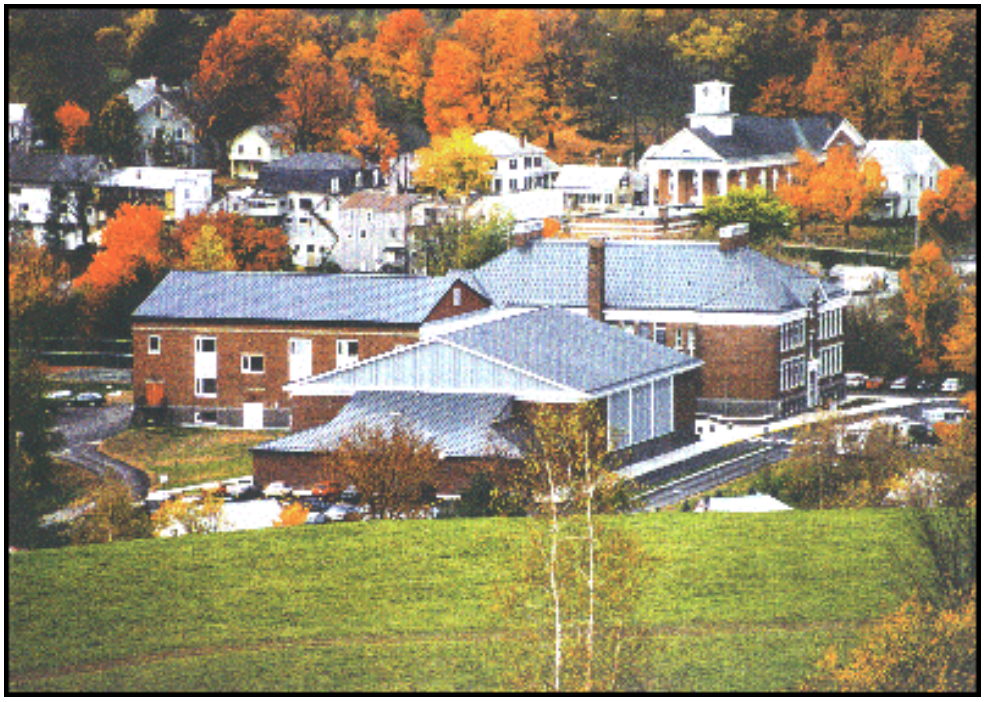
RICHFORD MUNCIPAL PLAN 2007



Prepared by
The Richford Planning Commission

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Northwest Regional Planning Commission

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE FOR THE RICHFORD, VERMONT TOWN PLAN 2006

Introduction

In many ways, town plans are a place where communities have an opportunity to reflect on the past accomplishments, take stock in where they are, and set a course for the future. Richford, perhaps more than any town in the area, is in a rapid state of change. Over the past few years the Town and Village have merged, the Richford 2010 Task Force completed *Richford … still a real Vermont town*, a new Emergency Services building was constructed, the high school was renovated, a new water treatment plant was constructed, the wastewater treatment plant was upgraded, the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail was built, and all of the Sweat-Comings building were purchased of which four or five have been demolished and rebuilt. Over the next few years, as a result of Richford 2010 and other efforts, the town has many bold initiatives planned to pump life back into the economy and community. This plan is being written to chart that course and establish the means of getting there.

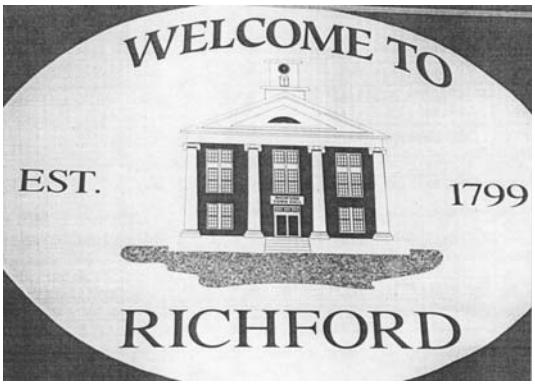


Photo 1: This sign is located to welcome residents and visitors to the Town of Richford.

Richford has been involved in town planning since its establishment over two centuries ago. Charting streets, establishing schools, and building water and sewer lines all needed town planning, even if the plans were never written down. Formal modern planning began in Richford in the 1980's with the first Town Plan adopted in 1989. Significant changes were made six years later when the plan was revised. The village, meanwhile, adopted their plan in the following year, 1996. In 2000 the Town Plan was readopted without changes to ensure the town continued to maintain a legal document while a new plan was drafted. The Richford Town Plan, revised in 2001, incorporated the Old Village Plan with the Town Plan. The Richford Town Plan 2006 is intended to reflect all of the recent changes and capture the goals and visions of the residents of the Town of Richford.

The remainder of the introduction explains why town plans are written, how plans are used and developed, and what role is played by the Planning Commission. Finally, the introduction concludes with the visions for the future of Richford.

Why Plan?

The primary purpose of any plan is to be a guide for the achievement of goals. In our personal lives this could entail financial planning, retirement planning, or planning for next month's vacation. In principle, town plans are no different. In very basic terms, a

town plan is a community statement describing where you came from, where you are now, and where you want to go in the future.

Land use, the focus of town planning, impacts the world in a myriad of ways. Each development has cultural, environmental, and economic costs and benefits that need to be weighed by the community. How can we improve the image of our downtown? Is there enough space available in the high school to accommodate future development? How can we encourage new employers to locate in Richford? How can we reduce petty crimes in the village? These are the kinds of questions that can be addressed in town plans.

Vermont municipalities are not required to plan, but most do – to protect community interest, to retain local control, to promote desired forms of growth and development, to target public investment, to protect scarce public resources, and build and sustain a sense of community.

How are Town Plans Used?

There is a range of ways in which a town plan can be used, from simply a source of information to a foundation for regulations. The town itself determines what is important and how it will be used.

At the most basic level the document can be used to catalogue what is known about the town. This collection of information could serve to familiarize residents, potential residents, and development interests about the Town and its resources. Good information is essential to wise decision making whether for town planning or investing in a home, farm, or business.

The plan may also be used to evaluate development proposals for conformance with the town's goals and policies. Determination of a specific project's conformance, or otherwise, with the town plan is one method of participating in the Act 250 process.

Towns that have adopted plans are eligible for certain State planning grants. In many cases, grants from private organizations require a town plan to be adopted as well. This money can be used for many projects including updating zoning bylaws, conducting feasibility studies for town projects, or purchasing development rights of a parcel of land.

Beyond this purpose, the Richford Town Plan serves as the legal basis for land use regulations and capital budget programs. The town plan, in general, states community goals and charts the course, while zoning and capital budgets are vehicles to get there.

What is Required in a Plan?

Under current law, a municipality must address ten (10) elements in its plan, which are the following:

- A statement of objectives, policies, and programs of the municipality to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment;
- A land use plan;
- A transportation plan;
- A utility and facility plan;
- A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources;

- An educational plan;
- A recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan;
- A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title;
- An energy plan; and
- A housing element that shall include a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income person's housing needs.

These represent minimum requirements required by Act 200 (the Vermont Municipal and Regional Development Control Act). Each town plan will be different depending on the unique qualities that exist in every community.

How Does the Planning Process Work?

A town plan is arrived at by: identifying community issues and needs; collecting and analyzing background information about the town; and combining them into a vision (statement) of how the community should develop. Goals and policies are formulated to address specific elements such as land use, housing, or education.

The need for involvement of town residents in the planning process cannot be overstated. While it is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to develop the plan, citizens and citizen committees can have an active role in gathering information and formulating plan policies for guiding development. A better plan will be the result of a group effort. Without the participation of residents, the balancing of needs, values, and resources can be difficult to achieve.

Finally, planning is a continuous process, and plans can be amended to meet new challenges or situations. The Plan must be updated every five years or it expires. This provides opportunity for citizen involvement, and it acts as a review of the effectiveness of the Plan and its policies.

The update of the 2006 Town Plan encouraged public input through a variety of methods. First, preparation of the plan was conducted in open, posted meetings. Additionally, much of the information for the revision was based on other pubic forums such as the Richford 2010 process. Finally, the Planning Commission met statutory requirements by holding a public hearing to solicit comment on the final draft version before submitting the Plan to the Selectboard for approval.

Role of the Richford Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is empowered to formulate goals and objectives toward plan development. The Commission is responsible for the review and revision of the Town Plan and to propose amendments to the zoning bylaws and regulations in an effort to implement the plan.

The role of the Commission is ongoing. Changing community conditions, preferences and priorities call for consistent monitoring of plan objectives. Amendments to the plan may, from time to time, be necessary and the Commission has responsibility for this task.

Authority

The Town of Richford is authorized to prepare and adopt a Municipal Plan via Chapter 117, Title 24 of the VSA (Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act). Section 4382 of the Act dictates what needs to be included in a plan. The intent of the law is to encourage a municipality to "engage in a continuing planning process that will further several stated goals." The Act further states that municipal plans shall be re-examined, updated, and re-adopted every five years. This process should be ongoing, whereby the Plan is continually reassessed and revised to meet the changing needs of the community. Consequently, there will be future opportunities to review and amend the Plan. Residents, community groups, and anyone with an interest in the Town are encouraged to provide input into this ever-continuing process to the Richford Planning Commission.

The Structure of the Richford Town Plan

The Richford Town Plan is divided into seven chapters that address both the required elements of Act 200 and other key areas of concern. Each subject is then addressed in detail including past conditions, current status, and future needs.

Based on the findings in the discussion, one or more goals are then developed for the subject. **Goals** can be defined as "the desired future condition" although some may not be attainable for many years. For example the goal for housing is "to ensure the Richford has an adequate supply of safe, healthy, attractive, and affordable housing which satisfies the day to day living requirements of Richford's residents and visitors."

Policies are those features that describe how to attain the goals, are a guide for homeowners and developers, and a means for the Planning Commission to evaluate projects. For example, "to fully support the efforts of the Housing Code Enforcement Officer, Fire Chief, and State Fire Marshall in their enforcement of the Minimum Housing Codes to improve the quality of the rental units in the village district."

Visions

The desired future of Richford, as defined by residents of the community, is outlined in this plan. In the future, Richford:

- Is a responsive community of promise, which encourages and rewards a balance of traditional ways and new ideas;
- Has a vibrant, attractive downtown.
- Maintains a steady population and balance of generations, with a range of good housing options;
- Has a proactive community well being program, which includes recreation, culture, and wellness;
- Is a regional center for lifelong learning;
- Is a respectful community;
- Contains an environment which will protect the health, safety, and general well being of the Town and its citizens.
- Has eliminated blighted influences and environmental deficiencies, which detract from the functional unity, aesthetic appearance, and economic vitality of the Town;

and conditions have been established, which will prevent the recurrence of such problems.

- Has improved the living environment for citizens by providing adequate and affordable community facilities.
- Provides a safe and efficient transportation system in and around town.
- Provides for physical and economic growth in the town through controlled development.

Development and town planning are not idle in Richford. A great many projects have been completed in the downtown area and more are planned for the future. Over the past five years, for example, blighted buildings have been redeveloped with new commercial and housing (both affordable and senior) development. The Town is now laying the foundation for a revival in the downtown although a great deal of work has yet to be done.

PLANNING PROCESS GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL: TO CREATE A DOCUMENT THAT REPRESENTS THE COLLECTIVE VISION OF THE TOWN OF RICHFORD FOR THE FUTURE.

POLICIES:

- Encourage citizen involvement at all levels of the planning process.
- Ensure that decisions having local impacts are made at the most local level possible and with local input.
- Continue to represent and advocate local interests, as time and resources permit, through participation in regional, state, and federal planning, legislative efforts, and/or regulatory proceedings that may affect the Town of Richford and the interest of its residents.
- Participate as a statutory party in state Act 250 proceedings as appropriate.

CHAPTER 2: THE RICHFORD COMMUNITY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE OF RICHFORD

Overview

To understand and plan for a town, one must understand the people who live there. The members of a community may vary in age, ethnicity, place of birth, income, and occupation but all are members of a town with a singular past. Communities grow over time and are held together by a common historical link.

In order to understand Richford's visions and goals for the future, you must understand the world today. To understand today, you must understand the past. That is why this chapter begins with a discussion of the history of Richford. A discussion of the community profile will follow in order to understand the character of the residents that now compose the residents of the Town of Richford.

Early History

Human activity, in what is now known as Richford, likely began shortly after the Wisconsin glacier retreated some twelve thousand years ago. Little is known about these first inhabitants, referred to as "Paleo-Indian," however it is probable that these people passed through and possibly settled in the area as long as 11,000 years ago. The "Paleo-Indian" hunted animals that inhabited what was then a sub-arctic tundra environment. These animals included mastodons, mammoths, caribou, fox, beaver, sea animals, and fish.

During what is known as the "Archaic Period," which lasted from about 9,500 to 3,000 years ago, the Vermont climate gradually warmed. The landscape changed from tundra to softwood forests and later to softwood-hardwood mixed. In one stretch during this time, between 6,000 to 4,000 years ago, the climate was much warmer than it is today. Native Americans adapted to the new environmental settings by using new methods of hunting, fishing, and gathering. Around 3,500 years ago they learned to carve vessels from soapstone (steatite) which allowed them to cook directly in fires. Not only did they eat a wide variety of plants and animals, they also exploited new territories and lived in houses framed with deciduous trees and covered with skins, bark, or mats.

The "Woodland Period" began about 3,000 years ago, marked by the introduction of pottery, and lasted until European contact. Bows and arrows supplemented the spear, dart, and trap. About 700 years ago a farming economy developed in which corn, beans, and squash and former wild foods were planted and cultivated. Seasonal hunting and fishing continued and farming led to increased populations in the lowlands and valleys.

During the 200 years that followed Samuel de Champlain's arrival in 1609, the culture of the Native Americans underwent radical changes. Epidemics of European diseases, trade wars between Indian communities, and the war of French and English colonial expansion drastically altered the traditional ways of life for Native Americans in Vermont, many of whom settled in the lower reaches of the Missisquoi River including the Richford area.

In the 1790's and early 1800's, Native Americans became integrated into Vermont communities. Many families remained on the fringes economically and many lost their Native American identity. In the past two decades has there been a resurgence of ethnic awareness among the Native Americans in Vermont, in particular among the members of the Abenaki nation.

Colonial History

The 1780 Vermont legislature granted 60 Connecticut residents 36 square miles of land along the Canadian border. The parcel was surrounded by a broad plain appearing to be an extension of Quebec's Eastern Township lowlands. To the south and east were the heavily forested Green Mountains capped by Jay Peak in the neighboring town of Jay. Wandering its way through the abrupt foothills of the mountain range, the Missisquoi River graces the unique and beautiful natural setting that is Richford.

First colonial settlers, at the close of the 18th century, sought out and utilized the power of the Missisquoi at the site to drive their first primitive industries – the saw and grist mills, the tannery, and cloth dressing works. Richford's first colonial settlers were attracted to the area in the late 1700's with the dream of harnessing the waterpower of the Missisquoi River. The first town residents built a gristmill at the falls in 1797 to encourage settlers to purchase land in the town, and by 1804 the falls had become the center of the community. The gristmill and a sawmill were the early mainstays of Richford's early economy. The early years were not without hardship, however, as floods and fires caused great damage and caused some early settlers to leave in despair. The settlers had a close relationship with their Canadian neighbors to the north who were also attempting to carve a settlement in the wilderness.

There is some question as to the true origin of the town's name. The Missisquoi River in Richford was rich in "fords" when the first settlers arrived, thus providing easy access from one side of the river to the other: "Rich-ford". Perhaps the name was chosen with the idea that land investors would be attracted by the sound of the name. In any event, the colonial settlers of Richford who were determined to begin a new settlement included Hugh Miller, Joseph Stanhope, Ephriam Corliss, Bradford Powell, Daniel Loveland, and Jonathan Janes. Hugh Miller and family arrived first in March of 1795. These settlers made their mark on the town, and some of their family names are still commonly used: Loveland Brook and Stanhope Brook. These people survived by homesteading and trading with whatever was available. The grist and sawmills provided grain and lumber for the local market but, without an adequate transportation network, there was no way to deal efficiently with outside markets. Potash (pearlash) and furs were the only marketable products, and they had to be carried to St. John's or Montreal to market.

The Whitehall Canal, built in 1823 from Lake Champlain to the Hudson River, helped make markets more accessible and brought the first American trade goods to Richford. Richford gradually grew into a trading center in the 1850's with the passage of the free trade agreement with Canada, and the economic relationship between the town and Canada became stronger. With new markets, Richford's agricultural and forestry economies expanded and increased in size and number. Sheep farming became more common in the early 1800's and the homesteaders felled virgin forests to make room for more crops and livestock. Farmers began to use horses instead of oxen to pull their new

tools, including the wagon, steel plow, and harrow. The annual trip to market in Boston provided great excitement.

The arrival of the steam-powered engine (1850's) made year-round operation of the sawmills possible. Still, water-powered mills were the favorite in Richford, given the town's great water resources. Sawmills were located throughout the town. There were two shingle mills at the Stevens Mills and smaller mills on Loveland Brook and Goff Mill Brook (South Richford). East Richford was particularly self-sufficient by the late 1860's with a store, hotel, and post office serving a farming community along the Canadian border.

Though access to markets increased considerably with the development of the Whitehall Canal, it was a Canadian railroad, built in 1871 from West Farnham, Quebec to Richford, which ended Richford's isolation. Soon after, another rail line connected Richford to Newport and later St. Albans. Finally, the last piece of Richford's logging economy was in place, complementing the vast timber resources and the water-powered mills. The railroad spurred all types of investment in town and an accompanying surge in population.

In November 1878, a special meeting was held to consider incorporating a village. This was accomplished by an act of legislature in 1879, providing the framework for planning for the future of the Village of Richford. The rapid growth the community brought on by the railroads and increased commercial activity resulted in a critical housing shortage. Several new streets were laid out to make way for the many homes being built. A Board of Trade was established, comprised of members of the industrial and commercial interests of the town.

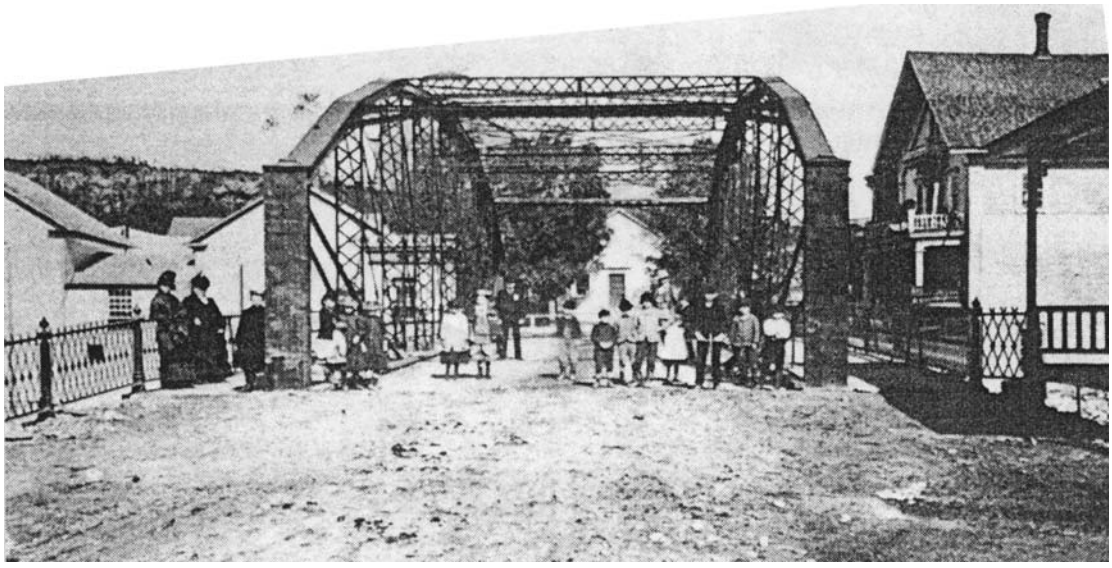


Photo 2: The Main Street Bridge erected in 1881.

This group was dedicated to making every effort to increase local economic activity. During this period, the Brattleboro Reformer, a leading newspaper, stated: "Richford people have the enterprise to take advantage of all her natural and acquired resources and easily place her among the leading commercial centers of its population in New England."

The homestead farms continued operation through the 19th century, seemingly unchanged by the arrival of the railroad. Most homestead families worked the land to sustain their members, though some families managed to market maple syrup and butter, their two most popular commodities. In 1889 the Franklin Farmers Cooperative Creamery paved the way for a formal market for farmers' products. The combination of the railway's refrigerated cars, plus the uniform products from the creameries, made the switch from homestead farming to dairy farming possible.

The 1890's marked the start of great industrial development in Richford as many industries located in the town. Most of these industries revolved around the agriculture and lumbering economies.

Recent History

By the twentieth century, Richford was acknowledged as the fastest growing town in Franklin County. Richford had much in its favor: good farmland, vast timber resources, inexpensive power generation, and direct transport to outside markets. The village became the center of a retail/trading area and a major customs port of entry, the only Chinese port of entry in New England.

