

# Rochester Town Plan

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Prepared by the Rochester Planning Commission

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# ROCHESTER TOWN PLAN

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

This Rochester Town Plan is a comprehensive document which replaces the Town Plan prepared by the Planning Commission in 2002. It is required by State Statute to be updated every five years and is prepared in conformance with the provisions of Chapter 117 of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act. The Town Plan provides a guide for the future of Rochester's natural and human environment.

### Why Have a Plan?

The Town Plan provides the basis for the implementation and administration of the zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations. As such, it represents one element in the ongoing planning process, which must respond to changes within the community and to trends and factors which influence it from the outside. The Plan must serve to promote the health, safety and welfare of all the Town's residents. It also serves as a guide for development review within the Town. It provides a basis for funding initiatives and grant applications. Equally important it articulates planning goals and objectives and outlines steps for fulfilling them. The Plan, however, is only a document. It is the people of the community who will put the Plan into action, in striving to sustain and enhance the special quality of life we value and experience in Rochester.

### History

The Charter of Incorporation was granted to Rochester on July 30, 1781, by Governor Thomas Chittenden and the General Assembly when Vermont was still a Republic. However, Rochester existed before 1780, as witnessed from notes of Jonathan Carpenter of Barnard when he wrote that he "scouted the upper White River as far as Rochester and found no evidence of ye enemy."

Rochester is located in the center of Vermont and in the northwest corner of Windsor County. It is a most oddly shaped Town, abutted by eight towns and three counties. The White River runs north to south through the Town. There are mountain ranges on both sides of the River, creating a narrow valley. The picturesque village is located approximately in the center of the township. The Town contains approximately 36,000 acres and, of that about one-third is owned by the governments of the United States, the State of Vermont and the Town of Rochester.

Some of the early settlers were from Rochester, Massachusetts -- no doubt the source of the name of the Town.

In 1781 the first ordinances were established. The Charter stated that "each proprietor of the Township of Rochester, his heirs and assigns shall plant and cultivate five acres of land and build a house at least eighteen feet square on the floor, or have one family settled on Each Respective Right within the term of three years next after the Circumstances of the War(e) will admit of Settlement with safety, or penalty of the forfeiture of Each Right of Land in said Township not so improved or settled and the same to revert to the freeman of this State to be by

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Representatives regranted to such persons as shall appear to settle and cultivate the same. The Pine timber suitable for the Navy be reserved to the use and benefit of the freemen of this State." Although Rochester was annexed to Windsor County in 1783, it was not until 1788 that there were sufficient settlers to require a town government. The first town meeting was held May 15, 1788.

The first real planning, maybe by luck, but a key piece of planning none-the-less, occurred in July of 1787. Ebenezer Burnham deeded four acres "to the said Inhabitants & Proprietors of Rochester to build a meeting house on, for Burying yard, training field and such other uses as the Inhabitants and Proprietors of the said Rochester shall see fit to put to." Today, that four acres is known as the Park, the Green, the Square or the Common, call it what you choose. Rochester residents will be forever grateful to Ebenezer Burnham for his generosity and foresight! It is the "centerpiece" of the Valley.

In 1792 the Town purchased land across the road and a little north (back of Mac's Valley Market) for the Village Cemetery. This purchase kept the full four acres of the Park open for public use. As of this writing we have lost some acreage to roads, but the rest of the Park is still there and beautifully kept.

By 1800, Rochester's population was over 500 and the next several decades were a time of building town institutions and infrastructure. A public library opened (1801) and churches and schools were organized in the village and outlying districts. By 1820 Rochester's population was 1148, and eventually, 13 school districts were established throughout the town.

Leading industries during the remainder of the 1800's included talc mining, granite quarrying, sheep and dairy (56!) farming, lumber and wood products. The latter part of the century saw the first graduation exercises at Rochester High School (1894) telephone service (1894), and electric service (1890) brought to the town. Other services demanded by the growing community included Fire District #1 (1890), the town reservoir (1895) as well as a host of retail shops.

The 1900's opened with the coming of the railroad and thus, greater opportunity for travel and commerce. 1901 also saw the first Annual Old Home Week with a concert by the Rochester Town Band, which plays on the Park on summer Sunday evenings to this day. Agriculture remained a primary economic force, with the processing of wood products and grain, lumbering, blacksmithing, marble quarrying and associated retail services all contributing to a vibrant community.

In the late 1970's Rochester experienced a growth in population, partly due to an influx of people seeking a slower pace of life in Rochester's beautiful setting. Vacation homes and new permanent homes were built and the town's economic mix turned away from agriculture (with only one dairy farm now remaining) and more toward "quiet industries" and the construction and service sectors.

Our natural resources of lumber, agriculture and Verde Antique marble have contributed to the Town's life support through the years and continue to do so, but to a lesser extent. Today, with

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the changing life styles, more people go out of Town to earn a living and recreational aspects play a larger part in the life of the Town.

There have always been retail stores and banks. The library, churches and schools were established in the early days of the Town. Today, in 2007, there are many small businesses that are favorable to our environment, and a stable population is available to be employed by them. There are many vacation homes, but regrettably, only a few farms are still operating.

## **STATEMENT of OBJECTIVES, POLICIES and PROGRAMS**

### **Objectives**

- To provide for the orderly growth of the Town of Rochester while protecting its unique setting, environmental integrity and scenic beauty.
- To protect the quality of the White River and West Branch.
- To encourage the maintenance of our agricultural and forest lands.
- To encourage business enterprises compatible with the character of Rochester which improves the economic base and provides employment opportunities.
- To encourage maintenance of the Rochester Village area as a center for commercial activity for the Town.
- To maintain the village Park area, while preserving the character and architecture of the Park's historic setting.
- To establish procedures to coordinate with other town agencies and groups which affect Rochester as a whole, such as schools, parks, sewer, etc.
- To maintain public recreation facilities and encourage open space both public and private.
- To consider long term solutions to problems of sewage treatment and solid waste disposal.
- To encourage the citizenry to acquire a basic understanding of their duly adopted plans, regulations and ordinances with a goal of voluntary compliance.

### **Policies**

- To continue to properly administer the zoning ordinance adopted by the Town, as amended December 27th, 2005, and make revisions as deemed necessary.
- To continue the effective administration of our subdivision regulations as adopted March, 1976.
- To continue to administer the permanent Flood Hazard Bylaw, adopted 3 March 1992, and discourage building in the flood hazard areas.
- To maintain a communication link with the United States Forest Service concerning their comprehensive planning program.
- To support our school system and public library, which have proven to be major factors in the building of a cohesive community.
- To consider the needs and capacities of the school system, fire department, rescue squad and law enforcement in our planning efforts.

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- The Planning Commission welcomes a larger input by the citizens and business community, in particular, for ideas and expertise to assist in the performance of its duties.

### **Programs**

- The Rochester Zoning Ordinance as amended December 27, 2005.
- The Rochester Subdivision Regulations adopted March, 1976.
- The Rochester Sewer Ordinance adopted August 7, 1974, as amended July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

# POPULATION

## Population Patterns and Projections

Population, when considered in terms of past, present, and future, represents an important factor in the overall development of our Town. Rapid and unanticipated population increases can compromise rural character, create a demand for new and expanded municipal services, and strain the financial ability of a town to provide public services economically.

When local populations are small, as in Rochester, land use and economic factors affecting migration rates are far more influential on short-term population changes than the more stable birth and death rates. For example, a single industry, subdivision or trailer park added to or subtracted from our community will more radically change Rochester's short term population than the effect of our natural birth or death rate. Such an event, however, cannot be forecast in the standard demographic analysis, which is why population projections can only serve as a planning guide.

In summary, it should be emphasized that Rochester's land use planning policies and bylaws, combined with the affluence of the northeast, the popularity of Vermont and the growth pressure of the surrounding area will heavily influence future Town population levels as well as second home development.

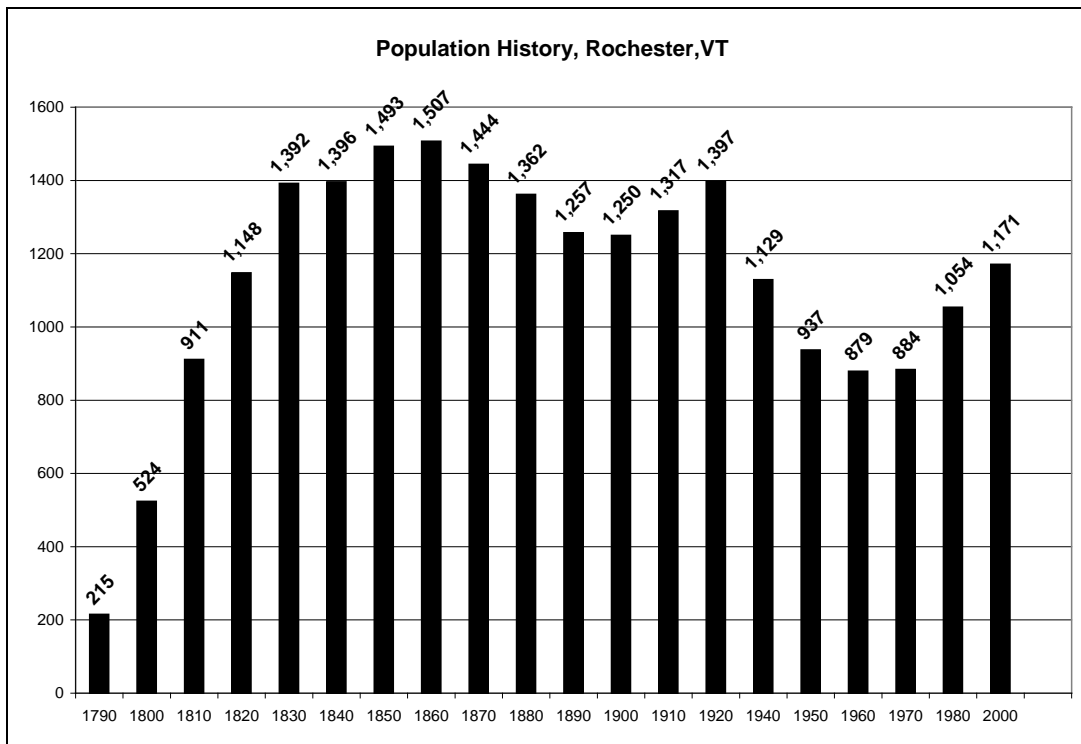
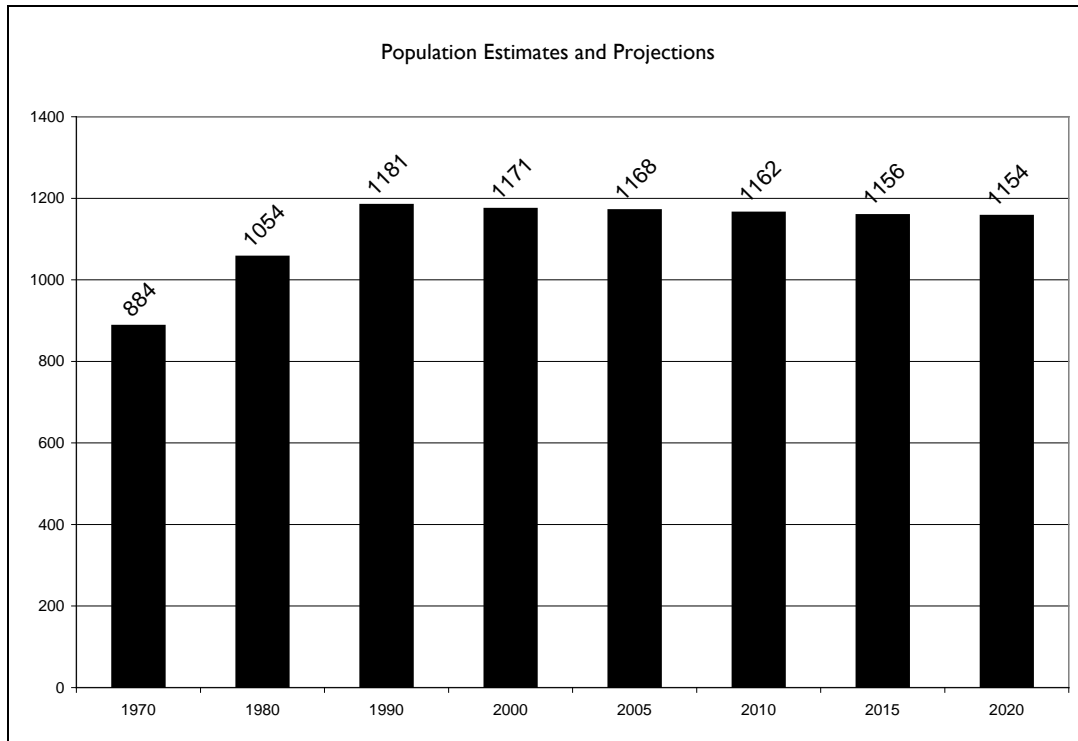


Figure I – Population History, Rochester, VT (Source Center for Rural Studies)

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Just how this growth will affect the tax rate and quality of life now enjoyed by residents and vacationers alike will depend on highly variable factors such as: the age of new residents; public spending philosophies and service priorities; and intangible concepts such as the interaction of old and new residents and the maintenance of a sense of community.

