

STOCKBRIDGE TOWN PLAN

Presented By The
Stockbridge Planning Commission

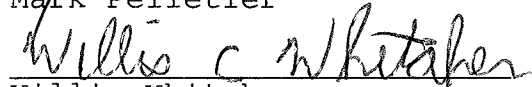
For Public Comment
May 11, 2010

Adopted by the Stockbridge Selectboard 7/1/10

Mark Doughty



Mark Pelletier



Willis Whitaker



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FOREWORD

This Plan is the municipal plan for Stockbridge. It has been prepared by the Stockbridge Planning Commission during the year, and is intended to replace the current Plan that is outdated. In Vermont, plans are limited to a period of five years, unless updated or readopted.

The Planning Commission welcomes your review and comments on this Plan. Please feel free to contact members of the Commission or to attend one of our meetings. Following review of your suggestions, it is our intent to revise this draft, as appropriate. Thank you.

Stockbridge Planning Commission

Richard Rivers, Chairperson

Jon Benson

Richard Favor

Richard Hart

Kyle Kershner

Barbara Vellturo

Mark Doughty

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
A. TOWN SETTING	1
B. TOWN HISTORY	1
C. PLANNING HISTORY	2
D. PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN.....	3
POPULATION	4
A. POPULATION PATTERNS AND TRENDS	4
B. INCOMES	7
C. FUTURE POPULATION TRENDS.....	8
ECONOMY	9
A. OCCUPATIONS	9
B. PLACES OF WORK.....	10
C. REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	11
D. CHILD CARE.....	12
<i>Recommendations</i>	12
E. FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	13
<i>Goals</i>	13
<i>Policies</i>	13
<i>Recommendation for Action</i>	13
TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES	14
A. FIRE PROTECTION	14
B. LAW ENFORCEMENT.....	14
C. SCHOOLS	14
D. RECREATION	15
E. PUBLIC SEWER/PUBLIC WATER.....	16
F. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT.....	16
G. TOWN GARAGE/OFFICES.....	16
<i>Goals</i>	17
<i>Policies</i>	17
<i>Recommendation For Action</i>	18
HOUSING	19
A. BACKGROUND.....	19
B. NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS.....	19
C. TYPE OF HOUSING AND OWNERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS	20
D. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS.....	21
E. HOUSING NEED AND AVAILABILITY	21
<i>Goals</i>	22
<i>Policies</i>	23
<i>Recommendation for Action</i>	23
NATURAL RESOURCES	24
A. WETLANDS.....	24
<i>Background</i>	24
<i>Goals</i>	25
<i>Policies</i>	25

B. FLOOD HAZARD AREAS AND FLOODPLAINS	25
<i>Background</i>	25
<i>Goals</i>	26
<i>Policies</i>	26
C. WATER RESOURCES	27
<i>Background</i>	27
<i>Goals</i>	27
<i>Policies</i>	28
D. WILDLIFE RESOURCES	29
<i>Background</i>	29
<i>Goals</i>	30
<i>Policies</i>	30
E. MINERAL RESOURCES	31
<i>Background</i>	31
<i>Goals</i>	31
<i>Policies</i>	31
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY	32
A. BACKGROUND.....	32
B. FARM AND FOREST LAND ISSUES	32
C. SUSTAINING AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY	33
<i>Goals</i>	34
<i>Policies</i>	34
<i>Recommendations for Action</i>	34
HISTORIC AND SCENIC RESOURCES	36
A. BACKGROUND.....	36
<i>Policies</i>	37
<i>Recommendations for Action</i>	37
TRANSPORTATION	39
A. INTRODUCTION.....	39
B. TOWN HIGHWAYS	39
C. STATE HIGHWAYS	40
D. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION	40
E. SCENIC ROADS	40
<i>Goals</i>	40
<i>Policies</i>	41
<i>Recommendations for Action</i>	41
ENERGY	42
A. BACKGROUND.....	42
<i>Goals</i>	43
<i>Policies</i>	43
<i>Recommendations for Action</i>	44
LAND USE.....	45
A. EXISTING LAND USE	45
<i>Chateaugay No Town Conservation Area (CNT)</i>	46
<i>Goals for the Chateaugay No Town Conservation Area</i>	48
<i>Policies for the Chateaugay No Town Conservation Area</i>	49
B. PROPOSED LAND USE.....	50
1. <i>Overall Land Use Goals</i>	50
2. <i>Village Residential District</i>	51
<i>Policies</i>	51