It was during this time that fortunes were made. Quite elegant homes and substantial business buildings were the status symbols of the era. These robust times saw the building of the Boright Mansion on River Street, the Carpenter Mansion on Main Street, and many other elegant homes, mainly Victorian, throughout the community. It was also the era of building fine public buildings such as the magnificent Colonial Town House and the Federal Building, which still grace Main Street with their outstanding beauty. The impressive commercial buildings of the era, located on upper Main Street and River Street, have been designated as Richford's Historic District and are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Since that peak, the residents of Richford have experienced great changes in fortune. Disastrous fires in 1904, 1906, and 1907 killed many and destroyed much of the industry, which had brought prosperity to the town. The townspeople, distraught over the great loss, managed to bounce back and rebuild the industrial base. The post World War I era brought back unemployment to Richford, since the town had become dependent on the war machine. However, the town rebounded again with the rest of the nation in the early twenties. Another disaster struck in 1927 with a great flood; yet the people quickly rebuilt their town and their lives. Lack of orders due to the stock market crash of 1929 spelled doom for Richford's economic success. It wasn't until the increased demand for war commodities during World War II that Richford achieved full economic recovery.

The economies of the early 1900's had relied on industries which harvested the forests and produced furniture, bobbin blanks, handles, plywood, and other wood products of the time. However, forest harvesting was accelerated when loggers began to use the chainsaw. After a few years, cutting far-exceeded regrowth. Forest regrowth occurred slowly in Richford's harsh climate. This caused industries to go out of business or cut back sharply in production. Many people were forced to leave the area to find employment.

As the twentieth century came to a close, Richford again faced isolation from markets since rail travel had been replaced by road and air travel. Farming and forestry could not maintain the thriving town of the past in a modern economy. However, there was a push for economic redevelopment in the recent past with the formation of the Richford Economic Advancement Corporation (REAC). In April of 1988, a fifteen-lot commercial/light industrial park was approved by the District Environmental Commission and was located on Route 105.

The Richford Business Park, referred to above, is now a thriving center for new businesses, which includes Kaytec and Rodger Brown's Furniture Refinishing. The companies located in the business park, along with the Blue Seal Feed Plant, the U.S. and local governments, Our Lady of the Meadows Community Care Home, Richford Health Center, and the High School are major employers.

The late 1990's continued this revival through two more initiatives. The first of these was the merger of the town and village. Unlike the times that existed in 1879, the automobile and global economies made the system of two governmental bodies antiquated. It was hoped that through merging, the job of managing and governing would become more efficient. This project was completed in January 1999.

In the fall of 1998, the Town embarked on a yearlong process to create a plan for economic development and downtown revitalization. Dubbed 'Richford 2010' to represent the year the current kindergarten class would graduate from high school, the vision was to create "a responsive community of promise, which encourages and rewards a balance of traditional ways and new ideas." Released in December 1999, "Richford… still a real Vermont town" detailed a plan for the following decade to create and promote a vibrant, attractive downtown as well as other goals for the town.

Photo 3: Historic photo of Richford.

Richford is now in a state of change and growth. It is an exciting time to be involved in the development and future of the town. For anyone interested in a more detailed account of the history of Richford, *Richford Vermont frontier town – the first hundred and fifty*

years by Jack Salisbury is an excellent source. Copies are in various places but none are for sale. It is hoped that a reprint will be offered in the future.

Archeological Sites

Archeological sites contain a fragile, complex and irreplaceable record of past human activities. Richford has several known archeological sites as well as areas having a high probability of containing archeological remains. Because only a few areas in Vermont have been systematically surveyed to identify and evaluate archeological sites, it is misleading to precisely map known sites. The known, inventoried sites constitute only a fraction of those sites that potentially exist. Furthermore, archeological sites are too often vandalized. For these reasons, site locations are not specifically pinpointed in this town plan. With that in mind, the area in Richford of known "moderate to high sensitivity" is the 3.5-mile segment of the Missisquoi River from the Enosburgh town line to one mile east of the village district.

The Historical District

A complete survey of the historical buildings in Richford, including the mapping of the Downtown Richford Historic District and the East Richford Historic District, was completed in 2001 by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and chronicled in a book titled The Historic Architecture of Richford. This book in hereby incorporated by reference into the Richford Town Plan. See the Appendix for a list of the surveyed historic structures in the village and historic districts.

Cemeteries and Other Historic Features

Cemeteries can offer some of the best glimpses into the past. The earliest known cemetery in Richford is Davis Family Cemetery dating back to 1809. Although only three headstones remain, it is believed that earlier there had been more.

A few years later a second cemetery was established on what is now Troy Street. This land was later sold to the town as a burial ground. The first person laid to rest in Troy Street Cemetery was Hannah Blaisdell in 1813. By 1880 this cemetery was filled to capacity.

With the old cemetery filled, a new cemetery was purchased in 1885. The Hillside Cemetery was put in fine condition the following year with the hillside terraced and maple trees planted by volunteers. The Catholic cemetery was acquired by deed in 1889 and blessed in 1891.

In addition to these four cemeteries, there is also the Corliss Family Cemetery (next to Hillside), Barnet Family Cemetery (at the end of Corliss Road), Richford Center Cemetery (on South Richford Road), South Richford Cemetery (Wightman Hill), and East Richford Cemetery (in East Richford on the Slide Road). These cemeteries make an important link to the past. Many are currently maintained by the town cemeteries and parks committee while others are maintained by associations.

Smaller landscape features such as stone walls, old barns, outbuildings, corner stones, markers, trees, and old apple orchards and lilac bushes planted around former homesteads, all have historic value and importance but these unfortunately often go

unnoticed. These features say as much about the region's rural and agricultural heritage as many of its more readily recognized historic landmarks, but are often disturbed, removed, or demolished without any thought.

Community Profile

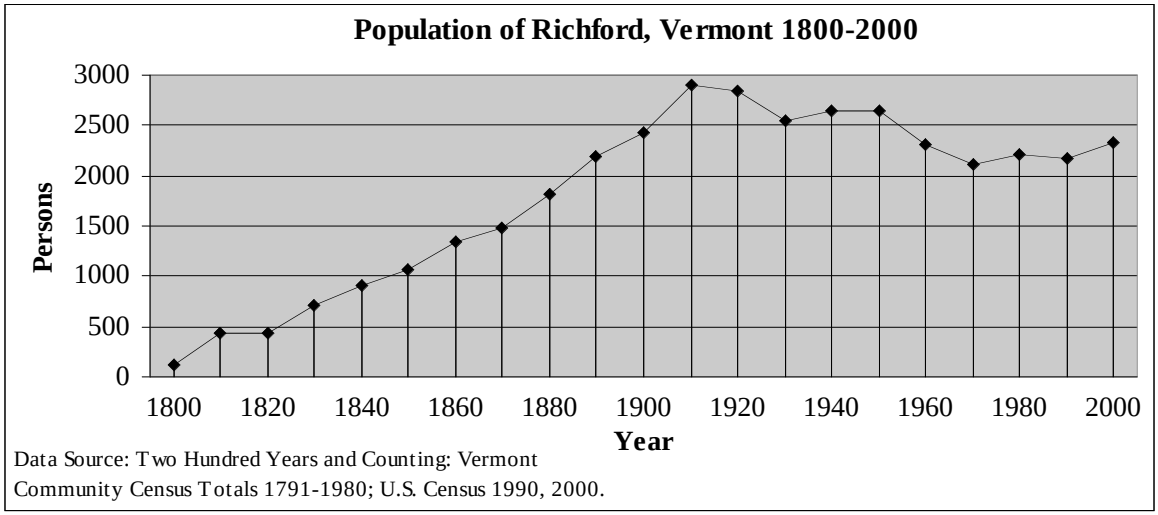
Many of these social and economic indicators will be discussed in greater detail in other chapters. The purpose here is to understand the mix of individuals that make up the community as it exists today.

The Town of Richford is located in the northwestern part of the State of Vermont in Franklin County and is bordered by five towns: Jay to the east; Westfield to the southeast; Montgomery to the south; Enosburgh to the southwest; and Berkshire to the west.

Past and Present Population

In the year 1800, shortly after being settled, Richford had 113 persons. Figure 2.1 (next page) shows how the population for Richford has changed since that year. The Town experienced steady growth until the early twentieth century. The population peaked in 1910 at 2,907 persons and then ebbed and flowed with the changing fortunes of the town - dropping through the 1920's and 1930's - rising during the war years- and dropping again thereafter. From 1960 to 2000, the population fluctuated up and down, remaining at 2,321 persons in 2000.

Figure # 2.1



Data Source: Two Hundred Years and Counting: Vermont Community Census Totals 1791-1980; U.S. Census 1990, 2000.

Table 2.1 shows the population for Richford and the bordering communities. The Table shows that, with the exception of Richford, populations have been increasing in the region over the last half of the twentieth century.

Table 2.2 (next page) shows the percent change within each decade for Richford and Franklin County from the year 1960 to the year 2000. Richford's population behaved independently of the rest of the county. Populations in the county have been steadily

growing since the 1960's, while the town's population has been fluctuating up and down, with a net gain of only 5 people.

Table # 2.1

Population for Richford, VT and Selected Surrounding Communities					
Year	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**
Richford	2,316	2,116	2,206	2,178	2,321
Montgomery	876	651	681	823	992
Enosburg Falls & Enosburgh Town	1,966	1,918	2,070	2,535	2,788
Jay	197	182	302	381	426
Westfield	347	375	418	422	503
Berkshire	965	931	1,116	1,190	1,388
Franklin County	29,474	31,282	34,788	39,980	45,417
Source: US Census 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000;					

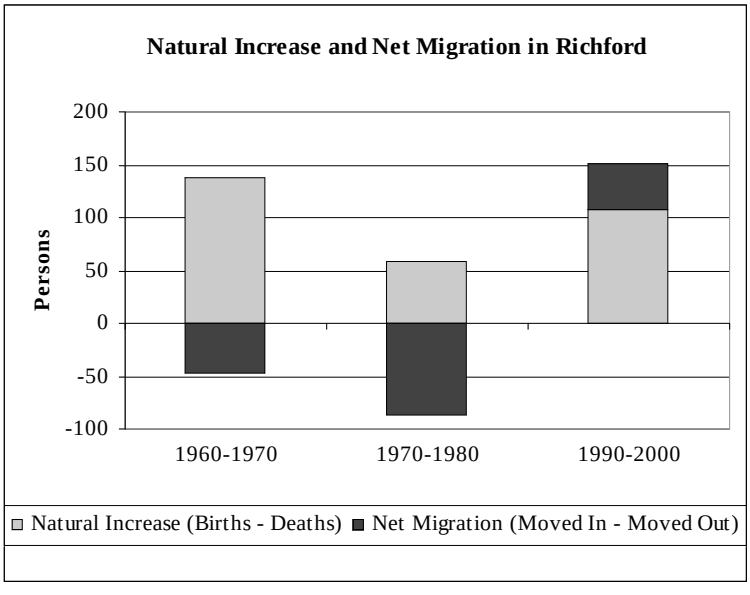
Table # 2.2

Percent Change in Population				
	% Change 1960-1970	**% Change 1970-1980**	**% Change 1980-1990**	**% Change 1990-2000**
Richford	-8.64	4.25	-1.27	6.57
Franklin County	6.13	11.21	14.92	13.60

Components of Population Change

Population change is the result of two factors: natural increases (the difference between the number of births and the number of deaths) and net immigration (the difference between the number of people moving into a community and the number of people moving out). This information is valuable in evaluating the nature of the population change.

Figure #2.2



In Richford, the number of births exceeded the number of deaths in the 1970's and 1980's resulting in a growing population. Between 1970 and 1980 there were 424 births and 286 deaths for a net increase of 138 persons (or 6.52 percent). The fact that the actual population in 1980 had only grown by 90 persons indicates a net loss of 48 persons who moved out of Richford. In the 1980's there were 341 births and 282 deaths for a natural

increase of 59 persons (or 2.67%). In actuality the population had dropped by 28 persons. This indicates that 87 persons moved out of Richford in the decade from 1980-1990.

In the 1990's there were 375 births and 267 deaths for a natural increase of 108 persons or (4.96%). In actuality the population increased by 143 persons. This indicates that 43 persons moved into Richford. See Figure #2.2 for a graphical depiction of natural increase and net migration.

The continual loss of persons moving out of town is indicative of the economic problems that existed in Richford during those decades. It is promising for the health of Richford's economy that persons moved into the Town during the 1990's.

Projected Populations

The small size of the population base makes long-term forecasting difficult especially at the local level. Most models assume that migration out of town, driven in part by the continued economic slump, will continue into the years to come, but natural increases will level off somewhat given the overall aging of the population. Table 2.3 shows the projected populations for Richford and for Franklin County through the year 2020. According to the Vermont Department of Aging and Disabilities (Table #2.4), the projected population in Richford is expected to increase by small increments through the year 2020, while Franklin County's populations as a whole is expected to increase at a much higher rate.

Table # 2.3

Projected Populations for Richford and Franklin County 2000-2020				
Year	**2000**	**2005 (est)**	**2010**	**2020**
Richford	2,321	2351	2,353	2,400
Franklin County	45,417	47,914	49,583	54,065

Source: MISER Population Projections for VT (2000-2020), VT Dept. of Aging and Disabilities

Table #2.4

Percent Change in Projected Populations				
Year	**1990-2000**	**2000-2005**	**2000-2010**	**2010-2020**
Richford	6.57%	1.29%	1.38%	2.00
Franklin County	13.60%	5.5%	9.17	9.04

Age Distribution/Growth by Group

The median age in 2000 for the residents of Richford was 37.8 years. This is almost the same as the State of Vermont's median age of 37.7 years but slightly higher than Franklin County's median age of 35.7 years. Richford, Franklin County and the State of Vermont have seen an increase in their median ages since 1980.

Table # 2.5

Age Distribution in Richford												
	% of Pop < 18 yrs			% of Pop 18-64 yrs			% of Pop 65+ yrs			Median Age (yrs)		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Richford	31.6	28.8	25.9	53.0	56.5	57.0	15.4	14.7	17.1	30.8	33.5	37.8
Franklin County	33.0	29.0	28.1	56.0	60.0	60.9	11.0	11.0	11.0	28.9	31.7	35.7
State of Vermont	28.4	25.9	24.2	60.2	62.3	63.0	11.4	11.8	12.7	29.4	33.0	37.7

Source: US Census 1980, 1990; 2000

Richford, along with Franklin County and the State of Vermont has seen a drop in the percentage of it's under eighteen population since 1980, while the percentage of population between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four has seen a slight increase. Unlike most towns in the State, Richford saw a decrease in its elderly population during the 1980's, but then saw a significant increase to a percentage higher than both Franklin County and the State of Vermont during the 1990's.

Special Populations

The U.S. Census provides information about the number of people with various levels and types of disabilities. As seen on Table #2.6 , Richford had higher percentages of persons of all ages with a mobility or self care limitation than Franklin County or the State of Vermont. The Town had a lower percentage than the County for persons between sixteen and sixty-four with a work disability, but a higher percentage than the State. People with disabilities require special needs housing, social, and economic services, which are discussed in the Housing, Utilities, Facilities, and Services and the Economics Chapters.

Table # 2.6

Percent of People with a Work Disability, Mobility Limitation, or Self-Care Limitation			
	Civilian Non-institutionalized Persons 16-64 years		Civilian Non-institutionalized Persons 65 years and over
	% with a work Disability	% with a mobility or self-care limitation	% with a mobility or self-care limitation
Richford	11.6	13.1	46.2
Franklin County	12.3	8.8	37.4
Vermont	9.7	7.3	33.9

Source: US Census 2000

Table # 2.7

Household Types and Percentages for Richford 1990 and 2000				
Household Type	**1990**	**% of Total Households**	**2000**	**% of Total Households**
Total Households	826	100.0	899	100.0
Family Households	578	70.0	613	68.2
Married Couple Families	442	53.5	465	51.7
Male Householder - no wife	37	4.5	46	5.1
Female Householder - no husband	99	12.0	102	11.3
Non-family Households	248	30.0	286	31.8
One-person (householder living alone)	205	24.8	231	25.7

Source: US Census of Population and Housing 1990-2000

Household & Household Types

The way the population groups itself into households affects the demand for housing, community services, and employment. Table 2.7 shows the number and percentages of households in Richford in 1990 and 2000. The number of households grew by 73 between 1990 and 2000 although the distribution of household types remained very similar. Of the different household types, the percentage of non-family households increased the most with a majority of that resulting from the increase in one-person households. The decade saw a decrease in the percentage of family households, but an increase in the percentage of family households with a male householder and no wife.

Education Level

In the Town of Richford, only 70.0 percent of its residents were high school graduates or higher while in Franklin County there were 82.6 percent and in the State of Vermont ~~was~~ 86.4 percent with high school diplomas.

Table # 2.8

Educational Attainment for Population 25+ in 2000 (1999)		
	% with a High School Diploma or Higher	**% with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher**
Richford	70.1 (60.0)	5.4 (9.3)
Franklin County	82.6	16.6
Vermont	86.4	29.4

Source: US Census 2000

This staggeringly low figure for the town has been improving slowly over time; in 1990 the figure was 60.0 percent and in 1980 the figure was 50.4 percent. The high school dropout rate~~s~~ for the 2003-2004 school year was around 3.0 percent, which has improved since the 2001-2002 school year when it was 6.3 percent. The drop out rate in Richford is approaching the State's rate, which was 2.6 percent for the 2003-2004 school year. The Town also had an extremely lower percentage of people with a Bachelor's degree than either the County or the State in 2000. In fact, the percentage of people with a Bachelor's degree actually decreased in Richford from 1990 to 2000. This fact indicates a larger economic problem that is discussed in more detail in the Economics Chapter.

Table 2.8 shows the percentages of high school graduates and those with a Bachelor's degree in 2000.

Income

The median household income in 1999 for Richford of $28,125 was below the median incomes for both Franklin County and the State of Vermont. Median household income for the Town did increase by 14.1 percent from 199 to 19899 but both the County and State had greater increases of 46.7 and 37.1 percent respectively. Richford saw an increase of over 15% in the number of persons living below the poverty level from 1989 to 1999, to more than twice the number in Franklin County. Table 2.9 shows both the median household incomes for Richford, Franklin County, and the State of Vermont and the percentage of persons living below the poverty level. The Department of Taxes tracks individual incomes (unlike the Census, which records 'household' incomes) so the figures are lower but still allows for comparisons. In 2004, the median income for a resident of Richford was $22,601.50 – the lowest in Franklin County. The percentage of population in the Reach Up Program (formerly Aid to Needy Families and Children (ANFC)) in Richford is 6.1% and food stamps is 19.8%. These are the highest totals in the county for each category (source: Vermont Center for Rural Studies, 2004).

Table # 2.9

Median Household Income, Percent Change, and % Below Poverty Level				
	1989	**1999**	**% Change 1989-1999**	**% of all persons living Below the poverty level 1999**
Richford	$24,639	$28,125	14.1	21.0
Franklin County	$28,401	$41,659	46.7	9.0
Vermont	$29,792	$40,856	37.1	9.4
Source: US Census of Population 1990-2000				

Employment

Table #2.10 (next page) shows the employment breakdown by industry for Richford, Franklin County, and the State of Vermont. Industry is the kind of business conducted by a person's employer. The greatest percentage of Richford residents were employed in the manufacturing industry (23.5%) in 2000. Manufacturing is the mechanical or chemical transformation of materials or substances into new products, such as done in plants, factories, or mills using power driven machines and materials handling equipment. Examples of this type of industry in Franklin County include, Franklin Foods, Energizer, Mylan Technologies, Stairs Unlimited and Carroll Concrete. Health care and social assistance employs the second largest percentage of workers in Richford at 15.9%. Health care includes all types of medical offices, laboratories, hospitals, home health care and health care insurance offices. Social assistance includes individual and family social services, job training and vocational rehabilitation, day care, and residential care. Examples of this type of industry in Franklin County include the Northwest Medical Center, Richford Health Center, Our Lady of the Meadows, and Northwest Counseling and Support Services.

Almost all of Richford residents work in Franklin County, with the greatest percentage working right in Richford. Nine percent travel to Chittenden County, while a small

percentage work in other counties in Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, or Canada. See Table #2.11 for a breakdown of where Richford residents work.

Persons that have employment in the Town of Richford largely come from towns in Franklin County, Richford holding the greatest percentage. Workers coming from Berkshire and Enosburg Falls and Town hold the second highest percentages. Richford also draws small percentages of workers from several other counties in Vermont. See Table #2.12 for a breakdown of where workers in Richford reside.

