

Stockbridge Town Plan

2015

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Development.*

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	7
A.	Vision Statement.....	7
B.	Town Setting	8
C.	Town History.....	8
D.	Why Have A Plan? – Purpose	9
E.	Defining Rural Character	9
F.	Purposes and Overarching Goals of the Plan	10
II.	Tropical Storm Irene: A Historic Event.....	12
III.	Demographics	15
A.	Introduction	15
B.	Population	15
C.	Age of Population	17
IV.	Land Use	19
A.	Background	19
B.	Historic Land Use	19
C.	Current Land Use.....	22
D.	Future Land Use	23
E.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	31
V.	Economic Development.....	33
A.	Economic Statistics.....	33
B.	Stockbridge’s Economy	34
C.	Employment Characteristics.....	35
D.	Regional Employment and Economic Development	37
E.	Future Economic Development	37
F.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	38
VI.	Recreation	40
A.	Background	40
B.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	41
VII.	Utilities and Facilities.....	43

A.	Capital Budgeting & Planning	43
B.	Town Buildings	43
C.	Privately Owned Community Buildings	44
D.	Municipal Services	45
E.	Cemeteries	45
F.	Communication Facilities	45
G.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	47
VIII.	Health and Emergency Services	49
A.	Health Care Facilities	49
B.	Fire Protection Services	49
C.	Police Protection Services	49
D.	Emergency Medical Services	50
E.	Emergency Management	50
F.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	52
IX.	Housing	54
A.	Background	54
B.	Housing Profile	54
C.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	58
X.	Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources	60
A.	Background	60
B.	Water Resources	60
C.	Wetlands	62
D.	Flood plains	63
E.	Flora, Fauna and Natural Communities	67
F.	Invasive Species	69
G.	Mineral Resources	70
H.	Significant Natural and Historic Areas	70
<u>I.</u>	Conservation Commission	71
J.	Land Protection Strategies	72
K.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	73
XI.	Agriculture and Forestry	74
A.	Background	74
B.	Farm and Forest Land Issues	74

C.	Agricultural Trends	75
D.	Forestry Trends	76
E.	Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use Regulation	76
F.	Sustaining Agriculture and Forestry	77
G.	Farming, Forestry and the Economy	78
H.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	78
XII.	Transportation	80
A.	Town Highways	80
B.	Town Culverts and Bridges	81
C.	State Highways	81
D.	Class 4 & Trails	81
E.	Development Review Road Standards	81
F.	Access Management	82
G.	Other Modes of Travel	83
H.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	84
XIII.	Education	87
A.	School Organization	88
B.	School Performance	88
C.	School Enrollment	88
D.	Tax Impact of Public Education in Stockbridge	89
E.	School Support	90
F.	School Choice	90
G.	Home Schooling	90
H.	Central School Building	90
I.	Secondary Education	91
J.	Childcare	91
K.	Adult Education	92
L.	Goals, Policies and Recommendations	92
XIV.	Energy	94
A.	Background	94
B.	Energy Demands	94
C.	Current Energy Sources	95
D.	Renewable Energy Resources	97

E. Permitting and Siting Considerations.....	100
F. Residential Energy Efficiency	102
G. Municipal Role in Energy Efficiency	103
H. Energy and Land Use Policy	105
I. Energy and Transportation Policy	106
J. Energy Assurance Planning.....	106
K. Goals, Policies and Recommendations	107
XV. Relationship to Other Plans.....	110
A. Relationship to Municipal Plans	110
B. Relationship to the Regional Plan.....	111
C. Goals, Policies and Recommendations	112
XVI. Town Plan Implementation	113
A. Regulatory Implementation	113
Zoning Bylaws.....	113
Subdivision Regulations	114
Flood Hazard Bylaws.....	114
Act 250	114
Highway Ordinances	115
B. Non-Regulatory Implementation	115
C. Responsibility for Implementation	117

Signature Page:

Appendices:

1. Implementation Plan
2. Stockbridge Resident Survey Results
3. The Future of Stockbridge—Resident Interviews

Exhibits

- A. Stockbridge School Tuition History
- B. School Performance
- C. Annual School Tax for Residents Paying Based on Grand List Property Value
- D. Annual School Tax for Residents Paying Based on their Income
- E. Maps

I. Introduction

In 2012, Tropical Storm Irene swept through Vermont leaving devastation in its wake – including substantial damage in the Town of Stockbridge. The serious impacts of this event have increased the community’s awareness of the need to be resilient, self-sufficient, prepared and sustainable. It is with this knowledge and sentiment in mind, that this Plan and following Vision Statement have been written. The Stockbridge Planning Commission has attempted to capture the five-year vision for the future of Stockbridge in this document. Through the process of drafting this plan, the Planning Commission has invited public input to finalize Stockbridge’s vision for the future.

A. Vision Statement

The townspeople of Stockbridge envision a community where people respect and care for each other as well as the land and its natural beauty. A community of homes and families, small businesses and farms, linked by an appreciation of the importance of working together for a better tomorrow.

Fletcher Brook Rd. during Irene (Source: D. Brown)



B. Town Setting

The Town of Stockbridge is located in the northwestern portion of Windsor County, Vermont. It comprises an area of approximately 28,300 acres, or 45.41 square miles. Stockbridge is bordered by six towns: Barnard to the east, Bridgewater and Killington to the south, Bethel and Rochester to the north, and Pittsfield to the west. Unlike many neighboring towns, Stockbridge does not have a town center. Residents generally work in other communities, choosing Stockbridge for location, natural beauty, housing or educational opportunities.

Geographically, Stockbridge is located in the region known as the Intermountain Valleys and Foothills of the Green Mountains. This area is characterized by mountainous terrain, narrow valleys and a few peaks above 2,500 feet. In the case of Stockbridge, the typically narrow valleys are bisected by the White and Tweed Rivers and Fletcher, Stony Brook and Lilliesville Brook.

C. Town History

The Town of Stockbridge received its Royal Charter on July 21, 1761, from Benning Wentworth, Governor of the province of New Hampshire. Thirty-one Proprietors Shares were issued to William Dodge and his associates. The first settlement in Stockbridge was not begun until 1784 when John Durkee established his family at what is now the junction of the Tweed and White Rivers.

Settlers in this area found Stockbridge to be an extremely beautiful township, richly endowed with fertile soils, virgin trees, and pure waters. As was the case throughout New England, the very tallest and straightest of pine trees in the Town were to be reserved for use as masts on the ships of England's Royal Navy.

In 1786, Elias Keyes established a grist mill and later a saw mill at "The Narrows," later known as Gaysville, so named for its founders Daniel and Jeremiah Gay. Gaysville flourished as a manufacturing center, powered by the waters of the White River. A button shop, sawmills, grist mills, schools, churches, several general stores, a woolen mill, snowshoe shop, and many homes were at one time located at Gaysville. Stockbridge Village was also a major manufacturing center boasting of two stores, a school, a sawmill, a church, and a tannery. The maximum population of Stockbridge of 1,327 was reached in 1850.

The White River Valley Railroad, known locally as "the Peavine," was established in 1900 and served both freight and passenger trade throughout the valley. High school students used the railroad to commute to Whitcomb High in Bethel.

Perhaps no other event shaped the Town of Stockbridge as did the flood of November 3, 1927. The waters ripped through the valleys of Stockbridge, taking with them bridges, dams, sawmills, homes, factories, businesses, and the railroad. The book *Floodtide of 1927* reports some thirty buildings gone, with many more rendered useless in Gaysville alone. Barrows Mill at Stockbridge Village, at the time the largest industry in Town, was also destroyed.

Due to the devastation of the 1927 flood, and a changing economy, the Town of Stockbridge and the hamlet of Gaysville were never rebuilt to their former glory. The whistle of the Peavine no longer resounds throughout the valley. Today, Stockbridge is a community scattered throughout the hills and valleys, although unquestionably still richly endowed with fertile soils, beautiful landscapes, productive forestlands, and abundant water resources.

D. Why Have A Plan? – Purpose

A municipal plan is intended to act as a vision for the community. A community imagines what the future should be, and then starts putting these ideas into action. Communities with little or no planning are more likely to experience problems of over-development, high property taxes and increased demands for community services. Their lack of local control leaves them subject to decisions made at the state level or by private interests that might not accurately reflect their vision. Stockbridge, like every town, has choices in the way it provides for orderly growth and in the way it balances growth with natural and built environments. Planning is done to meet the needs of the people who are here now in the face of change and for future generations.

The Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of Stockbridge's demographics, land use, jobs, economy, local infrastructure, housing, natural resources, and energy. This analysis of current conditions in the context of goals for our community, leads to policies and recommendations that can help our community make wise choices and provide direction for the patterns of its future growth.

Here are some specific reasons to have a Town Plan:

- **Guide for local regulations** - State statute requires that all land use regulations (zoning, subdivision, etc.) must be consistent with the goals of the local plan. The municipal plan functions as the framework under which these regulations operate.
- **A guide for community investments** - Information in the plan can be used for developing the recommendations contained in a capital budget and program, for establishing a community development program, and for providing direction to the Selectboard for such things as community services, emergency services, recreation and municipal facility development to name a few. It also serves to guide the decisions made by the Zoning Board of Adjustment when permits come before them.
- **Support for grant applications and planning studies** - Many of the state run grant programs available to Stockbridge consider whether or not the town has stated a need for its grant request. Studies are often called for within a plan, and the funding for such projects can come from state sources as well.
- **A guide for future development** - The District Environmental Commission considers Town Plans during an Act 250 hearing under Criterion 10. The Plan should clearly define what is and is not appropriate in terms of development within the community.

E. Defining Rural Character

The District Environmental Commission will often look to a Town Plan for guidance with regard to the issue of "rural character." Too often this concept is poorly defined and/or too vague to be useful in a legal proceeding under Act 250. Therefore, for the purposes of this document, the Planning Commission defines what residents view as the "rural character" of Stockbridge as follows:

Stockbridge is a small, quiet, rural residential community that is geographically positioned to appeal to residents and vacation home-owners alike. Stockbridge's proximity to Rutland, Woodstock and the Vermont Interstate system make it a good location for residents who work out of town. Likewise, its proximity to the ski areas of Killington and Pico make it an appealing vacation spot. Development, which is primarily residential in nature, is generally clustered around roads. Most town roads are gravel roads that are more appropriate for the types of traffic common to residential, recreational and agricultural development rather than large-scale commercial development.

The community is a mix of woods, open-spaces and valley floor, all of which create an aesthetically pleasing natural environment. The White and Tweed Rivers each create an area of open valley floors that are rich in soil quality as well as open, scenic beauty. The southeast corner of Stockbridge is part of the Chateaugay-No-Town area, and much of the landscape remains wild and sparsely populated.

Development within Stockbridge remains sparsely organized, blending in with the landscape in such a fashion that it does not negatively impact the scenic quality of the community.

F. Purposes and Overarching Goals of the Plan

It is the intent and purpose of this Plan to encourage the appropriate use of all lands in the Town of Stockbridge in such a manner as will promote the public health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience, sustainability, self-sufficiency, economy and general welfare of the town. It is also the purpose of this plan to encourage a sense of community.

It is hoped that both existing and future residents, landowners, elected officials, and business people will find this plan useful when making decisions affecting land use in the Town of Stockbridge. Furthermore, this Plan shall further the following goals:

1. To protect the rural character of Stockbridge as defined by our Town Plan.
2. To foster a greater sense of community.
3. To protect and enhance the scenic and recreational amenities of the Town of Stockbridge.
4. To protect steep slopes, soils, forests, water and other natural resources, and to provide open space and wildlife corridors for wildlife habitat.
5. To protect agricultural and forest lands, so as to maintain and enhance their productive capabilities.
6. To promote development of Stockbridge in such a way as will protect and enhance residential areas, and not cause undue concentrations of population, buildings, traffic, congestion, or loss of peace, quiet, and privacy.
7. To promote development within the Town of Stockbridge consistent with the ability of the Town to provide services.

8. To prevent the development of land clearly incapable of supporting, from a physical standpoint, the type or intensity of land use being proposed.
9. To maintain and enhance the freedom, rights, privileges, and responsibilities of all citizens of Stockbridge.

II. Tropical Storm Irene: A Historic Event

On August 28, 2011, the State of Vermont found itself in the path of Tropical Storm Irene. The storm caused power outages statewide for approximately 50,000 households and widespread flooding that resulted in six deaths. Record amounts of rain fell in a short amount of time resulting in catastrophic flooding across the state. Rainfall totals were between 4 and 7 inches with some locally higher amounts up to 10 inches concentrated during a 6-8 hour period. The Otter Creek reached an historic crest (nearly 4 feet over the previous record in 1938) and the Mad, Winooski and White Rivers were very close to records established in 1927. Those main stem rivers were fed by many smaller tributaries that caused damaging flash flooding throughout the central and southern parts of the state.

More than 1500 Vermont families were displaced and the transportation and public infrastructure was decimated. Of Vermont's 251 towns and cities, 223 towns were impacted by Irene causing household damage, infrastructure damage or both. Forty-five (45) municipalities were considered severely impacted. Hundreds of state and local roads were closed for an extended period of time completely isolating numerous towns and limiting access to many others. This resulted in state and National Guard missions to deliver emergency supplies by ground and air. The flooding also caused the first-ever evacuation of the State Emergency Operations Center due to access challenges and the impact to the buildings and support mechanism in the state office complex in Waterbury.



1 - Route 107 during Irene (Source: D. Brown)

Some of the most severe damage from Irene took place in and around Stockbridge and its neighboring communities of Pittsfield, Bethel, Rochester and Killington. By the morning of August 29th, the town of Stockbridge found itself isolated geographically and technologically. Electrical services to the community had been broken. Telephone and cellular communications were predominantly down.

Highways leading out of Stockbridge (Route 100 and Route 107) were all so severely damaged that no one that could get in or out by vehicle.

When municipal officials left their homes to determine how much damage had been done, they found that nearly every road in Stockbridge had suffered damage and many of them were impassable. Irene had washed out dozens of culverts, destroyed town bridges and turned stretches of brook-side roads into unrecognizable gravel wastelands. Worse, it was clear that the many brooks that feed into the

Tweed and White River in Stockbridge had become raging torrents and had damaged more than 40 homes and businesses. Some homes were completely flooded or washed away. In the floodplain along the Tweed River, Chalet Village was inundated. The strength of the floodwaters in Chalet Village was so strong that homes were knocked off their foundations.



2 - Fletcher Brook Rd. during Irene (Source: D. Brown)



3 - Stony Brook Rd. after Irene (Source: D. Brown)

By August 30th, efforts to reconnect parts of the community began in earnest. But, the task was daunting, and work was slow. Access to neighboring towns was available only by ATV. Members of the community rallied and depended on itself. In Gaysville, the postmaster hiked through the village collecting outgoing mail and delivering it outside the community. Residents with heavy equipment began repairing or cutting detours around damaged roads. Some residents took turns driving from home to home to make sure elderly residents were safe and to deliver messages.

The town office and post office were both flooded, eliminating what was a regular location where residents could meet. Under Selectboard direction community members gathered in two primary locations to receive updates and emergency supplies. The Selectboard hosted meetings at the Central

School as well as the Stockbridge Town Common. Holding meetings in two locations presented challenges to sharing consistent information and to connecting the community as a whole.

Route 107 remained impassible for weeks after Irene passed through Stockbridge, causing residents substantial difficulties. Travel to work that once took 10 minutes took hours due to the slow rate of speed on the back roads used to connect Stockbridge to other communities. The State of Vermont began the massive task of repairing the devastated road utilizing National Guard troops from multiple states to aid in the efforts by providing massive trucking and logistical support. The railway system that runs through Bethel, once repaired, provided transport for aggregate material that was used to restore the road. Weeks after Irene, Route 107 became barely passable. In December of 2011, it was opened officially.

FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for providing aide to communities and their residents following federally declared disasters. In response to Tropical Storm Irene, the Selectboard worked with FEMA to fund municipal infrastructure repairs, such as roads and bridges. Municipality desires to improve, and not just repair, damaged infrastructure however, met resistance due to strict FEMA regulations. Such regulations and restrictions often prevented the Town from constructing improved infrastructure that would mitigate future storm damages.

Due to the widespread damage to all of Stockbridge's roads, many of which were obliterated, the total amount of funds spent repairing town property (including roads, bridges and culverts) is estimated at approximately \$5 million as of March, 2012.

For businesses and private citizens, working with FEMA was noted to be a more challenging and slower process. Businesses are not eligible for FEMA relief funding and instead were directed to take advantage of low-interest loans through the Small Business Association. The burden of new or additional debt to a business can make reopening after a disaster difficult. Residences were eligible for the Individual Assistance through FEMA, but the maximum amount of assistance per home is \$30,000. If a resident's home is destroyed, the cost to replace it is likely to be substantially more than \$30,000.

Under certain circumstances, some properties were eligible for a FEMA buyout through the State of Vermont. The purpose of this program is to remove structures that have, or are likely to be, severely damaged by flooding again. These properties, if purchased through this program, become Town property in perpetuity and all infrastructure is to be demolished and never rebuilt. The buyout amount is generally 75% of the value of the building, but the building must be 95% damaged. There are nineteen homes in Stockbridge that are being bought out through this program.

III. Demographics

A. Introduction

The demographic nature of a town tells a great deal about who the town is and what trends define its direction. To get a real-time snapshot of the town it is important to have the most up-to-date data available. Much of the content in this chapter has been taken from the 2010 US Census or the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. In other instances, state data was used.

B. Population

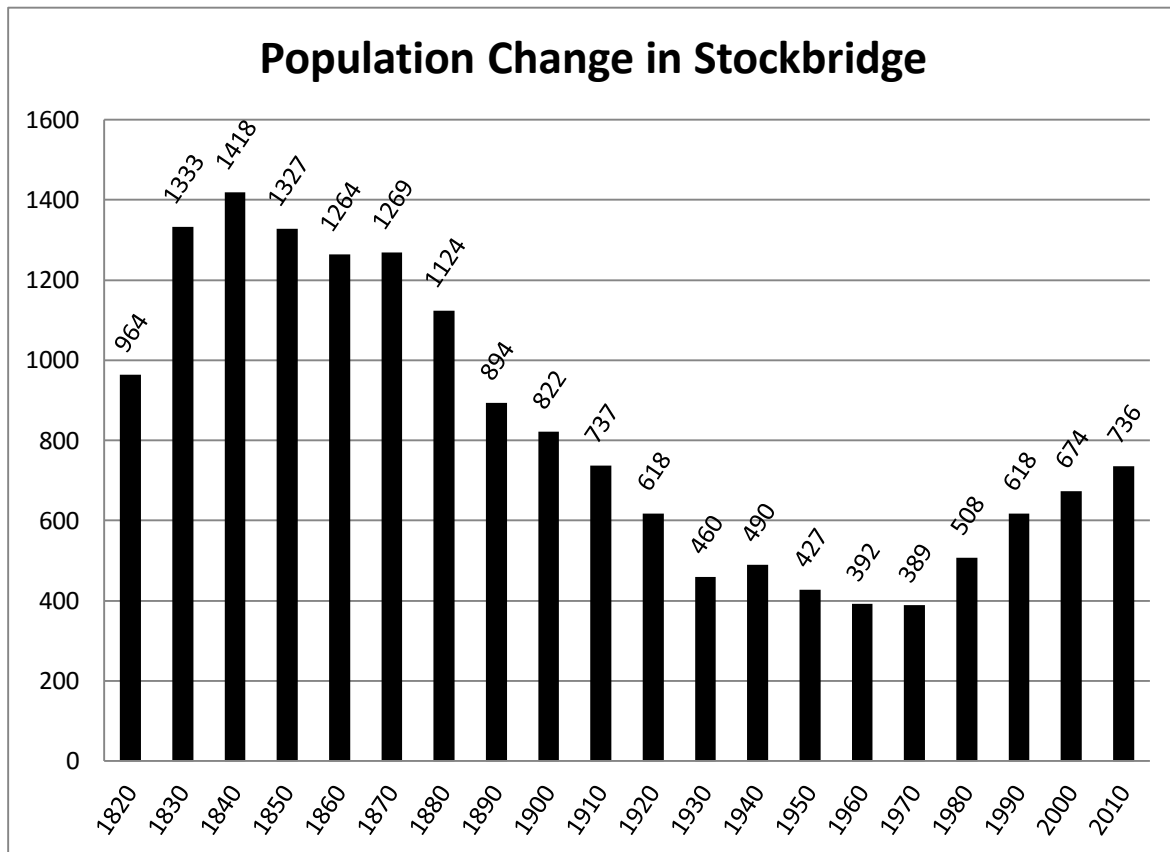


Figure 4 - Source: U.S. Census

Population, when considered in terms of past, present, and future growth patterns and trends, comprises an important factor in the development of Stockbridge. Rapid or unanticipated growth can create a demand for new and expanded municipal services straining the financial ability of the Town to provide public services economically or equably. This is particularly true when new residents are of school age and schools are at or near capacity. Accordingly, it is in the public interest to monitor population changes and to direct these changes in a manner that does not burden the Town's ability to provide services. Outlined below are some basic population statistics for the Town of Stockbridge compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the data in figure 1, Stockbridge's year 2010 population numbered 736 compared to a population of 674 in 2000, resulting in an increase in population of just over 9%. During the same ten year period, only two out of six of Stockbridge's neighboring communities gained population. Stockbridge's gain was second only to the town of Pittsfield. Windsor County overall reflected a slight loss of population.

Stockbridge's population change over time is reflective of many communities in Vermont. During the mid to late 1800s, many Vermont towns reached their peak population. A mass exodus as citizens moved south caused a steep drop that finally stopped during the 1970s. Throughout the 1980s and up to 2000, most communities experienced a steady influx of new residents. Between 2000 and 2010, however, gains became losses in many communities.

% of Population Change, Stockbridge and other Towns				
	1980	1990	2000	2010
Barnard	790	872	958	947
<i>% Change</i>		10.38%	9.86%	-1.15%
Bethel	1,715	1,866	1,968	2,030
<i>% Change</i>		8.80%	5.47%	3.15%
Bridgewater	867	895	980	936
<i>% Change</i>		3.23%	9.50%	-4.49%
Killington	891	738	1,095	811
<i>% Change</i>		-17.17%	48.37%	-25.94%
Pittsfield	396	389	427	546
<i>% Change</i>		-1.77%	9.77%	27.87%
Rochester	1,054	1,181	1,171	1,139
<i>% Change</i>		12.05%	-0.85%	-2.73%
Stockbridge	508	618	674	736
<i>% Change</i>		21.65%	9.06%	9.20%
Windsor County	51,030	54,055	57,418	56,670
<i>% Change</i>		5.93%	6.22%	-1.30%
Vermont	511,456	562,758	608,827	625,741
<i>% Change</i>		10.03%	8.18%	2.77%

Figure 5: % Population Change in Stockbridge and Other Towns.
(Source - U.S. Census)

As is the case in most of Vermont, the primary factor influencing population change is new settlement rather than an unusually high birth or death rate. One of the reasons that Stockbridge has continued to gain population during a time when other community populations are declining, may be that Stockbridge offers school of choice above grade six. Community surveys show that the advantage of having access to a small community elementary school and a wide range of choices for Middle and High Schools is appealing..

C. Age of Population

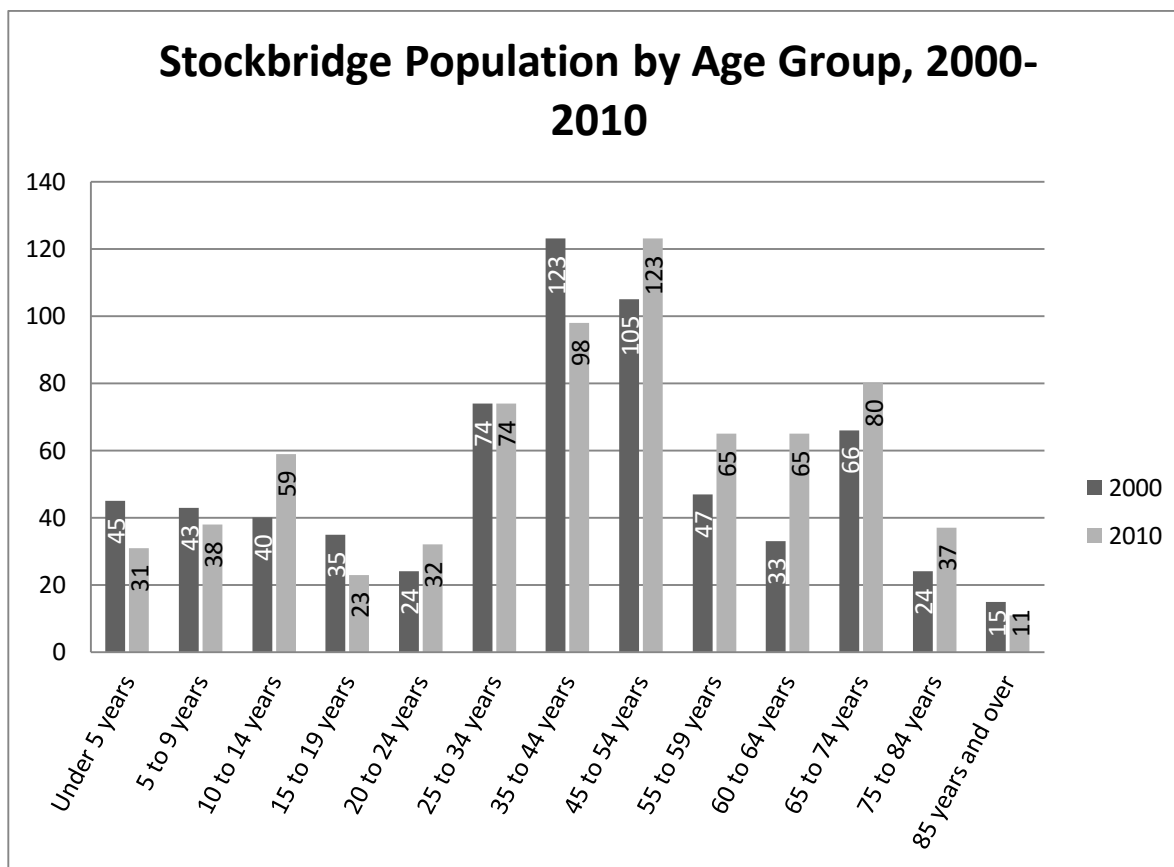


Figure 6 - Stockbridge Population by Age Group, 200-2010 (Source: U.S. Census)

In general, the age of Stockbridge's population is similar to that of Vermont as a whole, with much of our population over the age of 35. From 2000 to 2010, there have been noticeable changes in the age of Stockbridge's population. Stockbridge saw a 40 % increase in the number of residents aged 60 and over while retaining or replacing residents in the prime working ages of 25-59. In 2000, Stockbridge had 123 residents aged 35-44. This number remained consistent when analyzed in 2010.

The loss of young adults (generally between the ages of 25-35) has been a concern throughout Vermont during the past decade. Often referred to as a "brain drain," the out-migration of young adults raises concerns

% Population by Age Group, 2010		
Age	Stockbridge	Windsor County
Under 5 years	4%	5%
5 to 9 years	5%	5%
10 to 14 years	8%	6%
15 to 19 years	3%	6%
20 to 24 years	4%	5%
25 to 34 years	10%	11%
35 to 44 years	13%	12%
45 to 54 years	17%	17%
55 to 59 years	9%	9%
60 to 64 years	9%	7%
65 to 74 years	11%	10%
75 to 84 years	5%	5%
85 years and over	1%	3%

Figure 7 - % Population by Age Group, 2010

on both economic and social levels. Without a talented and well-educated pool of young workers, there are worries that the state will find it increasingly difficult to attract and retain well-paid jobs, which in turn can have serious repercussions for the state's capacity to raise tax revenues and pay for essential services. Young adults who leave their rural communities often do so because communities lack the resources commonly sought after by people of their age group, such as: reliable high speed internet access; clear cell phone reception; employment opportunities; affordable housing; and opportunities for social interaction with others of their age group.

According to the Department of Economic Development's (DED) 2007 Report "Growing Vermont's Next Generation Workforce," Vermont ranks at the bottom nationally for the percentage of its citizens between the ages of 25 and 29, and at the top in the percentage aged 50-54. While it is common, and perhaps desirable, for young adults to venture beyond their home state after college, the biggest concern is that many are not returning. During interviews for the DED report in 2007, young adults explained that their primary reason for leaving Vermont was to find better paying jobs. Likewise, the biggest hurdle for young adults wanting to return to Vermont was the availability of well-paying jobs and affordable housing.

Those young adults who choose to return to, or relocate to, Vermont have indicated that their primary motivation for moving to Vermont is the lifestyle associated with the working landscape. Outdoor recreation, agriculture and the importance of community often encourage these citizens to return. The retention of this age group over the 2000-2010 decade in Stockbridge, supports the notion that our community offers the working landscape lifestyle.