It is the purpose of this Plan to help accommodate this change and see that it takes place in an orderly fashion.



**Figure 2 – Population Estimates and Projections (Source: Center for Rural Studies)**

The population of Rochester grew from 215 in 1791 to a high of 1,509 in 1860. Current population is less than 1,200. Population projections for Rochester, presented in Figure 2, indicate the likelihood of a slight decline in population over the next two decades.

Figure 3 represents population growth statistics for Rochester and its neighboring towns taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the U.S. Census, Rochester's year 2000 population was 1,171, compared to a population of 1,181 in 1990, a decline in population of less than one percent. Rochester's declining growth rate stands out against the 8% rate of growth by the State of Vermont and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region. With the exception of Granville, Rochester had the slowest growth rate between 1990 and 2000. This indicates that Rochester has a fairly stable population with an equal number of residents moving to and moving away from Town.

Population Change, Rochester and Surrounding Area				
	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
Bethel	1347	1715	1866	1968
	-6%	+27.32%	+8.8%	+5.4%
Granville	255	288	309	303
	+18.6%	+12.9%	+7.2%	-1.9%
Hancock	283	334	340	382
	-12.4%	+18%	+1.8%	+12.3%
Pittsfield	249	396	389	427
	-1.9%	+59%	-1.7%	+9.7%
Rochester	884	1054	1181	1171
	+0.5%	+19.2%	+12%	-8%
Stockbridge	389	508	618	674
	-8%	+30%	+21%	+9%

Figure 3 – Population Change, Rochester and Surrounding Area (Source: Center for Rural Studies)

### Age of Population

Between 1990 and 2000, population increases have occurred primarily in the 44-54 year old range. To some extent, this reflects the ongoing effect of the baby boomers; however it is most likely that many of the residents who have moved to Rochester in the past decade are between the ages of 35 and 54.

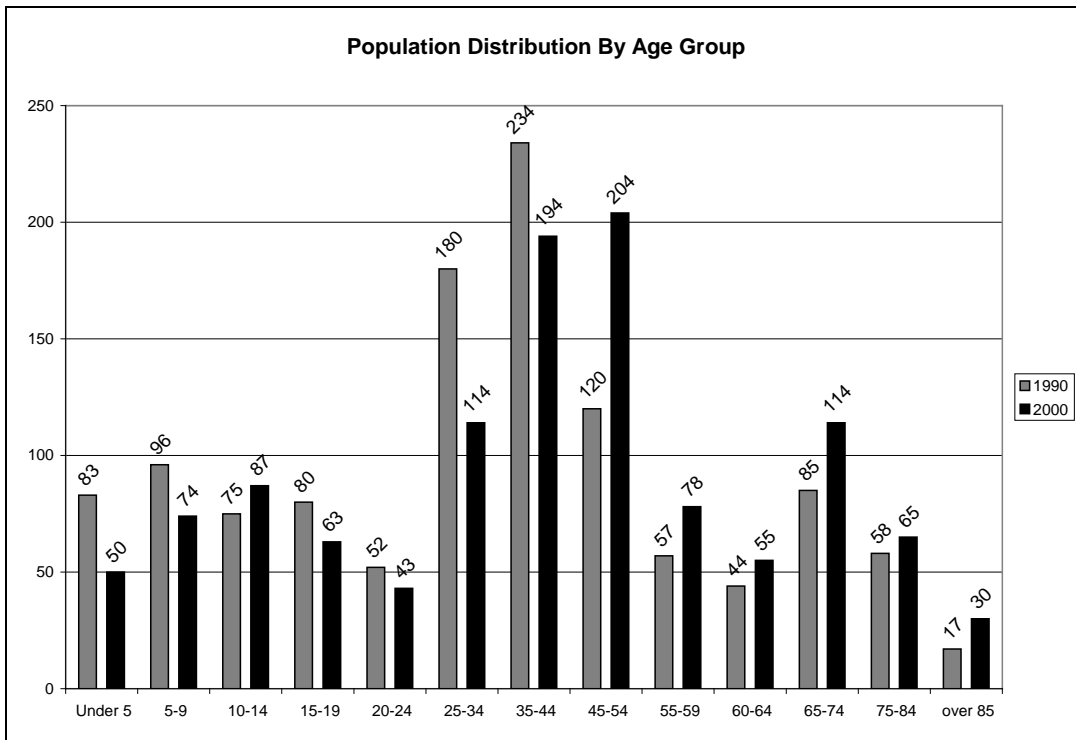


Figure 4 – Population Distribution by Age Group, 1990-2000 (Source: U.S. Census)

A common trend throughout Vermont is that younger residents are leaving their towns for other locations, either out of State, or perhaps to more urban areas of Vermont. This trend is also shown in Figure 4. Between 1990 and 2000, Rochester has lost nearly 21% of its population in this group. This implies that when teenagers graduate from high school, they are unlikely to remain in Rochester. Meanwhile, residents 45 and older seem to be remaining in, or moving to, Rochester.

When compared to statewide population by age group numbers (Figure 4), Rochester is generally behind statewide percentages in the age groups under 30, and ahead of the State in ages 60 and over. The aging of a population can have impacts on its community. The need for services, particularly medical and elderly care, can become more acute.

## HOUSING

### Background

Like many towns in the State, Rochester has seen a sharp increase in the cost of single family residences, driven primarily by the demands of the second home market. At the same time, much of the existing housing, which was built at a time when larger families required larger structures, has become increasingly difficult to properly heat and maintain. Both of these forces have called attention to the need for more affordable housing.

For many years, it has been the Town's policy to encourage partition of existing structures into more than one living unit as a means to preserve our rich heritage of 19th century architecture and to provide additional affordable housing units. Although the Town adopted density limitations in all zones, multi-family dwellings are encouraged in all zones of the Town. The greatest density is encouraged in the Village Area, where all necessary services are located within walking distance.

One of the most successful conversions of an historic structure in the Village was the renovation of the former Rochester Inn (originally the Pierce residence) into congregate housing for the elderly. With its location right next to the Rochester Park, it enhances the appearance of our "downtown" area and provides its residents with easy accessibility to services and visitors.

Having a school located in Rochester makes it an appealing location for families with children. Rochester's schools not only have excess capacity, but the secondary school would actually benefit from a larger student body. Other Town services can also handle additional capacity.

A major function of local housing planning is to meet two community objectives - first, safe and affordable housing for its present and future population and second, suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the community. Growth in housing affects the Town's capacity to provide facilities and services to our Town and the character of the area. Housing built without adequate planning for schools, roads, and other public services can overburden the ability of the taxpayers to pay for these services, and also can lower adjacent property values and negatively affect the rural character of the Town.

**Number of Housing Units**

<b>Change in Number of Housing Units, Rochester and Surrounding Area</b>				
	<b>1960-1970</b>	<b>1970-1980</b>	<b>1980-1990</b>	<b>1990-2000</b>
Bethel	609	823	888	956
	+7%	+27.32%	+7.8%	+7.6%
Granville	99	201	210	218
	+10%	+103%	+4.5%	+3.8%
Hancock	143	198	201	214
	+16.4%	+38%	+1.5%	+6.4%
Pittsfield	175	298	401	393
	+101%	+70%	+38.7%	-2%
<b>Rochester</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>768</b>
	<b>+17%</b>	<b>+44%</b>	<b>+11.3%</b>	<b>+4%</b>
Stockbridge	207	413	488	528
	+21.7%	+99.5%	+18%	+8%

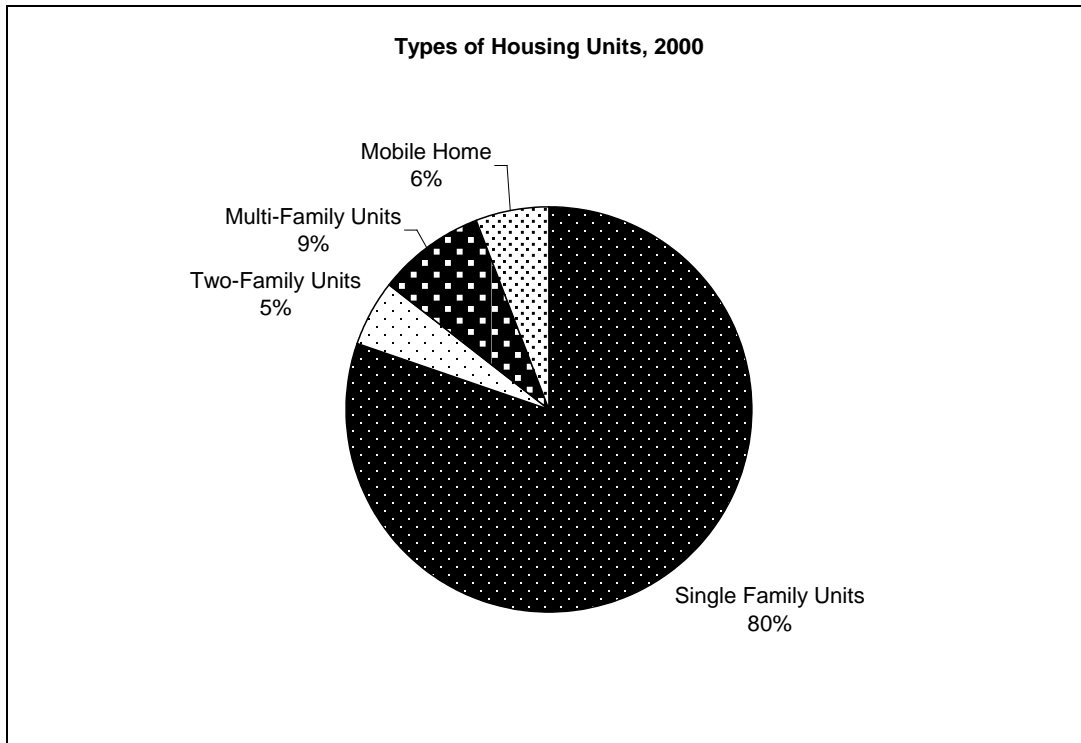
**Figure 5 – Change in Number of Housing Units in Rochester and Surrounding Area**  
**Source: Vermont Housing Data, 2007**

Rochester’s total number of housing units has been increasing since the 1940’s, reaching its peak growth between 1970 and 1980. Since the 1980’s the growth of housing units in Rochester has slowed, resulting in a 20 year growth rate of only 14%. During the same time period, the number of housing units in Windsor County grew by 30%, and the State of Vermont which grew 31% overall. It is likely that Rochester’s limited access to primary highways such as Interstate 89 and its distance from major employers has made it a less popular location to build a home. This means, however, that Rochester is fortunate not to experience many of the pressures other Vermont towns have experienced due to an overabundance of new housing.