Table # 2.10

Richford Residents Employed by Industry						
Persons Employed by Industry 2000	**Richford**		**Franklin County**		**Vermont**	
Manufacturing	238	23.5%	5,362	23.2%	47,767	15.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	161	15.9%	2,488	10.8%	36,894	11.6%
Retail trade	81	8.0%	2,635	11.4%	38,027	12.0%
Construction	79	7.8%	1,607	7.0%	21,155	6.7%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	71	7.0%	1,306	5.7%	9,167	2.9%
Educational Services	68	6.7%	1,976	8.6%	39,487	12.5%
Transportation and warehousing	64	6.3%	912	4.0%	9,541	3.0%
Public Administration	63	6.2%	1,549	6.7%	14,596	4.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	61	6.0%	956	4.1%	22,450	7.1%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	33	3.3%	849	3.7%	14,963	4.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	21	2.1%	750	3.3%	15,263	4.8%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	17	1.7%	151	0.7%	4,375	1.4%
Wholesale Trade	16	1.6%	729	3.2%	9,901	3.1%
Finance and Insurance	12	1.2%	607	2.6%	10,444	3.3%
Information	10	1.0%	507	2.2%	8,425	2.7%
Administrative and Support and Waster	6	0.6%	358	1.6%	6,988	2.2%
Utilities	5	0.5%	102	0.4%	2,242	0.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5	0.5%	156	0.7%	4,787	1.5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2	0.2%	17	0.1%	186	0.1%
Mining	0	0.0%	48	0.2%	476	0.2%
Total	1,013	100.0%	23,065	100.0%	317,134	100.0%
Source: US Census 2000						

Where People Living in Richford Work		
	Count	Percent
Vermont	974	--
Richford	442	44.6%
Enosburg	106	10.7%
St. Albans City	92	9.3%
St. Albans Town	75	7.6%
Other Franklin Cnty	137	13.8%
Chittenden County	89	9.0%
Orleans Cnty	11	1.1%
Washington Cnty	11	1.1%
Lamoille Cnty	7	0.7%
Grand Isle Cnty	2	0.2%
Caledonia Cnty	2	0.2%
Canada	8	0.8%
New York	7	0.7%
Massachusetts	1	0.1%
Total	990	100.0%
Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census (sample data)		

Table #2.11

Table # 2.12

Where People Working in Richford Live		
	Count	Percent
Vermont	738	--
Richford	442	59.6%
Berkshire	63	8.5%
Enosburg	53	7.1%
Other Franklin Cnty	132	17.8%
Orleans Cnty	17	2.3%
Washington Cnty	10	1.3%
Chittenden County	9	1.2%
Lamoille Cnty	6	0.8%
Grand Isle Cnty	4	0.5%
Windsor Cnty	2	0.3%
New York	4	0.5%
Total	742	100.0%
Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census		

HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL: TO RECOGNIZE THE ROLE OF RICHFORD'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES IN SHAPING THE TOWN'S PRESENT QUALITY OF LIFE AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

POLICIES:

- Protect sites of potential archaeological significance.
- Projects occurring in the 'archeologically sensitive region' should consider the potential impact of their project on sites during the early stages of development. This will offer the best opportunity to mitigate potential impacts.
- Encourage the renovation and reuse of historic buildings whenever feasible.
- Encourage the promotion and protection, to the extent feasible, of the Richford Historic District.

CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

THE HOMES OF RICHFORD'S RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Overview

Housing is an integral component of a community's cultural and built environments, and represents substantial private and public investment. All Richford residents, present and future, are entitled to safe and affordable housing. In response to growth; however, housing development necessarily increases demands on available facilities and services and may adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas. Planning is necessary to meet anticipated needs, to avoid overburdening services, and to protect natural resources. Housing considerations include not only the character of the housing stock, but also the patterns of development within the community, and housing affordability.

Housing History in Richford

The first housing in Richford consisted of a number of isolated, windowless, one-room log cabins. Over time, with the coming of sawmills, framed houses replaced the simple log cabins. Historically, housing development in Richford occurred in mill-based settlements (Richford Village, East Richford, Stevens Mills, and South Richford) along the Missisquoi River and its tributaries, and on hill farms scattered throughout the western part of town. The greatest increase in housing development, particularly within the villages, came in the early part of this century, during the height of the railroad era. At that time, the housing stock included everything from the large Victorian homes of the wealthy to the company tenement housing of the mill workers. The decline in Richford's economy in the years that followed was accompanied by a decline in the town's housing stock, in both number and condition.

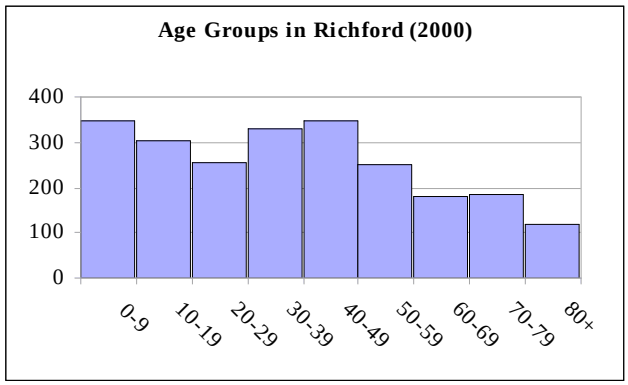
Significant improvements to the Town's housing stock have been made in the past fifteen years, though property values still remain some of the lowest in the state. Property owners have been encouraged to maintain their homes and grounds, being assured that higher property taxes would not be the result. Before the merger of the town and village, the Trustees enacted a Minimum Housing Code Ordinance, and established explicit Minimum Housing Standards. A Housing Code Enforcement Officer, assisted by the State Fire Marshall and Richford's Fire Chief, has worked to enforce the ordinances.

Housing Needs

People have different housing needs at different ages. When there is a burst of demand within a specific age group, it leads to inflation within their particular type of housing. Richford's housing goal includes a statement to ensure that each age group has an adequate supply of housing to meet their needs. Listed below are general descriptions of housing needs for each age group of Richford's population.

- 20's – Lower income, high mobility, smaller rental options
- 30's – Beginning families, growing income, usually are first time homebuyers
- 40's - Growing families, growing income, step up to larger homes or make additions.
- 50's – Empty nest, income peak, now desire smaller homes or condominiums.
- 60's/70's – Retirement, income decreasing, desire smaller homes or senior housing options.

Figure #3.1



- 80's – Typically single, growing frail, market for assisted living.
- 90's – Frail, institutional needs.

The largest cohorts of Richford's population are persons aged between 0 – 9, 30 - 40, and 40 – 50, indicating that larger homes for growing families and smaller homes for empty nesters are currently in highest demand. As shown in Table #2.5 in Chapter 2, the senior population increased significantly from 1990 to 2000 and can be expected to continue to increase as the "baby boomer" population (ages 36-54 in 2000) grows older. U.S. Census data also reports that there was an increase in single occupancy households from 1990 to 2000, about half of which were elderly households. These trends indicate that a variety of senior housing options, including small homeownership and rental opportunities and various levels of assisted living and institutional care are needed and will be in higher demand in the future.

According to the 2000 Census, more non-families and families own homes than rent homes, indicating that, in general, family and non-family households desire home ownership. Families are defined as married couples, single parents with children, or related individuals living together. Non-family households are either persons living alone or a group of unrelated individuals. Of the 899~~826~~ households in the 2000~~1990~~ Census, 613~~578~~ were families and 286~~248~~ were non-family. It was also reported that there were 655~~574~~ owner-occupied units and 244~~252~~ rented units.

Evaluation of Housing Supply

Housing Unit Growth

Table 3.1

Percent Change in Housing Units vs. Percent Change in Population in Richford			
	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
Population	4.25%	-1.27%	6.57%
Housing Units	13.58%	10.25%	5.06%
Data Source: U.S. Census			

Generally, local, regional, and national trends have seen housing units grow at higher rates that population during the seventies and eighties. During the nineties growth rates began to even out in most areas, while in Richford population grew at a higher rate than housing units. In part, the higher rate of increase in the number of total households can be explained by a reduction in the average number of persons per household. In Richford, average household size decreased from over three people in 1970 to ~~just over~~

two and a half in 2000, indicating that more units are required to shelter the same number of people. As the traditional family has been redefined, a greater number of young, non-family, single persons, and childless households have created a demand for smaller units with greater amenities.

Type and Size of Housing Units

An examination of the types of housing structures reveals a wide variety of housing choices. Of the 1,017 units reported in the 2000 Census, 702 (69%) are single unit structures. Another 162 (16%) units were contained within 2 to 4 unit structures (small buildings) while another 39 (4%) units were in structures containing more than 5 units (larger buildings). Richford also has 114 (11%) mobile homes. A review of the types of units reveals that 92.6% of housing units had at least two bedrooms and 22.6%had 4 or more bedrooms. This shows that a variety of options and sizes of units exist in Richford.

Vacant Housing Units

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, of the 1,017 housing units in 2000, 118 were vacant which represented 11.6 percent of the total housing units. Of those, 52 were seasonal units making the actual vacancy rate 6.5% in Richford. This was a decrease from the 1990 vacancy rate of 9.1%, but still the highest in Franklin County. The median actual vacancy rate in Franklin County was 2.5% in 2000. The optimum vacancy rate is 3 percent for non-rental housing and 5 percent for rental housing. Richford's vacancy rate (computed for non-rental and rental housing combined) is higher than optimum, indicating that while there is a sufficient supply of housing units in numbers, there may be a number of uninhabitable units in disrepair. The lower than optimum vacancy rate in Franklin County is one indicator of the housing shortage experienced mainly in the western and southern parts of the County.

Housing Unit Quality

One major factor contributing to the decline of housing quality in Richford has been the age of the structures. In 2000, the Census reported that 59.3 percent of the houses in the town were built before 1939. Of the 255 towns and incorporated cities in Vermont, only 2 had a greater percentage of housing older than 1939 than the Town of Richford, none of which are in Franklin County.

Enforcement of the Minimum Housing Code Ordinance is considered the best step towards improving the quality of housing stock. The Housing Code Enforcement Officer assisted by the State Fire Marshall and Richford's Fire Chief, has been working to enforce the ordinance. The code is also enforced as part of the Richford Zoning Bylaws. Over the past decade, the town has been working to bring basic necessities to each housing unit. For instance, according to the Census in 2000 there were only 3 units in the town lacking complete plumbing facilities and 68 units in town without a phone. These figures have improved since 1990, when there were still 15 units lacking plumbing and 86 without a phone.

Although effort has been made to improve the situation, property values in Richford are, by far, the lowest of any town in Franklin County at $57, 600 in 2000. By way of comparison, median residential value in Berkshire was $81,000, in Enosburg was $82,500, and in Montgomery was $85,500.

Affordable Housing

Table #3. 2

Median Gross Rent (2000)	
Franklin County	$539
Montgomery	$490
Berkshire	$481
Richford	***$463***
Enosburg Falls and Town	$457
Data Source: U.S. Census 2000	

Table #3.3 shows the median prices of primary residences sold in Richford and surrounding communities based on Vermont State tax data. From 2000 to 2005, the median sale price of primary residences increased by 28 percent in Richford and by 59 percent in Franklin County. Richford's median sale price and its rate of increase are the lowest in the County. Median gross rent in Richford is among the lowest in the County (see Table #3.2).

Table #3.3

Median Sale Price of Primary Residences (2005)						
Year	***Richford***	Enosburg Falls and Town	Montgomery	Berkshire	Franklin County	Vermont
2000	***$69,000***	$75,000	$90,425	$91,000	$110,000	$115,000
2001	***$58,500***	$89,700	$80,000	$82,400	$118,000	$124,900
2002	***$63,000***	$91,750	$102,750	$81,700	$127,000	$130,000
2003	***$75,450***	$95,500	$119,000	$101,500	$140,000	$145,000
2004	***$85,000***	$111,000	$128,600	$140,350	$152,000	$160,000
2005	***$88,500***	$127,000	$145,000	$125,000	$175,000	$185,000
Data Source: Vermont Housing Data						

The standard federal and State definition of affordable home ownership is a mortgage (principle and interest) plus taxes and property insurance that consumes no more than 30 percent of 80 percent of the County's median household income, or the metropolitan statistical area's (MSA's) median household income, if it applies. All of Franklin County has recently been added to the Burlington-South Burlington MSA; however, we are using the County's median household income to compute affordability statistics in order to avoid skewing the results with very high figures from Chittenden County.

Table #3.4 computes the maximum affordable mortgage and affordability gap for Richford and surrounding communities. In 2005, the median sale price for primary residences in Richford was $88,500 (Vermont Housing Data) and 80 percent of Franklin County's median household income in 1999 was $33,327 (2000 U.S. Census). The maximum affordable mortgage for 80 percent of the County's median household income (1999) was $99,431, indicating that 80 percent of the median income could afford a home at the 2005 median home price in Richford, leaving a positive affordability gap of $10,931. A household earning about 74 percent of the median household income ($30,700) could afford a home at the median sale price in 2005; all annual household incomes below $30,700 (over 50 percent of households) would be spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing at the median sale price.

Table #3.4

Affordability Gap for Grand Isle County (Household Income)

Municipality or County	80% Median HH Income (1999)	30% of Income		Taxes & Insurance	Income Available for Housing per Month	Maximum Affordable Mortgage	Median Sale Price for Primary Residences (2005)	Owner Affordability Gap
		Per Year	Per Month					
Franklin County	$33,327	$9,998	$833	$240	$593	$99,431	$175,000	($75,569)
Montgomery	$33,327	$9,998	$833	$240	$593	$99,431	$145,000	($45,569)
Enosburg Falls and Town	$33,327	$9,998	$833	$240	$593	$99,431	$127,000	($27,569)
Berkshire	$33,327	$9,998	$833	$240	$593	$99,431	$125,000	($25,569)
Richford	**$33,327**	**$9,998**	**$833**	**$240**	**$593**	**$99,431**	**$88,500**	**$10,931**
Data Source: U.S. Census, Housing Vermont, NRPC calculations								

Affordable rent is defined by the State of Vermont as a household earning no more than 80 percent of the County's or MSA's median household income, if it applies, that spends no more that 30 percent of their income on rent plus utilities. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the median contract rent in Richford was $363 and the median gross rent was $463, leaving the median cost of utilities to be $100. Richford has a positive rental affordability gap; a household earning about 45 percent of the County median household income ($18,747) could afford the 2000 median gross rent in Richford (see Table #3.5).

Table #3.5

Rental Affordability Gap				
	80% Median HH Income (1999)	Income Available for Housing per Month	Median Gross Rent (2000)	Rental Affordability Gap
Franklin County	$33,327	$833	*$539*	$294
Montgomery	$33,327	$833	$490	$343
Berkshire	$33,327	$833	$481	$352
Richford	**$33,327**	**$833**	**$463**	**$370**
Enosburg Falls and Town	$33,327	$833	$457	$376
Data Source: U.S. Census, NRPC calculations				

Another way of calculating affordability in town is to find the median percentage spent on housing by a community. The Census reports this figure every ten years. In 2000, the median percentage of income spent on housing by homeowners with a mortgage in Richford was 22.0%, up from 16.1% in 1990. The median percentage spent by homeowners without a mortgage was 14.4%, down from 14.9% in 1990. The median percentage of income spent on housing by renters was 28.8% in 2000, down from 31.8% in 1990. This data indicates that homeownership costs are increasing in Richford, while rental costs are decreasing. A limiting factor with this data is that there is no information on what percentage lower income households versus higher income households are

spending on housing. Spending 22 to 28 percent of monthly income on housing will have a higher impact on lower income households.

Overall, this data indicates that affordable homeownership and rental housing is available in Richford. However, although it cannot be demonstrated from the affordability analyses, there is a pressing need for additional mid-income housing opportunities, particularly for renters. Many people who work in Richford and commute from neighboring towns have indicated that they would prefer to live in Richford if better quality rental units were available. The expansion in quality area units would provide the opportunity for young professional people to live and work in the Richford community, which, in turn, could allow them to participate more fully in community activities.

Special Needs Housing

Within every community are individuals or families with special housing needs, such as the elderly, families with children in poverty, and the disabled. Special housing needs may require group quarters or institutional care, such as nursing homes, correctional facilities, group homes, and homeless shelters. To meet the needs of Richford's community, a variety of types of facilities are necessary and available.

The 2000 U.S. Census summarizes some of the characteristics of those who have special needs.

- There were 396 seniors living in Richford in 2000.
- There were 111 seniors living alone in 2000. Of these, 79 were women.
- 14.4 percent, or 57 of the 396 seniors, also lived in poverty.
- In 1999, 106 of the 626 families (or 16.9 percent) in Richford lived in poverty.
- 31.2 percent of all children lived in poverty.
- Of the 1,392 persons in Richford between the ages of 16 and 64, 150 had a physical disability and 32 had a self-care limitation.
- Of the 396 residents over 65, 136 had a physical disability and 47 individuals also had a self-care limitation.
- Richford had no persons who were institutionalized in 2000 and 48 living in group quarters.

It is quite apparent that Richford has a sizable population of persons or families with special needs. In addition to a variety of services and programs (which are discussed in a later section), there are four facilities that operate to meet special housing needs in Richford (listed below). In total, Richford has 31 low-income senior or disabled units, 5 units for mentally handicapped, 52 units of assisted living, including 21 units to assist seniors with memory loss.

Missisquoi Manor: One of the first facilities in Richford for the elderly or handicapped housing was the Missisquoi Manor. Constructed in the early 1980's with Section 8 funding, the facility provides an important source of housing for this segment of the population.

The Missisquoi Manor consists of 24 single bedroom units. It is typically full, though waiting lists are short. To qualify, applicants must be either disabled or over 65, and have either low or very low income (as defined by HUD).

Academy Lane Apartments: Located on Intervale Avenue, the Old School House has been renovated to seven senior handicap accessible apartments.

Four Seasons: Located on the South Richford Road, the Four Seasons is a Level IV home licensed to provide room and board for up to five mentally challenged individuals. There is currently one resident. The owner provides respite services for people needing assistance with the care of aged or ill family members.

Ave Maria Community Care Home: Ave Maria is licensed as a Level III Residential Care facility located on School Street, providing 24 hour residential care for up to 17 residents. Nurse overview and medication administration is provided. No skilled nursing can be provided without a waiver from the State of Vermont.

Besides offering assistance with daily living, Ave Maria offers daily devotions for those interested, plus weekly prayer services provided by area clergy and weekly transportation to church. Other services include an activity director, in-house doctor visits, a beautician, and three French-speaking staff. The wholesome, nutritious, family style meals are prepared by an in-house chef. Two staff members have been recognized with the Quality of Life award by the Champlain Area Agency on Aging. The home is locally owned and operated.

Our Lady of the Meadows: Located on Pinnacle Meadows, this facility is owned and operated by the Doe Family and offers many of the same services as Ave Maria, including a beautician and prayer services. As with Ave Maria, the Meadows is a Level III residential care facility. The Meadows has a total of 52 units all with private bath, including the St. Joseph's Memory Loss Unit (21 units), a special unit devoted to the care of seniors with dementia, Alzheimer's, and other memory disabilities.

In summary, housing for seniors is available especially for those with assisted living requirements. Unfortunately more of these types of units are still needed especially for low-income and Level I and II living requirements.

Although a great deal of affordable housing exists in Richford there is a need for more affordable family housing facilities. Richford Renaissance is currently working in partnership with Housing Vermont on the construction of 12 affordable apartments in the former Sweat Comings building. This will provide needed high quality, affordable units for Richford families. The construction of more facilities would further help reduce the strain of poverty on families in Richford.

Housing Assistance Agencies

To meet housing needs Richford, the State, and Federal government have a variety of programs to support residents with special needs.

The Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) is the state's largest financer of affordable home ownership opportunities. VHFA directs its funding toward increasing the availability of both new and rehabilitated low-cost housing.

The Office of Economic Opportunity administers a number of programs for low income Vermonters including financial assistance for homeless and emergency shelters.

The Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) administers rental assistance programs and helps private and non-profit developers of affordable housing. The primary source of funding comes from HUD through the various "Section 8" programs. VSHA also administers the ENABLE program that provides loans to improve handicap accessibility.

Champlain Valley Rehab Loan Fund. In rural Vermont, many old single-family homes are occupied by low-income owners who have had to maintain them on a shoestring budget. These owners have rarely, if ever, had the funds necessary to substantially upgrade or replace major mechanical, building envelope, or structural systems. At the same time, fewer and fewer public funds or programs are available to assist these owners. As a result, the useful life of these homes has rapidly declined and many are in substandard conditions.

In early partnership with a consortium of the towns of St. Albans, Enosburgh, Richford, and the City of St. Albans, Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation (LCHDC) established in 1997 the Franklin County Rehab Loan Fund. The program was administered by the Town of Richford, and offered rehab grants and low-interest loans to low and moderate-income existing homeowners. In January 1999, the Loan Fund added the remaining towns of Grand Isle and Franklin Counties to the consortium and became the Champlain Valley Rehab Loan Fund (CVRLF). Affordable loans are available to homeowners who meet the income requirements. Loan decisions are made by a Loan Review Committee comprised of representatives from each participating community.

Richford Renaissance. Richford took a very important step in 1999 when the Richford Renaissance Corporation was formed. The mission of Richford Renaissance is to improve Richford housing for the benefit of the occupants and the community. One of their goals is to improve the quality and preserve affordability of housing for homeowners and renters. They plan to accomplish their goals by identifying projects for housing improvements and providing information and assistance to renters and owners. They also develop, operate, finance, and manage affordable housing projects for the downtown area. Richford Renaissance provides Richford with a valuable resource to form partnerships in addressing the many issues that surround Richford housing in the community.

Residential Development Pattern

Current development patterns show that, with the exception of higher density residential areas in the village district, lower density housing is distributed mostly in the northern and western sections of Richford, along river valleys. The constraints of soil and topography limit residential development elsewhere in the town. Generally, this distribution includes farm dwellings and single-family homes adjacent to traveled roads, and clusters of housing in the historically settled hamlets of Stevens Mills, East Richford, and South Richford. High density housing in Richford should continue to be developed within the village district where municipal water and sewer are located.

Conclusions

Richford's housing has a great many benefits as well as problems. Richford's housing is affordable, plentiful, located centrally around the village district, and of many types, styles, and sizes. There are many historic buildings in the village district which have been rehabilitated and maintained for private or public use. Unfortunately a great many houses in Richford are old and in disrepair. The issue is not if there is enough housing but rather is there enough safe, healthy and attractive housing.

