

# Growth Center Designation Program





# Growth Center Designation Program

## 6 designated growth centers

Designated growth centers encompass areas beyond the commercial center to shape the way a community develops over time. Once designated, infrastructure and building investments, both public and private, combined with a local framework of policies and regulations, ensure that 20 years of future development will enhance the vitality of the designated commercial center, while protecting farm and forest land outside the growth center.



- **Designated Growth Centers**  
6 designated growth centers:  
Bennington, Colchester, Hartford,  
Montpelier, St. Albans, and Williston



# Growth Center Designation Program

## Requirements

	DOWNTOWN VILLAGE CENTER	NEW TOWN CENTER	GROWTH CENTER	NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AREA	
<b>AUTHORITY</b>					
Statute Section (24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A)	2793	2793a	2793b	2793c	2793e
Date Established	1998	2002	2002	2006	2013
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS</b>					
Pre-application meeting with DHCD staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complete application submitted by the legislative body of a municipality*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Notice sent to RPC and RDC of intent to apply	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Notice of application published in local newspaper	✓				
Notice of application sent to adjoining towns and interested parties				✓	
Map of proposed designation**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Preliminary application required				✓	
Number of days to a designation decision after application received	45	45	45	90	45
Number of years the designation remains in effect (renewal required to maintain designation)	8	8	8	20	***
Interim review required (interval of years) ***	4		4	5	***
<b>LOCAL CAPACITY AND CHARACTERISTICS</b>					
Area listed or eligible for National Register of Historic Places	✓				
Community reinvestment agreement - signed by municipality & others	✓		✓		
Source of funding for necessary improvements	✓				
An organizational structure for long-term revitalization	✓				
Meet requirements for sewage and water systems	✓		✓	✓	✓
Existing or planned multi-modal transport options including transit			✓	✓	
Existing or planned mix of uses				✓	
Existing or planned civic and public buildings			✓		
Existing or planned public spaces				✓	
Existing or planned pedestrian friendly features				✓	✓
Right to use household energy conserving devices					✓
<b>PLANNING STATUS</b>					
Confirmed Planning Process (Municipal Plan approved by RPC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Plan addresses intention to apply for designation and support for goals****	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20 year plan for growth with local and regional growth projections				✓	
Adopted Zoning and Subdivision Regulations				✓	✓
Bylaw provisions that support the goals of designation	✓		✓	✓	✓
Non-regulatory programs that support the designation				✓	
Capital budget and program for public infrastructure	✓		✓	✓	
Municipal center plan			✓		
Concept plan showing vision for the area				✓	
Official Map (optional for Growth Centers)			✓	✓	
Maps showing resources and development constraints				✓	✓
Maps showing existing and planned public facilities				✓	
Justification for designation location and boundaries			✓	✓	✓
Plan for mixed income housing			✓		
Impacts on natural resources avoided				✓	✓
Compatibility with cultural and historic resources				✓	
Regional Planning Commission (RPC) description of regional context				✓	
RPC confirms that designation is in conformance with regional plan				✓	

\* For Neighborhoods, landowners may apply directly. \*\* Growth Center map requirements differ from others.

\*\*\* Neighborhood review and renewal is concurrent with the underlying designation. \*\*\*\* Growth Center plan requirements differ from others.

## Benefits

	DOWNTOWN VILLAGE CENTER	NEW TOWN CENTER	GROWTH CENTER	NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AREA	
<b>AUTHORITY</b>					
Statute Section (24 V.S.A. Chapter 76A)	2793	2793a	2793b	2793c	2793e
Date Established	1998	2002	2002	2006	2013
<b>PURPOSE</b>					
Historic Preservation*		✓		✓	✓
Economic Revitalization*	✓	✓		✓	✓
Smart Growth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>BENEFITS</b>					
10% State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit	✓	✓			
25% Façade Improvement Tax Credit	✓	✓			
50% Code Improvement Tax Credit	✓	✓			
50% Technology Tax Credits	✓	✓			
Downtown Transportation Fund	✓				
Sprinkler System Rebate	✓				
Special Assessment District	✓	✓	✓		
Reallocation of Sales Tax on Construction Materials	✓				
Traffic Calming Options	✓				
Signage Options	✓				
No appeal of decision on character of neighborhood for housing	✓			✓	✓
Act 250 Threshold and Exemption for "Priority Housing Projects"	✓		✓	✓	✓
Act 250 Limited Review & Criteria - "Downtown Findings" Act	✓				
250 Findings and Conclusions for Growth Centers			✓		
Act 250 Master Plan Permit Application			✓		
Act 250 Mitigation for Loss of Primary Agricultural Soils** Act	✓		✓	✓	✓
250 fee reduction					✓
Act 250 Existing Settlement under criterion 9(L)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption from land gains tax					✓
ANR Wastewater fee capped at \$50/application					✓
<b>PRIORITY CONSIDERATION***</b>					
All State Agencies and Funding Programs - first priority Specific	✓	✓			
State Agencies and Funding Programs:					
Municipal Planning Grants	✓	✓		✓	✓
Bike/Ped and Transportation Alternatives Grants	✓	✓		✓	✓
Property Assessment Fund (Contaminated Sites / Brownfields)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Community Development Block Grants	✓	✓		✓	✓
ANR Wastewater funding	✓	✓		✓	✓
State affordable housing funds	✓	✓		✓	✓
Locating State Buildings	✓	✓	✓	✓	

\*May not apply to all growth centers.

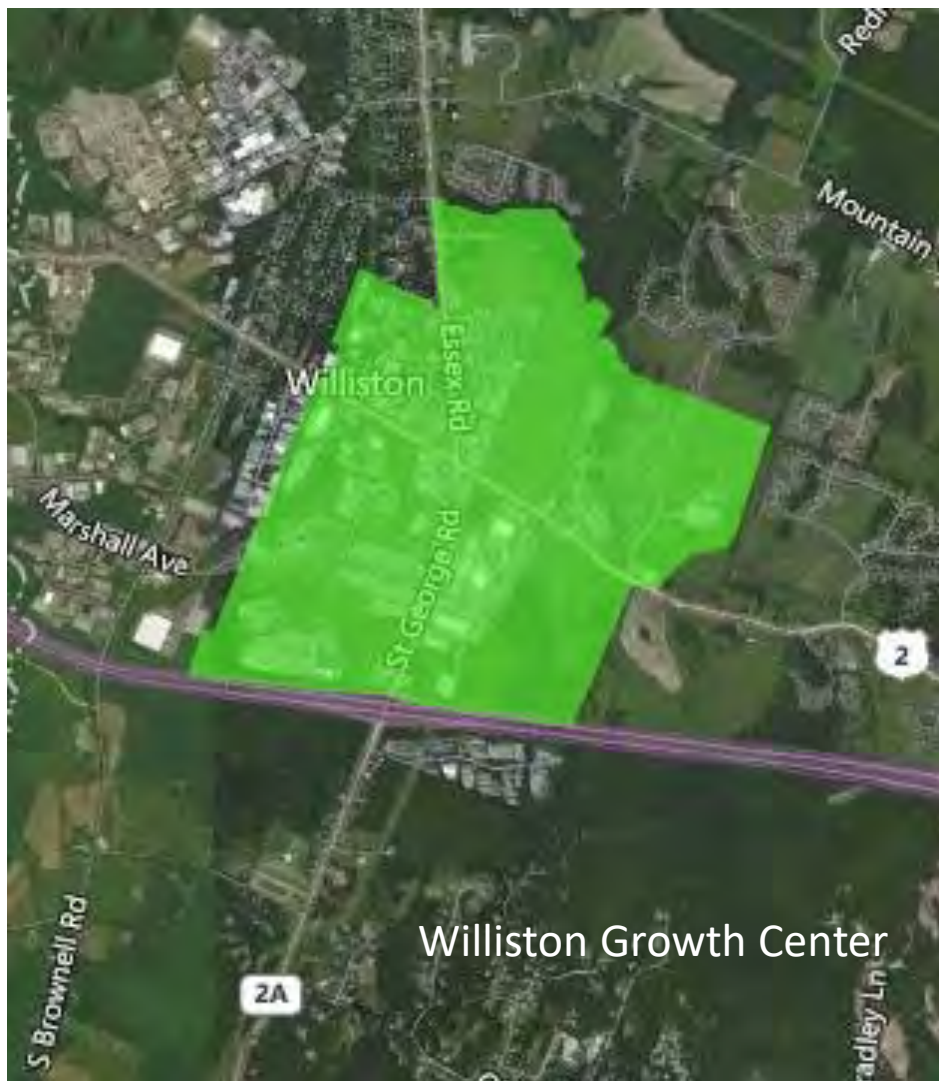
\*\*Agricultural soil mitigation benefits apply to designated neighborhood development areas only when they are associated with a designated downtown and applies only to new town centers created before 1/1/14.

\*\*\*Statute establishes that designated downtowns and village centers should have greater priority for state funding and programs than new town centers and growth centers. (24 V.S.A. §2790(d) and 24 V.S.A. §2793c(j)(2)(A))



# Growth Center Designation Program

20-year Designation with 5-year Reviews



## Second Round of Five-Year Reviews

- Williston – 2017**
- Bennington – 2018**
- Colchester – 2019**
- Montpelier – 2019**
- Hartford – 2020**
- St. Albans - 2020**

# Williston Growth Center

Compliance with Approval Conditions

## 2007 Original Approval – Seven conditions imposed

## 2012 Five-Year Review – Four conditions met

Board reviewed compliance with the original approval conditions and deemed four to be satisfied, leaving three conditions for continued review in 2017

## 2017 Ten-Year Review – Three conditions outstanding

- Ongoing sewage treatment capacity updates
- Ongoing traffic & transportation improvement updates

 Comprehensive Plan Archaeological Resources

# Williston Growth Center

Compliance with Approval Conditions

## Archeological Resources

**2007 Original Condition #7:** *Williston shall develop a policy, and incorporate it into their Town Plan, calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources prior to the first five-year review of its growth center designation by the Expanded Board.*

**2012 Board Instruction:** *In order to allow the up-coming work on the natural resources management plan to be incorporated into the next comprehensive plan, ...extend compliance with this condition to the next 5-year review in 2017*

### **2017 Archeological Resources Summary:**

- The Comprehensive Plan was readopted in 2017 but it did not address archeological resources and there was minimal mention in the five-year report
- Town provided a follow-up letter dated 11/3/17 indicating intent to address archeological resources in the Unified Development Bylaw in 2018
- Town met with the SHPO and historic preservation staff to discuss strategies for proactively addressing archeological resources and agreed to amend the Comprehensive Plan accordingly in one year.

# Williston Growth Center

Compliance with Approval Conditions

## Archeological Resources

### 2017 Board Decision:

*The town shall provide updates addressing conditions #2 (sewage treatment capacity) and #6 (route 2A corridor traffic) and shall amend the Comprehensive Plan to address archaeological resources in keeping with condition #7 by submitting the adopted language to DHCD by November 30, 2108.*

# Williston Growth Center

Compliance with Approval Conditions

## **Complete Submission. 11/30/18 deadline met.**

- Cover Letter from Planning Director, Matt Boulanger
- Village Master Plan
- Chapter 13 of adopted Municipal Plan on Natural and Cultural Resources



# Williston Growth Center

## Compliance with Approval Conditions

### Summary of Changes

- Adoption of Village Master Plan as appendix to the Municipal Plan
- Chapter 13 renamed “Natural and Cultural Resources”, formerly “Open Space”.
- 13.4.1: All development/planning projects should be evaluated to determine the potential for impacting archaeological resources and whether there is a need for preservation action prior to site development.
- 13.4.2: Utilize the assistance of the VT Division for Historic Preservation in evaluating potential impacts to archaeological resources.
- 13.4.3: Consider the appointment of an archaeologist to the Conservation Commission
- 13.4.4: Leverage outside funding sources to conduct archaeological surveys or to protect archaeological resources.
- 13.4.5: Use the archaeological sensitivity map as a focus for future archaeological surveys.

# Williston Growth Center

Discussion/Questions and Motion

## Staff Recommendation/Proposed Motion

**Board determines that Williston has developed a Town Plan policy calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources, satisfying condition 7 of the original Growth Center designation approval.**



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November 30, 2018

Jacob Hemmerick | Planning Policy Manager  
 Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development | Community Planning &  
 Revitalization  
 1 National Life Drive, Davis Bldg, 6th Floor | Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

Dear Jacob,

I am writing to you to provide you and the Downtown Board with some additional information about the town's plans for the identification and protection of archeological resources within the town. As you know, there was a condition of approval as part of the Growth Center Designation for this to be completed by the ten-year review by the Downtown Board. While this item was not accomplished in time for the ten-year review, the Board approved a renewal of the Growth Center last year with a requirement that the town adopt comprehensive language regarding the protection of archeological resources by November 30, 2018.


I am pleased to inform you that on November 5, 2018, the Williston Selectboard adopted revisions to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan* that include a significant reworking of Chapter 13, which was previously titled *Open Space* and is now titled "*Natural and Cultural Resources*." This change of title reflects additions made to the chapter identifying actions the town will take to protect archeological resources.

Among these changes are item 13.4.1, directing the town to add archaeological resources maps to the *Plan* and *Unified Development Bylaw* and to consider such resources as part of local development review, much the way that review currently encompasses viewsheds, wildlife habitat, steep slopes, and other resources the town works to protect. I have excerpted this language in an attachment to this letter.

I have also excerpted other portions of the new section 13.4 that discuss archaeological resources and address proactive ways the town will protect archaeological resources: by pursuing partnerships with the state Division of Historic Preservation, by pursuing funding opportunities to map sensitive areas, by appointing an archaeologist to the town's Conservation Commission, and by surveying sensitive areas once they have been mapped.

Please let me know if you will need any additional information for the Downtown Board review of Williston's Growth Center Designation prior to the board's November 17, 2017 meeting.

Very truly yours,

  
 Matt Boulanger, AICP  
 Director of Planning and Zoning

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 ■  
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 ■  
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#### **13.4 Cultural Resources – The town will strive to protect and maintain significant archaeological and historic resources.**

This section primarily addresses the protection of archaeological resources. The protection of historic resources is addressed in Chapter 3 - Land Use and Chapter 4 - Community Design.

Williston has a long and rich history of human settlement far predating the last several centuries of European influence. Though the clues are not so easily found and interpreted as those of European settlement, the Williston landscape abounds with evidence of its prehistoric past. To date, almost 100 archeological sites have been documented in Williston spanning the time period from about 9500BC-1600AD.

In Williston, as in every town, locating archaeological sites is a basic and necessary activity if these resources are to be preserved, interpreted and considered in town planning. In 1990 the Town of Williston began the process of identifying, inventorying and planning for the preservation of the Town's cultural resources, when it received a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP). The CLG grant allowed the town to develop a preliminary overview of archaeological resources in town, consisting of the mapping of known sites and the development of an archaeological sensitivity map based on environmental parameters. Through this grant, 65 Native American, 92 European American and 5 unspecified archaeological sites were documented. The archaeological sensitivity map provided a predictive model of areas in Williston expected to contain more Native American sites. As more information has been gathered from around the region and through the development of more sophisticated modeling tools, this now statewide model continues to be updated and refined by the VDHP.

This map is used to provide notice to a developer that certain areas may contain archaeological sites, and may require further investigation. Areas mapped as highly sensitive have typically been established as not-to-be-disturbed buffer zones or required to conduct archaeological surveys under Act 250 regulations. The Town of Williston is currently working on strategies to incorporate protection of these cultural resources into the Town Bylaws, in much the same way we have addressed protection of other resources such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, open space and agricultural lands.

Identifying and recording archaeological sites is a lengthy and ongoing process. Since 1990, many additional sites have been identified in Williston. The concentration of known Native American sites north of Interstate 89 is primarily the result of archaeological investigations conducted as part of federal and state environmental review required for development activities. There is an abundance of identified sites in areas where surveys have been done,

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and an absence of sites in areas where surveys have been lacking. Therefore, the absence of sites is likely a result of not having looked in those areas, rather than an actual lack of sites.

Many of the prehistoric sites are clustered near the Allen Brook, for it not only provided water for drinking, but the rich floodplain soils also harbored prolific edible plants such as butternuts, ostrich ferns (fiddleheads), and wild leeks. The Allen Brook would have been used for transportation both on foot and by boat as well. Southern-facing rises on the landscape were particularly attractive for settlements, as these provided good views and a drier, slightly warmer microclimate. The Mahan site is one example. It is one of the largest Paleoindian sites in the Northeast, dating to about 10,500 years ago, and containing over 5,000 stone artifacts including projectile points, scrapers, knives, a drill, and many stone flakes (Thomas 2001). This site is interpreted as a summertime base camp occupied for an extended period by 25-40 people, perhaps representing a staging area for the early explorations that populated the region.

The Mahan site gives us a glimpse of the earliest cultures in Williston, but prehistoric cultures changed over the millennia as their environment continued to change and as new technologies, such as the bow and arrow, pottery and agriculture, were developed. The archeological sites in Williston document these changing technologies and cultures and suggest a nearly continuous human occupation from the earliest inhabitants of Vermont to the time of European settlement.

To ensure the protection of these and other significant sites, the following policies have been adopted.

**13.4.1 All development/planning projects should be evaluated to determine the potential for impacting archaeological resources and whether there is a need for preservation action prior to site development.** All development projects under Act 250 Jurisdiction are reviewed by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation (VDHP) for potential impacts to archaeological resources, and are required to avoid or mitigate any impacts. For development not covered by Act 250, the town should consider the inclusion of archaeological resources as an additional Conservation Area for which impacts are considered during site plan review. The town should also consider including the following standards in the bylaw:

- New construction should be designed to avoid known archaeological sites or at least to minimize impacts on them.
- Limit soil disturbance to the minimum necessary on sites where testing for potential archaeological sites has not been done.
- Preserve known archaeological sites by capping with clean fill and sealing with asphalt or turf.

**13.4.2 Utilize the assistance of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation in evaluating potential impacts to archaeological resources.** The VDHP can assist in examining maps and other documents, as well as viewing the site itself, to decide if a

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project could have an impact on visible ruins or buried deposits important to Williston's and Vermont's history. An archaeological consultant may need to be hired to conduct research, survey, and excavation.

**13.4.3 Consider the appointment of an archaeologist to the Conservation Commission** to assist in developing appropriate standards of protection and in the review of a proposed development's impacts on archaeological resources.

**13.4.4 Leverage outside funding sources to conduct archaeological surveys or to protect archaeological resources.** Williston is a Certified Local Government (CLG) and as such is eligible for grant funding to conduct historic research and documentation related to buildings and archaeology. Williston should use this funding where appropriate.

**13.4.5 Use the archaeological sensitivity map as a focus for future archaeological surveys,** through grants or donations, especially in under surveyed areas of town.

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**Town of Williston Board determines that Williston has developed a Town Plan policy calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources, satisfying condition 7 of the original Growth Center designation approval.**

## **CHAPTER 13 – NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Maintaining significant natural and cultural resources, including open space and scenic, working landscapes are among Williston’s most important goals for the future. The vision statement presented in Chapter 2 states that the town will:

- sustain rural landscapes by requiring an open space pattern for subdivisions, conserving lands identified as high priority through acquisitions or easements, and supporting continued stewardship of working lands ; and
- use regulatory and non-regulatory tools, including funding for the acquisition of development rights or land to protect water quality, wildlife habitat including forest blocks and habitat connectors, scenic views, and other natural and cultural resources.