**Types of Housing and Ownership Characteristics**

The U.S. Census defines a “housing unit” to include: conventional houses, apartments, mobile homes, condominiums, and rooms for occupancy. According to Vermont Housing Data, Rochester has a total of 768 housing units. Like most of the towns throughout Vermont, the housing units in Rochester are predominantly single-family homes, with multi-family homes being a distant second.

As noted in Figure 7, 48% of the housing stock in Rochester is owner occupied. An additional 30% of the housing is dedicated to seasonal, recreational or occasional use, making Rochester unique when compared to nearby Bethel (11%) or 19.7% in Windsor County and 14.6% in Vermont as a whole. Yet, when compared to its Quintown neighbors, such as Stockbridge (43%) and Hancock (20%) or Granville (37%), Rochester’s percentage of vacation homes is not out of the ordinary. The very nature of the Quintown area, with its distinct natural beauty and proximity to major ski areas like Killington and Sugarbush, makes it a desirable place to have a vacation home.



**Figure 6 - Rochester Types of Housing Units (Source: US Census, 2000)**

When a town has a large number of homes that are not occupied year-round, it can have unforeseen impacts on town services. For example Rochester, like many other Vermont towns, has a volunteer fire department. This department depends on full-time residents to staff its fire department and a lack of full-time residents can make recruiting staff difficult because the pool of candidates is reduced. Although Rochester's percentage of seasonal housing stock is high, it should be noted that in the past decade the number increased by only three homes.

Vacation homes notwithstanding, Rochester had only 3% of its total housing stock vacant in 2000. Anything below 5% is functionally considered a zero, so in general, Rochester does not have much available housing stock to offer.

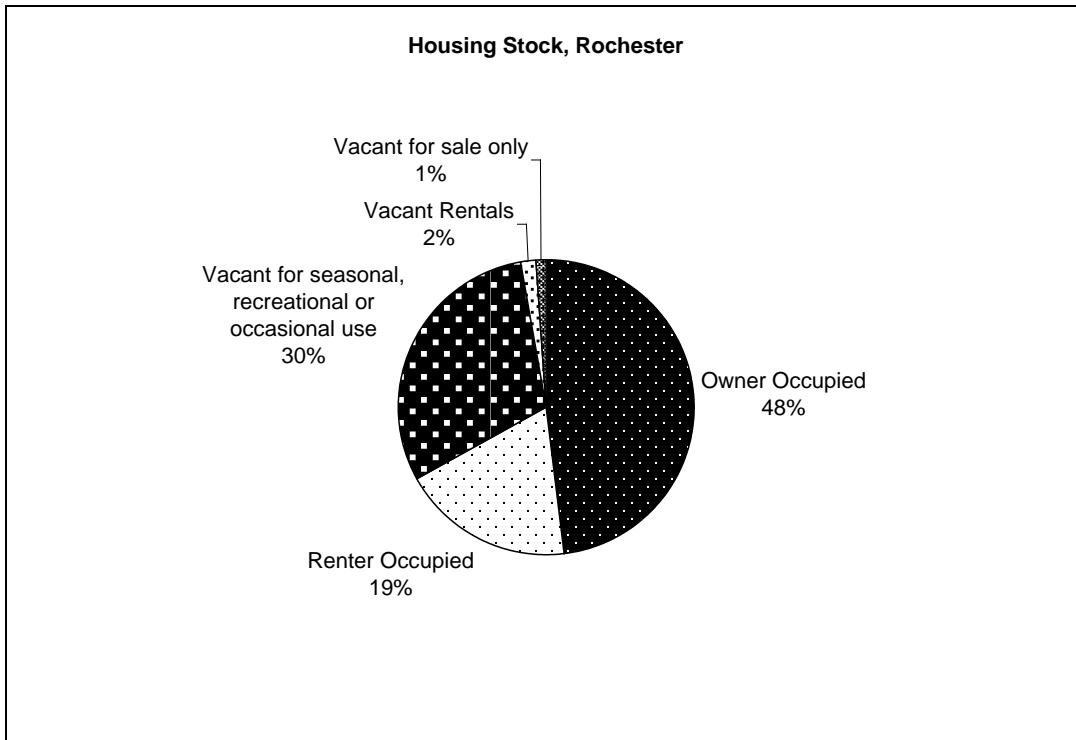


Figure 7 - Housing Stock in Rochester (Source: Vermont Housing Data, 2007)

## Affordable Housing

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

When asked if there is a need for affordable housing in Rochester, residents generally said “yes”. In Rochester, the average price of primary residences sold in 2005 was \$122,533 which is less than the Windsor County average of \$239,901 and the statewide average of \$220,671. This figure does fluctuate widely from year to year based on the types of homes sold. For example, in 2003 \$152,750 and in 2002 it was \$89,429. In general, most homeowners in Rochester are paying about 18% of their income for homeowner costs, but according to information collected in 1999, there were 52 households paying more than 30% of their income for the same expenses.

The median gross rent in Rochester is \$550 per month (for all units, regardless of number of rooms), including utilities. When compared to Windsor County (\$539) and the Vermont average (\$553), the rental rates in Rochester are about average. This means that residents making the average income of \$29,207 are paying 22% of their income for the median gross rental rate, which implies that rental properties in Rochester are relatively affordable.

## **Elderly Housing**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 209 individuals in Rochester who are 65 or older. There are no options for assisted living in Rochester. Nearby Hancock has a very small facility (six beds).

However Park House, located on the park in Rochester's village center, has 17 rooms and offers independent family-style living for the elderly. Residents have their own bedroom furnished with their own furniture and either a private or semi-private bathroom. They share common areas such as the living and dining rooms, front porch and beautiful gardens. Residents are encouraged to participate with the household and outdoor tasks as they are able.

While an excellent resource for an active and independent elderly population, Park House does not fill the role of assisted living that is often needed as people get older. As Rochester's population continues to age, the need for such housing, both assisted and unassisted, will only increase.

## **Childcare**

Rochester has limited options for childcare. According to the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission inventory of childcare facilities, Rochester has a single registered childcare facility with thirty spaces. Most residents currently arrange for care with relatives, or take their children to childcare facilities beyond the borders of Rochester. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 124 children under the age of 10 in Rochester; this seems to indicate that there is a need for additional childcare services in Rochester.

## **Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

The following housing goals have been established to guide the Town's residential development:

1. To encourage suitable and affordable housing for all of Rochester's residents.
2. To encourage the conservation of existing structures, especially in the Village Area.
3. To provide for orderly growth in housing, taking into account neighboring uses and available services.
4. To encourage the creation of accessory dwelling units for the purpose of providing additional housing for the community.

### **Recommendations**

1. Design and prepare an inventory of individual housing units, including their condition and approximate rental or purchase cost in order to assess housing availability; and
2. To consider increased density regulations, if necessary, to increase the availability of housing for persons of low and moderate incomes.

## **CURRENT and FUTURE LAND USE**

### **Land Use Policies**

#### **Historic Sites**

Historic buildings and sites have an irreplaceable value providing a link between the Town's past and present. It is recommended that as Rochester develops, these community assets be preserved and restored wherever possible.

#### **Preservation of Agricultural Lands**

Although the number of active farms has steadily declined in the past years, agriculture and forestry continue to exert a strong influence on Rochester's economy and the day-to-day life styles of many of its residents.

With natural resources becoming increasingly scarce and the cost of transporting food products into the valley rising sharply, it would seem prudent for us to work toward a higher degree of self-sufficiency through protection and preservation of both existing farms and potentially suitable agricultural lands. A means to accomplish this is through the State's Land Use Assessment Program, which started in 1980, and enables owners of bona fide farm and forest land parcels to apply to the State of Vermont for land assessment based on its current use for farming and forestry rather than its maximum value if subdivided and developed. This program eases the tax burden placed on farm and forest land owners, and hopefully, helps keep land from being subdivided and sold.

If development must take place within an agricultural area, the Planning Commission shall encourage the developer to utilize cluster planning principles in order to minimize any adverse impacts on the farmed portion of the site or adjacent lands.

In addition, the Town should consider adopting regulations which allow a developer increased density for siting structures along the periphery of tillable and high forested areas.

#### **Development Above 2,500 Feet**

Land in Vermont above 2,500 feet in elevation is generally recognized as being part of a more fragile environment and natural ecosystem than land below this elevation. Land at this elevation is often characterized by steep slopes, shallow to bedrock soils and subtle changes in plant and animal species that have adapted to the more severe physical conditions that exist at this elevation. It is a fact that sudden and unchecked disturbances to the land surface in these areas can have a long-term damaging effect on the ecology of the mountain environment. Susceptibility to erosion is high at these altitudes and recovery from the same is a slow process. Any activity proposed for these areas should respect these important physical qualities and not upset the delicate balance of nature.

There are a number of mountain peaks within Rochester that exceed 2,500 feet in elevation. Some of these are within the Green Mountain National Forest while others, like Braintree Mountain, are privately owned.

As a matter of policy, it is suggested that these lands continue to support conservation purposes. While residential dwellings and camps could be located here if properly sited, it is not the purpose of this Plan to encourage such activity.

## **Cooperation with the U. S. Forest Service, GMNF**

As owners of roughly 34% of the total land area in Rochester, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) has a major influence on Town affairs. Logging activity on the Forest Service lands has a direct impact on the local economy. Recreation is another benefit of having the GMNF. Hiking, skiing, snowmobiling and hunting are only a few of the many activities enjoyed by both residents and non-residents alike.

Because of the need for close coordination with the USFS, GMNF, it shall be the Town's objective to maintain an open line of communication at all times and to promote cooperative planning and decision-making.

## **Planned Unit Development**

Making Planned Unit Development (PUD) a part of this Plan is intended to offer land developers an alternative to conventional land subdivision where every house is placed on a lot which must meet minimum area, frontage, and setback requirements.

PUD is a development style which allows flexibility in site plan design in which a modification of the zoning regulations is permitted by the Planning Commission. Residences may be clustered together within a PUD and valuable open space preserved, but in no case can the overall density of the project exceed the number of units that would be permissible if conventionally subdivided.

The advantages of PUD are that it provides for a more economic arrangement of streets and utilities, helps preserve the natural and scenic qualities of open land, and provides for the development of those lands which are most able to support building. A PUD may also offer a variety of housing types, varying densities, and be limited to only certain zoning districts.

## **Land Use Plan**

Rochester, with its location in the heart of the Green Mountains, has many areas which do not lend themselves to land development. Much of this land is characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils revealing little potential for development. However, there are areas in Rochester, like the valley corridor and less rugged side hills, which can support some development. Any new growth located outside the immediate village and town sewer service will most probably utilize individual on-site systems of sewage disposal. For this reason, the land's capability for safely disposing of sewage and, more generally, its ability to support all types of development have weighed heavily in determining the land use zones.

Another major consideration in the formulation of the land use scheme is Rochester's existing land use patterns and road network. With Town roads being so costly to construct and maintain, it is our policy to discourage development in un-served and remote areas of the community. The Plan encourages new growth to locate where public utilities and services can be economically provided. This is not to imply that a pattern of strip development is favored, only that it is cost effective to attempt to centralize growth into areas presently served or within easy access to services. Furthermore, by discouraging scattered growth, Rochester can help to maintain its agricultural land resources, its rural character, and the viability of its village area as a beautiful community center. Consideration of these and other factors, including but not limited to: topography, soils, access, present water and sewer systems, existing land use problems, business needs, and housing opportunities results in the land use pattern illustrated on the map entitled "Land Use".

To give effect to the goals and objectives of the people of Rochester as expressed in this Plan, the land area of the Town of Rochester has been divided into the following five zones:

## **Business Residential**

This zone comprises the village area as well as some of the adjacent fringe areas. Rochester Village has historically been a closely knit residential and small business community. By designating this vicinity as Village Business-Residential it is a goal of the Plan to reinforce this role and to encourage new residences and businesses to locate in or adjacent to the village. Such a pattern of future development will help support the viability of the town center, prevent scattered growth and assist in maintaining Rochester's present small town character.

