

Town of Johnson Municipal Development Plan 2006 - 2010

Adopted by the Selectboard on August 21, 2006

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The Johnson Planning Commission

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The Lamoille County Planning Commission

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VISION

Johnson Vermont is a rural town nestled in the Green Mountains at the confluence of two rivers. Johnson is within commuting distance of Vermont's two most important cities, Burlington and Montpelier. Despite that proximity, a substantial portion of the town's residents live and work within Johnson itself. Diverse employment opportunities, range of affordable housing, cultural resources and four-season recreation afford the town's residents an enviable quality of life.

The town of Johnson is a family-oriented community that is culturally enriched because it is home to a fine elementary school, Johnson State College and the Vermont Studio Center. Together these institutions offer diverse learning opportunities and sound preparation for success in many fields, not the least of which is the creative arts.

This plan envisions the growth and development of Johnson's considerable assets. In recreation, this plan anticipates a town-wide network of bikeways and pathways that will include access to town waterways. In land management, this plan is dedicated to the balance of sound environmental stewardship with public and private interests in recreation, economic development and conservation. As a result, the plan sets the tone for responsible growth that makes room for new citizens and building without compromising the high quality of life that makes Johnson attractive.

In cultural promotion, this plan supports the continuation of the activities, events and celebrations that connect and enhance the Johnson community. This plan also seeks to base Johnson's future upon sound facilities, infrastructure, and policies that will maintain and ensure Johnson's high standard of public welfare, health and safety.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE MUNICIPALITY

Johnson is a town of 3,274 people nestled in the heart of Lamoille County. The town is comprised of approximately 29,492 acres or 46 square miles. Mountains and forest dominate Johnson's landscape and the spine of the Green Mountains winds through the town northeast to southwest. Butternut mountain is the highest peak that falls entirely within the town. The peak of the 3,715-foot Sterling Mountain (also known as White Face Mountain) is located just south of the Johnson town line.

The Lamoille and Gihon rivers are a major recreational and scenic resource. In the past, the Gihon provided the foundation for Johnson's water-powered mill economy. The first generating plant in town was located on the falls just north of the Power House Bridge. Johnson Woolen Mills dates back to 1836, when sheep outnumbered cows, and to date remains a core feature of the Johnson Village business district. Around the turn of the century, talc was the prominent industry in Johnson. Today, trees continue to be Johnson's largest crop – for fuel, saw logs, pulp, Christmas trees and maple products. Stowe and Smugglers Notch Ski Resorts located in neighboring communities of Stowe and Cambridge are major contributors to the regional economy.

Johnson, granted in 1782 to Samuel Johnson and others, was chartered as a town in January, 1792. In 1856, Johnson annexed part of the town of Sterling, and in 1894 the Village of Johnson was incorporated. Today, the Town and Village of Johnson remain separate governmental bodies.

Johnson Village represents the community's cultural, commercial and institutional center. The Village is a compact community that is home to a number of unique businesses, heritage buildings and residential neighborhoods. The Village has long been a center for education and today approximately 44% of in-town jobs are in educational services. Johnson State College's roots go back to Johnson Academy School, founded in 1828. Today, Johnson State College has approximately 1,700 students.

The Vermont Studio Center, a nonprofit, year-round, international creative community annually serving 600 artists and writers from across the country and around the world started in Johnson in 1984.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The principal purpose for a municipal development plan is to be a guide for the achievement of a community vision. The plan is not a regulation, rather, it is a document meant to state a desired direction for growth and development.

The framework for planning in Vermont has been established by two major pieces of legislation. The first is 24 V.S.A. chapter 117, the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, also known as the Vermont Planning and Development Act or

Chapter 117. The second is 10 V.S.A. chapter 151, known as Act 250, which regulates land use and development projects. A municipality is not required to plan, but is enabled by statute to develop and adopt a municipal plan. If a community chooses to do so, Chapter 117 sets forth the elements that are required as part of a municipal plan.

An adopted plan has the potential for many uses. The Planning Manual for Vermont Municipalities recognizes the following uses of the plan:

A long-term guide: The plan is a long-term guide by which to measure and evaluate public and private proposals that affect the future physical, social, and economic environment of the community.

A basis for community programs and decision-making: The plan is a guide to help achieve community goals. Information in the plan is used for developing the recommendations contained in a capital budget and program or an impact fee program, for establishing a community development program, and for providing direction and content of other public and private local initiatives, such as, farmland protection, recreation development and housing.

A basis for municipal regulatory actions: The plan serves as a foundation for the provisions of zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, an official map, shoreland bylaws, and flood hazard area bylaws, and as a guide for the decisions made under these regulations.

A source of information: The plan is a valuable source of information for local boards, commissions, citizens and businesses, and other governmental organizations, such as, neighboring towns, state agencies and regional planning commissions.

A source for planning studies: Few plans can address every issue in sufficient detail. Therefore, many plans often recommend further studies to develop policies or strategies to meet a specific need.

A standard for review at the state and regional levels: Act 250 and other state regulatory processes identify the municipal plan as a standard for review of applications. Municipal plans are important to the development of intermunicipal, regional and state agency plans and programs.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was initiated in January 2005 and completed in April 2006. The Johnson Planning Commission provided overall direction to the planning effort and Johnson's Community & Economic Development Coordinator coordinated the process. The Coordinator's responsibilities included creating public awareness of the planning process, facilitation of public meetings, write-up of the plan, and project administration.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission provided technical assistance of its senior land use and GIS planners.

During the planning process, the Planning Commission held five public meetings to discuss five specific components of the plan. These components were housing, education, recreation, economic development and land use. Prior to the completion of the planning process, the Planning Commission held one public hearing and the Select Board held two public hearings to review the entire plan.

HOW THIS PLAN RELATES TO NEIGHBORING PLANS

Copies of the proposed *Town of Johnson Municipal Development Plan* have been submitted to all neighboring towns and the Regional Planning Commission. This plan proposes no radical changes in the present land use. In light of this fact and from our review of adjoining town plans we feel no substantial conflicts exist.

HOW THIS PLAN RELATES TO THE VILLAGE PLAN

The Village of Johnson is a separate governmental entity that has its own municipal development plan. The Village Plan addresses issues and strategies pertinent to the Village. The current Village Plan will expire in March 2008.

PRINCIPAL NEEDS AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

PRINCIPAL NEEDS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Johnson is a growing community. Between 2000 and 2015, the total population in Johnson is projected to increase by 12.4%, or 408 persons. To accommodate this growth and pursue its vision for a high quality of life, Johnson needs to design and implement wise land use policies. The non-existence of zoning bylaws makes it challenging to regulate future land use. Policies and goals contained in the town plan have been only partially effective in providing guidance to Act 250 proceedings.

2. Pristine natural areas, large blocks of timber, a working agricultural landscape, open spaces, and rivers and streams are essential features of Johnson's rural character. To protect this rural character as well as enable future economic activity, Johnson needs to design a thoughtful mix of conservation, development and usage policies. Johnson needs to identify lands and areas that are suitable for development and areas that are undevelopable as well as areas worthy of protection.

3. Johnson's housing stock composition is significantly influenced by the presence of Johnson State College as many students who choose to live off-campus rent apartments in proximity to the College, primarily in Johnson Village. This student demand for off-campus housing has been contributing to a conversion of single-family houses to student rental apartments. A partial result of this trend is a notably lower proportion of one-unit buildings in Johnson than in other communities of Lamoille County. In Johnson, one-unit buildings represent 49.3% of the total housing stock, while in Lamoille County this proportion is 70.5%. The loss of single-family houses in Johnson Village is a major concern. An additional concern is the lack of information about the actual size of and trends in the student rental market, since no records exist on the number of students living in local off-campus housing.

4. In 1999, 36% of Johnson's labor force reported that they worked in Johnson. Additionally, the 2003 average wage data showed that jobs provided in Johnson were among the highest paying ones in Lamoille County. Johnson strives to support its residents' ability to work within the community boundaries and create conditions that will nurture well paying local jobs. To achieve this goal, Johnson plans to pursue five economic development strategies. These are: Downtown revitalization through the Johnson Main Street Project; Improvement of telecommunication infrastructure; Marketing and branding of Johnson; Special projects linking natural recreation assets, tourism and economy; and Special projects supporting the expansion of Johnson's creative economy.

5. Johnson is a walking community. In Lamoille County, Johnson has the highest percentage of people walking to work. To encourage local transportation options, Johnson needs to improve the safety and extent of its pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

6. Johnson's educational institutions have a strong presence in the community. About 44% of in-town jobs are in educational services. Johnson State College, Johnson Elementary School, Laraway Youth and Family Services and the Vermont Studio Center

are the largest in-town educational employers. During this planning process, representatives of the educational institutions expressed their wishes for infrastructural improvements that would increase the attractiveness of the community as a whole as well as the attractiveness of the community as an educational hub. These improvements included better infrastructure such as trails, small open spaces for recreation, sidewalks leading to the College, and an information booth promoting community assets and events. Availability of single-family houses would encourage employees of the educational institutions to locate in Johnson.

7. Johnson has a unique opportunity to create a dynamic system of recreation that is well integrated throughout the town center and extends outward into the natural environment. Given Johnson's unique location, riverfront assets and the availability of certain public lands, the town should use the opportunity of the recent acquisitions of the former Tatro land and River Park, along with the development of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, to envision a Multiple Function Recreation Campus developed in conjunction with the Old Mill Park. The multifunction campus would serve as an important gateway between Johnson Village and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, the Long Trail and the Lamoille River. The campus could further be connected by riverfront trails to facilities throughout the village and at Johnson State College and beyond. The recreation system would integrate new greenways and historic recreation sites throughout the village.

8. In the past five years, Johnson began addressing the issue of the lack of coordination within and between the Town and Village by hiring a Town/Village Administrator and a part-time Community & Economic Development Coordinator (CEDC). Additionally, a recently completed *Recreation Facilities Plan* recommended that the town would benefit from a new organizational structure to oversee recreation, including the hiring of a Director for Recreation. This organizational structure would support Johnson's numerous volunteers and further improve coordination among various recreation groups and citizens. There is also a need to extend the CEDC position from part-time to full-time.

SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

The Town of Johnson will strive to achieve its vision and address its needs through the policies and implementation tasks that are described below.

Housing Policies

In the area of Housing the Town of Johnson will:

- Support research efforts to improve understanding of local housing needs and the housing market.
- Support residential developments that are consistent with land use policies stated in this plan.
- Support development approaches that enable residents of different ages to live in a broad variety of housing types based on their preferences and what they can

afford. Johnson has a specific interest in increasing the proportion of single-family houses to correct the existing imbalance in Johnson. In Johnson, the proportion of one-unit buildings is notably lower than in the County (49.3% in Johnson versus 70.5% in the County).

- Encourage efforts that will address the structural and visual deterioration of Johnson's aging rental housing stock.
- Encourage Planned Residential Development approaches.

Tasks

- Appropriate resources to conduct a survey of existing housing market trends, including an analysis of housing for special needs populations (*Select Board*).
- Commission a study to conduct an in-depth survey of housing market trends and housing needs. This study will include an update of comprehensive demographic and housing data; define affordability; examine special needs; and examine housing maintenance and upkeep issues (*Johnson Housing Committee*).

Economic Development

Policies

In the area of Economic Development the Town of Johnson will:

- Support the expansion and diversification of the town's economic base in a way that respects the scale and character of the community and protects against sprawl.
- Encourage efforts that strengthen Johnson's economic viability through:
 - Enhancement of telecommunication facilities
 - Marketing and branding of Johnson's unique resources and attractive features
 - Implementation of the Johnson Main Street Project
 - Projects linking natural recreation resources, tourism and the economy
 - Establishment of home based businesses and jobs in the creative economy sector.
- Support the Village's efforts to pursue Village Center Designation Status.

Task

- Assist citizen committees and groups that strive to enhance Johnson's economic base (*Select Board & Community & Economic Development Coordinator*).

Natural, Scenic and Historic resources

Policies

In the area of Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources the Town of Johnson will:

- Encourage a range of land use measures that will protect wilderness areas, support the viability of agricultural and timber landscapes and preserve undeveloped spaces for recreation.

- Protect rare, threatened and endangered species and preserve their habitats through appropriate conservation techniques. Where appropriate a buffer strip will be designed and maintained to ensure protection.
- Protect resources by restricting commercial and residential development:
 - In fragile areas, i.e. areas with topography limitations, soil limitations, areas prone to flooding and wetlands
 - On land 1500 feet above sea level. Forestry, agriculture, recreation or primitive camps can be considered appropriate, providing the proposed use does not adversely impact the land or public water supplies
 - On class III or higher and development roads that are above 1500 feet, or on slopes greater than 25%
 - That would negatively impact bear and moose habitats, winter deer ranges and critical habitat areas.
- Discourage road construction of town highways, class III roads, and development roads that are above 1500 feet or on slopes greater than 25%. *Cross-reference in Transportation section*
- Support efforts that monitor the water quality of Johnson's rivers and streams; maintain or improve the quality of water resources; and take actions to ensure that our rivers and streams are classified and developed in accordance with the Select Board's resolution from August 16, 2004 (see page 35 of this plan).
- Protect the quality of public drinking water supplies and restrict development in Source Protection Areas.
- Encourage initiatives that conserve and promote the area's historic and cultural assets.

Tasks

- Identify lands desirable for conservation (*Conservation Commission*).
- Determine what actions should be taken to conserve identified lands (*Conservation Commission*).

Recreation

Policies

In the area of Recreation the Town of Johnson will:

- Encourage coordination of town-sponsored recreation by one person.
- Facilitate access to and improve the publicity for recreation programs, facilities and policies governing the use of the facilities.
- Encourage stronger communication to promote recreation resources.
- Support an envisioning process for the future desirable layout and uses of recreation facilities. Until a plan for the future desirable layout of the recreation facilities exists, the Town will focus major investments on facility improvements that will improve the safety of facility users, decrease negative impacts on neighborhoods and optimize the use of the existing recreation resources to their best potential.
- Encourage the expansion of trail-based infrastructure that will link prospective recreation facilities with the heart of the Village and explore opportunities to link

- local trails with statewide trails. One example is a connection of the Long Trail with the Village Center through the Talc Mill Property.
- Preserve and encourage recreational uses of rivers, streams and ponds.
 - Support and actively pursue strategies assuring long-term public access to recreation resources.
 - Support efforts that maintain and facilitate access to private lands.

Tasks

- Review recommended implementation tasks outlined in the Recreation Facilities Plan and where applicable, determine which are feasible for implementation. (*Select Board*).
The tasks included in the Recreation Facilities Plan are:
 - Create a sub-committee to explore the feasibility of hiring a professional recreation coordinator - look at examples and efforts of other towns; investigate potential funding sources; and draft job description (*Select Board*).
 - Explore a new committee structure which would merge or coordinate the current SkatePark and Recreation Committees (*Johnson Recreation Committee and SkatePark Committee*).
 - To advance the implementation tasks identified in this plan, assist committees that work on recreation related projects with grant writing. (*Community & Economic Development Coordinator*).
 - On an annual basis, review progress that has been made towards achieving the goals, policies and tasks defined in this plan (*Community & Economic Development Coordinator*).
 - Create a focal point in the Village advertising programs, facilities and policies governing facilities use (*Main Street Committee, Johnson Communications Committee*).
 - Improve signage to recreation facilities, particularly the Old Mill Park.
 - Encourage JSC to annually create a list of recreation opportunities available to Johnson residents (*Johnson Communications Committee*).
 - Organize a public forum to discuss the use of the school gymnasium (*School Board*).
 - Invite representatives from the College, VAST, Green Mountain Club and other organizations to different committees (*committee chairs*).
 - Commission a study to determine potential and most desirable uses for the former Talc Mill Property also known as the Tatro land (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
 - Create a master plan detailing the future layout and use of Johnson's recreation facilities (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
 - Conduct a study to explore utilization and integration of the Gomo Farm property for recreation purposes (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
 - Until a plan for the future desirable layout of the recreation facilities exists, focus major investments on improvements to existing facilities that will improve the safety of facility users, decrease negative neighborhood impacts and optimize the use of the existing recreation resources to their best potential.
 - Expand playground equipment at Old Mill Park.