Another trend that mirrors statewide trends, Stockbridge has an aging population. In 2010, 17% of the population was over 65 years of age, which is marginally lower than Windsor County (18%), but higher than the State of Vermont (14.6%). Vermont also has the lowest birth rate in the nation (10.4 births per 1,000 of population, compared with 14.2 for the U.S) which, when coupled with in-migration of residents over 55, results in an aging population that will need services that are not readily available in a town like Stockbridge. The need for elderly housing will increase.

IV. Land Use

A. Background

In terms of planning, one of the most complex discussions is about how land should be used in the future in accordance with the community's vision. How a town uses its land and plans for future land development can affect a wide range of issues including the town's character, economic base, and its ability to provide services adequately and at a reasonable price. In order to ensure that the impacts of future development in Stockbridge does not have unintended consequences, the town's growth must be managed to reflect the vision of this Plan.

This section discusses historic, current, and future land use patterns and provides goals, policies and recommendations for future implementation. V.S.A. Title 24, §4411(a) authorizes towns to implement the plan through land use regulations, such as zoning, subdivision and site plan review, provided that those regulations are in conformance with this plan and §4302 of Title 24, which addresses the state's planning goals. In 2004, the state legislature passed Act 115 to define more clearly "conformance with the plan". It states that:

"All such regulatory and non-regulatory tools shall be in conformance with the plan, shall be adopted for the purposes set forth in section 4302 of this title, and shall be in accord with the policies set forth therein." [§4411(a)]

The Plan is designed to be used by Stockbridge's decision makers to guide growth to the most appropriate locations and to make any necessary expansion of municipal infrastructure or services manageable and cost-effective. The citizens of Stockbridge have both a need and a right to review and assess proposed development, and to regulate new building to insure appropriate location and that too rapid expansion of Stockbridge does not unreasonably and adversely affect the rural scenic quality of the town or its ability to pay for the services that increased development requires.

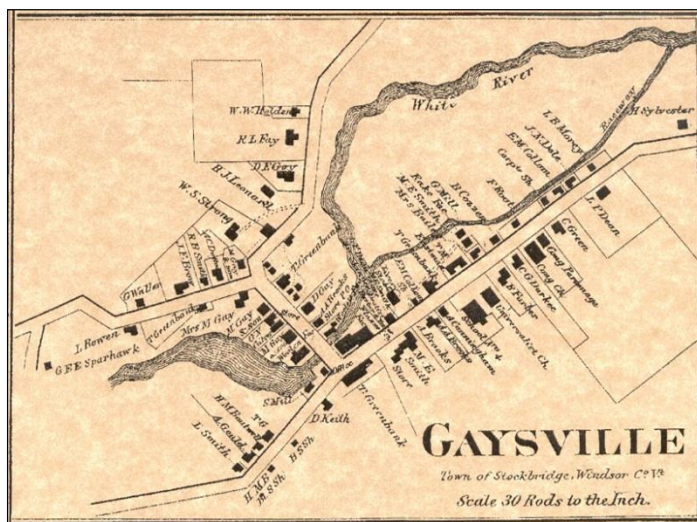
It is the intent of this Plan to provide for the maintenance of the high quality of life in Stockbridge by protecting the rural, scenic quality of the town through the appropriate use of land for residential, agricultural/forestry, small business and recreational use. Future development within Stockbridge should be guided by and related to the existing settlement patterns and the citizens' desires to maintain the rural scenic quality of the town, as well as by natural environmental constraints, and the ability of the taxpayers and the land to support the proposed growth.

B. Historic Land Use

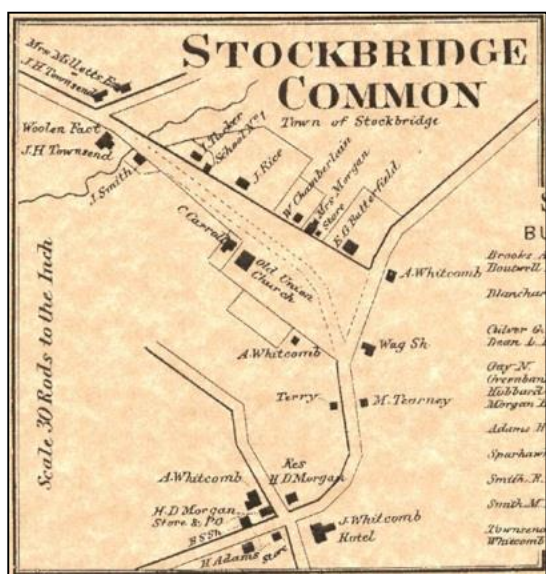
In order to consider how and where a community can and should encourage development, it is valuable to look to the past. In many instances, there are lessons to be learned from the way land was used and where the community most often congregated.

In the 1800s, Stockbridge had two strong villages: Stockbridge Common-on the western side of Stockbridge, near Route 100, and Gaysville-on the eastern side of Stockbridge, near Route 107. They were vital community centers that served as the central places in which citizens could meet and use the services offered by local businesses.

At one point in time, Gaysville was home to such businesses as a general store, blacksmith, lumberyard, dry goods and drug store, woolen mill, flannel mill, homeopathic physician and surgeon, harness maker and a grist mill. Stockbridge Common, while smaller than Gaysville, had a dry goods and grocery, blacksmith, woolen mill and hotel. Both villages were home to public and civic facilities such as post offices, churches and meeting houses. Much of this prosperity was due to the presence of the Peavine railroad which connected Rochester to Bethel and passed through, or near, both of Stockbridge's villages.



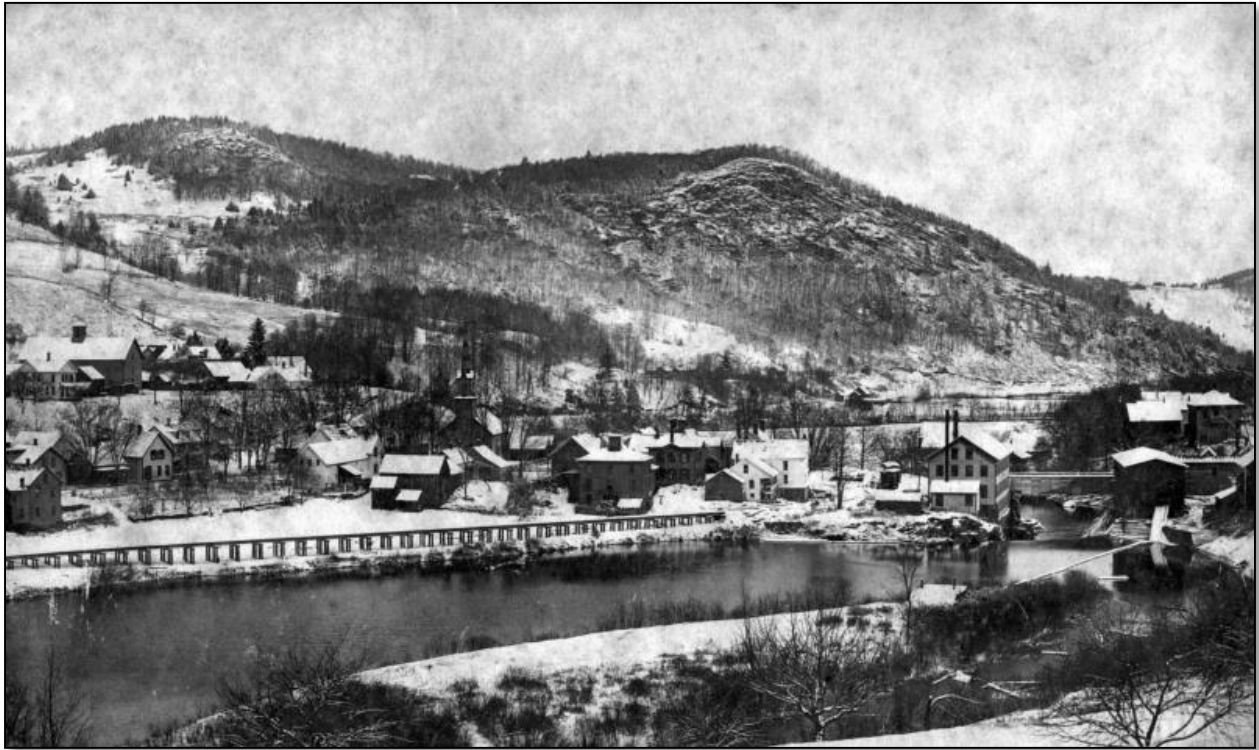
8 - Gaysville circa 1869 (Source: Beers Atlas 1869)



9 – Stockbridge Common
circa 1869 (Source: Beers Atlas 1869)

As with much of Vermont, farming and forestry used to be the primary jobs held by citizens in Stockbridge. Most homes were connected in some form or another to agriculture, either through full-time farming or in the form of smaller endeavors that fed the families who lived there.

Vermont suffered what is commonly referred to as “The Great Flood of ’27.” The severe flooding and damaging winds devastated central Vermont, including Stockbridge. As can be seen on the following page, the damage suffered in Gaysville was dramatic. The Mill, a church, railroad station, and many other businesses and homes were swept away by the raging White River. A large section of low, river bottom land where the losses were most severe was completely eroded away. The resulting damage was so substantial that Gaysville never fully recovered from it.



10 - Gaysville 1927, pre flood (Source: UVM Landscape Change Program)



11 - Gaysville 1927, post flood (Source: UVM Landscape Change Program)

The inherent risks of developing land located adjacent to the White and Tweed Rivers were made clear

during the Flood of 1927 and subsequently over time in Stockbridge.

In the 1960s, Vermont Route 107 was built, running through Stockbridge. In order to accommodate the width of the road, several essential businesses were torn down (including John Chedal's General store – pictured right), further eroding the economic viability of Gaysville.

C. Current Land Use

Present day Stockbridge is much different than Stockbridge of the 1800s and early 1900s. The primary form of development is residential, and most residents work outside of the community.

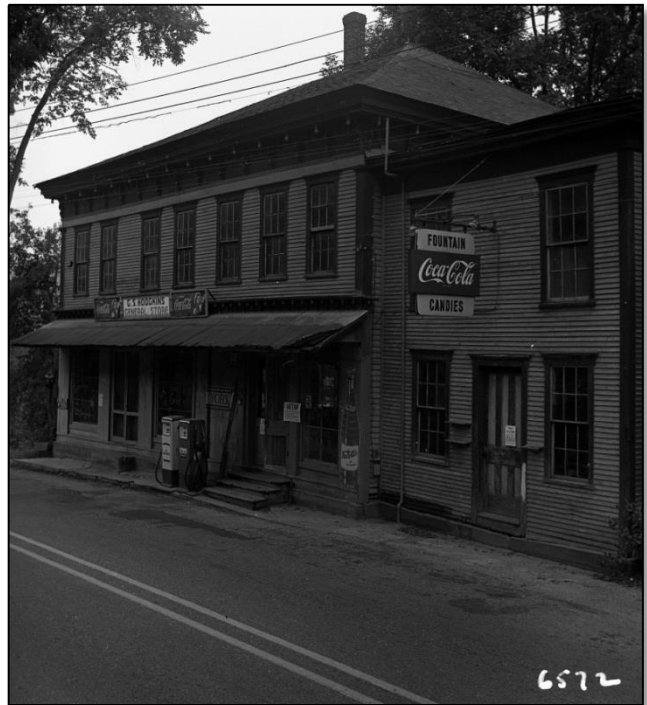
Stockbridge has no central location where the community can come together. A majority of residents who responded to the 2012 Town Plan survey indicated that they felt that Stockbridge is “two separate communities,” with the eastern and western sides of the community viewing themselves as separate from the other.

Commercial land uses once centered within and around these community centers are now scattered primarily along State Highway Routes 100 and 107. Home occupations are the more prevalent type of commercial activity in Stockbridge.

Residential uses, although still sparsely scattered along road and highways, are no longer primarily associated with farming and other agricultural uses. Rather, new residential uses have been located according to aesthetic values, suitability for subsurface sewage disposal and access to public roads.

Where once most households were once part of an active farming operation, there are few active farms in Stockbridge. This is a trend being experienced throughout Vermont, New England and the nation. Another trend in Vermont is the resurgence of small scale backyard animal husbandry and some residential lots can be found to include some sheep, beef cattle, horses or dairy cows. While agriculture may no longer play a major role in the economy of Stockbridge, the value of agricultural and other open lands extends beyond dollar production figures.

Stockbridge's most valuable asset is its natural landscape. Stockbridge has a substantial amount of preserved land, including 4400 acres of public lands (Les Newell Wildlife Management Area and Green Mountain National Forest) and roughly 2000 acres of private conservation easements. The hills, valleys and open river-bottom lands make Stockbridge a pleasing place to live and a destination for those who seek outdoor recreational opportunities.



12 - John Chedal's General Store in 1962, before Route 107 was built. (Source: UVM Landscape Change Project)

D. Future Land Use

When surveyed in 2012, 86% of the respondees indicated that the Town's major strength was its people and rural setting. Residents seek a balance between the rural, primarily residential landscape that exists in Stockbridge today, and the vision of a Stockbridge that offers the potential for local employment as well as commercial businesses that take advantage of the natural landscape. Survey results also indicate that residents have a desire to have locations where they can utilize services and retail stores within the community instead of having to go outside the community, provided that these uses are of a scale and type of development that fit within the landscape and the surrounding area.

At the same time, the State of Vermont has established planning goals which seek to maintain the current pattern of development common to Vermont, densely populated village and urban centers surrounded by open countryside. State law clearly discourages the types of development most commonly associated with strip development and sprawl, the reason being that many of these uses can be harmful to existing villages. For a community such as Stockbridge that has no active village center, meeting the goal of centralizing development can be somewhat challenging.

The future land use section of a town plan is intended to act as a guide for future development within a town, and to aid local planners in the process of implementing the plan through regulatory tools. Future land use areas are not necessarily required to mimic the historic character of land use, but instead should reflect Stockbridge's vision of the future, even if the proposed land use settlement pattern suggested differs from the present pattern.

The Stockbridge Planning Commission has collected input from members of the community and have used this guidance to create a framework through which the citizen's vision can be implemented. This vision includes changes to land use areas that support the goals of the community while remaining consistent with state law. The following land use areas are established for the purposes of implementing this vision:

i. Village/Hamlet Areas

Stockbridge's historic villages (Gaysville and Stockbridge Common) were once thriving villages with a traditional mix of uses. However, each has become primarily residential in nature and neither is geographically central to the community. The Planning Commission, seeking to create a central location for civic and commercial uses in addition to Gaysville and Stockbridge Common, has proposed the creation of a new hamlet area around the Stockbridge Central School.

The school remains the location where community gatherings most frequently occur, and the topography of this location is such that it could accept a light mix of appropriately scaled uses, including commercial development. The pattern of development around the Stockbridge Central School is primarily residential in nature, with a few small businesses which are supported primarily by

Formula Commercial

For the purposes of this plan, "Formula Commercial" means retail establishments and restaurants that are required by contractual or other arrangement to maintain any of the following: standardized ('formula') array of services and/or merchandise, trademark, logo, service mark, symbol, decor, architecture, layout, uniform, or similar standardized feature.

local residents. The Planning Commission has identified this location as a more appropriate location for additional commercial development (including retail) provided that any such development is appropriately scaled.

To try to meet the intent of state planning goals while acknowledging residents' desires for a town center with additional commercial development, Stockbridge's Villages and Hamlet areas are organized in a fashion that is not likely to encourage strip development, and measures will be put in place that encourage appropriate in keeping with Stockbridge's rural character.

Policies

1. Commercial establishments that are formulaic in nature (chain stores) are viewed as inconsistent with the vision of Stockbridge's community and are prohibited from locating in Stockbridge.
2. It is the policy of this Plan to prohibit the pattern of development most associated with sprawl, which is to allow primary commercial development in a strip along main roads. As an alternative, commercial development areas will be located in small, clustered areas.

Recommendation

- ~~1.~~ The Planning Commission should change the Bylaws to eliminate the Business Enterprise Districts in order to remain consistent with this Plan, the Regional Plan, and state planning goals.

Gaysville Village Area

The purpose of the Gaysville Village Area is to provide an area where a mix of residential and commercial (including primary retail) development can be located. The types of uses in this area should be wide-ranging, but appropriate in terms of scale and impact on the surrounding area-which is generally residential in nature. Businesses that serve the immediate area and residents located in other parts of Stockbridge would be suitable. Higher density development (as small as ½ acre) is encouraged in this area, but it is recognized that there are constraints with regard to the availability of groundwater and septic suitability that might make dense development difficult. Because Gaysville is historically significant to the community, any development proposed for this area would need to be designed so as to blend in with the surrounding structures.

Policies

1. The density of development in the Gaysville Village Area should reflect existing settlement patterns, land capability, and the availability of utilities for expansion.
2. Developments should be designed so as to reflect the historic character of Gaysville.
3. Primary retail and services, tourist businesses, lodging and public facilities, at a scale and design appropriate to the existing characteristics, are encouraged.
4. Conversion of existing structures and older buildings, especially those of historic merit, are encouraged to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.
5. Where new development is being planned, efforts should be directed to ensure that such development is reasonably complementary and compatible to the configuration of existing

buildings, streetscape, and respects traditional scales, proportions, and shapes of the surrounding neighborhoods.

6. Single, two, and multiple family housing at medium to high densities is encouraged.

Stockbridge Common Area

While Stockbridge Common was also a hub of economic development in the past, what it represents today is primarily a center of historic value. It is the intent of this Plan to allow for a limited mix of uses within this area, provided that such uses clearly fit with the historic character of the area. It is possible that Stockbridge Common Area could support historically designed professional offices or a general store as it has in the past, but only if such operations are designed in a manner that is sensitive to the historic character of the area. Density in this area should be consistent with existing densities, generally no smaller than one acre.

Policies

1. Development shall be designed so as to maintain and enhance the historic character of the Stockbridge Common Area.
2. The density of development in the area should reflect existing settlement patterns, land capability, and the availability of utilities for expansion.
3. Primary retail and services, tourist businesses, lodging and public facilities, at a small scale and design appropriate to the historic characteristics of the Stockbridge Common Area, are encouraged.
4. Conversion of existing structures and older buildings, especially those of historic merit, are encouraged to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.
5. Where new development is being planned, development shall be complementary and compatible to the configuration of existing buildings, streetscape, and respects traditional scales, proportions, and shapes of the surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Single and two- family housing at medium to high densities is encouraged.

Stockbridge School Hamlet Area

The Stockbridge School Hamlet Area is located around the Stockbridge Central School and along Route 107 where several businesses have historically been located. The purpose of this land use area is to continue to support the current pattern of development by providing a small, clustered location where a mix of residential, civic and commercial uses that include properly scaled primary retail can interact with existing businesses and/or a civic center (the school) in a manner that encourages mixed-use growth. Density in these areas should be no smaller than one-acre.

Policies

1. Residential, civic and commercial uses that include properly scaled primary retail are appropriate in this area.
2. New commercial development within the Mixed Use Commercial Area should be designed in such a fashion that it:

- Creates a compact project which utilizes land efficiently
 - Reduces the visual and environmental (runoff) impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots and integrating landscaping
 - Provides pedestrian and vehicular links between projects
 - Incorporates green space and screening between the project and the street, including use of large trees
 - Includes signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being garish
3. Sound access management techniques, including shared access points, shall be incorporated into all commercial developments in an effort to ensure traffic safety and to minimize the number of curb cuts.

Recommendation

1. The Planning Commission should change the Zoning Bylaws to create the Stockbridge School Hamlet Area around the Stockbridge Central School from Blackmer Boulevard to Stony Brook Road.

ii. Economic Development Area

Mixed Use Light Industrial Area

The Mixed Use Light Industrial Area is intended to provide an appropriate location for mixed use development with a focus on job-producing light industrial establishments. While residential and small-scale commercial (including secondary retail) are also allowed, light industrial, manufacturing and commercial establishments such as professional offices and other facilities are intended to be the dominant type of use. The location of this land use area along Route 107 and within a mile of the Route 107/Route 100 intersect, allows it to take advantage of direct access to a main highway, while directing these more intensive uses away from smaller municipal roads. Density in these areas should be no smaller than one-acre.

Secondary vs. Primary Retail

A primary retail establishment is a business whose primary purpose is the sale of goods. *Examples include (but are not limited to) a grocery store, a pharmacy, a flower shop, etc.*

A secondary retail establishment is a small portion of a business whose primary purpose does not involve the sale of goods. *Examples include (but are not limited to) a furniture manufacturer who has a small retail shop on site, a veterinarian's office that sells dog food, a brewery with a restaurant and beer sales, etc.*

Policies

1. New commercial development within the Mixed Use Light Industrial Area should be designed in such a fashion that it:
 - Creates a compact project which utilizes land efficiently
 - Reduces the impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots and integrating landscaping
 - Provides pedestrian and vehicular links between projects
 - Utilizes screening between the project and the street to reduce visual impacts and to diminish other impacts such as noise, including use of large trees

- Includes signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being garish
2. Sound access management techniques, including shared access points, shall be incorporated into all commercial developments in an effort to ensure traffic safety and to minimize the number of curb cuts.
 3. Primary retail establishments shall be located only in Stockbridge's Village and Hamlet areas and not within this land use area.

Recommendations

1. The Planning Commission should revise the Zoning Bylaws to create the Mixed Use Light Industrial Areas around the area where Advanced Animations is currently located to encourage similar uses and job creation.
2. Clear standards (possibly including performance standards) with regard to the types and sizes of appropriate light industrial and commercial development and access management should be developed for conditional use review.

iii. Rural Areas

The majority of land in Stockbridge remains distinctly rural in nature. These lands are often forested and in some cases relatively untouched by development and they are one of the key elements that makes Stockbridge appealing to its residents. It is in the rural areas of Stockbridge that most residents choose to locate their homes. In 2012, residents surveyed indicated strong support for protecting the town's rural character. The Plan seeks to strike a balance between residential development and the desire to protect and maintain the natural and scenic character of Stockbridge.

Rural Residential Area

The Rural Residential Area is intended to be the primary location for residential development, as it is well served by the municipal road system and the topography is such that it allows for adequate septic suitability. Development that is encouraged in this area is intended to be done in a way that is sensitive to, and guided by, the physical landscape. All development should be compatible with the rural and natural character of Stockbridge. Housing should be single family or two family, larger multi-family dwellings are not appropriate for this area.

Commercial development in this area should be very small-scale and of the nature most commonly associated with home businesses or home enterprises where a landowner uses a portion of the home or property to conduct business. Retail development in this area is appropriate only if it is secondary to a primary use, such as a woodworker who sells furniture from their shop or an eye doctor who sells glasses in addition to conducting eye exams. Development that is recreational, agricultural or forestry related is encouraged.

Policies

1. Projects which adversely affect the rural setting and conflict with existing rural land uses are not appropriate in this area.
2. Residential, recreational, agricultural, and forestry uses are to be the primary and dominant land uses in the Rural Residential District.
3. Primary retail enterprises or service centers which draw principally on regional market shares, including factory outlets, fast food establishments, and shopping malls, are inappropriate in the Rural Residential District. Secondary retail is acceptable provided the primary use is compatible with the area.
4. The establishment and operation of small entrepreneurial enterprises are consistent with the general purpose of this area. Such uses are encouraged provided that their size, type, appearance, and setting do not significantly or unnecessarily detract from rural character. These enterprises should not cause an undue burden on the ability of the town to provide services, such as highways and fire protection.
5. New land development should be planned and sited so as to promote the continued use of agricultural and forestry for their intended uses. This can be accomplished by siting residential and other non-agricultural uses on the least productive soils for agriculture or forestry. In addition, the layout of building lots should be designed to conserve crop and pasture land and managed woodlands.
6. Residents are free to conduct an occupation in their homes provided that the nature of the occupation is customary or appropriate in rural residential areas.
7. The use of planned residential development or the cluster development concept, where intensive settlement is balanced by compensating land for open space, is encouraged. It is a means of providing an environment more amenable to the land use goals of this Plan.

Recommendations for Action

1. The Planning Commission should amend the Zoning Bylaws to remove primary retail as an allowed use in the Rural Residential Area.

Upland Conservation Area

The Upland Conservation Area is primarily remote forestland, particularly in the No-Town, Stony Brook, and Fletcher Brook areas of town. This area has historically been very rural or in a wild state. Human settlement in the area is very sparse, public access very limited, particularly on a year round basis, and public utilities (electric and telephone) nearly non-existent. Land parcel sizes range from small to very large parcels with several owners being timber or land holding companies.

Much of this area contains valuable natural habitats that are critical to conservation and management of wildlife populations, particularly black bear habitats. Research conducted by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife indicate this area, as well as neighboring areas, support relatively high densities of cub-producing females considered critical habitats necessary to bear survival. The long-term stability of Vermont's bear population depends on these areas for feeding and vital as travel areas for bears.

The purpose of the Upland Conservation Area is to protect and preserve areas which are ecologically important or fragile; to enhance and maintain important wildlife habitat and forests; and to maintain the visual quality of the mountainside. To achieve this purpose the primary use in this area should be low density residential, camps, recreational and other uses which will not have a negative impact on the landscape.

Multi-use recreational activities are highly prevalent in this area, and are strongly supported by this plan. Hikers, sportsman, cross country skiers, bikers, and snowmobilers use this area as it receives region-wide recognition as a quality recreational area. Commercial activities that are recreational in nature are not only appropriate in this area, but are encouraged. Other commercial activities should be limited to agriculture and forestry and other uses that fit well with the natural character of the area.

Policies

1. Land above 2,000' elevation should be maintained in a natural wild state.
2. Forest Service (FS) acquisition and management of lands as part of the Green Mountain National Forest above 2,000 feet is encouraged only upon approval by the town.
3. Outdoor recreation and forestry uses are encouraged provided these uses do not unduly impact other significant resources of the site.
4. Permanent uses such as dwellings and other similar uses should be discouraged.
5. Any use deemed appropriate to high elevations should be sensitive to severe soil limitations to avoid erosion and slow vegetative recovery.
6. Large scale or large tract land developments or subdivision are not appropriate in areas where steep slopes, wet, or shallow soils are predominant, unless it can be demonstrated that such developments or subdivisions will not be unduly detrimental to the environment. Where this can be adequately proven, density of settlement should be relatively low. Outdoor recreational, forestry, and agricultural uses are examples of the preferred uses for critical areas, subject to overcoming site limitations.
7. Where permitted, land development or subdivision should be planned to minimize reduction of the resource value of such areas for forestry by providing reasonable population densities, use of cluster development, and new community planning designed to economize on the costs of roads, utilities, and land usage.

8. In areas exhibiting significant wildlife habitats, planning for land development or subdivision should be sensitive to the economic, social, cultural, recreational, or other benefits to the public of the habitat. Where loss to the public of the resource is imminent by a development or subdivision, all feasible and reasonable means to prevent significant loss or imperilment of the resource should be employed.
9. Commercial development that is not associated with a home enterprise, recreational, agriculture or forestry businesses is not appropriate in this area.

iv. **Flood Hazard Area**

Flood Hazard Areas include some lands adjacent to the Tweed and White Rivers, as well as their tributaries, which are subject to periodic flooding. Floodplains and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas are unsuitable for development because of the high potential for loss of life and property as well as the limited ability of septic systems to perform adequately during periods of high water. For more specific information about the function of Floodplains, see Chapter X, Natural Resources.

It is the purpose of this land use area to:

1. Avoid and minimize the loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, the impairment of the tax base, and the extraordinary public expenditures and demands on public services that result from flooding related inundation and erosion;
2. Ensure that the selection, design, creation, and use of development in hazard areas is safe and accomplished in a manner that is consistent with public wellbeing, does not impair stream equilibrium, flood plain services, or the stream corridor;
3. Manage all flood hazard areas designated pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Chapter 32 § 753, the municipal hazard mitigation plan; and make the Town of Stockbridge, its citizens, and businesses eligible for federal flood insurance, federal disaster recovery funds, and hazard mitigation funds as may be available.

Types of Floodplain Regulation

There are a wide range of options in terms of levels of regulation that can be applied within the Floodplain, and the community will have to engage in a discussion about how strict limitations should be. Regulation options can include:

Prohibition – The community can opt to prohibit all new development within the floodplain. This is the most effective way to ensure the continued public safety of community members. Existing homes, while subject to potential flooding, do not have their potential risk increased by the addition of more development in the floodplain. Towns can opt to prohibit all development, or just certain types (such as residential or commercial). Towns can opt to prohibit all development including expansion of existing structures. They can opt to prohibit or allow accessory structures.

Increased Requirements – Towns can continue to allow development within the floodplain (provided this development does not violate the minimum NFIP requirements), but require additional measures to develop in the floodplain. This would include having developments elevate structures to a greater height than one foot above base flood elevation (the minimum required by the NFIP), to design structures in such a fashion that they allow water to flow through lower levels and to more stringently secure structures in place.

Additional Flood Protection Areas – Towns can utilize newer river data that has mapped the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area (also called the River Corridor Area) to identify areas that are at risk from potential flood hazards but are not within the mapped floodplain. This data can be used to create buffers that keep new development outside of potential erosion zones.