Density of development should be highest here, depending on the availability of water and sewer, off-street parking, open space, and compatibility with surrounding land uses. It is recommended that a minimum area requirement be established as a means of controlling the density and spacing of structures. One half acre per principal building seems appropriate based on existing lot sizes of the village area. It is important that any new growth or intensification of existing uses not have a damaging effect on the very qualities that now make the village an attractive place to live or do business.

The bounds of this zone follow roughly the White River on the western side, and the 940 foot contour line on the eastern side. The southern most boundary is Nason Brook, with the intersection of Route 100 and Robinson Drive defining the boundary north of the village.

## **Commercial - Agricultural**

The purpose of this zone is to provide a location for future commercial development that would serve to complement rather than compete with existing business already well established in the village area. The location near the intersection of Route 100 and 73 with its proximity to the existing service center make this area most favorable for expansion of business interests. Because of the perceived need for increased business areas this zone has been expanded to also include the valley floor north of the business-residential zone.

Proper site planning, screening and control of access and egress points will be necessary in order to protect public safety and preserve the beauty of the area. Any flood plain lands present in this zone should be developed only in accordance with the Flood Hazard Bylaw.

Both residential and agricultural uses are also in keeping with the purpose of this zone as it is expected that the scale of business likely to locate in the vicinity would not be incompatible with housing and agriculture.

In order to insure that new growth taking place within this zone meets certain quality standards, it is recommended that minimum area dimensional requirements including setbacks, be established to avoid any strip or cluttered appearance at the intersection of the Town's two main arteries and along the southern and northern entrances to the village. One acre per principal building is permitted.

The location of this zone is best described by utilizing valley floor contour lines since the land above certain base elevations rises suddenly and, for obvious reasons, is not either buildable or safely accessible. Topographical information was obtained from U. S. Geological Survey Maps.

The Commercial - Agricultural begins at the junction of Route 100 and Route 73. From there it meanders east and south following the 840 foot contour just west of the White River for the distance of 1.4 miles. Crossing Route 100 and starting in a northerly direction, the border generally follows the 900 foot contour line, eventually intersecting the Village's southern boundary. This zone also includes the valley floor from the 900 foot contour on the east to the 900 foot contour on the west beginning at the north end of the village and continuing to the Hancock town line.

### **Agricultural - Residential**

This zone covers the river valley in two separate areas. From the Commercial - Agriculture zone south to the Stockbridge town line, and west from the Commercial - Agriculture zone along Route 73 to Flanders Hill Road (TH 30). Agriculture and residential development would be the major types of development permitted in this zone. The contrast between these open, undeveloped areas and the more built-up hamlet area is what helps maintain the character and identity of a small New England village.

New homes built within these two corridors must meet zoning ordinance setback requirements as well as flood hazard bylaw provisions. Incentives for clustered housing and shared drives are recommended. The stringing out of homes along the two state highways is not in Rochester's long-term interest.

Primary uses preferred for this area would be residences and farms. A minimum lot size of two acres is recommended.

The boundaries of the two individual areas comprising the Agriculture - Residential Zone also follow contour lines. The southern most area borders the Commercial - Agricultural Zone and the Stockbridge town line and has on its western and eastern borders the 840 foot and 900

foot contour lines respectively. The second area runs parallel to Route 73 and the West Branch following contour lines ranging from 900 feet through 1,100 feet ending at Flanders Hill Road (TH 30).

### **Aquifer Recharge**

In order to protect the quality of the public water supply serving Rochester Village, the 13 acres surrounding the Town well south of the village have been designated as the Aquifer Recharge Zone. These are the lands whose surface and ground water serve to recharge the gravel packed well.

In order to preserve the drinking water source and prevent contamination from sub-surface septic systems, it is recommended that any development which would require the construction of sub-surface sewage systems not to be permitted in the aquifer recharge area.

### **Residential - Conservation**

Any land not covered by one of the other four zones falls within this category. From a physical standpoint these lands exhibit the least potential for supporting high density development since the majority of the land is characterized by steep slopes, shallow and fragile soils, high elevations and remote locations. An estimated 13,104 +/- acres within this zone are publicly owned or part of the Green Mountain National Forest.

Without water or sewer facilities present in these outlying areas, soil suitability should play a major role in determining lot sizes and home placement. For purposes of this Plan, three acres per single family residence is recommended.

It is also important that house sites are well planned taking into consideration such elements as grade, screening, access and energy conservation. Development of lands above 2,500 feet in elevation should be given special attention since other uses are more suitable for these locations. Uses compatible with the purposes of this zone would include: agriculture, forestry, recreation and properly sited residential development.

### **Flood Hazard Area**

This area contains those lands which are considered subject to flood hazard as described and designated by the Federal Flood Insurance Administration on Rochester's Flood Hazard Boundary Map. This map was issued in 2006 and serves as the official map. In order for Rochester to continue participation in the National Flood Insurance Program, it has adopted and will continue to enforce a permanent flood plain zoning bylaw regulating development activities within the flood hazard areas.

By definition the boundaries on the Flood Hazard Boundary Map represent the 100 year base flood or the flood having a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

It is hereby recommended that any development within the flood hazard areas involving principal structures be discouraged. Proper use for this area would be agriculture, forestry and recreation.

**Telecommunication Towers**

A telecommunications element has been incorporated into the zoning ordinance.

## EDUCATION

### Educational Facilities

Rochester has its own Elementary and High School, housed in adjacent buildings. Grades K - 5 are taught in the elementary school by four classroom teachers. Services are also provided for the early essential education program. A combination gym and cafeteria with a commercial sized kitchen allows for a hot lunch program and a breakfast program to be offered to the entire student body.

In 1990, a volunteer parent-community group raised funds and constructed a marvelous play structure that stands between the elementary and high schools.

One area of the high school building houses the middle school where students in grades 6 - 8 have their own locker room, separate from the 9th - 12th grades. Also in the high school we have an auditorium that is partially maintained and improved by the local community theater group which uses it regularly for their performances. The 300+ capacity facility also serves as a Town meeting hall.

Behind the high school is a Little League baseball field and skating rink and the nearby Town recreation field contains softball and baseball fields, tennis courts and soccer fields.

In 2002 the elementary building was expanded and improved.

The neighboring towns of Granville, Hancock, Stockbridge and Pittsfield send some of their students to Rochester. Some high school students are transported to Randolph to attend the area vocational school.

### Student Enrollment

Enrollments of Rochester students in the Rochester School System are reported annually to the Vermont Department of Education. Based upon annual student resident counts from the Department, average daily membership (ADM) at the school for grades (K-12) in recent years has been as follows:

Year	Rochester School
2006	231
2005	249
2004	252
2003	260

**Figure 8 - Yearly Enrollment (Source: Vermont Department of Education)**

Enrollment in the Rochester School has experienced just over a 10% decline in the past four years. This is not uncommon, as the Vermont educational system on the whole has been experiencing a decline in student enrollments. The Rochester School district has been struggling

to find a way to maintain the quality of education that it offers in the face of increasing costs of special education and declining enrollment.

These struggles have lead to a dialogue with neighboring towns about the idea of consolidating schools. The Quintown (The Quintown area includes the towns of Granville, Hancock, Rochester, Stockbridge and Pittsfield) 20-year vision survey asked residents if they would support school consolidation, and 60% of Rochester respondents did. However, support from surrounding towns appears to be less definitive. The towns of Hancock and Granville have already consolidated their small schools. It is likely that any merger would involve towns not in the Quintown area, such as Bethel.

The student to teacher ratio is 10.7 to 1, which is slightly less than the statewide average of 11.3 to 1.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Background

Rochester has always been a community of independent means. In the early years, agriculture, forestry, mills and mining were the primary sources of industry in the Town. The small village, located on the valley floor of the White River, served as the commercial center of the Town with small businesses servicing the needs of the people. Thirteen one room schools educated the children of large homestead families. Then in the 1950's an elementary school was built in the village, increasing the daily traffic and activity there.

Rochester is a town of spectacular natural beauty. This attracts people from urban areas who purchase second homes and retirement property. They come to enjoy a slower pace of life and many make permanent homes here. The rate of new home construction is slow. Because of this, land values and taxes have continually risen. Many citizens commute to surrounding towns for employment, three of these towns being Randolph, Rutland and Middlebury.

During the 1980's, a group of substantial "quiet industries" developed: a greeting card company, two publishers and four computer oriented companies. These companies had a large customer base that reached beyond Vermont and the United States by way of telecommunications and national postal delivery services. They also offered employment opportunities to an increasing number of local workers.

Fortunately the physical charm and character of the Town is very much intact. The village has a beautiful New England setting with its Park surrounded by large older homes. Within the village there are retail stores, banks, dining facilities, a gas station, a library, churches, private homes and apartment houses. Many construction businesses (carpentry, electrical, plumbing, excavation) serve the needs of Rochester citizens and the surrounding areas. Agriculture, forestry and mining are lesser economic factors. One dairy farm remains along with some beef cattle operations. Timber management takes place in the National Forest and on private property. The rare Verde Antique marble is quarried in North Hollow.

The State of Vermont owns 629± acres in the Town. The U.S. Forest Service has acquired property in the Town to the total of 12,394 (May 2006) acres, about 34% of Rochester. They have worked to focus Rochester as a recreational use area. Campgrounds, nature trails, snowmobile trails, the mountains and rivers bring people into the area year round. Bed and breakfast lodging is available in the Hollows, village and on the valley floor. Sugarbush and Killington ski areas are approximately thirty miles north and south of Rochester respectively.

Presently, Rochester has more small businesses per capita and self employment than most communities its size. The Town has attracted a number of new high tech businesses. In the past several years, there has been a small boom in service establishments, featuring a bakery, art gallery, coffee house and restaurant.

In 2005, Rochester's village was granted "village center designation" by the Vermont Downtown Board. This allows businesses within the village to take advantage of State income tax credits

for such revitalization and improvement efforts as the substantial rehabilitation of historic structures, code improvements and handicapped accessibility upgrades.