- o Schedule the use of the fields in a way that has the least negative impact on neighborhoods (*Recreation Committee, Select Board*).
- o Think of how to connect the Rail Trail with the heart of the Village and beyond (*Economic Development Committee*).
- o Implement the Riverwalk Greenway project described in the Pathways Plan.
- o Create a priority list of lands desirable for conservation and recreation development (*Conservation Commission*).
- o Explore creative ways to raise financial resources for land conservation (*Conservation Commission*).
- o Provide information to private landowners about laws protecting them from liabilities for injuries to recreationists on their property when the landowner did not purposefully cause the injuries (*Conservation Commission*).
- o Provide information on various options available to landowners for allowing recreational use of their lands (*Conservation Commission*).

Transportation

Policies

In the area of Transportation the Town of Johnson will:

- Maintain the existing infrastructure of town roads and bridges while conserving their aesthetic and recreational qualities.
- Encourage and promote public transportation and ridesharing.
- Support the Village in their efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and explore the expansion of this infrastructure beyond the Village boundaries.
- Discourage the road construction of town highways, class III roads, and development roads that are above 1500 feet or on slopes greater than 25%. *Cross-reference in Natural Resources section*

Tasks

- Maintain and update the Highway, Bridge and Culvert Inventory and develop a capital plan to repair and replace these assets (*Select Board and Town/Village Administrator*).
- Continue to seek funding sources for highway, bridge and culvert improvements (*Select Board and Town/Village Administrator*).
- Continue to encourage the State to fund needed bridge repair and replacement projects in Johnson (*Select Board*).
- Cooperate with the Village Trustees in the implementation of the Johnson Main Street Project (*Select Board*).

Utilities and Facilities

Policies

In the area of Utilities and Facilities the Town of Johnson will:

- Continue developing long-term infrastructure maintenance/expansion plans and coordinate these plans with the Village Trustees and Johnson Planning

Commission. Planning will take into consideration infrastructural needs of Johnson's educational institutions (trails, sidewalks, open spaces for recreation and an information booth).

- Develop management plans for all publicly owned lands and facilities.
- Promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design, construction, and use of municipal, industrial, commercial, and residential structures.
- Support efforts to generate energy locally from renewable sources, whether for heating, electricity, or transportation.

Task

- Review the existing on-site sewage ordinance in light of the revised State Regulation of Wastewater Disposal and Water Supply Rules (*Select Board*).

Land Use

Policies

In the area of Land Use the Town of Johnson will:

- Manage growth and development in a manner that is respectful of Johnson's rural character, natural resources and their environmental, recreational and economic functions, and its infrastructural capacity.
- Support Village's efforts that encourage and expand the diversity and vitality of the Village as the cultural, single family residential and commercial-service hub of the Town.

Tasks

- Utilize existing development controls and state regulatory proceedings in an effort to implement the vision, and address the needs, conclusions and policies of this plan (*Select Board and Johnson Planning Commission*).
- Define future land use districts. Within those districts, identify areas and properties that are developable as well as areas to be protected from development. Follow up by drafting subdivision and zoning bylaws (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
- Develop an unregistered vehicle and junkyard ordinance (*Select Board*).

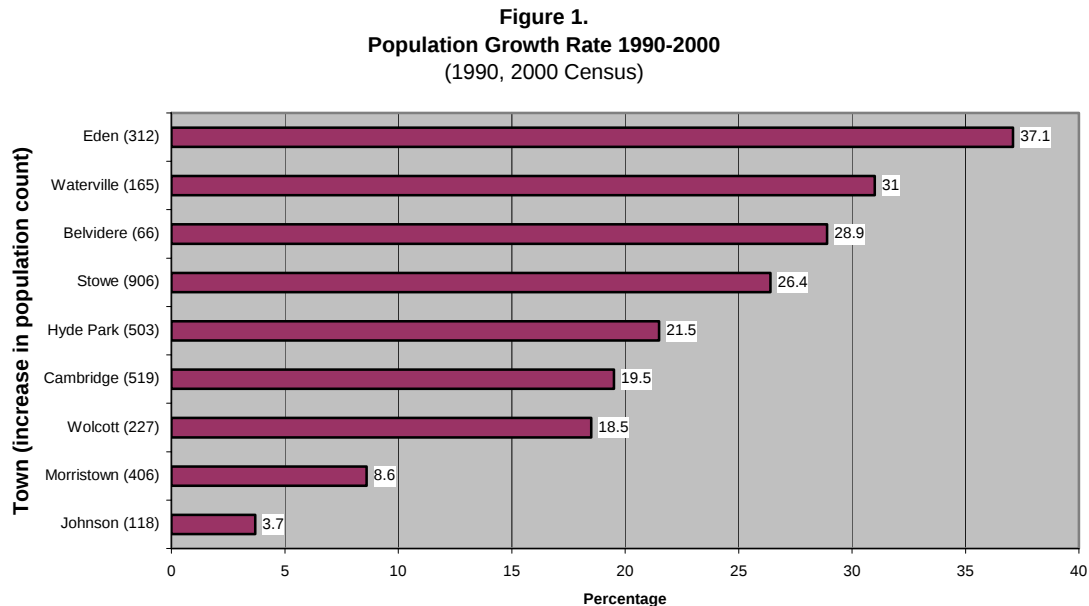
PLAN, ELEMENTS AND DATA

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

A. DEMOGRAPHICS

Population growth

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Johnson has a population of 3,274 people. Over 43% (1,420 persons) of Johnson residents live within the incorporated Village. Since the last population count in 1990, the town's population grew by 3.7%, or by 118 people. The overall Lamoille County growth rate was 17.7% and two fastest growing towns were Elmore (48.2%) and Eden (37.1%). Complete population growth statistics for all towns in Lamoille County are shown in Figure 1. The numbers in brackets show increases in total population numbers in different towns.



Population projections

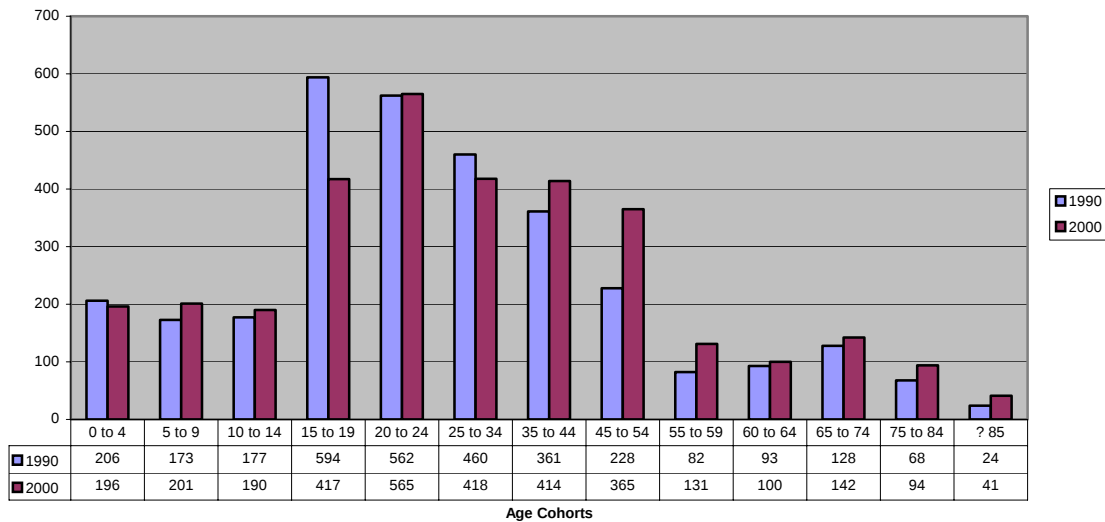
MISER (Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research) population projections for Vermont show that between 2000 and 2015 the total population in Johnson will increase by 12.4%. As with any population projection, the accuracy of this projection depends on the validity of its underlying assumptions and the socio-economic factors within the municipality. For example, the Vermont Health Care Authority population projections indicated that between 1990 and 2000 Johnson's population would grow by 18.8%. However, the real growth was only 3.7%.

Out of six towns abutting Johnson, the fastest growth between 2000 and 2015 is projected in Eden (32.1%) and Waterville (22.8%). The slowest growth is projected in Morristown (4.1%).

Age distribution

Figure 2 depicts changes in age distribution for the Town of Johnson between 1990 and 2000. In both 1990 and 2000, the greatest number of persons fell within the 20-24 years of age category. The high numbers in the category reflect the impact of Johnson State College on the population of the Town. Another interesting trend as evidenced in Figure 2 is a rather significant decline of high school age persons, which shows that between 1990 and 2000, there was a 29.8% decrease in the 15-19 age category. The 25-34 group experienced a notable decline as well. This decline has been in accordance with statewide trends. Beginning at the age of 35, the population numbers mark steady increases, particularly in baby boomer and senior generations.

Figure 2.
Age Distribution
(1990 and 2000 Census)



B. HOUSING

Current housing demographics and housing projections

As of 2000, Johnson had 1263 housing units. Since 1990, 203 units were added. With the population increase of 118 people and the average household size of 2.43 persons per household, 48 new units were needed to accommodate the population growth. The most likely reason for the high number of units as compared to the population increase is houses converting to apartments as a response to demand for rental housing by Johnson State College students. Table 1 shows changes in the total number of housing units for Johnson from 1980 to 2000.

Table 1. Total Number of Housing Units in Johnson 1980 – 2000

	1980	1990	2000	Percent Change 1980 – 1990	Percent Change 1990-2000
Johnson	869	1060	1263	22%	19.2%

Provided the average household size remains at 2.43 persons, Johnson will need 168 additional housing units to accommodate the population increase projected by 2015 of 408 persons.

Housing stock by structure and age

Out of the total of 1263 housing units, 92.6% or 1170 were occupied and 7.4% or 93 were vacant. A little over 49% of the housing structures were single-family units. The second most common housing structure type was mobile homes.

Table 2 shows the dynamics of housing development broken down by various housing structures between 1980 and 2000. Table 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of those structures that housed the biggest number of units. Johnson State College on-campus residence halls and apartment buildings fall within the 50 or more unit and 20 to 49 unit categories. The age of the Johnson housing stock in 2000 is shown in Table 4.

Table 2. Housing Units per Structure 1980-2000

Units in structure	1980		1990		2000	
1 unit (detached + attached)	426	49.0%	543	51.2%	623	49.3%
2 units	76	8.7%	85	8.0%	96	7.6%
3 or 4 units	31	3.6%	97	9.2%	121	9.6%
5 and more units	176	20.3%	104	9.8%	143	10.3%
Mobile home	160	18.4%	231	21.8%	272	21.5%
Boat, RV, van	-		-		8	0.6%
Total	869		1060		1263	

Table 3. Housing Units in Large Structures (5 or more units per structure)

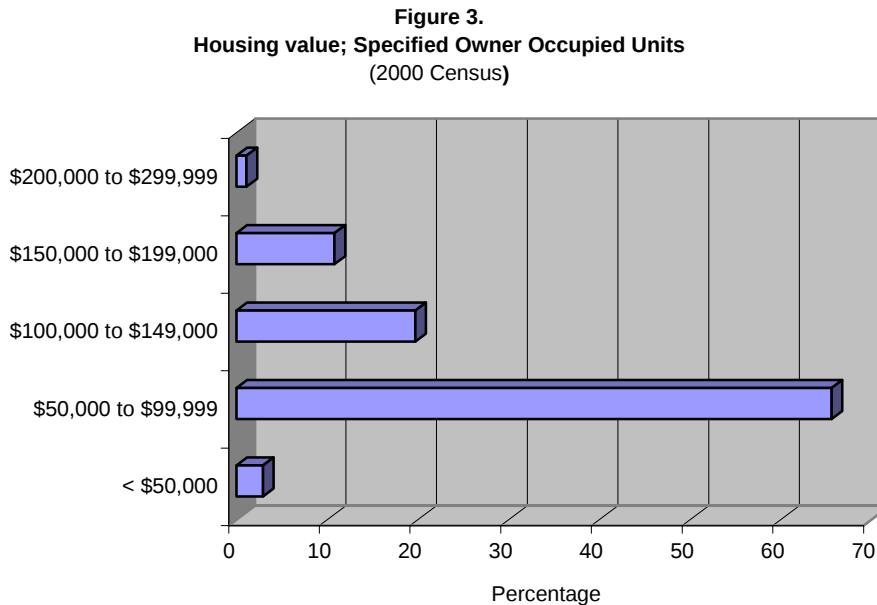
Units in structure	Year 2000
50 or more units	2
20 to 49 units	24
10 to 19 units	17
5 to 9 units	100
<i>5 and more units total</i>	<i>143</i>

Table 4. Housing Structures by Year of Construction

Time period	Number of structures	Percentage
1980 - March 2000	367	36.5
1960 - 1979	337	29.8
1940 - 1959	91	7.2
1939 or earlier	334	26.4

Housing value

According to the 2000 Census, median house value in Johnson was \$90,800. Figure 3 depicts the distribution of housing based on the housing value. Most houses, about 66%, were valued between \$50,000 - \$99,000.



Rental housing

Out of 1170 occupied housing units, 62.1% or 727 were owner-occupied and 37.9% or 443 were renter-occupied. The high number of renter units can be attributed to Johnson State College.

In ten years, the demand for rental housing jumped 32%. More significantly, the renter vacancy rate dropped dramatically during that period from 7.9% to 2.0%. This decline could have in part been caused by the renovation of college residences which temporarily reduced the availability of on-campus housing.

The majority of renters in Vermont live in units that are 50 years old or older. An aging rental stock coupled with low vacancy rates raises concerns as to the quality of Johnson's rental housing supply. The 2002 report titled *Housing in Lamoille County* states that "in many areas of the County housing is run down and in desperate need of repair. Lack of money and resources prevents homeowners from keeping up their buildings. Programs to address this issue would be very helpful." The report says that the deterioration, both visual and structural, of the local housing stock may be the most pressing issue that towns like Johnson face and recommends examining housing maintenance and upkeep issues.

Affordable housing

Following is the definition of affordable housing as offered by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): “Housing is affordable when households with income below an area’s median income pay no more than 30% of their income on housing. Housing costs for renters are rent and utilities. Housing costs for homeowners are principal on mortgage payments, interest, property taxes, and insurance.”

2000 Census sampling applied to 413 renter-occupied units showed that 205 or 49.6% of units paid more than 30% of their income for gross rent. The sampling applied to 279 owner-occupied units showed that 85 or 30.4% of homeowners paid 30% or more of their income on mortgage, insurance and taxes.

Unique characteristics of the Johnson Village housing stock

- Johnson Village provides 492 housing units representing 39% of overall housing units in Johnson.
- Most of Johnson’s rental housing, specifically 67.5%, is located in the Village. The higher proportion of rental units in the Village is partly due to Johnson State College’s off-campus student population that chooses to live in proximity to the College.
- While the total population in the Village between 1990 and 2000 decreased by 50 people (negative growth of -3.4%), the housing stock grew by 78 housing units.

Selected comparisons between Johnson and Lamoille County housing stocks

- One- unit buildings dominate both Johnson and Lamoille County housing stocks. In Johnson, however, the proportion of one-unit buildings is notably lower than in the County (49.3% in Johnson versus 70.5% in the County).
- Johnson has a significantly higher proportion of mobile homes (21.5% in Johnson versus 10% in the County).
- Johnson has the lowest median rent of all the towns in Lamoille County.