This chapter expands on the vision statement in Chapter 2 by presenting a long-range strategy for preserving and protecting Williston’s conservation areas, scenic viewsheds, working landscapes, and cultural resources:

**13.1 Conservation Areas** protect important natural resources, including wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat, from incompatible development. Public access is limited.

**13.2 Scenic Viewsheds** are identified through a detailed visual assessment. They include open fields and meadows, and wooded slopes and ridgelines.

**13.3 Working Landscapes** include farms and other lands that are managed for the production of agricultural, forest, and earth products. They also include lands used for outdoor recreation, such as golf courses or fee-based trail systems. In some cases public access is not necessary, and may be undesirable.

**13.4 Cultural Resources** include historic and archaeological sites that document the town’s human history. This section focuses on archaeological resources, while historic resources are addressed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The goals and objectives provided in this chapter account for the changes in land use and development patterns that have taken place since Williston adopted its first Open Space Plan in 1989. In 2005, the Open Space Plan was broadened and became Appendix C to the *2006 Comprehensive Plan*. In 2010, the town decided that Williston’s Open Space Plan is in no way ancillary to the way that Williston is managed, Appendix C was divided into two chapters in this plan: Chapter 8 - Recreation & Parks and Chapter 12 - Natural and Cultural Resources, and incorporated into the main body of this Plan.

### **From Foothills to the Valley Floor: Williston’s Landscape**

From east to west Williston touches the foothills of the Green Mountains and includes the lowlands that surround Lake Champlain (Map 1). Encompassing over 30 square miles along the southern banks of the Winooski River, the town of Williston has a unique physical setting whose roots trace back over millennia

to ancient river deltas in Glacial Lake Vermont and to the great tectonic forces of geology that uplifted the Green Mountains and shaped the very bedrock the town stands on.

Such ancient stories shape the lives of animals, plants and humans to create the patterns we see on the landscape today. From moist floodplain forests and wetlands to dry craggy ridgelines, Williston hosts diverse plant communities that include rare species and telling signs of past human land use. While not always noticed, Williston is home to abundant wildlife including such dramatic creatures as bobcats, fishers, black bears and moose as well as a rich springtime chorus of amphibians.

Humans have been part of the Williston landscape for over 10,000 years leaving a rich archeological heritage with much yet to be discovered on the land. As the more than 9,000 residents of Williston look to the future they can celebrate their ongoing part in the rich and exciting landscape of stories around them. Geological events of millennia past, which explain everything from why there is sand mining in north Williston to why it is difficult to locate a good site for wastewater disposal south of I-89, set the stage for the town's development and this plan.

Although forests cover 74% of the state today, Vermont wasn't always the "Green Mountain" state. At the time of European settlement, forests covered almost all of Vermont. During the 18th century, Vermont's and Williston's landscape changed dramatically. The forests were rapidly cleared for agriculture. Clearing reached its peak in the mid to late 1800s and reduced forest cover to about 35% of the state. Over the last century, westward expansion, the decline of the sheep industry, and reduced timber harvesting have contributed to the steady regrowth of Vermont's forests. Today's forests are the result of a major reforestation.

Forests provide Vermonters with enormous benefits and a range of critical goods and services. A thriving forest economy, functioning natural systems, and Vermont's quality of life rely on maintaining healthy forests across our landscape. Forest benefits include water supply and water quality protection, flood control and protection, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, clean air, carbon sequestration, outdoor recreation, and scenic beauty. Forests also provide cultural, spiritual, and intellectual enrichment benefits. All of these benefits are known as ecosystem services because of the value they provide. Without forests, these services would need to be replaced and at a great expense.

At present, reforestation is slowing as commercial and residential development increases. For the first time in a century, Vermont is experiencing an overall loss of forest cover. While it is hard to pin down the exact amount of acreage, a US Forest Service report indicates Vermont may have lost up to 69,000 acres of forest land from 2010 to 2015.

The main cause of this loss is scattered, incremental residential development. Forest fragmentation results when development physically breaks up continuous forest and often happens during low-density, uncoordinated residential development. This pattern of development compromises many of the ecological and economic benefits of forests, including native fish and wildlife habitat, forest health, water quality, outdoor recreation, and forest management. Much of this type of development never triggers Act 250 review.

In recent times, Williston's landscape has experienced rapid, dramatic change. Residential, commercial and industrial development has not only resulted in forest fragmentation and loss of forest cover; Williston has also lost a sizeable area of productive farmland to development. Map 16 shows the overall extent of productive agricultural soils in Williston and the farms that were evaluated for long term agricultural viability using the town's Land Evaluation, Site Assessment (LESA) system in 1988. At that time (when some farmland had already been lost to development), there were about 9,700 acres of active or potential farmland in Williston. Roughly 2,600 more acres of farmland have been developed or taken out of



production since 1988. Most of the remaining active farmland is located along the Winooski River in the Floodplain and Agricultural/Rural Residential zoning districts.

The remainder of this chapter outlines long-range strategies for preserving and protecting Williston's conservation areas, scenic viewsheds, working landscapes, and cultural resources.

**13.1 - Conservation Areas - The Town of Williston will protect conservation areas that provide significant benefits for soil conservation, water quality, groundwater recharge, and biological diversity.**

There are seven distinct types of Conservation Areas in Williston:

- 1) significant wildlife habitat areas, including large meadows, forest blocks and habitat connectors;
- 2) areas containing uncommon, rare, threatened, or endangered species;
- 3) unique natural communities;
- 4) farmlands of local importance;
- 5) scenic viewsheds;
- 6) special flood hazard areas; and
- 7) streams, wetlands, lakes and ponds.

The Williston Development Bylaw Chapter 27 *Conservation Areas* defines these areas in detail.

Incompatible development would impair the ecological functions of these areas and reduce the benefits they naturally provide to humans and wildlife. For example, wetlands and vegetated stream buffers protect water quality and healthy aquatic habitat by filtering stormwater runoff and slowing downstream flooding. Conservation of forested uplands will reduce soil erosion, attenuate flooding and fluvial erosion, and provide valuable wildlife habitat. Limited recreation (hiking, cross-country skiing, birding), environmental education, and scientific research are acceptable in conservation areas as long as they are compatible with the goal of protecting the physical features, ecological functions, and biodiversity they provide.

**13.1.1 Maintain Existing Conservation Areas.** Williston has protected conservation areas through a mix of land acquisition, the purchase of development rights (PDR), the transfer of development rights (TDR), the designation of open space within planned developments, and its land use bylaws. Map 18 shows the location of the existing protected areas. Conservation properties that are owned by the town or the Lake Iroquois Recreational District include:

- Mud Pond and a majority of the surrounding bog and wetlands within the upper reach of Allen Brook (158 acres);
- approximately half of the headwater wetlands north of Lake Iroquois (about 53 acres), which are also part of the Champlain Water District's source water protection area (see Section 11.5 of this plan);
- approximately half of the forested slopes of Brownell Mountain (107 acres), which will also function as a country park, as described in Chapter 9 - Recreation and Parks;
- the former Hill property, located along the Sucker Brook off Route 2A (20 acres), which also functions as a country park, as described in Chapter 9 - Recreation and Parks;
- the 14-acre red maple/blueberry swamp on Marshall Avenue that the town acquired when it extended Marshall Avenue, along with adjoining areas of the O'Brien Brothers development on which use is restricted due to the presence of wetlands;
- the forested slopes of the former Burnett property south of I-89 (91 acres); and

- the former Senecal property located between the Chatham Woods development and the town-owned Allen Brook Nature Trail property (14 acres).

Conservation areas that have been protected by the purchase of development rights include 70 acres on the northern part of Gramma Ridge, which is located southwest of the Five Tree Hill overlook and portions of the conserved farms and woodlots listed in section 12.3 below. Numerous acres of streams and wetland buffers have been protected as a result of the town’s development review process.

**13.1.2 Continue to Protect Conservation Areas in Development Review.** Development of conservation areas is subject to the town’s bylaws, including the stormwater management and watershed health regulations that apply throughout Williston and the specific requirements of the zoning districts. Depending on their location and scale, projects that include conservation areas may be asked to set at least some portion of those areas aside as open space. This is required for most developments in the ARZD (see Policy 3.2.1) and encouraged in the RZD (see Policies 3.5 and 5.1.4).

Table 13.1: Residential Developments with Designated Open Space

Subdivision name	Zoning District	Open Space (acres)
Brownell	ARZD	15
Gardner	ARZD	91
Tangalos	ARZD	16
Hayes	ARZD	24
Reardon, Beers and Connelly	ARZD	34
Goldman	ARZD	10
Miller	ARZD	32
Brownell	ARZD	10
New England Theological Seminary	ARZD	42
River Hill Farm	ARZD	111
<b>TOTAL ARZD</b>		<b>384</b>
Wood Lily	RZD	14
Brennan Woods	RZD	101
Bittersweet Village	RZD	14
Pinecrest Village	RZD	36
Pleasant Acres	RZD	10
Old Stage Estates	RZD	46
Southridge	RZD	79
Coyote Run	RZD	14
Chelsea Commons	TCZD	2
Finney Crossing	TCZD	66
The Commons	VZD	44
<b>TOTAL OTHER ZONING DISTRICTS</b>		<b>433</b>
<b>TOTAL OPEN SPACE</b>		<b>818</b>

Approximately 818 acres of open space have been protected through Williston’s development review requirements. As summarized in Table 13.1 above, 384 acres of open space has been protected by Williston’s 75% open space requirement in the Agriculture/Rural Zoning District (ARZD) and an additional 433 acres of open space has been protected in all other zoning districts.

**13.1.3 Develop Conservation Area Management Plans.** The Conservation Commission should continue to develop and update management plans for the conservation areas owned by the town, as it does for the country parks. The commission should also work with the landowners and the Vermont Land Trust in developing management plans for the conservation areas that are under easement. These plans should emphasize the maintenance of water quality, biodiversity, and other conservation values. Currently there are management plans for Mud Pond, Five Tree Hill and Sucker Brook Hollow Country Parks, and for the former Lyon property The Conservation Commission is currently developing a management plan for Brownell Mountain and updating the Mud Pond Country Park management plan.

**13.1.4 Protect Significant Wetland and Riparian Conservation Areas.** The town has identified several important wetland and riparian conservation areas including:

- the Griswold Farm and adjacent wetlands and riparian forests, located off River Cove Road at the confluence of the Muddy Brook, Allen Brook, and Winooski River;
- the floodplain forests, tributary confluences, and wetlands along the Winooski River;
- several wetlands south of I-89, including the glacial spillway, located south of Old Creamery Road; the remainder of the wetlands north of Lake Iroquois; and the remainder of the wetlands and forested uplands surrounding Mud Pond;
- the Allen Brook tributaries, wetlands, and riparian areas;
- the remaining hemlock woodlands and wetlands, located south of Mountain View Road;
- the remaining wetlands in the Industrial Zoning District, specifically including those along Marshall Avenue and south of the intersection of Industrial Avenue and Rt. 2; and
- Johnson Falls off Governor Chittenden Road.

Wetlands and riparian corridors are partially protected from incompatible development by the town's stormwater management and watershed health regulations, the Special Flood Hazard Area (in some cases), and other state and federal regulations. As part of a multi-year streambank restoration project, the town acquired six conservation easements totaling 26 acres along the Allen Brook. Permanent protection via conservation easements or acquisitions should continue to be pursued as funding opportunities allow.

**The Benefits of Protecting River Corridors.** Vegetated buffers along the banks of rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands help prevent water pollution, attenuate floods, protect development from stream bank erosion, and provide important wildlife habitat. Williston's Watershed Protection regulations require a 150-foot buffer adjacent to major streams (Allen Brook, Sucker Brook, Muddy Brook), the Winooski River, and major ponds and wetlands, and a 50-foot buffer along tributary streams. More information on river corridors is available in some of the publications available on-line at [http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/cfm/ref/Ref\\_Rivers.cfm](http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/cfm/ref/Ref_Rivers.cfm).

**13.1.5 Protect Significant Upland Conservation Areas.** Upland conservation areas are partially protected from incompatible development by the town's regulations; nonetheless uplands are more likely to be developed than wetlands or riparian corridors and should have priority in Williston's land conservation efforts. Upland conservation areas include:

- the remaining undeveloped lands on Brownell Mountain, where conservation and trail easements or strategic acquisitions would complement the town's existing conservation area/country park;

- the unprotected portion of Gramma Ridge, north of Butternut Road, where the town has already obtained one easement; and
- the remainder of the Bur Oaks knoll (the town already owns the water tank) east of Maple Tree Place. This conservation area was set aside to protect the only regional stand of bur oaks.

This list may be expanded as the town’s conservation and planning commissions identify other parcels that have significant conservation value.

**13.1.6 Protect Significant Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas.** Despite past development patterns that have fragmented wildlife habitats in Williston and surrounding communities, significant areas of habitat remain that are essential for a variety of plant and animal species, that contribute to local biological diversity and ecological integrity, and that support traditional activities such as hunting and fishing. Maintaining connectivity through the protection of wildlife habitat and travel corridors is critical to the long-term survival of several wildlife species.

Utilizing a Lake Champlain Basin Grant, several objectives stated in the 2011-2016 Williston Comprehensive Plan were accomplished, including 1) Identification of significant wildlife habitat and travel corridors, 2) Development of a mechanism to protect significant wildlife habitat, and 3) Development of standards to protect significant wildlife habitat in development review. As the first step, several areas characterized as significant habitat were identified in *An Assessment of Wildlife Habitat in Williston, VT, 2005*. This University of Vermont study, copies of which are available from Williston Planning, identifies seven wildlife habitat “units” – blocks of land characterized by relatively low development densities - that comprise functional habitat for many identified wildlife species.

A follow-up study, *An Assessment of Wildlife Habitat in Williston: Expanded Land Cover Mapping and Corridor Modeling*, was completed in 2011. This assessment completed the land-cover mapping of the entire town; revised the potential habitat maps for the previously-used set of representative species; and 3) identified possible wildlife migration corridors or landscape connections between important habitat blocks.

A clear and unambiguous definition of significant wildlife habitat was developed based on the data from the studies. The definition of significant wildlife habitat and associated map was incorporated in the town’s *Unified Development Bylaw* together with appropriate habitat protection standards as an overlay district. These standards facilitate the protection of areas characterized as significant wildlife habitat (i.e., located within one of the defined wildlife areas, or encompassing an identified wildlife travel corridor or other identifiable significant habitat feature).

The town should continue to implement these standards. For these areas to retain their ecological functions for wildlife, it is important that future development be carefully located and designed to avoid habitat fragmentation and adverse impacts (i.e., impacts that would demonstrably reduce the ecological function of habitat on a particular parcel).

**13.1.7 Monitor and Assess the Significant Wildlife Habitat Area Modeled Data for its Continued Relevance.** The town will periodically review the modeled data on which the significant wildlife habitat area is based. This can be accomplished through field surveys by town staff, hired consultants and/or trained citizen science volunteers. The resulting data will be used to further refine the significant wildlife habitat area maps.

Now that the habitat protection standards have been in place for a few years, there is an opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness and incorporate information from the Habitat Disturbance Assessments (HDA) conducted under the new standards. Since 2014, 27 development applications have been

reviewed for impacts to the Significant Wildlife Habitat Area (SWHA), including 17 residential developments, 5 commercial developments, 2 Boundary Line Adjustments, 2 conservation subdivisions, and 1 municipal project. Fifteen of these projects were required to submit an HDA in order to demonstrate a finding of no adverse impact to the SWHA. None of the HDAs submitted to date have resulted in the denial of a permit or major alterations to a project. Often, however, an HDA's recommendations have been incorporated into the conditions of approval, such as retaining hedgerows and soft edges between fields and forests, or following a mowing schedule for open fields that supports nesting grassland birds. The Town should continue to document the HDA findings and resulting effects on habitat protection, and if necessary, modify the standards in the Williston Development Bylaw Chapter 27 to more effectively achieve its intended goals.

***13.1.8 Further refine the Significant Wildlife Habitat Area by identifying significant forest blocks and habitat connectors; develop regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms to reduce forest fragmentation, enhance forest health, and support essential ecological functions.*** When the SWHA was developed in 2010/2011, the town utilized an all-inclusive and non-discriminatory approach, which modeled habitat for several species and aggregated all the different habitat types together in a single layer without discrimination, in a well-intentioned attempt to protect as much habitat as possible. Since then, regional and statewide research has highlighted the importance of a subset of natural resources – **forests** – to the maintenance of overall ecological health and function; and has also documented the increasing threat to forests from incremental development and the lack of protections under state law. Forests and wildlife ranges extend beyond parcel and political boundaries, so planners must consider how state, regional, and local actions and decisions affect these important resources and promote their longevity and productivity.

In recognition of these facts, in January 2018 Vermont adopted Act 171, which encourages and allows municipalities to address protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors. Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) has developed guidance for municipalities looking to implement Act 171. The Town should utilize this guidance to identify and prioritize significant forest blocks and habitat connectors within the SWHA, and to develop regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms to reduce forest fragmentation, enhance forest health, and support essential ecological functions.

***13.1.9 Utilize Environmental Reserve Funds and Other Non-Regulatory Strategies to Protect Conservation Areas.*** Because conservation areas are especially sensitive to impacts from not only development but also land management techniques (e.g., clearing) that are not easily covered by development regulations, the town should employ appropriate non-regulatory strategies in addition to regulatory standards to protect significant wildlife habitat and other conservation areas. In 2013 the Town used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and scoring criteria to develop a prioritization matrix to identify and prioritize key areas for long-term protection through the use of the town's Environmental Reserve Fund. Total parcel scores were used to classify parcels as high, medium or low priority. This prioritization matrix serves as an important tool to guide decisions about funding future conservation easements or land acquisitions, and should be updated periodically. Other non-regulatory strategies should be promoted, such as encouraging landowner involvement in the wetlands reserve program, habitat improvement programs, and conservation easements and/or current use if applicable. The town will continue to fund its Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, and to work with other organizations including the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to leverage funds. While many landowners are uncomfortable with permanent restrictions on their rights, the town should always be ready to assist those who are willing to commit to conservation.

**13.1.10 Promote Private Stewardship of Conservation Areas.** Listing private lands as a conservation area will not affect their continued use for farming, forest management, or fee-based recreation. In fact, the town supports private stewardship and encourages sound land management practices (for example, maintaining a forest structure – including snags, downed trees, and understory vegetation – that supports diverse wildlife). The town is also proactive in educating landowners about the current regulations designed to protect conservation areas, such as watershed protection buffer requirements, and encourages them to take steps that bring them closer to compliance with all applicable laws.

**13.1.11 Ensure Compliance With Conditions of Approval.** In many cases, conditions of approval for new developments include required actions that are designed to protect Williston’s natural resources. For example, as a condition of approval, a Class III wetland may require a 25-foot buffer and permanent demarcation on the ground, such as a fence or a tree line, to memorialize its location. The town will work to ensure ongoing compliance with conditions of approval. Compliance with pre-existing conditions of approval is required prior to issuing any new permits. When a property changes ownership, the buyer usually requests verification that no outstanding zoning violations exist on the seller’s property.