### **Economic Development and Land Use**

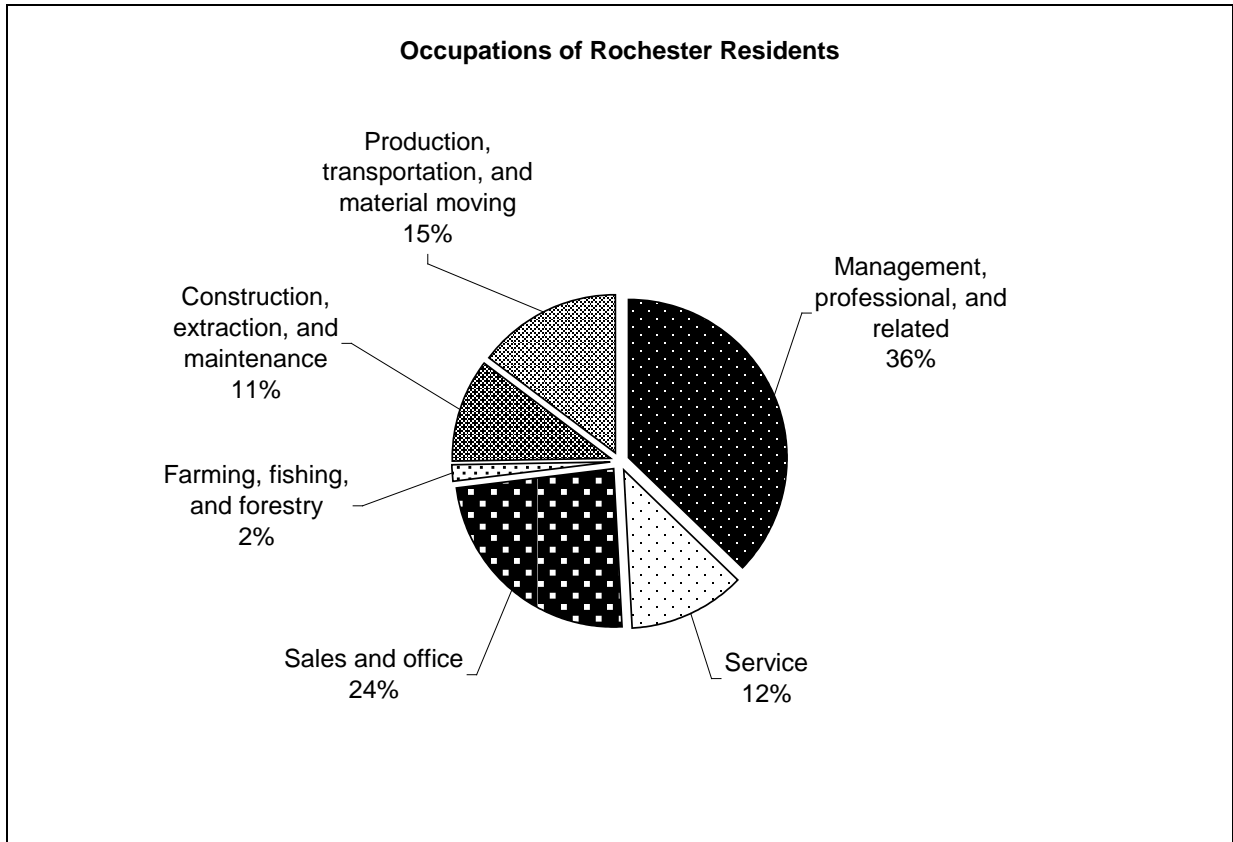
Rochester offers residents and visitors a unique combination of rural character and prospering commerce. Historically there has been a balance between the two. In order to continue to support this healthy balance, land use policies must consider the relationship between Rochester's aesthetic character and the need for goods and services. Business development is important to the community.

In the 2006 Quintown survey, residents indicated a strong desire that there should be more jobs in Rochester. Additionally, they felt that many types of businesses, including manufacturing, retail, high-tech, tourism and agriculture should be encouraged to develop in Town.

Yet, residents value the rural character of the Town. Therefore, the types of businesses that Rochester should encourage are those that will exist in harmony with the flavor and character of the village and Town. Businesses such as Oatmeal Studios, Inner Traditions, Advanced illuminations and LCS Controls are examples of appropriate businesses for Rochester. In the more rural parts of Town, small-scale agricultural operations, bed and breakfasts and home occupations continue to maintain the Town's unique rural character.

The downside to encouraging businesses to develop and grow within the village center is that they can put pressures on the Town that it may not be prepared to handle. For example, until 2006, Rochester's town septic system was at full capacity and was unable to handle additional hookups. More businesses in Town will also create the need for more parking, which is already at a premium within the Village Center.

**Employment and Jobs**

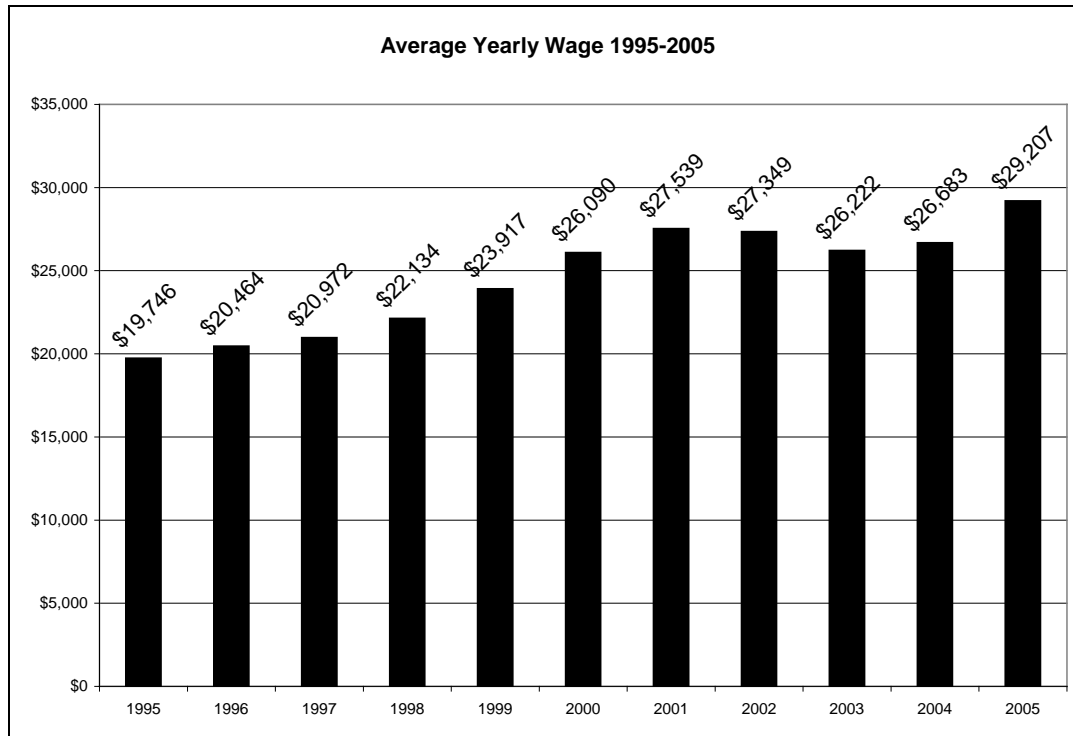


To some extent, Rochester serves as a hub for employment and services within the Quintown area (which includes the Route 100 Towns of Granville, Hancock, Rochester, Stockbridge and Pittsfield). Most residents utilize services in larger towns such as Randolph and the nearest city of Rutland.

Many residents commute to work, but over 60% of those who do commute reported their driving time as 20 minutes or less, which implies that residents are working either in Rochester or one of its immediate neighbors. The most likely locations for work within 20 minutes driving time are Hancock, Randolph and Bethel.

**Income of Population**

The average annual wage of an individual in Rochester in 2005 was \$29,307, which is less than the Windsor County average of \$32,240 and \$34,199 for the State of Vermont on the whole. Of 2005 income tax filers in Rochester, more than 50% made less than the Town average annual wage. In Windsor County, just under 49% of filers reported making less than the annual average.



## Goals, Policies and Recommendations

### Goal

1. Promote a healthy economy which provides jobs for Rochester residents and helps to support the Town.

### Policies

1. Encourage business growth that will enhance the rural environment that its residents so strongly value.
2. Consider ways to encourage the kinds of business that will support and enhance the life of the Town.

Our policy is to encourage and support people who want to open small quiet businesses and use the village as the center of such enterprises.

### Recommendation

1. To further investigate options for increasing the amount of available parking, perhaps by making Park Row and Huntington Place one way, thus freeing up more area for parking spaces.

## TRANSPORTATION

Rochester is made up of basically two parts; its rural and undeveloped, unpaved scenic part, and its more developed village area. An adequate transportation system is essential for the community's growth and economic well-being.

There are many different elements to the transportation system in Rochester. The biggest is our highways and roads, and their importance in providing efficient and safe through traffic.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Rochester Selectboard jointly determine road classifications. There are four road classifications used by the State of Vermont. The classification determines the rate of State financial aid in the repair and maintenance of Town roads (there is no State aid for class four roads). The classes are:

- Class 1: town highways which form the extension of a state highway route and which carry a state highway route number.
- Class 2: important town highways, often paved, with the primary purpose of linking towns and high traffic areas such as village settlements and state highways.
- Class 3: all traveled town highways other than Class 1 or Class 2 highways that are negotiable under normal conditions, all seasons of the year by a standard manufactured pleasure car.
- Class 4: all other town highways on which public use is limited.

Rochester's highways are classified in four categories according to level of use and condition:

Class 1 town roads	0.000 miles
Class 2 town roads	24.500 miles
Class 3 town roads	27.200 miles
Class 4 town roads	7.830 miles
State highways (100 & 73)	17.135 miles

**Figure 9 - Road Mileage, Town of Rochester (Source: VTrans)**

Of nearly 60 miles of town roads, the Town maintains approximately 52 miles on a year-round basis. The remaining eight (8) miles are considered Class 4 roads.

### Major Equipment

- 2002 Ford F350 4-wheel drive pickup with plow
- 2001 International dump truck with plow
- 2006 International 7600 tandem dump truck with plow wing and sander

- 2006 Ford F-550 with plow and sander
- 1996 Cat 928F bucket loader
- 1995 Galion grader with wing
- 1989 Eager Beaver wood chipper

Additional elements of the transportation system include walking, bicycling, the Stagecoach, snowmobiling, hiking and cross country skiing.

## **Goals**

1. To improve the quality of the road system and maintain scenic quality wherever possible.
2. Work closely with State organizations on roadway and bridge reworks.
3. Monitor up-coming State highway projects to insure safety and citizen rights.
4. To widen the shoulders, wherever possible, of our main through routes (73 & 100) for pedestrian and biking safety.
5. Continue an aggressive policy of road maintenance, upgrade of paving (re: State Garage Road) to accommodate business.
6. To preserve the current parking capacity and explore expanding village parking resources.
7. Both Route 100 and Route 73 provide unusually scenic routes through the Town of Rochester and the State of Vermont. Any effort by the State to add additional lanes of vehicular traffic, increase the amount of through traffic or to increase the speed limit on either of those roads should be vigorously opposed.
8. Similarly, any increase in the use of Bethel Mountain Road for through traffic, particularly truck traffic, should be vigorously opposed. That road is far too steep and runs too close to village dwellings to be suitable for through truck traffic. The Selectboard should be encouraged to do all in its power to establish a realistic size and load limit on Bethel Mountain Road.

## **UTILITIES and FACILITIES**

### **Municipal Building**

In 1982 the Town renovated the Little School Building on School Street for use as the Town Office. The facility provides a vault and office for the Town Clerk, Treasurer and Constable, a small office/conference room for the Selectboard, and a spacious room for meetings, public hearings and voting, as well as a meeting place for other groups. In 1995, renovations took place to make the building handicap accessible.

### **Village Sewer System**

In 1972, Rochester installed a municipal septic tank/leach field type sewage system to serve approximately 124 homes and businesses located in the village. The system includes subsurface disposal sites, one of which had to be completely renovated in 1983. Site 3 (southwest of the elementary school) was updated by adding two leach fields. In 1990, a program to replace some sewer lines built at the turn of the century was started. In 2005, a fourth site was added to the Rochester sewer system, which should allow the Town to meet anticipated needs.

### **The Village Water Supply**

The Town well is located south of the village on Route 100 just north of the junction of Route 73. This system has seen several changes over the past few years. It was rebuilt in 1982 with the assistance of grants from the State of Vermont and low-interest financing from FmHA.

Renovations included a gravel packed well, a reservoir on Brook Street, 8-inch and 12-inch pipes, fire hydrants, and water meters. These improvements have given residents first class water quality. It has also improved the fire fighting capabilities.

The Town well is located within an aquifer recharge district where development is limited to agricultural and outdoor recreational uses. The area is also a wildlife refuge. Rochester has a wellhead protection plan which is available for viewing at the Town Clerk's office.

The water supplies outside of the village are owned by individuals and, in some cases, these are cooperative systems.

### **Library**

The mission of the Rochester Public Library is to promote reading for the enjoyment, self-education and enrichment of its patrons in a welcoming atmosphere. Community members are invited to explore and satisfy their curiosities through books, current materials, and a variety of services. The children's collection and services encourage an enthusiasm for reading and life-long use of the library. The library seeks to achieve its mission by setting goals and objectives in a five year plan.

The library sponsors adult and children's reading programs, including a winter adult book discussion series, storytelling and a summer children's program. The Library is open seventeen hours a week: Tuesday 12:30-7 p.m., Thursday 12:30-7 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m. to 1p.m.