Housing Committee

The Housing Committee was established as an outcome of the Community Visit, a town-wide planning forum hosted by the Vermont Council on Rural Development in 2004. The Community Visit identified housing as a priority area that needed to be addressed in the near future. The Community Visit recognized that there was a lack of adequate single, multi-family, and elder housing in town, and that the loss of single-family homes in the village to meet student housing needs and the expansion of the Vermont Studio Center created pressures that should be addressed through a common planning process. The Community Visit identified the following tasks for the newly created Housing Committee: 1) Survey condition of existing housing stock; 2) Survey general market conditions for all housing types; and 3) Identify preferred housing mix for a healthy community and address housing aesthetics.

C. JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE

Population

As of fall 2004, Johnson State College had a student population of approximately 1,700 students. Of this number, 1,020 students attended on-campus undergraduate classes; 470 students were enrolled in external, off-campus undergraduate programs; and 170 students were enrolled in graduate programs. Over the last four years, the student population has grown by about 12% (approximately 3% each year). Most of this growth has been in off-campus and graduate programs. It is important to note that the U.S. Census figures include the college student population. Considering the way the Census figures are reported, it is very difficult to separate out the college population from the rest of the town.

Housing

The total on-campus housing capacity is 576 beds in residence halls. Additionally, there are 50 on-campus apartments, providing a total of 85 beds for students with families, or students over 21 years old. The College does not track the distribution of off-campus housing but the President believes that the majority of them live within Johnson and other nearby communities.

POLICIES

In the area of Housing the Town of Johnson will:

- Support research efforts to improve understanding of local housing needs and the housing market.
- Support residential developments that are consistent with land use policies stated in this plan.
- Support development approaches that enable residents of different ages to live in a broad variety of housing types based on their preferences and what they can afford. Johnson has a specific interest in increasing the proportion of single-family houses to correct the existing imbalance in Johnson. In Johnson, the proportion of one-unit buildings is notably lower than in the County (49.3% in Johnson versus 70.5% in the County).
- Encourage efforts that will address the structural and visual deterioration of Johnson's aging rental housing stock.
- Encourage Planned Residential Development approaches.

IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

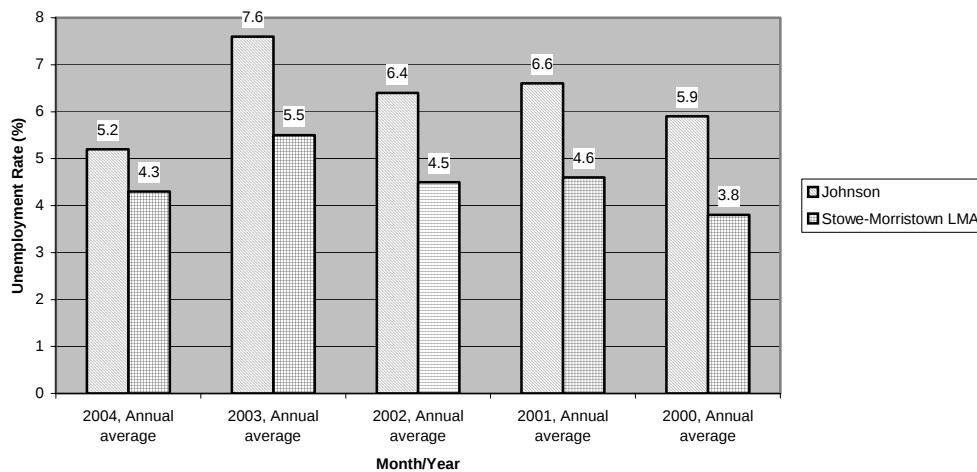
- Appropriate resources to conduct a survey of existing housing market trends, including an analysis of housing for special needs populations (*Select Board*).
- Commission a study to conduct an in-depth survey of housing market trends and housing needs. This study will include an update of comprehensive demographic and housing data; define affordability; examine special needs; and examine housing maintenance and upkeep issues (*Johnson Housing Committee*).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. JOHNSON'S WORKFORCE

The workforce includes all Johnson residents classified as the civilian labor force plus members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The civilian labor force consists of people classified as employed or unemployed. VT Department of Employment and Training data for 2003 indicate that 1,670 Johnson residents were employed in that year. A total of 140 persons or 7.6% of the labor force were unemployed. The regional unemployment rate in Lamoille County in 2003 was slightly lower and averaged 5.5%. (Note: Due to a high proportion of regional jobs in the service, recreation and construction fields, the rate of unemployment tends to seasonally fluctuate). Figure 4 shows trends in unemployment rates in the Johnson and Stowe-Morristown Labor Market Area between 2000 and 2004.

Figure 4.
Unemployment rates in Johnson
and Stowe-Morristown Labor Market Area
(Vermont DET)



Journey to work

The 2000 Census data indicate that in 1999 6.4% Johnson residents worked out of their homes and 15.1% of Johnson residents walked to work. This percentage represents the highest proportion of people walking to work in all of Lamoille County.

The *VT 15 Corridor Management Plan* completed in November 2004 provides an overview of the 2000 Census data on the flow of commuters from the places they live to the places they work for nine towns located along VT Route 15 (from Jericho to Hardwick). Comparing the data for Lamoille and Chittenden County towns, the plan concludes that a much higher percentage of employed residents in Lamoille County towns work and live in the same municipality. The plan also shows that while the percentage of internal work trips has decreased between 1990-2000, the percentage of

trips to other Lamoille County towns has increased. Overall work traffic flow figures for Johnson are provided below in Table 5.

Table 5. Work Traffic Flow Figures for Johnson

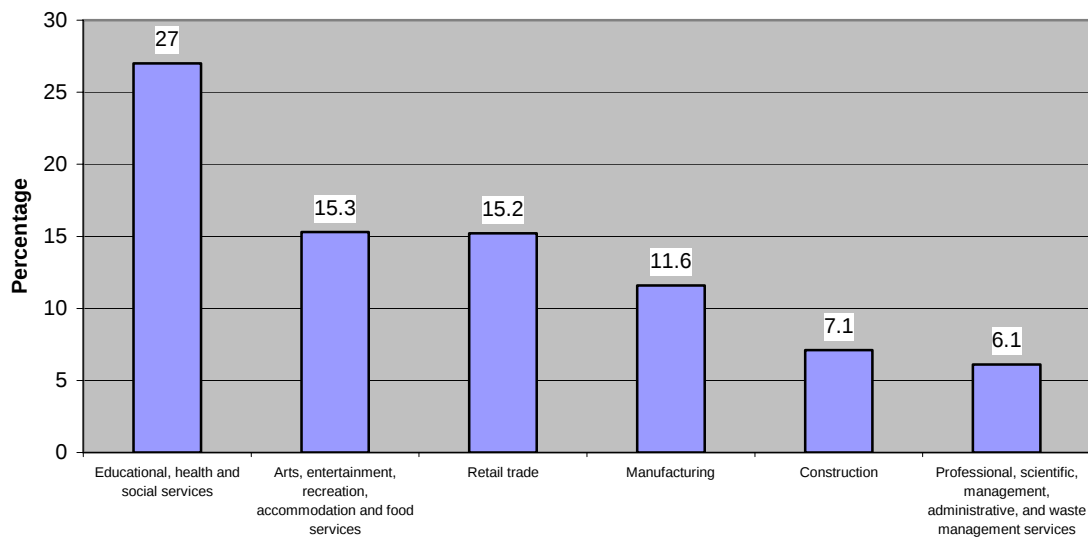
Workers' travel destination	Workers traveling from Johnson	
	1990	2000
Internal trips	42%	36%
Lamoille County	35%	42%
Chittenden County	15%	12%
Washington County	5%	3%
Caledonia County	1%	1%
Other	2%	5%

The VT 15 Corridor Management Plan also identifies the Johnson/Cambridge town border as a dividing line for the flow of traffic. Travel flow of people living in towns west of this line is primarily oriented toward Chittenden County. East of the line, travel flows are more oriented towards Lamoille County in general and Morristown specifically. In Johnson, 55% of AM peak hour traffic is eastbound indicating a shift in traffic flows from Chittenden County towards Morristown.

Occupational structure, income and poverty

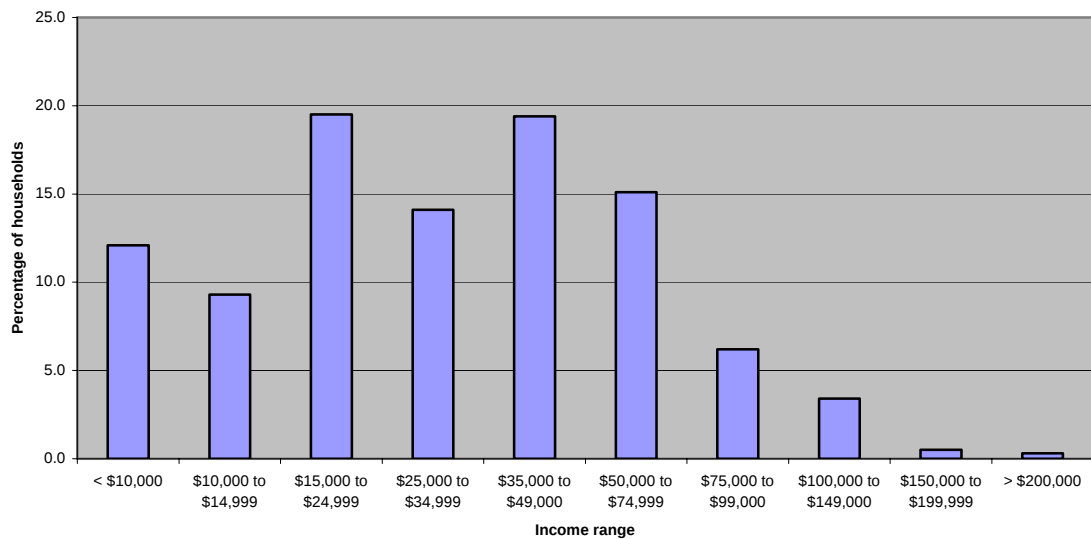
In 1999, Johnson residents worked in a broad spectrum of jobs. Figure 5 shows those industry categories that employed more than 5% of Johnson's workforce.

Figure 5.
Industries Employing Over 5% of Johnson's Workforce
(Vermont DET)



Income range categories and percentage distribution of those income ranges among Johnson's workforce in 1999 are shown in Figure 6. The median household income was \$31,343. Countywide the median household income was \$39,356, and the statewide figure was \$40,856. The 2000 Census identified 536 residents of Johnson whose income level for the year 1999 was at or below poverty level.

Figure 6.
Household income in 1999
(Census 2000)



B. IN-TOWN EMPLOYMENT

Number of local jobs

In-town employment consists of all jobs paid within geographical boundaries of Johnson regardless of whether they are held by Johnson residents or out of town commuters. VT Department of Employment and Training data for 2003 show that 875 people were employed in Johnson. About 44% of in-town jobs are classified as "Educational Services" jobs. The five largest Johnson employers listed in the February 2006 issue of the Vermont Business Magazine were:

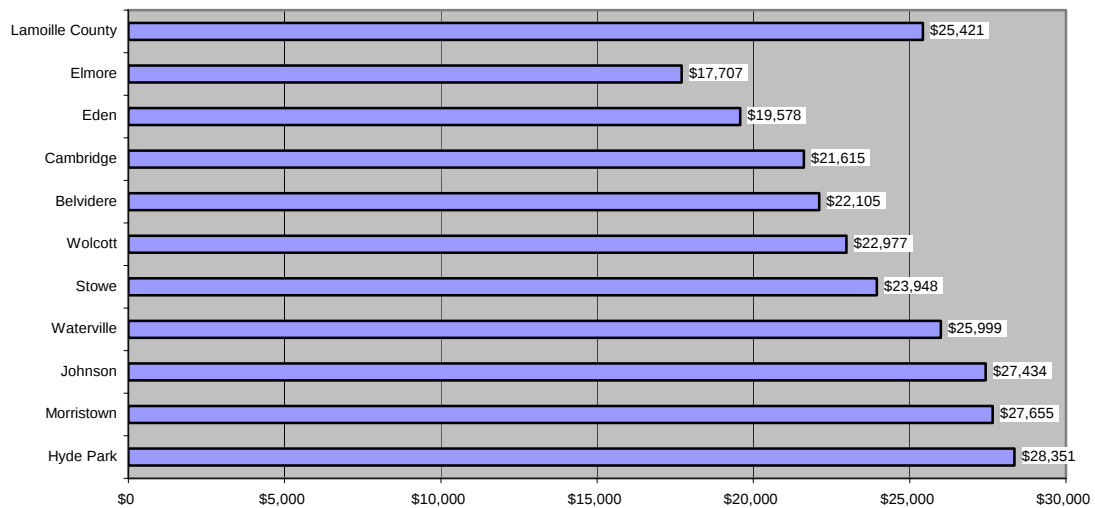
Table 5. Johnson's Largest Employers

<i>Employer</i>	<i>No of employees</i>
Johnson State College	205
Vermont Electric Cooperative, Inc.	106
Parker & Stearns, Inc.	33
Johnson Woolen Mills, LLC	29
Manchester Lumber, Inc.	25

Wages of in-town workers

The average annual wage of in-town workers was \$27,434. The average annual wage of in-town workers was the third highest in Lamoille County. Figure 7 shows 2003 annual average wage distribution throughout all ten county towns.

Figure 7.
Annual Average Wage in 2003
(Vermont DET)



Johnson State College and its impact on regional economy

The College's impact on the local and regional economy is a significant one. With its 200+ employees, the College contributes over \$11 million on salaries and benefits. The College spends \$750 thousand on utilities and fuel, and another \$4.6 million on supplies and services. In addition – over 1,500 prospective students and their parents visit the College annually, staying in area properties and dining locally.

POLICIES

Economic Development

Policies

In the area of Economic Development the Town of Johnson will:

- Support the expansion and diversification of the town's economic base in a way that respects the scale and character of the community and protects against sprawl.
- Encourage efforts that strengthen Johnson's economic viability through:
 - Enhancement of telecommunication facilities
 - Marketing and branding of Johnson's unique resources and attractive features
 - Implementation of the Johnson Main Street Project
 - Projects linking natural recreation resources, tourism and the economy

- o Establishment of home based businesses and jobs in the creative economy sector.
- Support the Village's efforts to pursue Village Center Designation Status.

IMPLEMENTATION TASK

- Assist citizen committees and groups that strive to enhance Johnson's economic base (*Select Board & Community & Economic Development Coordinator*).

NATURAL, SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

A. LAND RESOURCES

Soils

The soil structure attributes in Johnson provide both opportunities and limitations for construction and agriculture. Depending on the physical and natural process that formed it, soils may have differing depth, composition, texture and layering. Soils also vary in how easily they absorb water and their load-bearing capacity.

Soils that pose limits to development are often characterized by excessive slope, shallow depth to bedrock, high seasonal water, stability and high erosion potential. Soils also have qualities that make them productive for timber and agricultural products. The five main soil associations found in Johnson are described in Table 7.