4. To protect the environmental and recreational value of Stockbridge's rivers and streams.

As of the date this Plan was adopted, Stockbridge's Flood Hazard Regulations have been designed to meet the minimum standards (for more information, see Chapter X, Natural Resources) set by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Current Zoning Bylaws do not allow new development within the floodway, but does allow development within the 100-year floodplain, where allowed uses require a conditional use permit. Uses currently allowed with a conditional use permit include single and multi-family residences, utilities, public buildings, quarries and home industries to name a few.

When surveyed in 2012, over 70% of responders agreed that "new construction should not be allowed in flood hazard areas." Two Rivers-Ottawa-Quebec Regional Commission has determined that approximately 43 structures (including 38 houses and 4 businesses) have been identified as being located within the mapped flood hazard areas. 21 of the homes identified as within the floodplain are located in Chalet Village in Stockbridge. The severe damages and complete loss of homes caused by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 highlighted the need for Stockbridge to reevaluate the requirements of the Flood Hazard Area, both in terms of uses allowed and in terms of the area designated as Flood Hazard Area.

In order to protect the citizens of Stockbridge from further damages from a severe flooding event, and to implement the vision of Survey responders, the Planning Commission is proposing the following:

- Strongly discourage new development in the 100-year floodplain.
- The discouragement of new development would not apply to small out-buildings or similar structures provided they are properly flood-proofed and meet the thresholds required by the National Flood Insurance Program for flood hazard regulation.
- This standard would not apply to renovations to existing structures unless the proposed renovations expanded the footprint of the existing building to a point that crossed the substantial improvement thresholds required by the National Flood Insurance Program for flood hazard regulation.

The best and most appropriate uses within the Flood Hazard Area are those which are recreational and agricultural in nature. Minimizing development within these areas will help protect both public and private investments as well as the natural and scenic quality of Stockbridge's rivers.

E. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal

1. To protect the citizens of Stockbridge and the quality of our rivers as natural and recreational resources by using sound planning practices within designated Flood Hazard Areas.

Policies

1. Agriculture, recreational, open space, and alternative energy uses are the preferred uses in floodplains.

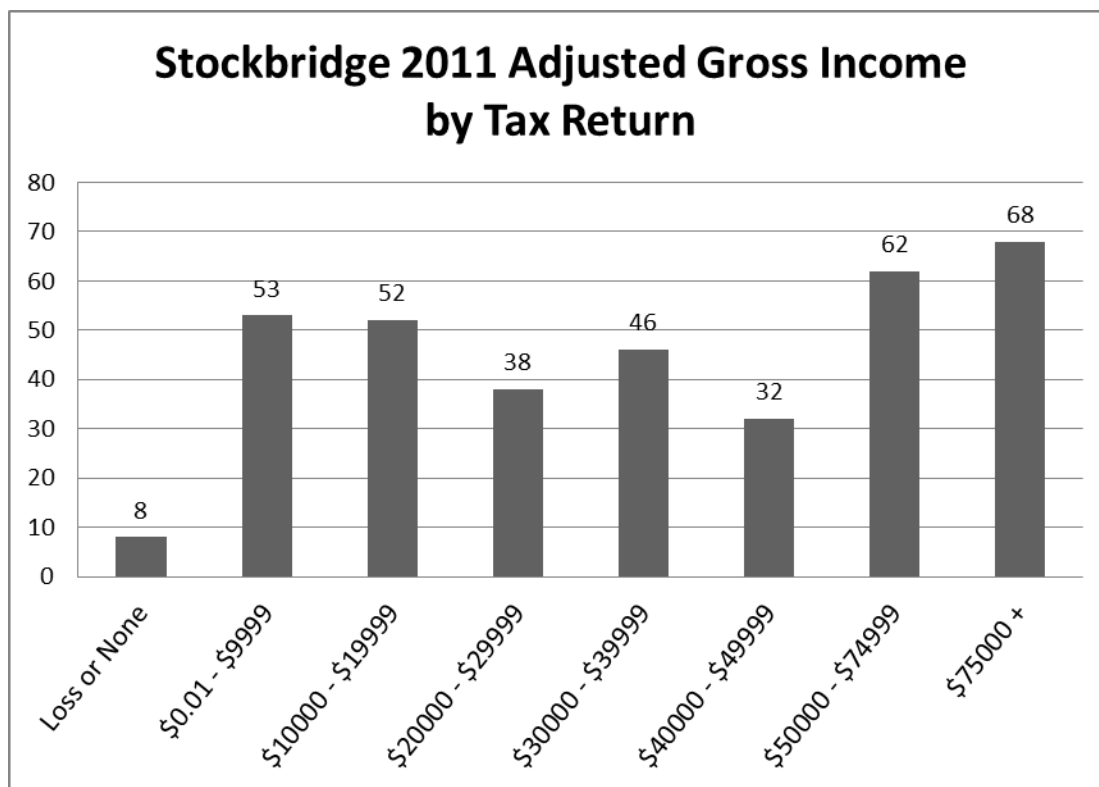
2. New development within the 100-year floodplain is highly discouraged with the exception of properly designed outbuildings and renovations that meet the requirements for Flood Hazard regulation as stipulated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Recommendations

1. The Planning Commission should regularly review the Flood Hazard section of the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to ensure that it remains up-to-date with the requirements of FEMA and the NFIP.
2. The Planning Commission should examine additional protections for the Flood Hazard Area, and areas outside the FHA that are prone to flooding or flood damage.
3. The Planning Commission should revise the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to highly discourage new development within the 100 year floodplain excluding properly designed outbuildings and renovations that meet the requirements for Flood Hazard regulation as stipulated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

V. Economic Development

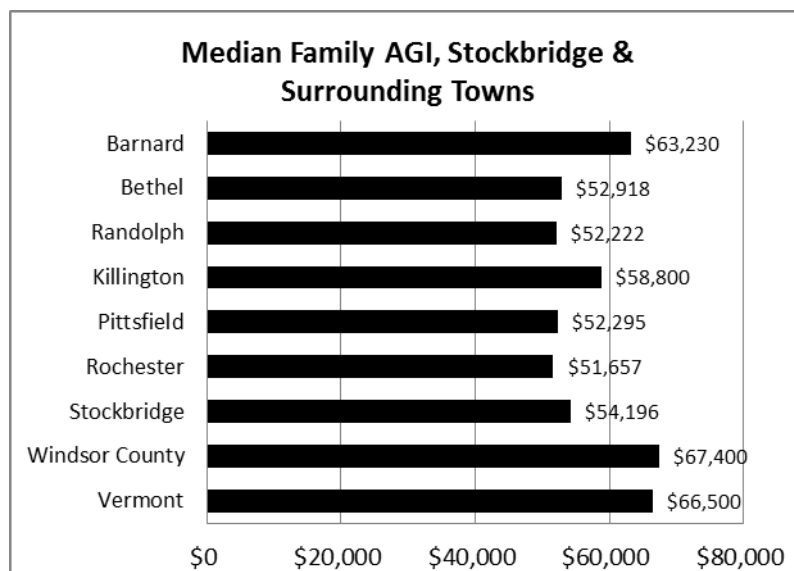
A. Economic Statistics



14 - Stockbridge 2011 AGI (Source: VT Dept. of Taxes)

The Vermont Department of Taxes annually publishes Vermont Tax Statistics, which includes a summary of personal income tax returns filed with the State. In 2011, three hundred and fifty nine (359) income tax returns were filed in Stockbridge. Total adjusted gross personal income reported for Stockbridge residents was \$16,314,099.

According to the Vermont Department of Taxes, Stockbridge's median adjusted gross income per family in 2000 was \$40,069. In 2011, the median adjusted gross income for a family had risen to \$54,196, an



13 - Median AGI, Stockbridge & Surrounding Towns
(Source: VT Dept. of Taxes)

increase of just over 35%. The percentage of growth since 2000 of Stockbridge's median family income was substantially higher than the 9% increase that occurred during the same period statewide. But, it should be noted that Stockbridge remains behind the 2011 median AGI for Windsor County and the State.

For 2011, 56% of the total family income generated in Stockbridge was by filers earning \$30,000 or more and 44% were earning less than \$30,000. The US Census Bureau sets the national poverty level on an annual basis. In 2011, the poverty level for a family of four was \$22,350 in income. During that year, at least 113 (32%) of the 359 filers in Stockbridge reported an income below that threshold. Given the costs of housing (discussed in chapter IX, Housing), the high percentage of residents who make \$30,000 or less may struggle to afford adequate housing in Stockbridge. Stockbridge's incomes also reflect a continuing need for income sensitive education tax policy.

B. Stockbridge's Economy

Unlike many of its neighbors, Stockbridge lacks a key element essential to a strong community economy – a village center. Residents utilize neighboring communities as the location for many services, including banking, professional, and health services. Stockbridge is a rural residential community in that a major portion of its working resident population is employed outside of the community. A village center has the advantages of encouraging economic development and providing a center for community activities. Creating a village center is possible over time through well thought out planning and willingness for businesses to locate here.

There are other alternatives to the village center model. Historically, Stockbridge has had several hamlets including Gaysville and Stockbridge Common. Often, Hamlets are defined by their geography. It may be that this concept is more desirable and would be a more effective tool in encouraging economic development and fostering a sense of community. Another alternative is designating mixed-use/light industrial areas to encourage job creation.

The community continues to do what it can to support the development of small business enterprises within the Town that employ area residents. Most commercial development in Stockbridge is of a scale that is appropriate in the rural countryside, and is consistent with this plan. In particular, the Community supports the development of home-based businesses that fit with the rural character. Likewise, the development of businesses that are based on recreation is important. Through sensible planning and good land use regulations these enterprises are located throughout

Sprawl - Dispersed auto-dependent development occurring outside of compact urban and village centers, along highways, and in rural countryside. Sprawl is typically characterized by:

- excessive land consumption;
- low densities in comparison with older centers;
- lack of choice in ways to travel;
- fragmented open space, wide gaps between development and a scattered appearance;
- lack of choice in housing types and prices;
- separation of uses into distinct areas;
- repetitive one-story development;
- commercial buildings surrounded by acres of parking;
- lack of public spaces and community centers.

Stockbridge. The town recognizes that improvements to communication infrastructure such as high-speed internet and cell phone service may allow residents who are currently commuting to telecommute. Any opportunity to improve these services would have the support of the town.

The community will continue to encourage the development of small businesses as long as they do not negatively impact the rural character of Stockbridge and are at a size and scale that live harmoniously with surrounding homes and other businesses. Businesses in town should not put an undue burden on community services, in particular roads. Commercial development (e.g. primary retail) that is consistent with "strip development" or "sprawl" (see sidebar on page 34) is not consistent with the character of the community. Additionally, Commercial development that requires trucking and freight handling should only locate on roads which can effectively handle the size of vehicle needed, and should not have an adverse impact on the rural nature of the community. The Mixed Use/Light Industrial Area proposed in this plan is located on Route 107, making it a suitable location for this type of development.

C. Employment Characteristics

Population, employment characteristics, and housing trends are factors that are considered when planning for economic development. As previously noted, Stockbridge has no center of commerce, and therefore a majority of residents commute outside of town for employment. Stockbridge does not contain the self-sufficient employment center of Gaysville that it had during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Even though the advances of the technological age of computers, automobiles, telecommunications and other conveniences have allowed for some residents to work from their homes, many Stockbridge residents commute to surrounding communities.

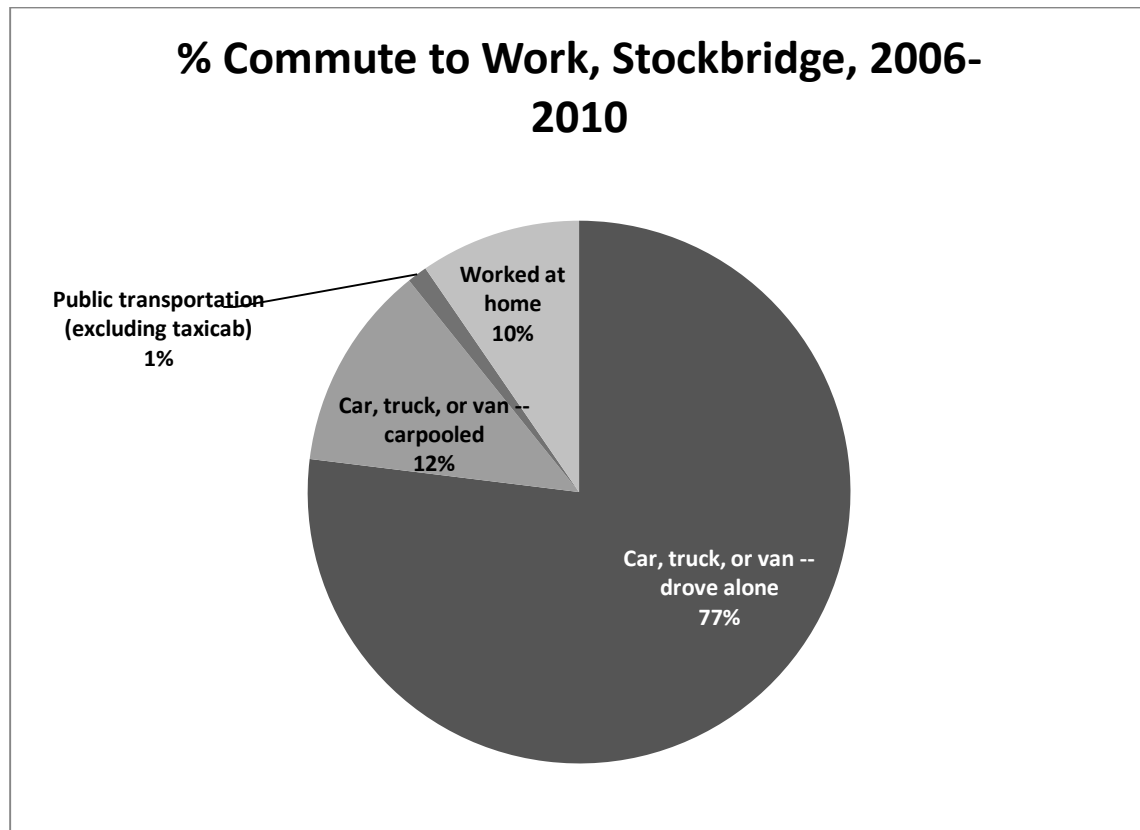


Figure 15 - % Commute to Work, Stockbridge (2006-2010)

The number of Stockbridge residents commuting to work alone (77%) mirrors that statistic at the County level. A slightly higher percentage of Stockbridge residents carpool (12% vs. 10%) and more work at home (10% compared to 8% in Windsor County).

Figure 13 indicates that more than half (62%) of Stockbridge residents are employed in management, business, science, art or service occupations. When compared at the County level these numbers (56%) are similar, although more Stockbridge residents (26%) are employed in the service industry than the county as a whole (17%). This may be related to Stockbridge's proximity to Killington and the resort services that offer employment in that area. A greater percentage of Stockbridge residents work in natural resources, construction or maintenance occupations (16%) than the bulk of the county (11%).

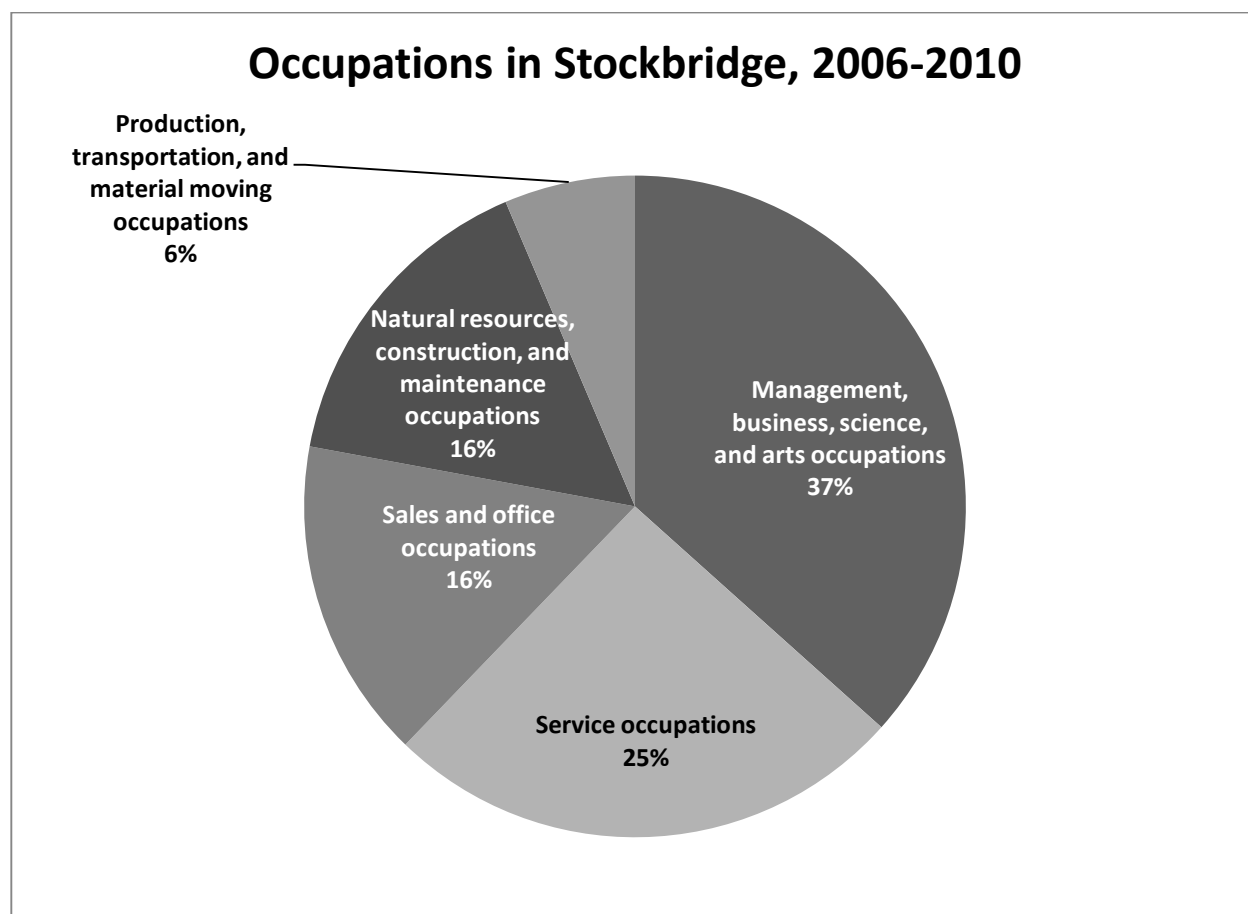


Figure 16 - Occupations in Stockbridge, 2006-2010

D. Regional Employment and Economic Development

The nationwide economic downturn which began in 2008, has had a negative impact on a majority of the United States, although Vermont has not suffered the same dramatic job losses. Population projections conducted during the 2000s indicated that the number of people entering the work force would increase despite relatively low unemployment levels. As a result of the downturn, population projections proved to be incorrect and the number of jobs created within the White River Valley area relative to the natural growth in the work force slowed substantially.

Stockbridge operates in a regional economy. Cooperation and coordination among neighboring employment center communities is essential to secure the proper balance between population, employment and housing. As the economy improves, natural work force changes in Stockbridge (job entries versus job attrition rates) can more than likely be accommodated in the Upper Valley.

E. Future Economic Development

Future economic investment in Stockbridge can have a significant economic impact on the community. Discussion and coordination regarding future land use development options should be encouraged between the community and economic development interests. For the larger and more complex projects,

review and analysis of proposed developments should measure community-wide impacts on the financial capacity of government to service the economic development and likely mitigation measures to accommodate such growth in the most equitable manner.

Measures can be taken in Stockbridge to create the opportunity for new economic development, but they are generally related to land use and land use regulation. In the Land Use Chapter of this Plan, several areas have been identified as suitable for some types of mixed-use commercial development. If these areas are designated and developed, they would create higher-density mixed use development areas near existing community centers such as the Stockbridge Central School. By creating these new mixed-use areas and stipulating what types of businesses would be appropriate for the community, it is hoped that Stockbridge can attract diverse and sustainable businesses which contribute to the small town quality of life.

Studies show that one of the primary reasons commercial developers are choosing towns like Stockbridge is due to the quality of life provided in the area. The Urban Land Institute noted a trend in its 2012 study, in which businesses select their location based substantially on the quality of life in that area. Benefits such as easy access to outdoor recreation or school choice, may do more to draw new businesses to Stockbridge than changes in land use regulation. To be sure, it is essential not to create an impediment to commercial development, but land use regulations that protect the character of the area while allowing appropriate types of commercial development will help maintain the community's quality of life.

F. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. It is the policy of the Town to attract diverse and sustainable businesses in Stockbridge which contribute to the small town quality of life.
2. To nurture a strong and diverse regional economy that provides sustainable employment opportunities for residents while maintaining environmental standards.
3. To strengthen and maintain the town's agricultural and forest economies and to ensure continuance of small town village and rural character.
4. To strengthen small businesses, such as home occupations, artistic and recreational activities

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town to provide for reasonable zoning standards enabling home occupations and home businesses to be developed or to continue.
2. It is the policy of the Town to support the development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services.

3. It is the policy of the Town to encourage new business development in appropriate locations where services such as roads, fire protection and power supply are available or planned.
4. It is the policy of the Town to support creation of regional economies that do not place unreasonable financial burdens on the taxpayers of Stockbridge to support those economies.
5. It is the policy of the Town that primary retail development shall be located in designated Village Center or Hamlet areas.
6. It is the policy of the Town to prohibit development that has the effect of creating sprawl.
7. It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with neighboring towns, regional planning commissions and economic development groups to plan for and maintain a balance between the type and number of jobs created and natural population growth in the area.

Recommendation

1. The Stockbridge Central School Hamlet and Mixed Use Light Industrial land use areas proposed in the Land Use chapter of this Plan should be created through revisions to the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws. Such areas should be near to existing public and civic facilities, roads, utilities, and have favorable site characteristics. This will encourage a managed growth pattern and lessen commercial sprawl throughout the Town.

VI. Recreation

A. Background

The Town of Stockbridge provides recreational facilities through the Stockbridge Central School, including a playground and sports fields. While these facilities are limited in scale, there are a wide number of additional recreation opportunities throughout the community.

Of note are the numerous swimming holes to be found along the White and Tweed Rivers. These spectacular spots are major summer recreation sites, attracting people from throughout the region. Access to these swimming holes is available through private and public locations. Should these accesses be threatened, a major loss to Stockbridge and its residents would result. The stretches to the White River passing through Stockbridge also attract people from throughout the region for tubing, rafting, boating and fishing.

There are several properties in Stockbridge that were catastrophically damaged by Tropical Storm Irene, which were purchased as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's buyout program. These parcels have become the property of Stockbridge and are permanently preserved, allowing additional access to the Tweed and Wither Rivers. Future river access areas and Town "green" spaces will result from the FEMA Buyout Program (see "FEMA" section on page 14 of this document). Access to the river is a major concern in order that residents of Stockbridge and other areas might enjoy the benefits of this Federal program.

Recreation and the Stockbridge Economy

Outdoor recreation is a key element of Vermont's economy, generating roughly \$2.5 billion a year in retail sales and services throughout the state. Recreation seeking tourists spend money. In "a National Survey of the Vermont Visitor," the University of Vermont business school determined that visiting hunters and fishermen spend more than \$2000 per trip. Hikers and campers spend \$440 per trip.

The Outdoor Industry Foundation reports that Vermont's residents are regular participants in outdoor recreation as well. Primary activities for residents include:

- Wildlife viewing: 54%
- Hiking: 33%
- Biking: 29%
- Skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing: 25%
- Camping: 21%
- Fishing: 18%
- Hunting: 14%

Stockbridge is home to roughly 4400 acres of publicly conserved lands. The Les Newell Wildlife Management Area and the Green Mountain National Forest both offer the potential for recreational opportunities including fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, etc. The

Appalachian Trail also runs through Stockbridge, exposing the town to regional, national and international hikers. Some of the more rural areas, such as the Chateaugay No-Town Area, have limited trail access, but there is interest in expanding the existing system to allow for more use.

In addition to hiking, hunting and other recreation, Stockbridge has a network of trails that are utilized by All-Terrain Vehicles. This system is maintained by the Quad-runners, a local chapter of Vermont All-Terrain Vehicle Sportsman's Association. During the winter, additional trails are utilized by snowmobilers. These trails are maintained by VAST, the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers.

These recreational pursuits have the potential to provide Stockbridge with a market that helps feed the local economic system. Additionally, Stockbridge's water resources include the Tweed and White rivers, both of which offer excellent opportunities for recreation.

Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 caused major environmental damage along the White and Tweed Rivers as well as structural damage. One of the hardest hit locations was the White River Campground. According to the Resident Survey in 2012, 51% of Stockbridge residents agreed with the statement that "having a campground in town is a plus," while only 17% disagreed. Given this sentiment, the town should support viable efforts to provide for public recreational uses. The way land is used in the community has an influence on recreation. Stockbridge should continue to maintain a pattern of low density development in the more rural areas of, allowing for retention of open land and reducing the possibility of having large land areas broken up for development. This Plan specifically encourages outdoor recreation as a valuable commercial use in Stockbridge and seeks to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike.

B. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To maintain, enhance and expand recreational opportunities in Stockbridge.
2. To make outdoor recreation a strong part of Stockbridge's local niche and economy.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the town to encourage the development of outdoor recreational businesses in Stockbridge.
2. It is the policy of the town to encourage patterns of land use that maintain and enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Recommendations

1. Explore options to encourage public access to local campgrounds..

2. The Town should request State improvements for parking area signage along Route 107 that allow access to the river.
3. Continue to support, permitted recreational events.
4. Work to ensure that development of the town's web site includes a major focus on Stockbridge's recreational opportunities and assets.
5. The Town should work with the Forest Service to improve signage and visibility of the Stony Brook trailhead of the Appalachian Trail.

VII. Utilities and Facilities

The provision of services and maintenance of facilities is one of the key roles of any municipal government. The cost of services and public facility maintenance can represent a substantial amount of a municipality's yearly budget (not including transportation, which is generally the largest portion).

A. Capital Budgeting & Planning

State statute enables communities to create a Capital Budget Plan for the purposes of planning and investing in long-range capital planning. Although most communities have some form of capital account where they save money, many do not have an adequate capital budget plan. A capital budget outlines the capital projects that are planned to be undertaken in the coming fiscal years over a five to ten year period. It includes estimated costs and a proposed method of financing those costs. Also outlined is an indication of priority of need and the order in which these investments will be made. Capital budget plans should be consistent with the Town Plan and include an analysis of what effect capital investments might have on municipal operating costs.

When planning for routine major facilities investments, such as roof replacements, foundation repairs, etc., it is important to also consider making energy efficiency improvements at the same time. Making improvements for energy efficiency during renovation activities is normally more cost effective than completing the projects independently.

At present, the town of Stockbridge does not have a full-scale capital budget plan to help guide investments in community infrastructure and equipment. The Planning Commission has the authority to make recommendations as part of its role under V.S.A. Title 24, §4430 to the Selectboard with regard to what capital investments should be considered annually.

B. Town Buildings

Stockbridge Town Office

The Stockbridge Town Office is located on Route 100 in Stockbridge adjacent to the U.S. Post Office. The building was built in 2003 and represents a substantial improvement over the previous location which shared space in the Town Garage. The new building is attractive and conveniently located, and contains both adequate office and meeting space and sufficient vault storage space to meet the town's needs for the foreseeable future.

However, the Town Office is located immediately adjacent to a portion of the Tweed River Flood Hazard Area. Although not in the mapped floodplain, the building was inundated during Tropical Storm Irene, forcing a complete renovation of the new building. As a result, the building is not in need of any improvements at this time.

Given the potential for a severe flood hazard event to damage the Stockbridge Town Office, it is possible that the town may seek an alternative location for the Town Offices provided that one can be found that is financially appropriate and acceptable to the taxpayers of Stockbridge.

Town Garage

The Stockbridge Highway Department shares space with the Stockbridge Volunteer Fire Department in a building located on Blackmer Boulevard. Although available space was increased when the Town Office moved into its new building on Route 107, the limited square footage of the building remains inadequate for the storage needs of the Town Garage. Additionally, the limited acreage of the location (.53 acres) does not allow for the exterior storage of materials and equipment commonly needed by a Highway Department. It is hoped that at some point in the future, opportunities will present themselves which will allow for the size of the parcel to increase, thus allowing for the expansion of the facility.

An energy audit was conducted on the Town Garage in 2010. The most significant energy saving opportunities identified were replacing the boiler, improving the insulation and airtightness of the ceiling, and replacing the outdoor lighting. The total estimate for implementing all suggested upgrades could be as much as \$52,000. Improving the ceiling is not a simple solution and on its own would not be cost effective, but the cost effectiveness would increase if the work was timed with replacement of the roof membrane. At this time there is no plan to implement the suggested improvements.