The Town of Richford has taken steps directly to help solve these issues. A Housing Code Enforcement Officer has the responsibility of inspecting rental units in the village district to ensure they meet fire and safety codes. This has been instrumental in shutting down the most troublesome sites and improving many others.

A second significant step is the formation of Richford Renaissance Corporation to take a proactive approach to ensuring safe and affordable housing. In the past five years, many projects were completed in the downtown area including the removal of some blighted buildings and the construction of senior housing. There are many other projects planned for the next five years. The Town is now laying the foundation for a revival in the downtown although a great deal of work has yet to be done.

HOUSING GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS: **TO INSURE THAT RICHFORD HAS AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF SAFE, HEALTHY, ATTRACTIVE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING THAT SATISFIES THE DAY TO DAY LIVING REQUIREMENTS OF RICHFORD'S RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.**

TO INSURE THAT HOUSING IS AVALABLE IN A VARIETY OF TYPES FOR ALL INCOMES AND AGES AND IS LOCATED CONVENIENTLY IN RELATION TO EMPLOYMENT, SERVICES, RETAIL CENTERS, AND EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.

POLICIES:

Housing supply and demand

- To provide a variety of housing options, including a diverse range of cost and size, within each area of town.
- The rehabilitation of vacant housing units in town will take priority over new housing development in the allocation of public funds if such units can be renovated to provide safe housing.

Housing safety and quality

- To fully support the efforts of the Housing Code Enforcement Officer, Fire Chief, and State Fire Marshall in their enforcement of the Minimum Housing Codes to improve the quality of the rental units in the village district.
- Residential development is not permitted in the floodplain and existing housing in flood hazard areas should be flood-proofed for the safety of the residents and the town as a whole.

Aesthetics

- Housing and buildings will be encouraged to reflect the architecture and settlement patterns that characterize the surrounding region.
- Landscaping and site design that reduces adverse impacts of new housing on neighbors will be strongly encouraged.

Convenient location

- Promote new and rehabilitated residential development that reinforces and reflects the traditional forms and patterns of residential community settlements, that efficiently utilizes existing and planned infrastructure, and is located near employment and commercial centers.

SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL: TO INSURE THAT HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS, INCLUDING THE ELDERLY, HANDICAPPED, LOW AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, AND THE MENTALLY ILL ARE ABLE TO ATTAIN SUITABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

POLICIES:

- Sites for manufactured housing are allowed in locations similar to those generally used for single family conventional dwellings.
- Encourage accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences to provide affordable housing options for families and seniors.
- Affordable housing should be located in areas with access to appropriate services.
- Affordable housing should minimize long-term living costs through high quality design, efficient construction, energy efficiency and proximity to employment and /or service centers.
- Encourage land use patterns which are inherently more affordable by nature of cost efficiencies associated with construction (e.g. shorter access roads, common walls, proximity to public utilities, smaller lot sizes). Continue the practice of allowing PUD's in designated areas to promote this pattern of growth.

Housing assistance agencies

- Efforts by municipal, regional and non-profit organizations to provide increased opportunities for affordable home ownership will be supported provided the efforts are consistent with other elements of the Richford Town Plan.
- Support will be given to efforts that assist elderly and disabled residents who want to remain in their homes, and to community-based health care systems that enables elderly and disabled people to remain in the community.

HOUSING IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL: INTO THE FUTURE, HISTORIC BUILDINGS WILL BE MAINTAINED AND CONTINUE TO BE USED TO HOUSE THE RESIDENTS OF RICHFORD

POLICIES:

- Promote the use and, where necessary, restoration of historic buildings to meet various housing needs.

CHAPTER 4: UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

THE SERVICES NEEDED FOR THE PEOPLE AND ECONOMY OF RICHFORD

Overview

One benefit of living in a community is the availability of resources to make lives easier. These resources may come in the form of utilities such as electricity and gas, facilities like libraries and ball fields, or services such as public transportation and home health care.

These services benefit both the people of Richford as well as the economy. Businesses and industry require reliable and affordable sources of power and water, and access to roads and rail are critical to shipping costs.

This chapter will examine the services available to the people and economy of Richford. Some of these are public services and are supported through taxes while others are private initiatives, which exist through donations or fees. In either case, Richford has a wealth of services and facilities available to businesses and residents alike.

Public Facilities

Arvin A. Brown Public Library – The estate of Arvin A. Brown, after the death of Mrs. Brown in 1894, was bequeathed to the town for the establishment of a public library. The library opened in 1895 in rooms in the Bank Block on Main Street.

In 1906, the Library Trustees purchased the Union Church from individual pew-holders and in 1914, deeded the property to the Town for the Town Hall with the provision that the Town would provide suitable rooms for the Library. The library moved into the new quarters in 1915.

The Library then moved to the first floor of the "Guertin House" next to the Town Hall in 1984 (newly purchased by the Town in 1983), after which, many new programs were offered. The Guertin House was renovated in 1994 so that the Library could expand to the second floor, to provide additional structural support, and to meet requirements of the American with Disabilities (ADA) Act, funded by a Community Development Block Grant, a bequest from the estate of Mable Pond Ayer, and other local funds.

From 1941 through 1971, an appropriation of Town funds for books and supplies was voted at the annual Town Meeting. Beginning in 1972 the appropriation was included in the general fund budget. The appropriation include salaries for five part-time staff, books and other materials, supplies and equipment, utilities, repairs, and other miscellaneous expenses. Other revenues are received from donations, out-of-town registrations, book sales, and the 'conscience box' (voluntary late fees).

The Arvin A. Brown Public Library has an excellent collection of fiction and literature, including large print materials for the visually impaired. A coordinated plan is under development for updating the non-fiction areas for adults and children. In addition, the

library is developing a strong multi-media collection including fiction and non-fiction videos and DVDs, computer software, audiobooks, and music.

Over the past 100 years, the library has become a valuable resource to the community and to the school system. Aside from the collections of books and other media, the library is an art gallery in which local crafters and artists may display their creations. A microfilm reader is available for genealogical research. The library now has three computers with high-speed internet for public use and another for staff purposes.

In an effort to continue to act as a community center for information and entertainment the library offers many regular programs. Among the programs offered are weekday and weekend story hours for toddlers and preschoolers, summer reading programs for elementary and secondary students, and evening book discussions for adults. The library also contributes activities and performers to the Richford Summer Day Camp, as well as hosting Summer School classes. Art classes and tutoring sessions in mathematics, history and literature are also available. Programs under development include Vermont Technical College satellite classes, pre-literacy programs, movie nights, and music appreciation evenings. The Library also acts in concert with local service organizations and other Franklin County libraries to bring speakers and performance groups to the area. Other programs which might be offered include a Writer's Club, Business Club, Literary Luncheons, Home Dem Club, Photography Club, play school group, a home-schoolers monthly meeting, and a babysitting class.

In all, the Arvin A. Brown Public Library is a thriving resource in the center of Richford. Continued support will be needed for the library to become a greater resource, especially as a computer and learning center. The Town of Richford, for its population, can be proud of its support of a top-notch Library. Few, if any, can compare with the programs, quality of staff, and the work of community-building resulting from the above mentioned qualities.

The Post Office – The Post Office Building is owned and maintained by the Town. Its contracted tenants include the U.S. Post Office, the U.S. Border Patrol, and the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union offices. In 1999, the Post Office building required fire safety code work, which included creating a second fire-resistant exit for the first and second floors complete with emergency lighting. The roof had some work completed in 1998 and plans are being developed to provide ADA access to the buildings' second floor, and increase parking to meet the requirements of the buildings' tenants. This beautiful building will serve the Town for many years.

The Town Hall – The Town Hall was originally a church, built in 1871, and renovated in 1914 to house the library, Town and Village Office, and the Colonial Theater. Rooms previously occupied by the library are now the Clerk's Office and the conference room. The former jail was turned into a meeting room for the Selectmen, then became the Community Action Office, and is now occupied by the Richford Economic Advancement Corporation (REAC). The Colonial Theater, a beautiful auditorium on the second floor, continues to stage elementary and high school music and drama productions. It is the site for municipal meetings and public hearings, and is used by local groups and traveling performers for fundraising and cultural events. The Board of Listers has a second floor

office and the School District Bookkeeper has an office on the third floor. An 1872 Seth Thomas clock chimes the hour from the tower above.

The building is very well maintained and funds are budgeted annually for improvements. Energy efficient windows have been installed, the coal-fired boiler has been replaced by a thermostatically controlled oil furnace, and insulation has been added. In 1994 the Town was awarded a Community Development Implementation Grant which provided half of the funds needed to install a wheelchair lift and a new ramp. In addition, unused and underutilized space has been refurbished creating or relocating offices for the Listers, Zoning Administrator, Housing Code Officer, Health Officer, and the Franklin County Sheriff's office.

There are plans to triple the vault space. Other plans include: improvement to the building's exterior drainage, addressing a potential structural flaw supporting the clock tower, increasing parking space to meet ADA standards, and adding gycol-heat exterior walking spaces to eliminate the use of sodium chloride products for ice and snow removal.

The Highway Department and Town Garage - The Town Garage is in good condition and is adequate to serve the needs of the community for years to come.

Highway equipment includes:

- 1994 Ford Dump/Plow Truck
- 1998 Mack Dump/Plow Truck
- 2000 International Dump/Plow Truck
- 2002 International Tandum Dump/Plow Truck
- 2002 1-ton truck
- 2006 pick-up truck
- Cat loader
- Cat backhoe
- Grader
- Kabota Tractor/ Mower/Plow

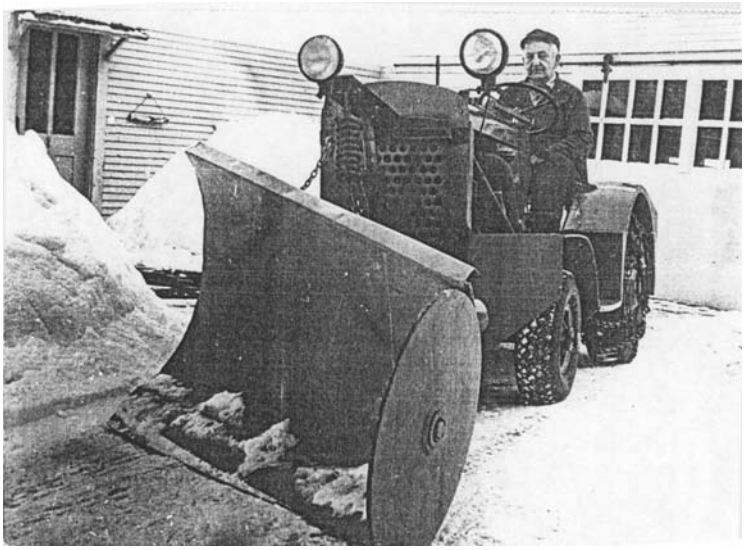


Photo 4: Historic photo of an early snowplow.

The 1994 Ford is scheduled to be replaced in the near future. A new salt shed was constructed in 2006 that replaces two old and inadequate salt sheds. Having recently separated the water and wastewater departments from the highway department, the highway foreman position is currently vacant and being advertised.

Highway account expenditures are the largest single component of the town's budget. The 2006 budget for highway expenditures is 42% of the total budgeted expenditures for the year.

Police Services

The village, for many years, maintained a police department with one full-time officer and one part-time officer. In 1990 both positions were removed due to funding. Police protection for the Town of Richford is now provided by the Franklin County Sheriff's Department and the State Police, the primary agent being the Vermont State Police. Fifty-six evening hours weekly are contracted through the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. Local Municipal Ordinance Enforcement and parking violations in the village district can be enforced by any enforcement agency and the Town Constable.

The most common crimes reported by the Sherriff's Department are DUI, Contempt of Court, simple assault, disorderly conduct, and unlawful mischief and a majority occur in the village district. The most active times are the hot summer months. Although no longer organized, neighborhood watches are encouraged and are some of the best means to combat quality-of-life issues such as squealing tires, excessively loud people, public drinking, loitering, and littering.

Police protection is considered adequate within the means of Town taxpayers. Fine and fee reimbursement affords additional protection when needed, especially for the higher crime summer months.

Fire Protection

After the 1884 fire at the falls, Richford residents voted in 1889 in favor of a $420,000 bond for a village water system, fire equipment, two hose companies (one for each side of the river), and one hook and ladder company. The fire station was located at the corner of Main and Powell Streets and burned in 1907 in the Sweat-Comings Fire. It was rebuilt in 1908 at its present site next to the bridge.

Photo 5: The new emergency services building dedicated July 4, 1998.

The Richford Fire Department is now made up of trained and dedicated volunteers. The Department typically responds to 40-50 fires each year in town, plus ten mutual aid calls in Sutton, Quebec; Enosburgh, Berkshire, and Montgomery.

A formal mutual-aid agreement is in place for Franklin County departments, outlining and coordinating assistance between the departments. In addition, a separate reciprocal agreement is in place between Richford, Enosburgh, and Sutton Quebec. The agreement provides coverage when a town's department has been called to a fire. One of the other two towns will post men and a pumper truck at the neighboring fire station until the local

department is back in service. The agreement assures that each town has adequate coverage in case of multiple emergencies. An additional agreement provides assistance to the Richford Ambulance Service whenever that department is called for a vehicular accident.

Members of the department are also active in the Richford Firefighters Association. The Association conducts fundraisers assisted by civic groups and organizations to purchase equipment not provided for in the town appropriation. The Association has purchased such essentials as the air cascade system (used to fill air bottles on respirators), a portable pump, beepers, and all of the vehicles except the E-one Pumper and the 2006 International Pumper/Tanker.

The department has participated in a number of grant programs to purchase equipment such as extraction equipment, a thermal imaging camera, wildland fire gear, Haz-Mat gear, bunker gear, SCBAs and accessories, and a lap top computer with software. The department was fortunate to be awarded a $100,000 USDA Rural Development Community Facilities grant toward the purchase of the 2006 International Pumper/Tanker. The department currently owns the following vehicles:

- 1968 75' ladder truck with 1000 gpm pump;
- Chevi-Van Rescue truck;
- 1976 Grass fire pickup with 225 gallon tank;
- 1981 Mack tanker with 2800 gallon tank and 400 gpm pump;
- 1989 E-one pumper with 1000 gallon tank and 1500 gpm pump;
- 2006 International pumper/tanker with 1800 gallon tank with 1250 gpm pump.

All vehicles are in good condition, except the 1976 Pickup, which will need replacing within the next 5 to 10 years.

The vehicles are centrally located at the Emergency Services Building on Main Street, which was dedicated for service on July 4, 1998.
The department is supported by the town's general fund, for fire fighting, fire training, insurance, communications (dispatch services), and maintenance for the fire station, trucks and equipment.

The town uses dispatch services at St. Albans Central Dispatch. All emergencies can be reported on the E911 system. The establishment of this system was the result of tremendous amounts of work around the state throughout the 1990's.

Another important service provided by the department is its work with the State Fire Marshall. The Fire Chief routinely accompanies the Fire Marshall on these inspections. These visits give the Fire Chief the opportunity to become familiar with the properties and discuss safety and fire prevention with the tenants.

The Firefighter Auxiliary is a separate organization providing community services (Breakfast with Santa Claus) and support to the department. Auxiliary members are usually on-site at major fires, dispensing coffee and sandwiches to the firefighters.

The Fire Services are considered adequate at this time.

Ambulance Services

The Richford Ambulance Service is owned by the Town of Richford and managed by the Richford Health Center, under the oversight of the Ambulance Committee, which is appointed by the Richford Selectboard.

The 13 active members of the all-volunteer Ambulance Service responded to over 360 emergency calls in 2005, maintaining 24-hour, seven day a week continuous service. Currently the Service is manned by 8 drivers, 6 EMT's, 1 EMT-I, 1 EMT-103, and 1 ECA.

Richford Ambulance Service is an ALS certified service equipped with 2 ambulances. The ambulances, built and purchased in 2001 and 2005, are made by McCoy-Miller. Both are equipped with advanced life saving devices and staffed by qualified emergency medical technicians.

The Town of Richford offers a subscription service for residents at $40.00 per year per household. Each subscription provides 12 months of service with assurance that the household will not be billed for services beyond insurance coverage. Households without insurance will not be billed at all. Medicare and Medicaid are considered insurance coverage.

The Richford Ambulance Service is able to meet its expenses through its billing process. Any income over expenses is deposited in the Ambulance Fund, which helps to underwrite the cost of replacement rigs, major equipment and unexpected expenses.

As with all volunteer organizations, Richford Ambulance Service has experienced a drop in membership over the past ten years. The level of commitment in time and training for stressful situations is certainly a factor. The Service does provide financial support for training and Richford Jr.-Sr. High School offers a course for Certified First Responders to introduce young people to emergency service.

Health Services

Richford Health Center, Inc. d/b/a Northern Tier Center for Health, (NOTCH), is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that now serves 11 rural communities of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties in Vermont. Primary medical care and behavioral health counseling are accessible at four central sites in the towns of Alburgh, Enosburgh, Richford, and Swanton. Dental care and the 340B pharmaceutical program through Richford Rexall are available in Richford. Administrative and billing offices for the entire corporation are located in Richford. Richford Health Center employs approximately 75 people with 35 employees based in Richford. Over 7,000 patients used the four clinics in 2005.

Richford Health Center is a private non-profit corporation governed by a community Board of Directors, which is responsible for setting policy and direction of the corporation. The Executive Director, selected and hired by the Board, manages the day-to-day operations and works closely with the Medical Director to assure that staff and facilities are in place to provide health care of the highest quality.

The Richford Health Center is open 5 days each week with after hour telephone coverage. The Health Center accepts all insurances, including Medicare, Medicaid and third party payers. It also provides a sliding fee scale payment method and treats all individuals regardless of ability to pay. The clinic services include: routine physical exams for all ages, including pediatric and women's health; diagnoses; treatment of acute and chronic conditions, including diabetes and asthma; and immunizations and referrals to specialists. Over 9,000 encounters were recorded in 2005.

Richford Health Center has been working diligently for several years to correct the inadequate and outdated medical building on Main Street. In June 2006, following nearly two years of planning and negotiating, construction has begun on the Main Street Mill site. The Health Center will renovate and occupy the second floor of the building placing its medical, administrative and billing offices in that space. The Richford Rexall Pharmacy will be installed on the first floor. The Health Center will be joined by a grocery store on the first floor and housing on the third floor. The fourth floor will be developed at a later date.

The nearest hospital is the Northwest Medical Center in St. Albans, approximately 30 miles away.

Water Services

Village voters approved funds to construct the first municipal water system in 1889; five years after fire nearly destroyed several downtown buildings. Reservoirs were later built for greater storage capacity. This early system still serves as emergency backup for the current system. Most developed properties in the village district are connected to the system; a transmission system is in place and capacity still exists to serve future development.

The primary source of water is the Stanhope Brook with Loveland Brook serving as a secondary source. In 1922, voters approved building a reservoir on the eastern edge of the village district with not less than 5 million gallons capacity, to which the old system would be connected. Voters approved funds for a WPA project in 1933 to build a dam on Stanhope Brook. A 12-inch diameter cast-iron pipe was laid in a ditch, hand dug below the frostline, more than five miles from the reservoir east of the village district.

In the mid-1980's, the village was ordered to make improvements to the system to comply with State and Federal regulations. A covered reservoir was required for water that had been filtered and chlorinated because of the system's source. Distribution did not provide adequate fire flows in some areas and needed to be upgraded. Residents strongly resented the mandates to improve the system that had served them for more than fifty years, and resisted compliance. A boil-water order was issued and new water connections were prohibited. The project was eventually approved in 1990 with intense bitterness. Construction was started in 1991 and completed in 1993, with a fair number of complications.

The slow-sand filtration system receives water from either the brook or the reservoir. After being filtered and chlorinated, water is stored in the 1 million gallon covered reservoir until being drawn through transmission lines to the network of distribution lines. The entire system is gravity feed. Problems continue to occur occasionally,

particularly with sections of the distribution lines not replaced as part of the project. Repairs are made in a timely manner when problems occur.

Village Trustees approved an ordinance in August 1993, which became effective that October and which established rules and regulations for the water system. All properties connected to the system are now billed a base rate, set below the previous rate, on a semi-annual basis. The base rate includes a base usage number of gallons for residential, commercial and industrial users. Additional charges of $3.00 per 1,000 gallons are imposed for usage above the base gallons. Meters are read semi-annually to determine usage. Users were notified of the billing change in October 1994; collections under the new system began in May 1995.

The intent of the rate change was to assure enough revenue to make payments on the bond and to operate the system efficiently. Operating expenses are high because of increases in the cost of testing required by the Environmental Protection Agency and the State. One impact of the rate change was an increase in conservation. Water use decreased since they were instituted as residents repaired leaks and purchased more efficient washing machines and toilets.

In 1999, the water department replaced over 400 feet of old pipe on Elm Street. The new line is larger and should last many years and help increase the quantity and quality of water in that area. At that time the water department also repaired the dam on Stanhope Brook and completed a study of the area where the water line crosses the Missisquoi River. In 2005 with funding from the Army Corps of Engineers, the water department completed the installation of approximately 1/2 mile of water line on Stanhope Flats and under the Missisquoi River using directional boring, which makes the transmission line less susceptible to erosion from the Missisquoi River. The town has initiated efforts to protect the watershed areas of the system and now that the town and village have merged, the system is managed by the Town. Currently, the system has a total capacity of 471,000 gallons per day, while less than 200,000 gallons per day are currently being used. This leaves an approximate reserve capacity of 271,000 gallons per day.