Table 7. Major Soil Associations Found in Johnson

Association	Description	Uses/Limitations	Location
Adams/Colton/ Duxbury	Level to steep, excessively drained sandy soil.	Main source of sand & gravel. Steeper areas in woodland. Less steep used for crops and home sites.	Along Lamoille and Gihon Rivers.
Lyman/Tunbridge	Deep, level to steep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy.	Woodland w/farming on lower slopes. Development limited by depth to bedrock & slopes.	Northern uplands & mountains.
Berkshire/Marlow/ Peru	Deep, level to steep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soil.	Cropping and trees. Pan & slope limit for development. Suitable for wildlife habitat, recreation, woodland.	Across portions of southern uplands and Johnson Village.
Udfluents/Ondawa/ Rumney/Podunk	Deep, level excessively drained to poorly drained loamy soils.	Hay, crops & trees. Limited by seasonal high water table and flooding.	Lamoille River floodplain at Cambridge town line.
Boothbay/Salmon/ Swanville	Deep, level to steep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils.	Used mainly for cropping. Limitations are slow permeability, slope and wetness. Suitable for wildlife habitat & woodland.	From East Johnson south into Hyde Park.

Source: USDA Soil Conservation Service. Soil Survey of Lamoille County, Vermont 1981.

B. PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

Forest Resources

The dominant land use in both Johnson and Lamoille County today is forest. Forests benefit the town and the county by providing habitats for numerous game and non-game woodland animals, forest products from timber to maple syrup, jobs both in the woods and the mills, protection of our valuable water resources, and contrast upon the landscape. Forestry is a large part of Johnson's heritage, and it continues to play an important part in shaping both the town's character and its economy.

Agriculture

Farming remains an important part of the economy, landscape, and cultural heritage of Johnson. Once mainly a dairying community, Johnson farms now also produce crops, vegetables, turf, beef cattle and veal. Most of the prime agricultural soils in town are being farmed by either full time or part-time farmers, with the noted exception of the farmland converted to residential development on the Johnson Plains. According to estimates from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, there are 9 farms in town which provide over 50% of the owner's annual income. 2000 Census figures indicate that 20 people were employed in farming, fishing and forestry occupations.

Use Value Appraisal Program

The Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program was established by the Vermont Legislature in 1977 in recognition that the high tax burdens placed on farm and forest lands was contributing to the rapid development of prime agricultural and forestry lands across the state. The UVA Program allows farm and forest lands to be taxed on their resource production value rather than their value for development purposes. A popular program statewide, the growth of UVA enrollment was curtailed by legislative under funding in 1991 and 1992 and an enrollment moratorium in tax years 1992 and 1993. During the moratorium, property owners enrolled in the UVA program were allowed to withdraw from the program without penalty. In 1992, 67 properties were enrolled in UVA. By 2004 this number has increased to 104 properties.

Gravel

Lamoille County is one of the most gravel rich areas of the state. It is also one of the fastest growing. Since gravel is a non-renewable resource, it is important to plan for its wise use. Areas which are likely to be gravel rich should be identified and noted. The approximate locations of sand and gravel are identified in the Surficial Geology Resources map.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission completed a study in 1989 that identified existing gravel pits and areas of likely gravel deposits. According to that study,

there were 39 gravel pits in Johnson, of which 12 were active, 8 were inactive and 19 had been reclaimed.

Talc resources

Underground talc mining in Johnson ended in the mid 1980's but the extent of the remaining talc deposit and its economic viability today is uncertain at best.

C. TOPOGRAPHY

Topographic information is important for planning future land use, transportation, and public facilities and services. Topography will influence accessibility, will provide natural boundaries between areas, and will often determine land use. The 30,656 acres in Johnson cover a diverse topography.

Some general guidelines for assessing slope limitations include:

0-3%	Suitable for most development but may require drainage improvements
3-8%	Most desirable for development, least restrictions
8-20%	Suitable for low density housing on large lots with some consideration for erosion control and runoff
21-30%	May be developed with careful siting and off site wastewater treatment
Over 30%	Avoid all construction. Natural vegetation generally required to prevent soil erosion

Johnson's topographic limitations map illustrates general areas with slopes less than 20%, areas where slopes are between 20 and 30% and those above 30%. The suitability of any particular site for development, must be evaluated considering the interaction of slope with other features such as soil type and vegetation with the proposed land use.

D. WATER RESOURCES

Water resources take on a variety of forms and functions. They provide rivers and lakes upon which to boat, fish and swim, groundwater to drink, and wetlands to store floodwaters and filter natural and manmade contaminants. Water resources provide numerous habitats for a variety of aquatic and riparian plant and animal communities, and support numerous economic activities such as fishing and boating.

Water resources also serve as repositories for runoff and seepage including pesticides, herbicides, sediments, and leaching landfills, septic systems and underground storage tanks. These contaminants kill fish and plants, destroy existing and potential drinking water supplies and preclude recreational activities.

Rivers and streams

The Lamoille River flows westerly through the Johnson landscape for about 7.9 miles. The Lamoille originates at Horse Pond in Greensboro and flows into Lake Champlain at Milton. From its headwaters to the mouth, the river descends approximately 1,200 feet and drains a 706 square mile watershed.

All the streams and rivers in Johnson are part of the Lamoille River drainage basin. Geologic features such as oxbows, potholes and two sets of waterfalls highlight the Johnson section of the Lamoille. The biggest tributary to the Lamoille in Johnson is the Gihon River. The Gihon River played an important role in the history of Johnson. The first generating plant in town was located on the falls just north of the Power House Bridge. Johnson's historic mill economy was literally powered by the Gihon in Johnson Village.

Riparian habitats

Plant life such as trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs along stream banks and river corridors serve to provide both food and shelter for a great many wildlife species. According to a 1986 study on Vermont's rivers, several of Vermont's wildlife groups are highly dependant on riparian areas for their habitat needs.

The Lamoille River and Smith, Foote, Joe, Waterman, Belding Pond and French Hill Brooks were all noted in the 1986 study as important deer habitats.

Significant natural features

In a 1991 report on *Waterfalls, Cascades and Gorges of Lamoille County*, Vermont by the Lamoille County Planning Commission, two sets of falls on the Lamoille River in Johnson were identified as being of regional or state-wide significance: Dog's Head and Ithiel Falls.

Dog's Head Falls is located about 1 mile southeast of Johnson Village and consist of six-foot high twin falls, two large pools for swimming, rocks and outcrops for jumping, picnicking, and sunbathing. An impressive bedrock outcrop forms the "dog's head". Sloping Falls just downstream is another well-used recreation area. It consists of a fifty-foot long cascade, sculptured rocks, undercut ledges, swift current, and several pools. The undertow in the upper area makes it too dangerous for swimming but the lower pool is enjoyed by swimmers.

Ithiel Falls is a picturesque section of the Lamoille River located about 2.5 miles west of Johnson Village and can be accessed from Hog Back Road. The entire area of Ithiel Falls is considered for the purpose of this plan a significant natural feature. This area consists of rapids, pools and runs beginning with 150-yard long upper rapids in a wooded ravine with occasional rock walls that reach up to 30 feet high. Following a large pool with submerged boulders there is a stretch of rapids with interrupted slanting rock walls up to 20 feet high followed by a large pool in a series of runs, islands and pools. The Ithiel

Falls area ends where the Lamoille resumes as a single channel. The Long Trail crosses the Lamoille via a pedestrian suspension bridge within this significant natural area. The area is widely used by both boaters and fishermen.

There are also a number of swimming holes in tributaries to the Lamoille. Those identified in the Vermont Swimming Hole Study (1992) include the popular Sheep's Hole and The Ledges on Foote Brook, and the Power House Covered Bridge Falls on the Gihon River.

Lakes and Ponds

Belding Pond and French Hill Collector Reservoir are located near the Dry Ridge in the southwest section of town. According to the 2000 Johnson Utility and Facility Report, there is no public access to ponds in Johnson for recreational use.

Water Quality

Vermont's waters are classified according to established goals to be attained or minimum standards to be maintained, depending upon the present quality of a particular section of water. The Agency of Natural Resources works to implement activities that restore, maintain or protect the management goals. Until recently, the classification system included two classes A and B. Class A waters were divided into two subclasses: A(1) and A(2). As part of the Water Quality Standards revisions in 2000, the system was changed to allow Class B waters to be divided into three management types: B1, B2 and B3.

Presently, in all basins, waters above 2,500 feet in elevation are classified A(1) by Vermont statute. The management objective for A(1) waters is to maintain their natural condition. Waters used as public water supplies are classified A(2). All the remaining waters are class B waters. A simplification of the B1, B2 and B3 designations would be to say that the spectrum from B3 to B2 to B1 is described as representing "good", "better" and "best" aquatic conditions. All Class B waters must still support the designated uses described in the Vermont Water Quality Standards for Class B waters, which include, among other uses, suitability for aquatic life, boating, fishing, swimming, and drinking with treatment.

On August 16, 2004, the Select Board passed a resolution requesting that all streams and rivers in Johnson be classified as B1 waters, with the following exceptions: 1) The mainstream of Lamoille; 2) The brook through Paul McLure's farm, which should be classified B2; 3) The Gihon River downstream from School Street Bridge to the confluence with the Lamoille, which should be B2, 4) Smith Brook below Route 15 to the confluence with the Lamoille River should be B2; and 5) Waters currently classified as A1 or A2.

Wetlands

The term wetland is used to refer to areas that are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, bogs, fens or other such names. Wetlands serve a number of important functions, including storm water retention, erosion control, ground water recharge, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands share three basic characteristics:

1. The presence of water at or near the ground surfaces;
2. The presence of water dependant plants occurring on site; and
3. Common types of soil that have formed as a result of the presence of water.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has mapped wetlands, and each town has a set of National Wetlands Inventory Maps. These maps were made using aerial photos. They are useful for assessing the general character of a particular area, but are not accurate enough to determine the nature of a particular property without a site visit.

Vermont's wetland regulations are based upon the National Wetlands Inventory. They designate all of the wetlands identified by the inventory in Johnson as Class II, meaning the functions they serve – either alone or in conjunction with other wetlands in Vermont are protected by a 50 foot vegetated buffer between the wetland and any adjacent land development. Class I wetlands are those of such high quality and important function that they are considered of statewide significance. In 1992, there were no wetlands in Johnson classified as Class I.

Groundwater resources

Groundwater is the source for over 90% of the drinking water for rural communities in Vermont. It is replenished through rain and surface waters which percolate through the soil. Any activity that introduces contaminants directly into the ground (such as underground storage tanks, septic disposal fields, abandoned wells, junk cars and agricultural activities) can affect groundwater quality. Since surface waters may also travel underground, surface water quality may affect groundwater quality as well.

Groundwater is an important source of drinking water for Johnson residents. For homes outside of the Village Water Company service area, groundwater is the primary source of drinking water. The Village Water Company uses groundwater and surface water but will be abandoning their surface water source in late 2006.

Public groundwater sources in Vermont are assigned a Source Protection Area (SPA). SPAs are defined as the surface and subsurface areas from or through which contaminants are reasonably likely to reach a public water system source. The state Agency for Natural Resources (ANR) Water Supply Division is responsible for the Vermont Source Protection Program. A public water supply is defined as one serving fifteen or more connections or 25 or more people.

There are four Source Protection Areas in Johnson. The first is an area defined by a 3,000-foot radius around the Wescom Trailer Park wells. The second is a hydrogeologically delineated area around the Nadeau Well, which is supposed to be a

back-up supply well for the Village Water Department but is used daily to meet peak demand. The third and fourth protection areas are in the northeast corner of town, and are delineated for the protection of the North Hyde Park Fire District #1 and Mountain View Mobile Home Park.

In addition, a source protection area has been proposed, but not yet approved, for the new well that will serve the Johnson Village Water system. In November 2004 Johnson voters directed the Village Trustees to pursue a general obligation bond that, among other improvements, would enable the Village to acquire and develop the new water source. The new well, located just west of Johnson Village off Route 15 below the Highland Heights Mobile Home Park, will serve as a permanent and primary source when it goes online in summer 2006.

E. WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Fisheries

The Vermont Guide to Fishing, published by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, lists the Lamoille River as supporting all warm and cold-water sport fish found in state with the exception of lake trout and smelt. The upper reaches of the Gihon River in Johnson support rainbow, brown and brook trout.

The Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife owns two sections of stream bank for public and fishing access on the Lamoille River in Johnson. The first is 11 acres on the southerly bank of the river from the Hyde Park line to the island below Dog's Head Falls. The second section is approximately 0.2 acres on the north bank of the Lamoille on the Johnson/Hyde Park line.

Deer wintering areas

Vermont's deer require specific winter habitat to survive the seasonally severe weather and heavy snowfall. Winter deer yards provide two features important to whitetail deer and survival: shelter and food. Statewide, between 6% and 8% of Vermont's forestland is suitable for winter deer range under average winter conditions. Wintering areas do not change significantly between years and can be used by generations of deer over several decades if appropriate habitat conditions are maintained.

Bear habitat

Bears require large areas of uninterrupted forestland for breeding. They also require travel corridors to move from one part of their habitat to another, especially as forested areas may be subdivided and developed.

Rare and endangered species

Rare plants and animals are important for a variety of reasons. Some are indicators of unusual habitats or of colder (or warmer) climates in Vermont's distant past. Some serve as indicators of environmental quality. Some species may provide compounds for medicines or agricultural or industrial products. Finally, some are attractive and add beauty to the natural landscape. Many uncommon species will disappear if not recognized and given some form of protection.

Johnson critical habitat map

The Vermont Non-game and Natural Heritage Program, in the Fish and Wildlife Department, has an ongoing program of identifying and mapping special natural features of significance in each town. These maps show the approximate boundaries of known deer wintering areas and known locations of rare plants, animals, significant wildlife communities or state natural/fragile areas.

The 1991 revised Critical Habitat Map for Johnson in the back of this plan identifies the approximate boundaries of known deer wintering areas and indicates general areas of black bear habitat.

F. SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Johnson is blessed with its location, beauty and natural resources. Sense of place, determined by historic features, geography of the land and availability of recreation and cultural opportunities are among key determinants for why people choose to live in or visit Johnson.

The historic architecture and scenic landscapes of Johnson are a product of the Town's agricultural and forestry heritage. The Town's scenic agricultural and forested landscape continues to change as more land is taken out of resource management use and is used for residential development.

In 1981 the entire town was inventoried by the state Division of Historic Preservation for the Vermont state historic registry. Town-wide, approximately 170 structures were noted for their statewide historic significance. Of these, 125 structures are located within the Johnson Village Historic District. The two remaining covered bridges in Johnson - Power House and Scribner - are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

POLICIES

In the area of Natural, Scenic and Historic Resources the Town of Johnson will:

- Encourage a range of land use measures that will protect wilderness areas, support the viability of agricultural and timber landscapes and preserve undeveloped spaces for recreation.
- Protect rare, threatened and endangered species and preserve their habitats through appropriate conservation techniques. Where appropriate a buffer strip will be designed and maintained to ensure protection.
- Protect resources by restricting commercial and residential development:
 - In fragile areas, i.e. areas with topography limitations, soil limitations, areas prone to flooding and wetlands
 - On land 1500 feet above sea level. Forestry, agriculture, recreation or primitive camps can be considered appropriate, providing the proposed use does not adversely impact the land or public water supplies
 - On class III or higher and development roads that are above 1500 feet, or on slopes greater than 25%
 - That would negatively impact bear and moose habitats, winter deer ranges and critical habitat areas.
- Discourage road construction of town highways, class III roads, and development roads that are above 1500 feet or on slopes greater than 25%. *Cross-reference in Transportation section*
- Support efforts that monitor the water quality of Johnson's rivers and streams; maintain or improve the quality of water resources; and take actions to ensure that our rivers and streams are classified and developed in accordance with the Select Board's resolution from August 16, 2004 (see page 35 of this plan).
- Protect the quality of public drinking water supplies and restrict development in Source Protection Areas.
- Encourage initiatives that conserve and promote the area's historic and cultural assets.

IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- Identify lands desirable for conservation (*Conservation Commission*).
- Determine what actions should be taken to conserve identified lands (*Conservation Commission*).