C. Privately Owned Community Buildings

Belcher Public Library

The Belcher Library is located in Gaysville on Route 107 near the Gaysville Community Church. According to Stockbridge Gaysville 1761-1976, the library together with a sum of money was bequeathed to the village of Gaysville by Mr. William C. Belcher in 1896. First located across from the present-day library adjoining the Chedel General Store, it was relocated when Mrs. Laura Gay bequeathed the family home to the library. Around 1944, the books were moved into their new quarters and it has been used as a library ever since.

The Library is run by an independent Board of Trustees and staffed by three volunteer librarians. Traditionally the library has received an annual contribution from the town for (most recently \$3500 for 2013-14). The Library is owned by a private trust.

To supplement its estimated collection of 3,000 volumes, the Library uses the services of the Midstate Regional Library in Berlin, VT, along with the inter-library loan program. Besides books and magazines, the Library has a varied section of videos, audiobooks, DVDs and CDs as well as public computer and internet access.

For the year 2012-2013, the Library served 374 patrons and circulated 278 books, 40 videos, 9 audiobooks and 40 DVDs for adult use. Additionally, the library circulated 160 books, 45 videos, 4 audiobooks and 34 DVDs for children.

The Library's community support role includes workshops, use as public meeting space, "meet the author" events, and various children's programs including Valentine, Easter Egg, and Christmas Cookie parties. Volunteers also have read aloud at local day care centers and the Stockbridge Central School.

D. Municipal Services

Public Sewer/Public Water

At present, there are no municipally owned public water or sewage disposal systems in Stockbridge. It is not anticipated that any such systems will be constructed or proposed during the five year life of this Plan.

While recognizing that such facilities would permit greater densities and concentrations of development, the Planning Commission does not recommend that the substantial capital investments required be delegated for this purpose, at this time.

Solid Waste Management

Consistent with Act 148, the Universal Recycling Law which requires municipalities to charge for the collection of waste by volume or weight by July 1, 2015, property owners now contract directly with a hauler for the disposal of their solid wastes. Prior to this time solid waste collection was contracted by the town and financed through property taxes.

For information on municipal services such as fire, police and rescue see chapter VIII, Health and Emergency Services. For information relating to Stockbridge's Education System, see chapter XIII, Education.

E. Cemeteries

There are five cemeteries located in Stockbridge: Maplewood, South Hill, Mt. Pleasant, Sylvester and Abbott. Maintenance and management of these cemeteries is overseen by the Cemetery Commission elected by the town at Town Meeting. The Cemetery Commission continues to keep the cemetery facilities in good repair. Fences were recently rebuilt and a small grave marker repair program is ongoing.

F. Communication Facilities

When surveyed in 2012, 94% of respondents indicated that they felt that universal cell phone and high speed internet were important to the community.

Telephone

Landline Communications - Most of the telephone related services in Stockbridge are still offered via the traditional telephone lines and poles (landline). Coverage over landlines in Stockbridge is currently provided exclusively by FairPoint Communications, Inc.

Internet

There are presently five ways to access the internet in Stockbridge, they are: landline, DSL, cable, satellite and cellular internet.

Dial-up - Dial-up access is the most commonly available service to residents, but speeds over a telephone modem are very slow, and given the ever increasing need for bandwidth in day-to-day use of the internet, it is not practical for more than checking email.

Satellite Internet - Provided by companies such as Dish Network, Hughes and Wildblue, satellite internet is an option for residents who are unable to access the internet via cable or DSL provided they have a clear view of the southern sky from their location. Although bandwidth over satellite is on average three to five times faster than a dial-up connection, it is more expensive than other methods of access and it can be affected by weather such as heavy rain or snow.

DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) - DSL is very similar to cable in speed. It is less subject to decreases in speed caused by heavy internet traffic because a certain amount of bandwidth is dedicated for each user. DSL is provided to those within the service area of FairPoint Communications, but only within three line miles of a switching station.

Cable Internet – Comcast offers internet through their existing cable TV system. Speeds are generally considered good for home users, and businesses can acquire higher speeds through business specific packages. Home cable internet can be subject to slow-downs at peak hours when many users are accessing the internet at the same time. Cable is available in limited areas of Stockbridge.

Cellular Internet – With the growing amount of bandwidth available to smartphone users via cellular phone networks, cellular providers are offering the ability to utilize their network for internet access. The nature of cellular connections is such that they are less susceptible to disruption from weather conditions as is the case with satellite internet. However, a clear and strong connection to a cellular tower is required in order to utilize this service. The State of Vermont has put a substantial amount of support behind the notion of providing internet access via this medium to those areas that are currently underserved.

Based on limited availability, it is estimated that as many as three-quarters of the households in Stockbridge have access to the internet only via landline or satellite modem. Because of the difficulties in convincing cable and DSL providers to extend their coverage areas, other towns have considered alternatives to those listed above. In some cases, wireless internet providers have placed towers in towns that provide wireless broadband access to those within line-of-sight.

In the past three years, the East Central Vermont Community Fiber (EC Fiber) Network has approached towns in the Upper Valley and surrounding areas including Stockbridge. This organization has developed a long-term plan to extend fiber optic cable throughout the region. Fiber optic cables offer the fastest connection speed available. When asked to become an active participant in the EC Fiber project, the Town of Stockbridge accepted and has a representative on the EC Fiber board.

Municipal Web Site

Many communities in Vermont have created municipal web sites to provide information to their citizens. These sites often include events calendars and in some cases local business directories. With the help of a state grant Stockbridge now has a municipal web site.

Cellular Communications

There are no cell towers located in Stockbridge, and coverage is poor at best. Stockbridge has a cell tower ordinance that guides the design of any towers that might be developed; however, any cellular provider who is creating a network of cell towers is exempt from local land use regulations under V.S.A Title 30, Chapter 5, §248a. While these facilities are exempt from local regulations, due consideration to the municipal plan is supposed to occur as part of the permitting process.

G. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal

1. To provide public services and public facilities that meet the needs of the community without creating an undue burden on taxpayers.

Policies

1. To provide residents with safe, effective, responsive and affordable municipal infrastructure, facilities and services consistent with other town goals and whenever possible, to encourage and work with other public and private utility or service providers to do the same.
2. Town officials will participate in the Public Service Board's review of new and expanded telecommunications facilities to ensure that the goals and policies of this plan are considered in future development.
3. To effectively plan for future investments and upkeep of community facilities so as to avoid overburdening taxpayers due to unexpected capital costs.

Recommendations

1. The Selectboard should work with the Planning Commission to create a Capital Budget and Program to guide future investments in infrastructure.
2. The Selectboard should continue to support universal cellular coverage in Town.
3. The Selectboard continue to support universal internet coverage within Stockbridge, such as the East Central Vermont Fiber Project.
4. The town should enhance its municipal web site to: improve communication; enhance emergency preparedness; provide residents with access to municipal data; and educate visitors

and residents to local events and opportunities.

5. The Town should make meeting the requirements of state solid waste regulations a priority, focusing on cost-effective methods of compliance.

VIII. Health and Emergency Services

A. Health Care Facilities

Health care facilities are essential in the prevention, treatment, and management of illness, and in the preservation of mental and physical well-being. Rural locations such as Stockbridge are served by small facilities that can assist residents with general health care needs but are not equipped to provide complex acute care services that require specialized services and equipment.

The lower population density of Vermont's rural countryside and the larger the area over which the population is distributed can make providing adequate health care more difficult, particularly for the elderly who may not be able to drive themselves to major health care facilities. Likewise in rural areas, emergency care for severe trauma or major acute illnesses such as stroke and heart attack may take longer to arrive than in more populated locations, risking potential loss of life.

Although there are no town-based health care services in Stockbridge, local and regional health care services are available throughout the region, including: Gifford Medical Center and smaller health centers in Randolph, VT; large-scale community hospitals in Rutland and Berlin, VT; and a tertiary care facility in Lebanon, NH.

B. Fire Protection Services

Stockbridge is serviced by the Stockbridge Volunteer Fire Department. Funding of the department is provided by the Town and by department fund raising activities. Stockbridge has a mutual aid agreement with the towns of Pittsfield and Bethel whereby assistance is provided in the event of a serious fire.

The Stockbridge Fire Department is operated exclusively by volunteers. There is always a need for additional volunteers to serve as firefighters, to help raise money, and to help care for the equipment. Because a vast majority of Stockbridge's residents work outside of the community, and because of the added challenge of the many State and Federal requirements for training, it can be challenging to find volunteers and maintain their training credentials. In particular, day coverage is spotty because many residents work out of town.

Fire Station

The Stockbridge Volunteer Fire Department shares space with the Stockbridge Town Garage on Blackmer Boulevard. The building may be inadequate for future expansion of the equipment needs of the Town Volunteer Fire Department.

C. Police Protection Services

A first and second constable are elected annually at Town Meeting. The Vermont State Police, located in Royalton, respond to emergencies in Stockbridge, such as traffic accidents, breaches of the peace or other criminal rather than civil emergencies.

The Windsor County Sheriff's Department, located in Woodstock, does not provide emergency service to Stockbridge but will, for a fee, provide radar surveillance and prearranged security service.

D. Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical services in Stockbridge are provided by White River Valley Ambulance, Inc. (WRVA). WRVA is a not for profit emergency ambulance and rescue service composed of paid full-time, part-time and volunteer staff. Emergency medical service is provided to a geographical area encompassing 280 square miles and approximately 10,000 residents. In addition to Stockbridge, WRVA covers Barnard, Bethel, Braintree, Brookfield, Granville, East Granville, Randolph and Rochester. The Town of Stockbridge pays WRVA for its services. It should be noted that those who use the ambulance will be charged for WRVA's service on an individual basis in addition to the fees paid by the town.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Advanced Response Team (DHART)

The Dartmouth-Hitchcock Advanced Response Team is based in Lebanon, NH at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. DHART crews provide air medical transportation services to the medical communities of Northern New England. In addition, DHART flight crews respond to public safety agency requests for medical evacuation of trauma patients from scenes of injury, and will transport to the closest Trauma Center in the region's five states. Operating 24 hours a day and seven days a week, DHART Crews transport adult, pediatric and neonatal patients to ANY appropriate medical facility in New England.

E. Emergency Management

The impact of unpredictable natural and human-caused events to the region can be reduced through proper emergency management. Emergency management is generally broken down into four areas: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

- Preparedness includes emergency personnel acquiring suitable equipment, and conducting training and exercises. Preparedness is also a responsibility of residents, business and government. Simple preparedness measures, like having disaster supplies on hand, installing smoke detectors and generators, having emergency fuel for generators and vehicles and knowing basic first aid will all help to lessen the impact of a disaster. Preparing emergency plans is also a preparedness activity.
- Response is the initial emergency response to save life and property during and immediately after the disaster, and is initiated by local emergency crews and then followed up by outside forces if necessary. Response operations are greatly enhanced by proper preparedness. Most emergencies of any scale will require towns to work together, and often to work with state or federal agencies. Practicing with all of these partners before an actual emergency is critical to smooth emergency operations.
- Recovery is the long-term process of putting life back to normal, and includes many state and federal agencies, especially the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in large disasters. As events like Tropical Storm Irene showed, recovery can take a long time and is

hindered if a disaster is severe or widespread. Recovery requires substantial coordination effort at the municipal level, so the best strategy is to avoid disaster-prone behavior in the first place.

- Hazard mitigation means any sustained action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from natural or human-caused hazards and their effects. Mitigation planning begins with an assessment of likely hazards, and then targets activities to reduce the effects of these hazards. Given that the largest threat in Vermont is flood related, good mitigation measures include proper road and drainage construction, as well as limiting development in flood prone areas.

Planning for emergencies is essential at the municipal level and should focus on all four of the areas outlined above. Over four out of five respondents in the Resident Survey agreed with the statement “I’m proud as a community how we responded to Irene.” Reflecting the importance of emergency management in the future, a similar majority agreed that “the town should strengthen its emergency management capabilities.”

Local Emergency Operations Plan

Stockbridge is required by the State of Vermont to have a Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP). This plan supplies a list of contacts to use during an emergency as well as information on shelters, vulnerable sites, and which town officials might play which roles during a disaster. It is not typically a public document as it has private numbers in it, but the people expected to use it should have hard copies. The Selectboard should continue to keep the LEOP up-to-date and ensure that all parts of municipal government that are active during a hazard event are aware of what is in it. This includes the Selectboard, Fire and Rescue, Road Crew and Shelter coordinators.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Disaster mitigation covers actions done to reduce the effects of a disaster. For Stockbridge, the most prevalent hazard is flooding, with a variety of other hazards. All hazards have been reviewed in the town's Mitigation Plan. There are many ways that the town can reduce damages, and since a disaster does not always result in state or federal assistance, the town should take sensible steps that can reduce disaster costs, damage to property and loss of life. The Town is in the process of developing a new HMP.

Emergency Access

Any new property development in Stockbridge should be designed so as to allow safe access for emergency services. Poorly designed driveways that are too steep or too narrow can limit access, particularly in the winter, and may represent a safety hazard for the emergency responder. The Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws contain provisions to ensure that land development shall be designed to ensure adequate provision of facilities necessary for emergency services.

In new subdivisions, the design of such drives or similar facilities shall be done in consultation with the Stockbridge Fire Department. On future major subdivisions, the Zoning Board of Adjustment may require the provision of storage ponds and dry hydrants necessary for adequate fire protection.

F. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To strengthen and maintain strong emergency management capabilities.
2. To ensure the protection and safety of the citizens of Stockbridge against crime and violations of law.
3. High quality medical care should be available to all Stockbridge residents.

Healthcare Policies

1. It is the policy of the town to support and encourage the development of local health care facilities and counseling services to help residents obtain health care as close to home as possible.
2. It is the policy of the town to support programs that improve medical services for Stockbridge residents.
3. It is the policy of the town to support the development of assisted living or other facilities or services dedicated to supporting the elderly in Stockbridge.
4. It is the policy of the town to support efforts to provide residents with access to high quality physical and mental health care through local providers.

Emergency Management Policies

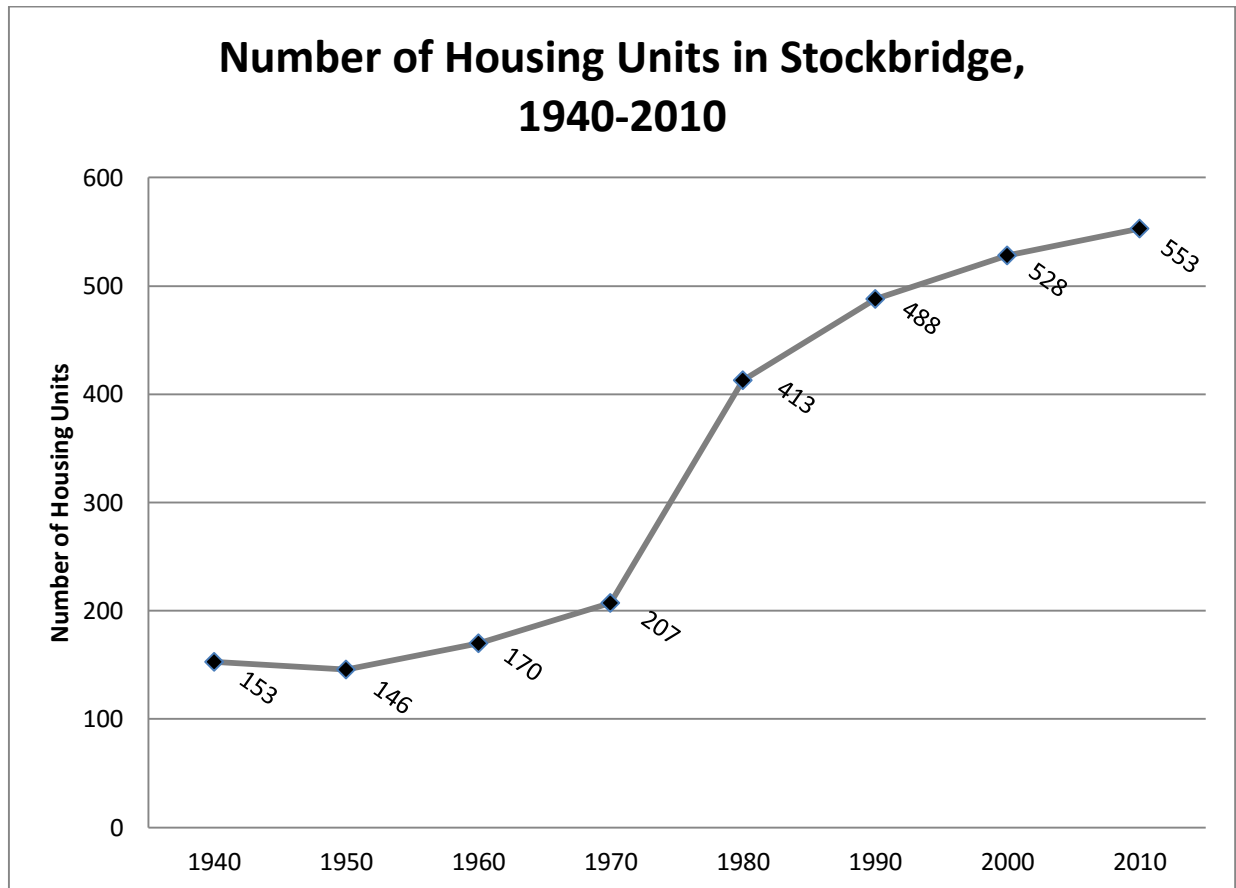
1. It is the policy of the town to maintain or improve (if necessary) response times for emergency services.
2. It is the policy of the town that road and driveway access to proposed developments for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles be evaluated as part of the permit review process.
3. It is the policy of the town to maintain its relationship with local ambulance service providers.
4. It is the policy of the town that the Selectboard maintain an up-to-date Emergency Operations Plan.
5. It is the policy of the town to make its emergency management capabilities/preparedness, responsiveness, recovery and hazard mitigation an ongoing priority.

Recommendations

1. The Selectboard review and update the Local Emergency Operations Plan and its overall emergency management capabilities on a yearly basis.
2. The Selectboard should update and approve a 5-year Hazard Mitigation Plan with assistance from the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission

IX. Housing

A. Background



17 - Housing Units in Stockbridge, 1940-2010 (Source: US Census)

A key element in the character of the Town is its housing - the quality, availability and affordability of places for residents to live and a means for non-residents to enjoy the town's and region's many assets. The availability of housing can also influence the rate and direction of business and commercial growth.

B. Housing Profile

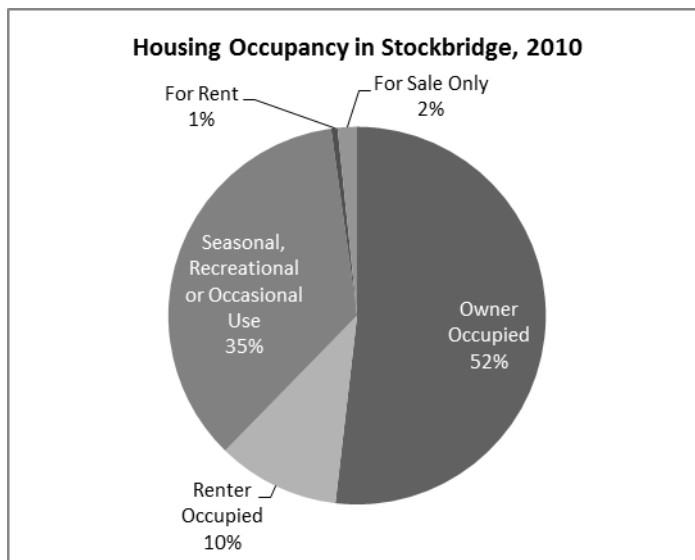
According to the U.S. Census, there were 553 housing units in Stockbridge in 2010 (see figure 17). In 2000, there were 528 housing units. This amounted to an increase of 25 units or 4.7% over the ten year period or an average of almost 2.5 units per year. A housing unit, as defined by the U.S. Census, includes houses, apartments, mobile homes, and rooms for occupancy. The majority of Stockbridge's homes are owner-occupied with only 10% renter-occupied and 35% used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use (second homes).

As is the case for most Vermont towns, the bulk of Stockbridge's housing units comprise of owner occupied homes (52%). The percentage of second homes (35%) in Stockbridge is comparable to its immediate neighbors (Barnard, Pittsfield and Bridgewater), but higher than Windsor County or the State of Vermont as a whole. This is primarily due to the communities' proximity to the ski resort community of Killington. Killington is clearly a prime location for vacation homes with 80% of their total stock used for seasonal, occasional or recreational use. When a town has a large number of homes that are not occupied year-round, it can have unforeseen impacts on town services. For example, communities which have volunteer fire department depend on full-time residents to staff its fire department and a lack of full-time residents can make acquiring staff difficult because the pool of candidates is reduced.

Rental Housing

Only 10% of Stockbridge's housing stock in 2010 were rentals, which is smaller than nearly all of the surrounding communities. The tight housing market statewide and lack of unoccupied apartments (only 1% of Stockbridge's apartments are unoccupied) continues to drive up rental costs. In 2000, the US Agency of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculated the fair market rent for a modest two bedroom apartment in Stockbridge at \$623 per month; in 2012 that cost had risen nearly 65% to \$1030 per month. In order for a renter in Stockbridge to be able to afford rent for a two-bedroom apartment at this rate, in 2012 he/she would have needed a household income of roughly least \$41,200 annually. Given that 50% of Stockbridge's households¹ filed tax returns valued at \$30,000 or less in 2010, it is likely that many in the community found it difficult to afford rental housing in Stockbridge.

The low percentage of homes that were unoccupied (for sale or for rent) indicate that in 2010 Stockbridge was experiencing a shortage of available housing stock. Anything below 5% is functionally considered a



19 - Housing Occupancy in Stockbridge, 2010
(Source: 2010 US Census)

% Owner Occupied vs. Vacation Homes, 2010		
	Owner Occupied	Vacation Home
Barnard	47%	37%
Bethel	62%	11%
Bridgewater	47%	32%
Killington	10%	80%
Pittsfield	42%	40%
Rochester	48%	28%
Stockbridge	52%	35%
Windsor County	52%	22%
Vermont	56%	15%

18 - Housing Occupancy in Stockbridge, 2010
(Source: 2010 US Census)

¹ A "household" can include multiple unrelated tax filers in the same home.

zero. This low percentage of available housing stock is very consistent from town to town throughout Vermont.

Affordable Housing

Between 2000 and 2010, home prices throughout rose dramatically. The collapse of the US Housing Bubble during the Great Recession (2007-2009) slowed the rise in home prices in many locations. Between 2010 and 2012 Stockbridge's average equalized home value did decrease.

When compared to neighboring communities in 2012, Stockbridge had one of the lowest average equalized residential home values.

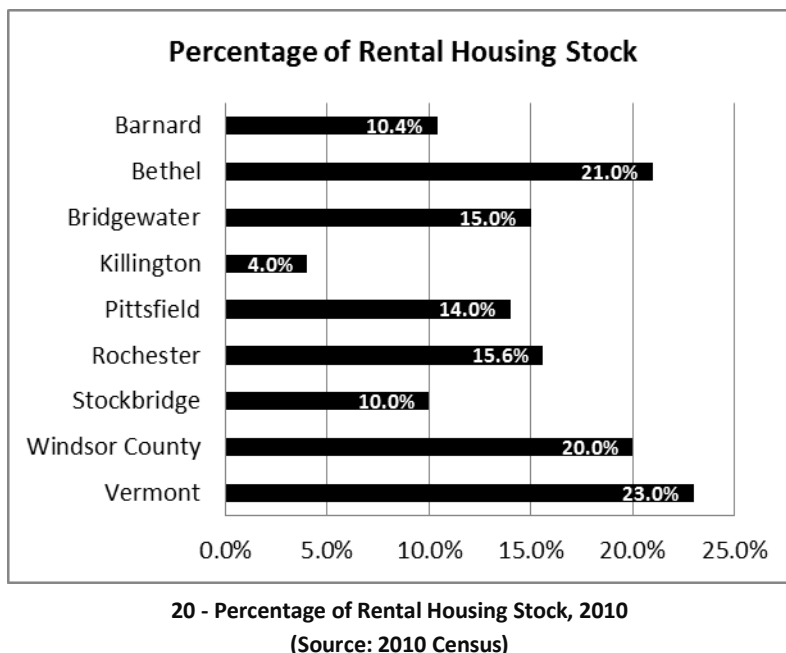
Affordable housing is defined as that which a household making the County median income could afford if no more than 30% of its income were spent on housing costs. For homeowners, housing costs include payments for principal and interest on mortgage, taxes, etc. For renters, housing costs include rent and utilities.

The lack of consistent available housing data makes it challenging to track trends in housing values over time. In its annual publication "Between a Rock and A Hard Place: Housing and Wages in Vermont," the Vermont Housing Council notes that the median purchase price of a primary home in Vermont in 2010 reached \$195,000. A Vermont household would need an annual income of \$58,000 as well as \$16,000 in cash (for closing costs and a 5% down payment) to purchase a home at that price. This is slightly higher than Stockbridge's median family income of \$54,196 (see figure 13). It should be noted that the housing market has changed substantially over the past decade due to the national recession.

While housing prices have not dropped dramatically in the last decade, income and employment opportunities have decreased, making housing less affordable.

The cost of housing has been driven up in great part due to the tight housing market. As is noted in Figure 9 in 2000, Stockbridge's vacancy rate was only 1% which is consistent with the rest of the State and, according to "Between a Rock and A Hard Place," the lowest in the nation.

Stockbridge, like many communities, has



	Average Equalized Value, 2012	
	Residential	Vacation
Barnard	\$476,965	\$161,559
Bethel	\$191,918	\$124,298
Bridgewater	\$269,436	\$378,391
Killington	\$338,305	\$1,993,159
Pittsfield	\$238,132	\$62,011
Rochester	\$198,168	\$176,304
Stockbridge	\$196,035	\$152,661

21 - Average Appraised Value, Stockbridge & Surrounding Towns 2012 (Source: VT Dept. of Taxes)

experienced a trend toward fewer home occupants. This trend is unlikely to be reversed. The trend results in an increase demand for housing. The elderly, single households and other special populations are oftentimes in need of special types of housing including that which is affordable and readily accessible.

Another barrier to affordable housing is the age of homes in Stockbridge. “Between a Rock and A Hard Place” points out that on the whole, “Vermont’s housing stock is among the oldest in the United States. 63% of owned homes and 74% of rentals in Vermont were built in 1979 or earlier, before newer energy efficiency technology was available, housing codes were more lax and the use of lead based paint was wide-spread. These factors make an important impact on the cost of operating housing, assuring the health and safety of all residents, and providing access to Vermonters with different abilities.”

Elderly Housing

Total Beds by Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, 2013			
	Nursing Care (II)	Residential Care (III)	Residential Care (IV)
Bethel	0	0	0
Granville	0	0	0
Hancock	0	6	0
Pittsfield	0	0	0
Randolph	30	17	0
Rochester	0	0	0
Rutland	406	278	7
Stockbridge	0	0	0

22 – Total beds by Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, 2013
(Source: VT Department of Independent Living)

Section B of Chapter 1 discussed Stockbridge’s trend toward an aging population. The Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) are beginning to retire, and the oldest ones will be 84 in 2030. This shift in demographics will put added pressure on an already tight housing market. Expanding health care costs may leave seniors with even less money to spend on housing.

As the elderly (citizens aged 65 or older) become less comfortable with the tasks involved in managing their own home, they often turn to some sort of elderly housing. If health is an issue and some form of constant care is required, seniors will need to enter a nursing home or a residential care facility. As is indicated in Figure 22, there are very few options in Stockbridge or the surrounding area for this type of care. Elderly Stockbridge residents in need of full-time care are forced to move away from their community. This is, of course, not just a local issue. There is a lack of elderly housing throughout the State of Vermont.

Within Vermont there are several types of elderly care facilities which are subject to State regulation, including nursing homes and residential care facilities. Nursing homes provide nursing care and related services for people who need nursing, medical, rehabilitation, or other special services. They are licensed by the state and may be certified to participate in the Medicaid and/or Medicare programs. Certain nursing homes may also meet specific standards for sub-acute care or dementia care. Residential care

homes are state licensed group living arrangements designed to meet the needs of people who cannot live independently and usually do not require the type of care provided in a nursing home. When needed, help is provided with daily activities such as eating, walking, toileting, bathing, and dressing. Residential care homes may provide nursing home level of care to residents under certain conditions. Daily rates at residential care homes are usually less than rates at nursing homes.

The Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living classifies residential care homes in two groups, depending upon the level of care they provide. Level III homes provide nursing overview, but not full-time nursing care. Level IV homes do not provide nursing overview or nursing care. Nursing homes, which have full time nursing care, are considered Level II. At present, Stockbridge nursing or residential care homes. The nearest options are in Randolph (Number of beds: 30 Level II, 18 Level III) and Rutland (Number of beds: 406 Level II, 278 Level III, 7 Level IV). However, given the size of the populations in both Randolph and Rutland, it is likely that there is a large population waiting for vacancies at these locations.