**13.1.12 Improve the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program to Better Protect Open Space Resources.** Transferring the development rights from one piece of land to another can be an effective tool for preserving important agricultural lands and other environmentally sensitive landscapes. The town has used this mechanism to a limited degree but the process for doing this has been defined only in outline form. The town should consider developing a more robust set of standards for transferring development rights from land areas that the town wishes to preserve to those portions of town where the town wishes to encourage development, such as the Growth Center. Such standards might include the establishment of a “Land Bank,” where the town purchases development rights, “banks” those rights and then later sells them to developers who wish to increase the density of their projects.

## **13.2 - Scenic Viewsheds - The town will protect and maintain the visual character that defines Williston, including open fields and meadows, wooded slopes and ridgelines, and scenic viewpoints.**

When driving, bicycling, or hiking through Williston - especially the rural areas - one enjoys views of rolling fields framed by a background of wooded slopes, nearby ridgelines, and distant mountains. These views are central to the sense of place the residents of Williston treasure. To help maintain that sense of place, the town undertook a detailed assessment that systematically evaluated the visual character and quality of the local landscape in 1989. The results of that analysis are provided on Map 19. The accompanying report is available from the town planning office. Briefly, Williston’s visual character is created by open fields and meadows, wooded hillsides, and ridgelines. These features, and the contrast between them, create a visually satisfying mosaic that is especially appealing where it includes long views to dramatic landforms, such as Camel’s Hump or Mt. Mansfield.

Some of the most important visual resources illustrated on Map 19 are listed below. This list does not include scenic farmlands, which are listed separately in section 13.3 below. Note the substantial overlap with other open space types. Scenic viewsheds that are at least partially protected from incompatible development include:

- the Brennan field, south of Mountain View Road, part of which was designated as open space when the Brennan Woods Subdivision was approved;

- the Martel Hill, located north of Mountain View Road, a portion of which was set aside as open space when a residential subdivision was approved;
- the Southridge fields – which were designated as open space in the development review process - that provide an open view up to the homes of the Southridge Subdivision, north of Rt. 2;
- the former Mahan Farm fields, south of Route 2, which the town has committed to conserve as mitigation for the approval of Maple Tree Place;
- the LaCasse fields along South Brownell Road, a portion of which were designated as open space when a residential subdivision was approved;
- Brownell Mountain, the northern slopes of which are a future country park and conservation area; and
- the former Lyons fields south of Town Hall, which are town property.

Some viewsheds have recently been subdivided, or are now in the development review process, including the former Swift property along Oak Hill Road, the former Brown fields west of South Road, the former Foxwood Farm north of Maple Tree Place, and a portion of the ridge that forms (roughly) the boundary between Williston and Richmond. Some open space will be protected in each of these developments. Scenic properties that currently have no formal protection from incompatible uses include:

- open fields and meadows, including the pastures along River Cove Road; the fields southwest of the intersection of Mountain View and Old Stage roads; meadows south of Governor Chittenden Road; and portions of several parcels along Oak Hill; and
- prominent ridgelines, including much of the Richmond Ridge; the hills that lie above the Winooski River; the highlands above I-89 between South Brownell and Oak Hill roads; and the north-south ridge, including Gramma Ridge that runs through the central portion of Williston south of Old Creamery Road.

**13.2.1 Update the Visual Resource Assessment.** Williston’s landscape has changed since the visual resource assessment was done in 1989. Development has filled some views, formerly open fields are no longer mowed, and the number of public viewpoints has grown as roads and trails are extended. A new visual resources analysis should be conducted using a combination of public participation and geographic information systems technology.

**13.2.2 Continue to Consider Visual Resources in Development Review.** Visual impacts will continue to be considered in the review of any proposed development project in a scenic viewshed identified on Map 19 or its successor (as called for by Policy 12.2.1, above), including Administrative Permit proposals to construct new homes and other buildings that were not part of a subdivision process where building envelopes were identified. The bylaw should be updated to clarify this permit review criteria.

The town originally implemented this policy through two overlay zoning districts: the Ridgelines/Wooded Hillside and Special Features. In 2008, the Ridgelines/Wooded Hillside and Special Features Overlays were replaced with specific performance standards, including standards designed to minimize the impact of development on important viewsheds. These standards address the siting of structures (outside the viewshed if possible, or where they will have the least impact if it is not) and

building design, including height, color, scale, area of glass surface, outdoor lighting, and signs. The standards also limit clearing and thinning of wooded landscapes on ridgelines and steep slopes.

**13.2.3 Explore New Methods and Technologies That Will Better Illustrate the Impact of Proposed Development On the Landscape.** The town currently relies on the Visual Resource Overlay to guide development projects in Williston. To avoid being subjective, the town should explore new visual assessment methods and technologies that developers can use to better illustrate how the proposed development will impact the landscape.

**13.2.4 Promote Private Stewardship of Scenic Viewsheds.** Like conservation areas, scenic viewsheds are best protected by continuing private use for agriculture, wood lots, and recreation. The town will implement the same tools listed in Policy 12.1.8 to help landowners maintain scenic viewsheds.

**13.3 - Working Landscapes - The Town of Williston will encourage landowners to actively manage their resources for the production of food, forest, and earth products; wildlife, scenic views; and outdoor recreation. This support will include continued funding for the purchase of development rights; zoning for a reasonable range of income-generating activities in the ARZD; and encouraging landowners to take advantage of Current Use and other working lands incentive programs.**

Working landscapes are lands actively used for the production of food, fiber, earth products, and outdoor recreation. They include cropland, dairies, woodlots, orchards, sugarbushes, pastures, plant nurseries, sand mines, and fee-based recreation areas. Working landscapes do not include meadows or fields that are only periodically hayed for aesthetic purposes. These lands may fall into types of open space, but the intent here is to include only lands from which the owners derive at least a part of their livelihood.

Working landscapes are what many residents and visitors see as the classic image of Vermont. The persistence of these traditional land uses in rapidly changing Williston is a credit to the perseverance and hard work of dedicated private landowners. The policies adopted here seek to support their continued stewardship.

**13.3.1 Support and Encourage Enrollment in the Current Use Program.** Rapidly increasing property taxes are one of the factors contributing to the loss of working landscapes and other open spaces. Current Use helps farm and forest landowners keep their land productive by assessing it for property tax purposes based on its use value, not its development value. This lowers the owners' property tax burden. In exchange for the use value assessment, owners keep their land in productive management and pledge not to develop it while they are enrolled in the program. While the state's Current Use Program has been effective at protecting large parcels of working lands, the minimum size requirement and the program's complexity has been an obstacle for many landowners who wish to keep active farms or woodlots. Several years ago, a legislative Current Use Task Force helped to develop strategies for improving the Program. Citizen groups such as the Working Lands Enterprise Board and the Current Use Tax Coalition continue to advocate for Current Use and strategize improvements to the program. Williston should participate in discussions of Current Use and how to improve it, and should periodically sponsor outreach efforts to encourage eligible landowners to participate in the program.

**Current Use Program.** The Use Value Appraisal program provides an incentive for private landowners to keep farmland or forestland productive and undeveloped. The program assesses agricultural or forestland at its use value rather than fair market value, which lowers the property tax assessment for landowners who enroll. There are many misperceptions about the tax implications of enrolling land in the Use Value Appraisal program. For example, the State of Vermont reimburses communities for all of the tax revenue that is lost due to enrollment of land under the program. More



information on Vermont's Current Use tax program may be obtained from the Department of Taxes at <http://www.state.vt.us/tax/pvr.shtml>.

**13.3.2 Continue to Protect Important Agricultural Lands.** As noted earlier in this plan, Williston has lost a sizeable area of productive farmland to development. Agriculture is still an important part of the local landscape, however, and the town will continue to work with landowners to sustain it. The town developed the LESA (Land Evaluation, Site Assessment) system on which Map 16 is based to help identify important farms in the late 1980s. The top five farms identified by that system are all still in production. These include the Clark (Riverhill), Conant, Fontaine, and Landvater properties along the Winooski River, and the Imajica farm. None of these farms are protected from conversion to other uses by a conservation easement or other restriction. Working farms the town has helped conserve through the purchase of development rights include the Lacasse Farm on South Brownell Rd, the Johnson Farm and Woodlot at the east edge of the Village, the Siple Farm on South Rd, the Isham Farm and Bruce Farm on Oak Hill Rd, and the Burnett Farm on Route 2 west of the Village. With the local foods movement, there are many small farm operations cropping up in Williston. The town should encourage and support these small farms wherever possible.

**Defining Farmlands.** The State of Vermont uses a definition of agricultural lands that is based solely in the important farmlands definitions adopted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (see 10 V.S.A. § 6001(15)). Those definitions, which include “prime farmland” and “farmlands of statewide importance,” reflect the inherent characteristics and management of a parcel, but ignore its context. Their use in Williston and other suburban areas has been counterproductive, making it more difficult to promote a compact pattern of development because the state is “protecting” isolated parcels of productive soils that are surrounded by development and urban infrastructure. Williston follows the experience of numerous jurisdictions throughout the nation in focusing its farmland protection efforts on working farms (which may include soils that are not so productive) rather than on soil bodies.

**13.3.3 Protect Other Working Landscapes.** Other working landscapes include tree farms, commercial wood lots, nurseries, sand and gravel mines, and fee-based outdoor recreation. Some local examples include the Comeau sugarbush at the end of Bradley Lane, the sand and gravel operations in North Williston, the Boomhower wood lot and the former O'Brien property wood lot, located on Gramma Ridge south of Five Tree Hill, which the town has helped conserve through PDR. Outdoor recreation facilities include two golf courses (Williston and Catamount), the North Country Sportsman Club located off Old Creamery Road; and the Catamount Family Center on Governor Chittenden Road.

**13.3.4 Ensure that the Town Bylaws Permit a Reasonable Range of Uses in Working Landscapes.** The town will periodically review its bylaws to ensure promotion of the development of diverse, innovative agricultural activities, including farm stands; cottage industries like cheese making or other value-added enterprises; farm waste recovery for energy generation; and fee-based recreation, hospitality, and educational activities.

**13.3.5 Promote Community Gardens in Designated Open Space.** The town should encourage developers to designate community garden space into their development plans whether inside or outside of the designated open space.

**13.3.6 Consider Land Use Conflicts when Investing in Parks or Trails.** The town should carefully consider the potential conflict between public access and farm and woodlot operations before investing in country parks or trails.

### **13.4 Cultural Resources – The town will strive to protect and maintain significant archaeological and historic resources.**

This section primarily addresses the protection of archaeological resources. The protection of historic resources is addressed in Chapter 3 - Land Use and Chapter 4 - Community Design.

Williston has a long and rich history of human settlement far predating the last several centuries of European influence. Though the clues are not so easily found and interpreted as those of European settlement, the Williston landscape abounds with evidence of its prehistoric past. To date, almost 100 archeological sites have been documented in Williston spanning the time period from about 9500BC-1600AD.

In Williston, as in every town, locating archaeological sites is a basic and necessary activity of these resources are to be preserved, interpreted and considered in town planning. In 1990 the Town of Williston began the process of identifying, inventorying and planning for the preservation of the Town's cultural resources, when it received a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP). The CLG grant allowed the town to develop a preliminary overview of archaeological resources in town, consisting of the mapping of known sites and the development of an archaeological sensitivity map based on environmental parameters. Through this grant, 65 Native American, 92 European American and 5 unspecified archaeological sites were documented. The archaeological sensitivity map provided a predictive model of areas in Williston expected to contain more Native American sites. As more information has been gathered from around the region and through the development of more sophisticated modeling tools, this now statewide model continues to be updated and refined by the VDHP.

This map is used to provide notice to a developer that certain areas may contain archaeological sites, and may require further investigation. Areas mapped as highly sensitive have typically been established as not-to-be-disturbed buffer zones or required to conduct archaeological surveys under Act 250 regulations. The Town of Williston is currently working on strategies to incorporate protection of these cultural resources into the Town Bylaws, in much the same way we have addressed protection of other resources such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, open space and agricultural lands.

Identifying and recording archaeological sites is a lengthy and ongoing process. Since 1990, many additional sites have been identified in Williston. The concentration of known Native American sites north of Interstate 89 is primarily the result of archaeological investigations conducted as part of federal and state environmental review required for development activities. There is an abundance of identified sites in areas where surveys have been done, and an absence of sites in areas where surveys have been lacking. Therefore, the absence of sites is likely a result of not having looked in those areas, rather than an actual lack of sites.

Many of the prehistoric sites are clustered near the Allen Brook, for it not only provided water for drinking, but the rich floodplain soils also harbored prolific edible plants such as butternuts, ostrich ferns (fiddleheads), and wild leeks. The Allen Brook would have been used for transportation both on foot and by boat as well. Southern-facing rises on the landscape were particularly attractive for settlements, as these provided good views and a drier, slightly warmer microclimate. The Mahan site is one example. It is one of the largest Paleoindian sites in the Northeast, dating to about 10,500 years ago, and containing over 5,000 stone artifacts including projectile points, scrapers, knives, a drill, and many stone flakes (Thomas 2001). This site is interpreted as a summertime base camp occupied for an extended period by 25-40 people, perhaps representing a staging area for the early explorations that populated the region.

The Mahan site gives us a glimpse of the earliest cultures in Williston, but prehistoric cultures changed over the millennia as their environment continued to change and as new technologies, such as the bow and arrow, pottery and agriculture, were developed. The archeological sites in Williston document these

changing technologies and cultures and suggest a nearly continuous human occupation from the earliest inhabitants of Vermont to the time of European settlement.

To ensure the protection of these and other significant sites, the following policies have been adopted.

***13.4.1 All development/planning projects should be evaluated to determine the potential for impacting archaeological resources and whether there is a need for preservation action prior to site development.***

All development projects under Act 250 Jurisdiction are reviewed by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation (VDHP) for potential impacts to archaeological resources, and are required to avoid or mitigate any impacts. For development not covered by Act 250, the town should consider the inclusion of archaeological resources as an additional Conservation Area for which impacts are considered during site plan review. The town should also consider including the following standards in the bylaw:

- New construction should be designed to avoid known archaeological sites or at least to minimize impacts on them.
- Limit soil disturbance to the minimum necessary on sites where testing for potential archaeological sites has not been done.
- Preserve known archaeological sites by capping with clean fill and sealing with asphalt or turf.

***13.4.2 Utilize the assistance of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation in evaluating potential impacts to archaeological resources.*** The VDHP can assist in examining maps and other documents, as well as viewing the site itself, to decide if a project could have an impact on visible ruins or buried deposits important to Williston's and Vermont's history. An archaeological consultant may need to be hired to conduct research, survey, and excavation.

***13.4.3 Consider the appointment of an archaeologist to the Conservation,*** to assist in developing appropriate standards of protection and in the review of a proposed development's impacts on archaeological resources.

***13.4.4 Leverage outside funding sources to conduct archaeological surveys or to protect archaeological resources.*** Williston is a Certified Local Government (CLG) and as such is eligible for grant funding to conduct historic research and documentation related to buildings and archaeology. Williston should use this funding where appropriate.

***13.4.5 Use the archaeological sensitivity map as a focus for future archaeological surveys,*** through grants or donations, especially in under surveyed areas of town.



# VILLAGE VISION

## 2018-2024 WILLISTON VILLAGE MASTER PLAN

an amendment to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan*



**Acknowledgments**

This plan represents a collaborative effort by Williston citizens and staff along with members of the Williston Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee, the Williston Planning Commission, and the Williston Selectboard, as well as the staff of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

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	7.3.1.3 Policy- Enable Enhanced Special Events in the Village	28
	7.3.1.4 Policy- Encourage Economic Development and Adaptive Reuse in the Village	28
	7.3.1.5 Policy- Explore Public Parking in the Village	28
<b>Implementation</b>		
<b>8.1 Introduction</b>		31
<b>8.2 implementation Table</b>		31

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- 11 **List of Acronyms:**
- 12
- 13 **CoA: Certificate of Appropriateness**
- 14 **DRB: Development Review Board**
- 15 **HAAC: Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee**
- 16 **NPS: National Park Service**
- 17 **VZD: Village Zoning District**
- 18 **WDB: Williston Unified Development Bylaw**
- 19
- 20

21 **1.1 Purpose of the Williston Village Master Plan**

22 The purpose of the Williston Village Master Plan is to provide guidance to town decision-  
23 makers, citizens, and staff as they work together to address development pressure, demands  
24 for transportation, and the desires expressed by community members to preserve the historic  
25 quality of the village while enhancing its vibrancy and role as the civic center of the town.

26  
27 This plan is adopted as an appendix to the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan (often  
28 referred to as the Town Plan). While the Town Plan currently discusses some goals for the  
29 village, the creation of this plan is an opportunity for the town to explore the opportunities and  
30 challenges faced by the village in greater detail.

31  
32 Based on public input, an accounting of the history of the village, and its geographic and historic  
33 context, this plan proposes changes to how the town interacts with the village in three action  
34 areas: Development Standards; Streets, Sidewalks, Paths and Trails; and Vibrancy. This plan  
35 establishes objectives and the policies to be implemented by the town to achieve those  
36 objectives.

37  
38 **1.1.1 How This Plan Will Be Used**

39 Objectives and policies are organized in the implementation table at the end of this plan, which  
40 also identifies partners the town should work with and timelines for the implementation of each  
41 policy, along with any intermediate steps necessary to achieve them. These objectives and  
42 policies are tabulated in the same format as the objectives and policies in the *2016-2024*  
43 *Williston Comprehensive Plan* and can be used by the planning staff, planning commission, and  
44 town leaders to sequence, prioritize, and monitor progress toward achieving the vision  
45 articulated by this plan.