RECREATION

To many residents and visitors alike, Johnson's sense of place is defined by the community's recreation assets. In May 2005, the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee and the Johnson Planning Commission completed the *Recreation Facilities Plan* that maps recreation assets ranging from municipal facilities and public and private recreation lands to organized programs and unstructured recreation activities. The *Plan* also examines the most pertinent recreation issues and outlines future priority actions. This document contains selected sections of the *Recreation Facilities Plan*.

A. MUNICIPAL RECREATION FACILITIES AND PUBLIC LANDS OF RECREATION INTEREST

The Old Mill Park

The Old Mill Park is a 22-acre self-contained park located at the end of Railroad Street. It is owned by Luzenac America and formerly served as a talc-processing site. In 1995, after the company ceased its operations, the premises were converted to recreational use. The Town of Johnson leases the property for an annual rent of one dollar and is bound to use the premises for recreational purposes only. The initial term of the lease is 25 years and the Town has the option to renew the lease for five additional terms, each 25 years in duration.

The athletic park consists of three baseball and softball fields, and three soccer fields. The central part of the park features a small and modestly equipped playground. The original design also envisioned a basketball court. However, that project has not yet been completed. A gravel path circles the outskirts of the entire park.

Primary users of the ball fields are youth sports teams sponsored by the Johnson Recreation Committee. In 2004, approximately 100 children were enrolled in the soccer program and 70 children participated in the baseball and softball programs. The gravel path encircling the perimeter of the park is frequently used for walking and jogging.

Nelson Duba (Checkerberry) Field

The Nelson Duba Field is a beautiful traditional field located in the heart of Johnson Village. The 2.9-acre parcel stretching along the northern bank of the Gihon River was purchased by the Town and School District in 1924 and is home to a baseball field. The Babe Ruth team (13-15 years of age) practices and plays at the Nelson Duba Field.

River Park SkatePark & Bike Track

River Park is a 7-acre recreation area, a portion of which has been developed into a skateboard park. The land is located on the west end of the Village and is intersected

by Wescom Road. The eastern border of the River Park meanders along the Lamoille River. The Old Mill Park recreation fields are located right across the river.

The Town of Johnson purchased this land, previously occupied by the Cubb mobile home park, in 2001. Because the land was subject to frequent floods, an agreement was made with the mobile home park owner to remove the trailers from the flood-prone area and develop new trailer sites on higher ground, in the upper part of the park. The Town purchased the land through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant. Because of the floods, the grant agreement with FEMA designated the use of the land as solely recreational, thus excluding residential and commercial uses of the property.

The Skate Park & Bike Track is a very active facility open from April through October. About 150 teens, young adults and families from all over Lamoille County are registered to skate and bike here. The Johnson SkatePark Committee oversees the use, programs and development of the facility. The Town provides insurance and town services.

Legion Field

The Legion Field is a 1.6-acre parcel owned by the Town of Johnson. It is located on School Street in proximity to Johnson Elementary School. The *Johnson Pathways Plan* acknowledges the Legion Field as an “extremely important town facility often serving as a town common for special events.” Parking is available along School Street and on a nearby College Hill parking lot.

The central location of the Legion Field in the heart of the Village lends itself to the field’s frequent use. The field is rich in community events and celebrations. In recent years, the field hosted events such as the Winter Carnival; the Halloween parade and bonfire; the Tuesday Night Live concert series, the Powerhouse Bridge reopening, and the Johnson Millennium Celebration.

The field also serves as a sports and outdoor education facility. Minor League Baseball players (9-11 year olds) and the women’s softball league use the field for their team practices and games. Johnson Elementary and Laraway Schools conduct their physical education classes here. Church Football Days are held here as well. In the winter, the Johnson Fire Department floods the field and converts it into an ice rink. The hillside of the field above the Art House functions as a sledding slope.

When not otherwise in use, the field serves as a general park space for local residents. A member of the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee observed that the Legion Field “is the only field in town where you can see people gather for pick-up games.”

Elementary School Facilities - Gymnasium and Playground

The gymnasium and playground are owned by the School District and are integrated into a greater Johnson Elementary School campus located on School Street. The gymnasium was built in 1998 as a part of a larger building addition project. The playground features diverse equipment, a basketball court and a grass-covered play area.

The gymnasium is considered a wonderful addition to Johnson's indoor recreation facilities. The demand for its use is greater than the School's ability to accommodate it. Youth basketball teams sponsored by the Johnson Recreation Committee train and play here. Town meeting is held here in the spring. Some community celebrations, such as Winter Carnival, are able to take advantage of this indoor space and organize activities that complement the outdoor activities.

The playground is a quality facility primarily used by school children. Outside of school hours, the playground is open to the greater community. The basketball court is the only place where outdoor basketball can be played and is heavily used for that purpose.

Former Talc Mill Property

The former Talc Mill Property consists of approximately 195 acres of land and several buildings. Until 1995, a part of the property served as an industrial site for the Luzenac Corporation's talc-processing operations. The northern border of the property is defined by the Lamoille River (from the end of Railroad Street and along Lendway Lane). From there the property extends south towards Upper French Hill Road. The Town and Village of Johnson jointly purchased the property in two phases. The first purchase of about 15 acres, two large industrial buildings and an office building occurred in 1995. The remaining 180 acres and related physical infrastructure were acquired in 2003.

At present, the two-story office building houses the office of the Public Works Superintendent, Boy Scouts meeting room, storage space for youth sports equipment, and a Food Shelf. One of the large buildings is home to the Village Electric and Village Water and Light Departments. A storage place for salt and sand is located here as well. The property also features a cement pad, which by some is viewed as a good foundation for a potential recreation facility.

To get a better understanding of the most desirable and feasible future uses of the property, the Johnson Planning Commission was charged with a task to commission an evaluation study outlining different use options. During the recreation planning process, the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee and residents participating in public meetings brainstormed their suggestions for the potential recreational utilization of the property. One obvious advantage of developing the property for recreation is its location. Primarily, the property is adjacent to the Old Mill Park athletic fields. Secondly, it is intersected by the Lamoille Valley Railroad Corridor, which, after financial resources have been secured, will be converted to a 98-mile, four-season multipurpose recreation

path going from Swanton to St. Johnsbury. And lastly, the property is adjacent to a section of Vermont State Forest land that will eventually site the Long Trail when the trail is fully relocated. This relocation could create an easy link between the trail and the village.

Gomo Farm

The Gomo farm was purchased by the Town in 1948 to prevent the need for bussing school children from a remote and inaccessible area. The land consists of 141 acres near Laraway Mountain. The Long Trail runs through the property. The property is used for camping by local scouts and lends itself to future recreation use. Potential recreational activities could include day hiking and picnics, nature study and bird watching, hunting, mountain biking, x-country skiing and snowshoeing. Because of its value, Johnson voters rejected the sale of the land at the 1983 Town Meeting.

Rivers and Trails

The Gihon and Lamoille Rivers help create the essential character of Johnson. There are many commonly used access points on public or private land along the rivers within the town center. Many sites are accessed by paths well worn from decades of use. There is a state fishing access along the Lamoille to Dog's Head Falls. There are countless other fishing sites along the streams and brooks that form the watershed. Fishermen and swimmers are among the most frequent river users. Kayakers flock to Johnson in the spring. A portion of the Lamoille, between the mouth of the Gihon and the intersection with Route 15, has restrictions on live bait fishing.

Two major state trail systems pass through Johnson. The Long Trail passes within two miles of the village center and a future relocation will bring the trail closer. When completed, The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail will intersect the Old Mill Park and pass through the former Talc Mill Property. This 98-mile trail system will wind throughout the Lamoille Valley bringing a variety of users in different seasons. The Rail Trail will have the added benefit of creating a direct connection between the Long Trail and the village, bypassing VT 15.

B. RECREATION ISSUES ORGANIZED BY SPECIFIC SITES

Old Mill Park

Maintenance: Outside of basic mowing performed by the Town, field maintenance relies on volunteers. While the soccer fields are in good shape, the baseball fields are in need of serious improvements. Needed improvements include measures such as persistent grass re-growth control and a replacement of the field surface from dirt to a desired mix of sand, silt and clay.

Infrastructure: Both soccer and baseball fields could use new benches. The playground, which is currently minimally equipped, should be expanded and improved.

The walking path is falling into disrepair. The basketball court idea has never been implemented. There is no signage on Railroad Street directing traffic to Old Mill Park. The current carry out waste disposal approach occasionally results in trash being left behind.

Access and parking: Many residents feel that the Old Mill Park is far away, because the entrance is far removed at the end of Railroad Street. Car access to the field is regulated by the availability of a single entry point. On the other hand, pedestrians can access the field from several places informally.

While parking opportunities are generally adequate; there is an overflow of parking during soccer tournaments. Winter-specific access issues, such as parking and snow mobile access, need to be addressed should the park be open in winter (e.g. for cross-country skiing).

Future considerations: To maximize the use of Old Mill Park, a suggestion was made to hire a professional to optimize the layout of the fields. This would include reevaluation of current use and identification of user conflicts. The proximity of the River Park, Lamoille Valley Railroad Corridor and the 180-acre former Tatro property recently purchased by the Town and Village gives Johnson an opportunity to brainstorm a vision for the development of a comprehensive recreation campus. Potential recreational utilization of the adjacent Parker & Stearns land, used for recreation in the past, could also be included in the brainstorming process.

Nelson Duba (Checkerberry) Field

Maintenance: The field has maintenance and upgrade challenges similar to those applicable to the Old Mill Park fields. Additionally, there are problems with weeds growing into the fence from behind the field and the warm-up pitching mounds are in inadequate condition.

Access, parking and neighborhood impacts: The right of way to the field goes through David Perkins' property by sharing a narrow driveway. Public access has been enabled through an agreement between Mr. Perkins and the Town. The agreement limits parking in the field to two vehicles. Field users, however, tend not to respect this limit and drive in and out of the field to drop off players. Additionally, in an attempt to access the field from as close as possible, cars are often parked on Clay Hill, which compromises safety and comfort of the neighborhood.

River Park, SkatePark & Bike Track

Location: The SkatePark was created in response to a pressing need for a safe place for youth to skateboard and bike, and community support for a drug, alcohol and tobacco-free facility for youth and teens. A perceived downside of the quick development of the site is that the SkatePark was built prior to any comprehensive

planning of the River Park area. The isolation of the SkatePark from other recreation facilities is also an issue.

Neighborhood impacts and user-safety: The proximity of the facility to the trailer park causes some negative impacts on the residential neighborhood. Some residents who live near the SkatePark have voiced concerns about late night noise and headlights beaming into their homes. They were also concerned about the lack of supervision and attested: “Several times kids have been hurt and have come to us for help.”

Future considerations: Johnson’s recreation community believes that the SkatePark would greatly benefit from a multipurpose location, where a broader spectrum of children, youth and parents could engage in activities. Future development of the River Park could address this issue. The proposed bridge across the Lamoille River would also help, as it would connect the Old Mill Park athletic fields with the River Park area. (Note: There used to be a bridge near the foot of Wescom Road but it was washed away in the 1995 flood.) Another proposal was to explore the integration of the SkatePark into a multiple function recreation campus that could be developed on the former Talc Mill Property.

Overall, the River Park area has not been fully developed and future development should be integrated into a comprehensive approach addressing connectivity of the River Park with other town parks. The 2001 *River Park Survey* gathered public opinion about potential recreational uses of the park. The most preferred uses were a bike-trail, skateboard area, and walking paths, followed by a picnic area and site for outdoor music.

Legion Field

Infrastructure: Though this facility sees wide and diverse use, the only infrastructure in place is a baseball field. There is little in the way of trees, benches or amenities. Tuesday Night Live concerts must set up and take down staging for each concert. The ice rink must utilize snow banks in order to be flooded each winter.

Maintenance: The list of improvements suggested for the enhancement of the baseball function of the field is described in the *Recreation Facilities Plan*. A portion of the hillside is still owned by Johnson State College and is no longer maintained. Consequently, it is reverting to a wild state.

Neighborhood impacts:

- **Parking:** The surrounding neighborhood is impacted by increased car traffic and parking during the use of the field. Occasionally, behavioral issues are present as well.
- **Behavioral issues:** The women’s softball league has created several negative impacts on the neighborhood. These impacts result from behaviors such as drinking, use of foul language and trespassing on private property by the players’ children. Language issues are also present when the field is used by Laraway school students.

- **Field layout:** The orientation of the field and location of bleachers interfere with the privacy of neighboring properties by bringing the focus of game activity into close proximity of neighboring backyards.

Future considerations: Discussion about the use of the Legion Field brought up a broad need to clarify and better coordinate policies guiding the use of Johnson's recreation facilities. To alleviate the over-use of the Legion Field, the Recreation Facilities Plan Steering Committee called for a scheduling approach that would address the use of recreation facilities in a coordinated manner.

Elementary School Facilities - Gymnasium and Playground

Insufficient availability of the gymnasium for the community: To address concerns of some residents regarding what they believe is an insufficient availability of the gym to the community, as well as to respond to the high demand for the use of the gym, the School Board drafted a policy document providing guidance for the use of the gym. The document defines priority user groups and is available at the school office. Some residents, however, still express that the user policy does not adequately address the issue of unavailability and needs to be revised. The residents feel that the community access to the gym needs be simplified, better facilitated and publicized.

Site design: The gymnasium has two different compartments divided by a removable curtain. During events when only one compartment is intended for public use, the removable curtain cannot prevent trespassing to the other compartment, which directly connects to the rest of the school premises. Occasionally, this trespassing has resulted in vandalism of the facilities.

Neighborhood impacts: Late night use of the playground causes occasional noise and light disturbances.

C. RECREATION ISSUES ORGANIZED BY THEMES

1. Exclusive reliance on volunteers: All town-sponsored programming, and much of recreation planning and facility maintenance rely on volunteers. Throughout the recreation planning process it became obvious that the sole reliance on volunteers poses the threat of volunteer burn out and subsequent setbacks in recreation development. The availability of professional help to support volunteer efforts and coordinate various aspects of recreation development was recognized as being potentially very helpful.

2. Johnson's recreation activities are offered by diverse groups with no central coordination. It is unclear who is responsible for broad oversight, scheduling of the use of recreation fields and planning for all facilities. As a result, some fields end up being overused, and others under-utilized. The lack of coordination is also believed to contribute to various communication and information distribution deficiencies. For

example, citizens are not adequately aware of which facilities they are welcome to use and under what conditions.

3. Dispersed location of recreation facilities: The Old Mill Park and SkatePark are located some distance from traditional recreational fields that are clustered in the vicinity of Johnson Elementary School. One perceived disadvantage of the fields being located in three not-well-interconnected locations is the inability of families to recreate together and enjoy advantages usually provided by multi-purpose recreation campuses.

4. Missing, inadequate or poorly utilized recreation facilities, and missing recreation activities. Examples of missing facilities include a youth center, playground for pre-schoolers, or infrastructure for snowmobilers.

5. Fragility of public access to some recreation assets: Access to numerous outdoor recreation resources in Johnson exists thanks to the generosity and willingness of private landowners allowing the public to use them. While recreating in these places is possible today, long-term uncertainties exist regarding future use of these favorite sites. Johnson currently lacks an organized approach that would enable the community to define and prioritize lands of public recreation interest and to act upon their preservation and/or recreation development.

D. JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE RECREATION RESOURCES

JSC recreation resources available to the community

Johnson State College (JSC) has a broad range of recreation facilities serving its approximately 1,700 students and 200 employees. Some of these facilities are available to the wider community.

Among the facilities open to community use is the SHAPE facility, which includes a swimming pool, exercise rooms and an indoor climbing wall. Four outdoor tennis courts; a network of hiking, biking and running trails; and a newly built disc golf course are also available. The Lower Pond is a favorite walking destination as is a pathway loop circling the College via School Street, College and Clay Hills.