The Rochester Public Library has 750± registered patrons and circulates an average of over 15,500 pieces of library material yearly. The collection includes 14,000 volumes and patrons have access to all the resources in Vermont's regional public and college libraries through the computerized library loans.

The Rochester Historical Society has a museum on the second floor of the library with striking displays depicting the styles of the past and remnants of industries and agriculture. Many residents, past and present, give their treasures of local interest to the Society to be displayed. There is a large collection of scrapbooks, news items and photographs.

## **The Gifford Valley Health Center**

Gifford Valley Health Center (formerly the Green Valley Health Center) opened in 1976 and, at present, provides services four days a week. Physicians cover the Health Center on a rotating basis as a secondary office and have privileges at Gifford Memorial Hospital in Randolph, Vermont.

The Health Center is located in a building on South Main Street.

## **Town Garage**

The Town Garage, located in the village, is a 100 foot by 40 foot structure housing the Town road equipment. The metal building consists of five bays (three heated) and is well stocked with tools and equipment for minor repairs. In 1985, a salt shed was built for winter storage. Sand is stored on the site.

## **Pierce Hall**

Built in 1916, Pierce Hall was designed by local architect Charles Kinsman and commissioned by Julia and Ellen Pierce in memory of Chester Pierce, Sr. and his son, Edward L. Pierce. The Pierce sisters planned and envisioned the structure as a community center. In 1932, Pierce Memorial Hall was given to Masonic Rural Lodge #29 F&AM which used one room of the building as their lodge and continued the operation of the Hall as a community center. In 1971, The Masons deeded the Hall to the Rochester Town School District for kindergarten and shop classes. In 1973, the building was closed for large public gatherings. When the current Rochester High School building opened in 1974, Pierce Memorial Hall was deeded back to the Masons, who renovated it for limited use of space. The Masons owned and occupied the premises for almost thirty years.

In 2001, nine community members created a non-profit association (PHCC) to begin discussions with the Masons to restore Pierce Hall to its original beauty and its use as a viable community center. In May, 2004, the Masons voted to give Pierce Hall to PHCC, Inc., in exchange for a

permanent meeting place within the building. October of 2004 PHCC, Inc., received through deed transfer, ownership of Pierce Memorial Hall

During 2004-2005, PHCC worked with the Preservation Trust of Vermont on plans to most effectively maintain the integrity of the building and to restore the facility to its original design. Through a series of ongoing meetings, proposals and drawings were discussed and reviewed. On October 21, 2005, The Preservation Trust of Vermont approved the concept designs for the restoration and additions to Pierce Hall. On November 1, 2005, the PHCC Board of Directors voted and approved plans for the Project.

Pierce Hall Community Center, Inc. is now undertaking renovations that will progress for 2 to 5 years at a minimum cost of \$1,350,000. The fundraising and work will be done in phases.

Pierce Hall Community Center will preserve and restore Pierce Memorial Hall to its 1916 appearance and re-establish it as a much needed community center for the Quintown region.

### **Park House**

Park House, located on the park in Rochester's village center, has 17 rooms and offers independent family-style living for the elderly. Residents have their own bedroom furnished with their own furniture and either a private or semi-private bathroom. They share common areas such as the living and dining rooms, front porch and beautiful gardens. Residents are encouraged to participate with the household and outdoor tasks as they are able.

### **Telephone System**

Phone service in the Rochester area is supplied by Verizon. A building on Park Row has the equipment for switching local and long distance calls. For fire and rescue services residents call the E 9-1-1 emergency number.

### **DSL and Internet Access**

Rochester has high speed Internet access via both cable and DSL in the village extending outward to a three- mile radius. Residents outside of the village have voiced a strong interest in the expansion of high-speed internet throughout town.

Many towns in Vermont have joined together to create wireless broadband initiatives designed to encourage wireless broadband internet providers to service their town. Nearly 61% of Rochester residents who do not have high-speed internet access and responded to the Quintown 20-year vision survey indicated that they wanted it.

### **Solid Waste Management**

The Solid Waste Management Alliance program covers the Towns of Royalton, Bethel, Stockbridge, Barnard, Pittsfield, Hancock and Rochester. In 1994, construction of the waste management facilities on Waterman Road in Royalton was completed. These facilities are jointly owned by the Towns of Bethel and Royalton and are situated on the site formerly used for the landfill operation.

The new facility consists of an office and recycling building equipped with a 60 foot - 60 ton scale, a compacting unit which is currently handling a voluminous flow of corrugated cardboard, and a separate transfer station where residual non-recyclable waste is loaded onto a transport vehicle.

The program provides total waste management service to the Alliance Towns and is in full compliance with State and Federal regulations, including recycling, hazardous waste collection events and disposal provision for residual wastes.

Markets for recyclables are improving and may result in the recycling component of the program being self supporting. The Town of Rochester, as a member of the "Alliance", participated in the planning process since its inception in 1991. At present the Town of Rochester pays a fee based on its tonnage generated and its portion of the recycling program costs based on population. The Town of Rochester engages a hauler to pick up recyclable items monthly at the town office. This has proven successful in reducing solid waste.

Rochester residents must pay private haulers for non-recyclable solid waste pickup. The Transfer Station charges a tipping fee based on tonnage which is paid by the haulers. The haulers in turn charge customers based on volume generated. The Town of Rochester's membership and active participation in the Alliance has proven to be beneficial and economically sound for its residential and commercial establishments. The Alliance has been and continues to be advisory to the operation of the Solid Waste Management facility.

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

### **Rochester Fire Department**

The fire station is located at the northern end of Rochester village. It consists of two bays with very limited space for expansion. There is no space for indoor training exercises, and insufficient space for all of the department's equipment. It is estimated that the Department would require about three to five acres (the current building is on less than one acre of land) to accommodate parking, five bays to handle trucks and equipment as well as 1,200 square feet for training. If, in the future, Rochester made the decision to hire a full time paid fire department, the facility would need dorms, showers and living space as well.

Preliminary plans for a new firehouse have been made, but are still under discussion. Also under consideration is the possibility of combining space with neighboring towns. Although in the early stages, Rochester, Hancock and Granville have begun a dialogue.

The department is chartered for up to 30 members, all required to attend fire fighting classes. As of 2007, there were 16 active members of the Fire Department. Executive officers are elected bi-yearly, consisting of a Chief, two Assistant Chiefs, one Captain, one Lieutenant, Secretary, Treasurer, and two Stewards.

The alarm system utilizes the E 9-1-1 emergency phone method of reporting incidents. Rockingham State Police Barracks acts as the system's dispatching service. Volunteers are equipped with portable pagers.

Neighboring towns of Hancock and Granville respond to all structure fires as mutual aid is important due to daytime manpower shortages. Cooperation among towns is also important due to the rising costs of fire fighting equipment. The Rochester Volunteer Fire Department also serves with the Valley Rescue Squad at auto accidents in Rochester.

#### **Major Equipment**

- GMC tanker
- International 4900 pumper truck
- 2000 Ford F550 4x4 one-ton - initial response vehicle
- Powerhawk Jaws of Life
- Seven Scott 2.2 air packs, 2 portable pumps, 20 spare air tanks, hoses and small fire-fighting tools

#### **Law Enforcement**

A First and a Second Constable and Special Officer are appointed by the Selectboard. The Town provides a 2002 S10 Chevrolet Police cruiser for use by the Constables.

### **Valley Rescue Squad**

Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. (VRS, Inc.) is housed on Route 100 in Hancock. It was established in 1972 to provide 24-hour emergency transport service to area medical centers. At the time the squad was staffed by volunteers who were on call in 12-hour shifts, 2 or 3 volunteers per shift. Since 1992, VRS, Inc. has upgraded to an intermediate service through education, testing and state certification of its personnel.

In 1994, due to lack of volunteers and resignations from long-time members, VRS, Inc. determined that in order to stay in operation staffing had to change. So on November 1, 1994 Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. opened, on a trial basis, with a full time paid administrator and part-time paid drivers who staffed the ambulance during the day shifts, Mon.- Fri. Volunteers continue staffing the night and weekend shifts. After affirmative votes on town meeting day (March 1995) from all three towns, Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. became a paid staff/volunteer hybrid service.

Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. is governed by a 7 member Board of Directors consisting of 4 VRS, Inc. officers and 3 town representatives.

The Valley Rescue Squad has been involved with the Rochester Fire Department's discussions about consolidating emergency services under one facility. Like the Fire Department, VRS, Inc. has little space for vehicles, staff or training. It is likely that VRS, Inc. will be involved in any cooperative effort.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMUNICATION**

Rochester is bounded by eight towns and three counties. The five principal adjacent towns are Stockbridge, Pittsfield, Hancock, Granville and Bethel. All have municipal plans in effect.

Those bordering towns along the Route 100 corridor (Pittsfield, Stockbridge, Hancock, Granville) all have expressed the intent in their town plans that Route 100's scenic value be preserved and that widening of the road be vigorously opposed; that the river ways and flood plain be protected; that compatible commercial development be clustered in the higher-density village areas; and that each town's rural character be preserved. Rochester's plan is in agreement and compatible with these goals, and Rochester plans to cooperate with adjoining towns to promote development which preserves our shared rural character.

Another main corridor with a border town is the Bethel Mountain Road area. Again, Rochester and Bethel's plans both share the intent to keep development compatible with the character of the area by regulating the type of activity permitted and the size of subdivisions.

Rochester shares numerous activities and services with surrounding towns, including school services, rescue squad, fire protection and a residential community care program. The Town is also a member of the Windsor County Selectboard Association and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.

Since development in adjacent towns has the potential to significantly impact Rochester, communication among towns will continue to be encouraged to insure compatibility of development along town borders.

### **Recommendations**

1. To encourage continued communication and cooperation between Rochester and its neighboring towns;
2. To continue participation in regional bodies; and
3. To exchange planning information and development data with neighboring communities.

## **ENERGY**

### **Background**

In the past 5 years, America has seen an increasing concern over our energy consumption. As prices of oil-related fuels continues to rise, everyday activities such as home heating and travel by car become increasingly more burdensome for the average citizen.

Practical energy planning and implementation results in positive environmental and economic returns to the community and energy providers. Conservation of energy lessens the demand for expensive new sources. Utilities are able to postpone capital investments necessary to provide for additional capacity. This has benefits for residents, businesses, and ratepayers.

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

### **Energy Demands**

Vermont currently gets about one-third of its energy from the nuclear power generated at the Vermont Yankee plant. Another third of the power used in Vermont comes from Hydro-Quebec, a large-scale hydro-power facility in Canada. About 7-10% of state power comes from renewable generating plants. Statewide energy consumption has been increasing progressively over the past decade.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the major fuels consumed in Vermont are oil (58%), electric (5%), wood (9%) and LPG and gas (14%). Across the U.S., per capita energy consumption for residential and transportation purposes is about the same as in the northeast. About 76% of all energy used is for these purposes. Almost 80% of residential energy is dedicated to space heating and domestic hot water. State energy officials estimate that simple conservation measures incorporated in new housing can result in a 20% to 30% reduction of energy usage.

About half of all energy used in Vermont is for transportation. Over 50% of this is for residential users who drive private cars. Public transportation in Rochester is limited and, as a result, there are few alternatives, if any, to the automobile.

## Renewable Energy

### Energy Efficiency

One of the best ways to address our use of energy is simply to reduce that use.

The most significant ways to reduce energy use in the home are:

- Insulate homes with modern insulations
- Use modern, high efficiency windows
- Install energy efficient appliances like refrigerators, freezers, front loading washing machines, gas heated clothes driers and heating systems without blowers.
- Use high efficiency compact fluorescent lighting
- Use Gas and/or solar hot water heaters

### Solar Power (Photovoltaics)

Solar power is a viable source of energy in Vermont, provided that panels can be located facing south with a good view of the sun. It is generally considered reliable and after the initial investment of installation, it will save the user money.