A vast majority of Richford residents, outside of the village district, maintain private springs or wells as their source of potable water. Well yields are generally low, but sufficient to supply single domestic users. State environmental geology maps (Vermont Geologic Survey, 1974) indicate that areas of moderate to good groundwater potential for higher yield needs are associated with sand and gravel deposits located along the Missisquoi River, and in sites north of the village district and around South Richford. Aquifer protection, in order to maintain the groundwater quality of existing and potential sources, is a necessary consideration in the development of the areas.

Wastewater Treatment

Before the first sewer lines were laid in 1891, the Missisquoi River received most of the sewage from the village district. Many, many years passed before that practice ceased.

The town owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility built in 1969-70, which serves most of the village district properties. The treatment plant has a design capacity of 380,000 gallons per day (GPD) for the primary and secondary aerated lagoons.

Wastes flow by gravity from properties on the north side of the river to a pumping station at the playground on Intervale Avenue; and from properties on the south side of the river to a pumping station located behind the bank on Main Street. A third pumping station is located in the business park on Route 105, west of the village district. Wastes are pumped from these collection points to the treatment plant. The system currently has a capacity of 380,000 gallons per day, while, on average, 242,000 gallons per day are currently being used. This leaves a reserve capacity of approximately 138,000 gallons per day.

In the past, capacity was regularly surpassed in the spring and sometimes in the summer due to groundwater infiltration and stormwater inflow. When the plant is over capacity, the overflow runs into the Missisquoi River. In response, a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) study was conducted in 1993-94 by Thermo Consulting Engineers to determine the extent of the groundwater/ stormwater problem and to recommend improvements to the facility. The town entered into an agreement with the state, which includes a time line for improvements. Storm drain separation work has been done by the town with the cooperation of businesses and property owners. As a result, reserve capacity has increased and now appears adequate for the foreseeable future. Domestic wastewater has also been reduced somewhat as a side effect of metered water billings. The sewage treatment plant is currently undergoing a phosphorus removal project to comply with current EPA standards. The project is expected to increase operating expenses for the wastewater treatment plant, even though the capital expense is being paid by the State.

Most residents outside of the village district depend on on-site systems, primarily septic and mound systems, for sewage disposal. Richford's Select-board, acting as the Board of Health, assisted by the Town Health Officer, addresses some sewage problems. As noted earlier, many of the soils in Richford are not suited for standard septic systems because of their slope characteristics, shallow depth to the seasonal water table or bedrock, and/or low percolation rates. For health reasons, proper system siting and design are especially important in these areas.

Solid Waste

The Town of Richford currently has a contract with Bruce Wetherby for the disposal of solid waste in the village district. Town residents outside of the district may either take the trash to transfer stations in Montgomery or Highgate or hire private haulers for collection. Richford is a member community of the Northwest Vermont Solid Waste Management District which has a regional solid waste management plan and a certified regional facility.

The Northwest Solid Waste District sponsors many activities such as "special collections" (bulky items, scrap metal, and tires) and Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collections (oil based paints, solvents, cleaners, pesticides, and other chemicals that would be harmful to the environment if not handled properly).

There is also a Backyard Burning Ordinance and an Illegal Dumping Ordinance in effect at the District level. It is now illegal to burn or dump garbage within the Town of Richford.

Recycling is now mandatory in the franchise district and is free of charge. One incentive to recycle is that residents pay by the bag for garbage disposal so the more they recycle, the fewer bags they will use.

One goal of the District is to make solid waste disposal as convenient as possible for residents so that compliance with the regulations are high. By making pick up and drop off of garbage easy and recycling free, there should be less incentive to dump or burn garbage illegally. The special collection of bulky and hazardous materials keeps these materials out of the waste stream and disposed of properly.

Residents outside of the franchise district must make their own arrangements for trash and recycling pickup.

Education

The first school in the village was built in 1822-23 at the corner of Province and Dewey Streets. A brick schoolhouse was then built on Main Street in 1839, across from today's library. The building burned in 1850 and a 2-story wooden school was built in 1851 across from School Street. At that time there were about 175 pupils in the village.

The school, which was soon outgrown, was replaced in 1870 by the Academy at the end of School Street. The Academy burned in 1892 and classes were held in the basement of the Methodist and Union churches and in the Bank Block Opera Hall. A new primary school for grades 1-5 was built in 1903 adjacent to the Academy.

In 1916, at a special town meeting, the town voted to build a new Academy, and in 1917 the current High school was completed. A new gym was constructed in 1938, and a temporary structure was added in 1967. (The temporary structure was retired in 1994.)

The building is 26,000 square feet, located on a 20-acre site in the village district owned by the Town School District. Facilities include 19 classrooms, a library, study hall, shop, and gymnasium. Overcrowding had again become a problem in the early 1990's and, more seriously, the building was severely deficient according to state educational standards. Renovations completed in 1997 made tremendous improvements and the school is now fully approved by the State of Vermont's Public School Approval Process.

The enrollment at Richford Junior-Senior High School over the past five years has risen from 228 in the 2000-01 school year to 247 in 2005-06 school year. Moderate fluctuations in enrollment are expected to continue. Enrollment is not expected to approach capacity (303 students) at least within the next five years.

Richford's elementary school, which provides facilities for grades K-6, is located just south of the village district on Route 105 on a 65-acre site. Originally constructed in 1968, and expanded in 1989, the school is 27,360 square feet with 14 classrooms, several multi-purpose rooms, a library, gymnasium, health room, and kitchen. The school has the capacity for 300 students and current enrollment is 234. Since enrollment has been decreasing over the last 5 years, capacity should be adequate for next five years and beyond. The facility currently meets all state educational requirements and provides space for some community functions.

All students are bussed and there have been some recent discussions on providing and improving sidewalks to allow some students to walk to school.

Education is a life long process and programs and opportunities exist in and around Richford from pre-school to college and technical training.

The Franklin County Early Childhood Programs (FCECP) is a collaborative early care and education program for young children (birth to school age) and their families operated by the public schools in the Franklin Central, Franklin Northeast and Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union School Districts.

The FCECP's primary target population is young children from birth to school age who are developmentally at risk or developmentally delayed and their families. In addition, they provide a variety of services for all young children and their families as they attempt to ensure that children are as ready as they can be for public school kindergarten and that public school kindergarten programs are as ready as they can be for young children with a variety of developmental needs.

A full range of vocational education is available to Richford residents at the Cold Hollow Career Center in Enosburg Falls. The Center offers various courses in Business, Agriculture, Construction Technology, Industrial Mechanics, and Adult Education.

Around the State of Vermont, opportunities exist for higher education although only one is in Franklin County. Community College of Vermont (CCV) offers classes in St. Albans. With the existing telecommunication infrastructure in Richford, opportunities are available for satellite classrooms to various colleges in the area.

Childcare

Childcare can be a growing concern for existing and prospective working families, whether it means finding quality services or securing the costs of services. High quality, available childcare is a critical component supporting a stable workforce.

According to state data, Richford currently has 8 registered childcare homes and 2 childcare centers, with a total capacity of 122 children. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that there are 510 children from birth to age 14 living in Richford. Data on other options, such as siblings, stay at home parents, family care providers, un-registered childcare homes or other opportunities are not available. Therefore, there is currently no data on how the needs of the 388 children are being met.

Energy Plan

The town is not involved in providing electrical service, gas service or other fuel supply for its residents. Energy needs for the town are provided by private utility companies and suppliers. Currently there are no locally identified unmet needs or scarcities associated with energy resources; however, prices of petroleum based products are approaching all time highs and are very unstable.

Electricity is provided by the Vermont Electric Cooperative. Rates for electricity have increased in recent years. Most residences rely on fuel oil or kerosene (67%) for heating. Other sources include wood (14%), Bottled, tank, or LP gas (13%), electricity (6%), utility gas (1%), and coal or coke (less than 1%). No natural gas lines are available in Richford.

Alternative energy development. Locally generated power from alternative sources, including but not limited to solar, wind, biomass, and methane, can provide cost saving and environmental benefits for Vermont municipalities. The more power produced locally (on a household or community basis), the less dependent communities, and the state as a whole, are on purchasing non-renewable and/or non-locally produced power. This in turn reduces the impact of volatile electric and heating fuel costs on the community and the state as a whole. Net-metering locally generated power back into the grid provides an opportunity to offset some costs and potentially generate revenue. Net-metering power requires a Certificate of Public Good under Act 248 and is exempt from local zoning, though the Public Service Board usually considers local town plans and regulations in the review. Locally generated power that does not connect to the grid is subject to local zoning. While Richford encourages alternative energies as clean, renewable sources of power, impacts on wildlife habitats, ecological systems, water and/or air quality, scenic qualities and views, and cultural features in town should be minimized. In addition, measures should be taken to minimize or eliminate significant noise impacts resulting from the construction or operation of facilities. With appropriate and careful review, the development of alternative power generation facilities will help diversify and strengthen Richford's energy portfolio.

A significant biomass energy proposal, which emerged from the Richford 2010 project, was the proposal to build a wood-fired co-generation plant for heat and electricity. It is felt that this will offer stable cheap electric power and add a boost to the economics of the town.

Energy efficiency. The Town has nine municipal buildings: the water treatment plant, wastewater treatment plant, Town Garage, Emergency Services Building, library, Post Office, Town Hall, and Old Fire Station. The water treatment plant was built in 1993 with energy efficiency and conservation in mind. The wastewater treatment facility was built in 1970; upgrades to address energy efficiency were made in conjunction with the CSO study. The Town Garage houses highway equipment. It is difficult to heat and needs improvements. Like the water treatment plant, the new Emergency Services Building was designed with energy efficiency in mind. Renovations to the library, post office and Town Hall have addressed many energy efficiency problems. For instance, the Town Hall changed from a coal heating system to oil furnaces. Temperatures are more easily controlled and air quality has improved.

Town highway equipment has been upgraded over the past few years with exception of one truck. Energy efficiency was a major consideration when these vehicles were replaced and substantial savings are expected over the coming years.

Ordinances enacted by the Selectboard to govern the municipal water and sewer treatment facilities will encourage conservation. State laws passed in 1998 require new home construction to meet energy efficiency standards. These standards are not enforced at the local level and are the responsibility of the builders.

Distances driven to work and limited public transportation create heavy uses of gasoline for automobiles. More employment opportunities in town would prevent these long commutes.

Telecommunication and Information Services

The Town of Richford in general, and the village district specifically, has a wealth of technology infrastructure available that is very underutilized. In the growing information age, by luck and circumstance, Richford has been the beneficiary of many types of infrastructure like coaxial cable, fiber optic lines, T1 telephone, and two cellular companies. All the infrastructure needed to create a high-tech Town is in place - all that is needed is a plan to bring the businesses to the resource. It is believed that once word gets out, companies will look to locate here because there are no other towns or cities in the area with better telecommunications facilities.

North County Cablevision has about 25 miles of coaxial cable in Richford and a fiber optic system that connects Richford, East Berkshire, Montgomery, and Enosburg Falls. Presently the system operates at 40 MHZ to 330 MHZ and has extended to 550 MHZ, which allows more video and data capability. North Country over the past ten years has overlaid a coaxial and fiber optic system to serve the two schools, the superintendent offices, the Catholic church, and the Health Center in Richford. The local overlay is presently using very little of its capability.

There are two cellular companies serving the area, Verizon Wireless and Unicel. Although no towers are currently sited in Richford, making one available could allow for special privileges for the town. Richford could create a telecommunication zone with no "roaming charges" for businesses and corporations.

Hyperion Communications has created a number of sonet loops using fiber optics with plans to be one of the biggest long-distance phone companies in Vermont. They came through Richford in late 1998 from Newport to complete its northern loop. In exchange for using their power poles, the Vermont Electric Cooperative uses some of Hyperion's fiber optics. By working with the utility or Hyperion, access to these lines could be arranged to offer the town or a business high-speed telecommunications service.

Recreation

A 15-acre playground is located in the conservation 1 district (the Missisquoi River flood plain) off Intervale Avenue in the village district. The Playground Association leased the park to the village in 1935 so federal funds could be obtained to build the grandstand and refurbish the baseball diamond. Fields are available for soccer, softball and baseball, and facilities for basketball are also available. The playground is used by the Richford School District, Little League, Babe Ruth, and adult leagues.

The Elementary and High Schools also have athletic fields including soccer and basketball facilities. An outdoor tennis court is available at the High School.

Memorial Park, on the corner of Main and Troy Streets, is a favorite summer spot for children and bikers. Graced by the recently restored Corliss Fountain, and with benches available, it is a pleasant place to relax and enjoy the view of Jay Peak. Seasonal community celebrations are held in the park.

Missisquoi Park connects to Memorial Park and consists of 8 acres, including a boat launch, new parking, and a trail extension.

The Davis Park on River Street also offers a respite to travelers. It is located on the banks of the Missisquoi River with benches set in shady spots for quiet resting. In 1997, a bandstand was built in the Park for summer concerts. Funds for the bandstand were left to the Town by Cornelia Jacobs.

In addition, Richford is part of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, which connects St. Albans and Richford on a 26-mile trail suitable for biking, walking, running, horseback riding, snowmobiling and cross-county skiing. The rolling terrain that makes up the trail passes through some of the most beautiful Vermont landscapes, including agricultural farmland and river valleys. There are many awe-inspiring places to stop on the trail for a picnic lunch or a short nap by the river.

Perhaps the most easily accessible and underused recreational resource in Town is the Missisquoi River, which is available for fishing, canoeing, tubing, swimming, and nature walks. The Missisquoi River Basin Association was organized in the mid-1990s and provides a forum for all groups and individuals interested in promoting and protecting the river. The group organizes educational and recreational outings.

A beautifully scenic, 186-acre, 9-hole golf course is located just north of the village district. Golf carts are available for rent, and meals and refreshments are available at the clubhouse. The course is well maintained and is well used by residents and visitors.

The addition of fitness facilities in People's Plaza has been popular. Desire has been expressed for facilities such as volleyball, swimming and fishing access areas.

Thought should be given to non-athletic recreation facilities as well. A community center, available to youth and adults, would be a great asset. There have been efforts, with varying degrees of success, to build youth facilities in the past. Young people in Richford have very few options for recreation, especially after school, in the evening and more particularly in the summer months.

Civic Groups and Organizations

The Richford Economic Advancement Corporation (REAC) is a private non-profit, quasi-municipal organization formed in 1982 to promote economic and community development. Governed by a Board of Directors, REAC serves as a contact for commercial/ industrial concerns, and as a contact with local, regional, and state agencies and officials.

REAC, with support from the Town, sponsored the Richford 2010 planning effort for long-term economic and community development. The 2010 report, finalized in 1999, recommended several specific projects. A Town web-site was developed, sponsored by REAC (www.richfordvt.com), which provides a great deal of information about Richford. Approved minutes from REAC and Selectboard meetings are posted on the site.

REAC is currently working toward implementing more of the projects from Richford 2010, including development of a Business Association.

A number of non-governmental community organizations support activities and improvements in the Town:

Richford Lions Club: Besides their national projects with special emphasis on needs in sight and hearing and providing assistance for eyeglasses, the Richford Lions Club supports the school bands, school sports and class activities, scholarships, Old Home Days on the first weekend in July, and numerous community service projects.

American Legion Post #12: The Legion provides their banquet hall for senior citizen meals and meals for deceased member's families after funerals. They also provide Christmas baskets to elderly legion members and donate to little league programs, girl scouts, and various other youth programs. The Legion also provides three $1000 scholarships for Richford High School seniors going to college and sponsorship for Richford High School boys attending Boys State, which organizes the Town's annual Memorial Day parade and program.

Knights of Columbus: Among the many charitable activities quietly conducted by the Knights of Columbus are sponsorship of a cub scouts troop and donations of food baskets for shut-ins. Missisquoi Lodge #9 F&AM provides support to Shriner Hospitals for crippled and burned children and awards two scholarships to Richford High School graduating seniors. The Lodge assists with sponsoring Mason CARES seminars (Comprehensive Assessment and Recovery Effort) through area schools.

Missisquoi Chapter #51, OES consolidated with the Enosburgh Chapter in 2003. Prior to their consolidation, the members established a Memorial Trust that continues to support the Richford projects that the Chapter had traditionally supported, including providing two scholarships for Richford High School graduating seniors.

The Beautification and Image Committee has, for many years, worked to keep the village district attractive. The small group raises funds to purchase trees and plants for the parks. Trees have been planted along Main Street, and the committee takes charge of planters at the Town Hall, Library, and Post Office buildings. The committee also purchases and maintains lighted ornaments, which are put up on utility poles at Christmas. The Town employees often assist the committee with their plantings and decorations. The committee has established the Golden Service Award, presented yearly at the annual holiday gathering to a community member who has volunteered time and effort to improving the community for all.

The Stage Committee maintains the stage in the second floor of the Town Hall. The Christmas Concert, the Mr. Falcon Contest, the Elementary School play, the library, and summer youth programs make use of the facility. The Hometown Follies, a variety show featuring local talent, is staged annually raising funds to assist the Meal Site. Stage committee members provide the physical and technical support required, and oversees use of the stage and audio-visual equipment. The Richford Historical Society has recently reorganized and has acquired the 1908 Fire Station. The Society's plan is to both preserve the building as their home, and utilize it as the Fire Station Museum, (to be renovated through local donations and fund raisers), which will then contain artifacts pertaining to the history of Richford. The Society has received enthusiastic support from the community and its members meet monthly. The Society is in the process of reprinting the Richford History Book written by Jack Salisbury in 1980. Franklin County Community Action assists the low-income residents. Among the programs offered are

commodity distribution and WIC, a food and nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children.

BERMMA: Another homegrown organization assisting low-income residents is BERMMA – the Berkshire, Enosburgh, Richford, Montgomery Ministry Association – which took over operation of the food shelf from Community Action a few years ago. BERMMA also receives and distributes donated clothes, furniture and housewares. BERMMA's clients are encouraged to get back on their feet, and are given help with budgeting and with finding jobs.

The Hometown Committee: An ad-hoc group formed in 1994 to organize community events in an effort to emphasize Richford's positive attributes. The Hometown Committee was organized by a local businesswoman, Paulette Legault, and is open to everyone. The committee organized the Hometown Harvest, a fall event with hayrides, face painting, games, booths and a dance. The Committee also organizes an annual Christmas Tree lighting ceremony.

Richford Renaissance, established as a non-profit corporation in 1999, was created to improve Richford's housing for the benefit of the occupants and the community with the goals of improving quality and preserving affordability. The organization has completed one rental project that included four buildings: Academy Lane Schoolhouse Apartments, the Janes Block and two duplexes on Powell Street and Intervale Avenue. That project is fully occupied. Presently, RR is collaborating with Housing Vermont in the renovation of the third floor of Main Street Mill, the former Sweat Comings factory building on Main Street. The volunteer board of Richford Renaissance is committed to the improvement of housing within the village district through the development, operation, financing and management of affordable projects. RR will continue to take a proactive approach to ensuring safe and affordable housing in Richford. These, and other local groups and organizations, are vital to the Town. They support educational, safety, and service organizations, and often support each other. Without the many dedicated members and volunteers working together through these organizations, many of the vital services and programs now in place would be unable to continue.

UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES GOALS AND POLICIES

GENERAL GOAL: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CAPITAL BUDGET AND PLAN FOR ALL PUBLICALLY FUNDED UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES.

PUBLIC FACILTIES GOAL: TO SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN PUBLIC FACILITIES SUCH AS THE ARVIN A. BROWN PUBLIC LIBRARY, THE POST OFFICE, THE TOWN HALL, AND THE TOWN GARAGE

POLICIES:

- Encourage continued public support for the Library.
- Support promotion of library activities and services.
- Support continued maintenance and preservation of the Town Hall.
- Encourage public use of the auditorium at the Town Hall.
- Maintain Town Garage and equipment inventories to keep pace with Town growth.

POLICE SERVICES GOAL: TO HAVE SUFFICIENT LAW ENFORCEMENT TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLFARE OF THE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OF RICHFORD.

POLICIES:

- Encourage the Selectboard to cause appropriate law enforcement to be provided within the means of the town taxpayers.
- The development and expansion of community watch programs are supported.

FIRE PROTECTION GOAL: TO HAVE SUFFICIENT FIRE PROTECTION TO ENSURE THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF THE RESIDENTS OF AND VISITORS OF RICHFORD.

POLICIES:

- To continue to train members of the fire department in the essential courses.
- Continue fundraising efforts to purchase equipment for fire services.
- Continue to work with the Fire Marshall to enforce the Minimum Housing Standards Ordinance.
- Encourage the purchase of E911 markers for mailboxes to increase accuracy of responses to emergencies.
- To continue to support the mutual aid arrangements with Richford's neighboring communities.

AMBULANCE SERVICES GOAL: TO HAVE SUFFICIENT EMERGENCY SERVICES TO ENSURE THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF THE RESIDENTS OF AND VISITORS OF RICHFORD.

POLICIES:

- To increase the number of volunteers
- To cover all shifts.

-
- To assure proper and adequate training for all emergency service volunteers.
- To encourage participation in the subscription plan for individuals throughout Town.
- Encourage the purchase of E911 markers for mailboxes to increase accuracy of responses to emergencies.

HEALTH SERVICES GOAL: TO GUARD, PROMOTE, PRESERVE AND RESTORE THE HEALTH OF PERSONS RESIDING IN THE GREATER RICHFORD AREA.