JSC human resources that could support Johnson's recreation development are concentrated within the Outdoor Education, Physical Education, and Hospitality and Tourism Management programs. The Outdoor Education program has two useful curriculum requirements. Students are required to complete a 25-day leadership requirement as well as a semester-long internship requirement (240-280 hours) in adventure education, wilderness leadership, or environmental education. In Johnson, the Outdoor Education Program has been working with the Laraway School and P.T.A. The Physical Education students could act as youth sports team coaches and supervisors. The Hospitality and Tourism Management program could help research and design solutions to recreation issues related to tourism and economic development.

Following are some statistics providing insight as to how Johnson residents use JSC facilities. In 2003, 60 residents purchased membership cards at the SHAPE facility. Eighteen children participated in the SWIM program sponsored by the Johnson Recreation Committee. A total of 20 children participated in 2003 camps and clinics (Summer Hoop Camp - 4 kids; Fall Soccer Clinic - 10 kids; and Fall Small Fry Basketball Clinic - 6 kids). The Dibden Center for the Arts, which in 2003 organized 52 cultural events, has 300 Johnson residents on the mailing list. The College Library registers 637 guest borrowers with the 05656 zip code.

Issues relating to JSC recreation resources

Visibility of JSC recreation resources: Johnson State College disseminates the information about its facilities and programs through a number of different channels. These include their web site, a periodic newsletter to subscribed residents, and occasional publications, such as the 1999 *Community Contributions* brochure. Recently, a link to JSC events has been added to the community calendar available on the town web site. Despite these efforts, many Johnson residents have been continuously concerned about the lack of publicity for the College's recreational offerings. One resident expressed her viewpoint in the following way: "We don't know what recreation facilities and programs we are welcome to use. It took some of us three years to find out that the College had a swimming pool we could use."

Understanding of JSC facility user policies by the community: JSC welcomes and encourages the use of its facilities by the community. That said, there are some important issues that JSC needs to address prior to making the facilities available to the community. These include liability issues and resolving staffing challenges to accommodate extension of hours of availability of their facilities for community use (e.g. swimming pool hours). JSC is currently in the process of reviewing many of its policies, one of them being a policy of opening up outdoor recreation fields to the community.

Future considerations: Town recreation leaders believe that the strengthening of mutual linkages would be beneficial for both the College and Town. For example, JSC has a solid skill, knowledge and research base. Better utilization of this intellectual hub for the benefit of the entire community could significantly advance the implementation of this recreation plan. The Town, on the other hand, offers a vast array of amenities that enhance the quality of life of both students and employees.

During this planning process the following suggestions have been made to improve coordination and communication:

- 1) The Town should create a focal point (e.g. informational kiosk in the Village) with a space designated for the promotion of College facilities and events;
- 2) The Town should designate a liaison to interface with the College;
- 3) The College and the Town could explore possibilities for broader student involvement in Town matters. These could take the form of student internships, sports coaching, or recreation studies and research;
- 4) The College should consider nominating its representatives to the Town Committees charged with recreation development;

- 5) The College could provide an annual update of its facilities and programs open to the community. This update could be advertised on the town web site, annual town meeting report, and the informational kiosk in the Village;
- 6) The College and the Town should discuss opportunities for establishing a system of ‘easy links’ between JSC and the town. (Note: In this example, ‘easy links’ are understood as physical pathways; signage improving the visibility of recreation resources; or a greenway through the College campus enabling walkers to avoid the main asphalt road)
- 7) The College is currently undergoing a master planning process for the campus. The planning process offers a useful opportunity to initiate a dialogue with the community.

POLICIES

In the area of Recreation the Town of Johnson will:

- Encourage coordination of town-sponsored recreation by one person.
- Facilitate access to and improve the publicity for recreation programs, facilities and policies governing the use of the facilities.
- Encourage stronger communication to promote recreation resources.
- Support an envisioning process for the future desirable layout and uses of recreation facilities. Until a plan for the future desirable layout of the recreation facilities exists, the Town will focus major investments on facility improvements that will improve the safety of facility users, decrease negative impacts on neighborhoods and optimize the use of the existing recreation resources to their best potential.
- Encourage the expansion of trail-based infrastructure that will link prospective recreation facilities with the heart of the Village and explore opportunities to link local trails with statewide trails. One example is a connection of the Long Trail with the Village Center through the Talc Mill Property.
- Preserve and encourage recreational uses of rivers, streams and ponds.
- Support and actively pursue strategies assuring long-term public access to recreation resources.
- Support efforts that maintain and facilitate access to private lands.

IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- Review recommended implementation tasks outlined in the Recreation Facilities Plan and where applicable, determine which are feasible for implementation. (*Select Board*).
The tasks included in the Recreation Facilities Plan are:
 - Create a sub-committee to explore the feasibility of hiring a professional recreation coordinator - look at examples and efforts of other towns; investigate potential funding sources; and draft job description (*Select Board*).

- o Explore a new committee structure which would merge or coordinate the current SkatePark and Recreation Committees (*Johnson Recreation Committee and SkatePark Committee*).
- o To advance the implementation tasks identified in this plan, assist committees that work on recreation related projects with grant writing. (*Community & Economic Development Coordinator*).
- o On an annual basis, review progress that has been made towards achieving the goals, policies and tasks defined in this plan (*Community & Economic Development Coordinator*).
- o Create a focal point in the Village advertising programs, facilities and policies governing facilities use (*Main Street Committee, Johnson Communications Committee*).
- o Improve signage to recreation facilities, particularly the Old Mill Park.
- o Encourage JSC to annually create a list of recreation opportunities available to Johnson residents (*Johnson Communications Committee*).
- o Organize a public forum to discuss the use of the school gymnasium (*School Board*).
- o Invite representatives from the College, VAST, Green Mountain Club and other organizations to different committees (*committee chairs*).
- o Commission a study to determine potential and most desirable uses for the former Talc Mill Property also known as the Tatro land (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
- o Create a master plan detailing the future layout and use of Johnson's recreation facilities (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
- o Conduct a study to explore utilization and integration of the Gomo Farm property for recreation purposes (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
- o Until a plan for the future desirable layout of the recreation facilities exists, focus major investments on improvements to existing facilities that will improve the safety of facility users, decrease negative neighborhood impacts and optimize the use of the existing recreation resources to their best potential.
- o Expand playground equipment at Old Mill Park.
- o Schedule the use of the fields in a way that has the least negative impact on neighborhoods (*Recreation Committee, Select Board*).
- o Think of how to connect the Rail Trail with the heart of the Village and beyond (*Economic Development Committee*).
- o Implement the Riverwalk Greenway project described in the Pathways Plan.
- o Create a priority list of lands desirable for conservation and recreation development (*Conservation Commission*).
- o Explore creative ways to raise financial resources for land conservation (*Conservation Commission*).
- o Provide information to private landowners about laws protecting them from liabilities for injuries to recreationists on their property when the landowner did not purposefully cause the injuries (*Conservation Commission*).
- o Provide information on various options available to landowners for allowing recreational use of their lands (*Conservation Commission*).

EDUCATION

A. JOHNSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Students in the Town of Johnson attend schools in two locations. Pre-kindergarten through sixth grade attend classes in Johnson, at the Elementary School, while students in seventh through twelfth grades and Johnson's vocational students attend classes at Lamoille Union High School, and the contiguous Green Mountain Technology and Career Center, all located in Hyde Park.

Johnson Elementary School

The Johnson Elementary School (JES) is owned by the Johnson School District. The Johnson Elementary School Board governs the School District. There are five directors, elected to two and three year terms, at the Annual School District/Town meeting.

Enrollment trends

JES underwent a major renovation in 1997 and was expanded by the addition of a gymnasium, 11 classrooms, a library, and kitchen. The school was built for growth, however, following state trends, Johnson's school age population has been slowly dropping over the past decade. As a result of the expansion, the school now has a capacity for approximately 350-360 students. The 2004-2005 pre-K through 6th grade enrollment was 257 students. The enrollment history since the 1997 facility expansion is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Johnson Elementary Enrollment History

Year	K – 6 students	Pre-K students	Pre-K – 6 TOTAL
1998-1999	241	-	241
1999-2000	265	40	305
2000-2001	261	27	288
2001-2002	246	31	277
2002-2003	240	26	266
2003-2004	245	28	273
2004-2005	235	22	257

School budget

According to the JES Business Officer, the school budget has been rising, on average, a couple of percentage points more than consumer price index (CPI), because school expenditures are inflating more than the CPI. The full impact of this is felt at the state, not local level, since the amount most Johnson residents owe in school tax is based on their income, not their property value. The total size of the local grand list has no effect on school taxes paid, that is, town school taxes owed depend only on the size of the school budget and the income and property value of individuals, not the collective value of property in the town.

Future facility considerations

According to the Business Officer, the school has no plans for improvements to school facilities and services, or expansion of school programs at this time. However, the school has a need for garage space, a maintenance workshop and storage. Another idea that is at the “very early brainstorming and investigation stage” is the possibility of housing a dental clinic in the building. Currently, the school does not have a space available for this purpose, so pursuing a dental clinic would likely involve weighing the benefits of such a program against other competing uses for space in the building. The advantage of such a service anywhere in Johnson would be providing low-cost, near-by dental care for children of low income families. The added advantage of housing such a service at the school is that it would eliminate the need for a parent to transport the child to the appointment, which for many children most in need of dental care is as much of an obstacle as the actual cost of the service.

Lamoille Union High School

The Lamoille Union High School is owned by a cooperative agreement among six member towns called the Lamoille Union High School District. These towns are: Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson and Waterville. The Lamoille Union High School Board of School Directors governs the District. There are 12 members on the Board. At present three of the Directors are from Johnson.

When the school was built, it was designed to serve about 800 students, based on the educational standards of the time. Current standards, which came into effect in 2000, reduced the facility capacity to 640 students. The change of standards necessitated the expansion of the facility and in 2002 a new Middle School building, along with expansion and renovation of the High School, was completed. Currently, Lamoille Union Middle and High Schools accommodate approximately 900 students and are not considered to have a space problem at this time.

Enrollment trends have been relatively stable for several years. In grades 7-12, there were 197 Johnson students in 2002-2003; 193 Johnson students in 2003-2004; and 204 students in 2004-2005.

Green Mountain Technology and Career Center

The Green Mountain Technology and Career Center (GMTCC) is one of 16 regional technical centers in the state of Vermont that provides career, technical, and vocational programs for high school and adult students in the greater Lamoille Valley. It serves students from Hazen Union High School District, Lamoille Union High School District, Craftsbury Academy, Peoples Academy, and Stowe High School.

GMTCC has a close association with, but is separate from, Lamoille Union High School. It shares the same physical location (attached to but separate from the High School Building), and the same Board of Directors, on matters concerning financial

management. The Center provides technical training for self selected 11th and 12th grade students, as well as certain adult students. The facility has a total capacity of 315 students. In Fall 2004, 206 students were enrolled in GMTCC courses. Projections for fiscal year 2007 are for 272 students.

GMTCC provides technical training and develops appropriate work skills for students in 14 program areas. These currently include: Automotive Technology; Business Administration; Computer Design; Construction Technology; Culinary Arts; Digital Arts; Forestry; Health & Human Services; Heating Ventilation Tech; Industrial Mechanics; Marketing & Tourism; Multimedia; Pre-Tech; and Technical Electronics. In the near future, GMTCC is proposing to open the following courses: Horticulture and Landscape Technology; Emergency and Fire Management Services; Emergency Medical Technician; and Management and Entrepreneurship.

The facility was built in 1967 and contains career and technical classrooms, laboratories, and office space. Although this facility has been well maintained, it needs to be updated to meet standards in safety, climate quality, mechanics, disability access, and communications. A plan for renovation and expansion of the facility was proposed to the public for bonding in November 2005. The bond passed and the completion of the facility is projected to be February 2008.

B. JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE

Academics

Johnson State College is one of five colleges belonging to the statewide network of Vermont State Colleges. Johnson State College features a range of programs in Behavioral Sciences; Biology and Environmental Science; Business and Economics; Education; Fine & Performing Arts; Health Sciences and Outdoor Education; Hospitality and Tourism Management; Humanities and Liberal Arts; Mathematics; Wellness & Alternative Medicine; and Writing and Literature.

As of fall 2004, Johnson State College had a student population of approximately 1,700 students. Of this number, 1,020 students attended on-campus undergraduate classes; 470 students were enrolled in external, off-campus undergraduate programs; and 170 students were enrolled in graduate programs. Over the last four years, the student population has grown by about 12% (approximately 3% each year). Most of this growth has been in off-campus and graduate programs.

In spring 2005, JSC received a Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant from the U.S. Department of Education for approximately \$1.78 million of federal funding over the next five years. The grant will enable JSC to restructure and improve course curricula, increase the number of interdisciplinary course offerings, expand its faculty development, and improve academic programs, joint use of facilities and student services.

Child Development Center

Johnson State College owns and operates the Child Development Center. The Center is the largest facility in Johnson serving 2-5 year-olds, with an approximately 30-child capacity.

Library and Cultural Facilities

The College Library and Learning Center has over 100,000 titles, Internet capability and related amenities enabling reading, study and/or research. The Library offers free membership to area residents.

Dibden Center for the Arts houses a 500-seat theater. Dibden acts as an incubator for the Performing Arts departments of Theater, Music and Dance. Events range from local to nationally known performers. Performances are open to the community. About 300 local residents are on Dibden's mailing list. The Center also houses the Julian Scott Memorial Gallery that hosts student, faculty and touring art exhibits.

C. PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Laraway Youth and Family Services

Johnson is home to Laraway Youth and Family Services (LYFS), a private non-profit organization employing about 70 people. LYFS' two main programmatic components include the Laraway School and Substitute Care program.

The Laraway School is licensed in Vermont as an independent school, approved for special education. The School serves 4th to 12th grade-students who have special emotional and behavioral circumstances that keep them from being successful in their own schools and who want to return to their own schools once they get their behavior under control.

Laraway Substitute Care is a behavioral treatment program that serves youth who experience problems that make it difficult for them to live in their own communities. Laraway provides services designed to support children, adolescents and their families as they identify effective ways to address those problems.

LYFS is also a Licensed Child Placing Agency administering a statewide Foster Care program that provides daily care, intensive care management, treatment and crisis intervention services.

D. OTHER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Vermont Studio Center

The Vermont Studio Center (VSC) is a nonprofit, year-round, international creative community serving artists and writers from across the country and around the

world. Each month, 50 artists and writers participate in 4-12 week independent studio residencies. The local community can participate in Community Life Drawing available to Johnson residents on Monday nights. Throughout the year, VSC also offers exhibitions, public lectures and readings to the community.

Since it was founded in 1984, VSC has offered a free summer art program for children, and since 1998, a community arts program for teenagers and adults. In addition, VSC's Community Arts Director teaches 16 art classes per week at the local Johnson Elementary School. As part of her teaching program, she is often assisted by VSC residents, and monthly, VSC international residents are invited to participate in special projects with the students.

In 2005, VSC staff has been selected by the Vermont Alliance for Arts Education (VAAE) to be honored at the VAAE Arts Education Recognition Evening at the State Capital in Montpelier.

Art House

The Art House facility is owned by Johnson Elementary School. Various classes for kids as well as adults are held here. Classes for adults include clay arts, book arts, massage, and photography classes.

Johnson Public Library

The Johnson Public Library has over 1,500 registered patrons. It is open 24 hours a week and, on average, 107 people visit the library in the course of a week. The Library has approximately 6,150 books, 27 videos and 120 audio books. Four computers with high-speed Internet access were added several years ago. Children's groups meet here for their story-time readings and play.