According to the EPA, a 5kw photovoltaic system in Vermont can avoid 18,583 pounds of CO<sup>2</sup>, or about 9 tons of CO<sup>2</sup> per year. A study conducted at the University of Vermont indicates that this is the equivalent to the emissions from driving approximately 23, 229 miles in a vehicle that gets 24 mpg, equal to driving across the United States almost eight times.

Photovoltaic systems are most cost effective for remote off the grid sites, energy efficient buildings with the PV systems integrated as part of the building designs and when net metering is available. Net metering is a method of crediting customers for electricity that they generate on site in excess of their own electricity consumption. Customers with their own generation offset the electricity they would have purchased from their utility. If such customers generate more than they use in a billing period, their electric meter turns backwards to indicate their net excess generation.

Although solar power does not receive much in the way of federal or state support when compared to fossil fuels, Vermont does offer the Solar and Small Wind Incentive Program to encourage businesses and homeowners to buy small-scale solar and wind energy systems by offering direct cash incentives to reduce the initial costs of installation.

### Wind Power

In the past five years, the most commonly debated renewable energy option has been wind towers. The primary disadvantages to wind energy are environmental and aesthetic, which explains the heated debates surrounding proposed wind power projects in Vermont. Residents want the renewable electricity, but are often unwilling to accept the aesthetic impact of wind towers on the rural character of their town.

According to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Vermont's best winds for wind energy development are found along its mountains and ridgelines between 2,500 feet and 3,500 feet in elevation. Approximately 20% of the potential sites for wind development in Vermont are located on state land under the jurisdiction of ANR. Much of that land is restricted from development due to various legal restrictions on the land.

There are several locations above 2,500 feet in elevation in Rochester but most are in the Green Mountain National Forest Wilderness area.

Similar to hydropower, wind energy is an intermittent resource and its generation fluctuates in response to environmental conditions. However, most modern wind turbines are able to generate electricity 95% of the time.

### **Biomass**

The Vermont Department of Public Service reports that Vermont is a national leader in the research, development and commercialization of wood energy. This focuses primarily on using wood chips for heat and electricity productions. Wood is an abundant renewable energy resource in Vermont and virtually all of Vermont's wood chip usage comes from mill wastes or chips from low-quality trees.

Generally, use of biomass for heating purposes is only practical on the large scale. For example, the creation of a biomass energy district, common in Europe is under consideration in Burlington. The State has several active biomass district energy systems, one in Waterbury and one in Montpelier.

On a smaller scale, the 2000 Census reports that 23% of Rochester's households use wood as a fuel source for heating, 53% use fuel oil, and 21% use LP gas. The Vermont Department of Public Service estimates that the average household burns between 3 to 4 cords of wood each year during the heating season. Given that the total number of homes in Rochester heating with wood was 116, it is estimated that between 348 and 464 cords of wood were burned in 2000.

Increased reliance on wood as a heating source can offset some demand for expensive alternative sources. The downside to this is, however, that significant use of wood could contribute to increased air pollution. Modern catalytic converters installed on wood burning stoves could be a partial solution.

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

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

(diesel) engines or oil-fired boilers or furnaces with little or no modifications. Biodiesel is simple to use, biodegradable, nontoxic, and essentially free of sulfur and aromatics.

From an environmental standpoint, Biodiesel is the only alternative fuel to have fully completed the health effects testing requirements of the Clean Air Act.

The largest user of Biodiesel in the United States is the U.S. Department of Defense who are reported to have purchased more than 5.2 million gallons during the 2003-2004 contract year. Interestingly, some forms of Biodiesel are available at retail pumps in many locations throughout the Midwest.

### **Cow Power**

Another alternative energy source that is emerging in Vermont is “Cow Power”. This system capitalizes on Vermont’s farming industry by utilizing “biogas” (methane) that is created using cow manure. An anaerobic digester is built on a farm where the manure is collected. The digester holds the farm waste at roughly 100 degrees for more than 20 days. In the process gas is produced by the bacteria in the digester which is delivered to a modified natural gas engine. The gas is then burned to generate electricity.

One of the key advantages to this system is the reduction of Methane released into the environment. Methane is approximately 20 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

### **Micro Hydropower**

Many locations in Vermont once depended on hydropower to grind grain, run mills and even supply electricity to homes. But, with the onset of centralized power, most of these small-scale power generation facilities have been replaced by massive hydro facilities such as Hydro Quebec.

While large hydro facilities are more common, advances in technology are making it far more viable for an individual homeowner to utilize the energy created by moving water. Micro hydropower has the potential to generate enough electricity to power a home, provided that the essential ingredients – water and vertical drop are available. Hydro can be an excellent compliment to a solar system, because water flow is more consistent greater during the winter season when solar is less effective.

## **Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

1. To encourage a pattern of settlement and land use that uses energy efficiently;
2. To promote the design and construction of buildings and structures that are energy efficient;
3. To encourage the development of local renewable energy sources and to reduce dependence on outside foreign energy sources;

4. To increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices through education efforts.

### **Policies**

1. Where generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas are proposed, such facilities or areas should be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this Plan;
2. As alternatives to the automobile, the acquisition of land or rights to land by the Town or other qualified entities for the future development of bikeways and footpaths is encouraged in the village areas or other areas of concentrated settlement;
3. To reduce the demand for commuter transportation facilities and energy, the development of energy efficient home occupations and small-scale home business is encouraged; and
4. To promote energy efficient commuting, the community supports state and regional transportation programs serving Rochester.
5. To provide information on energy efficiency to building permit applicants.

### **Recommendation**

1. To develop a viable park and ride location in Rochester for the purpose of encouraging carpooling.

## RECREATION

### Background

The well being of a community relies on many things, one of which is an opportunity to participate in outdoor recreation. As the population grows, more and more city and suburban dwellers are purchasing second homes or are renting in rural locations to vacation. As the finite land base is being developed, more pressure is being placed on the remaining open areas to provide outdoor recreation opportunities. The *Vermont Outdoor Recreation Plan*, completed in 2005, indicates a continuing deficit in the capacity of certain outdoor recreation resources.

Horseback riding, mountain bike riding, jogging and walking are all activities which continue to gain popularity. Some Bed and Breakfast establishments are promoting activities such as these as a "drawing card". In the last few years, improvements in the VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) corridor and secondary trail systems have connected local trails with state-wide trail network. It is now possible to snowmobile from Rochester to anywhere in the State, from Island Pond in the Northeast Kingdom to Sommerset in the south. Likewise, visitors from all over the State can now snowmobile to Rochester.

### Publicly Owned Recreation Resources

**Community owned** - The Town of Rochester owns several parcels of land used for public recreation. Areas include the ball field, tennis courts, skating rink, the Park, the picnic area at Bean's Bridge which is currently being maintained by the Route 100 Lion's Club, school playground and structure and the school forest.

**State owned** - The State of Vermont owns 20± acres on Mount Cushman, the site of the old fire tower. Another parcel is known as the Riley Bostwick Millionth Acre Tree Farm located off Bethel Mountain Road and the Riley Bostwick Wildlife Management Area (609± acres).

**Federally owned** – 12,394 acres of federally owned land are located in the Town of Rochester. These public lands are administered by USDA - Forest Service as part of the Green Mountain National Forest. These lands provide a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. No matter whether your preference is for snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, bird watching, hiking or hunting, the National Forest provides those opportunities. The Forest Service has constructed parking facilities and recreational use areas along the White River. In 2006, the US Congress established the Battell Wilderness Area. Approximately 4000 acres of which are located in Rochester.

### Recreational Attractions

- Campground
- Mountain Biking
- Cross Country Skiing

- Farm Vacations at B & B's.
- National Forest Campground at Chittenden Brook
- National Forest White River Travelway Sites
- Hunting and Fishing
- Golf Course
- Verde Antique Marble Quarry
- Viewing Maple Syrup Production
- Hiking and Snowmobile Trails
- Canoeing and Tubing
- Horseback Riding

## SCENIC and HISTORIC RESOURCES

### Background

The Town of Rochester is blessed with numerous scenic and historic resources. While these may not have achieved the stature of nationally significant landmarks, they are, none-the-less, vital in shaping our community and, in fact, make it what it is. Preservation of these buildings and landscapes, whether it be a building such as Park House, or a landscape, such as the views from Route 100, is critical to the health of the community.

### Inventory of Special Places

The following inventory of scenic and historic areas is included as part of the Town Plan because these particular resources have been singled out by the Planning Commission as being of special significance. Careful consideration should be given towards preservation of all these "special places" in the overall planning process.

### Scenic Areas

**The Park:** Perhaps no other location in Rochester symbolizes the Town more than the Park. With its stately maple trees, bandstand, the Civil War monument and surrounded by beautiful old homes, the Park is the focal point of many community events.

**Bethel Mt. Road:** There are scenic views from many locations along the road. It offers foreground views of the woodlands and pastures, and distant views of the valleys and mountains stretching from Killington Peak in the south to Mt. Ellen to the north.

**Route 100/White River Corridor:** As Vermont Route 100 winds its way north through the valley, it parallels the White River, offering views of the village, farms and other open areas and the Green Mountain foothills. Route 100 has been recognized as one of Vermont's most scenic highways.

**West Hill:** Located in the western part of Town, the West Hill offers the explorer a combination of woodland, cellar holes, old buildings, a cemetery, mountain streams and views of the main ridge of the Green Mountains.

**The Hollows:** Little, North, Middle and South Hollow all offer spectacular scenery. Farms, forests, country lanes, mountains and streams, all the things that evoke the image of Vermont are located in the Hollows.

**Bingo:** Whether via auto, bicycle or cross-country skis, a trip along Bingo Brook offers beautiful views of the mountain streams in all seasons.

### Historic Areas

The Town of Rochester has numerous historic resources, both publicly and privately owned. A survey, conducted in 1973 by Vermont's Division for Historic Preservation, identified approximately 38 structures with historical significance. Twenty-five of these are located around the village Park. In addition, there are many other structures or sites of local significance.

## **Goals**

Rochester has a wealth of scenic and historic resources that few other towns can match. These resources have been in place many years and give Rochester its identity. There is a public benefit achieved when areas with these outstanding scenic and historical values are preserved for future generations.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Wetlands

#### Background

Wetlands are ecologically fragile areas and how these lands are managed has a direct bearing on the quality and quantity of water resources.

The Vermont Water Resources Board estimates that wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the surface area of Vermont. In addition to being Vermont's most productive ecosystem, wetlands serve a wide variety of functions beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the general public, including the following:

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

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

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

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

In Rochester, which has zoning and subdivision regulations, final approvals cannot be granted for projects involving wetlands unless the Agency of Natural Resources first has had an opportunity to evaluate the effect of the project on the wetland (24 V.S.A., Section 4413). It is

important to note that future investigations of wetlands within Rochester may result in additional areas being determined as significant or important for conservation.

## **Goals and Policies**

### **Goals**

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

### **Policies**

1. It is the policy of the Town to abide and adhere to state wetlands regulations.
2. Developments adjacent to wetlands should be planned so as not to result in undue disturbance to wetland areas or their function. Mitigating measures to protect the function of a wetland are an acceptable measure.

## **Flood Hazard Areas and Floodplains Background**

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

Floodplains, lands adjacent to watercourses, are periodically inundated by heavy rains or during spring thaws. They are porous and can absorb considerable water before reaching flood stage. Floodplains make excellent agricultural land but are poorly suited for development, both because of their propensity for flooding and because of their proximity to watercourses, which creates the potential for pollution.

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

### **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**

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

FEMA has prepared a Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) for the Town of Rochester, which includes flood hazard areas for the White River and for major streams and ponds. This map is on file at the Town Office and at the Regional Commission. The topography of Rochester is such that there are few areas low enough to be in the FEMA Flood Hazard Area. The designated area follows the White River through Rochester as well as parts of the West Branch of the White River.

FEMA also administers the National Flood Insurance Program, which provides flood hazard insurance at subsidized rates for property owners in affected areas. In order to qualify for federal insurance, towns must adopt and retain a by-law to control land development within these areas. Minimum standards must be included and approved by FEMA.