46



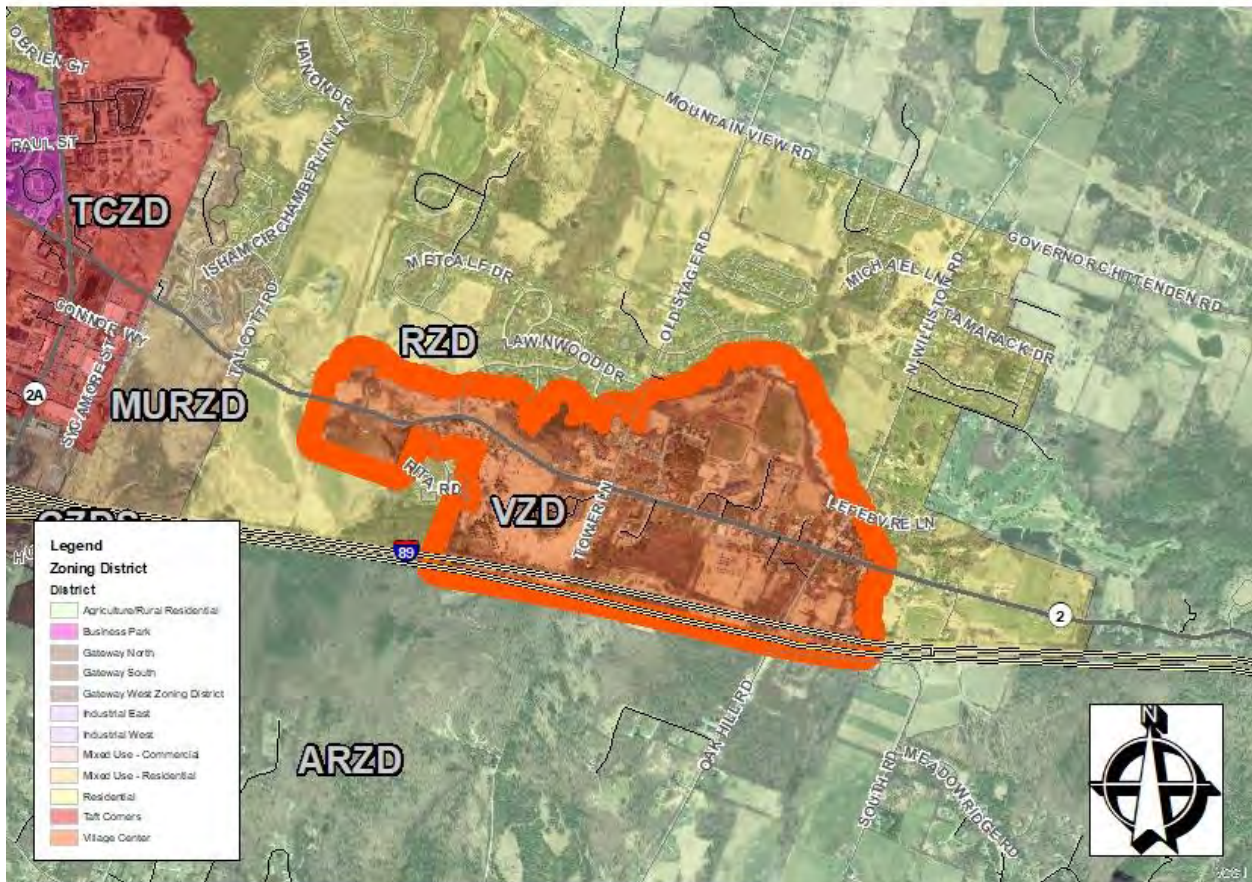
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*The Korner Kwick Stop and the Federated Church in the village at the corner of North Williston Road and US2 (Williston Road).*

**1.2 What is Williston Village? What Part of Williston is Covered by this Master Plan?**

Williston Village is a place within the town of Williston, Vermont. It is one of several historic centers in the town and contains a high concentration of the town’s oldest buildings. The exact boundaries of the village depend on who you ask, but for the purposes of this plan, the village is all of the lands contained within the Village Zoning District as identified in the Williston Unified Development Bylaw. This plan may also identify goals beyond that zoning boundary, especially along Route 2, North Williston Road, Oak Hill Road, and Old Stage Road, which connect the village to the surrounding rural, residential, and commercial areas next to it.

## The Village Zoning District (VZD)

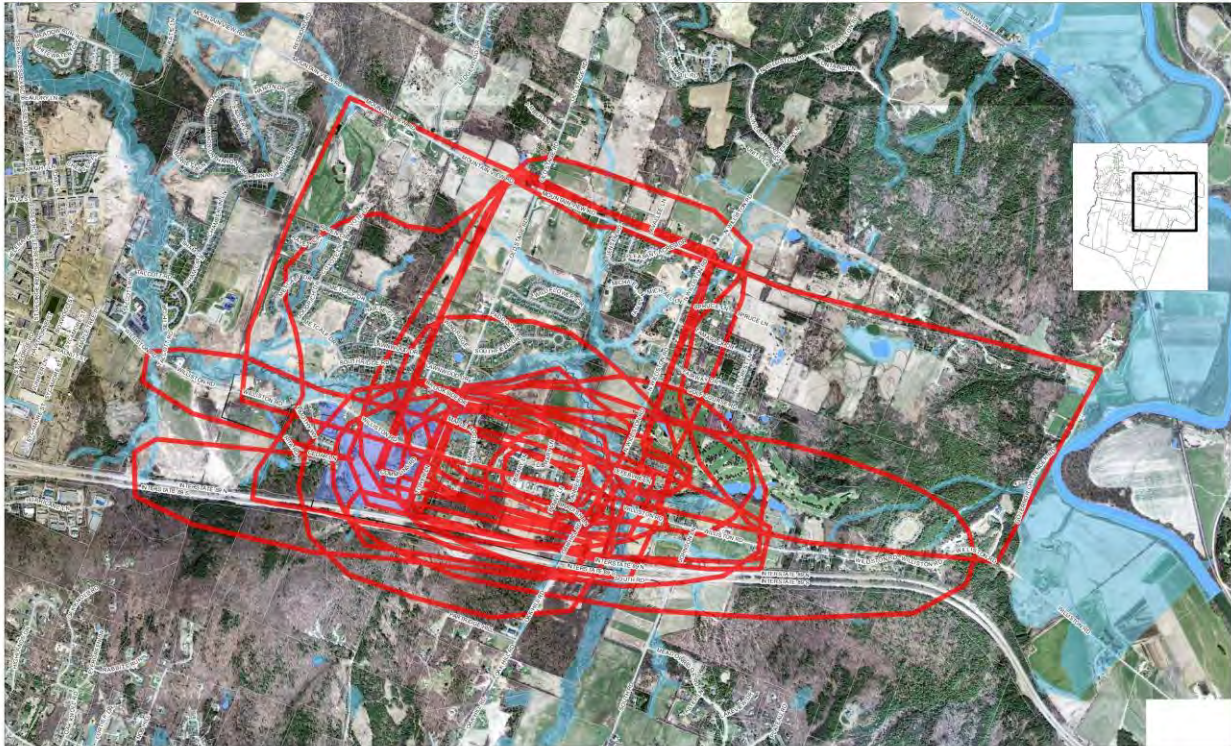


60  
61 The Village Zoning District (VZD; in orange). The yellow area surrounding it is the Residential District  
62 (RZD) and the green area to the south is Agricultural/ Rural Residential (ARZD).

63  
64 As part of the 'kick-off' sessions for this plan in 2016, town staff asked participants to draw the  
65 boundary of the village on a blank map. People drew fairly different boundaries, but most of  
66 them included the core of the village along Route 2 from Old Stage Road to North Williston and  
67 Oak Hill Roads.

68

## Where is Williston Village?



69  
70 *At our kickoff “Open House” in 2015, we asked participants to draw “Williston Village” on a map that*  
71 *showed no other boundaries. The red lines show all of the different boundaries people drew.*

72  
73 What most people experience as “the village” stretches along US Route 2 (Williston Road)  
74 generally from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church east to French Hill, and north from  
75 Interstate 89 to the Allen Brook. Today, the village contains single-family homes, apartments,  
76 businesses, municipal services, parks, paths, playing fields, a school, and the town library. The  
77 majority of the buildings in the village are historic, dating from between 1790 and 1900.

78  
79 The way the village looks, feels, and functions today is a result of its strong historic fabric and  
80 many decades of efforts by the town and others to preserve it while also allowing for adaptation,  
81 vibrancy, and new development where appropriate. The same tensions between preservation  
82 and cost, intensity of use and the impacts it brings, and between change and adaptation  
83 continue to present the greatest challenges and opportunities to the people of the town as they  
84 work to shape the future of this special place while honoring its past.

85  
86 This new *Village Master Plan* is an effort to clarify and, in many cases, reiterate the town’s  
87 longstanding vision for the future of the village. Over the last two decades, the town has worked  
88 through several difficult decisions about proposed development and changes to streets and  
89 intersections in the village. The town has also learned more about the extent of wetlands and  
90 other constraints on lands within the village. The knowledge of those constraints inform and in  
91 some cases limit its vision of what could happen in the future. Businesses within the village

92 have come and gone. The town has learned more about the challenges they face and how that  
93 connects to the stated goals that the village contain a vibrant mix of shops, offices, and homes.  
94 This plan addresses both the regulatory challenges faced by commercial users in the village as  
95 well as citizens' desire for a vibrant atmosphere there.  
96



97  
98 *A 1984 rendering of potential strip development in the Village*  
99

### 100 **1.3 Historic Significance**

101 The majority of the historic buildings in Williston Village and the Williston Historic Gateway were  
102 built between 1790 & 1900, with a large portion being built between 1820 & 1860.<sup>1</sup> To  
103 understand why Williston Village and the town as a whole grew and prospered during this time,  
104 it is important to understand what this period in history looked like for Vermont.

105  
106 Following the War of 1812 and the simultaneous Napoleonic Wars in Europe, the United States  
107 had been largely cut off from foreign trade opportunities. This led to one of the fastest growing  
108 industries in Vermont's history, the great Merino boom. At the peak of their production there  
109 were six sheep for every one human in the state. Larger Merino farmers were buying up smaller  
110 neighboring operations, and subsistence farmers turned to diversified farming and trades to  
111 make their living. It was in the context of this economic boom that many of the significant  
112 structures in the Village were built.  
113

---

<sup>1</sup> See *The Williston Story*, F. Kennon Moody and Floyd D. Putnam, 1961

114 Unlike the bulk of Vermont whose reputation for accessible transportation was poor at best,  
115 Williston was very lucky to have the first form of transportation that would grow our town: the  
116 Winooski Turnpike. While other Vermont Villages were staying small, and their farmers were  
117 migrating West to make a new life, the Winooski Turnpike (now US Rt. 2) allowed Willistonians  
118 to capitalize on travelers and have access to commerce. As the only link between Montpelier  
119 and Burlington, 6 taverns were in operation in the Village and Historic Gateway along the  
120 Winooski Turnpike. A “tavern” at this time implied a place where travelers would find lodging,  
121 food, boarding for their horse and carriages, and most importantly entertainment. Second only  
122 to churches, taverns were the hub of the community and the social scene in the Village.  
123

124 People working diversified farms and those focusing on trades founded villages like Williston. By  
125 1842 two churches were built in the Village and several tanneries, machine shops, a grain mill,  
126 several distilleries, a blacksmith shop, meeting house, taverns and two stores were in operation.  
127

128 With the diversification of agriculture and industry, and local business fueled by the Winooski  
129 Turnpike, actual cash was changing hands all over the Village. It was now possible for Williston  
130 Village to tax those industries and professionals who owned local businesses. Much of the  
131 actual industry moved north to North Williston with the advent of the train in 1849, leaving  
132 Williston Village to operate more as the professional and community center of Williston.  
133

134 Reading through the list of homebuilders and property owners from the 1840’s -1860’s one may  
135 recognize the large number of notable families in Williston Village like Chittenden, Wright,  
136 Brownell, and Miller. With a thriving community and wealth inside the village, the use of  
137 vernacular Greek Revival and Federal architectural styles declined. Residents started to build  
138 more high-style facades in the 1860’s. In the 1880’s they adorned houses with architectural  
139 features, including stained glass windows and corbels, and built elaborate detached carriage  
140 houses. Taverns became less popular as the train carried travelers directly to their destinations,  
141 and the Village transitioned to working farms and the mostly residential district we see today.  
142

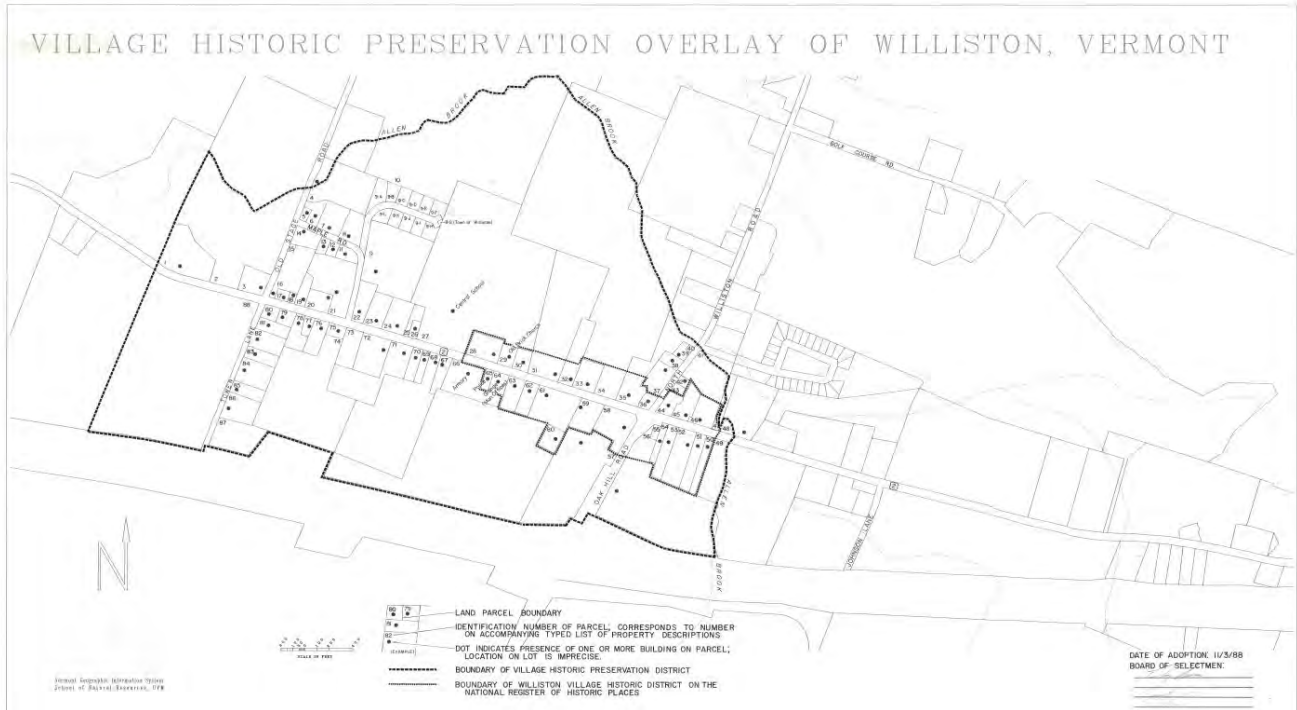
143 **1.4. Boundaries of the VZD and sub-districts**

144 Williston Village is partially contained by several regulatory and designation boundaries: the  
145 Village Zoning District (VZD), The Williston Village *Vermont Designated Village Center*, and the  
146 Williston Village National Register Historic District. Each of these mapped areas represents a  
147 set of tools the Town can use to meet its goals for the Village as discussed below.  
148

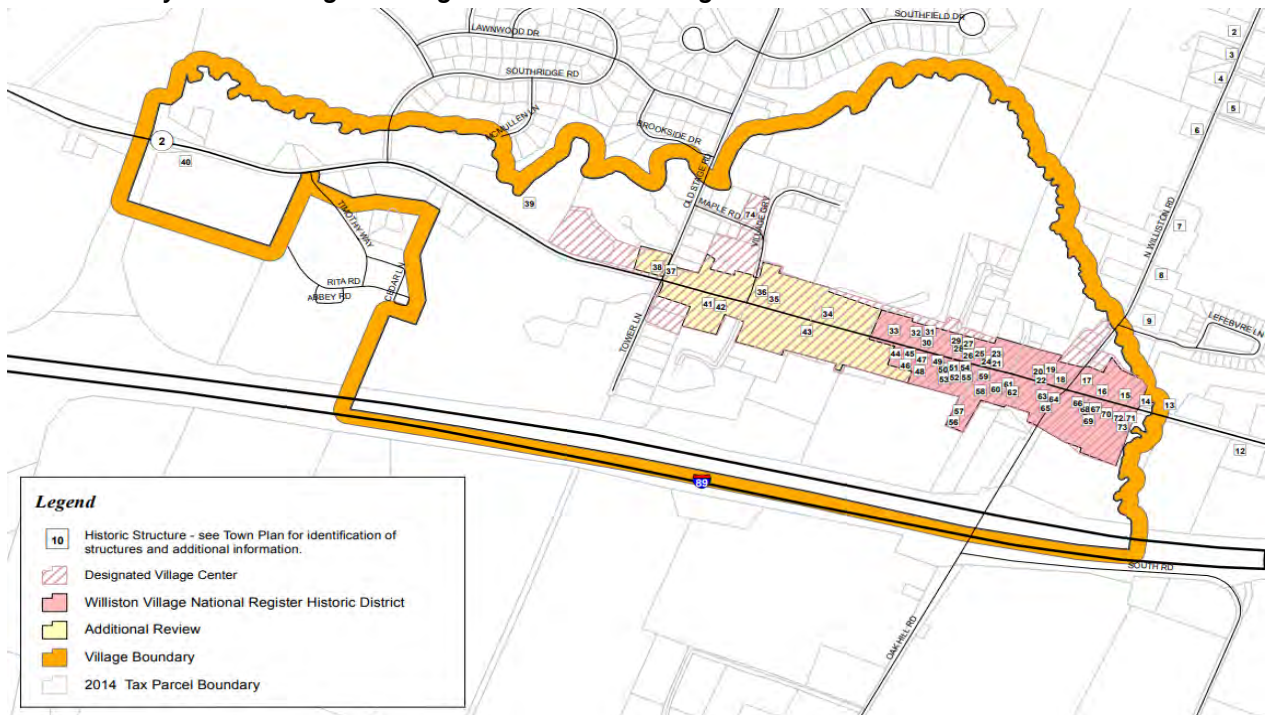
149 **1.4.1. The National Register District**

150 The Williston Village National Register Historic District was established in 1986 and expanded in  
151 1992 to include accessory structures and outbuildings on the lots within the District.  
152





153  
 154 *The original boundary of the Williston Village National Register Historic District from 1988, with*  
 155 *the boundary of the Village Zoning District surrounding it.*



156  
 157 *The National Register District (pink), Additional Review Area (yellow), and Designated Village*  
 158 *Center (pink hatch) within the Village Zoning District (orange). A larger version of this map is*  
 159 *contained within the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan as Map 6.*

160 **1.4.2. The Additional Review Area and remainder of the VZD**

161 Development in the VZD, which surrounds the Historic District and additional Review Area, is  
162 subject to the same standards as the district, but those standards may be administered by the  
163 Zoning Administrator without approval by the HAAC or the DRB.

164

165 **1.4.3 The Designated Village Center**

166 Williston Village is also a state-designated Village Center. Designation was originally approved  
167 in 2006, was extended until 2012, and lapsed in 2016 following a delay in the adoption of the  
168 new Town Plan. Following the adoption of the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan in  
169 2017, the town applied to the Vermont Downtown Board and received approval of a new Village  
170 Center Designation. Village Center Designation can potentially provide financial benefits to  
171 landowners and tenants, including tax credits for work on buildings, priority consideration for  
172 state facilities, grant opportunities, and flexibility in the use of special assessment district funds.  
173 These incentives can help maintain the historic character of the village as well as the other  
174 goals of this plan.

175

176

177

178 **2. History of Past Planning Efforts in the Village.**  
179

180 There have been efforts to plan for the future of Williston Village almost as long as there has  
181 been planning and zoning in Williston. Efforts to retain and restore important historic structures  
182 were made by the town and other civic groups as far back as the 1960's. The first zoning district  
183 established in town that impacted the village came along in 1964. The first comprehensive plan  
184 in Williston that specifically discusses the village was adopted in 1987.