Conservation Commission

At 2005 Town Meeting, Johnson voters approved the creation of the Municipal Conservation Commission. As stated in the Vermont Statutes, one of the duties of the Conservation Commission is to conduct educational activities to encourage public understanding of local natural resources and conservation needs.

North Country Animal League

The North Country Animal League (NCAL) conducts school visits, and other educational outreach programs throughout the county regarding animal care and responsibility. This includes annual summer day camps that Johnson children attend. Johnson supports NCAL with \$1500 annually.

TRANSPORTATION

State and local roads

Local roads in Johnson are maintained by the Town of Johnson Highway Department. Numbered state roads are maintained by the Vermont Department of Transportation. Vermont's local roads are classified according to their importance and general use. This classification system applies to all town highways and is used to determine the amount of state highway aid provided to each community. The classes are as follows:

- Class I Town Highways are those highways that, while the responsibility of the town to maintain, are extensions of the State Highway System and carry a State Highway route number. Johnson currently does not have any Class I Town Highways.
- Class II Town Highways are the most important highways in each town, serving as important corridors between towns, and consequently often support a large volume of local and regional traffic. Plot Road is an example of a Class II Town Highway.
- Class III Town Highways, such as the West Settlement Road - are all year-round traveled other than class 1 or class 2 highways.
- Class IV Town Highways are all other not classified as I, II or III. Coddington Hollow Road, from just beyond Foote Brook to the Waterville boundary is a class IV road. Class IV roads are not maintained by the Town of Johnson beyond the levels required by state statute. Year round development on class IV roads should be discouraged due to their non-maintained status.

Table 9. Johnson Local Highway Mileage

Class I Highway Mileage	0
Class II Highway Mileage	9.98
Class III Highway Mileage	39.17
Class IV Highway Mileage	13.29
State Highway Mileage	11.35
Scenic Highway Mileage	0

Source: VTrans, 2004

Bridges and culverts

The Town owns and maintains 8 bridges within its boundaries, not including the numerous culverts serving both intermittent streams and larger waterways. There are several grant programs administered by VTrans that provide significant financial assistance in repairing and replacing bridges, culverts and highways. In 2003, the Town completed a Highway, Bridge and Culvert Inventory, which serves as a basis for decision making and allocating financial resources.

Currently, there are three bridges projected for reconstruction or rehabilitation:

- State-owned Route 15/Gihon River Bridge: VTrans has prepared final design plans for the proposed replacement of this bridge.
- Town-owned Railroad Street Bridge: The Railroad Street bridge rehabilitation project has been included in a capital bill with the bridge slated for funding April 1, 2006. Since the project is a rehabilitation project, the Town's requirement is only five percent of the total project cost.
- Town-owned Pearl Street Bridge: The Pearl Street Bridge is in need of a new concrete deck and railings and is in a conceptual design phase.

Due to the efforts of Senator Leahy, Johnson will receive from the 2006 Federal Transportation Re-authorization Act \$3.6 million for the reconstruction of the Route 15/Gihon River Bridge and \$1.4 million for the Pearl Street Bridge. Additionally, Senator Jeffords secured \$300,000 to reconstruct and pave Hogback Road.

Rail

The nearest passenger service available is AMTRAK with a station in Waterbury.

Airports

Johnson residents are provided air transportation service through the Morrisville-Stowe state Airport on Route 100 in Morristown, and through the Burlington International Airport in South Burlington. Long-term expansion plans for the Morrisville-Stowe State airport have been considered although none of those plans are expected to be implemented over the next 20 years.

Regional trails and paths

Long Trail

Johnson's stretch of the 270-mile Long Trail consists of fifteen miles of main trail and 1.5 miles of side trails. The trail descends the north side of Whiteface Mountain, through Bear Hollow, along Smith Brook Basin, crosses Rte 15 and the Lamoille River, ascends to Prospect Rock, up and over Roundtop Mountain, crosses the Plot Rd, wends into Coddling Hollow, then continues its way north to Laraway, Butternut and Bowen Mountains. The trail includes three overnight shelters: Bear Hollow, Roundtop and Corliss Camp.

VAST Trails

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) maintains a network of snowmobile trails on private and public lands across the state. There are about 36 miles of VAST trails through both public and private lands in Johnson. VAST trails in Johnson are maintained by the Sterling Snow Riders - local VAST chapter in Johnson.

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail

The Lamoille Valley Railroad, a 98-mile corridor between Sheldon Junction and St. Johnsbury, passes through Johnson along the banks of the Lamoille River. The line is

owned by the State of Vermont and is not operational at this time. Plans are currently underway to convert the line to a year-round, multi-use recreational trail. The railbanking of the line was completed in 2005.

The conversion of the Lamoille Valley Railroad (LVR) right-of-way into a four-season multi-use trail will provide a continuous connection between all village centers from Hardwick to Jeffersonville. A hard packed gravel surface that will accommodate bicyclists is currently proposed for the LVR multi-use path. The facility will provide a safe alternative for bicyclists not comfortable traveling along Route 15. The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers will hold a lease on the right-of-way and will be responsible for operating and maintaining the multi-use trail.

In 2005, Congressman Bernie Sanders secured \$5.8 million for the construction of the trail. Because this amount will not be sufficient to cover the cost of the entire project, Johnson will need to get organized to help with the completion. It is also very important that Johnson becomes an active player in the trail's management and advocacy structures. One other aspect of the project that is key to the economic vitality of our downtown is creating a linkage between the rail trail and the Village Center. A pathway, trailhead facility, informational board and other infrastructure to invite trail users to the Village Center need to be planned for.

Public transportation services

The closest regional public transit service available to Johnson residents is Lamoille Valley buses operated by Green Mountain Transit Authority in Morrisville. Commuter routes exist that connect to Stowe and Waterbury.

In 2005, a new service, Lamoille Valley Express, was added to the Waterbury-Morrisville line to bring people to school, work or shop in Johnson. This service runs Monday thru Friday. Three days a week, the bus goes all the way to Cambridge. This route is free to all Johnson State College students and staff with JSC ID.

An employee-oriented Smugglers Shuttle service runs between Morrisville and the Smugglers Notch Resort.

Five human-service organizations in Lamoille County currently provide services that include Johnson residents.

- The Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) provides transportation to health care, shopping and community programs. They also transport meals to residents that are confined to their homes. In addition, CVCOA operates the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in central Vermont. RSVP provides transportation to its volunteers in addition to reimbursing self-drive volunteers for mileage.
- Central Vermont Community Action Council (CVCAC) has contracted with Rural Community Transport (RCT) to administer a ride referral/ride match program in Lamoille County. RCT also focuses on developing and coordinating

transit services and cultivating awareness of and support for public transportation in the region.

- Lamoille County mental Health (LCMH) provides rides for developmentally-disabled clients between their homes and the region's treatment and activity centers.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services to clients with disabilities that create barriers to employment. The VR program works to relocate individuals and provide transportation so they can work in the community. VR also serves as an advocate of local and regional transportation planning.
- Out and About is an adult day care program at Copley Hospital which provides transportation to clients through RCT to gain access to and from their home to the day care.

VT Route 15 Corridor Management Plan

The 2004 *VT Route 15 Corridor Management Plan* presents a list of transportation system recommendations and identifies land use planning and regulatory tools for Route 15 from the Essex/Jericho Town line to Hardwick. The plan's recommendations stem from two goals: 1) Village Centers along VT 15 should be designed for village residents, businesses and visitors, and 2) Rural and transitional sections should provide a high level of mobility and safety for through traffic. The plan recognizes the Johnson Main Street Project as an important contributor to achieving these goals.

Johnson Main Street Project

The Johnson Main Street Project is located in the historic center of Johnson Village in the town of Johnson. In its full scope, the project encompasses:

- A continuous pedestrian sidewalk system separated from the roadway with clearly marked crosswalks for crossing Main Street;
- Bicycle routes that clearly delineate lanes and shoulders with appropriate signage to guide bicyclists through the Village of Johnson;
- Clearly defined vehicular lanes and on street parking for motorists to eliminate conflicts between vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians;
- An enhanced Main Street streetscape with street trees, streetlights and furniture, benches, bike racks, and information kiosks for residents and visitors to use.

The project reached an historic milestone when Congress passed the 2005 Omnibus Appropriations Act in November. With the help of Senator Patrick Leahy, the appropriations bill includes \$1,984,000 earmarked for Main Street improvements. In December 2004, the project was awarded an additional \$294,000 from the VTrans Enhancement grant program. The implementation of the design phase and construction of Main Street improvements are projected for completion within four years.

Pathways Plan

The 2003 Johnson Pathways Plan identifies six pedestrian loops radiating from Main Street. While most of these pathways are located within the Village, some stretch beyond the Village boundary. Within the *Pathways Plan*, the top priorities are: Development of a Master Plan for roadway and pedestrian improvements of the Pearl Street/School Street Corridor between Main Street and the Powerhouse Bridge; linking of the future Rail Trail with the Village Center; and implementation of the Riverwalk Greenway accessing point locations along the banks of the Lamoille and Gihon Rivers.

POLICIES

In the area of Transportation the Town of Johnson will:

- Maintain the existing infrastructure of town roads and bridges while conserving their aesthetic and recreational qualities.
- Encourage and promote public transportation and ridesharing.
- Support the Village in their efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and explore the expansion of this infrastructure beyond the Village boundaries.
- Discourage the road construction of town highways, class III roads, and development roads that are above 1500 feet or on slopes greater than 25%. *Cross-reference in Natural Resources section*

IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- Maintain and update the Highway, Bridge and Culvert Inventory and develop a capital plan to repair and replace these assets (*Select Board and Town/Village Administrator*).
- Continue to seek funding sources for highway, bridge and culvert improvements (*Select Board and Town/Village Administrator*).
- Continue to encourage the State to fund needed bridge repair and replacement projects in Johnson (*Select Board*).
- Cooperate with the Village Trustees in the implementation of the Johnson Main Street Project (*Select Board*).

UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

Sewage and septic System

Johnson Village owns and operates a municipal wastewater sewage treatment plant built in 1996. The plant was built on the site of the original 1968 plant and has approximately 30% more capacity than its predecessor. It has a design capacity of 270,000 gallons per day and should provide Johnson with the ability to accommodate its needs for the foreseeable future.

The Village sewer currently encompasses the entire Village (including Johnson State College) plus 13 houses in East Johnson. The Town and Village entered into an inter- municipal agreement to extend sewer service onto specific mapped areas of the Town.

Development in the Village is required to connect to the system, if the development is within 100 feet of a sewer line. Outside of the Village and Town sewer service area, individual on-site sewage disposal permits are required and are regulated by the Town Health Ordinance.

In 2002, the State legislature amended the Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules. These changes will result in the Agency of Natural Resources taking over all permitting of septic systems in 2007. The new rules allow towns the right to take over permitting from the state under certain conditions. The Select Board will need to review Johnson's on-site sewage ordinance in light of these changes.

Water supply

Residents within the Village are serviced by a municipal water system, which is managed and maintained by the Village Water Department. Connection to the system is decided on a per case basis by the Village Trustees. The Johnson State College campus is also connected to the Village system. Residents outside the Village supply their own water through on-site, private systems (e.g. springs or wells).

There are two sources of public drinking water: the French Hill Surface Supply and the Nadeau well. The French Hill source has been used by the Village since the water system was first developed in 1895. The French Hill Source is protected by over 47 acres of surrounding watershed owned by the Village, as well as by the adjacent lands of the Mount Mansfield State Forests. The Nadeau Well, southeast of the Village is used daily to meet peak demand. This gravel well was drilled in 1974. There is an 180,000 gallon reservoir located off Collins Hill which provides storage and system pressure. Both sources of water fill the reservoir.

In 1997 the Trustees began to identify the water system's deficiencies and find practical and efficient means to address them. This evaluation indicated that:

- The Nadeau well site has the potential of contamination from spills and has elevated sodium levels and naturally occurring hardness.
- The French Hill filtration plant and stream impoundment needs significant repairs and improvements, is an “open water” source and has limited water production. The cost of repairs does not warrant the expense of improving this facility.
- The distribution system is old cast iron piping with leakage estimated as high as 50% of total water consumption.
- Undersized mains result in inadequate fire flows and lower insurance ratings. System pressure is inadequate for building sprinkler requirements, limiting the development potential in the Village.
- The storage reservoir is old and undersized to meet fire protection requirements.
- Booster pump stations do not conform to water system and operator safety requirements.

To address water system deficiencies, in November 2004 Johnson voters approved the Village Trustees to pursue a general obligation bond in an amount not to exceed 4.25 million dollars to implement the following improvements to the public water system:

- Acquisition of a property where a new water supply well was located, drilled and tested in 2003-2004. Final development of water source, and construction of filtration plant for manganese removal.
- Replacement and construction of 18,750 ft. of water mains and hydrants and new 350,000-gallon storage reservoir for improved domestic water and fire service in the Village.
- Improvements to the existing Nadeau well to serve as a back-up supply.
- Replacement of the two existing water booster pump stations
- Replacement of all customer water meters
- Abandonment of the French Hill impoundment and filtration building.

The project is scheduled for implementation in 2006.

Electric facilities and energy consumption

Electric Facilities

There are five utilities that provide electric utility services in the Town of Johnson; however, only four of them have franchise areas in the town. The Morrisville Water and Light Department serves only the specific customers that they have historically served.

The Village owns and runs the (Johnson) Village Water and Light Department that serves an area associated with, but slightly larger than, the Village. The Village serves approximately 950 metered customers ranging from residential, commercial and industrial to JSC, which is the largest user of the system accounting for app 27% of system load. The system has very high reliability records and has historically had some of the lowest rates statewide. System improvements are needed and will require increases in rates over time.

Also providing electric service in Johnson is: Vermont Electric Cooperative (serving broad areas north and south of the Village's franchise area), Hyde Park Village (serving a narrow corridor on the southeastern border), and Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (serving a very small area on the extreme north eastern border).

The entity responsible for installing and maintaining the Village's electric system is the Village Water and Light Department. Since around 1956 the Village Water and Light Department has purchased all of its power supplies from outside generation sources. The Department still owns a small portion of the old hydro site on the Gihon River near the School Street Bridge; however, the damming rights have been sold. All of the Department's distribution lines are above ground.

The Village of Johnson is a member of the Vermont Public Power and Supply Authority (VPPSA) which is a Joint Action Agency serving 14 municipal power entities in Vermont. VPPSA aggregates the Power Supply need of the members and secures the power from the market on behalf of the members, at a cost savings. With changes in the power supply market, membership in VPPSA has become essential to the continued operation of municipal electric departments all over the state. The increasing costs of purchasing power are of great concern.

Energy consumption:

Across Vermont, residential heat and electricity account for 34.6% of all energy used statewide. Commercial and industrial land uses consume a much lower percentage of the total energy use at 13% and 12% respectively. Transportation currently accounts for 46% of the total energy demand in Vermont, and is predicted to account for 1/3 of the increase in energy demand by 2010.

The 2000 Census data on home heating in Johnson show that over 51% of homes town wide rely on oil and kerosene as their primary heating fuel. 23% of homes primarily use gas, 14% use electricity and 10% use wood.

Municipal energy related expenses listed in the 2004 Town Report indicate that the Johnson School District spent \$25,383 for electricity; \$7,174 for fuel oil; and \$7,088 for wood chips. Other energy expenditures by the Town include \$6,817 for heating; \$3,461 for electricity; and \$20,341 for equipment fuels and oils.

Solid waste facilities

Johnson is a member of the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District (LRSWMD), a municipal district formed to serve the towns of Lamoille County as well as Craftsbury and Worcester. Funding for LRSWMD expenses is covered entirely by user fees, local appropriations and service fees.