The Town of Rochester has incorporated a Flood Hazard Bylaw into its zoning ordinance; therefore it is recognized as a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program. Coverage is only available to landowners in a town if the Town elects to participate in the program. As part of the Flood Hazard element of the Rochester Zoning Ordinance, a permit from the Town is required prior to any substantial improvement to an existing structure, or to any new construction in the designated floodplain. In granting approval, the Town must find that the proposal meets or exceeds minimum development standards for flood hazard areas.

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has determined that approximately fifty-one buildings in Rochester are presently located within the mapped flood hazard areas. Mortgage lending institutions now require, as a prerequisite to financing, that flood insurance be purchased on property subject to flooding.

## **Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

1. To enhance and maintain wise use of flood hazard areas as open space, greenways, non-commercial recreation and/or agricultural land.
2. To ensure no net loss of flood storage capacity in order to minimize the loss of life and property, disruption of commerce, and demand for extraordinary public services and expenditures which result from flood damage.
3. To maintain maps which reflect as accurately as possible the flood hazard areas, to assist in appropriate land use decisions.
4. To recognize that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at risk of erosion during floods.

### **Policies**

1. It is the policy of the Town that the preferred uses for flood hazard areas shall be for open space, greenbelts, and non-commercial recreational or agricultural uses.

2. Any land use activity (filling, or removal of earth or rock) within flood hazard areas which would result in net loss of flood storage or increased or diverted flood levels or increased risk to adjacent areas should be prohibited.
3. Utilities or facilities serving existing development (e.g. water lines, electrical service, waste disposal systems, roads, and bridges) may be located within these areas only when off-site options are not feasible and provided that their placement is deemed to be relatively protected from flooding damage.
4. Flood hazard regulations should be extended to areas identified as at risk to flood erosion.

## **Water Resources**

### **Background**

Rochester's water resources include aquifers (groundwater) and surface waters. Sustainable yields of quality water is necessary for the lives and livelihood of citizens of Rochester.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, in cooperation with federal and other state agencies, has evaluated aquifer recharge areas serving systems involving 10 or more connections or 25 or more people. These recharge areas are acknowledged and are recognized as important for protection. Land developments that are potential threats to water quality and significant aquifers are discouraged from locating in these areas.

In recent years, underground fuel storage tanks have been identified as major threats to water quality. Studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have shown that the average fuel tank is likely to leak within 15 years from installation. To lessen the risk of contamination, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has promulgated rules to monitor underground tanks with a capacity of 1,100 gallons or more. Tanks in excess of this capacity must be registered with the town. In addition, replacement of underground tanks are subject to rigid standards.

Rochester has a well system that provides water to the village. The primary well is located south of the village in the aquifer recharge district. The 15 acre area surrounding it has been designated a "well-head protection area".

The White River and West Branch of the White River (including Brandon Brook and Bingo Brook) are currently part of an effort to restore Atlantic Salmon to historically used rivers in the Northeast. Although the efforts have not resulted in significant salmon returns at this point, program managers continue to be hopeful. If their efforts succeed, the White River will become a more significant recreation resource for the valley.

Regardless of the success or failure of the salmon restoration efforts, the White River, West Branch, Bingo Brook, Brandon Brook and numerous other tributaries continue to provide excellent fishing opportunities for Brook and Rainbow trout. The Forest Service has purchased land and/or easements for public access to many areas of the White River.

Rochester is fortunate to have a non-profit organization in Town that focuses on the protection of the White River watershed. The White River Partnership started in 1995 with a group of local citizens interested in preserving the quality of life in the White River Watershed. A grass-roots organization, the Partnership promotes the cultural, economic, and environmental health of the watershed through active citizen participation. The Partnership is committed to developing a diverse membership to assure a balanced approach to addressing the challenges facing the watershed, incorporating the best of traditional thinking and practice with current research and technology.

## **Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

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

### **Policies**

1. Water withdrawal from underground sources should be such that existing groundwater users are not adversely affected.
2. Aquifers and surface waters should not be significantly depleted and water should be properly allocated between actual and potential uses.
3. Land use activities which potentially threaten groundwater quality should be carefully reviewed and monitored to prevent undue loss of quality to groundwater.
4. Maintenance or enhancement of water resources for recreation, fisheries, necessary wildlife habitats and quality aesthetics are high priorities. Water resource policy and practices should protect these uses.
5. Preservation of the natural state of streams should be encouraged by:
  - Protection of adjacent wetlands and natural areas;
  - Protection of natural scenic qualities; and
  - Maintenance of existing stream bank and buffer vegetation including trees, together with wildlife habitat.
6. Municipal buildings should be situated as to avoid potential contamination of the water supply.

### **Recommendations**

1. Continue to support the White River Partnership river monitoring program.

2. Investigate maintaining and improving public access to the river for recreational use.
3. Support efforts to map aquifer recharge areas.

## **Wildlife Resources**

### **Background**

Wildlife is one of the primary attractions to the area and provides many citizens of Rochester with direct and indirect livelihoods from sports, tourism and direct harvest of wildlife.

Wildlife management requires management of human activities around animals as much as management of animals around human activities. Managing for specific species is not as desirable as managing for the entire ecosystem supporting the species

Nearly all open space provides habitat for game and non-game species. There are, however, some areas in Rochester which provide critical habitat that should remain intact. These areas include wetlands, deer wintering areas, bear mast stands, and edge (the transition zone between two cover types, such as field and forest). Development or logging in or adjacent to these areas should consider wildlife implications during the planning process.

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

## **Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

1. To maintain or enhance the natural diversity and population of wildlife, including natural predators in proper balance.
2. To restore stable populations of endangered or threatened wildlife in appropriate habitat areas.
3. To maintain or improve the natural diversity, population, and migratory routes of fish.

### **Policies**

1. Wildlife populations and natural diversity should be maintained or enhanced.
2. Long-term protection of major habitats through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives is encouraged.
3. It is the policy of the Town to protect deer wintering areas from developments and other uses that adversely impact the resources.

4. Development other than isolated houses and camps shall be designed so as to preserve continuous areas of wildlife habitat. Fragmentation of wildlife habitat is discouraged. Effort shall be made to maintain connecting links between such areas.
5. Preference shall be given to development that utilizes existing roads and field lines.

## **Recommendation**

1. Owners of necessary habitat for threatened species are encouraged to contact the State for assistance in developing a management plan for these sites.

## **Mineral Resources**

### **Background**

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

### **Goals and Policies**

#### **Goals**

1. To enable appropriate utilization of mineral resources.
2. To allow extraction and processing of the resource where such activities are appropriately managed and the public interest is clearly benefited thereby.

#### **Policies**

1. Existing and proposed mineral extraction and processing facilities should be planned, constructed, and managed:
  - So as not to adversely impact existing or planned uses within the vicinity of the project site;
  - To not significantly interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site;
  - To minimize any adverse effects on water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, and adjacent land uses; and
  - To reclaim and re-vegetate sites after their useful life.
  - To not result in a nuisance to neighboring property owners through noise or dust, nor be a burden on public services.

## **Agriculture**

Agriculture has been in decline in Rochester for quite a few years. There is only one dairy farm remaining in Rochester. Another is a producer of natural beef and poultry. Gardening continues to play an important role in the lives of many Rochester residents. There has been a weekly farmers market during the summer for the last few years. Many local families have their own fruit trees. There are several commercial producers of maple syrup in town.

## **Woodlands**

Rochester has a total of 36,608± acres. Of this 13,104± acres are in public ownership (including lands owned by the Town of Rochester, the State of Vermont and the Federal Government), the remainder is divided between industrial and private holdings. A forest products industry is absent in Rochester at the present time in spite of the industry holding an important part in the history of the town. Markets for raw products are found in other communities in Vermont, New York and north to Canada. The Town does not rely on the economic value of the forest products industry (stumpage, wages, equipment, services), but it does play a role in the Town's economy which should not be overlooked.

An equally important aspect of the woodlands is the aesthetic role they play in the valley. It is the mix of open valley lands with a backdrop of forested hillsides that draws hundreds (if not thousands) of visitors to this region. The woodlands also play an important role in the management of fish and wildlife resources and have a significant role in the protection of water resources.

Multiple-use forest management is encouraged. This type of forest management results in a sustained yield of forest products, protects and/or improves important watershed values, provides a diversity of wildlife habitat, and enhances a setting for many types of outdoor recreation. Advice and management services to private and industrial landowners is provided by the Vermont Department of Forest and Parks (Windsor County Forester), the RC&D forester, National Resource Conservation Service and private consulting foresters.

## **Plant Communities**

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

Invasive species are a growing problem in Vermont. Invasive species are defined as those species which spread from human settings (gardens, agricultural areas, etc.) into the wild. Once in the wild, invasive species may continue to reproduce, and displace native species causing biodiversity to suffer and throwing entire ecosystems out of alignment. Both Federal and State

governments have guidelines in place for handling invasive species and there are resources available to interested parties through the University of Vermont. While the list of invasives in Vermont is extensive, the most common invasives in Rochester seem to be Wild Chervil, Wild Parsnip and Japanese Knotweed.

## **IMPLEMENTATION of PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

As per section 4382 of Chapter 117, Vermont Municipal Regional Planning and Development Act, town plans shall include: "a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan." As part of Rochester's goals and objectives of this plan, several key elements have been identified which the Town can begin to address in the near future. These elements serve not only to guide growth and development, but to preserve those characteristics of Rochester which have been identified as being integral to the identity of the community and the quality of life that exists here.

### **Utilities and Facilities**

- Review police, rescue squad and fire protection needs on an annual basis.
- Encourage the relocation and construction of a new fire station and possible consolidation of emergency services with adjoining towns.
- Find new cemetery locations.
- Consider a sewage treatment facility to meet the expanding needs.
- Develop additional public parking areas in the center of the village.
- Encourage the local telecommunication companies to keep pace with the future demands of our local high-tech businesses and residential users.
- Identify opportunities for renewable energy sources.

### **Education**

- Support the improvement of existing school facilities to meet the educational needs of current and future students.

### **Transportation**

- Improve the quality of our Town road system and maintain scenic areas wherever possible.
- Extend the village sidewalks south of the Rochester Schools.
- Continue ongoing repaving and roadway maintenance programs.

### **Historic Resources**

- Maintain the historic features of the Park (trees, monument and band stand.)
- Consider establishing historic sites and designation of historic structures by working with the Rochester Historical Society and State Division of Historic Preservation.
- Explore opportunities for historic preservation with an emphasis on preserving places that are important parts of Rochester's identity.

## **Housing**

- The Planning Commission should continue to monitor areas of growth in the Town.
- Encourage suitable housing for all of Rochester.
- Encourage the conservation and protection of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage private sector development of new dwelling units compatible with existing neighborhoods.
- Assure the level of development activity does not overburden municipal resources.

## **Agriculture**

- Encourage the conservation of agricultural lands.
- Consider "Density Bonus Points" for the siting of structures which keeps agricultural land in production.

## **Natural Resources**

- Discourage activities that adversely affect streams, rivers and water resources.
- Encourage the maintenance of scenic qualities of rivers, streams and forests.
- Protect ground water quality.
- Develop appropriate guidelines for disposal, storage and use of toxic substances and sewage discharge in flood plain areas and around aquifers.
- Identify areas vital to rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species.
- Protect natural habitats of animal, birds, fish and plants.
- Work with appropriate state and federal agencies to preserve the natural resources in Rochester.
- Encourage the use of Best Management Practices of the resources on public and private lands.

## **Planning**

- Develop strategies for more public involvement in the planning process.
- Continue communication and cooperation between the Planning Commission and the Selectboard.
- Review and update the Rochester Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations and Flood Hazard Regulations.
- Encourage communication and cooperation between Rochester and its neighboring towns.

## **Economic Development**

- To encourage clean businesses to locate in Rochester.
- Continue to support the conversion of old village residences to commercial uses.