In the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's issue paper "Housing and the Needs of Vermont's Aging Population", it is acknowledged that more seniors today want to "age in place," which means choosing to remain at home or in a supportive living community as they grow older without having to move each time their needs increase. Considering the lack of availability of nursing homes in Stockbridge and Vermont as a whole, this may be the optimal way to address elderly housing in the future. Having the right housing includes the ability to stay active and engaged in community life, which is a great benefit not only to the individual, but to the community as a whole.

Several municipalities have benefited from planned retirement communities which provide for older persons. Innovative land use policies and controls to direct special needs are encouraged. Such land usages are best located in close proximity to existing hamlet centers where basic services are available and not in rural areas. As of the date of completion of this plan, Gifford Medical Center was granted an Act 250 permit for a 165 bed senior living community on a 26 acre campus in Randolph Center. If completed as planned, the campus would have independent living apartments, assisted living facilities and end of life care, all in one place. This facility, while not in Stockbridge, would serve the entire Central Vermont area.

C. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To encourage safe and affordable shelter for present and future populations.
2. To continue to promote sufficient affordable primary housing for Stockbridge residents by revitalization of existing or construction of new housing.

3. To encourage innovative planning, design and construction of primary housing which minimizes the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of housing.
4. To have a density and distribution of housing throughout the town that allows for the continued maintenance of the working landscape.

Policies

1. The Town should allow for growth of housing for all income levels and at a rate consistent with the community's ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner and consistent with the other goals and policies expressed in this Plan.
2. Priority should be given to the preservation and improvement of affordable housing already in existence.
3. Use of public funds in the form of subsidies may be necessary to preserve maintenance of or access to affordable housing. Where such projects involve public funds, they should only be encouraged when these investments result in developments which are affordable on a long-term basis and when a clear public benefit to the community can be demonstrated.
4. Concentration of affordable housing into only selected areas is discouraged. The Town and private developers are encouraged to work together toward an affirmative strategy or incentives to locate housing in different areas to meet the needs of the residents within the community. Large individual developments are discouraged.
5. Projects need to be sensitive to the predominant characteristics of a site and responsive to the desires of the immediate neighbors.

Recommendations

1. Community leaders should work with state housing agencies, non-profit organizations, and lending institutions to encourage the availability of loan or grant funds for Stockbridge residents to acquire or improve their primary homes.
2. The Town is encouraged to explore how to enhance housing opportunities while protecting our Town's rural character.

X. Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources

A. Background

The rural landscape is of the utmost importance to the Stockbridge community, both for its utility and its scenic value. Stockbridge residents value open, working lands that are hospitable to both recreation and outdoor work. It is essential to the community that this landscape be protected as it is the fundamental reason why residents choose to live in Stockbridge. Residents want to maintain the quality of their landscape for the future, to protect the natural world they value, while allowing the land to be worked sustainably and harmoniously.

Goals

1. To protect the natural, scenic and historic character of Stockbridge.
2. To maintain the quality of the landscape for the future and to protect natural resources while allowing the land to be worked safely and harmoniously.
3. To enhance and maintain Stockbridge's outdoor environment for both active and passive recreational uses including hiking, fishing, boating, camping, hunting, music and the arts.

Policy

1. It is the policy of the town to protect the natural, scenic and historic character of Stockbridge's working landscape.

B. Water Resources

Water resources include aquifers (the supply of fresh water beneath the ground) and surface waters (rivers, streams, ponds and lakes). Maintaining these resources, including sustainable yields of quality water, is necessary for the citizens of Stockbridge.

Understanding existing water resources is a challenge due to limits on available data. Stockbridge has no mapped groundwater information and the process for obtaining this data is complex, including using geographic data and technologies to map groundwater situations and use patterns, analyzing well data provided to the state by well drillers, and site specific analysis.

The health of Stockbridge's surface waters is essential to maintaining quality groundwater, as well as an important element for outdoor recreation and natural beauty. Vermont law declares that the lakes and ponds of the state and the lands lying underneath them are held in trust by the state for the benefit of all Vermonters. The state, as trustee, cannot sell or give away these public resources to individuals or corporations for purely private purposes. A permitting program for large groundwater withdrawals was implemented by the state in 2011. Those seeking permits will have to show that their withdrawals will

not have an adverse impact on water resources. They must also show that their withdrawals must be consistent with local and Regional Plans.

There are a number of state and federal programs that help fund stream-management projects, such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP provides funds to farmers for the purpose of preserving lands once used for agriculture, with the goal of introducing and encouraging plant life to prevent erosion and provide habitat. Stream instability can lead to excessive flooding and other types of damage due to increased flow velocity.

Riparian buffers are strips of bankside vegetation along waterways that provide a transition zone between water and land use. Construction or development along shorelines, or removal or disruption of vegetation within these areas can create increased water pollution, higher water temperatures, destabilization of banks, higher soil erosion rates and loss of fish or wildlife habitats.

The Plan continues to support current policy which maintains that no structures shall be allowed within 35 feet of the top of the bank of designated permanent streams, except those that by their nature must be located near streams (hydro facilities, for example). No ground disturbance should be allowed within 35 feet, with the exception of bridge or culvert construction, or bank stabilization as is necessary for hazard mitigation purposes. Damages from Tropical Storm Irene have indicated a need for larger stream buffers, particularly in areas outside of the Flood Hazard Area.

Goals

1. To maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of non-polluted surface and sub-surface water resources.
2. To allow use of groundwater resources by new development in such a manner to protect the public right to adequate quality and quantity of the resource.
3. To consider surface water and groundwater impacts and effects related to proposed or existing uses of land.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town that land use activities which potentially threaten groundwater quality must be carefully reviewed and monitored to prevent undue loss of groundwater quality.
2. It is the policy of the Town that the maintenance or enhancement of water resources for recreation, fisheries, necessary wildlife habitats and quality aesthetics be high priorities.
3. On-site sewage disposal facilities must meet state requirements.
4. It is the policy of the Town that preservation of the natural state of streams should be encouraged by:
 - Protection of adjacent wetlands and natural areas;
 - Maintenance of existing stream bank and buffer vegetation including trees, together with wildlife habitat.

5. It is the policy of the Town that development in Stockbridge shall be permitted only if it does not cause any significant environmental degradation and does not result in the pollution of ground or surface waters or cause unreasonable reductions in supply.
6. It is the policy of the Town that all proposed development must be reviewed for appropriate location away from brooks, streams, tributaries and well head recharge areas and for adequate protection of the recharge environment of these resources.
7. It is the policy of the Town that all large water withdrawals in the regional area that have a potential to affect the private water sources of Stockbridge residents should be monitored.
8. It is the policy of the town that any newly permitted commercial water withdrawal facility permitted in Stockbridge provide some level of remuneration to the community in return for utilizing a public asset.

A. Wetlands

Wetlands are ecologically fragile areas and how these lands are managed have a direct bearing on the quality and quantity of water resources. The Vermont Water Resources Board estimates that wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the surface area of Vermont. In addition to being Vermont's most productive ecosystem, wetlands serve a wide variety of functions beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the general public, including the following:

- Retaining storm water run-off, reducing flood peaks and thereby reducing flooding;
- Improving surface water quality through storage of organic materials, chemical decomposition and filtration of sediments and other matter from surface water;
- Providing spawning, feeding and general habitat for fish;
- Providing habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife and rare, threatened or endangered plants; and
- Contributing to the open space character and the overall beauty of the rural landscape.

In 1986, Vermont adopted legislation for the protection and management of wetlands [10 V.S.A., Chapter 37]. Determination of whether a wetland merits protection is based on an evaluation of the extent to which it serves the general functions outlined in the bulleted list above.

Under the Vermont's Wetland Rules, if land development can be expected to impact a protected wetland, such activity cannot commence unless the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources first grants a Conditional Use Determination (CUD). A CUD will be granted when the proposed use will not have an undue adverse impact on the function of the wetland. In many cases, such approvals are granted with conditions to mitigate impacts and to more readily protect wetlands.

For Stockbridge, as well as the State, the most significant wetlands have been mapped and are included as part of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These wetlands have been delineated on USGS topographic maps, and by reference are made a part of this Plan (see Map 5, Natural Resources). Other smaller wetlands often do not show on these maps, so a field determination by a qualified biologist is needed for most activities that involve state permits. There are approximately 139 acres of mapped wetlands in Stockbridge.

In those towns such as Stockbridge, that have zoning or subdivision regulations, final approvals cannot be granted for projects involving wetlands unless the Agency of Natural Resources has first had an opportunity to evaluate the effect of the project on the wetland [24 V.S.A., Section 4409]. It is important to note that future investigations of wetlands within Stockbridge may result in additional areas being determined as significant or important for conservation. Setback requirements for wetlands vary as required by ANR staff, but communities are allowed to set more stringent requirements. Some communities have opted to create a standardized buffer around wetlands of up to 100 feet.

Goal

1. To identify and encourage land use development practices that avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on significant wetlands.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town to abide and adhere to state wetlands regulations.
2. It is the policy of the Town that structural development or intensive land uses shall not be located in mapped wetlands or within buffer zones to significant wetlands.
3. It is the policy of the Town that development adjacent to mapped wetlands should be planned so as not to result in undue disturbance to wetland areas or their function. Mitigating measures to protect the function of a wetland are an acceptable measure.
4. It is the policy of the Town that no development is to be located in or allowed to fill in or alter any mapped wetland area.

Recommendations

B. Flood plains

Floods are inevitable and uncontrollable natural events which occur sporadically and affect lands adjacent to watercourses. It is therefore in the public interest to plan for floods, and to implement land use strategies which will protect these areas and minimize the risks to public health, safety, and property.

Floodplains, lands adjacent to watercourses (rivers, streams and brooks), are periodically inundated by heavy rains or during spring thaws. They are porous and can absorb considerable water before reaching flood stage. Floodplains make excellent agricultural land but are poorly suited for development, both because of their propensity for flooding and because of their proximity to watercourses, which creates the potential for pollution. Approximately 811 acres in Stockbridge are within the floodplain area, which is 3% of the total land in the community.

Vermont has experienced more than fifteen statewide and regional floods since 1973. All but one of these were declared federal disasters, and economic losses were significant. Damage was not limited to designated floodplains, but often occurred along unstable river systems and steep streams, and in areas where stream debris was excessive. In some cases, recovery costs to the Town of Stockbridge alone amounted to several million dollars per flooding event. Public interest dictates that every reasonable attempt should be made to avoid or reduce such exposure to flood damage.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

Under the provisions of the National Flood Insurance Act (1968), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has conducted a series of evaluations and hydrologic engineering studies to determine the limits of flood hazard areas along streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds expected to be inundated during the 100-year base flood, meaning that the flood level has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The calculations do not take into account the impact of ice dams or debris, and may, therefore, actually underestimate the areas which are subject to flooding damage.

FEMA has prepared a Flood Hazard Boundary Map for the Town of Stockbridge, which includes flood hazard areas for the Main Stem of the White River and for major streams and ponds. This map is on file at the Town Office and at the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. The Flood Hazard Area is indicated in Map #2, Future Land Use. If in doubt when developing, contact the Stockbridge Zoning Administrator.

FEMA also administers the National Flood Insurance Program, which provides flood hazard insurance at subsidized rates for property owners in affected areas. In order to qualify for federal insurance, towns must adopt and retain a by-law to control land development within these areas. Minimum standards must be included and approved by FEMA. Coverage is only available to landowners in town if a town elects to participate in the program. The Town of Stockbridge incorporates Flood Hazard regulations as part of its Zoning Bylaws, and is recognized as a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has determined that approximately 43 structures (including 38 houses and 4 businesses) have been identified as being located within the mapped flood hazard areas. 21 of the homes identified as within the floodplain are located in Chalet Village in Stockbridge, which was devastated by Tropical Storm Irene. Mortgage lending institutions require as a prerequisite to financing that flood insurance be purchased on property subject to flooding. Because of the potential for severe damage to public health and safety, Stockbridge strongly discourages development of

new primary structures in the FEMA Floodplain and requires development, if built, to meet FEMA flood proofing requirements. Other structures, such as accessory structures, are allowed but only if they are properly flood-proofed and do not raise the existing flood level more than one foot.

Fluvial Erosion Hazards

Much flood damage in Vermont is associated with stream channel instability, also known as the fluvial erosion hazard (FEH), as opposed to inundation related losses. This is a reflection of Vermont's natural geography and its man-made landscape consisting of steep, relatively narrow valleys with agricultural land uses, highway infrastructure, private residences and commercial properties located in close proximity to stream channels. River channels that are undergoing an adjustment process as a result of historic channel management activities or floodplain encroachments oftentimes respond catastrophically during large storm events.

Historically, landowners and local government have relied on the standards and the flood hazard boundary maps provided by FEMA through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to determine areas within river corridors susceptible to flood damage. The maps are also used to delineate the allowable (floodway) limits of river corridor encroachments and human land use investments. However, the NFIP maps address only inundation issues by applying a water surface elevation based standard. For this reason the NFIP maps are often inadequate as an indicator of flood hazards, especially erosion. The NFIP standards do not recognize the danger present in unstable channels which may be undergoing a physical adjustment process. The stream bed may be eroding or it may be actively aggrading due to erosion occurring upstream.

The NFIP standards often allow for significant encroachment within floodplain areas and river corridors that may prevent the stream from ever reestablishing its stability. Special mapping and geomorphic assessments can identify FEH areas along rivers, more comprehensively defining high-hazard areas. The Main Stem of the White River and the Tweed River have mapped fluvial erosion hazard (also called River Corridor Area) data. This area is not subject to specific regulatory conditions in the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws, but the Planning Commission may adopt new language that protects development against fluvial erosion hazards.

Severe Flooding Events

In 2011, Vermont was struck by Tropical Storm Irene, which inundated the region with heavy rains and severe flooding. Regional damage was severe enough to warrant a federal disaster declaration. In Stockbridge, significant impacts were felt throughout town (see chapter II, Irene).

Surprisingly, a significant portion of the impact of Irene's damage was not in the area mapped by FEMA as flood plain or fluvial erosion hazard areas. Instead, the flood waters did substantial damage along nearly every brook in Stockbridge, in some instances completely destroying entire stretches of town road. Stream valleys are common locations for rural roads, and as such, much of the damage that occurred in Stockbridge was to roads. Inundation and flood damage caused along the Tweed and White Rivers was also quite severe.

The impact of Irene on Stockbridge has brought to light the need to consider more substantial and stringent regulation on development within the Flood Hazard Area. The devastation caused by Irene

within the Flood Hazard Area (FHA) and outside the FHA in fluvial erosion hazard areas has made it clear that development in these areas carries high risk. When surveyed by the Planning Commission in 2012, 72% of the responses indicated that current regulations should not allow new development in Flood Hazard Areas.

Goals

1. To enhance and maintain use of flood hazard areas as open space, greenways, recreation, pasture land, agricultural land, and renewable energy facilities.
2. To ensure no net loss of flood storage capacity in an effort to minimize potential negative impacts. These impacts include the loss of life and property, disruption of commerce, and demand for extraordinary public services and expenditures that result from flood damage.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town that the preferred uses for flood hazard areas shall be for open space, greenways, recreation, pasture land, agricultural land and renewable energy facilities.
2. It is the policy of the Town that any land use activity (filling, or removal of earth or rock) within flood hazard areas which would result in: net loss of flood storage; increased or diverted flood levels; or increased risk to adjacent areas shall be prohibited.
3. It is the policy of the Town that utilities or facilities serving existing development (e.g. water lines, electrical service, waste disposal systems, roads, and bridges) may be located within these areas only when off-site options are not feasible and provided that these utilities or facilities meet the flood proofing requirements in Stockbridge's Zoning Bylaws.
4. It is the policy of the Town to maintain its membership in the National Flood Insurance Program.
5. It is the policy of the Town to recognize that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at risk of erosion during floods.

Recommendations

1. The Planning Commission should update the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to ensure that it meets the standards required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency so that Stockbridge may continue to participate in the NFIP.
2. The Planning Commission shall revise the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to highly discourage new development within the floodplain with the preferred uses being open space, greenways, recreation, pasture land, agricultural land and renewable energy facilities.
3. FEMA should maintain maps that reflect as accurately as possible the flood hazard areas to assist in appropriate land use decisions.

C. Flora, Fauna and Natural Communities

In Stockbridge, there are a broad range of communities that exist in the older forests, early successional forests, open fields and valley floors. The breadth and diversity of wildlife and plant communities indicate a healthy, thriving ecosystem. Yet, natural communities are affected by the surrounding environment. Plants respond to soil structure and chemistry, hydrology, and climate. The effects of unmanaged development can have a negative impact on plant communities, which in turn will harm the overall ecosystem in the area affected. Good management practices, such as requiring developers to locate their projects in less sensitive areas, maintain buffer areas and protect against silt runoff from excavating, are a few of the ways that natural communities can be maintained.

Stockbridge's fields, forests, wetlands and streams provide habitat to a diversity of flora and fauna. Although nearly all undeveloped land in the town provides habitat for these plants and animals, there are some areas which provide critical habitat that should remain intact. These areas include wetlands, vernal pools, and deer-wintering areas and ecotone (the edge transition zone between two cover types, such as field and forest). Development or logging in or adjacent to these areas should consider wildlife implications during the planning process. Wildlife is one of the primary attractions to the area and provides many citizens of Stockbridge with direct and indirect livelihoods from sports, tourism and direct harvest of wildlife.

Wintering areas are an important habitat requirement for deer during the critical winter months when snow depth and climate are limiting factors to survival. Typically these areas consist of mature softwood stands, at low elevations or along stream beds, which provide cover and limit snow depths. Southerly facing slopes are also beneficial due to good sun exposure and may be utilized in areas of limited softwood cover. More specific factors, such as percent canopy closure, species of softwoods, and stand age, also figure into the quality of the wintering area. Stockbridge has in excess of 2644 acres (9% of Stockbridge's total acreage) of deer wintering yards.

Wildlife management requires management of human activities around animals as much as management of animals around human activities. Managing for specific species is not as desirable as managing for the entire ecosystem supporting the species. Parochial wildlife management programs usually manage for one species at the expense of others, while a more ecological approach is to ensure healthy habitat for all components of the ecosystem. The Vermont Non-Game and Natural Heritage Program has identified several sites in Stockbridge that are habitats for rare, threatened or endangered species. Large tracts of forest land, caves, floodways, floodplains, and cliffs are natural communities for many habitats.

There comes a point where a species cannot use seemingly adequate habitat because of adjacent development. While certain strategies may lessen the impact on habitat, planners and developers should keep in mind that almost every development will affect the ecological balance. It should be noted, however, that high density or intensive land uses are more likely to have a negative impact on the quality of wildlife habitats.

Most important when considering development and its impact on wildlife is the concept of habitat fragmentation. Forests provide habitat to a diverse population of wildlife, which are negatively impacted

when forested land is fragmented through development. Forest fragmentation affects water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife populations, and the biological health and diversity of the forest itself. When many small habitat losses occur over time, the combined effect may be as dramatic as one large loss. Forest fragmentation can disrupt animal travel corridors, increase flooding, promote the invasion of exotic vegetation, expose forest interiors, and create conflicts between people and wildlife. Habitat loss reduces the number of many wildlife species and totally eliminates others.

To help mitigate the effects of human population growth and land consumption, many scientists and conservationists urge governments to establish protected corridors, which connect patches of important wildlife habitat. These corridors, if planned correctly, allow wildlife to move between habitats and allow individual animals to move between groups, helping to restore or maintain genetic diversity that is essential both to the long-term viability of populations and to the restoration of functional ecosystems. Because of its generally low density and the percentage of preserved forestland (Green Mountain National Forest) in town, Stockbridge maintains a substantial amount of good quality wildlife habitat.

Goals

1. To sustain the natural diversity of flora and fauna found in Stockbridge.
2. To maintain or improve the natural diversity, populations, and migratory routes of native fish.
3. To encourage sport and subsistence hunting and fishing in accordance with seasons and bag limits determined by the State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town that native wildlife populations and natural diversity should be sustained and enhanced.
2. It is the policy of the Town that long-term protection of critical habitats through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives be encouraged.
3. It is the policy of the Town to protect deer wintering areas from development and other uses that adversely impact these areas.
4. It is the policy of the Town that development, other than isolated houses and camps, should be designed to preserve continuous areas of wildlife habitat whenever possible. Fragmentation of habitat is discouraged. Efforts should be made to maintain connecting links between such areas.
5. It is the policy of the Town that preference shall be given to development that utilizes existing roads and whenever possible preserve existing agricultural use.

D. Invasive Species

Invasive non-native species are a growing problem throughout Vermont. Invasive plants are defined as those exotic species that typically spread from disturbed areas into natural communities, but many of these species are also impacting yards, agricultural fields, and working forests. In Stockbridge, the spread of invasives is: negatively impacting the rural character of the town; reducing native plant populations and consequently affecting wildlife populations; creating economic impacts by dominating other plants in agricultural fields; inhibiting reproduction of trees in sugarbush areas and other forests; destroying the scenic quality of roadsides; reducing property values; and potentially posing health risks. At the present time, the greatest threats are posed by wild chervil (fields, roadsides and recently logged areas), Japanese knotweed (streams, rivers, roadsides, yards), and Japanese barberry (forests), but there are increasing threats throughout the region from garlic mustard, giant hogweed, and other invasives.

Some of these invasives, especially wild chervil and knotweed, have proliferated to such an extent that eradication from many sites is impossible, but there are still portions of the town that have not been infested. Diligence is necessary from town residents and employees to prevent the further spread of these species, and the introduction of new species that could pose more serious threats. For example, giant hogweed has been identified from several towns in Central Vermont. This Federally listed noxious weed produces a sap that, in combination with moisture and sunlight, can cause severe skin and eye irritation, painful blistering, permanent scarring and blindness.

One of the more common ways in which invasive species spread to new locations is when seeds or root segments are transported on vehicles, especially construction and logging machinery, mowers, etc. Best management practices have been identified for reducing the accidental spread of invasives including avoiding using fill from invaded sites, washing of equipment before leaving infected sites, stabilization of disturbed sites, timing of mowing, etc.

Goal

1. Reduce the impact of invasive species on agricultural native ecosystems.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town that new occurrences of invasive species should be controlled to prevent further infestations.

Recommendations

1. Town employees and contractors should become familiar with the best management practices to prevent the accidental spread of invasives.
2. The Town should time roadside mowing to minimize and reduce the spread of invasive species.

E. Mineral Resources

The use and management of Stockbridge's earth and mineral resources are matters of public good. Maintenance of sustainable quantities of gravel, sand, crushed rock, and other materials are essential for business development, as well as state and local highways. In spite of this, public and private interests are oftentimes in conflict over use of the resource. It is in the interest of the Stockbridge business owners and residents to enable utilization of these resources when such uses do not significantly inhibit or conflict with other existing or planned land uses, or are in conflict with other stated goals in this Plan.

Goal

1. To support extraction and processing of mineral resources only where such activities are appropriately sited (taking into account aesthetics and compatibility with this Plan), managed and the public interest is clearly benefited. Any support shall be balanced against the need to maintain the rural character valued by the citizens of Stockbridge.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town to consider pollution, noise and vehicle traffic as part of the decision making process when reviewing proposed gravel extraction projects.
2. It is the policy of the Town that existing and proposed mineral extraction and processing facilities shall be planned, constructed, and managed,
 - So as not to adversely impact existing or planned uses within the vicinity of the project site
 - To not significantly interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site
 - To minimize any adverse effects on water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, viewsheds and adjacent land uses
 - To reclaim and re-vegetate sites following extraction
 - To minimize noise impacts on adjacent uses including residential areas
 - To maintain the rural character of the Town

F. Significant Natural and Historic Areas

While Stockbridge residents would agree that the entirety of the community is significant for its beauty and its rural landscape, some notable and unique areas in the town include:

- Stockbridge Common – The Stockbridge Common has a wealth of historic structures including the Union Meetinghouse, the Green, the Morgan House, the Common School and the Old Stockbridge Hotel (known as the tractor shed) – all of which are privately owned. This area represents a substantial amount of Stockbridge's past and should be sustained.

- Union Meeting House – The Union Meeting House is one of the first community buildings in the town of Stockbridge, constructed some time before 1828. It has been substantially renovated, most recently under the guidance of the Stockbridge Meeting House Society.
- Luce Farm – Located on Music Mountain, this 300 year old farm has a substantial amount of open land which is visually significant to the community.
- The Belcher Library – The Belcher Library is one of Stockbridge’s most architecturally significant buildings with its substantial front columns. The building was sold to the library in 1913.
- Gaysville Community Church – Formerly the Gaysville Congregational Church, it is located next to the Belcher Library, this church was built in 1864. The church steeple was recently replaced. The Church has a working bell in the bell tower.
- Chateauguay No Town Area - In 1997, the towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Stockbridge and Killington formed a group of town representatives and created a conservation plan, in voluntary cooperation with landowners, for the 60,000+ acre Chateauguay No Town (CNT) Area. This area represents a substantial area of wild, natural lands and should be preserved.
- South Hill – The view from the height of South Hill is judged as spectacular by many in the community.

G. Conservation Commission

Vermont statute enables communities to create a Conservation Commission (CC), a volunteer board that focuses specifically on the natural, scenic and cultural resources within a community. A CC may conduct inventories of natural resources, recommend the purchase of or the receipt of gifts of land to the Selectboard, assist the planning commission with natural resource planning and maintain a conservation fund.

The CC, at the discretion of the town, can manage a fund which is to be used to assist with the purchase or conservation of property with the intention of protecting natural resources and implementing the town plan. Any use of such a fund requires support from the Selectboard.

Stockbridge does not have a Conservation Commission at this time.

H. Land Protection Strategies

Methods of protecting significant lands are varied. In general, there are two ways to encourage the preservation of culturally and naturally significant areas: regulatory and voluntary. Voluntary methods include:

- Preserving land by placing restrictions on its use, through such tools as conservation easements or mutual covenants.
- Transferring land to a conservation organization (such as the Vermont Land Trust) through donation.
- Selling or donating land with conditions attached, like deed restrictions or conditional transfers.

Stockbridge could become an active participant in land conservation through the creation of a conservation fund. This fund, which is generally funded on a yearly basis, would contain funds that a Conservation Commission could use to purchase land outright, or assist a land conservation organization with the purchase of a conservation easement. It is safe to assume that there will never be sufficient funding for land protection strategies to acquire conservation easements or ownership for all of the unprotected identified areas of value.

Regulatory methods use zoning and/or subdivision rules to regulate the location, density and design of development within selected areas to minimize harmful impacts while allowing for a reasonable level of development. Regulatory methods include:

- **Overlay Districts** - The creation of overlay districts is the most common method of regulating specific areas for the purpose of protecting cultural or natural resources. Overlay districts can be used to exclude development on or to impose resource protection or conservation standards within overlay areas. These districts can be used to protect many types of resources.
- **Resource Protection Districts** - protect resource and open space areas or resource-based uses such as farming, forestry, recreation from incompatible development.
- **Large Lot Zoning** - Large lot zoning refers to the designation of a very large minimum lot size within certain zoning districts to accommodate resource-based uses, such as farming or forestry, or to require a pattern of very scattered, low-density development to limit, for example, impervious surfaces and protect surface and groundwater quality.
- **Fixed Area & Sliding Scale** - Fixed area and sliding scale zoning are two zoning techniques (typically applied in association with subdivision regulations) that are used to differentiate allowed densities of development from district lot size requirements.

- **Conservation (Open Space) Subdivision Design** - Conservation or open space subdivision design is a subdivision design process wherein subdivisions are intentionally designed to protect rural character and open space.

Each of these methods has its own set of benefits and pitfalls and all of them should be thoroughly evaluated before they are implemented. However, there are many examples of successful regulatory land protection strategies in Vermont. The key to success is to ensure that the community on a whole supports the regulations.

I. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To identify, preserve and protect those natural, cultural and historic resources that are unique to Stockbridge and make it special.
2. To allow for compatible development without sacrificing important cultural and natural resources.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the town to ensure careful review of all development projects to minimize the impact on Stockbridge's natural and cultural resources.
2. It is the policy of the Town to protect unique resources through careful planning.

Recommendations

1. The Selectboard should consider creating a Conservation Commission.
2. A Conservation Commission, if created, should assist the Selectboard with on-going efforts to care for and expand public uses of town plans.
3. The Town should review proposed landscaping plan for the Stockbridge Common drafted several years ago as part of a prior municipal planning grant for possible implementation.

XI. Agriculture and Forestry

A. Background

Agriculture and forestry define the character of Vermont and comprise major industries in the Region. The shape of Vermont agriculture and forestry are changing and the pressures for change come from both inside and outside the state. This poses difficult challenges, not just for landowners, but for all who desire a rural lifestyle and working landscape. Unless policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels, citizens, and the farming and forestry community confront the economic problems facing the industry and seize the opportunities that the challenges present, the agriculture and forestry sectors will continue to erode away. Jobs will be lost to other pursuits and the Town will lose much of what it desires to be.

B. Farm and Forest Land Issues

Land and Taxation

A statewide economic restructuring or a shift away from agriculture to the service and tourism industries has placed economic pressure on farm owners. The higher cost of owning land makes it difficult to rationalize conventional farming. This coupled with a need for house lots or development land in general, has prompted landowners to place their land on the market for these purposes.