185  
186 As the town began to experience increased development pressure and demand for services,  
187 citizens became more concerned about the impact development might have on areas of town  
188 beyond Taft Corners, including the village.

189  
190 **2.1. Pre-1980**  
191

192 **1927:** US-Route 2 is paved through Williston Village  
193

194 **1976:** Williston completes its first Historic Sites and Structures survey.  
195

196 **September 28, 1979:** Williston's first application for National Register Historic District is  
197 approved.  
198

199 **2.2. The 1980's survey**  
200

201 **August, 1986:** The Williston Selectboard votes to reduce the allowed residential density in the  
202 Village from six units per acre to three units per acre. This is further reduced to two units per  
203 acre, which is what is allowed as of 2017.  
204

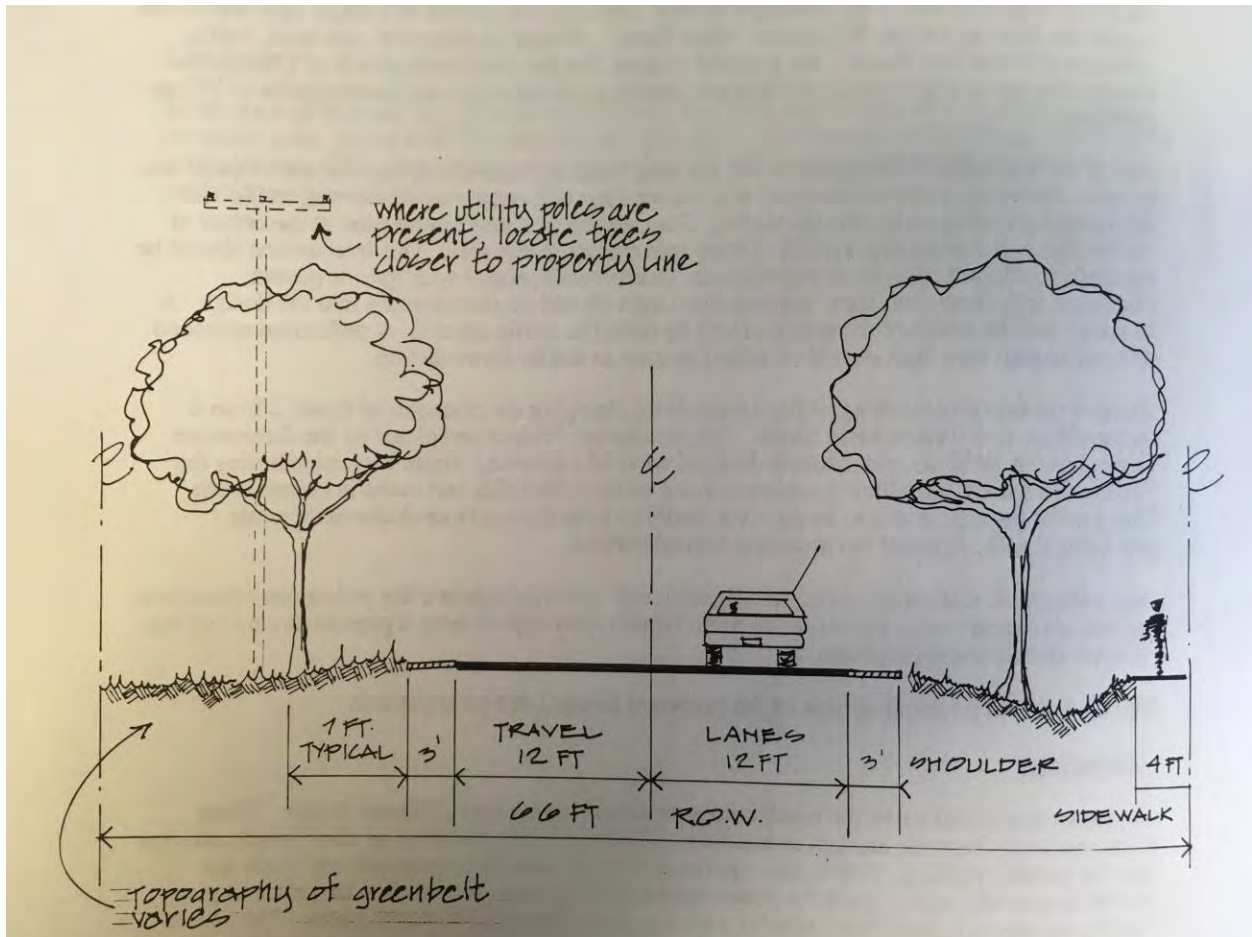
205 **1988:** Williston completes its first Streetscape Plan.  
206

207 **1989:** The Williston Historical Society publishes *A Walking Tour of Historic Williston*, identifying  
208 many of the important structures within Williston Village.  
209

210 **1989:** As part of a community conversation about growth in Williston, the University of Vermont  
211 Department of Historic Preservation Visual Lab prepares some physical models of what the  
212 Village might look like unless development standards are changed.  
213

214 **2.3. Village Streetscape Project**  
215

216 **1990:** The Williston Village Streetscape Committee submits its recommendations for Williston  
217 Village to the Planning Commission and Selectboard. Most of the committee's  
218 recommendations are related to extending the sidewalk system in the Village and adding  
219 crosswalks and other pedestrian enhancements. Tree planting in the "greenbelt" between the  
220 sidewalks and the road is also recommended.



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Added sidewalks and Street Trees from the 1990 Williston Village Streetscape project

**2.4. Village Streetscape Project II**

**1991:** Williston amends its National Register Historic District to include many outbuildings and supporting structures not originally included in the District.

**2.5. Plans for Development behind Town Hall**

**1991:** Williston adopts its first Village Master Plan. The plan encompasses desired streetscape configurations, road connections, and design standards for development. The plan anticipates significant residential development south of Town Hall between the town property and Interstate 89 and north of Williston Central School. Neither of these developments ever happened.



236

237 *A rendering of anticipated new development in the village from the 1991 Williston Village Master*  
238 *Plan*

239

240 **1999:** Williston develops and adopts the *Williston Village Historic District Design Review Guide*.

241

## 242 **2.6 Designations and New Rules**

243

244 **November, 2006:** Williston applies for and receives Village Center Designation for a portion of  
245 Williston Village.

246

247 **June, 2009:** The *Williston Unified Development Bylaw* is adopted as a complete replacement of  
248 the existing *Williston Zoning Ordinance*. The *Bylaw* adds regulatory weight to the *Williston*  
249 *Village Historic District Design Review Guide*, placing it in the document as an appendix and  
250 stating that in most cases, the “should” requirements of the *Guide* will be treated as “shall”  
251 requirements in the *Bylaw*. The *Bylaw* also establishes an “Additional Review Area” beyond the  
252 boundary of the National Register District where applicants will have to follow the same design  
253 review and approval process as those within the district boundary.

254

255 **November, 2011:** The Downtown Board approves a five-year renewal of the *Williston Village*  
256 *Designated Village Center*.

257

258 **May, 2016:** Williston Planning staff kicks off the “Village Vision” public input project. The goal of  
259 this project is to develop a Williston Village Master Plan for eventual adoption into the Williston  
260 Comprehensive Plan.

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**September, 2016:** Williston Public Works installs Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB's) at two crosswalks on US-2 within the proposed Designated Village Center boundary. Pedestrian safety and confidence is enhanced.

**November 2016:** Williston's existing Village Center designation expires. It cannot be renewed right away as the town is still working to adopt its new Comprehensive Plan.

**September 2017:** Williston's *2016-2024 Comprehensive Plan* is adopted by the Selectboard and approved by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. The plan contains new language referencing and discussing the benefits of Village Center Designation and calls for the adoption of the *Village Master Plan*.

**October 2017:** Williston applies for Village Center Designation. As part of the conversation between planning staff and the Williston Selectboard, the idea of allocating staff resources to promoting the benefits of designation to commercial property owners is discussed and supported.

**November 2017:** The State of Vermont Downtown Board approves a new Village Center designation for Williston Village.

**2017-2018:** Williston's Planning Commission will continue to work on the Village Master Plan and will transmit it to the Selectboard for adoption in 2018.

**Beyond 2018:** Further efforts to implement the Master Plan will be focused around zoning bylaw and design standards updates, transportation improvements with a focus on streetscape design, bicycle/pedestrian safety, and adding "vibrancy" to the Village by enhancing programming and opportunities for the people of Williston to access and enjoy their historic village center. The town will also work to make commercial landowners aware of the benefits of Village Center designation and help them improve their historic structures.

304  
305

306 **3. Williston Village in the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan**  
307

308 The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan contains specific policies directing the town to  
309 undertake additional planning efforts for Williston Village. The Designated Village Center,  
310 Village Master Plan, and a specific call to address land development standards in the village are  
311 all discussed and identified as work items to be completed during the life of the plan.  
312

313 **3.1. The Town Plan calls for the Village Master Plan to be developed:**  
314

315 The bulk of the language in the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan is contained in  
316 Chapter 3- Land Use. Policy 3.6.1 below specifically calls for the adoption of this Village Master  
317 Plan.  
318

319 *3.6 – Williston Village - The Town of Williston will continue to maintain and protect the*  
320 *historic character of its village center.*  
321

322 *The Village Zoning District (VZD) encompasses one of the two focal points of Williston’s*  
323 *settlement (the other was in North Williston, at the railroad). A portion of the VZD is*  
324 *included in the Williston Village Historic District, which is on the National Register of*  
325 *Historic Places (see Map 6). A larger portion of the VZD includes a mix of historic and*  
326 *more recent development. Development in both areas must comply with the Williston*  
327 *Village Historic District Design Review Guide, as incorporated into the town’s zoning*  
328 *bylaw. For more on the design review process please see Chapter 4 – Community*  
329 *Design. Williston Village also contains a state-designated Village Center. In Williston,*  
330 *village center designation is particularly important because it impacts the designated*  
331 *growth center adjacent to it. Ongoing approval of the growth center depends on it*  
332 *incorporating a designated downtown, village center, or new town center. Village center*  
333 *designation can also potentially provide financial benefits to landowners and tenants,*  
334 *including tax credits for work on buildings, priority consideration for state facilities, grant*  
335 *opportunities, and flexibility in the use of special assessment district funds. These*  
336 *incentives can help maintain the historic character of the Village.*  
337  
338

339 *3.6.1 Develop and Adopt a Village Master Plan. The village planning process should aim*  
340 *to preserve the historic character and pedestrian friendliness of the village and consider*  
341 *the present town green, the possibility of connecting streets within the village to enhance*  
342 *traffic and pedestrian circulation, and appropriate improvements at the intersection of*  
343 *North Williston, Oak Hill, and Rt. 2, as well as limitations on development imposed by the*  
344 *wetlands and streams that are found throughout the Village. As of June, 2016, the town*  
345 *has begun the process of creating a Village Master Plan.*  
346

347 *3.6.2 Examine the Density Standards for Mixed-Use Development in the VZD. The*  
348 *existing development standards for the VZD allow properties to have a mix of residential*



349 *and some non-residential uses on the same property. The current standards do not*  
350 *address how the maximum allowable residential density might be affected by the location*  
351 *of non-residential uses on the same property. The town should consider developing*  
352 *standards for mixed use developments in the VZD. The Village Master plan process will*  
353 *include recommendations for changes to the bylaws that will address the density and*  
354 *intensity of development within the VZD. See Chapter 4, Community Design, for more*  
355 *discussion of this.*  
356  
357  
358  
359

360 **4.1 Why a new Master Plan? How was this Plan Produced?**

361  
362 The village is a unique part of the town. The village has been through several cycles of being  
363 more commercial, or more residential. Over the last several decades, vehicle traffic through the  
364 village has increased steadily. Stricter design standards for the village have resulted in careful  
365 reworking of historic structures and new development that “fits in” with the historic pattern. While  
366 the development of Taft Corners has shifted the center of commercial activity to the Growth  
367 Center, Central School and many town services have remained in the village, with evolving  
368 patterns of activity.

369  
370 **4.1.1 Adoption of the Village Design Guide, 2001**

371 In 2001 the town adopted the Village Design Guide, an illustrated guide to the form and  
372 materials required for new development and changes to existing sites and buildings in the  
373 village Zoning District. This guide is still in use and is adopted by reference as part of the  
374 *Williston Unified Development Bylaw*.

375  
376 **4.1.2 Traffic**

377 Increased traffic in and through the Village has created congestion. In 2009, the town  
378 considered a proposal to change the intersection of Williston, North Williston, and Oak Hill  
379 Roads from a 4-way stop to a roundabout. Citizen comment was divided on the matter and the  
380 Selectboard decided at that time not to pursue the change to a roundabout. Since that time, the  
381 Vermont Agency of Transportation and many Vermont citizens have had experiences with the  
382 construction of and navigation through roundabouts. Traffic congestion remains a challenge in  
383 the Village.

384  
385  
386 **4.1.3 Community Events**

387 The village is home to numerous community events. The town band has held bimonthly summer  
388 concerts on the green in the village since 1957, providing entertainment and connection to  
389 people in the village for several generations. The town green is the home of many of the town’s  
390 Independence Day activities, a “Chowder Challenge,” and summer camps. The nearby Brick  
391 Church is the site of a music performance series every year. Tournaments and sports and  
392 camps happen on the recreation fields behind Central School. Voting in primary and general  
393 elections often takes place at the Armory next to Town Hall. The village is home to the Town  
394 Library, which provides lectures, films, a home for the Williston Historical Society, and other  
395 services beyond the traditional loaning of books and media. In 2010 and 2011 there was a  
396 weekly farmers’ market on the green in the Village. The market was moved to Taft Corners after  
397 2011.

398  
399 **4.1.4 Contemporary Development Review in the Village**

400 Development Review in the village is performed by the Williston Development Review Board  
401 (DRB) with advice from the Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee (HAAC).  
402 Development Standards that apply to projects in the village exist throughout *the Williston Unified*

403 *Development Bylaw* (WDB) and in the *Village Design Guide*. The WDB, adopted in June of  
404 2009, is a complete rewrite of Williston’s zoning and subdivision requirements. The WDB also  
405 has the effect of making the *Village Design Guide* more regulatory than advisory.

406

#### 407 **4.1.5 Changes in Housing**

408 From the beginning of zoning in Williston until now, the allowed density in the village has ranged  
409 from two to six dwelling units per acre. The current residential density within the village could  
410 not be permitted under today’s two-per-acre rules. Lower density brings challenges in terms of  
411 supporting transit and vibrancy while also not adequately addressing the impact of new  
412 development on the village’s historic character. This new *Master Plan* provides some guidance  
413 to town officials as they consider changes to the rules that will more effectively address site and  
414 building design while allowing for a residential density that supports the plan’s overall goals for a  
415 vibrant, pedestrian friendly, multi-use historic village center in Williston.

416

#### 417 **4.2 Process**

418 This plan was developed with the help of public input and process, which is described in this  
419 section.

420

##### 421 **4.2.1 The kickoffs- what did we learn?**

422 In May of 2016, planning staff and HAAC members kicked off an extensive public involvement  
423 process to determine a direction for this plan. This included a survey asking residents what they  
424 loved about the Village and what they would change, exercises related to traffic, the creation of  
425 a village timeline, and a mapping exercise to help staff and others understand what people  
426 experience as “the village.”

427

##### 428 **Survey**

429 Staff received 54 completed survey responses (27 paper surveys and 26 online surveys). The  
430 vast majority of the responses to our open-ended 2-question survey were related to traffic,  
431 intersections and roadway operations, business and development, conservation, walking, biking  
432 and recreation, the library and school, the general feel and historic aspects of the village, events  
433 and specific bylaw changes.

434

##### 435 **Question 1: What is one thing you love about Williston Village?**

436 After reviewing the responses to this first question, it became clear that respondents found it  
437 difficult to name just one thing that they love about the village. However, about 59% of  
438 responses made reference to the small-town feel, sense of community, historic character and  
439 the lack of chain stores as the main aspects that are valued. Additionally, 33% of the  
440 respondents mentioned the importance of the library and about 35% emphasized the great  
441 opportunities for recreation with the bike path and walking trails. Other common values included  
442 events like the 4th of July celebration, former farmers’ market, Town band performances and  
443 the perceived separation from the Taft Corners development.

444

##### 445 **Question 2: What is one thing you would change about Williston Village?**

446 Similarly to question one, many survey respondents listed multiple things that they would  
447 change about the village. About 39% of the respondents wanted to see new development in the  
448 village. The majority of the development-related responses specifically indicated that a locally-  
449 owned restaurant or a coffee shop would be desirable. It's important to note that many of the  
450 responses specified a desire to see a non-chain establishment that is not associated with any  
451 national brand. Other development-related requests included infill development, housing to  
452 support young families, locally-owned retail shops and other communal venues that would make  
453 the village more of a destination. On the other hand, there were several respondents that were  
454 opposed to any new development in the village. About 11% of responses were related to  
455 conserving open land and prohibiting new development from impacting the Village.

456  
457 Nearly 28% of survey respondents stated that they would like to see changes related to traffic,  
458 intersections and roadway operations. Some comments suggested a need to reduce traffic  
459 congestion during the peak hour, upgrade the Oak Hill/US2 intersection with a roundabout or  
460 traffic light, enforce speed limits, decrease noise coming from the interstate and look into a  
461 traffic calming plan. Moreover, 26% of responses mentioned a need to support bicycle,  
462 pedestrian and outdoor recreation improvements (in the form of sidewalk repairs, bike lanes,  
463 new crosswalks, gateway treatments) to enhance safety and support the overall walkability of  
464 the village. Lastly, several other responses cited a need to change bylaws (to prevent  
465 "undesirable" projects from being built in the village, prevent subdivision of lots smaller than .5  
466 acres, limit the number of dwellings per parcel), bring back the farmers' market and make visual  
467 improvements to the village.

#### 468 Traffic input as a walker

469 We received 28 individual input points on our four-square coordinate system diagram. The vast  
470 majority of the input points were placed around the center of the diagram, which indicates that  
471 many people felt neutral about the state of traffic as a walker. There were 11 points placed on  
472 the "traffic is great" side while 10 were placed on the "traffic is terrible" side. Seven points were  
473 also placed directly between the two. There was also an even mix between changing traffic (as  
474 it relates to walking) and not changing anything with traffic. On the comment board, participants  
475 stated that it was easy to walk around the village, the recreation paths are very safe and more  
476 sidewalks would be beneficial. Participants also want to see more crosswalks at Old Stage and  
477 North Williston Roads, better bike lanes and more visible roadway/crosswalk signs.

#### 479 Traffic input as a driver

480 We received 33 individual input points on our driving diagram, the majority of which were placed  
481 around the neutral center. There were 8 placed on the "traffic is great" side while eleven were  
482 placed on the "traffic is terrible" side. Fourteen were placed directly on the center line. The  
483 overall change-related input suggested that there was a slight preference for making traffic  
484 changes. On the comment board, participants said that traffic was congested during the peak  
485 hours of the day, the school release causes congestion due to parents picking up their children  
486 and long queues are caused by the Oak Hill/US 2 intersection (numerous comments address  
487 changes to this intersection). Participants also conveyed a need to see a greater enforcement of  
488

489 the speed limit, traffic control, the elimination of the truck lane west of the Village and varying  
490 roundabout comments.