As required by state law, the LRSWMD has devised a 20-year plan for the management and disposal of all types of solid waste generated in its member

communities. Solid waste from Johnson is now brought to the Johnson Drop off site at the former Johnson landfill. From there, waste is hauled to a landfill in Coventry.

Law enforcement

There are two levels of police coverage in Johnson: the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department, and the Vermont State Police.

Town Constables are appointed by the Selectmen and do not currently have any law enforcement authority.

The Lamoille County Sheriff's Department provides enforcement of all laws that fall within the local jurisdiction, emergency dispatching services and requested back up in emergency situations. A minimum level of service is provided to all ten towns in the county; however, an additional level of service is provided to Johnson (Hyde Park and Wolcott), on a contractual basis for twenty-four hour police protection; response to emergency fire and rescue calls; and to serve in the civil legal process. The Sheriff is elected to the position by Lamoille County voters.

The Vermont State Police provide a third level of police protection and support for Johnson residents. The State Police provide emergency and back-up coverage as requested by the Sheriff's Department, criminal laboratory services, and the service of officers who are trained in special areas (i.e. homicide, arson or drug enforcement).

Rescue Services

Rescue services in Johnson are provided by the Northern Emergency Medical Services Division of Newport Ambulance Service, Inc. (NEMS), a privately owned ambulance service that provides immediate response emergency medical care, backup emergency response services (to volunteer rescue squads) and medical transfer services. The ambulance is dispatched either through 911 calls received at the sheriff's department or through direct calls to the service itself. The ambulance service is primarily a private, fee for service organization that is supported, in part, with municipal funds.

Fire

The Johnson Fire Department is a volunteer fire department providing twenty-four hour fire, rescue protection and HAZMAT (Hazardous Materials) response to a Community Service Area defined by the Village of Johnson and the towns of Johnson, Waterville and Belvidere. The Johnson Fire Department (JFD) is administratively responsible to the Village Trustees and receives part of its funding from the Village. Service to the towns of Johnson, Belvidere and Waterville and the College is by annual contract for fire protection coverage.

JFD is dispatched through the County Sheriff's 911 emergency call service. In the past five years the department's call volume has increased by 60%. In 2003, the department responded to 91 alarms.

In February 2004, JFD fire station was destroyed by a structural fire. This tragedy resulted in the loss of the fire station, gear and most of the equipment, personal gear and memorabilia, awards and trophies of the firefighters. The construction of the new Fire Station was completed in December 2005.

Cemeteries

There are six cemeteries in the Town and Village of Johnson. Three Cemetery Associations, a Cemetery Commissioner and the Johnson Selectboard oversee the care of these cemeteries.

Table 10. Johnson Cemeteries

Cemetery	Size	Capacity Status
Evergreen Ledge	+/- 1.1 acres	+/- 30% of land available
French Hill or Grow Cemetery	+/- .45 acres	Uncertain, but likely at or near capacity
Lamoille View	5-6 acres	At 60% capacity; should not reach full capacity for 10-20 years
Plot Cemetery	1 acre	Uncertain, considered full
Whiting Hill	Unknown	Considered full
Old Catholic Cemetery	Unknown	Considered full

Source: Johnson Utilities and Facilities Report 2000.

Health facilities & services

The primary health care facility serving Johnson and the whole Lamoille County is Copley Hospital in Morristown. Copley Hospital is a 53-bed acute care hospital that serves as an emergency care center for local emergency services and provides in patient and out-patient service, long-term care, and family oriented birthing center. Copley's major tertiary referral hospital is Fletcher Allen Hospital in Burlington.

Agencies and services not affiliated with Copley include the Department of Health (Morrisville), Lamoille Family Center (Morrisville), the Diabetes Center of Lamoille County (Johnson), Johnson Health Clinic (Johnson) and Lamoille Home Health and Hospice.

There are also two physicians in Johnson.

Other facilities

Johnson Public Library and Johnson public schools are included in the Education chapter. Recreation facilities are described in the Recreation chapter.

POLICIES

In the area of Utilities and Facilities the Town of Johnson will:

- Continue developing long-term infrastructure maintenance/expansion plans and coordinate these plans with the Village Trustees and Johnson Planning Commission. Planning will take into consideration infrastructural needs of Johnson's educational institutions (trails, sidewalks, open spaces for recreation and an information booth).
- Develop management plans for all publicly owned lands and facilities.
- Promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design, construction, and use of municipal, industrial, commercial, and residential structures.
- Support efforts to generate energy locally from renewable sources, whether for heating, electricity, or transportation.

IMPLEMENTATION TASK

- Review the existing on-site sewage ordinance in light of the revised State Regulation of Wastewater Disposal and Water Supply Rules (*Select Board*).

LAND USE

In order to achieve the goals of this Town Plan, the Town of Johnson is divided into seven districts: the Village District, the Highway District, the Residential District, Rural Residential/ Agricultural District, the College District, the Agricultural District, and the Forest District. This plan describes the boundaries for each of these districts, and their current and future land uses. Finally, various strategies for achieving the goals for each of these districts are presented.

These seven districts have been established based on current land use characteristics and/or future desired conditions. Some of the factors used to identify the districts include proximity to the Village, proximity to major highways, available public utilities (public water and sewer), current level of development, soils characteristics for support of on site septic fields, elevation, and environmental features such as flood hazard areas.

Most of the districts are further divided into neighborhoods. Although all neighborhoods within a district are intended to achieve similar broad goals, differences may exist based on physical or environmental characteristics or other factors. The Foote Brook neighborhood, for example, differs from Collins Hill neighborhood in that the Foote Brook neighborhood has a high quality stream. While both neighborhoods are expected to achieve the same goal of providing adequate medium density residential development, any development in Foote Brook Neighborhood may need to provide additional protections to the stream corridor.

A map showing the approximate boundaries of both neighborhoods and districts is attached to this plan.

The Village District

Immediately surrounding the Village of Johnson are neighborhoods that support and enhance the village. As these neighborhoods are close to the village center they should be given first consideration for future Town development. The Village District is divided into two categories- Village 1 and Village 2.

Description

The Village Districts are those neighborhoods identified on the land use map as village (VIL) areas. Some district boundaries are defined by property boundaries while others are defined as all land within 500 feet of a specific road. Village 1 includes Gould Hill, East Johnson, West Johnson, and French Hill. Village 2 consists of Railroad Street Extension.

Purpose

The purpose of the Village District is to support the role of the Village of Johnson as the focus of many social and economic activities in the community and to provide for

residential, commercial, and other compatible development that serve the needs of the community. Such development shall be constrained so as to maintain the traditional, social and physical character of the village including its historic and scenic resources, and that will not exceed the capabilities of the districts' municipal services. Facilities and services should be planned for these areas to accommodate moderate to high density development.

Present Land Use

These areas are primarily residential but forestry, agriculture, recreation, wildlife habitat, light industry, and commercial uses are also to be found.

Future Land Use

This District should continue to be used as described in the preceding paragraph. In Village 1 neighborhoods, light industrial and commercial uses shall be generally discouraged and restricted to areas where they would minimally impact on the designated uses for these neighborhoods.

The Highway District

The Town of Johnson has three primary highways: Vermont Routes 15 and 100C and the local Class II road Hogback Road. The Highway District is divided into three neighborhood types- Highway 1, Highway 2, and Hogback. Development along the highway corridors should balance the goal of having a smooth flow of traffic with the needs of neighboring property owners to get access. Development should be restricted to a scale commensurate with the neighborhood it is located in.

Description

The Highway Districts are those neighborhoods identified on the land use map as highway (HW) corridors. Highway 1 includes stretches of state highways that are immediately adjacent to the Village (Routes 15 east and west and Route 100c north). Highway 2 neighborhoods are the rural stretches of the state highway (see the Land Use Map). The Hogback Road neighborhood is the land on the north side of Hogback Road. For the most part the District is defined as those lands within 500 feet of the stated roadway. Some lands within 500 feet of the highways are not included in the District as they may be on the opposite side of the Lamoille River or other feature.

Purpose for district

The Highway District is established to maintain a safe, efficient travel corridor and to permit some commercial and industrial development on 'Highway 1' neighborhoods.

Present Land Use

These areas are primarily used for residential uses but other uses also exist including agriculture, recreation, wildlife habitat, light industry, heavy industry, and commercial purposes.

Future Land Use

This District should continue to be used as described in the previous paragraph although the scale and density of use will be limited by the neighborhood in which it is located. While much of the land in this District is developable, future land uses should be constructed based on specific site considerations. Some considerations include development of land that is not greater than 30% slope, that avoids flood hazard areas and has soils that can support the proposed activity, activities that will not threaten or impair water quality, and the presence of prime agricultural and statewide important soils suitable for use in agriculture.

The Residential District

Away from the village and major highways are some areas of medium density residential development. These areas include the neighborhoods of Foote Brook, Collins Hill, and the Gihon River neighborhood. Residential development should be permitted in these areas as they are relatively close to the village center and generally have good soils for on site systems and close access to major travel corridors.

Description

The Residential Districts are those neighborhoods identified on the land use map as residential (RES) areas. Some district boundaries are defined by property boundaries while others are defined as all land within 500 feet of a specific road.

Purpose for district

The purpose of the Residential Districts is to provide for medium density residential development in areas that are located within a short distance of the village which are serviced on site with water and wastewater systems. These areas are identified to allow for the development of safe and pleasant residential settings, away from busy highways but within easy access. A variety of residential uses are appropriate including single family, duplexes and multifamily housing.

Present Land Use

These areas are presently used primarily for residential uses but other uses also exist including forestry, agriculture, recreation, wildlife habitat, and some limited light industry and commercial uses. Some neighborhoods are more developed than others at this time.

Future Land Use

This District should continue to be developed for residential uses. Where constraints to development exist, future land uses should be constructed based on specific site considerations. Some considerations include development of land that is not greater than 30% slope, avoids flood hazard areas, has soils that can support the proposed activity, and activities that will not threaten or impair water quality.

Within the Foote Brook neighborhood any development should provide protection to the riparian habitat and water quality of the brook as well as protection to the deer habitat in the area.

The Rural Residential/Agricultural District

Johnson has set aside large parts of town for future rural residential development. Divided into two neighborhoods, the Rural Residential/Agricultural District (RRA) includes the Uplands neighborhood in the north and Sterling in the south.

Description

Three quarters of the town's area is contained within the Rural Residential/Agricultural District which includes a broad swath north of the Hogback Road and Village of Johnson extending from Waterville and Cambridge to Hyde Park and Eden in the east. To the south of Route 15 and Johnson Village, the RRA district also includes a large area southeast of French Hill to Sterling Mountain.

Purpose for the district

The purpose of the Rural Residential/Agricultural District is to provide residential and other compatible uses at densities appropriate with the physical capabilities of the land and the availability of community facilities and services on the land outside of the village areas. Planned Unit Developments (i.e. clustered housing), open space preservation, and other techniques for preserving rural character of these areas are a critical component of the plan. Development should take place in such a way that any irreplaceable, unique, or scarce resources and natural areas are not harmed.

Present Land Use

Due to the size and extent of the District, many land uses exist within its borders. The District includes much land that is still used for forestry, agriculture, and earth resource extraction (gravel pits). There are also recreational, wildlife habitat, and some limited commercial and light industrial activities. Low density residential development is scattered throughout the District although it is almost entirely within a few hundred feet of a road.

Future Land Use

This District should continue to be used as described above. The issues with future land use in this District lie with the amount and scale of development. Development must respect environmental and physical constraints that exist on site including slopes, soils that support proposed activity, and wildlife habitat. Preservation of open space for continued use in forestry and agriculture is desired as well.

The College District

Located within the Town and Village of Johnson is Johnson State College. The College properties have been given their own district due to the special circumstances that exist in managing land use changes on campus.

Description

The College District includes those lands owned by the Vermont State College system.

Purpose for district

The purpose of the College District is to accommodate the unique needs of Johnson State College and related uses.

Present Land Use

This area is presently used primarily for educational purposes including the associated high density residential housing, recreational uses, wildlife habitat, and some commercial activities.

Future Land Use

This District should continue to be used for all the purposes stated above. As long as this District continues as a public educational campus it should continue to receive its own district with some latitude in order to achieve its mission.

The Agricultural District

The Lamoille River is an important player in land use planning in Johnson. The frequent flooding events of the Lamoille and its tributaries cause great amounts of damage to the village area but also provide some of the best agricultural soils in the area. The Agricultural District has been identified to provide the best use for these flood prone areas and to ensure that development on lands outside of the flood plain does not conflict with these uses.

Description

Some District boundaries are defined by property boundaries while others are bordered by a road or defined as land greater than 500 feet of a specific road.

Purpose for district

The purpose of the Agricultural District is to protect flood prone areas around the Lamoille River that have an economic capability for agriculture. These areas are now predominantly undeveloped except for uses associated with agriculture or forestry.

Present Land Use

The Agricultural District is now predominantly undeveloped except for uses associated with agriculture or forestry and a few houses. There also exist some areas of wildlife habitat and recreational uses.

Future Land Use

This District should continue to be usable for all the purposes stated above. There is very limited development potential in these areas based on soil types (for wastewater

treatment) and the substantial flood hazards that exist. Any expansion of residential developments will be discouraged as they tend to conflict with agricultural uses.

The Forest District

The Forest District consists of the Mountain area, all lands above 1,500 feet, and the West Settlement area which is defined by past and present land use (see Land Use Map). These areas are best suited for timber management and wildlife habitat, and are unsuitable for development due to steep terrain and distance from roads and utilities. So as to conserve the resources of the Forest District, the Town shall encourage and promote responsible management practices, such as those defined by the State of Vermont Accepted Management Practices (AMPs).

Description

The Forest District shall be defined as all land within the Town of Johnson that is above 1,500 feet in elevation and the areas of West Settlement identified on the Land Use Map.

Purpose for district

Historically Johnson's forestlands have provided significant employment and income for area residents. In addition, the forestlands provide excellent opportunities for all-season recreation. The Forest District includes portions of the Long Trail, State Forest areas, and V.A.S.T. trails.

Specifically, within the Forest District, Johnson plans to encourage the use of its forestlands for sustainable forestry. Residential development and other land uses that conflict with commercial forestry are to be discouraged. Looking to the future, Johnson realizes that the increase in America's population will make land for forestry, agriculture and wildlife habitat a valuable resource. The Town therefore has identified this area of town to protect large unfragmented forests for future uses as timber, recreation and wildlife habitat.

Present Land Use

This District is presently in forest and is used for wildlife habitat and low impact recreation as well. The forests in this District are a source of employment and income for commercial and private forestry. It is also a valuable habitat for wildlife and watershed area for the rivers and streams. Except for a limited amount of development in the West Settlement neighborhood, there is no residential development in the Forest District.

Future Land Use

This District is specifically designated for forestry, watershed protection, wildlife habitat and low impact recreation. This District may have roads built for commercial forestry purposes but not for residential or other commercial purposes.

This Mountain neighborhood shall not have commercial or residential development.

POLICIES

In the area of Land Use the Town of Johnson will:

- Manage growth and development in a manner that is respectful of Johnson's rural character, natural resources and their environmental, recreational and economic functions, and its infrastructural capacity.
- Support Village's efforts that encourage and expand the diversity and vitality of the Village as the cultural, single family residential and commercial-service hub of the Town.

IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

- Utilize existing development controls and state regulatory proceedings in an effort to implement the vision, and address the needs, conclusions and policies of this plan (*Select Board and Johnson Planning Commission*).
- Define future land use districts. Within those districts, identify areas and properties that are developable as well as areas to be protected from development. Follow up by drafting subdivision and zoning bylaws (*Johnson Planning Commission*).
- Develop an unregistered vehicle and junkyard ordinance (*Select Board*).