Although historically the town's roads have been used for logging, they could sustain significant damage in a short time if misused. Because road maintenance is a major cost factor for town residents, continued oversight and control of use during mud season is needed.

Current Use Taxation

For farmland and forestland conservation to be successful, the pressures posed by the market value approach to taxation must be solved for both the landowner and municipality. One means to address this issue has been the Vermont Current Use Program administered by the State which sets the valuations on farm and forest land based on their productivity values rather than their development values.

The Current Use Program was established in 1980 with the primary objectives to keep Vermont's agricultural and forest land in production, to help preserve these lands and to achieve greater equity in property taxation. While there have been legislative changes in the Program, particularly in 1996 when the State turned the Program over to towns to finance, the overall philosophy remains largely unchanged. Statewide, enrollments and the number of parcels have increased steadily over the past few years and withdrawals from the Program limited, despite an inability for the State to fully fund the towns for loss of tax revenues.

In 2002, a total of 55 parcels comprising 14,484 acres of farm and forest land were enrolled under the Program. This amounted to roughly 23 square miles or nearly 50% of the total area of 46.17 square miles in Stockbridge.

Historic Decline in Farms

During the early to mid-1900s, Stockbridge had many more farms than it has today. It was not uncommon for these farms to be operated by multiple generations of a family during the early to mid-1900s, but in the '70s and '80s younger generations became less interested in farming. By the 1980s many of the farmers who followed in their parents footsteps had reached their later years of life, making farming a challenge physically. This, coupled with the lack of a successor to take over the farm also led to the closing of some farms.

Farms of the early to mid-1900s were generally diversified in nature, having a wide range of products which were sold at a broad number of markets locally and in New England. In the 1950s and 1960s, trends in agriculture began to move from this diversified model to one where farms specialized primarily in a single product -- dairy. This reliance on a single product put farmers at the mercy of national milk markets, which were notoriously unstable. The primary reason that farm closures occurred, particularly during the 1980s, was due to instability of milk prices, one of several key moments in agricultural history that have impacted farming in Stockbridge. Other issues included:

- Government mandate that all farms have bulk tanks and parlor floors
- Consolidation of farms
- Impacts of mechanization

C. Agricultural Trends

An analysis of the United States Census of Agriculture data between 2002 and 2007 (2007 being the most recent period of data collected) shows that farming in Vermont is slowly shifting away from the larger scale farm that developed as a result of trends toward consolidation. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms in Vermont increased by 6%. The average size of farms decreased from 189 acres to 177 acres between censuses. This is most likely due to the fact that 37% of Vermont's farms in 2007 were considered "hobby farms" – farms that sell under \$2,500 in agricultural products per year. While the number of small-scale farms continue to grow, these farms only produce slightly less than 3% of Vermont's agricultural income.

For census purposes, a farm is defined as "a place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year."

In Stockbridge, as in the rest of Vermont, the scale and style of farming has changed. The 2007 Census of agriculture reports that there are 13 farm operations. More than 50% of these operations utilize less than 50 acres of land. Products grown or produced on farms in Stockbridge include hay, corn, maple syrup, fruit, cattle, horses, chicken, and sheep.

D. Forestry Trends

Three primary trends have affected the Region's forestland and its productivity. First, forests and farms are being increasingly "parcelized" or subdivided into small lots which threaten the economic viability of forestry. Windsor County in 1989 ranked second in the State in the amount of land being subdivided and sold. Development pressure in the Region has been relaxed since the early 1990s, but the economy is predicted to rebound and the trend of land moving out of forest use to other uses will continue, particularly in those areas where access and development suitability are not severe. Funding of the Current Use Program has been identified by the Northern Forest Lands Council as vital to landowners keeping their patience, not over harvesting the forests or opting for liquidation cutting of tracts. By allowing land to be assessed on the basis of current use, family landowners are able to realize a more reasonable return on investment for long-term timber management.

Forest products continue to be a significant share of the Region's manufacturing sector, although the way statistics are kept makes it hard to quantify. Overall, according to the Vermont Department of Employment and Training, jobs in the lumber and wood products industries have increased statewide.

A major long-term issue for the Vermont forest products industry is how to keep it from drifting into the position of selling wood as a raw material without benefiting from the higher paying jobs that come from value added wood products.

E. Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use Regulation

Land use regulation has a definite impact on farming and forestry. For example, a zoning ordinance that allows for large tracts of land to be sold for residential purposes could conceivably help protect open space, but that open space might no longer be available for agricultural use without considerable forethought and design. The same ordinance calling for much smaller lot sizes (such as one acre) would, over time, lead to an incremental decrease in the amount of useable forest or farmland.

If Agricultural uses are to be preserved, we need to protect them. V.S.A. Title 12, Chapter 195, Section 5753 is intended to protect farmers against nuisance law suits. It states that:

Agricultural activities shall be entitled to a rebuttable presumption that the activity does not constitute a nuisance if the agricultural activity meets all of the following conditions:

- a) It is conducted in conformity with federal, state, and local laws and regulations (including accepted agricultural practices);
- b) It is consistent with good agricultural practices;
- c) It is established prior to surrounding nonagricultural activities; and
- d) It has not significantly changed since the commencement of the prior surrounding nonagricultural activity.

However, there have been circumstances where the state statute has not offered enough protection.

While the value of agriculture and silviculture are recognized in Stockbridge and much of Vermont, both activities do have the potential to cause harm to the environment. Overuse of fertilizer in areas

immediately adjacent to water bodies creates runoff that can increase the amount of phosphorous in the water to environmentally harmful levels. Likewise, clear cutting without any regard for topography and runoff can cause damage in the form of landslides and groundwater contamination. The state has established Accepted Management Practices for agriculture and silviculture which, if followed, should protect the environment while allowing for the continued growth of the agricultural and silvicultural product industries.

F. Sustaining Agriculture and Forestry

Planning policy and implementation efforts should be directed at sustaining agriculture and forestry pursuits and not just conservation of the resource. This is not only because it is the best way to keep the land open, but also because agriculture and forestry are critical industries in the Town and Region.

Just as there is a variety of interests, there is a variety of tools than can be used to conserve the working landscape. Some are directed primarily at sustaining agriculture, others forestry, some are regulatory in nature, others are compensatory, and others voluntary. It is in the public interest to encourage conservation groups, landowners, local officials, and policymakers to utilize all of these tools. The most obvious tool continues to be the Current Use Program (see section B of this chapter).

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are a common method used to ensure that the working landscape gets preserved. The Vermont Land Trust (VLT), Vermont's largest non-profit conservation organization, has conserved more than 590 parcels of land in agricultural use throughout the state, totaling 145,109 acres. Most land purchased with the intent of applying a conservation easement to it is funded, at least in part, by some form of grant funding from federal, state or private sources.

Benefits include:

- Easements are flexible; they can be written to achieve specific goals of the town involved.
- They are perpetual, and restrictions put on the conserved lands will remain in force even when the property is sold to a new party.
- They conserve scenic beauty, protect environmentally sensitive areas and sustain the viability of working landscape.
- Eased property remains on the tax rolls.

Education

Locally the Stockbridge Central School is involved with the Farm to School Program, which links the school with local farms who generate food for the schools as well as provide educational opportunities for the school children.

G. Farming, Forestry and the Economy

Despite the declining number of large commercial farms, farming represents a strong economic potential. In 2007, USDA data indicated the estimated agricultural revenue in Vermont to be \$673 million per year. Vermont's major agricultural and food product output totaled \$2.7 billion in 2007, the latest year of the Census of Agriculture.

Many other businesses in Vermont depend on the "farm economy." According to the Vermont Farm to Plate Strategic Plan (F2PSP), which was released in 2011, Vermont has at least 457 food processing establishments that employ at least 4,356 people and is the second-largest manufacturing sector employer in the state, behind computer and electronic products. In addition, Vermont has at least 263 wholesale distribution establishments that collectively employ at least 2,288 people. The farm-related food industry is clearly connected to the farm economy.

In addition to preserving Stockbridge's working landscape and maintaining the community's aesthetic beauty, farming and forestry can have an economic impact. Vermont is within easy reach of millions of people in cities like Boston and New York City. Rising fuel prices have led to an increased interest in food and energy security. Additionally, Vermonters are increasingly seeking locally-sourced, sustainably-produced farm and forest products. Vermont is a national leader in innovative education programs based on local food, agriculture and healthy eating. It is also widely recognized for its strong network of land trusts and other nonprofits that are models for conserving farm and forest lands.

There is already a growing mix of emerging entrepreneurs and long-time land-based businesses that are constantly evolving to stay competitive. They're producing biofuels, artisan cheese, craft beer, specialty wood products, produce, breads and other value-added items.

For Stockbridge, it is essential to encourage the growth of both forestry and agricultural industries within the community. These enterprises will continue to sustain the natural character of the town while adding the potential for jobs and unique and creative attractions that will bring people into the community for recreation and education. If tourists come to Stockbridge to visit a new organic farm or specialty wood or forest product producer, they will need a place to stay for the night, they will buy dinner at local restaurants, adding additional capital to the local economy.

H. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To encourage the economic growth of agricultural and forest operations at a scale that is appropriate for Stockbridge.
2. Encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the town's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features.
3. Protect the Region's rural agricultural character, scenic landscape, and recreational resources.
4. Preserve recreational and scenic access by ensuring that at the completion of logging projects, all roads are restored to their previous condition or better.

Policies

1. Where contiguous areas of high value farming or forestry exist, or have significant potential to exist, fragmentation of these areas into uses other than those incidental to agriculture or forestry should be discouraged.
2. Where high value agricultural and forested land are identified, clustered or peripheral development is especially encouraged to protect such resources and prevent fragmentation and sprawling settlement patterns.
3. Contiguous forest and significant agricultural areas should remain largely in non-intensive uses unless no reasonable alternative exists to provide essential residential, commercial and industrial activities for the Town's inhabitants.
4. The construction of utilities, roads or other physical modifications should skirt tracts of productive agricultural land rather than divide them.
5. Farmers, loggers, and foresters should use State of Vermont Accepted Management Practices (AMP) and are encouraged to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) in their operations and to minimize point and non-point source pollution.
6. The Town supports the development of value-added farm and forestry products in Stockbridge.

Recommendation

1. To promote a better understanding of the farming and forestry practices, and natural resource management in general; the Conservation Commission, if established, should seek out representatives of these industries, conservation organizations, public schools, and the tourism and recreation industries to sponsor continuing educational opportunities to the public.

XII. Transportation

Land use, energy, and transportation are related. Land use, both within and outside Stockbridge's borders, drives the need for improvements to the transportation system. At the same time, local land use goals must be facilitated in part by providing the necessary transportation facilities to accommodate growth where growth is desired. In addition, a given land use can have very different impacts on the transportation system depending on how it is sited and designed. Land use and transportation are both linked to the town's economic well-being. Poorly planned land use patterns increase transportation costs and also the tax rate, whereas well planned development can add to the tax base of the town, providing additional funds for the transportation system.

A. Town Highways

Highway classifications determine the amount of state aid available to assist with repair and maintenance. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Selectboard determine road classes. Criteria include traffic volume, road condition and function. Class two highways are the major connectors linking villages with each other and with state highways, and they receive a higher rate of State aid than Class 3 highways.

Miles of Town Roads in Stockbridge	
Class 1	0
Class 2	5.1
Class 3	33.4
Class 4	26.1
Total Town Roads	64.6

Figure 23: Miles of roads in Stockbridge
(Source: VTrans)

Only eight percent (8%) of Stockbridge's roads are Class 2 (Blackmer Blvd., River Road and Bridge St.). Class 3 highways are other town roads that are maintained in a manner enabling them to be driven under normal conditions in all seasons by a standard car. The majority (52%) of Stockbridge's roads are Class 3. 40% of Stockbridge's highways are Class 4, which is substantial compared to most communities where Class 4 roads make up less than 10% of their total roads. Class 4 highways are generally in poor condition and are limited in maintenance due to their relative low level of use or seasonal nature. No state aid is available for work on Class 4 highways. While not suited for regular traffic, these roads do represent a valuable asset for the town from a recreation standpoint. Such town-owned corridors will help ensure that there will continue to be a place to enjoy snowmobiling, ATV, cross country skiing, walking, hunting, horseback riding and other outdoor recreation.

Apart from education costs, public roads have been and will continue to be Stockbridge's largest town asset requiring significant financial investments paid through municipal taxes. Transportation funding sources come from numerous combinations of the local tax base, state and federal gas tax receipts, state and federal allocations and registration fees. The most significant funding resource comes from the federal transportation bill which passes through the State of Vermont and is distributed to towns by the Agency of Transportation. The federal and state government pays a percentage of project costs and the community pays the remainder. This funding applies only to Class 1-3 roads. Maintenance of Class 4 roads is funded exclusively by the community. The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has compared programs throughout the region and recommends a program of early intervention using preventative maintenance, because such a program has proven to be 75-85% less costly than larger

reconstruction work after significant deterioration has occurred. Such a program should be a part of an adopted Capital Budget and Program.

B. Town Culverts and Bridges

Proper and timely road and drainage systems maintenance can help protect these systems from most severe weather events. Maintaining a reliable and up-to-date inventory of existing culverts and structures, coupled with a short and long range plan for replacement and upsizing is essential. Replacing deficient culverts and bridges also helps protect water quality – installing appropriately scaled and designed structures that can handle flood events, stormwater runoff, promote fish passage, and minimize the discharge of road sediment. These upgraded culverts and bridges, operating in greater harmony with the natural environment, will also be less likely to fail during storm events.

C. State Highways

Vermont Route 107 is a primary state route across central Vermont linking I-89 to Route 14 and Route 4. U.S. Route 4 is the major east-west highway and the Route 107/100 is a road of lesser importance and status than Route 4. Route 107 was widened and flattened in the 1960s, leading to the removal of several structures including an architecturally significant general store in Gaysville.

State/Federal Roads in Stockbridge	
Route 100	5.0
Route 107	6.9
Total State Roads	11.9

Figure 24: Miles of State roads in Stockbridge
(Source: VTTrans)

According to the 2012 Town Plan survey 70% of the respondents indicated that they would oppose any efforts to increase truck traffic along Route 107. Stockbridge does not encourage any efforts to expand the width of Route 107 (except to accommodate bicycle traffic). This type of highway expansion can lead to increased speed and greater traffic and would negatively impact the proposed Central School Hamlet Area.

D. Class 4 & Trails

Class 4 roads and trails primarily offer access to Town and conservation resources and provide unique insights into an agrarian landscape long abandoned. Many Class 4 roads have been incorporated into the natural landscape whereby very little development has occurred along these roads. Trails are used exclusively for recreational purposes and are not intended for vehicle access (other than for approved ATV use), therefore they are not maintained except for some culvert and bridge work to ensure access for emergency vehicles. The town also does not plow these roads during the winter. Public utility services or other municipal infrastructure that typically accompany roads are nearly nonexistent. These roads are important scenic travel corridors for hikers, bicyclists, approved ATV use, and provide limited access to hunting and conservation lands.

According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation in 2010, Stockbridge has no publicly owned trails.

E. Development Review Road Standards

The Town currently uses highway rules and regulations based on state standards that were adopted by the Selectboard in March of 2011. This policy details road construction standards and policies for road

classifications, right-of-way, access, road acceptance, and numerous other construction and maintenance related activities. The responsibility of ordinance implementation rests with the Selectboard and the Stockbridge Road crew.

Insofar as guidelines for zoning review can contribute to this process, the following planning considerations should continue or be expanded upon in future policy updates:

- Emergency management services will have guaranteed safe access to all development.
- Roads should be designed with multi-modal transportation safety (pedestrian, bicycle, etc.) in mind.
- Since local and state road construction follows State of Vermont design standards, private roads should be constructed to those standards, thereby minimizing changes if the road is accepted by the Town at a later date.
- Road design and construction should adhere to the relevant Town Plan goals and objectives - land use, natural resources and transportation elements.
- All roads will reflect a context-sensitive design that preserves and enhances the adjacent land uses and transportation system.
- Private road and driveway standards should be adopted to ensure stormwater is not discharged onto public highways or drainage systems.
- The development of private roads shall be approved by the Selectboard after review of the proposed road by the town road Supervisor and a designated representative of the Fire Department.

Major transportation projects often place a greater emphasis on contemporary engineering design standards. However, in some instances, the design and engineering of our roadways and bridges fail to consider the Town's unique historical and natural landscapes. The design of a transportation project should account for a road being historic, scenic, pleasant to drive, or respectful to the people and businesses living alongside it. While engineering sufficiency criteria are important factors for road and bridge improvements, compatibility with existing and future development patterns also are important considerations.

F. Access Management

According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) definition, access management is a process that provides or manages access to land development while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system in terms of safety, capacity needs, and speed. Access management is an important process to provide reasonable accessibility to adjacent land uses while maintaining a safe and efficient flow of traffic. Transportation professionals have established that a single, well-designed access to a public highway presents few concerns for the traveling public. However, if access has been poorly designed and/or its frequency increases, the road's health declines proportionally. The result can be increased traffic congestion, crash rates, and road maintenance obligations to handle surface water improperly channeled to the road surface or shoulders. Ironically, these factors eventually compromise access to all land uses along the affected roadway. In many instances, towns are forced into costly highway expansion projects.

The Town recognizes the value of access management and can implement access management strategies through its planning and public works related ordinances and policies. The following are some of these strategies for all public and private transportation and development projects impacting local and state public roads as well as private roads:

- Utilize State of Vermont design standards for all temporary and permanent access, to include emphasis on drainage, sight distance, and access for emergency services;
- Encourage use of shared driveways and/or permitting access that may result in a future shared driveway;
- Require the review of access for existing development whenever a change of use, or other application process is brought before the Town;
- Encourage commercial properties to use existing development nodes in order to preserve or create road segments with few accesses, unless additional replacement access better meets access management goals;
- When practical, approve subdivisions with private and public road designs that allow shared access with other adjacent subdivisions and/or have the private rights-of-way reserved so an access may be built to connect to existing and future development;
- Encourage permanent landscaping and roadside enhancements to visually define access points and contribute to the roadway's aesthetic character;
- Use sight-distance standards based on the actual travel speeds and not the posted speed limits. If no such data exists or is not current, then the Town will work with the Regional Planning Commission to obtain the appropriate data.

G. Other Modes of Travel

Bicycles and Pedestrians

Many residents bike or walk on town roads in Stockbridge. The rural nature of most of Stockbridge's roads makes bike/pedestrian travel reasonably safe. Routes 100 and 107 are considered a prime location for cycling due to the scenic nature of the valley; however, high traffic columns, limited shoulders, and blind curves makes some areas along Routes 100 and 107 less safe.

Additional recreational opportunities can be found using trails maintained by VAST and VASA (see Chapter VI).

Public Transportation

Stockbridge, like most Vermont towns, has limited public transportation. Stagecoach, Inc. is the nearest public transit provider. They have regular transportation to West Lebanon, NH and Montpelier, VT. However, the nearest access points for Stagecoach's transit lines are in Bethel and Randolph. Stagecoach does offer limited public transportation in the form of special requests for individuals who need transportation for medical reasons. Stockbridge residents can take advantage of Stagecoach's "Ticket to Ride" Program which helps pay a substantial percentage of the cost of rides for senior citizens (60+) and persons with disabilities when there is not available transportation in the household or the person

requesting the trips is unable to drive on the day of the trip. Ticket to Ride is available for a broad array of destinations, such as medical services, shopping, errands, and social purposes.

Given that Stockbridge's elderly population is growing, the need for an affordable source of public transportation that can bring the elderly to major medical facilities like Dartmouth Hitchcock and larger commercial centers for day-to-day shopping needs is important.

H. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To provide and maintain a safe, energy efficient and well maintained transportation network, in a cost-effective manner, integrating all modes of travel (auto, pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit) and meeting the needs of the public in a manner consistent with the other goals, policies and recommendations of this Town Plan.
2. To maintain the rural and scenic character of the back roads and byways thereby protecting the rural scenic quality of the town whenever possible.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town to maintain the existing road system, while discouraging the expansion or addition of new roads.
2. It is the policy of the town to consider public input prior to a decision to substantially change the maintenance level, surface treatment, or class of a town road.
3. When determining which roads to pave and when, it is the policy of the town to evaluate traffic volume and maintenance costs against other factors, such as the up-front cost of paving and base improvements that may be necessary to support a paved surface and the potential quality-of-life impacts to residents.
4. When addressing road improvements on Class 3 roads, particularly roads that are prone to flood or erosion damage during hazard events, it is the policy of the town to replace undersized culverts and bridges with appropriately sized infrastructure whenever financially feasible.
5. It is the policy of the town to integrate land use and transportation planning by encouraging concentrated growth in areas served by an adequate highway system, utilizing land use regulations and appropriate highway access management techniques to control the impacts of development on the transportation system, and making transportation improvements in areas where growth is desired.

6. It is the policy of the town to encourage access management techniques that limit the number of access points during new development along highways to reduce driver confusion and traffic congestion and to minimize conflicts between through and local (turning) traffic via provisions on further subdivision in new access permits.
7. It is the policy of the town to cooperate with other communities in the region through the TRORC and its Transportation Advisory Committee to ensure that the region's transportation system is developed in a well-coordinated manner that recognizes and balances the needs and desires of each community.
8. It is the policy of the town to consider the relationship of a road to surrounding features of the landscape when planning improvements needed to safely accommodate increasing traffic.
9. It is the policy of the town to combine widening of roadways to accommodate safe use by bicyclists with traffic calming measures and enforcement of speed limits to ensure that traffic speeds do not increase.
10. It is the policy of the town to retain Class 4 roads and other public rights-of-way as public resources.
11. It is the policy of the Town to require development on private roads to adhere to town design standards and access standards and to provide safe year-round access for town services, particularly fire and rescue.
12. It is the policy of the Town to discourage any effort by the State to add additional lanes of vehicular traffic, increase the amount of through traffic or to increase the speed limit on either Route 100 or Route 107 should be vigorously opposed. However, efforts to improve Route 100 and Route 107 should be supported, provided such efforts do not exacerbate the bike/pedestrian safety or widen existing vehicular travel lanes. The Town encourages VTrans to reduce vehicle lane size to accommodate bicycle traffic.
13. It is the policy of the town to maintain a reliable and up-to-date inventory of existing culverts and structures, coupled with a short and long range plan for replacement and upsizing.
14. It is the policy of the Town to actively participate in any process or project which would result in significant changes to Route 100 or Route 107.

Recommendations

1. The Town should develop a town highway capital plan and schedule that will guide maintenance and road infrastructure investments in the future.

2. To further enhance current and future highway equipment, materials, maintenance and storage opportunities, the town should seek to expand the town garage site area, if and when it is available; and consider the benefits of extending the site's covered storage.
3. Continue participation in the Regional Transportation Advisory Commission as well as the TRORC Road Foreman's meeting program.
4. The Selectboard should acquire simple-to-use rural road maintenance software for maintaining roads and drainage systems.
5. The Town should support infrastructure improvements that enhance bicycling in Stockbridge.

XIII. Education

Two books document Stockbridge's history and provide information about the town's public school record—*A Pictorial History of Stockbridge Gaysville, 1761 – 1976* edited by Ramona Blackmer, Barbara Green, and Gloria Taylor, and *Stockbridge, Vermont Revisited, 1761 – 2007* compiled and edited by Barbara Green and Barbara Vellturo. Pictures of former students and teachers, school buildings and related documents demonstrate a long-term pride, interest, and devotion to our young scholars and their education. Most of the historical information that follows comes from these two sources.

In 1827, the Vermont Legislature adopted a uniform method of instruction in “orthography, reading, writing, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, history of the U.S. and good behavior,” but the push for public education goes back to at least 1792. At one time the town had as many as 17 school districts and considerable attention was spent determining the district boundaries and whether schools should be added, expanded, or consolidated.

Whether to build or improve our schools could be controversial. In 1894, for example, recorded on a piece of timber taken from the Stockbridge Common school was the following opinion—“...the school house building [was]...opposed by the wealthiest men in the District... [but] favored by all the poor people of the District... the old school house a mere reck unfit to keep cattle or hogs in...”

Gradually the number of district schools shrunk and our local upper school was not replaced after burning down in 1975. The Stockbridge Central School was constructed in 1956 consolidating enrollments from the Gaysville, Stockbridge and Ranney District Schools.

Five of the town's biggest district school buildings exist today (but are used for private uses) — on Stockbridge Common, Ranney Rd., Lyons Hill Rd., Stony Brook Rd. and the former Paine Academy across from the Stockbridge Town Office on Route 100.

In 1900 the Vermont Legislature made having a High School a local option “in which students may be fitted for college.” The town's Superintendent at the time, W.H. Hill, recommended building the town's High School in Gaysville. “By so doing, instead of paying tuition in other towns we would be building up our own town and school system and furnishing higher education for our young people and keeping up with the 20th century advance.”

Reflecting the town's population swings, our school enrollments have increased and decreased over time. In 1812 there were 169 “scholars” with a town population around 900. The town's population increased to a maximum of 1,418 in 1840 but when it decreased back down to 894 in the 1890s, the school population was again at 169. According to the 2010 census our 2010 town population was 736 and the 2010 PK – 12 enrollment was 112, approximately 20% decline in students on a per capita basis. Today our town has one elementary school—the Stockbridge Central School (PK - 6th grade) while student in grades 7 – 12 are tuitioned to other schools with costs paid, in part, by town taxpayers.

Students generally attend schools in Bethel, Randolph, Rochester, Rutland, Woodstock and at The Sharon Academy (See Exhibit A).

A. School Organization

Stockbridge is a member of the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union (WNWSU) along with the neighboring towns of Bethel, Rochester, Granville, Hancock, and Pittsfield. Local educational leadership is provided in Stockbridge by a three-member School Board. Our School Directors are responsible for educational policy and oversight of the academic programs and budget for the Stockbridge Central School (K-6), as well as the secondary education budgets and Supervisory Union support programs--e.g. special education and WNWSU administrative support. The school budget is voted on annually by members of the community, currently on Town Meeting day.

According to the WNWSU Report contained in the 2013 Annual School Report “the issue of dissolving the supervisory union and/or merging the local districts with another supervisory union is once again at the level of the State Board of Education and the office of the Secretary of Education.”

B. School Performance

While the importance of public education in Vermont and Stockbridge goes back to the 1780s, the ability to consistently measure educational performance has come relatively late—e.g. the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and for Vermont and most other New England states, the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), including annual Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reviews.

So how has our Central School performed? Using the most recent five years of information provided in Annual School Reports Stockbridge Elementary students have equaled or exceeded statewide scores in Reading, Science and Writing, and exceeded statewide Math scores in 3 of 5 years. Sample size was too small to compare Science and Writing scores in the most recent years available. Stockbridge Central School has also met its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in all 5 years.

C. School Enrollment

For a time in the 1970s the school was known as the Stockbridge-Pittsfield School for enrolling students from both Stockbridge and Pittsfield. Enrollment was 58 in the 2012-2013 school year, including three tuition students from Pittsfield and is now what it was 10 years earlier. Its recent enrollment peak of 76 was in 2008-2009. (See Figure 25) Stockbridge’s decline in elementary enrollment is mirrored throughout much of the state of Vermont. Recently the towns of Granville and Hancock closed their elementary schools. The town of Pittsfield hasn’t had a local school in years. Middle and High School enrollments have shown a small increase over the last several years and totaled 52 in 2012-13.

School Year	Enrollment
2012-2013	58
2011-2012	52
2010-2011	58
2009-2010	65
2008-2009	75
2007-2008	76
2006-2007	69
2005-2006	72
2004-2005	66
2003-2004	58

Figure 25: Student Enrollment, Stockbridge Central School (Source: VT Bright Futures)

The question of whether to close the Central School has been raised at Annual School meetings. The School Directors have reported that closing Stockbridge Central School would cost more money than it would save. There is also a concern that educational opportunities and learning environment could be negatively impacted if our school was closed and students were bused to other communities that might have lower academic performance. Finally, there are concerns over the loss of local control of school policy, the loss of the town's emergency facility (the Central School site played a key organizing, public meeting and food distribution role during the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene), and the role of having a local school in sustaining a sense of community.

The closing of a local school can be a difficult decision for a community as the local school often acts as a community center. In a town with no village center such as Stockbridge, this loss can be more pronounced because the school represents the best opportunity for the community to come together.

D. Tax Impact of Public Education in Stockbridge

Education funding in Vermont comes from a variety of sources. According to the Vermont Department of Education, on average 33% +/- of statewide education funding comes from various state tax sources and the federal government. The other 67% +/- comes from local property taxes. Of the latter funding source, 60% comes from nonresidential education property tax revenues and 40% from residential (homestead) education property tax revenues.

One reason the school budget is of interest is its financial impact on residents and property owners. The annual education budget is approximately 70% of the total property tax. This percentage isn't unique to Stockbridge.