491  
492 What would you like to see in the Village?

493 On this map, we received 90 total input bullet points in the form of new village businesses, bike  
494 path connections, traffic and intersection changes, more crosswalks, requests for a farmers'  
495 market, conservation recommendations, recreation facilities including dog parks, and various  
496 other requested changes. There were also numerous conflicting comments related to the idea of  
497 adding a town pool or multiple roundabouts to the village.

498  
499 Village timeline

500 Village Vision Open House participants added 25 memories, historical events and hopes for the  
501 future to the timeline. The future aspirations for the Village included the restoration of the  
502 Federated Church's steeple, temporary outdoor food vendors during the summer months,  
503 limited development on open land and turning the Brennan Barn into a community center.  
504 Furthermore, there were 12 public comments in support of an extension of the bike path from  
505 the village to Taft Corners. Some of the memories included the opening of the interstate,  
506 changes to the Williston school district and recollections of the 1983 village as a place where all  
507 of the town services were located. The post office for Williston was once located on the  
508 southeast corner of the Williston/North Williston/Oak Hill Road intersection, and moved to the  
509 Southwest corner of the same intersection in the 1940's. The post office was also located on the  
510 land adjacent to Central School Drive in the Village before it was moved closer to Taft Corners  
511 in the late 1980's.

512  
513 **4.2.2 Development of the plan draft.**

514 Based on input from the 2016 public process and ongoing participation by HAAC and Planning  
515 Commission members, planning staff developed a draft of this plan throughout the remainder of  
516 2016, 2017, and early 2018.

517  
518 **4.2.3 Amendment to the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan.**

519 This plan is adopted as an appendix to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan*. Many  
520 elements of the current plan, such as Chapter 13, *Open Space*, began as appendices to the  
521 plan and were later "rolled into" the body of the overall plan as new chapters or as elements of  
522 several chapters of the plan.

523  
524 **4.2.4 Adoption into the 2024-2032 Williston Comprehensive Plan.**

525 Before the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan expires, the town will have an opportunity  
526 to write and adopt a completely new plan. Workplan items and other elements of this document  
527 are expected to be incorporated into the body of the *2024-2032 Williston Comprehensive Plan*.

528  
529  
530

531 **5. Actions for Development Standards**

532

533 **5.1 Introduction**

534 New development and substantial redevelopment of properties in the village is infrequent.  
535 However, those few projects are often more controversial and take more time than they would if  
536 they were proposed elsewhere in town. This happens in part because there are more exacting  
537 development standards in the village related to historic preservation, but also because new  
538 development in the village can be more controversial. While additional requirements are  
539 necessary to preserve village character, they can create uncertainty or present a barrier to the  
540 redevelopment and viable use of existing properties. The policies discussed below will identify  
541 ways the town could pursue making development standards for the village more clear and  
542 predictable, while ensuring they are aligned with the overall goals the town has for the village.

543

544 **5.1.1. Structure of current development review process**

545 Both the development standards in the Village Zoning District and the review procedures are  
546 different from other parts of town. Smaller projects that would be handled administratively  
547 outside of the VZD are more likely to require review and approval by the Development Review  
548 Board (DRB). This DRB review takes two forms: in some parts of the village, the DRB assumes  
549 the federal role of “historic preservation commission” and issues a Certificate of  
550 Appropriateness (CoA) for a project. The CoA process and requirements are in line with the  
551 guidelines for historic preservation established by the United States Department of the Interior.  
552 All new development and any changes to existing buildings in the Williston Village National  
553 Register Historic District and the “Additional Review Area” is required to be reviewed by the  
554 DRB and a CoA is issued by them before the work can proceed.

555

556 **5.1.2. The Bylaw and the Design Guide**

557 Development in the Village is subject to the overall requirements of the Williston Unified  
558 Development Bylaw (WDB) as well as additional design standards contained in Chapter 42 of  
559 the Williston Village Design Review Guide, which WDB 42 adopts by reference, giving the  
560 design “guidelines” almost the full force of bylaw requirements.

561

562 **5.2 Public Input- What we learned about Development Standards in the Village**

563 The “kickoff” open house in May of 2016 gave the planning staff and citizens opportunities to  
564 have conversations about how new houses and changes to buildings in the village are  
565 addressed by the town.

566

567 **5.3 Objectives for Development Standards in Williston Village**

568 The primary objective for development standards in the Village is to balance flexibility with  
569 compatibility by allowing new development that contributes to the vibrancy of the Village without  
570 detracting from the historic fabric and relevance of the existing buildings and sites. Development  
571 standards, to be enforceable, need to be clear. To that end, part of this objective is to merge the  
572 *Village Design Review Guide* standards into the Unified Development Bylaw.

573

574 **5.3.1. Objective- Size, Mass, and Scale**

575 The town will develop standards that ensure compatibility between the size, mass, and scale of  
576 new buildings.

577

578 **5.3.2. Objective- Relationship to the Street**

579 The current standards address the relationship of buildings to the street. This will be enhanced  
580 with specific requirements for buildings that are part of “back lot” developments where a  
581 relationship to a public street is not possible.

582

583 **5.3.3. Objective- Rear Lot and Mixed-Use Development**

584 Most of the village along US2 is “built out,” but some developable parcels or portions of parcels  
585 remain. New (non-replacement) houses in the last decade in the village have all been built on  
586 “back lots” or portions of deep lots along US2 where there is another structure between the new  
587 one and the street. The standards in WDB 42 and the *Design Guide* do not directly address  
588 many of the challenges faced by the HAAC and DRB tasked with reviewing back-lot  
589 development. Similarly, the HAAC and DRB have been challenged by proposals for mixed use  
590 development, where adding a commercial use to a residential use on a parcel can lead to a  
591 more intense development pattern than the community may have anticipated. The policies  
592 adopted below are intended to lead the town to add clarity to its regulatory documents to better  
593 address the most common types of major development In the village it experiences.

594

595 **5.3.3.1 Policy- Rear-Lot Development Standards**

596 The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to  
597 the WDB that articulates specific standards for new development that does not have a street  
598 frontage relationship to US2 within the Village Zoning District.

599

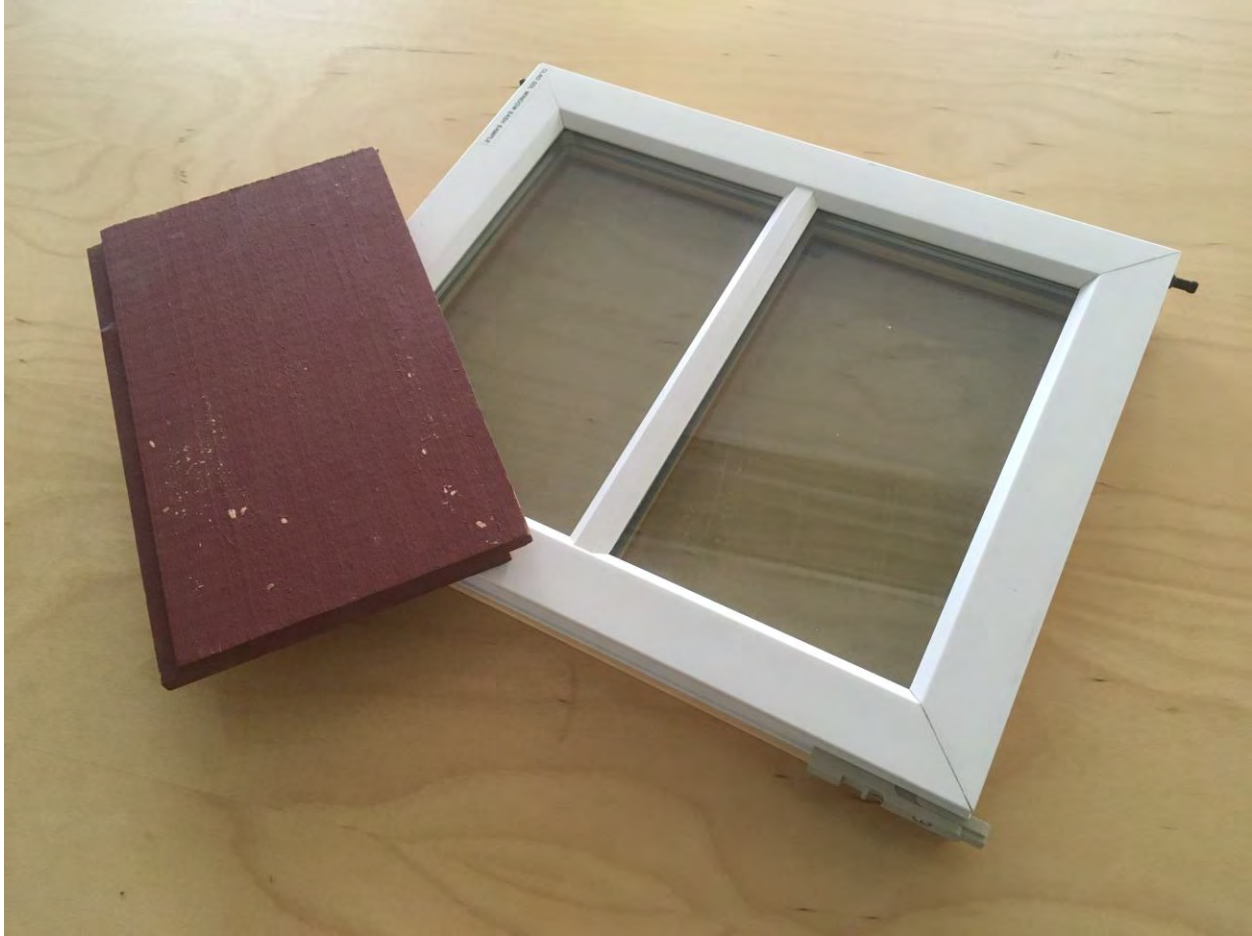
600 **5.3.3.2 Policy- Mixed-Use Standards**

601 The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to  
602 the WDB that regulates the overall density and form of mixed-use development in the Village  
603 Zoning District.

604

605 **5.3.4 Objective- Materials Standards**

606 Much of the development review in the village is of small projects which might not require a  
607 permit in other parts of town. Window replacements, roofing changes, and changes to siding  
608 materials are common requests in the village. The HAAC and the DRB have worked through  
609 these requests in different ways over the years, attempting to follow the NPS guidelines for  
610 projects in historic districts while also allowing for a level of flexibility that permits property  
611 owners to perform important maintenance to their homes and businesses. While the bylaw and  
612 the design review guide both discuss material choices, there is not clear guidance to the HAAC  
613 and DRB about when certain material choices should or should not be allowed. Revisions to the  
614 guide and bylaw should provide clearer information about which replacement materials are  
615 acceptable in which circumstances.



616  
617 *A typical simulated-divided-light, fiberglass-clad wood window and wood siding sample*  
618 *proposed for a new house in the village.*  
619

620 It is important that citizens, home and business owners, and prospective purchasers of historic  
621 properties in the village understand what will be required when changes to buildings and sites  
622 are proposed. The town will work to make the development review and permitting process in the  
623 village more clear and predictable while ensuring that development in the village meets National  
624 Park Service guidelines for national register historic districts.  
625

626 **5.3.4.1 Policy- Historic Structure Materials Standard**

627 The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to  
628 the WDB that explains when, how, and what type of windows, roofing, and siding are acceptable  
629 on historic structures and outbuildings within the Village Zoning District.  
630

631 **5.3.4.2 Policy- New Structure Materials Standard**

632 The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to  
633 the WDB that explains when, how, and what type of windows, roofing, and siding are acceptable  
634 on new primary structures and outbuildings within the Village Zoning District.  
635



636 **5.3.4.3 Policy- New Addition and Outbuilding Materials Standard**

637 The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to  
638 the WDB that explains when, how, and what type of windows, roofing, and siding are acceptable  
639 on new accessory structures and additions to historic structures within the Village Zoning  
640 District.

641

642 **5.3.5. Objective- Demolition**

643 Less frequently, there are requests for demolition; usually of an outbuilding or addition to an  
644 historic structure, but occasionally of an entire structure. The most recent full demolition and  
645 replacement of a primary structure was 7760 Williston Road in 2009.

646

647 While the zoning ordinance that was in place prior to the June 2009 adoption of the WDB  
648 contained some requirements for demolition, the current WDB does not. Each proposal for  
649 demolition since 2009 has been reviewed by the HAAC and the DRB with consideration given to  
650 the structural integrity of the structure proposed for demolition as well as its importance on the  
651 site. The DRB and HAAC have almost always required a letter from a structural engineer or  
652 other building professional stating what the integrity of the structure is and what the feasibility is  
653 of saving it. However, this has been a somewhat ad hoc process and the staff in the planning  
654 office struggles to give property owners and potential buyers of properties in the village  
655 guidance. The policies below identify components and decision points for the town that will lead  
656 to more precise and predictable standards and processes for proposed demolition in the village.

657

658 **5.3.5.1 Policy- Demolition Process and Standards**

659 The HAAC, Planning Commission, and Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to  
660 the WDB that identifies the process applicants who wish to demolish historic structures or  
661 portions of historic structures will follow. This amendment will include specific language about  
662 when and how the input of a historic preservation professional will be required where a  
663 demolition is proposed. This amendment will address when and how the retention of historic  
664 structures will be required.

665

666 **5.3.5.2 Policy- Requirements and Enforcement of “Demolition by Neglect” Standards**

667 The town currently has no rules related to properties that are allowed to fall into disrepair. This  
668 is a particular concern in the village where more expensive materials are often required when a  
669 structure is repaired, maintained, or modified. This can create a disincentive for some owners to  
670 perform basic maintenance (such as roof or siding replacement) that can lead to the decline of a  
671 structure to the point that it can no longer be saved. The HAAC, Planning Commission, and  
672 Selectboard will develop and adopt an amendment to the WDB that addresses standards and  
673 enforcement procedures for “demolition by neglect” situations. Town officials will also monitor  
674 buildings and work to connect their owners with funding opportunities to prevent deterioration.  
675 While this is a particular concern in the village, the town may wish to consider whether such  
676 requirements should be applied outside the VZD.

677

678

679 **6. Actions for Transportation: Sidewalks, Paths, and Streets**

680

681 **6.1. Introduction**

682 The street and sidewalk pattern in the village is a linear one, with most historic structures and  
683 sidewalks arranged along US2. This state highway carries a significant amount of motor vehicle,  
684 pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. The speed limit in the village along US2 is 30 miles per hour, but  
685 with the relative width and straight (alignment) of the road, it is easy for drivers to travel at  
686 higher rates of speed. The town and state have worked in recent years to add pedestrian  
687 crosswalks, and more recently, button-activated flashing yellow lights at some of those  
688 crosswalks to help ensure that pedestrians crossing the road are visible.

689

690 US2 in the village also experiences vehicle congestion during the week in the mornings, when  
691 commuter traffic and drivers accessing Central School are present; and during the afternoon  
692 “rush hour,” as commuters leaving the greater Burlington Area pass through and are generally  
693 slowed by the four-way stop at the US2/Oak Hill Road/ North Williston Road Intersection.

694

695 **6.2. Public input: What we learned about transportation in the Village**

696 In the public input related to traffic (for walkers and drivers) was that periodic vehicle congestion  
697 in the village was a concern but should be balanced with careful planning and design of street  
698 facilities. Citizens did express a desire that the village be a safe place to walk and cycle, and  
699 that the posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour be observed and enforced.

700

701 **6.3 Objective for Sidewalks, Paths, and Streets in Williston Village**

702 The town will work to ensure that sidewalks, paths, and streets in the village contribute  
703 functionally and aesthetically to the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while  
704 enhancing livability and historic character. These facilities not only allow people to circulate  
705 within the village, but also connect it to Taft Corners and its Growth Center, important school  
706 and recreation facilities, and open lands in town to the north and south. Stronger connections  
707 that can be used by all will enhance the vibrancy of the village as discussed in Chapter 7 of this  
708 plan.

709

710 **6.3.1 Policy to Calm Traffic in Williston Village**

711 The town will work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and other partners to add traffic-  
712 calming measures to Williston Village. Some of these may be tested out as short-term “tactical  
713 urbanism” projects. StreetSide landscaping, crosswalk “bump-outs,” street furniture such as the  
714 lampposts called for in previous streetscape projects in the village, and other strategies to calm  
715 traffic and create a pleasant and safe pedestrian environment will be pursued.

716

717 **6.3.2 Policy to Enhance the Visual Appeal of the Village**

718 Elements called for by the previous Village Streetscape efforts such as street trees, lamp posts  
719 and other street furniture will also be pursued to enhance the visual appeal of the village. New  
720 and existing overhead utilities will be placed or moved underground whenever possible.

721 Significant reconstruction of Williston Road in the village should include accommodations for the  
722 future underground location of existing utilities.

723

724 **6.3.3 Policy to Create Safe Connections Between the Village and the Rest of Williston**

725 In addition to Williston Road, many cyclists, runners, and walkers travel to and from the village  
726 via Oak Hill Road, North Williston Road, and Old Stage Road. Access to the open lands,  
727 recreation opportunities and scenic roads beyond the village will be enhanced by planning for  
728 multimodal facilities along these connecting roads. Connections to the transit and commerce  
729 options in Williston’s Growth Center will be enhanced.

730

731 **6.3.4 Policy to Ensure Transportation Improvements are in Balance with Village Scale**

732 Large-scale transportation improvements at intersections will be planned to balance safety,  
733 congestion relief, and the historic scale and feel of the village.

734

735

736

737 **7. Village Vibrancy**  
738 **7.1. Introduction**

739  
740 In addition to being a desirable place to live in town, Williston Village serves as the civic center  
741 of town. People come to the village to serve on various town committees, attend public  
742 meetings, use the town library, obtain passports, or pay tax and water bills. People come to the  
743 village to drop their children off at school, for sporting events, to play disc golf, run, bike, or  
744 skate on the rinks and paths contained within it. As of 2017, those people do not have a  
745 restaurant or coffee shop to go to, they cannot purchase a creemee or visit a gift shop. Their  
746 visit to the village is often limited to the single thing they came for, and then they leave, usually  
747 by car. The key to vibrancy is people. This section of the plan sets out goals and policies to help  
748 the town attract and retain visitors to the village to make it a more vibrant place.

749  
750 **7.2 Public Input- what we value about the Village**

751 During and beyond our public input sessions, many Williston citizens expressed a desire that  
752 the village offer more to do- that opportunities for events, food and drink, and other appropriately  
753 scaled destinations could add to a desired “vibrancy” for the village.

754  
755 **7.3 Objective for Vibrancy in Williston Village**

756 The town will work proactively with village residents, citizen groups, business owners, and  
757 others to allow appropriately-scaled events and businesses to locate in and contribute to the  
758 vibrancy of the village. Vibrancy is enhanced when visitors come to the village for one thing and  
759 stay to do another, for example, buying a creemee after a baseball game or visiting a shop after  
760 a doctor’s appointment or a trip to Town Hall. Village residents’ lives can be enhanced when not  
761 all commercial needs have to be met with a trip to Taft Corners.

