preservation of the environment be given precedence: once land is developed, it is generally lost to future generations.

This land belongs to all of us and, as the saying goes, we really are borrowing from our children. What right have we to deprive them of the green open spaces that we often take for granted? We must be cognisant of the fact that unchecked development steals from future Bermudians who will be here long after we have gone. Can we, in good conscience, dismiss this ethical obligation?

The drafting of the 2018 Bermuda Plan is a tremendous opportunity to start a discussion about what we want Bermuda to look like long-term. It may be time to draw a line in the sand and come up with overriding directives (such as mandating a set amount of inviolable open space) to ensure the country's conservation zones are not so easily overridden. There are creative and sustainable ways to do this to ensure this does not conflict with economic development. BEST is committed to continue working on ideas and suggestions to contribute to that end, *but we cannot do it alone.*

The draft Plan is due to be released in April or May, after which there will be a period of public consultation. There is still time to have your input and to influence policy by contacting your local MP or the Planning Department with ideas or concerns and we are also always looking for volunteers to get involved with BEST to help with our efforts! Let's make sure you have your say in the future of Bermuda as, in the end, we will live with the results of our action... or inaction.

New Leader and Board Members at BEST!

Kim Smith now leads at BEST, as **Executive Director**, after working with our long-serving Chief Advocacy Officer, Stuart Hayward, for over 10 years. **Alma Dismont** and **Lynne Matcham** have also joined the BEST Board. Read more here:

<http://www.royalgazette.com/environment/article/20180320/new-leader-at-best>

You are invited to 'have your say'!

We'd like to hear from you. Tell us what you like more information on from us. Visit our website for ideas, www.best.org.bm or e-mail Kim on office@best.org.bm



Sign up for EnviroTalk!

The Bermuda Government **Department of Environment and Natural Resources** have revived the Envirotalk publication! It is full of useful information on seasonal environmental topics and will now be produced 4 times a year. Click [here](#) for a copy of their Spring 2018 newsletter. If you would like to receive copies by email, you can subscribe by sending an email request to envirotalk@gov.bm



A Greener Bermuda

There's a new page on Facebook you will enjoy. Go to:

www.facebook.com/greenerbermuda/

This page exists to highlight all the good environmental work taking place in Bermuda and to campaign for changes that will protect our Island for future generations.

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