To shed light on the residential tax impact of our school budget, two exhibits are provided. As a result of the Vermont Supreme Court Brigham decision of 1997, Vermont now provides total state funding to its school districts. And thanks to Vermont's Act 68, enacted in 2003, high quality, affordable education can be a reality in smaller Vermont communities. Now approximately two-thirds of Vermont residents pay their school tax based on their income (ability to pay) instead of the Grand List value of their property. The percentage of Stockbridge residents who pay their school tax via Act 68 is estimated to be similar to the state average—approximately two-thirds. The other third of residents pay their school tax based on their property's Grand List value, as do all out-of-state property owners. The nonresidential education property tax is calculated separately from the residential education property tax.

Two exhibits are included—Exhibit C and Exhibit D. Approximately 1/3 of Stockbridge resident households paid their Education Tax based on the value of their property (most of which had incomes exceeding \$90,000). Those paying via their property value paid, on average, more than those paying based on their incomes (See Exhibit C).

Exhibit D shows the tax impact of the local share of education costs for ten years—from fiscal year 2005 to 2015 (and projected for FY16) for approximately 2/3rds of Stockbridge resident property owners that pay based on their household income. Whether the household income is \$47,000 or \$90,000, the average annual increase in their Education Tax was 1.8%. For households making \$47,000 to \$90,000 the smallest percentage of a resident's household income paid for public education was 2.39% paid in 2008. The highest percentage was 3.06% paid in 2013.

E. School Support

As noted in the introduction to this Chapter, Stockbridge residents have devoted considerable time, energy and resources to maintain their local schools “for the advancement of the rising generation” (G.B. Fish, 1905 Superintendent’s Report, Stockbridge, Vermont Revisited, page 170). While no longer maintaining a system of 17 district schools, our Central School is important to those who live here as evidenced by the 2012 Resident Survey. Sixty-nine% of those responding to the Survey agreed with the statement “Having a local school strengthens our community” including 40% who strongly agreed. Twenty-four percent were neutral and 7% disagreed, including 1% who strongly disagreed.

F. School Choice

Tuitioning students to schools outside of their home community has been practiced for over 140 years according to School Choice in Vermont. Approximately 90 Vermont communities’ tuition students for at least one grade, including in the WNWSU towns of Granville, Hancock, Pittsfield, and Stockbridge (for grades 7-12). According to our Annual Reports, the average student tuition is \$13,900 for school year 2013-14 (See Exhibit A Stockbridge School Tuition History.).

One benefit of School Choice is the opportunity it affords for parents to place their children in the school(s) best suited to meet their individual educational and family needs. Financially speaking, the cost of School Choice has been consistently lower in recent years than if all students were assigned to Bethel, Rochester or Woodstock (see School Tuition History). The Sharon Academy’s tuition, as an independent school, has consistently been the least expensive.

School Choice also appears to be advantageous with regard to assuring our students the best opportunity for receiving a quality education. Under current town policy, parents can take into consideration the level of academic standards of a specific school when deciding where to school their children.

Finally, School Choice is very popular in Stockbridge. According to the 2012 Resident Survey, 75% of responding residents agreed with the statement “Parents choosing where to send their children to middle/high school makes sense,” including 41% who strongly agreed. Sixteen percent were neutral, and 9% disagreed including 3% who strongly disagreed. As might be expected, respondents that have or had a family member attend school while living here were more supportive than those who haven’t (81% vs. 64%). It should be noted, however, that almost two-thirds of those households who didn’t have a direct Stockbridge educational experience still agreed with the statement.

G. Home Schooling

A number of households in town home school their children for some or all of their K – 12 education.

H. Central School Building

The Stockbridge Central School building was built in 1955 and expanded in 1975. The basic infrastructure of the school is structurally sound and consistently maintained, although there is limited

funding for larger capital projects. Portions of the original roof are over fifty-five years old, but presently exhibit no water infiltration. The roof will be a substantial capital investment when replacement is needed. At that time, it may be logical to re-insulate the roof to increase efficiency.

The School's water system was upgraded within the last 10 years and water tests have consistently passed. The school has two heating plants, one is over fifty years old, and was likely installed when the building was built in 1955. The newer of the two is over thirty years old. Both heating systems should be replaced in order to reduce costs through increased energy efficiency.

A primary issue at the Stockbridge Central School is the lack of adequate space, which impacts student safety and causes curriculum issues. Class room size is adequate, but lack of space for non-core curriculum programing (special education, physical education,, Enrichment, Health, etc.) forces the school to utilize non-compliant space and impacts the success of various educational programs.

School security is a concern given that there is no way to secure the front door without locking it, likewise there is no way to secure classroom doors from the inside. Classrooms do not have telephones or intercoms.

The School's budget contains a very limited amount of funding for daily operation (in 2013 there was roughly \$14,000 allocated for supplies and maintenance). There is no capital fund or capital program set up to save money toward any future capital needs.

I. Secondary Education

Because Stockbridge does not have a secondary school, students grade 7-12 are tuitioned to other schools in the region. Students generally attend schools in Bethel, Randolph, Rochester, Rutland, Sharon or Woodstock.

J. Childcare

An inventory of registered childcare facilities reveals that Stockbridge has a limited amount of childcare available to the community. The State of Vermont has two classifications of childcare that are regulated, they are:

- Registered Family Child Care Home:** A child care program approved only in the provider's residence, which is limited to a small number of children based on specific criteria.
- Licensed Program:** A child care program providing care to children in any approved location. The number and ages of children served are based on available approved space and staffing qualifications, as well as play and learning equipment. A Licensed program must be inspected by the Department of Public Safety Inspectors and must obtain a Water and Wastewater Disposal Permit from the Department of Environmental Conservation. A Licensed program is considered a

	Licensed Provider	Registered Home
Bethel	2	4
Barnard	1	0
Killington	3	0
Pittsfield	0	0
Stockbridge	2	2

Figure 26: Childcare Facilities
Stockbridge & Surrounding Area
(Source: VT Bright Futures)

public building under Vermont Law. Types of licensed programs include: early childhood programs, school-age care, family homes and non-recurring care programs.

There are currently only four registered childcare services in Stockbridge. Most residents currently arrange for care with relatives, or take their children to childcare facilities beyond the borders of Stockbridge to neighboring towns like Bethel or to locations close to where they work.

K. Adult Education

Stockbridge has a fairly limited amount of adult education opportunities. Most adults take advantage of the opportunities that are available in Randolph as an alternative. These include:

- Vermont Technical College (VTC) - Vermont Technical College is located in Randolph Center. VTC is part of the Vermont State College system and offers full and part time educational opportunities that range from computer technology, to agriculture to health services. Attendees may choose a two-year program that leads to an associate's degree, a four-year program that leads to a bachelor's degree, or the college's one-year program that leads to a Practical Nursing certificate.
- Randolph Technical Career Center (RTCC) – Located in Randolph village, the RTCC is part of Randolph Union High School. RTCC offers adult education courses that range from the traditional tech center focuses of mechanical and woodworking, to computer technology, small business management, bookkeeping as well as arts, crafts and languages. RTCC's adult education classes are open to all for a fee.

Additional opportunities are available in Rutland, VT and Hanover, NH as well.

L. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To provide the opportunities and environment that will enable our students to investigate, master and apply the knowledge, skills, values and behaviors necessary for lifelong learning and meaningful participation in a global society.
1. To provide high-quality educational opportunities for our students as cost-effectively as possible.
2. To encourage the creation of local, affordable childcare facilities that meet the needs of Stockbridge residents.

Policies

1. The town supports family-friendly policies and programs.
2. The town supports the continuance of Stockbridge Central School.

3. The town supports a policy that allows parents to choose where they send their children to middle and high school.
4. The town supports the private development of additional local childcare facilities, as needed, and may assist with seeking funding to develop these facilities.

Recommendation

1. The School Board should actively engage in long-range capital planning and budgeting with assistance of the Supervisory Union.

XIV. Energy

A. Background

Concern about the sustainability of our nation's dependence on oil produced in foreign countries has grown greatly since the oil crisis of the mid-1970s. As prices of oil-related fuels continue to rise, everyday activities such as home heating and travel by car become increasingly burdensome for the average Stockbridge resident.

While the Planning Commission recognizes that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, the manner in which Stockbridge plans for future growth can have an impact on how much energy is needed and used in this community. For example, a highly dispersed and unplanned pattern of land use can waste both land and energy resources. By planning the location of jobs, public services and housing in close proximity to growth centers, the consumption of fuel and the need for additional roads can be reduced. The siting and design of buildings and the selection of energy systems can influence efficient use and conservation of energy.

Theories such as the Hubbert Peak Theory (a.k.a. Peak Oil), suggest that at some point – perhaps sooner than later – the worldwide consumption of oil will outpace the existing supply. Although new technologies may enable energy providers to extract oil from locations that were previously impossible to reach, there is most likely a finite amount of oil, which means that Stockbridge, like the rest of the world, should prepare for a much less oil-dependent future.

B. Energy Demands

According to the 2011 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP), energy demand grew at 1.8% from 1990 to 1999, but has been close to 0% for the past 10 years. The combination of state energy efficiency programs and the 2007–2009 recession probably helped to reduce energy demand across most end-use sectors in Vermont. The 2010 American Community Survey indicates that the major heating fuels consumed in Vermont are oil (47%), LPG and natural gas (30%), wood (15%), electric (5%).

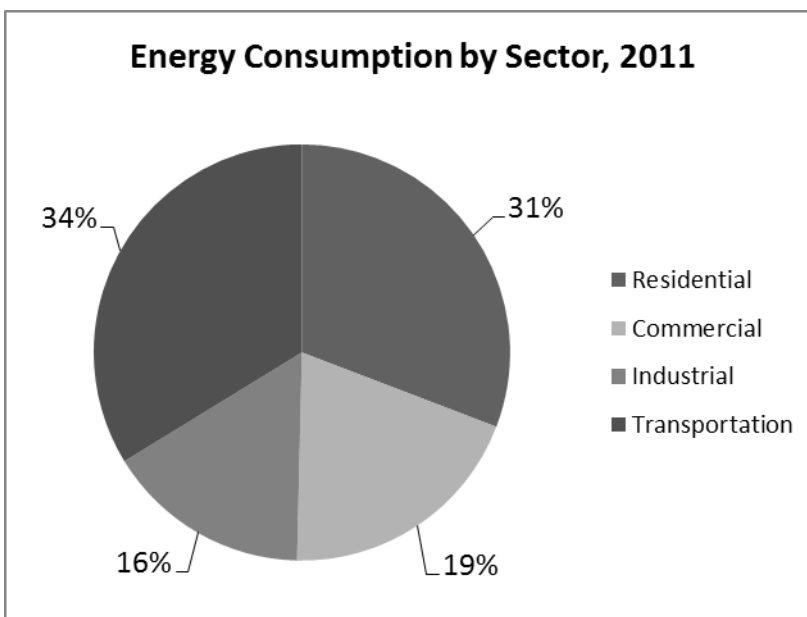


Figure 27: Source - US Energy Information Administration, 2011

In terms of per capita energy consumption for residential and transportation purposes, the North East is about the same as the rest of the U.S. In Vermont, almost 80% of residential energy is dedicated to space heating and domestic hot water, while approximately 34% of the state's total energy usage goes toward transportation.

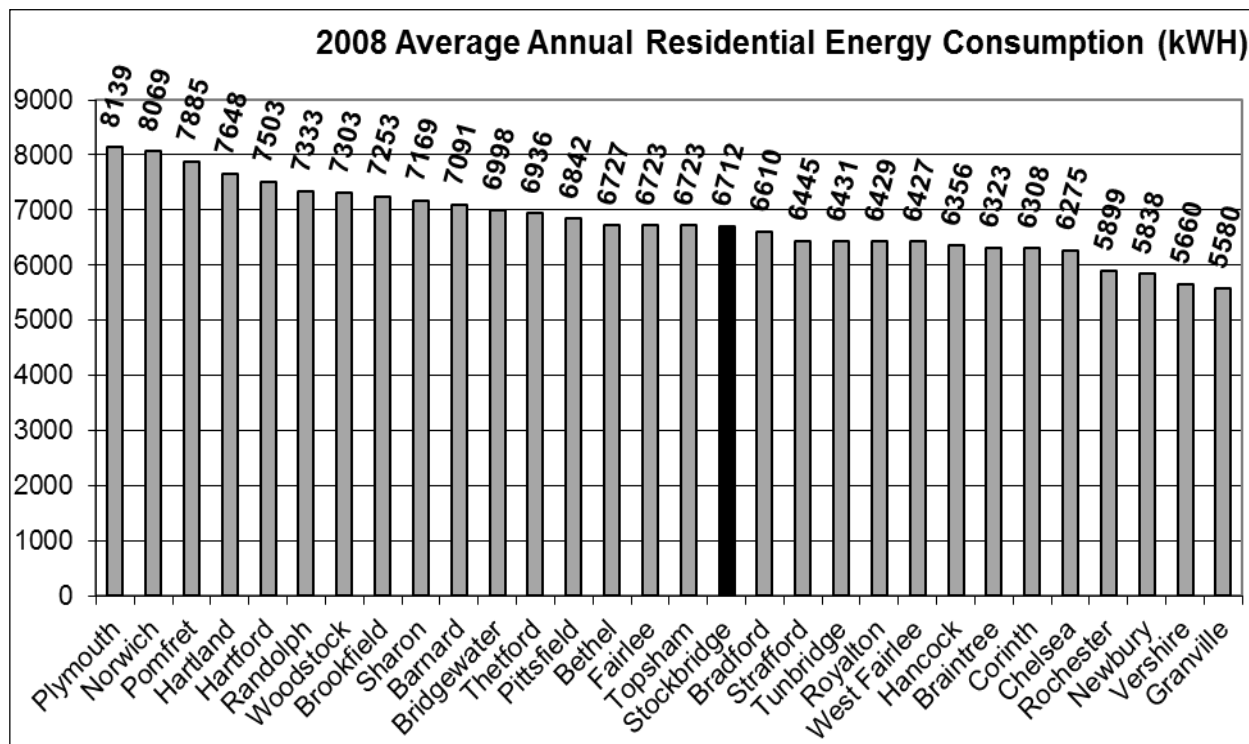


Figure 28 – Source: Vermont Energy Atlas and Efficiency Vermont, 2008

Of the energy dedicated to transportation, over 50% is used to fuel private cars for residents (as opposed to being used for public transit, road maintenance, or another public purpose). This fact reinforces the need for clear policies that take into account the transportation implications of land use decisions in this community.

According to data collected by Efficiency Vermont in 2008, the town of Stockbridge is seventeenth (out of 30 towns) in terms of average annual residential energy use levels in the TROC region. In 2008, this data (limited only to residential energy use) determined that Stockbridge used 6,712 kWh of energy, more than almost ½ of the towns in the region. When compared to neighboring communities, Stockbridge's level of energy use was less than every community except Rochester.

C. Current Energy Sources

Fossil Fuels

Stockbridge, like most other towns in Vermont, depends primarily on fossil fuels for heating and transportation. As shown in the table above, fossil fuels account for more than 50% of all energy consumed in Vermont, most of which is used in transportation. Nearly 50% of the oil consumed in the U.S. is imported. Vermont's economic system is so closely tied to the availability of fossil fuels that

modest price increases can lead to inflation, a slowdown in economic growth, and monetary instability. This can have unanticipated adverse impacts at the municipal and residential level. For example, increasing fuel prices make it more expensive for a town government to provide traditional public services and maintain existing facilities. Additionally, rising prices can also make it difficult for residents to heat their homes and put enough food on the table (the price and availability of food is usually influenced by fuel prices).

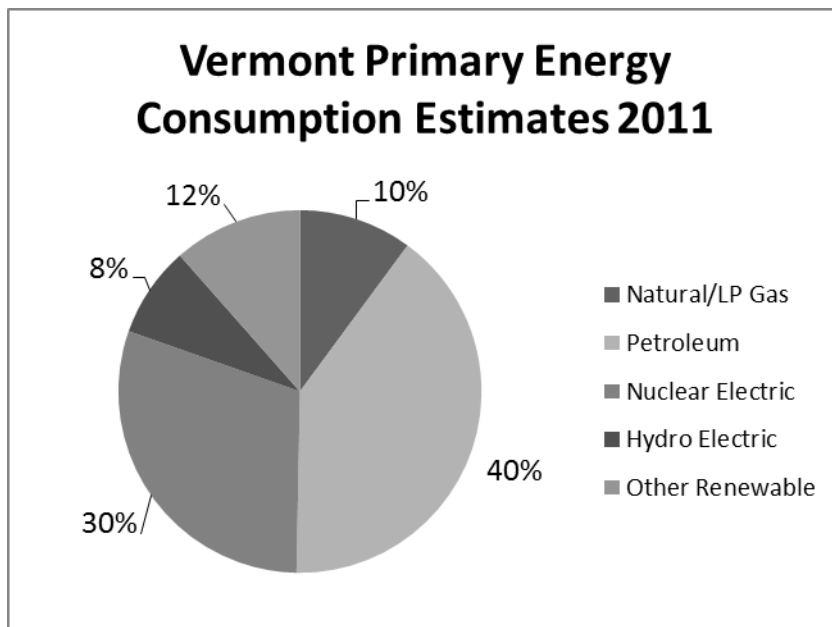


Figure 29: US Energy Information Administration, 2011

But these consequences of intensive fossil fuel use are only part of the story. The combustion of fossil fuels has been determined to be the largest contributor of atmospheric “greenhouse gases” (primarily carbon dioxide). There is near consensus in the scientific community that continued accumulation of greenhouse gases within the earth’s atmosphere will lead to a warming of the atmosphere, or “greenhouse effect.” Such warming can cause severe coastal flooding and unpredictable climate shifts, threatening the viability of the earth’s most significant urban and agricultural centers. Vermont has experienced an increase in the number of severe weather events: in 2011, there were four federally declared disaster events, breaking the record for the most events in a single year. If, indeed, climate instability and climate change are linked, then it is essential that we decrease our reliance on fossil fuels in an attempt to reverse or at least halt future damage to our atmosphere.

Nuclear Energy

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station has been generating electricity since 1971. The age of the facility has begun to manifest itself in terms of plant instability. Between 2009 and 2010, the Vermont Department of Health identified several ground water monitoring wells at the facility that contained tritium. This finding indicated an unintended release of radioactive material, and it means that other radioisotopes may have contaminated the environment. At the same time, Vermont Yankee’s license expired in March of 2012. The generation of electricity via nuclear fission with outdated equipment remains controversial.

A properly maintained nuclear power facility can, to some extent, represent a cleaner form of energy production than fossil fuels. However, the mining, processing and disposal of nuclear materials continues to raise questions regarding the viability of nuclear energy; nuclear generated electricity produces various

long-lived radioactive wastes which are highly toxic and require extraordinary precautions for safe storage. Existing technology does not assure safe disposal. The industry has not completely resolved safety issues regarding the decommissioning of nuclear power plants.

Renewable Energy

A substantial amount of the power used statewide comes from renewable sources when compared to other states. Although the majority of Vermont's renewable energy is generated through Hydro-Quebec (see below), some hydroelectric power is generated in Vermont. Additional sources of renewable energy include several utility owned commercial-scale wind and landfill methane projects. Many residences in Vermont also utilize wood for heating.

D. Renewable Energy Resources

For the municipality, individual or small group of homeowners, the key to sustainable energy production will be renewable sources of energy. The term "renewable energy" refers to the production of electricity and fuels from energy sources that are naturally and continually replenished, such as wind, solar power, geothermal (using the earth's heat to create power), hydropower, and various forms of biomass (trees, crops, manure, etc.).

Although initial set-up costs for renewable energy generation systems can be high, these systems can save users money over the long term, and they reduce the consumption of carbon-based fuels, which helps to protect our environment and reduce our reliance on centralized energy. In Vermont, some of these energy sources are more readily available than others and some are more cost effective for the individual energy producer.

When surveyed in 2012, 72% of residents who responded indicated that they support alternative energy generation. As a result, Stockbridge is highly supportive of residential scale alternative energy generation, whether for single family homes or small groups of homes.

The types of renewable energy found in Vermont are:

Solar Energy

Solar energy has potential for providing clean, reliable, and safe energy, even in Vermont's climate. Most areas in Vermont have the potential for some solar energy production, at least at the residential scale. In Stockbridge, if all potential opportunities to develop solar energy production were taken advantage of, the town could generate roughly 1.8 million kWh of power annually.

Passive Heating and Lighting – Good building and site design are essential to taking advantage of the sun's energy through passive methods.

Water Heating – Solar water heating is the most common form of residential-scale solar use in Vermont.

Electricity Generation – Decreasing costs of equipment have made solar electric generation systems more prevalent. Solar systems are no longer utilized exclusively by “off-grid” buildings. The advent of net-metering allows buildings to be connected to the grid while utilizing renewable energy. Systems that are net-metered are overseen by the Public Service Board and are not required to get a local permit.

At the time this plan was written, there was one net-metered solar electricity site in Stockbridge. Because of the nature of solar arrays, they are in some ways more desirable than wind towers. This is primarily due to the fact that they do not need to be located on high ground and are therefore less visually prominent. In addition, these facilities can be located in areas that are less rural in nature, requiring fewer access roads and reducing adverse impacts on wild lands.

Wind Energy

Potential Wind Development Areas (Acres)							
	<u>Class 1</u> (10-11 mph)	<u>Class 2</u> (12-13 mph)	<u>Class 3</u> (13-14 mph)	<u>Class 4</u> (15-16 mph)	<u>Class 5</u> (16-17 mph)	<u>Class 6</u> (17-18 mph)	<u>Class 7</u> (19-25 mph)
<u>Residential</u> (30-meter)	1311	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Small Commercial</u> (50-meter)	0	95	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Large Commercial</u> (70-meter)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 30: Potential Wind Development Areas in Stockbridge (Source: Vermont Energy Atlas)

Power generated from wind is done through a wind turbine, which is installed on top of a tall tower, where it collects and converts wind into electricity. Towers for home use are generally 80-100 feet in height and are far less obtrusive than larger, commercial “wind farms” that have become a subject of great debate throughout Vermont.

Similar to solar, wind energy is an intermittent resource and its generation fluctuates in response to environmental conditions. The amount of energy produced by a specific wind tower can depend greatly on location, height of the tower and proximity to other obstructions. Nevertheless, most modern wind turbines (when properly sited) are able to generate electricity 95% of the time.

There are multiple levels of potential wind energy generation, ranging from Class 1 (10-11 mph) to Class 7 (19-25 mph). Stockbridge’s topography and distance from the more windy areas of the state, makes it a poor location for wind energy generation, even on the residential level. Based on an analysis of these potential areas for wind development, the community does not have to be concerned with the development of commercial-scale wind energy in town.

Biomass & Biogas Energy Generation

The term ‘biomass’ refers to biologically-based feed stocks (that is, food or vegetable wastes, grass, wood, methane, algae, and more). Biomass can be converted into an energy source to fuel vehicles (e.g. biodiesel), heat homes, or generate electricity. According to the 2011 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, those using wood for primary heating consumed about 5.4 cords in 2007–2008, while those households using wood as a supplementary source used 2.25 cords. In that same year, Vermont households burned about 20,155 tons of wood pellets, with primary-heat-source consumers burning 3.8 tons and supplementary-heat-source consumers burning 1.2 tons for the season. There are no biomass energy generation facilities in Stockbridge.

Commercial biomass energy generation facilities should be located close to available biofuels to reduce transportation impacts and costs. A biomass power plant would require a great deal of space to accommodate the various stages of collection and conversion of the mass into fuel before burning it to produce electricity. Water can also pose a problem as biomass facilities require large quantities to handle the recycling process of waste materials. Materials would have to be transported to and from the facility, so truck traffic should be a consideration in selecting a site. Additionally, before a biomass energy generation facility could be located in Stockbridge, developers should prove that their proposed project will not negatively impact the rural character of the community or the local road system.

Biofuels

In addition to using biomass for heating, the use of biofuels, particularly biodiesel, is becoming an increasingly popular option for municipalities attempting to cut costs and reduce the environmental impacts associated with vehicle emissions.

According to the Vermont BioFuels Association, biodiesel is a clean burning alternative fuel, produced from domestic, renewable resources such as soybeans, sunflowers, canola, waste cooking oil, or animal fats. Biodiesel contains no petroleum, but it can be blended at any level with petroleum diesel to create a biodiesel blend which can be used in colder weather. It can be used in compression-ignition (diesel) engines or oil-fired boilers or furnaces with little or no modifications.

Growing biomass to use in biofuels may be a viable way to encourage farming in Stockbridge as well; however, balance should be sought between growing for energy demands and for human and animal consumption.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector has the potential to become a net generator of energy by growing crops that can be used for biofuel, by contributing cow manure to the process of methane digestion (also known as ‘Cow Power’), or by using fields for the location of large-scale solar generation (cows can graze around solar collectors).

Cow Power is especially popular in Vermont; however, it requires a significant upfront financial investment and is generally only effective when utilized by a large scale farm. One of the key advantages of methane digestion is that it reduces the amount of methane released into the environment. However,

large-scale cow farms can also have adverse impacts on the environment, which should be carefully considered when weighing the benefits and drawbacks of setting up a methane digestion system in this community.

Hydropower

Many locations in Vermont, including Stockbridge, once depended on hydropower to grind grain, run mills and supply electricity to homes. But, with the onset of centralized power, most of these small-scale power generation facilities have been replaced by massive hydro facilities such as Hydro Quebec. Gaysville's hydro power station was destroyed in the 1927 flood.

There are two main forms of hydropower: run-of-river which uses the natural flow of water to generate power and facilities that store water behind an impoundment. Run-of-river systems rely on seasonal rainfall and runoff to produce power, resulting in periods of low production. Impounding water behind a dam allows for control of the water flow, resulting in consistent electric production.

There are no sites in Stockbridge that are considered "in-service" (meaning that the site is not actively producing power, but has the basic infrastructure to do so).

Hydroelectric development necessitates balancing priorities. While the benefits of generating electricity from local renewable resources are evident, they are not without associated costs. The power output from a given stream must be moderated by environmental considerations. A minimum stream flow that is adequate to support aquatic life needs to be maintained and impoundments need to be designed with water quality, land use, and recreation considerations in mind.

Hydropower generating facilities are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and stringent federal water quality standards. As a result, the regulatory process for hydro facilities is extensive and time consuming. Further, streams are public trust resources and the potential impacts of hydro projects warrant significant consideration. It is important that any hydropower development proposed in Stockbridge shall not result in an undue adverse impact to riverine ecosystems and water quality.

E. Permitting and Siting Considerations

Energy generation in Vermont is subject to a number of different permitting requirements, most of which are limited to state level permitting. On the municipal level, state statute protects residential renewable energy generation systems from regulations that will completely prohibit their development.

Section 248

Distributed power generation facilities, such as hydropower dams, fossil fuel plants as well as wind power or solar systems that are part of the public power generation system, are subject to review and approval by the Vermont Public Service Board (30 VSA §248). Under this law, prior to the construction of a generation facility, the Board must issue a Certificate of Public Good. A Section 248 review addresses

environmental, economic, and social impacts associated with a particular project, similar to Act 250. In making its determination, the Board must give due consideration to the recommendations of municipal and regional planning commissions and their respective plans. Accordingly, it is appropriate that this Plan address these land uses and provide guidance to town officials, regulators, and utilities.

For all commercial-scale energy generation facilities, the following policies shall be considered:

1. **Prohibited Locations:** Because of their distinctive natural, historic or scenic value, energy facility development shall be excluded from the following areas:
 - Floodways shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (except as required for hydro facilities)
 - Fluvial erosion hazard areas shown on Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area maps (except as required for hydro facilities)
 - Wetlands as indicated on Vermont State Wetlands Inventory maps or identified through site analysis.
 - Rare, threatened or endangered species habitat or communities.
2. **Significant Areas:** All new generation, transmission, and distribution facilities shall be sited and designed to avoid or, if no other reasonable alternative exists, to otherwise minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to the following:
 - Historic districts, landmarks, sites and structures listed, or eligible for listing, on state or national registers.
 - Public parks and recreation areas, including state and municipal parks, forests and trail networks.
 - Municipally designated scenic roads and viewsheds.
 - Special flood hazard areas identified by National Flood Insurance Program maps (except as required for hydro facilities)
 - Public and private drinking water supplies, including mapped source protection areas.
 - Primary agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.
 - Necessary wildlife habitat identified by the state or through analysis, including core habitat areas, migration and travel corridors.
3. **Natural Resource Protection:** New generation and transmission facilities must be sited to avoid the fragmentation of, and undue adverse impacts to the town's working landscape, including large tracts of undeveloped forestland and core forest habitat areas, open farm land, and primary

Section 248

Section 248 of Title 30 requires companies to obtain approval from the Board before beginning site preparation or construction of electric transmission facilities, electric generation facilities and certain gas pipelines within Vermont. Section 248 also requires Board approval for some long-term contracts for purchasing power from outside Vermont and for some investments in transmission and generation facilities outside Vermont.

Development under Section 248 is exempt from local zoning regulations.

agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service.