3. <i>Business Enterprise District</i>	52
<i>Policies</i>	52
4. <i>Rural Residential District</i>	53
<i>Policies</i>	54
5. <i>Upland Conservation District and Public Lands Area</i>	54
<i>Goals</i>	56
<i>Policies</i>	56
6. <i>Flood Protection District</i>	57
<i>Policies</i>	57
RELATIONSHIP OF STOCKBRIDGE’S PLANNING ACTIVITIES TO ITS NEIGHBORS.....	59
A. KEEPING THE PLAN REALISTIC AND RELEVANT	59
B. NEIGHBORING TOWN PLANNING ACTIVITIES	59
C. REGIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES	60
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	61
A. REGULATORY METHODS	61
1. <i>Plan Adoption</i>	61
2. <i>Plan Maintenance and Adoption</i>	61
3. <i>Bylaws</i>	61
4. <i>Act 250</i>	62
5. <i>Health Regulations</i>	62
6. <i>Highway Ordinance</i>	62
B. NON-REGULATORY METHODS	63

INTRODUCTION

A. Town Setting

The Town of Stockbridge is located in the northwestern portion of Windsor County, Vermont. It comprises an area of approximately 28,300 acres, or 45.41 square miles.

Stockbridge is bordered by six other towns, Barnard to the east, Bridgewater and Sherburne to the south, Bethel and Rochester to the north, and Pittsfield to the west.

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

Generally, the soils of the hillsides and woodlands of Stockbridge were formed by the glaciers and are typically shallow, stony, and present limitations ranging from moderate to severe for community development involving septic tank sewerage disposal and road construction. These limitations increase in their severity in direct proportion to slope percentages.

The soils in the river and brook valleys have been formed in water-deposited materials on terraces and old lake plains. Community development within these soils is limited by flooding potential. When out of the flood prone areas, soils are generally favorable for on-site sewage systems, roads, and building foundations.

B. Town History

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

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

In 1786, Elais Keyes established a grist mill and later a saw mill at "The Narrows", later known as Gaysville, so named for its founders Daniel and Jeremiah Gay. Gaysville flourished as a manufacturing center, powered by the waters of the White River. A button shop, sawmills, grist mills, schools, churches, several general stores, a woolen mill, snowshoe shop, and many homes were at one time located at Gaysville. Stockbridge Village was also a major area manufacturing

center boasting two stores, a school, a sawmill, a church, and a tannery. The maximum population of Stockbridge of 1,327 was reached in 1850.

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

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

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

C. Planning History

1. Town Plan

Stockbridge has had a Town Plan in effect since 1976, which was developed with the assistance of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. As per Section 4387 of the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, this plan will expire five years from the date of its adoption by the Town Selectmen.

2. Bylaws

Stockbridge adopted Zoning Bylaws in 1976.

Since this time, the zoning regulations have been administered by several administrative officers. Conformance with the requirements of the bylaws has been achieved with few problems.

The Zoning Bylaws prescribe permitted and conditional uses for the Flood Protection, Upland Conservation, Village Residential, Rural Residential, and Business Enterprise Districts as identified on the Zoning Map.

Stockbridge adopted Subdivision Regulations which were in effect since 1979. These regulations provide the Town with the ability to regulate future land subdivisions.

Since 1975, Stockbridge has had in effect Health Regulations. These Regulations provide for review and approval of all wastewater disposal systems prior to construction.

D. Purposes and Objectives of the Plan

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

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

Furthermore, this Plan shall further the following objectives:

- a. To protect the rural residential character of Stockbridge.
- b. To protect and enhance the scenic and recreational amenities of the Town of Stockbridge.
- c. To protect steep slopes, soils, forests, water and other natural resources, and to provide open space for wildlife habitat.
- d. To promote development within the Town of Stockbridge consistent with the ability of the Town to provide services.
- e. To promote development of Stockbridge in such a way as will protect and enhance residential areas, and not cause undue concentrations of population, buildings, traffic, congestion, or loss of peace, quiet, and privacy.
- f. To protect agricultural and forest lands, so as to maintain and enhance their productive capabilities.
- g. To maintain and enhance the freedom, rights, privileges, and responsibilities of all citizens of Stockbridge.
- h. To prevent the development of land clearly incapable of supporting, from a physical standpoint, the type or intensity of land use being proposed.