POLICIES:
- Support the use and promotion of the Health Center as a primary care and dental care provider.
- To support the enforcement of the Minimum Housing Codes as substandard housing contributes significantly to health problems in Richford.
- Educate and motivate persons regarding healthy lifestyles and prevention.
- Support Summer Day Camp as a means of providing inspiring activities that develop strong bodies and foster a healthy mind in children.
- Continue to coordinate with rescue services to provide emergency care.

WATER SERVICES GOAL: TO ASSURE AN ADEQUATE AND RELIABLE SUPPLY OF CLEAN WATER FOR ALL RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

POLICIES:
- Provide protection to the Stanhope Brook watershed.
- Development in the Stanhope Brook watershed should be carefully monitored, and land use regulations should be adopted to control development in this area.
- Support the enforcement of the Water Supply Ordinance, including provisions for the expense of expansion of the system to be borne proportionately by the developer(s).
- Encourage and, if appropriate, work with the Selectboard to develop a capital budget for continuing improvement of the municipal water system.
- Support regulations that ensure clean groundwater for residents who maintain private wells.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT GOAL: TO ENSURE THAT ALL WASTEWATER IS TREATED APPROPRIATELY, WHETHER ON-SITE OR AT THE MUNICIPAL SEWER PLANT, TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF RESIDENTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

POLICIES:
- Support the enforcement of the Wastewater Treatment System Ordinance, including provisions for the expense of expansion of the system to be borne proportionately by the developer (s).
- Support the enforcement of the Water Supply Ordinance as a means to reduce water use and therefore the volume of wastewater treatment needed.
- Encourage and, if appropriate, work with the Selectboard to develop a capital budget for continuing improvement of the municipal wastewater treatment system.
- All onsite systems are required to be sited and designed properly.

SOLID WASTE GOAL: **TO HAVE A CONVENIENT, COST-EFFECTIVE, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEM WHICH PROMOTES REDUCTION, REUSE AND RECYCLING.**

POLICIES:

- Encourage the town to continue efforts to provide for solid waste collection in the village district that is equitable and affordable for ratepayers.
- Minimize generation of hazardous waste in Town and, where appropriate, provide for safe storage and transport of any material to the District facility.
- Discourage businesses that generate hazardous waste from locating in area where unintended discharge of waste could pose a threat to human health or introduce a persistent contaminant into a resource or conservation lands.
- Support mandatory recycling.
- Support the Northwest Solid Waste Management District in their efforts including special collections of household hazardous materials and bulky items.

EDUCATION GOAL: **BROADEN ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE THE FULL REALIZATION OF THE ABILITIES OF ALL VERMONTERS.**

POLICIES:

- Support the efforts of the School Directors to provide the best educational facilities that the community can afford.
- Encourage, to the extent feasible, appropriate public use of educational facilities.

CHILDCARE GOAL: **ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT LICENCED OR REGISTERED CHILDCARE FACILITIES AND CENTERS THAT ARE SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND HIGH QUALITY.**

ENERGY GOAL: **TO ENCOURAGE THE EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES.**

POLICIES:

- Encourage continuing effort toward energy efficiency at the municipal level.
- Encourage development of a capital budget for town highway vehicles and equipment in order to replace old and inefficient units.
- Encourage energy conservation through the site plan review process.
- Support a feasibility study for a wood-fired electricity or wood/gas co-generation facility for the town.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION GOAL: **TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE TOWN OF RICHFORD.**

POLICIES:

- Investigate opportunities to get access to Hyperion Communications fiber optic lines.

RECREATION GOAL: TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RICHFORD RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

POLICIES:
- Encourage improvements of existing recreational facilities.
- Improve signage for existing recreational facilities.
- Investigate the feasibility of improved access to the Missisquoi River.
- Work with existing committees to investigate the feasibility of a community center.
- Prime recreational resources should be protected from incompatible land uses to preserve scenic qualities (including agricultural land, woodland, riverbanks, shorelines, and ridge and mountain tops) from unnecessary despoliation.
- Future development shall not limit public access to recreational lands and waters.
- Recreational opportunities for the handicapped and elderly should be provided.
- After school opportunities should be supported to offer activities for youth.

CIVIC GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS GOAL: TO HAVE AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY CIVIC COMMUNITY WHERE RESIDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUTURE OF RICHFORD.

POLICIES:
- Support the efforts of the formal and ad-hoc community organizations to provide for development, recreation, service, and community improvement opportunities in the Town of Richford.

CHAPTER 5: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation

Two state highways, a network of local roads, and one railroad provide important transportation routes in the Town of Richford. The nearest airports for passenger service are in Burlington and Montreal, though a limited number of nonscheduled passenger and freight service is available at the Franklin County State Airport in Highgate. Federal Express, United Parcel Service, Western Union, and local independent trucking firms provide daily service to Richford. Route 105 south and east from Richford provide access to interstate 89 and 91.

The Canadian National Railroad enters the United States at East Richford and then swings north, just east of the village district, back into Canada. The railroad has major switching and siding facilities which serve Blue Seal Feeds, one of the major employers in Franklin County. Kaytec also uses these facilities. The former Central Vermont Railroad has been abandoned and the rail bed has been purchased by the State of Vermont for use as a recreation trail. Now renamed the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, the rail bed has been improved into a 26-mile multi-use bike and pedestrian trail connecting Richford to St. Albans. During the winter months the trail is accessible to snowmobiles and cross-country skiers.

By far, Richford's primary transportation needs are met by the local road system. The total mileage of the town's road system is 61.211 miles, comprised of the following road classifications according to the Vermont Agency of Transportation:

State Routes:	VT 105	8.248 mi.
	VT 105A	1.799 mi.
		10.047 mi.
Town Roads:	Class 1	2.804 mi.
	Class 2	8.380 mi.
	Class 3	36.890 mi.
	Class 4	3.090 mi.
		51.164 mi.

The Town Selectmen's Road Policy prescribes the requirements for upgrading present roads or admitting new roads to the town system. This policy relieves the taxpayers of expenses which should be borne by property owners and developers. The town has also adopted driveway standards to ensure safe access onto public roads.

The Town of Richford has been an active participant in the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). It is hoped that this program will provide more local input in transportation planning.

Route 139, which joins Vermont Route 105 on Main Street in Richford and extends to the Vermont border, was reclassified as a Class I road in the spring of 1995 and the State

now is responsible for paving. The town, though, is responsible for maintenance of the road.

Within the village district, street conditions are generally considered good. Funds are budgeted annually for repaving, keeping most streets in good repair. A separate fund is designated for major repair work. Winter maintenance is excellent, often reported by travelers to be the best in the region. A Road Surface Management System (RSMS) has been completed.

The business district, public and municipal facilities, and emergency services are located on Main Street, including the Town Hall, bank, library, post office, health center, ambulance and fire stations within a three block area. A number of service and retail businesses and apartment buildings are mixed in as well. Public parking is available within the village district in three municipal lots and three privately owned, but open to the public, lots. These facilities are not used to the fullest extent possible. Improvements to the lots and appropriate signage could encourage increased use of these facilities. There are also plans for a new public parking area at the Main Street Mill complex.

The historic iron Main Street Bridge is located at the North Main – River Street intersection, which faces and is flanked by three commercial buildings. This is a major truck route for Blue Seal Feeds and for Kaytec, Inc., as well as for the distributors supplying area businesses. Though the turning radius is tight and the sight lines are short, remarkably, very few accidents have occurred at the site. A local ordinance for a 4-way stop has helped control traffic at this intersection. The Bridge has been scheduled to receive a new deck for the past several years; the estimated cost is $1.4 million, with the town's contribution at 5%. Construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2007. The Long Range Regional Transportation Plan management objectives recognize this intersection as an area of concern, suggesting studying the feasibility of a new bridge to 'straighten' this hazardous intersection, thereby freeing up a strangled circulatory system and making the downtown more economically vibrant. Consideration must be given to the iron-bridge and surrounding buildings located within Richford's Historic District and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Care must be taken to preserve these structures if possible.

A number of Richford residents must commute to their places of employment but, because of the diversity of their destinations, use of carpooling is limited (16 percent of workforce in 2000, see Table #5.1).

Table #5.1

Means of Transportation to Work	
Car, truck, or van	83.90%
Drove alone	67.90%
Carpooled	16.10%
In 2-person carpool	11.60%
In 3-person carpool	3.30%
In 4-person carpool	0.90%
In 7-or-more-person carpool	0.20%
Workers per car, truck, or van	1.12
Public transportation	0.60%
Bus or trolley bus	0.60%
Data Source: U.S. Census 2000 (based on sample data)	

Public Transit

The Northwest Vermont Public Transit Network, Inc. (The Network) operates a subscription service from Richford to St. Albans. The Network is a non-profit organization formed in the early 1990's to investigate the development of public transportation in Franklin and Grand Isle

Counties. The Richford to St. Albans route, originally a fixed route, was one step towards implementing their goal of expanding service throughout the two counties. However, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, less than one percent of Richford's workforce takes the bus to work (see Table #5.1). The Network also provides Medicaid Transportation, Elderly and Disabled Transportation, Vermont Rideshare, and Ridematch.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS: TO PROVIDE AND MAINTAIN A SAFE, CONVENIENT, ECONOMIC AND ENERGY EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT RESPECTS THE INTEGRITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS AND PATHS FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLERS.

TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF THE TRAVELING PUBLIC THROUGH THE CONTROL OF STRIP DEVELOPMENT.

TO MAINTAIN THE SCENIC CHARACTER OF THE TOWN'S BYWAYS.

POLICIES:

- Efforts of the Northwest Vermont Public Transit Network should be supported as energy efficient means of affordable public transportation for residents of Richford.
- The town should survey local roads annually and develop a maintenance schedule and capital improvements plan. Roads requiring restricted loads in the spring shall be posted (essential traffic, i.e. milk trucks and feed trucks, shall be exempt but encouraged to minimize impacts during these periods).
- The adopted Road Policy should be adhered to for acceptance of new roads into the town system.
- Work with TAC to facilitate transportation plans and policies that are in the best interest of the region and of the Town of Richford.
- Encourage the development of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail extension from the village district to the Canadian border.

Maintain adequate parking to support tourism and commercial activity in the area.

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMICS

THE ENGINE THAT DRIVES RICHFORD

Overview

An improved economy is key to helping Richford rise from the current situation. More jobs and higher salaries will raise the standard of living, allowing investment in improved housing, services, and leisure. Retail businesses locate where there are people with money to spend and manufacturing is located where the local labor force has the necessary skills. Richford's economy, though, has been struggling for many years under high unemployment, poor town image, and aging buildings.

Economic goals, in general, address a desire for diversity, local employment at a livable wage, and sustainability over the long term. A local economy achieving these characteristics will weather downturns in the national economy or drops in one or more sectors. Employers should pay livable wages to assure no one who works full time lives in poverty. In this way both the employer and employees have the opportunity to succeed. Richford has paid the price of the boom and bust economic strategies of the past. The future economy of Richford must be one where resources are used sustainably, local strengths are built upon, and all residents can achieve success.

How Economics Relates to Other Chapters

A healthy economy is dependent upon many factors including a healthy population and sustainable resources. Businesses need infrastructure to support growth and an available housing stock that is not blighted and deteriorating.

The Utilities, Facilities, and Services Chapter addresses much of the infrastructure needed for businesses. Affordable electricity, access to efficient transportation systems, and high-tech infrastructure, such as fiber optic lines, all impact the economic potential of a town. Where a business locates within a town may depend on such things as the location of three-phase power and where sewer and water hookups are available.

Housing and building stock quality and quantity determine the location of commercial and retail sites. In Richford, downtown revitalization and economic development are considered closely tied.

Social issues such as crime, vandalism, and loitering impact the way in which a community is perceived. In turn, this impacts investors and customers from visiting the area. Conversely, a vibrant downtown deters crime and attracts investment. Education and training of the work force offer greater opportunities for advancement and achievement.

In rural communities such as Richford's, economies are tied to the natural resources available in the region. Economic success in Richford's past resulted from timber extraction and, with proper management, some of that former glory can be regained but, this time, in a sustainable manner.

Economics can be discussed within every part of the town plan. It relies on many ingredients and impacts others. A strong economy is considered a solution to many of the ills in town. Therefore, economic revival is one of the top priorities for the town at this time.

Economic History of Richford

Richford's economic base has historically been tied to its agricultural and lumbering roots. The village was once the site of major lumber and gristmills. As these industries grew, supporting commercial – service and retail – enterprises developed around them.

Unfortunately the economy had been based on unsustainable resource extraction. As the forest resource dwindled, the mills closed and the supporting services followed. The Town of Richford learned two important principles from this experience – resources must be managed in a sustainable manner and the new economy must be based on a diversity of industries.

Developing a Strong and Diverse Economy

The Town of Richford currently has a diverse economy and is looking to expand further in the coming years. Some of the sectors are in good condition while others have been in decline over the past two decades.

The six sectors of Richford's economy are agriculture (farm and forestry), manufacturing, government, retail, tourism, and information technologies. While some of these sectors have been in Richford for many years others are only now getting started.

The goal is for the town to adopt policies that will assist businesses in order for Richford to have a robust economy based in such wide-ranging fields as forestry, education, government, and high-tech information.

The agricultural sector is the oldest in Richford. With the introduction of the railroad, value-added manufacturing came into existence. The manufacturing industries included lumber and furniture production. Over the years, these two sectors - agriculture and manufacturing - have been linked, with agriculture supplying the raw materials for manufacturing. Today, this is less true since Sweat-Comings furniture closed its doors. The forest and farm resources still exist and therefore the relationship can be redeveloped.

As Richford is a border community with three crossings into Canada, it has become the location for many government facilities including customs and border stations. These jobs are an important source of well paying jobs and every effort should be made to ensure they are not relocated to another community.

The commercial and retail sectors in Richford have been struggling in recent years. One positive point to future development is that there is a great deal of through traffic. Many truckers and travelers pass through Richford on their way to Canada giving exposure to businesses along the route. The biggest weakness facing the business community is considered to be the image of Richford. Many storefronts are boarded up and others are in need of repair. An additional threat to downtown commercial investment is that many of the downtown spaces are considered undersized.

The final two sectors of the economy, tourism and information technology, are in their infancy. The town is actively exploring ways to bring these types of businesses to Richford. By expanding into these new areas the town would create new employment opportunities for residents. The town's assets – both natural and technological – make these two sectors logical areas to seek new opportunities.

The village district has abundant high tech infrastructure that is underutilized. At the same time, Chittenden County has high office rents and low unemployment. High tech firms could find Richford a great area to expand into if they were aware of the available infrastructure. In addition, the infrastructure network would make Richford a great host site for a satellite campus or other educational opportunities.

Natural assets suggest Richford could expand tourism as well. The miles of forested hills, nearness to Jay Peak resort, Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, and the Missisquoi River make Richford an outdoor enthusiast's dream. Visitors to Richford in the summer have easy access to canoeing, fishing, mountain biking, or hiking the Long Trail. In the winter, guests can go cross-country and downhill skiing, snowmobiling, and hunting. Very few places can boast all of these recreational opportunities and still remain a real Vermont town. Again, image plays and important part of attracting tourist businesses to Richford.

Richford is on its way to meeting the goal of a strong and diverse economy. In this way, Richford will be more resistant to economic downturns and more successful in profitable times.

Earning a Livable Wage

To build a strong and diverse economy, Richford seeks businesses and industries that pay livable wages, the salary required in order to meet a family's needs. The larger the family, the more income is required to fulfill those needs. According to the 2005 Joint Fiscal Office Basic Needs Study, a single person needs $12.71 per hour ($26,430 per year) to meet basic needs (see Table #6.1). This increases to over $60,000 for a family with two wage earners and two children.

Table #6.1

Livable wages in rural communities	
Family Unit	**Rural community**
Single Person	12.71 ($26,430)
1 Parent, 1 child	18.22 ($37,896)
1 Parent, 2 children	20.25 ($42,116)
2 Parents, 2 children, 1 wage earner	21.79 ($45,705)
2 Parents, 2 children, 2 wage earners	14.55 ($60,523)
Source: JFO Basic Needs Study 2005	

According to the 2000 U.S Census, Vermont is 2.7% behind the national median household income. Median household income in Richford ($28,125 - 2000 U.S. Census) is another 45% below the state median ($40,850 – 2000 U.S. Census). Similarly, median family income in Richford ($32,016 – 2000 U.S. Census) is 52% below the state median family income ($48,625 – 2000 U.S. Census). While the median household income in Richford is above the minimum livable wage for a 'single person', the median family income in Richford is below all livable wage figures for single and two parent families. Forty six percent of families in Richford earned less than $30,000 (below the livable for even a one parent and one child family) in 1999 according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

~~Richford Unemployment Rate (%)~~
Quarter Averages

While many families and individuals find it difficult to earn livable wages in Richford, the unemployment rate is high as well. Richford and Enosburg Falls and Town usually have the highest unemployment rates in the County. It can be seen in Table #6.2 that situations are improving in Richford; however, rates are still high, especially in the winter months (1st qtr).

Table #6.2

	1st qtr	2nd qtr	3rd qtr	4th qtr
2001	9.1	4.9	4.1	5.9
2002	9.0	5.3	4.6	6.9
2003	12.5	7.5	4.1	6.4
2004	9.3	5.8	5.3	6.9
2005	10.0	5.5	3.7	6.0
2006	9.0	na	na	na

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program, produced by the Vermont Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Despite these figures, Richford has many livable wage positions in town, but more are needed. The town should support industries who will employ persons at livable salaries. Manufacturing, high tech, government and education careers all generally have the potential for good wages. Tourism has been singled out by the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont as a fast growing field, few of which provide livable wages. Although tourism would add diversity to the employment scene, care should be taken to ensure the jobs created are ones which will support the community.

Town Government – Fiscal Condition

As a result of significant effort to build and upgrade infrastructure, the Town incurred some sizable debt during the 90's. Although this resulted in the highest Effective Property Tax Rate (homestead and municipal) in Franklin County ($2.22 according to the Vermont Division of Property Valuation and Review- for year 1999), Richford is perhaps the only town not anticipating any major bond votes in the near future and the 2005 Effective Property Tax Rate (homestead and municipal) has been reduced to $2.06. Today there exists unused potential in the water and sewer and the schools have room for some residential growth. There are no plans for paving gravel roads, and bridge and culvert repairs are paid for annually through funds escrowed by vote at town meeting. By investing in itself, the town has laid a foundation for economic growth that could continue well into the future.

Building and Maintaining Status as an Economic and Commercial Center

Today the village district is still the commercial hub of Richford with industrial development located primarily outside of the district. Unfortunately, commercial activity is limited and does not meet all of the daily needs of residents. Because of the availability of municipal services within the village district boundaries, it makes sense that intense commercial development should occur there.

The Richford Planning Commission proposed that Richford seek Village Center Designation, which was approved by the Richford Selectboard to focus redevelopment efforts in an area containing most of the major public and commercial buildings in the downtown. Richford Village Center Designation was approved by the Vermont Downtown Development Board on September 26, 2005. The designated Village Center includes the Richford Town Hall, A.A. Brown Public Library, U.S. Post Office, Richford Health Center, Emergency Services Building, and Richford Historical Society, plus the

bank and other major commercial buildings on Main and River Streets. The downtown historic district is entirely within the Village Center.

Major investment by the town, state, and private property owners over the past several years have already contributed to this important revitalization. The recently-constructed Emergency Services Building, plus substantial improvements to the Town Hall, Library, Historical Society, and Health Center have resulted in better public access and expanded public services, as well as significant physical improvements in the downtown area. Rehabilitation of the Janes block for housing and commercial use was completed in 2003, and rehabilitation of the former Sweat Comings furniture factory on Main Street for retail, medical clinic and housing is now underway.

Properties in Richford Village Center are eligible for tax credits and other assistance from state agencies for those improvements that are needed to meet building codes or preserve historic structures. These benefits will provide substantial support to property owners who invest in the revitalization of the downtown area.

The 23-acre industrial park on Route 105 still has 9 acres available. Kaytec is located in the park and is providing 60-75 jobs for both residents and non-residents. The Town evaluated several sites for possible future industrial development and two sites were recommended. Fairview Commons, a commercial park in the village district, was established in 1990 although no development has occurred.

Richford strives to be an employment center for eastern Franklin County. Jobs located in Richford will help avoid the need to commute to St Albans or Burlington. In 2000, Richford had 1,086 workers living in town. Of these, 442 (out of a sample of 990) worked in Richford while the remaining 548 left for other towns for employment. At the same time, 300 persons from other towns came to Richford for work (See Tables #2.11 and #2.12 in Chapter 2 for more data on commuters to and from Richford). Therefore, there were 344 (32%) fewer jobs than workers, indicating that Richford is currently more of a bedroom community than a job center. However, it is helpful to note that Richford had the highest percentage of persons working in the town in which they lived in Franklin County.

Maintaining High Environmental Standards

History has taught Richford the lesson of utilizing resources sustainably. Any resource-based industry should not grow to the point where resources are extracted faster than they are replenished. Although Richford has an industrial past, serious air and water pollution has not been a problem. Having businesses and industries that follow the ethic of not polluting is another important goal.

While Richford does not want to discourage industry from locating in town, they will expect businesses to locate and act responsibly. Industries that release pollutants into water and air must meet all state and federal standards and should not degrade or endanger either resource. The town is fully willing to work with employers interested in establishing a facility in Richford. In this way, appropriate technologies can be administered to minimize environmental consequences.