- 4. Protection of Wildlife:** Designers must gather information about natural and wildlife habitats that exist in the project area and take measures to avoid any undue adverse impact on the resource. Consideration shall be given to the effects of the project on: natural communities, wildlife residing in the area and their migratory routes; the impacts of human activities at or near habitat areas; and any loss of vegetative cover or food sources for critical habitats.
- 5. Site Selection:** Site selection should not be limited to generation facilities alone; other elements of the facility need to be considered as well. These include access roads, site clearing, onsite power lines, substations, lighting, and off-site power lines. Development of these elements shall be done in such a way as to minimize any negative impacts. Unnecessary site clearing and highly visible roadways can have greater visual impacts than the energy generation facility itself. In planning for facilities, designers should take steps to mitigate their impact on natural, scenic and historic resources and improve the harmony with their surroundings.

New generation and transmission facilities should be sited in locations that reinforce Stockbridge's traditional patterns of growth, of compact village centers surrounded by a rural countryside, including farm and forest land.

F. Residential Energy Efficiency

There are a number of ways that the Town of Stockbridge can meet its local energy demand, first by lowering that demand, and then by working to meet the remaining need with local, untapped energy resources.

Decreasing Energy Use by Changing Behavior

Raising awareness to replace wasteful energy behaviors with energy saving ones can reduce the strain on existing energy resources, and help residents and businesses save money, making the town a more affordable place to live with a higher quality of life.

Decreasing Energy Use by Implementing Energy Efficiency

For those necessary or desired services that require energy, we can apply the principles of energy efficiency to ensure that we use less energy to provide the same level and quality of service. Examples include:

- Insulating with high R-value (or heat flow resistance) material,
- Using high efficiency windows,
- Installing energy efficient appliances like refrigerators, freezers, front loading washing machines, gas heated clothes driers and heating systems without blowers,
- Using high efficiency lighting,

- Using gas and/or solar hot water heaters,
- Siting buildings to make use of existing wind blocks and natural cooling patterns derived from the landscape's topography.
- Siting buildings with maximum southern exposure to capture passive solar energy.

New residential development in the State of Vermont is required to comply with Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES). Commercial development is subject to similar code regulations. Some examples of the types of development the RBES applies to include:

- Detached one- and two-family dwellings;
- Multi-family and other residential buildings three stories or fewer in height;
- Additions, alterations, renovations and repairs;
- Factory-built modular homes (not including mobile homes).

In order to comply with the RBES, a home, as built, must meet all of the Basic Requirements and the Performance Requirements for one of several possible compliance methods. If the home meets the technical requirements of the RBES, a Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards Certificate must be completed, filed with the Town Clerk and posted in the home. If a home required by law to meet the RBES does not comply, a homeowner may seek damages in court against the builder.

G. Municipal Role in Energy Efficiency

Although communities are unlikely to have an impact on energy consumption at the global level, they do have an impact at the local level given their demand for and use of energy. The relationship between a municipality and its energy use creates opportunities to have an impact on local energy use reduction.

Form an Energy Committee

Stockbridge does not have an energy committee, but towns are statutorily enabled to create one. An energy committee (EC) is a volunteer group that is formed for the purpose of establishing and implementing the town's energy goals; the group can act independently or can be formally appointed by the Selectboard. The work that can be done by an EC includes conducting energy audits on municipal buildings, tracking energy use for these buildings, providing outreach to homeowners on energy efficiency and renewable energy generation and working with the Planning Commission on the Energy Plan. Most importantly, an active EC can help the town and residents save money while saving energy.

Auditing Municipally Owned Buildings

Many towns in Vermont own buildings that are old and inefficient in many respects. For instance, older buildings often have insufficient insulation, wasteful heating and cooling systems, and out-of-date lighting. These kinds of infrastructure problems result in higher energy use with the resulting cost passed onto taxpayers.

Municipal officials should consider conducting audits on additional town buildings in order to determine what improvements are necessary, and which projects would have the highest cost-benefit ratio in terms of energy and financial savings.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

Vermont enacted legislation in May 2009 (Act 45) that authorizes local governments to create Clean Energy Assessment districts. Once created, municipalities can offer financing to property owners for renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects. Eligible projects include the installation of solar water and space heating, photovoltaic panels (PV), and biomass heating, small wind, and micro-hydroelectric systems. Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing effectively allows property owners to borrow money to pay for energy improvements. The amount borrowed is typically repaid via a special assessment on the property over a period of up to 20 years; if the property owner wishes to sell the parcel before fully repaying the obligation, then the obligation is transferred to the new property owner at the time of sale.

While many communities have voted to establish PACE districts, the mechanism for funding the PACE program at the state level has not yet been created.

Capital Budget Planning

Given the potential expense of energy efficiency improvements, it is essential to wisely budget town funding to cover these costs. State statute enables communities to create a Capital Budget and Program for the purposes of planning and investing in long-range capital planning. Although most communities have some form of capital account where they save money, many do not have a true Capital Budget and Program. A capital budget outlines the capital projects that are to be undertaken in the coming fiscal years over a five-year period. It includes estimated costs and a proposed method of financing those costs. Also outlined in the Program is an indication of priority of need and the order in which these investments will be made. Any Capital Budget and Program must be consistent with the Town Plan and should include an analysis of what effect capital investments might have on the operating costs of the community.

When planning for routine major facility investments, such as roof replacements, foundation repairs, etc., it is important to consider making energy efficiency improvements simultaneously. The cost to replace or renovate a community facility will only be slightly higher if energy efficiency improvements are done at the same time, rather than on their own.

At present, the town of Stockbridge does not have an adopted Capital Budget and Program to help guide investments in community infrastructure and equipment. The Planning Commission may make recommendations to the Selectboard with regard to what capital investments should be considered annually. Stockbridge should strongly consider creating a Capital Budget and Program.

Policy Making for Change

In addition to reducing the energy use related to facilities, Stockbridge can implement policies that lower energy use by town staff or encourage greater energy efficiency. Examples include:

Energy Efficient Purchasing Policy – A policy of this nature would require energy efficiency to be considered when purchasing or planning for other town investments. For example, purchasing Energy Star rated equipment is a well-documented way to increase energy efficiency. Devices carrying the Energy Star logo, such as computer products and peripherals, kitchen appliances, buildings and other products, generally use 20%–30% less energy than required by federal standards.

Staff Policies - Towns can also implement policies that are designed to reduce wasteful energy practices. For example, the Town of Stockbridge could create a policy requiring that town vehicles (such as dump trucks and other road maintenance equipment) not idle for more than a set period of time. Idling is an expensive waste of fuel, and a policy such as this could lead to substantial savings in money spent on fuel by the town.

Through policy making, local government can set a clear example for townspeople and encourage sustainable behavior that will ultimately result in both energy and financial savings. Please see the goals, policies, and recommendations section (F, below) for more ideas.

H. Energy and Land Use Policy

The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117) does not allow communities to impose land use regulations that prohibit or has the effect of prohibiting the installation of solar collectors or other renewable energy devices. However, statute does enable Vermont's municipalities to adopt regulatory bylaws (such as zoning and subdivision ordinances) to implement the energy provisions contained in their town plan.

Zoning Bylaws control the type and density of development. It is important to acknowledge connection between land use, transportation and energy and seek to create zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations that encourage energy efficiency and conservation. Encouraging higher density and diverse uses in and around existing built-up areas can lead to more compact settlement patterns, thereby minimizing travel requirements. At the same time, Zoning Bylaws must be flexible enough to recognize and allow for the emergence of technological advancements which encourage decreased energy consumption, such as increased use of solar and wind power.

Stockbridge's Zoning Bylaws contain provisions for planned unit developments (PUDs). PUDs are a grouping of mixed use or residential structures, pre-planned and developed on a single parcel of land. The setback frontage and density requirements of the zoning district may be varied, to allow creative and energy efficient design (i.e. east-west orientation of roads to encourage southern exposure of structures, solar access protection, use of land forms or vegetation for wind breaks, and attached structures), and to encourage the construction of energy efficient buildings.

Subdivision regulations are one of the most effective tools for encouraging energy efficiency and conservation. Subdivision regulations, like PUDs, involve town review (through the PC and ZBA) in the design process. Because subdivision regulations govern the creation of new building lots, as well as the provision of access and other facilities and services to those lots, a community can impose requirements

that a developer site their building to maximize solar gain. Likewise, subdivision can require that landscaping be utilized to reduce thermal loss.

I. Energy and Transportation Policy

It is important that our community recognizes the clear connection between land use patterns, transportation and energy use. Most communities encourage the development of residences in rural areas, and these are in fact coveted locations to develop because of the aesthetics that make Vermont special. However, this rural development requires most of our population to drive to reach schools, work and services.

Because transportation is such a substantial portion of local energy use, it is in the interest of the community to encourage any new developments that are proposed in Stockbridge to locate adjacent to existing roads. In particular dense residential developments should be located within or adjacent to existing village centers or within designated growth areas. Commercial development that requires trucking and freight handling should only locate on roads which can effectively handle the size of vehicle needed.

J. Energy Assurance Planning

The dramatic rise in fuel costs over the last decade has brought concerns about the stability of our national energy system to the forefront. Dependence on foreign fuels puts the nation in a position of weakness, unable to control prices and maintain fuel supplies. This lack of control highlights the fragility of our dependence on foreign fuel, particularly petroleum. This lack of control is especially apparent in Vermont because the state has no crude oil reserves or refining capacity.

If the cost of petroleum was to rise precipitously (for example, double in price), Stockbridge might find it challenging to maintain public services, such as regular road maintenance or the school bus. To continue providing the same quantity and quality of services, taxes would have to be raised. This, coupled with the impact of oil prices on the private sector, could result in significant economic hardship for residents.

Stockbridge should engage in comprehensive, integrated energy assurance planning that is designed to mitigate and enable timely response to the consequences of energy supply disruption, whether this disruption is the result of physical scarcity, high prices, or a severe weather event (for example, in 2011, Tropical Storm Irene cut off access to fuel supplies in many communities including Stockbridge). One way to prepare for an energy supply disruption is by including an element that specifically addresses this issue in our town's Municipal Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan should include a clear set of non-mandatory and mandatory fuel conservation measures along with a clear indication of what circumstances would trigger implementation of the various measures. For instance, if an acute shortage arises,

Stockbridge should be prepared to ensure that any available fuel will be distributed based on priority rankings (for example, fuel might go first toward emergency response, next to health care providers, etc.).

K. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goals

1. To ensure the long-term availability of safe, reliable and affordable energy supplies, to increase energy efficiency, and to promote the development of renewable energy resources and facilities in the Town of Stockbridge.
2. To reduce energy costs, the community's reliance on fossil fuels and foreign oil supplies, and greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.
3. To identify and limit the adverse impacts of energy development and use on public health, safety and welfare, the town's historic and planned pattern of development, environmentally sensitive areas, and our most highly valued natural, cultural and scenic resources, consistent with related development, resource protection and land conservation policies included elsewhere in this plan.
4. To encourage a continued pattern of settlement and land use that is energy efficient.
5. To promote the construction of energy efficient residential and commercial buildings and increase awareness and use of energy conservation practices through educational outreach to the public.
6. To increase public transportation opportunities throughout the community, including park-and-ride access, bus service, biking paths, and sidewalks.
7. To promote greater use of existing public transportation services by community members.

Policies

1. Town officials will actively support partnerships, strategies, and state and federal legislation that will ensure the affordable, reliable and sustainable production and delivery of electrical power to the region, in conformance with regional and municipal goals and objectives.
2. Town officials will participate in the Public Service Board's review of new and expanded generation and transmission facilities to ensure that local energy, resource conservation and development objectives are identified and considered in future utility development.
3. Any commercial energy generation facility proposed in Stockbridge must be developed so as to avoid negative impacts on the rural character of the surrounding area. Developers should make all possible efforts to minimize damage to important natural areas as identified in the Natural

Resource section of this Town Plan. Additionally, such facilities should be located as close to existing roads as possible to avoid any increase in the services provided by the town.

4. Developments that are proposed under Act 250 must include measures to reduce energy consumption through site and building design, materials selection and the use of energy-efficient lighting, heating, venting and air conditioning systems.
5. Stockbridge supports the development and use of renewable energy resources – including but not limited to wind, solar, biomass, micro hydro and cogeneration – at a scale that is sustainable, that enhances energy system capacity and security, that promotes cleaner, more affordable energy technologies, that increases the energy options available locally, and that avoids undue adverse impacts of energy development on the local community and environment.
6. Town officials will work in cooperation with state, regional and local agencies, emergency service providers, regional suppliers and municipalities to develop local emergency contingency plans that ensure access to critical energy supplies and measures to reduce nonessential energy consumption in the event of an abrupt energy shortage.
7. The Stockbridge Selectboard should discuss the PACE program at a future meeting and decide whether the program should be placed on the ballot for Town Meeting.
8. Town officials will support efforts to educate homeowners about what resources are available to them for energy efficiency improvements.
9. The rehabilitation or the development of new buildings and equipment should use proven design principles and practices with the lowest lifecycle costs (cost of owning, operating, maintaining, and disposing of a building or a building system over a period of time).
10. Where land development or subdivisions are proposed, design plans should reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation, the use of protective wind barriers, and cluster development (citing buildings close to each other to maintain open space on the remaining parcel).
11. Visual effects of electrical generation, transmission, and distribution facilities shall be minimized whenever feasible.
12. It is the policy of the Town that generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas shall be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this plan.
13. It is the policy of the Town that new significant public investments (including schools, public recreational areas, municipal facilities, and major commercial or residential developments) should be located within or in close proximity to the village or hamlet areas and shall utilize existing roads whenever possible.

14. It is the policy of the Town to encourage the extension of broadband services to all residences, and support energy efficient, small-scale home businesses.
15. It is the policy of the Town to promote energy efficient travel by residents.

Recommendations

1. The Stockbridge Selectboard should appoint a volunteer Energy Coordinator or volunteer Committee to develop an Energy Action Plan as a supplement to the Town Plan, to recommend actions that the town and community should take to conserve energy, increase energy efficiency, promote local energy production from renewable resources, and to reduce energy use.
2. Town officials and volunteers should work to increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices, energy-efficient products and efficiency and weatherization programs through educational efforts aimed at local residents and businesses.
3. The Town should evaluate municipal or community-based renewable energy generation, to include municipal biomass heating systems, and the installation of individual or group net metered generation facilities on town buildings and property to serve town facilities. Sources of funding for municipal power generation may include third-party financing, municipal funds, bonds, grants, and available government incentive programs.
4. The Energy Committee or volunteer energy coordinator, if appointed, should identify areas in town that are appropriate for commercial renewable energy production.
5. The Town should implement energy efficiency measures for existing and future facilities as opportunities arise, and incorporate priority efficiency improvements (e.g., facility retrofits, renovations, and equipment upgrades) in the town's capital budget and program.

XV. Relationship to Other Plans

A. Relationship to Municipal Plans

The Municipal Plan focuses primarily on development and policy within the community's boundaries. However, it is important to recognize that how a community grows and changes can be directly impacted by development that takes place outside of the community. For example, many places had large and vibrant villages that were negatively impacted by the location of the railroad in outside areas.

In order to analyze the potential for outside impacts on Stockbridge, the Planning Commission has reviewed the Municipal Plans and, if available, the land use regulations of surrounding towns for consistency with this Plan. These communities include:

- **Bethel** – Bethel has had a municipal plan and zoning for decades. Their current plan was adopted in 2011 and their Zoning Bylaws was adopted in 2008. Much of the land that abuts Stockbridge in Bethel is of a scale and density that is similar to Stockbridge – primarily rural residential in nature. However, along Route 107, Bethel currently has an area that allows an extensive range of commercial activities, which is not consistent with how Stockbridge treats much of 107. As of the writing of this document, the Planning Commission is aware that Bethel is revising their Town Plan and this potential conflict is likely to be addressed. Bethel is the primary operator of the White River Alliance, which manages the Bethel/Royalton landfill where Stockbridge's trash is taken. Stockbridge will need to work with Bethel and the Alliance in the future to address any changes in statewide solid waste policy.
- **Killington** – Killington has also maintained a lengthy history of local planning, primarily due to the constant development pressures from Killington and Pico Ski areas. Much of the land in Killington that is adjacent to Stockbridge has been designated as Forest Reserve and effectively mirror's Stockbridge's land use patterns in these locations.
- **Bridgewater** – The Town of Bridgewater has only a municipal plan, which was revised in 2013. However, there is a limited amount of land area between Bridgewater and Stockbridge which meets and that area is part of the Les Newell Wildlife Management Area and is preserved. There are no concerns regarding compatibility with Bridgewater's land use patterns.
- **Barnard** – The Town of Barnard has had an adopted plan since 1971, which has been revised regularly, as well as a newly adopted Unified Bylaw (zoning and subdivision). The pattern of development promoted by the Barnard Town Plan along Stockbridge's border is very similar to the diffuse pattern outlined in the Land Use chapter of this plan. Uses encouraged in Barnard are likewise similar. There are no potential conflicts between these plans.
- **Rochester** – The Town of Rochester has had a Town Plan, Zoning and Subdivision Regulations since the 1970s. Stockbridge and Rochester share access to Route 100, one of Vermont's most scenic roads. Areas of these communities which are adjacent to each other have similar types,

featuring disperse development that is primarily residential in nature.

- **Pittsfield** – The Town of Pittsfield is Stockbridge’s immediate neighbor to the East, with the communities sharing access to Route 100. Pittsfield has a Town Plan which is updated every five years as is required by law, but they do not have zoning or subdivision regulations – only Flood Hazard Regulations. Pittsfield’s approach to land use density and type along Stockbridge’s border is similar to Stockbridge – disperse development that is primarily residential in nature.

B. Relationship to the Regional Plan

Stockbridge is within the Two Rivers - Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. It is one of thirty (30) municipalities that comprise the Region. The Region covers northern Windsor County, most of Orange County and the Towns of Pittsfield, Hancock and Granville. The Commission was chartered in 1970 by the acts of its constituent towns. All towns are members of the Commission, and town representatives govern its affairs. One of the Regional Commission’s primary purposes is to provide technical services to town officials and to undertake a regional planning program. As is the case in many areas of the State, the extent of local planning throughout the region is varied. Some municipalities are more active than others. Thus, the level of services to each of the towns changes with time.

The Regional Commission updated its Regional Plan in June, 2014. It will remain in effect for a period of five years. This Plan was developed to reflect the general planning goals and policies expressed in the local plans. It is an official policy statement on growth and development of the Region. The Regional Plan contains several hundred policies to guide future public and private development in the Region. Policies for land use settlement are identified. These areas are: Town Centers, Village Settlement Areas, Hamlet Areas, Rural Area, and Conservation and Resource Areas. Delineation of each land use area is mapped or charted.

Prior to revisions to this Plan, the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission provided Stockbridge with an “enhanced consultation” at which staff identified areas of conflict between the Regional Plan and the Stockbridge Town Plan adopted in 2010. The major area of concern was a strip of commercial development allowed along Routes 100 and 107 that the Regional Commission viewed as counter to the state planning goal which discourages strip development. Additionally, the allowance of retail development was directly in conflict with the Regional Plan which contains policies that require principle retail establishments to be located in village centers and downtowns.

In response to this conflict, the Stockbridge Planning Commission has modified the areas identified for retail development, creating a more compact location within the Stockbridge School Hamlet. If adopted as written, it is likely that there will be no conflict between the Regional Plan and the Stockbridge Town Plan.

C. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal

1. To work with neighboring towns and the region to encourage sustainable land use and environmental policy that benefits the citizens of Stockbridge.

Policies

1. To encourage continued communication and cooperation between Stockbridge and its neighboring towns.
2. To continue participation in the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.
3. To exchange planning information and development data with neighboring communities.

XVI. Town Plan Implementation

Title 24, Chapter 117, §4382(7) requires a Town Plan to contain a “recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan”. While it is not required by law that communities implement any of the policies or recommendations in a municipal plan, it is important to recognize that in order to meet the vision of the Plan, it must be implemented wherever possible.

Implementation can be approached in multiple ways some regulatory and some non-regulatory, they include (but are not limited to) the following:

Regulatory	Non-Regulatory
<u>Zoning & Subdivision Bylaws</u>	<u>Design a Capital Budget & Program</u>
<u>Strengthening Town Plan language to clearly influence Act 250 proceedings (use of direct language, such as "shall")</u>	<u>Advisory Committees (i.e. Conservation Commissions or Energy Committees)</u>
<u>Official Map</u>	<u>Education/Outreach on important issues</u>
<u>Access Permits - Town Highways Only (Selectboard)</u>	<u>Purchase or acceptance of development rights</u>
<u>Flood Regulations & National Flood Insurance Program</u>	<u>Follow-up on recommendations for action in Plan</u>

A. Regulatory Implementation

Regulation of land use and development through rules adopted by the Town is one possible method of Plan implementation. Well recognized and utilized means include, but are not limited to, Zoning Bylaws and subdivision regulations. Examples of potential implementation tools include:

Zoning Bylaws

Zoning Bylaws are a commonly used method for guiding development at the local level. Zoning may regulate:

- Uses of land,
- The placement of buildings on lots,
- The relationship of buildings to open space, and
- The provision of parking, signs, landscaping and open space.

Stockbridge has Zoning Bylaws which establishes districts or zones that have a different set of uses, densities, and other standards for development. Zoning districts must be reasonably consistent with the Town Plan, and it is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to implement changes to the Zoning Bylaws that are proposed in this Plan. As an alternative to conventional methods, Stockbridge may opt to implement a set of measurable performance standards for specific uses as opposed to dividing the Town

into districts. This technique, referred to as "performance zoning", is designed to be more flexible and to recognize the specific conditions of each site proposed for development.

Subdivision Regulations

Stockbridge has had subdivision regulations since the 1970s. These regulations are administered by the Planning Commission. Subdivision regulations govern the division of parcels of land and the creation of roads and other public improvements. Furthermore, subdivision regulations can ensure that land development reflects land capability and that critical open spaces and resources are protected from poor design or layout. It is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to implement any changes to subdivision regulations that are proposed in this Plan.

Flood Hazard Bylaws

Under Vermont law [24 V.S.A., Section 4412], the Town of Stockbridge is able to regulate the use of land in a defined flood hazard area adjacent to streams and ponds. These bylaws have been established to ensure that design and construction activities within the limits of the 100 Year Flood Plain are designed so as to minimize potential for flood damage and to maintain use of agricultural land in flood-prone areas. As noted in the Natural Resources section of this Plan, property owners are eligible for federal flood insurance on buildings and structures at relatively low federally subsidized premium rates. However, such insurance cannot be obtained for properties in Stockbridge unless the Town has in effect a Flood Hazard Bylaw which, at present, Stockbridge has. Flooding and its impacts, particularly related to Tropical Storm Irene is discussed throughout this document. The strengthening of Stockbridge's Flood Hazard Bylaws has been recommended. It is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to implement any changes to Flood Hazard Bylaws that are proposed in this Plan

Act 250

Since 1970, Vermont has had in place a statewide review system for major developments and subdivisions of land. Exactly what constitutes a "development" or "subdivision" is subject to a rather large and involved set of definitions. However, generally, commercial and industrial projects on more than one acre of land; construction of 10 or more units of housing; subdivision of land into 6 or more lots; construction of a telecommunication tower over 20 feet in height; and development over 2,500 feet in elevation qualifies.

Prior to these activities being commenced, a permit must first be granted by the District Environmental Commission. In determining whether to grant a permit, the Commission shall evaluate the project in relation to ten specific review criteria.

These criteria relate to the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed project on the community and region. Parties to Act 250 proceedings include Stockbridge, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, the State, and the Regional Commission. One criterion that needs to be addressed is whether the project is in conformance with the Stockbridge Town Plan. If a project were determined not to be in conformance with the plan, the District Environmental Commission would have a basis to deny a permit. As such, Act 250 reviews can take into consideration protection of those types of resources considered important to the well-being of the community. Accordingly, it is in the interest of

the Town to evaluate Act 250 projects affecting Stockbridge and to offer testimony, as appropriate.

For a Town Plan to be given serious weight under Act 250, the Plan must contain specific and unambiguous language. If a community is serious that a policy be recognized by the District Environmental Commission during Act 250 review, it must use firm language such as “shall” or “must” instead of “should” or “could”. The Planning Commission has been selective about where strong language is used in policy throughout this document, as it is important to recognize that the Town Plan should have some flexibility. In instances where flexibility was not wanted, the Planning Commission wrote policy with appropriately strong language.

Highway Ordinances

Stockbridge has in effect a Highway Ordinance setting forth the standards and conditions for the maintenance, improvement, discontinuance, laying out and acceptance of Town highways. In addition, the ordinance includes provisions related to the reclassification of town highways (Classes 2, 3 and 4).

Lastly, Stockbridge does have, through its Selectboard, the ability to regulate private access to municipal roads through the issuance of "curb cut" permits to landowners. "Curb cuts" are places where a private driveway or road connects to a town highway. In granting a cut onto town roads, the Selectboard can give consideration to safety issues such as adequacy of sight distance and proximity to intersections as well as conformance with this Plan.

B. Non-Regulatory Implementation

Capital Budget Plan

The creation of a capital budget plan has been discussed in several chapters of this Plan. A capital budget plan is a financing approach that benefits the town greatly in the selection, prioritization, timing and costing of capital projects. Under the capital budget, a project is selected (e.g. bridge refurbishment), a funding source determined (e.g. general taxes, and general obligation bonds) and a priority year given for each activity. Collectively these capital projects make clear when public facilities will be placed to accommodate projected growth.

In addition, it is noted that under Vermont's Act 250 law, in granting a Land Use Permit for a major development or subdivision, the District Environmental Commission must first find that the project is in conformance with the town's capital budget. [See 10 V.S.A., Section 6086(a)(10).] Accordingly, this mechanism gives the town an indirect method of implementing its policies and priorities as set forth in the Plan.

Advisory Committees

State statute authorizes a community, by vote of the Selectboard, to create advisory committees. These committees can have differing roles, some provide advice to the Planning Commission or Zoning Board of Adjustment regarding development (for example, a historic review committee as part of a design review district), but more often advisory committees are created to focus on a specific topic in the Plan.

The most common advisory committees are the Conservation Commission and the Energy Committee. These groups (outlined in the Natural Resources and Energy chapters respectively) can assist the Selectboard and/or Planning Commission with the creation of policy, but they can also act as the primary source of outreach and education relating to their primary focus point. Stockbridge does not presently have any advisory committees. The Planning Commission has identified roles a Conservation Commission or Energy Committee could take if they were created by the Selectboard.

Coordination of Private Actions

Citizens and private enterprise have a vested interest in the well-being of Stockbridge. The actions of the private sector, such as the construction of homes and businesses, land conservation, and the use of land for recreation and agriculture, should relate positively to the goals and policies as set forth in this Plan.

It is in the interest of Stockbridge, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, to develop a cooperative relationship with private investment activities that may have a significant impact on the community values and policies set forth in the Plan. By working together in a cooperative venture early in the process of planning for a project, an adversarial relationship can be avoided. Contacts that should be maintained include the following:

- Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation
- Vermont Land Trust and Upper Valley Land Trust
- Twin State Housing Trust
- Owners of significant properties of high resource or development value, and
- Major employers in Stockbridge.

Conservation Activities

Conservation programs are an effective means of securing protection of valuable farm and forestland or significant natural resources. Techniques available involve voluntary direct work between non-profit conservation organizations and affected landowners such as donation of conservation easements, bargain sales of land, and limited development schemes.

The land trust movement has grown immensely during the past twenty years, particularly in Vermont. Land trusts offer viable means of bringing together the needs of property owners with the community interests. The Vermont Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy are particularly well-recognized organizations. Several organizations are also involved in water quality protection. It is the intent of this Plan to implement its policies through coordination and the involvement of these organizations and others dedicated to public purposes.

Vermont Community Development Program

Since the mid-1970s, the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) has made grant funds available to towns for community projects. Historically, the major focus of the program has been on housing rehabilitation and affordable housing projects benefiting low and moderate-income families, but the program also offers funding for municipal infrastructure investments.

Stockbridge should investigate the Vermont Community Development Program and its potential to assist the community in addressing its housing and infrastructure needs. The Regional Commission and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development are resources available to assist.

Vermont Local Roads

The Vermont Local Roads program offers technical assistance to communities which focuses on transportation infrastructure and maintenance.

C. Responsibility for Implementation

In order to ensure that the policies of this Plan are implemented, it is essential to identify what municipal panel, organization or citizen is most suited to act on them. Throughout this Plan, the Planning Commission has identified recommendations for action and indicated who should be responsible for them. Generally, responsibility for implementation of the Plan falls to either the Planning Commission (in the case of implementing changes to land use regulations) or the Selectboard (in the case of implementing municipal policy). However, advisory committees as well as other community organizations could also have responsibilities for implementation.

The Planning Commission should also keep track of progress made toward implementing the goals, policies and recommendations of this Plan. This information will be useful to identify areas where additional effort needs to be applied to achieve implementation. It can also be used to describe how successful the community has been at implementation in the next iteration of this Plan, and to guide future policy.

In order to track the progress of implementation, the Planning Commission has included a chart that identifies the policy or recommendation, the responsible party and the progress. See Appendix 1.