762  
763 **7.3.1 Policy- Enhance the Village’s Role as a Center of Community Life in Town**

764 The town will consider ways town lands and buildings in the village can be used as centers of  
765 community connection. An example would be deciding to offer additional town services or  
766 extended business hours at Town Hall.

767  
768 **7.3.1.1 Policy- Maintain a Civic Presence in the Village**

769 The town plays an active role in historic preservation and vibrancy in the village by occupying  
770 and maintaining a number of historic sites and structures there. The town will ensure the village  
771 remains a civic center into the future by maintaining and upgrading its facilities in the village  
772 before considering moving them off-site.

773  
774 **7.3.1.2 Policy- Balance Scale and Intensity of Commercial Uses in the Village**

775 The town will allow flexibility to use all or a portion of a structure in the village for commercial  
776 purposes while considering how that use will relate to onsite or adjacent residential uses.  
777 Standards for commercial uses will be clarified so prospective business owners have a clearer  
778 picture and lower risks of when considering locating in the village.

779

780 **7.3.1.3 Policy- Enable Enhanced Special Events in the Village**

781 The town will consider additional programming, such as a periodic “food truck night” or “family  
782 night out” in the village as a way to draw town residents and others to the village at times they  
783 might not otherwise go there.

784

785 **7.3.1.4 Policy- Encourage Economic Development and Adaptive Reuse in the Village**

786 Village Center Designation provides tax write-offs and other incentives for commercial users to  
787 upgrade their structures. Many old homes in the village are not as suitable or desirable for  
788 residential occupancy but may make excellent studio, co-working, or office spaces if they are  
789 property converted. This can provide a property owner with the necessary funds to maintain the  
790 structure and its historic value. The town will develop educational materials and programming to  
791 inform commercial landowners in the village of the benefits of these tax relief programs.

792

793 **7.3.1.5 Policy- Explore Public Parking in the Village**

794 Commercial development in the village, which may be desirable to add vibrancy to the village  
795 and to encourage the adaptive reuse and restoration of historic properties, is often challenged  
796 by a lack of parking. The Town of Williston should explore ways to provide public parking in the  
797 village, including consideration of parking areas at town hall and possible opportunities for street  
798 parking. Designating some town parking as a park-and-ride facility would also meet some of the  
799 transportation goals in the village and allow more users in town to connect with rideshare and  
800 transit opportunities.

801

802 **7.3.1.6 Policy- Residential Vibrancy** The diversity of housing types in the village, from  
803 apartments to live-work buildings to large single-family homes, supports a community that is  
804 connected, neighborly, and walkable. The Town of Williston will explore amendments to the  
805 WDB that will support and enhance the diversity of housing types, compact development  
806 pattern, and mix of uses that make the village a great place to live.

807

808 **7.3.1.7 Policy- Connectivity and Town Lands to Enhance Vibrancy**

809 The village is connected and walkable in part due to formal and informal trails, walkways,  
810 sidewalks, and bike paths. The town will explore ways to enhance these connections by  
811 providing wayfinding, access to public property, and innovative uses of town land, like active  
812 farming and community gardens, that invite people to visit and pass through these important  
813 resources.

814

815

816

817 **8. Implementation**

818 **8.1. Introduction**

819 The purpose of this chapter is to condense the policies and objectives discussed in chapters 5,  
 820 6, and 7 of this plan into a summary table. This table identifies responsibilities, potential costs,  
 821 and a prospective timeline for each policy discussed in the plan. Town staff and volunteer  
 822 citizen groups will use this table to track progress as well as to review indicators that the policies  
 823 identified in the table are working.

824  
 825 **8.2. Implementation Table**  
 826

<b>Williston Village Master Plan- Implementation Table</b>		
<b>Objectives and Policies</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>5.3 Objectives for Development Standards in Williston Village</b>	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.1 Objective- Size, Mass and Scale	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.2 Objective- Relationship to the Street	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.3 Objective- Rear Lot and Mixed-Use Development	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.3.1 Policy- Rear Lot development Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.3.2 Policy- Mixed-Use Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4 Objective- Materials Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4.1 Policy- Historic Structure Materials Standard	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4.2 Policy- New Structure Materials Standard	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.4.3 Policy- New Addition and Outbuilding Materials Standard	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.5 Objective- Demolition	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.5.1 Policy- Proposed Demolition Process and Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
5.3.5.2 Policy- Requirements and Enforcement of "Demolition by Neglect" Standards	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
<b>6.3 Objectives for Sidewalks, Paths, and Streets in Williston Village</b>	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
6.3.1 Policy- Calm Traffic in Williston Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
6.3.2 Policy- Enhance Visual Appeal of the Village	Planning Staff	ongoing
6.3.3 Policy- Create Safe Connections Between the Village and the Rest of Williston	Planning Staff	ongoing

6.3.4 Policy- Ensure Transportation Improvements Are in Balance with Village Scale	Planning Staff	ongoing/ as needed
<b>7.3 Objectives for Vibrancy in Williston Village</b>	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
7.3.1 Policy- Enhance the Village's Role as a Center of Community Life in Town	Planning Staff	ongoing
7.3.1.1 Policy- Maintain a Civic Presence in the Village	Planning Staff	ongoing
7.3.1.2 Policy- Balance Scale and intensity of Commercial Uses in the Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
7.3.1.3 Policy- Enable Enhanced Special Events in the Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020
7.3.1.4 Policy- Encourage Economic Development and Adaptive Reuse in the Village	Planning Staff	FY2019-2020; ongoing
7.3.1.5 Policy- Explore Public Parking in the Village	Planning Staff	FY 2020-2021
7.3.1.6 Policy- Residential Vibrancy	Planning Staff	FY 2020-2021
7.3.1.7 Policy- Connectivity and Town Lands to Enhance Vibrancy	Planning Staff	FY 2020-2021

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828  
829  
830  
831

## **TOWN OF WILLISTON APPLICATION FOR GROWTH CENTER DESIGNATION**

### **Formal Approval Growth Center Designation**

**Expanded Downtown Board  
October 22, 2007**

---

#### **Introduction**

During the months of July, August and September of 2007, the Planning Coordination Group (PCG) worked directly with the Town of Williston to complete the application materials for Growth Center Designation. In order to prepare a recommendation on Williston's application for the Expanded Downtown Board, the PCG met on August 14<sup>th</sup>, August 30<sup>th</sup> and September 26<sup>th</sup> of this year to review, discuss and deliberate on Williston's application.

Based upon a review of the application materials and the PCG's recommendations, the Expanded Board voted 8-2 to formally approve Williston's application with conditions set forth below, and award growth center designation at a warned public meeting on October 22, 2007. Expanded Board members voting to affirm: Kevin Dorn, Steve Sease, Peter Young, John Hall, Mel Adams, Michael McDonough, Tim Halverson, and Bill Fraser. Expanded Board Members voting not to affirm: Peter Gregory and Michael Munson.

In doing so, the Board also voted to expand the area of the growth center to include the Southwest Section, part of the original application which had been removed by the Town prior to bringing the final application package to the Expanded Downtown Board. This Board action resulted in the re-inclusion of Tax Parcels 7:106:34, 12:106:32, 13:106:27, 13:106:28, and 13:106:30, an area of approximately 50 acres that had been included in the original application, but was removed prior in the town's final application. This action resulted in no change in the number of residential units that will be accommodated within the growth center, but added 160,000 square feet of potential commercial development to the growth center, resulting in an increase from just 60% to 65% of the anticipated nonresidential growth through 2027.

The Expanded Board voted to enlarge the proposed growth center to include the lots in



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the Southwest Section since those lots currently contain over 300,000 square feet of existing commercial/retail space and have potential for new development and redevelopment in a manner that will promote a mixture of uses and other land use elements, making this area consistent with the statutory definition of a growth center. Inclusion of these lots will facilitate the generation of potential Tax Incremental Financing (T.I.F.) revenues from development in this area in order to help pay for infrastructure improvements that will become necessary in the future. Furthermore, the Board believes that Interstate 89 forms the natural, logical southern boundary to Williston's Growth Center as the CIRC Highway right of way forms the natural, logical eastern boundary.

Based upon a review of the statutory designation criteria (24 V.S.A. Section 2791), the Expanded Board hereby approves Williston's application, based upon the following findings and conclusions with attached conditions. In making this designation, the Board finds:

(A) that the growth center proposal meets the definition of a growth center established in 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12);

(B) that the applicant has identified important natural resources and historic resources within the proposed growth center and the anticipated impacts on those resources, and has proposed mitigation;

(C) that the approved municipal plan and the regional plan both have been updated during any five-year plan readoption that has taken place since the date the secretary of agriculture, food and markets has developed guidelines in compliance with 6 V.S.A. § 8, and such guidelines have been used to identify areas proposed for agriculture, and have been designed so as to avoid the conversion of primary agricultural soils, wherever possible;

(D)(i) that the applicant has a regionally confirmed planning process and an approved municipal plan, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4350;

(ii) that the approved plan contains provisions that are appropriate to implement the designated growth center proposal;

(iii) that the applicant has adopted bylaws in conformance with the municipal plan that implement the provisions in the plan that pertain to the designated growth center;

(iv) that the approved plan and the implementing bylaws further the goal of retaining a more rural character in the areas surrounding the growth center, to the extent that a more rural character exists, and provide reasonable protection for important natural resources and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center;

(E) that the applicant has adopted a capital budget and program in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4426, and that existing and planned infrastructure is adequate to implement the growth center;

(F) that the growth center is of an appropriate size sufficient to accommodate a majority of the projected population and development over a 20-year planning period in a manner that is consistent with the definition under 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12), and that the growth center does not encompass an excessive area of land that would involve the unnecessary extension of infrastructure to service low-density development or result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development at the conclusion of the 20-year planning period;

(G)(i) that the growth center will support and reinforce any existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located in the municipality or adjacent municipality by accommodating concentrated residential neighborhoods and a mix and scale of commercial, civic, and industrial uses consistent with the anticipated demand for those uses within the municipality and region;

(ii) that the proposed growth center growth cannot reasonably be achieved within an existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located within the applicant municipality.

These findings are discussed in greater detail below, in the format provided by the *Growth Center Planning Manual* approved by the Board in February 2007.

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### **Whether the Growth Center Proposal meets the definition of a growth center established in 24 VSA Section 2791(12)**

Prior to submitting the final application package to the Expanded Board, the original application was amended by the Town of Williston to remove the Southwest Section (discussed above) and approximately 100 acres of land (to the east of the growth center including the CIRC Highway right-of-way) that had previously formed a physical connection with the Village of Williston. In addition, a portion of the future park and open space lands north and northwest of Allen Brook School were deleted. The conserved lands of the Mahan farm were deleted. With the redrawn boundary, Williston's proposed growth center and its designated village center are no longer contiguous to each other and thus the Board found it necessary to address the "adjacency" requirement in 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(A)(ii). The statute allows for a growth center to be noncontiguous with a designated village center, "where contiguity is precluded by natural or physical constraints." *Id.* When this is the case, the village center must be "close to and not widely separated from the majority of the lands within the designated growth center." *Id.* In addition, the statute requires that "noncontiguous land included as part of a growth center . . . exhibit strong land use, economic, infrastructure, and transportation relationships to the designated . . . village center;" that it "be planned to function as a single, integrated growth center; and be essential to accommodate a majority of growth anticipated by the municipality . . . over a 20-year period." *Id.*

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The applicant has demonstrated that there are natural and physical constraints separating the village and the proposed growth center. These include (1) a stream corridor and associated floodplain and wetlands, (2) conserved lands, and (3) the R.O.W. reserved for the Circumferential Highway. Thus, contiguity is precluded by natural and physical constraints. The Board, with one dissenting member as noted below, also finds that the village center is “close to and not widely separated from the majority of the lands within the growth center.”

One Board member, Michael Munson, dissents on this point, and would not find that the proposed Growth Center meets the adjacency requirement. This Board member finds that the growth center is widely separated from the village center and that it does not meet the statutory requirement that “adjacent areas may include lands lying close to and not widely separated from the majority of the lands within the designated growth center.” In addition, this Board member believes that the statutory language does not authorize a growth center that is entirely separate from its associated downtown, village center, or new town center, which is what Williston has proposed. In his opinion, determining that this requirement has been met sets a bad precedent.

The Board recognizes that Williston’s proposed a growth center includes an area that has already been subject to intense development pressure outside of its historic village. Much of this development occurred in its present location due to the proximity of Interstate 89 and the extension of municipal water and sewer a number of years ago. In order to render a positive determination under the “adjacency” requirement in the statutory definition of “growth center,” we have relied on the following information and analysis.

MAP 1 IN THE APPLICATION HIGHLIGHTS THE OPEN SPACE THAT OCCUPIES MORE THAN 70% OF THE CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE VILLAGE AND TAFTS CORNER. IT ALSO SHOWS THE CIRC HIGHWAY R.O.W. MAP 5 PROVIDES MORE DETAIL OF THE RIPARIAN AND WETLAND RESOURCES THAT LIMIT DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THIS CORRIDOR.

There is strong connectivity between Williston’s growth center and its historic village through transportation, infrastructure, economic and land use links. There are multi-modal transportation links and the transportation relationship between the two centers will be made stronger with the completion of the proposed trail system and the establishment of transit service between the two.

MAP 10 IN THE APPLICATION SHOWS THE EXISTING BIKE PATH, AS WELL AS ADDITIONAL PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE VILLAGE AND TAFTS CORNER. MAP 11 SHOWS THE EXISTING BUS ROUTE THAT SERVES WILLISTON.

The Chittenden County Transportation Association (CCTA) is considering adding a new route and the Town of Williston has been encouraged to pursue this with CCTA.

Williston Village and the approved growth center are already fully served by the same infrastructure systems, including water, sewer, fire and rescue, police, roads, and schools. The application has demonstrated that the economic, political and social relationships be-

tween the two centers are quite strong. Residents of the village shop and seek entertainment in the proposed growth center and those who live or do business at Tafts Corner find themselves going to the Village for school, library and other civic functions.

The proposed land uses in the proposed growth center and Williston Village have a strong, complementary relationship. It is also clear from the application materials that the form and function of the two centers are complementary, and at the same time, they do not compete. Activities between the two centers, which are less than a mile apart, are well integrated and will become more integrated over time.

On this basis, the Expanded Board (with the one dissent noted above) finds that Williston's Growth Center meets the "adjacency" requirement (to a designated village center), as defined in the statute since there are significant natural barriers and the approved growth center exhibits very strong relationships to the designated village center.

SEE PAGE 3 OF WILLISTON'S ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS DATED SEPTEMBER 26, 2007 FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE VILLAGE AND THE GROWTH CENTER.

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### **Rationale for Growth Center**

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1. *The proposed growth center growth cannot reasonably be achieved within an existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located within the applicant municipality (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(G)(ii)).*
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Based on the municipality's 20-year projections for population, housing and commercial growth (SEE DETAILS IN APPENDIX A IN THE APPLICATION), it is clear that the majority of the projected growth cannot reasonably occur within the existing designated village center within the municipality. The applicant demonstrated that the town plan and regulations allow for less than 3% of the anticipated growth over the next 20 years, in order to maintain the desired character of the historic village. Furthermore, there is very little vacant land left in the village.

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### **Size and Configuration of Growth Center**

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2. *The proposed growth center is of an appropriate size sufficient to accommodate a majority of the projected population and development over a 20-year planning period. The proposed growth center does not encompass an excessive area of land that would involve the unnecessary extension of infrastructure to service low-density development or result in a scattered or low-density pattern of development at the conclusion of the 20-year period (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(F)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by development that is not serviced by municipal infrastructure or that requires the extension of municipal infrastructure across undeveloped lands in a manner that would extend service to lands located outside compact village and urban centers (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(l)(iv)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(l)(v)).*

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The application has provided a table and a map that summarizes the amount of land within the proposed growth center, which consists of 724 acres. This was prior to the inclusion of the Southwest section discussed above in the Introduction of this document. The applicant has been asked to submit a new map and revised statistics about the revised area.

SEE THE ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED SEPTEMBER 26, 2007.

According to the applicant, the growth center with the new boundary will accommodate 70% of anticipated residential growth and about 60% of the anticipated commercial and industrial growth within the twenty year planning period. 25% of the land is undeveloped, and half of that is not available or un-suitable for development. While the proposed area is only 18 acres larger than the minimum land area needed to accommodate the anticipated growth over twenty years, the “excess” land is not in parcels that can be easily eliminated from the boundaries of the growth center. The character of the development will consist predominately of infill at a higher density than the area of town outside the boundary. As stated above, the town is allowing increased development and redevelopment in an already developed area.

Williston shares the sewage treatment plant capacity of the Tri-Town plant located in Essex Junction. The Town’s wastewater is pumped across the Winooski River to the plant. According to the Sewer and Water Hook-Up Fees (Report) conducted for the Town of Williston (completed on March 5, 2007):

*The Town’s current treatment plant capacity, including the most recent plant ex-*

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*pansion, is 980,000 gpd. Some of this is currently committed but not yet used. Not including reserve capacity, it is estimated that approximately 400,000 gpd of new treatment capacity will be needed within the build-out period [50 years]. Report at p. 4*

Existing water and sewer lines extend throughout Williston's growth center. According to the Report, the most recent "twelve month average flow rate" for wastewater in Williston was 705,264 gpd in January of 2007. The average annual sewage allotment in the Town of Williston is 2,029 gpd for new commercial and industrial development. There is sewage capacity that has been awarded to Taft Corners Park and to Maple Tree Place which has not been used and which will be available to support future development in these areas. Existing sewage treatment capacity is available through 2015 with the phased approval of 80 residential dwelling units per year and phased commercial and industrial development.

The Town concedes that more capacity will be needed for continuing development beyond 2015 and through 2027 (which includes the 20 year span for growth center designation). The Town, however, is in the process of planning for the necessary increase in capacity. The Town expects to adopt a plan, including financing mechanisms, for the expansion of its treatment capacity before the first five-year review after growth center designation.

The Board specifically finds that designation of the proposed growth center will not result in the installation of scattered separate water and sewage systems. The Board will require that a specific plan for increased capacity be in place within five years following designation.

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### **Appropriateness of Growth Center**

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3. *The proposed growth center will support and reinforce any existing designated downtown, village center, or new town center located in the municipality or adjacent municipality by accommodating concentrated residential neighborhoods and a mix and scale of commercial, civic, and industrial uses consistent with the anticipated demand for those uses within the municipality and region (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(G)(i)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to develop compact mixed-use centers at a scale appropriate for the community and the region (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(B)).*

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The proposed growth center and existing designated village center are complementary to each other, one exists as a regional commercial center and the serves as the seat of government. A bus service between the growth center and the village center will strengthen that linkage. There have been discussions between town officials and CCTA for the town to join the transit authority. CCTA is also considering the addition of a route that connects Williston Village with Taft Corners and Burlington. The town expects these events to happen within five years. The town is also planning some bike/pedestrian infrastructure improvements along Route 2 between the two centers, as well as a primitive path that parallels I-89. In terms of cultural connections, the Town is gradually integrating civic life into the Tafts Corner area. The Board will require that the Town make every effort to join CCTA and to work with CCTA on developing a new route that connects the two centers within two years of designation.