Environmental standards and economic growth need not be at odds with each other. Richford is committed to ensuring future economic growth while maintaining environmental quality.

Strategies

Through "Richford 2010," the residents of Richford proposed ten activities to strengthen and develop economic activity in town.

- **Enhance police presence**.
- **Encourage employers to locate new jobs in Richford**.
- **Establish a continuing program of workforce training**.
- **Establish a "Partners = Partenaires" advisory group on economic development, trade, tourism, and related border issues to enhance economic activity with communities near Richford on both sides of the border with Canada**.
- **Create a community well-being program using culture and recreation**.
- **Develop a plan to attract tourists to Richford while preserving the qualities that make our community special**.
- **Recruit value added wood products companies to Richford**.
- **Investigate the feasibility of an energy co-op in Richford**.
- **Develop a business plan to create a high-tech village district, new jobs and to consolidate information-age economic opportunities in the community**. Richford

Programs and Organizations

The town offers loans for business expansion and for purchase of equipment. Additionally, the town may assist businesses with "seed" money, planning and technical assistance, advertising and loan and grant information.

The Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont (EDCNV) provides technical assistance for its clients in the development of business plans and quarterly financial reports, as well as providing comprehensive assistance in marketing, advertising, management, and inventory control. EDCNV writes grant proposals to the Economic Development Administration for funds to be used for economic development projects and feasibility studies. EDCNV manages the FUND, which provides loans up to $100,000 and two micro business programs providing loans under $25,000. Northern Communities Investment Corporation offers Small Business Administration loans, lines of credit, direct loans up to $100,000; loan guarantees; an equipment leasing program; equity investments; arrange bank loans, and SBA Fixed Asset Financing. The Vermont Community Loan Fund also provides capitol for businesses and non-profit organizations in the District.

Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation markets industrial sites and provides technical assistance to area businesses.

Workforce education and training is provided in towns around Richford. Technical and adult education providers include Cold Hollow Career Center in Enosburg Falls. The Vermont Department of Employment and Training, P.A.T.H., the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employee Assistance Services are active members of the Workforce Investment Board.

Conclusions

Richford's economy has a great many opportunities as well as challenges. Although unemployment is high and blighted buildings persist in the downtown, important corners have been turned. The village district has all the infrastructure needed to accommodate industrial and commercial expansion. High-tech wiring exists in town for new sectors of the economy to startup businesses. The blighted Sweat-Comings Building in the downtown has been redeveloped and other buildings in the area are preparing for rehabilitation. A new website and brochure has been released that markets Richford for tourism and business expansion.

For the first time in many years, Richford's residents are beginning to see real progress in town towards improving the business and commercial outlook. With all Richford has going for it, it is only a matter of time before businesses and developers take advantage of the opportunities present.

ECONOMICS GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS: TO HAVE A STABLE AND DIVERSE ECONOMY THAT PROVIDES SATISFYING AND REWARDING JOB OPPORTUNITIES AT A LIVABLE WAGE.

TO HAVE A FISCALLY SOUND TOWN GOVERNMENT THAT EFFICIENTLY UTILIZES TAXES TO PROVIDE SERVICES NEEDED BY THE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES OF RICHFORD.

FOR THE VILLAGE DISTRICT IN RICHFORD TO BE AN EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL CENTER FOR EASTERN FRANKLIN COUNTY.

THAT BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES IN RICHFORD WILL MAINTAIN HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

POLICIES:

Stable and diverse economy

- Utilize Richford's natural resources in a sustainable manner.
- Support efforts to expand value added manufacturing to the forest resource industry.
- Determine the feasibility of a wood-fired plant for the generation of electric power and heat energy cooperative.
- Ensure that the government jobs, which are so important to the local economy, are not moved out of Richford in the future.
- Support all efforts to bring high-tech jobs to Richford including developing a business plan for a "high-tech village district."
- Encourage efforts that increase tourism such as connecting the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail to Canada.
- Establish partnerships with Canada on economic development, trade, tourism, and border related issues.

Satisfying and rewarding jobs at a livable wage

- The development of appropriate industries which utilize the skills of the local labor force are encouraged.
- Support existing and proposed businesses, which provide jobs at livable wages.
- Develop a workforce-training program to improve opportunities for residents in new and existing businesses.

Fiscally sound town government

- Support the town in its effort to provide utilities, facilities, and services needed for businesses and industries in Richford.
- Encourage a decrease in tax rates over time through the retiring of debts and increase in grand lists.

Regional employment and commercial center

- Strip commercial development along highways shall be discouraged. Commercial and industrial land construction should be well designed and attractive, and should protect adjacent land with appropriately landscaped buffers.
- Industrial development should be planned in industrial park areas which are served by necessary facilities including sewer, water and transportation.
- Businesses should be located within the village district to be convenient to employees and to take advantage of the existing infrastructure.
- Blighted buildings should be removed or rehabilitated to improve the image and perception of the village district.
- Efforts to rehabilitate historic building will also be supported to improve the image of the village district.
- Enhance police presence in order to decrease petty crimes which detract from the downtown.
- Take advantage of tax credits and other assistance from state agencies, which are available to the designated Village Center, for completing improvements that are needed to meet building codes or preserve historic structures.

Businesses and industries will maintain high environmental standards

- Businesses and industries should not degrade or endanger air and water resources.
- Industries which extract renewable resources, such as timber, must do so in a sustainable manner.
- Businesses and industries which use hazardous materials should be located where they will not contaminate important resources in the event of an accident.

CHAPTER 7: NATURAL RESOURCES

THE RESOURCES USED TO BUILD RICHFORD'S PAST AND, NOW, STRENGTHEN IT'S FUTURE

Overview

The natural resource base is an important asset to be understood and wisely used in the long-term interest of the Town of Richford. The past bears out the importance of these resources in the town's economy and heritage. By examining these resources, we are better able to understand current social and economic conditions and patterns of development.

It has become increasingly evident that some areas are better suited for a particular use than others. Too often in the past, this fact has been ignored. The results of careless, unplanned growth and development can be seen every day in both rural and urban communities. If we are to protect our natural resources and provide a high quality of life for the citizens of Richford, we must develop a town plan based on the capabilities of the land and the conservation of natural resources.

This section is an inventory of Richford's natural resources, including climate, topography, water resources, woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, and fish and wildlife resources. This information will enable residents of Richford to develop a better understanding of the town's natural resource base and initiate a land use policy.

Climate and Air Quality

Climate. Climate represents the average weather conditions in an area over an extended period of time. Meteorological elements (atmospheric pressure, temperature, humidity, precipitation, and wind) interact and become a region's climate. Vermont's climate is controlled by the prevailing westerlies, a belt of air moving eastward along the mid-latitudes which brings three types of weather systems to the state – cold, dry air from sub-arctic Canada; warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico; and cool, damp air from the North Atlantic. The general climate in Vermont is characterized by long, cold winters and short, cool summers.

Within the context of each main weather system, Richford's weather and climate may be influenced by local physiographic features. Richford is too far from Lake Champlain to feel the direct effects of that water body, but the varied terrain within the town certainly influences the local climate. Mean annual precipitation increases and average temperature drops as you move from the Missisquoi River Valley up towards the Green Mountains in the east and southeast part of Richford. It is important to keep the local climate variables in mind when discussing climate data.

The 30-year (1971-2000) average temperature in Burlington varies from 68º Fahrenheit (F) in summer to 21º F in winter. Normal daily maximums during the same period ranged from a high of 81ºF during July to 9º F in January. It should be noted that Richford does

not experience the moderating effects of Lake Champlain and therefore experiences greater daily and seasonal ranges in temperature than in Burlington. The average annual precipitation (1971-2000) for Burlington is 36 inches in Burlington and the average snowfall is 79 inches. Greater amounts of precipitation fall at higher elevations, such as located in the southeast of Richford. Richford's climate must be considered in the planning process since climatic elements may affect soil erosion, air quality, road conditions, cost of heating, and agricultural and forestry pursuits. The climate must be considered in planning for different types of land uses, and in the design of buildings, roads, and other facilities. The growing season of Richford, between 110 and 120 days, is up to 50 days shorter than in the Champlain Valley, and clearly this helps determine what crops may be grown. As our cars know all to well, Vermont winters wreak havoc on roads. Buildings must be built with sufficient insulation, and efficient heating units, to stave off the winter chill at a reasonable price.

Air Quality. Specific pollutants in Vermont air samples have been traced back to their source in other parts of the country. The prevailing wind direction is one factor which is considered in determining the placement of industries, which produce airborne pollutants. Local sources (i.e. automobiles) also produce emissions which are harmful to health and the environment. "Acid rain" may be affecting the area, though the amount and extent of the impact is unknown.

Clean air is an essential component of the area's environment and should be protected from the cumulative effects that could increase air pollution. Air quality can deteriorate because of pollutants from either distant sources or localized development. Protection from distant pollution sources is a complex matter, since it is sometimes difficult to trace airborne pollutants back to their source. It is important that local officials consider the requirements of maintaining clean air in conjunction with the economic benefits of industrial development.

Geology and Topography

Geology. As in much of Vermont, the dominant rock formations in Richford are metamorphic, including schits, gneiss', and quartzites. Physiographic regions within Richford include the foothills of the Green Mountains and the Greens themselves, where the bedrock is highly metamorphosed and therefore more resistant to weathering than shale, slate and limestone of the Champlain Lowlands to the west.

The Late Wisconsin Glaciation held its grip on Vermont as recently as 10,000 years ago. Ice remained in the valleys as the bulk of the Labrador Ice Sheets began to melt. Glacial outwash, including large quantities of sand and gravel, was deposited along the valley sides. In Richford the highest quality deposits are located along the Missisquoi River and its tributaries: Mountain Brook, Whittaker Brook, Alder Brook, west of Guilmettes pond, and in the area east of the village district and north of the Missisquoi. The largest sand reserve is along Route 105 near the Berkshire town border (Vermont Geological survey maps, 1974). Much of the rest of town is covered by poorly sorted glacial till, except on mountain summits where bedrock is exposed.

The most significant geologic site in Richford is the Richford Mineral Area, located along Lucas Brook in the Northeast part of the town. The noted mineral collection site

covers ten acres and contains a variety of minerals including talc, actinolite, fuchsite, and magnetite.

Topography. Topography, which refers to the shape of the land's surface, is a function of the underlying bedrock, soils, and weathering patterns. Richford's varied topography includes weather resistant rock of the Green Mountains and the stream-cut valley of the Missisquoi River. The lowest point in Richford is along the Missisquoi River near Berkshire, approximately 400 feet above sea level. Route 105 follows the flood plain and adjacent low elevations of the river until East Richford where 105A branches to the north along the river and 105 continues east over the Green Mountains. The terrain is incised by Loveland Brook, Stanhope Brook, Mountain Brook, and Lucas Brook in the hills and mountains south of the Missisquoi. The land rises to 3,400 feet at the border of Orleans County, along the spine of the Green Mountains. Most human activity, houses, farming, and businesses can be found between 430 and 650 feet above mean sea level.

Slopes in Richford range from level along the Missisquoi to nearly vertical on some mountainsides. Slope can present major limitations for development. The cost of construction is higher on steep slopes and there is a greater risk of erosion, structural problems, and subsequent water pollution than on shallower slopes. In general, slopes over 20 percent are considered too steep to provide adequate sites for roads, homes, and septic systems. Steep slopes (over 20%) also present major problems for the operation of large farm equipment, though such areas may be suitable for forestry, wildlife, recreation, and grazing. Topographic information must be considered in planning for all land uses, including roads, facilities, and services.

Development on steep slopes (over 20%) may be at the expense of the municipality, as the costs of road maintenance, runoff maintenance and sedimentation problems are much higher on steep slopes. School bus and fire services may also be difficult, expensive, or even impossible depending on weather conditions. The necessary cuts and slope stabilization for foundation, parking areas, road access, and utilities are expensive and often, unless well-designed, unattractive.

Soils

Soils. Soil type is perhaps the most important physical factor governing the appropriate use of land. Soils provide a natural medium for plant growth and, properly protected, they can control runoff and naturally filter and purify wastes. Where suitable, they provide the foundation for the construction of buildings and roads. Soils that are too shallow, or poorly drained, may present severe development limitations.

Soils are classified on the basis of their structure, form, composition, and suitability for various types of development. The most widely used classification scheme is that of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS has produced soil survey maps on an aerial photo base showing the distribution and extent of soil types in Franklin County, including the Town of Richford. (These maps are for planning purposes and may not be appropriate for site-specific soil interpretations). Soil interpretations for septic suitability are also provided in the survey. These interpretations are shown on the Septic Suitability map..

Richford's soil has developed over the past 10,000 to 12,000 years, a result of the post-glacial weathering of local surficial materials. The soil formed in surficial materials had been deposited by water on floodplains, deposited by water on terraces and old lake plains, or deposited by glaciers (so-called glacial till) in the foothills and the Green Mountains.

Limerick-Rumney, a variant Winooski soil type, formed in water deposited material on flood plains. This type is not dominant in Richford. It is located only in the floodplains of the Missisquoi River west of the village district (the North Branch of the Missisquoi) and west of Stevens Mill. The Winooski Variant is moderately well drained, though the straight Limerick-Rumney is poorly drained. These soils have seasonal high water table and are flooded in the spring and during wet periods. If properly drained, these soils can support agriculture. They are used for corn, hay, and pasture. The potential for flooding makes this soil type poor for residential and urban uses. This soil has fair potential for woodlands and good potential for wildlife.

Munson-Buxton-Belgrade (MBB) and Windsor-Missisquoi (WM) soils were formed in water deposited material on terraces and old lake plains. MBB is located around the village district, south out of the village district along Route 105 and north along Route 139. These silty and clayey soils range from somewhat poorly drained to moderately good farming potential. Both MBB and WM are deep soils with slopes from nearly level to steep. The WM soil stretches south along the railway of Loveland Brook Valley and is also found in the northern sections of Richford. While MBB soil is often wet, the sandy WM soil is prone to drought, has a low nutrient content, and is thus less desirable for agricultural use. Even so, WM soil is used for dairying, farming, woodland, and community development and has good potential for urban development. MBB has good potential for woodland and wildlife. WM has poor potential for wildlife and fair potential for woodlands.

The remaining group of soils, Peru-Stowe (PS) and Woodstock-Tunbridge-Rock Outcrop (WTR), was formed in organic material and in glacial till in the Green Mountains and their foothills. PS soil covers a large area in East Richford and the foothill region to the Green Mountains, including Stanhope Mountain and Lucas Brook. WTR soil covers the highest elevations in Richford along the peaks of the Green Mountains. PS soil is generally deep, on shallow to steep slopes, and is used for hay, corn, pasture, and woodland. This well drained soil has good potential for farming, wildlife habitat, and woodland, but poor potential for agriculture and urban development because of the steep slopes and bedrock outcrops. This well drained shallow soil is host to climax forests of beech, birch, and maple. PS has good potential for wildlife and fair potential for woodlands.

In planning for growth and development, it is important to target development to those soils which have the appropriate permeability, depth to water table, slope, and erosion potential. Although not the only determining factor for development, an important soil quality is its ability to handle onsite sewage. Shallow soils, such as the WTR series along the Green Mountains in Richford, have severe limitations for sewage disposal. Also of interest is a soil's capability to support agriculture and forestry. The suitability of Richford's soil for agricultural use varies greatly from poor thin soils in the Green Mountains to more fertile soils in the Missisquoi River Valley.

Agricultural soils represent a vulnerable and irreplaceable resource which should not be wasted. Unique combinations of soil, water and topography, and climate contribute to the productivity of prime agricultural soils, and once developed, they may be lost forever. Much of the best farmland in Richford has been protected through flood plain zoning and purchase of development rights.

Water Resources

Water is essential to the life of the individual and the community, but so often its availability and purity are taken for granted. Water resources provide domestic, commercial, and industrial supplies and provide recreational opportunities. A consideration of water resources is basic to the planning process. For planning purposes, water resources are divided into two categories – surface water and ground water.

Surface water. The Missisquoi River in Richford has played an important role in the town's history as a source of power. Early settlers in Richford relied on the power of the natural falls along the Missisquoi and its tributaries. The Missisquoi enters the town at the Canadian border near East Richford, flows through the village district, and leaves the town at the Berkshire-Richford town boundary.

The Missisquoi River is not only a source of power and recreation. In 1927 the river devastated much of the industrial and commercial property along its banks during the great flood. Normally, high river levels are accommodated by the flood plains, which retain excessive amounts of water during heavy rainfall or runoff until the river levels drop back to normal. The work of the flood plains may reduce downstream damage (and help to maintain fertility on periodically flooded land). However, in 1927 there was too much water for this natural flood management system.

The streams and brooks in town were sites of small-scale power generation for early Richford. Today, the watershed of Stanhope Brook is the source of the municipal water supply.

In addition to the numerous flowing watercourses, Richford has two standing water bodies. Guilmette Pond is the only major pond in town, located south of Hardwood Hill with access by secondary class III roads. There are a few single-family dwellings in the vicinity of the pond, though there is little development directly on the shoreline. Fishing enthusiasts pull pickerel, bullhead, and perch from the pond. Paradise Pond is smaller than Guilmette Pond and consists of two ponds separated by a beaver dam.

Since there are very few ponds in Richford, and because development pressures are becoming stronger in rural areas, the town should protect the integrity of Guilmette and Paradise Ponds.

Wetlands , as defined by the state are- "*those areas … that are inundated by surface or groundwater with a frequency sufficient to support significant vegetation or aquatic life that depends on saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Such areas include, but are not limited to, marshes, swamps, sloughs, potholes, fens, river and lake overflows, mud flats, bogs and ponds, but excluding areas that grow food or crops in connection with farming activities*" (10 V.S.A. 902) and generally occur in low-lying areas with poor drainage. The delineation between wetlands

and dry lands may be difficult to determine due to fluctuations in the local water table during dry and wet periods. (See discussion of wetlands under "Critical Areas").

Water quality. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation classifies all surface waters in Vermont. Upper Stanhope Brook is the only source in Richford which receives the state's top rating (suitable for public water supply).

The water system for the village district relies on collection of surface water from the Stanhope Brook watershed rather than tapping groundwater. A new filtration plant was completed in 1993 and now meets state water quality standards.

Groundwater. Most groundwater is derived from precipitation that has been infiltrated and percolated through the soil. After reaching the water table, groundwater moves from the "recharge" area, through an underground gravel or bedrock layer known as an aquifer, and into an area of discharge, such as a lake, river or wetland. Richford relies heavily on groundwater for individual on-site water systems. In Richford, areas of high groundwater potentials are located within sand and gravel deposits in the valleys of the Missisquoi River and its tributaries.

It is important to note that every activity in the groundwater recharge area can affect the quality and quantity of this potential water supply. Failed septic systems, leaking gas tanks, road salt, industrial wastes, and chemical application in agriculture are all common sources of groundwater pollution. Once a groundwater system is contaminated, control and abatement are expensive and difficult, if not impossible.

Critical Areas

Critical areas, for the purpose of this plan, are defined as natural areas requiring special protection from development. They include areas that have environmental, ecological, educational, and/or scenic value, such as wetlands, woodlands, shorelines, flood hazard areas, groundwater recharge areas, important wildlife and threatened or endangered species habitats, and other areas of biological, hydrological, or geological significance. Some specific critical areas that the planning commission feels worth noting (realizing that they are not all the special areas), are the Stanhope Brook Watershed area, the Guilmette Pond wetland area, and the Paradise Pond wetlands area.

Woodlands. Despite the past decline of forest products businesses in Vermont, forest-based industries remain an important segment of the state's economy. This fact is also true for Richford and surrounding towns, and in other mountainous regions of the state. In Richford, the forest ecosystem supports many hardwood tree species including sugar maple, red maple, beech, yellow birch, white birch, and poplar. The soft wood species include white pine, hemlock, red spruce, and balsam fir. As noted above, the Natural Resource Conservation Service identifies soils of importance for forestry.

Location of the timber species is related to elevation. The lower elevations and valleys support stands of eastern hemlock, and as elevation increases the hemlock gives way to a northern hardwood forest community. With a further increase in elevation, a transition from the northern hardwood community to a spruce/fir forest occurs. Higher still, a coniferous forest community takes over and extends to the peaks of the Green Mountains in Richford.

The importance of the forest resource relates equally to activities other than the extraction of timber. The suitable condition and maintenance of Richford's water supply depends on the vegetation and land use activities which occur in the water supply recharge areas. Development of the area surrounding a town water source must be planned to prevent erosion of soil, siltation, and turbidity in the water supply.

The depletion of the local forest resources once contributed to the decline of the local economy. Forests should be protected from misuse, abuse, and poor resource management. The proper management of the forest resource will contribute to a stable economy and maintenance of the forest resource. In light of the increased development pressure throughout Vermont, protection of some of this prime forestry land will ensure a high quality forest resource in Richford.

Wetlands. Wetlands, as defined in the "Water Resources" section, are important for a variety of reasons. They provide temporary storage for floodwaters; they contribute to the quality of surface and ground water through chemical action; they help control the effects of erosion and runoff; they provide spawning, feeding, and habitat for aquatic life; they provide educational resources for the natural sciences; they provide recreational values, and they contribute to community open space and scenic beauty. Most wetlands in Richford occur in low-lying areas along the Missisquoi where they absorb great quantities of water during flood season and gradually release the water throughout the summer.