Due to absence of regional forecasts of the demand for type and scale of anticipated retail activity, it is difficult to assess how proposed growth in Williston compares to potential regional demand and what the impact will be on neighboring growth areas, designated downtowns, and village centers. The application has adequately demonstrated that the major retail stores in Williston are of a different nature than the local businesses in Essex Junction and the specialty stores in Burlington. It is recognized, also, that economic impacts related to large development projects are often reviewed in Act 250 under the economic impact criteria. 10 V.S.A. subdivisions 6086(a) 7, 9(A) and 9(K).

No information was submitted to suggest that the designation of Williston's Growth Center will have deleterious effect on the existing designated village center in Williston or any designated village center, downtown or new town center located in an adjacent municipality.

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### **Development Pattern**

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4. *The proposed growth center promotes densities of land development that are significantly greater than existing and allowable densities in parts of the municipality that are outside a designated downtown, village center, growth center, or new town center, or, in the case of municipalities characterized predominately by areas of existing dense urban settlement, it encourages infill development and redevelopment of historically developed land (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(iv)).*

*The proposed growth center results in compact concentrated areas of land development that are served by existing or planned infrastructure and are separated by rural countryside or working landscape (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vi)).*

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*The proposed growth center is planned to maintain the historic development pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(A)). The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by scattered development located outside of compact urban and village centers that is excessively land consumptive (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(l)(i)).*

*The approved plan and the implementing bylaws further the goal of retaining a more rural character in the areas surrounding the growth center, to the extent that a more rural character exists (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)(iv)).*

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Residential densities within the growth center are higher than other parts of the town, except in the older residential subdivisions west of Route 2A. They range from 1.17 to almost 10 units per acre. The new mixed-use development in the Tafts Corner area will be built out at 7-10 units per acre. SEE MAP 5 IN THE APPLICATION.

In terms of the areas outside the growth center, 75% of the Town is considered rural. The town has in place regulations that protect the character and resources of the area outside the growth center. Provisions include confining development to 25% or less of the site on parcels larger than 10 acres (encouraging the undeveloped portions to include habitat areas, visually significant lands, trails, etc.) and requiring comprehensive performance standards for cluster size and spacing, and design guidelines to minimize the visual impact of rural development. Williston also has funded a purchase of development rights program that has been used to conserve more than 1,200 acres of farmland and wildlife habitat. MAP 3 SHOWS THESE AND OTHER CONSERVED LANDS. As stated above, water and sewer lines are confined mainly to the village center and to the growth center so that designation of the proposed growth center will not result in the installation of separate or scattered water and sewage systems. Permitting new development is constrained by sewage treatment capacity (80 residential units/year and limited commercial growth), resulting in a growth management phasing system built into the town's bylaws. This system, which is currently embodied in interim amendments to the town's subdivision regulations, encourages development within the growth center.

Williston is in the process of rewriting its bylaws, and will fully commence the adoption process in three separate initiatives this fall. The Town expects that some of the changes should be effective by early 2008, with the remaining changes effective by the spring of 2008. It has been demonstrated by the Town that the current bylaws have been effective in providing for mixed use in the proposed growth center consistent with the type of development that would be expected in a designated growth center. However, the proposed bylaws will accomplish growth center objectives in a more comprehensive manner. The Board will require that Williston adopt the proposed new unified development bylaw that will more comprehensively implement and promote the growth center characteristics of



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24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B) within one year of obtaining designation and that the impacts on development will be evaluated at the time of the first five year review. The Board is comfortable with designation prior to the adoption of the new bylaw, because of the “pending ordinance rule” which was codified by the Vermont Legislature in 2001.

Under 24 V.S.A. Section 4449(d) [formerly 4443(d)], if a public hearing concerning the adoption or amendment of a bylaw has been noticed, the administrative officer is required to review any new application filed after the date of the notice under the proposed bylaw or amendment for a period of 150 days following the notice. If the new bylaw or amendment has not been adopted by the conclusion of the 150-day period (approximately five months), or if the proposed bylaw or amendment is rejected, then the permit shall be reviewed under existing bylaws and ordinances.

The Board relies on the fact that the proposed amendments to the applicable Williston ordinances will be binding on current applicants during the adoption process and fully expects that these amendments will be formally adopted in advance of the one year deadline that will be set by condition.

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### **Diversity of Development**

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5. *The proposed growth center incorporates a mix of uses that typically include or have the potential to include the following: retail, office, services, and other commercial, civic, recreational, industrial, and residential uses, including affordable housing and new residential neighborhoods, within a densely developed, compact area (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(i)). The proposed growth center is planned to support a diversity of viable businesses in downtowns and villages (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(G)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to provide for housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each community (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(H)).*

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The application demonstrates that there is and will continue to be a variety of uses located within the growth center, including residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and parks and other open space. SEE MAP 6 IN THE APPLICATION. There is also vacant land available, most of which will be developed with mixed uses. While some of the areas within the growth center are currently zoned mixed-use, the proposed bylaw changes will extend the mixed-use zoning to all parts of the growth center except existing residential neighborhoods. The bylaws also protect natural and historic resources within the growth center

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Williston has tools in place that will encourage the provision of more housing choices, including housing that is more affordable for residents and the workforce. Housing choices range from conventional single-family houses and duplex condominiums to rental apartments in large buildings and flats above commercial uses. More than 50 affordable dwelling units are at some stage in the approval process and, the town is working with the Champlain Housing Trust to study the feasibility of putting approximate 16 affordable units on a parcel it owns.

The town provides direct incentives for affordable housing in the growth center by granting bonus points in the residential phasing allocation system to developers that include affordable units in their projects. This works because only a limited number of units are allowed each year, so the permitting is competitive. CHAPTER 5 OF THE TOWN PLAN PROVIDES A USEFUL, BRIEF EXPLANATION OF WILLISTON'S GROWTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. Housing affordability and diversity account for half of the score in the growth center, and residential development in the growth center takes priority over residential development in other areas. The result is that new projects in the growth center will be proposing 20-30% affordable units.

The Board finds that Williston's growth center is well designed with implementing ordinances to promote a diversity of land uses consistent with the legislative intent of Act 183 and with the specific language of 24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(i).

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## Capital Budget and Program

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6. *The applicant has adopted a capital budget and program in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4426 and the existing and planned infrastructure is adequate to implement the growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(E)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to balance growth with the availability of economic and efficient public utilities and services (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(F)).*

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The application includes a Capital Budget and Program that indicates the town is planning in the short term for facilities that will support the growth center, including a local road network, water and sewer improvements, and fire and police facilities. Much of this will be paid for by local impact fees. For the longer term, the town is actively pursuing studies that will develop the information needed to include in future Capital Budgets and Programs. These studies supplement the detailed direction provided in the town plan and current Program. For example, the town will be embarking on a study in the coming fiscal year that will look at the best way to acquire or build more sewage treatment capacity.

The town just completed two studies on impact fees, one specific to transportation impact fees. The town selectboard will start reviewing these studies with plans to adopt a new impact fee schedule. The new fees will be able to generate a lot more revenues that can be used for necessary infrastructure improvements, and thus are important to the success of the growth center.

The Board will require, as a condition of growth center approval, that Williston adopt a revised impact fee schedule, as recommended in the consultant report, within one year of formal designation.

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## **Public Spaces**

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7. *The proposed growth center incorporates existing or planned public spaces that promote social interaction, such as public parks, civic buildings (e.g., post office, municipal offices), community gardens, and other formal and informal places to gather (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(ii)).*
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Most of the town's civic buildings are located in the Village Center, which complements the functions of the growth center. However, there are other public spaces in the growth center including parks, Vermont Technical College, the post office, and one of the town's schools. The Green at Maple Tree Place and the circulation around it is privately owned and maintained, and thus serves as quasi-public space. Three other proposed greens will be developed within the approved growth center under the new bylaw and will be "privately maintained public spaces."

The street system will consist of private and public ownership. Currently many of the internal streets within the developments are private while others will be public. The proposed grid street network will be public.

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## **Spatial Pattern**

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8. *The proposed growth center is organized around one or more central places or focal points, such as prominent buildings of civic, cultural, or spiritual significance or a village*

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*green, common, or square (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(iii)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by linear development along well-traveled roads and highways that lacks depth, as measured from the highway (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(v)).*

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Focal points in the growth center include several greens, Vermont Technical College, the U.S. Post Office, and the Allen Brook School.

ALL OF THESE FOCAL POINTS ARE IDENTIFIED ON MAP 9 IN THE APPLICATION, SHOWING AN APPROXIMATELY 10 MINUTE WALKING DISTANCE AROUND EACH FOCAL POINT.

The Board discussed the appropriateness of multiple focal points, and whether this compromises the character and definition of a growth center. The statute requires that the growth center should be organized around “one or more central places or focal points.”

The Board finds that, through the implementation of Williston’s growth center, multiple focal points will evolve over time to serve various public needs. In the interim, Williston’s historic village can be considered a primary focal point for the growth center.

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## **Transportation and Other Infrastructure**

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9. *The proposed growth center is supported by existing or planned investments in infrastructure and encompasses a circulation system that is conducive to pedestrian and other non-vehicular traffic and that incorporates, accommodates and supports the use of public transit systems (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(v)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to enable choice in modes of transportation (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(C)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by development that limits transportation options, especially for pedestrians (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(I)(ii)).*

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There was some debate as to whether the infrastructure will be adequate to support the growth center, both in terms of wastewater and transportation (including transit). Funding for needed improvements still needs to be worked out and there was a discussion as to

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whether Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) revenue would be sufficient to fund the necessary improvements.

The Town of Williston has indicated an interest in joining the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) and working with the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) for the purpose of identifying necessary traffic improvements and to seek funding for those improvements, including improvements at Exit 12 on Interstate 89. Williston will continue to monitor and collect data on traffic and wastewater demand. The Town will also report on the effectiveness of the new zoning ordinance to promote infill in the Taft Corners area of the growth center, as well as the mixed use commercial district. It will become increasingly important to control the timing of future growth to infrastructure improvements. Since most of the development within Williston's growth center is subject to the jurisdiction of Act 250, those infrastructure requirements will be closely scrutinized in that process.

The Town will seek to have the necessary traffic improvements added to the MPO's Transportation Plan within five years and VTrans' Traffic Improvement Plan (TIP) within ten years. Progress on these initiatives will be reviewed by the Extended Board five years after designation.

The Board desires to make it clear that any improvements on the State highway system, proposed by the Town as part of designation approval, cannot be guaranteed by the State of Vermont. Any proposed improvements will need to be prioritized by the MPO and must compete on a statewide basis for available funding. The Expanded Board can require the Town to seek improvements, but cannot obligate the State with ultimate responsibility for completing those improvements.

The Board will require the Town of Williston to work with VTrans and the MPO to explore what improvements can be made to mitigate the traffic conditions within the Route 2A corridor and surrounding area. These improvements may include, but are limited to, improvements at Exit 12, expanded public transit and bicycle & pedestrian improvements. A plan for improvements should be developed that includes monitoring performance standards. The Town, in conjunction with the MPO, will continue to monitor conditions and report back to the Board in five years including what has been accomplished and what is proposed for future action.

In the meantime, VTrans plans to adjust existing project prioritization formulae to reflect legislative intent to give additional consideration and priority to projects located in Designated Downtowns and Designated Growth Centers. Ultimately, the system to be used will compare the ranking of each transportation project based on such factors as safety, cost, condition, impact on the overall network, etc.

One Board member, Peter Gregory, has the opinion that the infrastructure requirements have not been met; he is concerned about the lack of planned infrastructure over the 20

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year period, with no specific mechanisms in place to make sure that the infrastructure will keep pace with the growth. He stated he could not support an application that doesn't meet the minimum requirements.

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## **Natural and Historic Resources**

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10. *The applicant has identified important natural resources and historic resources within the proposed growth center, anticipated impacts on those resources and has proposed mitigation (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(B)).*

*The approved plan and the implementing bylaws provide reasonable protection for important natural resources and historic resources located outside the proposed growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)(iv)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to protect the state's important environmental, natural and historic features, including natural areas, water quality, scenic resources, and historic sites and districts (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(D)).*

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The application identifies both natural resources and historic structures, both within and outside the growth center.

FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, SEE MAPS 3 AND 4 IN THE APPLICATION, AND FOR HISTORIC STRUCTURES, SEE THE ON THE UNNUMBERED MAPS THAT WERE PROVIDED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE ORIGINAL APPLICATION).

The Town has both regulatory and non-regulatory tools in place to help protect these resources, including open space development regulations, the town's competitive growth management system, design review, town acquisition (using the town's Environment Reserve Fund), and Planned Residential Development tools (PRD's).

The Town addressed potential impacts on archeological resources. While most of the land proposed for development in the growth center is already under Act 250 jurisdiction (SEE ACT 250 MAP IN THE PACKET SUBMITTED AT THE END OF AUGUST), Chapter 117 of Title 24 does not require towns to address archeological resources in "approved" town plans or implementing ordinances. Therefore, whatever is required for growth centers probably represents the first time towns have been asked to address archeological concerns. Since most of the land in the growth center has already been subject to some level of archeological study through the Act 250 process, a compilation of that data and any restrictions

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or conditions imposed through that process should prove to be an excellent way to determine how potential problems could be addressed at the town level.

The Town of Williston has proposed adding a policy calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources to the town plan and the Board will make this a requirement of growth center approval. Such policy must be added within five years following formal designation to coincide with the first five year review by the Board.

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## Agriculture

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11. *The most recently adopted guidelines of the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets have been used to identify areas proposed for agriculture and the proposed growth center has been designed to avoid the conversion of primary agricultural soils, wherever possible (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(C)).*

*The proposed growth center serves to strengthen agricultural and forest industries and is planned to minimize conflicts of development with these industries (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(E)).*

*The proposed growth center will result in a settlement pattern that, at full build-out, is not characterized by the fragmentation of farm and forest land (24 V.S.A. § 2791(13)(1)(iii)).*

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Williston's growth center has been planned to avoid conflicts with agriculture and impacts on agricultural soils to the maximum extent practicable. However, it is inevitable that much of the new development within the growth center will occur on primary agricultural soils. Act 183 has addressed the potential of undue adverse impacts on primary agricultural soils within designated growth centers and provides for automatic offsite mitigation for those impacts. This mitigation occurs through a mitigation payment to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) based upon the number of acres of impacted soils and the prevailing cost of purchasing development rights with the geographical area. Since Williston has been granted the interim agricultural benefits under Section 6093 of Title 10 (fixed ratio of 1:1), there are several projects within Williston's proposed growth center that are currently taking advantage of offsite mitigation which will allow the full development of those properties on primary agricultural soils.

The town also protects agricultural soils outside the growth center. Almost 90% of Williston's remaining farmland is in the Agricultural/Rural Residential Zoning District, where there is substantial regulatory protection from conversion to non-farm use.

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SEE MAP 4 IN THE APPLICATION.

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## Planning Process

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12. *The applicant has a regionally confirmed planning process and an approved municipal plan. The approved plan contains provisions that are appropriate to implement the designated growth center proposal. The applicant has adopted bylaws in conformance with the municipal plan that implement the provisions in the plan that pertain to the designated growth center (24 V.S.A. § 2793c(e)(1)(D)).*

*The proposed growth center is planned to reinforce the purposes of 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151. The proposed growth center is planned in accordance with the planning and development goals under 24 V.S.A. § 4302 (24 V.S.A. § 2791(12)(B)(vii) and (viii)).*

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The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission approved Williston's municipal plan and planning process on March 27, 2006. The new Town Plan contains provisions that support the approved growth center, and the town's adopted bylaws are in conformance with the plan. The newly proposed bylaws will further implement the town's growth center.

The Board has reviewed the statutory requirements for growth center designation and recognizes that these requirements closely parallel the Act 250 criteria and Act 250's Capability and Development Plan, as well as the goals of 24 V.S.A. § 4302, Vermont's Planning and Development Law.

Thus the Board has determined that Williston's growth center has been planned in accordance with the goals in 24 V.S.A. § 4302 and will reinforce the purposes of Act 250.

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## Expanded Board Approval

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The Board finds that Williston has successfully demonstrated that its growth center meets the criteria in statute for growth center designation as discussed herein. Williston has demonstrated that it is working hard to concentrate compact development within the growth center and this

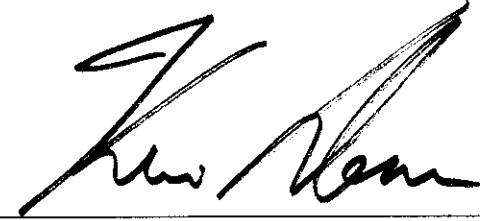


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center will easily accommodate a majority of the Town's growth over the next 20 years. Williston has also adequately demonstrated that they have the tools in place protect important resource lands outside of the growth center. The Board hereby approves Williston's application on a vote of 8-2, based on these findings and the following conditions:

1. Williston shall prepare and submit the final growth center boundary map reflecting the decision of the Board to include the Southwest section as discussed in the Introduction of this document. This submission shall include supporting materials that provide a revised description of the growth center, including acreage, amount of projected development, and other significant information
2. Williston shall develop a comprehensive plan, including financing mechanisms, for the expansion of the Town's sewage treatment plant capacity before the first five-year review following formal growth center designation. The Town shall also continue to implement its growth management program consistent with maintaining adequate reserve capacities. The Town shall monitor wastewater flows over the next five years and shall report its findings to the Expanded Board and provide a plan for future sewage treatment capacity.
3. Williston shall make every effort to join CCTA (which includes actually applying to join) and work with CCTA on developing a new route that connects the two centers within two years of designation.
4. Williston shall adopt its proposed unified development bylaw that will more comprehensively implement the provisions in the Town Plan that pertain to the designated growth center within one year of obtaining designation. The Town shall evaluate the successful implementation of the unified development bylaw and achieving its purposes and report to the Expanded Board at the time of the first five year review.
5. Williston shall adopt a new traffic impact fee schedule and ordinance consistent with consultant recommendations within one year of obtaining designation in order to generate revenues to address future infrastructure needs.
6. Williston shall continue to work with VTrans and the CCMPO to explore what improvements can be made to mitigate the traffic conditions on the Route 2A corridor and surrounding area. These improvements may include, but are not limited to, improvements at Exit 12, expanded public transit and bicycle & pedestrian improvements. A plan for improvements should be developed that includes performance standards that can be used for monitoring. The Town and MPO should continue to monitor traffic conditions as well as progress in alternative forms of transportation and report back to the Board in five years. They should also report on what has been accomplished and what is proposed in the plan.
7. Williston shall develop a policy, and incorporate it into their Town Plan, calling for the identification and protection of archaeological resources prior to the first five-year review of its growth center designation by the Expanded Board.

NOTE: Growth Center designation is not intended in any way to suggest that the State of Vermont is making any financial commitment to provide funding for any of the improvements required to be made or studied in one or more of the conditions of designation. It should be understood that any condition imposed by the Board applies to the Town of Williston and shall not obligate in any way other planning organizations or State Agencies.



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Kevin Dorn, Chair  
Expanded Downtown Board

11-16-07

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