The recharging of groundwater supplies is especially important in wetlands, which occur in large areas of permeable sands and gravels. The indiscriminate development of these wetlands and their surrounding sand and gravel deposits could substantially lessen the amount and quality of water entering the ground.

Flood hazard areas. Title 10 V.S.A., Chapter 32 defines a flood hazard area as an area that is likely to be inundated by a flood once every one hundred years. Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which are used in the National Flood Insurance Program, delineate the various zones of flood potential in Richford. Not surprisingly, the flood hazard areas in Richford are along the Missisquoi River. Land use policy in these areas should control development as prescribed by the National Flood Insurance Program.

Wildlife resources. Wildlife has great value with respect to private recreation and tourism and plays a key role in nature and agriculture. Water resource areas support waterfowl habitat and other wildlife, while forested uplands, covering a large area of Richford, support many large game and small upland game animals. For residents of Richford and the region as a whole, this area represents hours of recreational enjoyment, not to mention the economic benefit from outdoor enthusiasts visiting the town.

Local large game species include black bear, white-tailed deer, and, much less commonly, moose. Snowshoe hare, partridge, and woodcock are a few of the small game animals hunted locally. Associated with the aquatic ecosystem are mink, beaver, otter, and muskrat. The aquatic ecosystem also supports many fish species, both cold and warm water, and a diverse community of freshwater invertebrates and microorganisms. Furbearers in the area also include fishers, raccoon, red fox, and bobcat. Many other non-game species inhabit Richford, contributing to a varied and bountiful natural resource base.

The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife has produced maps which delineate deer yards in each town throughout the state. Large yards are located around Alder Brook and north of the Missisquoi River near East Richford, while smaller yards are near Lucas, Stanhope, Mountain, and Whittaker Brooks. Existence of these yards is an important factor in keeping the deer populations healthy, for without a winter habitat many deer would starve to death. There is also a rare animal community along the Missisquoi River, the breeding ground of the fan-tailed darter fish (not an endangered species).

Deer yards and other important wildlife habitat should be considered by local officials when making land use planning and development decisions. The need to encourage conservation of these areas can not be overstated. Once on the Vermont Natural Heritage Program's list of rare communities, the habitat of the fan-tailed darter fish should be protected in local land use planning.

CLIMATE AND AIR QUALITY

GOALS: TO TAKE THE EFFECT OF CLIMATIC FACTORS INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

TO MAINTAIN AIR QUALITY IN AREAS ENJOYING CLEAN, FRESH AIR AND IMPROVE AIR QUALITY IN AREAS WHERE POLLUTION STANDARDS HAVE BEEN EXCEDED.

POLICIES:

- Climatic conditions and weather patterns should be considered in planning for future land use, development, and energy requirements, and in the siting, design, and construction of roads, buildings, and other services and facilities.
- Support the use of wood stoves for heating and encourage the use of more efficient and less polluting wood-burning systems.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

GOAL: TO MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE LAND THROUGH THE CONSIDERATION OF TOPOGRAPHY AND SLOPE IN DETERMINING ITS CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT.

POLICIES:

- All land development should be prohibited on slopes greater than 25% and, to the extent possible, vegetative cover should be maintained.
- Conventional on-site sewage disposal should not be allowed on slopes greater than 20%. Furthermore, development on slopes greater than 20% should be carefully performed in order to avoid high environmental and social costs.

SOILS

GOAL: TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE LAND THROUGH THE CONSIDERATION OF SOIL CHARACTERISTICS IN DETERMINING ITS CAPABILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT.

POLICIES:

- The use of farmland for industrial or commercial purposes should be permitted if the site is served sewer and water and can contribute significantly to the area's economy.
- Development on shallow soils should be discouraged. Conventional on-site sewage disposal should not be allowed in areas with shallow soils, since the potential for a failed system is greater than on deep soils.
- Restoration of recently abandoned earth resource extraction sites should be required where appropriate.

- Runoff and erosion should be carefully controlled during all phases of construction and wastes should be treated off the steep slope area.
- Mineral and earth resource extraction and processing facilities should be planned, constructed, and managed: a) so as to not adversely impact existing or planned uses within the vicinity of the project site; b) to avoid if possible, or minimize if unavoidable, adverse impacts on fish and wildlife habitat and surrounding land uses; c) to avoid degrading waters leaving the site that will not undergo further off site management; d) to not result in the loss of prime agricultural land; e) to provide direct access to Class 3 or better highways; f) to not unduly interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site, including the impact of increased heavy traffic, increased number of heavy trucks, impacts on the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians and impacts in densely settled areas.
- As earth resources are a needed and finite resource, proposed developments that will prevent future extraction of an earth resource (e.g. housing projects on a gravel deposit) should consider the potential loss of the resource in evaluating the project.

WATER RESOURCES

GOAL: TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE AREA'S WATER RESOURCES, INCLUDING SURFACE WATERS AND GROUNDWATER.

POLICIES:

- Wetlands and shorelines should be maintained in their natural state, and be protected from pollution through appropriate health and land use regulations.
- No alteration should be allowed which interferes with the natural flow of surface water.
- Withdrawal of groundwater should not exceed the recharge rate over a reasonable period of time.
- Maintenance and expansion of vegetative buffers of sufficient width is encouraged as a tool for improving water quality.
- No form of land waste disposal or storage of possible contaminants should be permitted in high water table and groundwater recharge areas.
- Development in the Stanhope Brook Watershed should be carefully monitored, and land use regulations should be adopted to control development in this area.

CRITICAL AREAS

GOALS: **TO PROTECT AND MAINTAIN IN HEALTHY CONDITION CRITICAL NATURAL AREAS IN RICHFORD INCLUDING WOODLANDS, WETLANDS, FLOOD HAZARD AREAS AND WILDLIFE HABITAT.**

TO MAINTAIN THE NATIVE BIODIVERSITY OF THE REGION.

POLICIES:

- Development in proximity to natural areas should take place in such a way as to preserve their value for education, science, research, aesthetics, and recreation.
- To protect endangered and threatened species and their habitats.
- Acquisition of natural or fragile areas by local or state conservation agencies whose goal is protection of the area is encouraged.
- Development should not encroach on Vermont Significant Wetlands.
- Encourage establishment of vegetative buffer strips around wetlands and, where appropriate, other critical natural areas.
- The town should regulate development in identified flood hazard areas in accordance with the federal regulations to enable property owners to buy flood insurance and to prevent future public and private losses due to floods.
- Development should be prohibited on land over 1500 feet in elevation except for agriculture and forestry purposes.

CHAPTER 8: LAND USE PLAN

THE FUTURE OF RICHFORD

Overview

Land use planning is not meant to stop development. If properly implemented, planning can help a municipality provide for orderly growth while allowing a community to preserve its character. Planning gives Richford the opportunity to choose the future, provide a balance of natural and built environments, and preserve settlement patterns, town centers, and rural landscapes that are integral to the character of this community.

Community functions and services should be planned to provide for the existing population and with an eye toward accommodating growth. Land should be developed, or not, according to its physical characteristics, projected need, existing municipal services, and compatibility with existing land uses. Though sometimes difficult to avoid in urban areas, nobody likes to see a noisy industry located next to a residential area. Future development also may be planned to protect, and perhaps restore, scenic areas and historic features.

The goals and policies of the natural resources, economics, utilities, facilities and services, housing and community profile sections of the plan help define the goals and policies for future land use in Richford. With an eye toward projected development needs and existing land resources, future land use is targeted to areas that can accommodate development. Soils, topography, and critical areas must be considered, as well as the need for economic growth, housing, and public services. The following sections of the land use plan address the history and districts in Richford as well as the suitability for each of the major land uses - residential, commercial and industrial, and agricultural and forestry.

History

Comprehensive zoning bylaws were not enacted until more than 100 years after the village incorporated, by which time much of the area's land use had already been determined. In 1879, the settlement at the falls was already an important manufacturing and retail center. At that time, Richford's population totaled 1818, with 750 living in the village. Nearly all use areas had multiple examples of mixed uses.

The village zoning bylaws, first adopted in May 14, 1973, grandfathered existing properties, which were given conditional use approval as long as the use or structure did not change. Changes proposed for any of these particular properties are reviewed by the Board of Adjustment, which determines whether continued conditional use will be allowed. Flood Plain zoning was adopted on September 10, 1980 and updated on February 7, 1989 to protect against public and private property losses.

The first bylaws approved by the Town were Flood Plain Zoning on October 1, 1980. In May 1991 the Town adopted interim zoning bylaws followed in 1992 with permanent zoning bylaws. Revisions were made in March 1997 and preparations were made in 2000 for further revisions to combine the Town and Village zoning bylaws. These revised

bylaws were defeated. Permanent bylaws for the combined Town and Village of Richford were finally adopted in March of 2005.

In the future, the town wishes to continue the historic settlement pattern of a compact village center surrounded by rural countryside. In order to retain the historic feel of the village district, a historic overlay district may be appropriate for the Downtown Richford and East Richford Historic Districts identified by the historic review released in 2001.

Richford Village Center Designation was approved by the Vermont Downtown Development Board on September 26, 2005. Major investment by the town, state, and private property owners over the past several years have already contributed to this important revitalization (see the Economics Chapter for more information). The designated Village Center comprises the following area in the village district:

- All of Main Street, from All Saints Catholic Church, to River Street;
- School Street to Academy Lane;
- Academy Lane (School Street to Powell Street);
- Powell Street, from Academy Lane to Main Street;
- River Street, from Eastern Avenue to, and including Grey Gables and Davis Park;
- Province Street, from Eastern Avenue to, and including the Crossing Restaurant and Motel.

Richford Land Use Districts

The map of the proposed future land use is the product of an effort during a previous plan revision to identify areas best suited for each land use. The following development limitations were considered in drafting the proposed future land use map: historical land use, high elevations (over 1500 feet), steep slopes (over 15%), soil suitability, wetlands, deer wintering habitat, the Stanhope Brook Watershed, flood hazard areas, and potential groundwater recharge areas. During the 2006 plan revision, the Richford Planning Commission identified that there are further changes to make to the land use districts, which they plan to address during the next plan revision.

The village district is determined by the historical village boundaries. With a few exceptions, the district is the only area where services, such as water and sewer, are available. Within the village district, there are four land use districts: the Village Residential District, the Industrial District, the Commercial District, and the Conservation 1 District. Other Land Use Districts that are located outside the village district, making a total of nine districts and overlays, include: the Rural Residential District, the Agriculture District, the Conservation 2 District, the Water Supply Protection District, the Reservoir Protection Overlay, and the Flood Hazard Overlay. Refer to the Proposed Land Use Map for exact location of the districts.

Village Residential District - The Village Residential District is generally located on both sides of Main Street, north of River Street, and east of Province Street. This area is intended to provide for the increased densities of traditional village environments. Development in the District shall promote the continuation of high-density residential uses while providing a pedestrian oriented setting.

Commercial District - The Commercial District is generally located in the designated Village Center around the intersection of Main and River Streets, along Troy Street, and

along South Main Street. The Commercial District provides for increased densities of development suitable for the traditional village environment. Development in the District shall promote the continuation of higher density commercial uses while providing a pedestrian orientated environment.

Industrial District - The Industrial District is located in the Troy Street area, the Province Street area, and completely encompasses the Richford Business Park. The District provides for increased densities of industrial development suitable for the traditional village environment, and in the business park, industry that may be inappropriate for the village setting.

Rural Residential District - The Rural Residential District is determined by the historical use of land in the area, proximity to other centers, and the soil's suitability for septic systems. The intent of the District is to accommodate residential growth without burdening the town by extending sewer or water. This area may also accommodate small commercial or resource based light industrial development.

Agricultural District - The Agricultural District is land in town, which has somewhat limiting soils but not so much as to prevent all development. These areas have historically been, and continue to be, used for agriculture and forestry.

Conservation 1 District - The Conservation 1 District has limited suitability for community growth and development because of severe limitations, including remote locations extreme topography, and shallow soils. It is intended for conservation of the forest resource, recreation, and scenic values.

Conservation 2 District - The Conservation 2 District includes areas that offer unique environmental and public use opportunities within the village district. Residential development is not appropriate for this district.

Water Supply Protection District - The Water Supply Protection District is defined by the watershed that supplies the Stanhope Brook Reservoir. It is intended to protect the village water supply from contamination.

Reservoir Protection Overlay – The Reservoir Protection Overlay is defined by a 400 foot buffer around the backup reservoir for the village district water system. It is intended to protect the reservoir from contamination.

Flood Hazard Area Overlay - The Flood Hazard Area has been designated to minimize future public losses due to floods by regulating future land development. The area is defined as the 100-year floodplain as determined by the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM).

The remaining sections of this land use plan address some of the key land uses and their appropriateness in each district.

Residential Use

Most development in the Town of Richford, including residential, is dependent on on-site water and sewer. The village district's water and sewer facilities extend along Route 105 to the Industrial Park, which is the only significant extension of both services outside of the village district. A municipal water line extends up Route 139 to the Canadian border,

and water and sewer extend only short distances beyond the village district along other roads.

Most of the landmass along Route 105 and 139 through the village district, as well as the connecting side streets, are currently zoned residential. However, numerous commercial properties and some industries are intermingled. Some areas are very densely settled, particularly at the south end of the village district, with many dwellings on small lots. Without extensions of water and sewer, the village district will remain the primary location for high-density residential growth.

Areas suitable for medium density development must be planned according to the natural capability of the land to support development. As shown on the proposed land use map, such areas are expansions of existing development around the village district and East Richford, the aim being to concentrate development in existing centers. The other areas proposed for this type of development are along Hardwood Hill Road, South Richford and Stevens Road, McAllister Road, Pinnacle and Drew Roads, Province Street, and Route 105 south of the village district.

Low-density residential development can be permitted in the agricultural district on the condition that the site can support the development and that it does not conflict with agricultural and forestry uses.

While, residential dwellings are not desired in the conservation districts, only very low densities should be allowed in the Conservation 1 District and residential dwellings should be restricted in the Conservation 2 District. These lands have severe site limitations, remote locations, extreme topography and shallow soils.

For water quality and safety reasons, no residential development should occur in the water supply protection district or flood hazard areas.

Future seasonal residential development should take place in the same area where lower and medium density residential development is targeted, since seasonal development is also dependent upon site specific water and sewer facilities and needs to be accessible by town services.

Commercial and Industrial Use

The village district (including the Village Residential, Commercial, and parts of the Industrial Districts) is the commercial center for the town. The commercial establishments in the village district meet most daily needs of town residents. Because of the availability of municipal services within the village district, it makes sense that the intense commercial development should occur there. Historically, industrial development occurred along the river in the village district although recently industrial development has been encouraged to locate in the industrial park.

Commercial development outside of the village district should be relative to the scale of the district. Smaller commercial operations could be permitted in the Rural Residential District and still smaller operations in Agricultural District. In this manner, commercial strip development will be discouraged along major roadways. Small, isolated commercial ventures and home occupations are recommended where appropriate, except in the Conservation, Water Supply Protection, and Floodplain Districts.

Agriculture and Forestry

Land requirements for construction will most likely continue to place pressure on open space and agricultural land in Richford. The agricultural designation is not meant to prohibit development within the areas delineated on the future land use map; rather development in these areas should to the extent possible, preserve the agricultural character and maintain the agricultural viability of the land.

Agriculture is identified as the primary land use in three areas in town: the northwest corner, the Missisquoi River corridor, and the extreme northeast corner of town. These are areas which are either actively farmed or contain the best agricultural soils in town.

Agriculture is the prime desired land use in two of the districts – agriculture and floodplain. In these areas, other land uses should only be permitted if they do not conflict with farming. Farming will not be discouraged in other districts, although it is not expected to have as important a role. There is one active farm in the village district and its continuation into the future should be supported. About five percent of Richford's land area is conserved farmland through the Vermont Land Trust.

Careless management and planning of the forest can cause flooding and damage fish and wildlife habitat. The forests are used for many purposes in addition to timber harvesting including hiking, snowmobiling, hunting, cross-country skiing, bird watching, and sight seeing. Forestry is anticipated in the Conservation 2 and Water Protection District. It may also be appropriate in the Agricultural and Rural Residential Areas.

Implementation Strategies

The land use plan should be implemented through a variety of methods.

- Review and update the proposed land use districts in the Town Plan.
- Update and revise the zoning bylaws to meet the intent of the Town Plan.
- Pursue the economic strategies derived from the Richford 2010 project and described on pages 64 and 65 of this plan.
- Continue to participate in development review - whether through site plan review, zoning, or Act 250.
- Continue to support volunteers on local, regional, and state boards, which address matters of local interest.
- Support efforts of the Vermont Land Trust in the purchase of development rights on farms containing prime agricultural soils.
- New businesses or expansions of existing businesses that locate in accordance with the land use plan should be given favorable consideration for tax stabilization.

Compatibility with Neighboring Towns

The Towns of Montgomery, Enosburgh, Jay, Westfield, and Berkshire have regionally adopted plans. According to state regulations, the Richford Town Plan must be compatible with other adopted plans.

Richford's Proposed Land Use Map is compatible with Berkshire's Proposed Land Use Map. Adjoining borders are classified as rural lands/residential, agriculture, and conservation. The only area dissimilar is the existing industrial park in Richford on the

Berkshire line. Both towns anticipate some rural residential development along the Route 105 corridor which connects the two communities. For these reasons, the Richford Planning Commission believes these plans to be compatible.

Richford's and Montgomery's proposed land use maps are compatible, with agriculture/residential and conservation districts at their adjoining border.

Richford's and Enosburgh's proposed land use maps are compatible. Richford's Agricultural District meets with the corner of Enosburgh in the Rural/Agricultural District.

Richford's and Jay's proposed land use maps are compatible. The Agricultural District, Conservation District, and Water Supply Protection District in Richford border a rural residential area in Jay. Route 105 crosses into Jay from the Conservation 1 District in Richford to the rural residential area in Jay. Similar low densities of residential development are permitted along the corridor in both neighboring towns.

Richford's and Westfield's proposed land use maps are compatible, with the Jay State Forest encompassing the border area of the two towns.

Richford's plan is compatible with *the Plan for the Northwest Region* (Northwest Regional Planning Commission – adopted March 31, 2004).

The Town of Richford and the Richford Planning Commission seeks to work with neighboring communities and the region on issues and projects of common interest.

Conclusions

The future land use plan and map has been created based on the information generated in the other six chapters of the plan. By implementing the land use plan many of the goals of other parts of the plan may be achieved. As stated earlier, the goal is not to prevent growth and development but to guide it to preserve the character of Richford.

Richford is still a real Vermont town. New development or renovations of older structures should retain the spirit of Richford and enhance its future.

LAND USE PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS: TO PLAN DEVELOPMENT SO AS TO MAINTAIN THE HISTORIC SETTLEMENT PATTERN OF COMPACT VILLAGE AND URBAN CENTERS SEPARATED BY RURAL COUNTRYSIDE.

TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT SPACE IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A CONSIDERATION OF LAND CAPABILITY AND PRESERVATION OF THE TOWN'S CHARACTER.

TO PROVIDE FOR THE ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE COMMERCIAL SERVICES.

POLICIES:

Historic settlement pattern

- Continue to utilize the site plan review process to assure proposed developments have minimum impact on existing properties and on the environment.
- Review and, if necessary, amend the zoning bylaws to be consistent with this Town Plan.
-

Residential

- To encourage low densities where low levels of services are to be provided, and higher densities only where they can be properly served.
- To conserve and protect the quality and vitality of existing residential neighborhoods and renew or rehabilitate obsolete and deteriorating dwellings and neighborhoods.
- To encourage planned unit developments, wherever appropriate, to protect open space/ agricultural land and woodland.

Commercial

- Encourage suitable commercial activities in existing buildings.
- Strip commercial development along highways shall be discouraged.
- Businesses should be located within the village district to be convenient to employees and to take advantage of the existing infrastructure.
- Commercial construction should be well designed and attractive, and should protect adjacent land with appropriately landscaped buffers.

LAND USE PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES (CONT.)

TO PROMOTE A DIVERSIFIED AND STABLE ECONOMY BY ENCOURAGING COMPATIBLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS, AND WITH MINIMAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, ASSURING THE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF EXISTING INDUSTRY AND HOME OCCUPATIONS.

TO PROVIDE, IN CONVENIENT AND SUITABLE LOCATIONS, RECREATIONAL AREAS AND NECESSARY MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR THE USE AND ENJOYMENT OF TOWN RESIDENTS.

TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL USES AND SCENIC RESOURCES.

TO PROTECT AND ENCOURAGE THE CONTINUATION OF AGRICULTURE.

TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF MAJOR FORESTLANDS.

POLICIES:

Industrial

- Industrial development shall not overburden municipal services, and should have minimal adverse environmental impacts.
- Industrial land construction should be well designed and attractive, and should protect adjacent land with appropriately landscaped buffers.
- Industrial development should be planned in industrial park areas which are served by necessary facilities including sewer, water and transportation.

Recreation and scenic uses

- Encourage appropriate activities within the agricultural, conservation, and floodplain districts that will protect open areas and provide more recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Prime recreational resources should be protected from incompatible land uses to preserve scenic qualities (including agricultural land, woodland, riverbanks, shorelines, and ridges and mountaintops) from unnecessary despoliation.

Agricultural and forestry

- Positive incentives, such as current use and conservation easements, and other available means to keep prime agricultural lands in productivity should be considered.
- Provide for continued public and private recreation opportunities, sound forest harvest practices, and compatible rural uses.