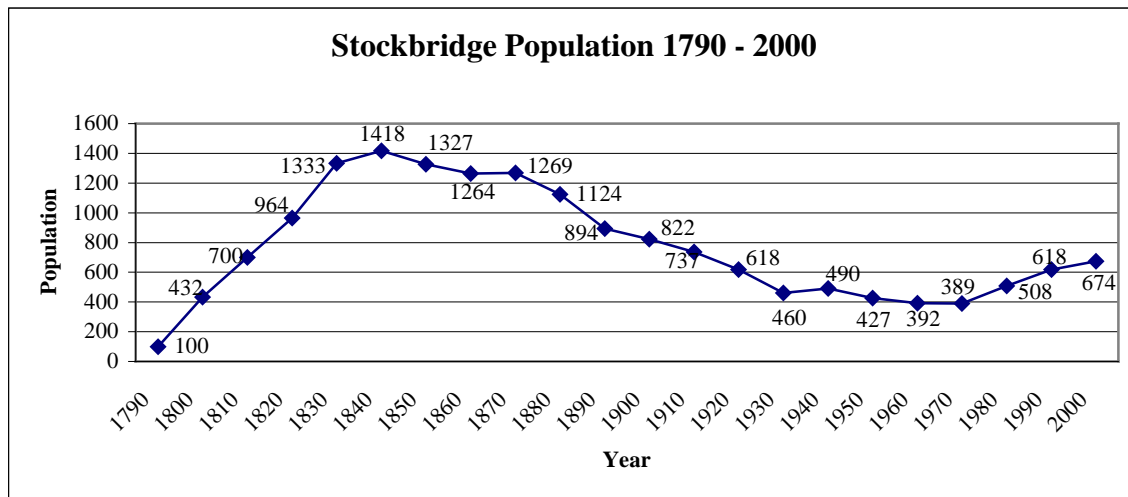
POPULATION

A. Population Patterns and Trends

Population when considered in terms of past, present, and future statistics, comprises an important aspect in the overall development of Stockbridge. Unanticipated and rapid population increases can create a demand for new and expanded municipal services. This could strain the financial ability of the Town to provide public services equitably. This is especially true in instances where new residents are attending local schools and the schools are at or near capacity.

With wise planning for population change, the services that a growing population will demand can be provided more efficiently and economically.

Outlined below are population counts for Stockbridge compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau from 1791 to 2000. Note that population counts continued on a decline from a high of about 1,400 in 1840, to a low of 389 in 1970. Since 1970, population levels have increased. The population in Stockbridge for 2000 was 674. Compared to 618 in 1980, this was a 9.1% increase; a slower rate of growth than the 21.7% that was experienced over the 1980s. The 9.1% rate of growth in Stockbridge was the median in a comparative list of rates of growth; it was a higher rate of growth than either Windsor County or the State of Vermont experienced. As the case in most of Vermont, the primary factor influencing population change is due to people moving into Stockbridge rather than an unusually high rate of births or deaths.



Figure

1- STOCKBRIDGE POPULATION 1790 - 2000

Source: U.S. Census

Population in Selected Towns, Windsor County & Vermont				
	1970	1980	1990	2000
Barnard	569	790	872	958
Bethel	1,347	1,715	1,866	1,968
Bridgewater	783	867	895	980
Killington	558	891	738	1,095
Pittsfield	249	396	389	427
Rochester	884	1,054	1,181	1,171
Stockbridge	389	508	618	674
Windsor County	44,082	51,030	54,055	57,418
Vermont	444,330	511,456	562,758	608,827

Figure 2- POPULATION in SELECTED AREAS 1970 – 2000

Source: U.S. Census

Percentage of Population Change 1970 - 2000			
	1970 - 1980	1980 - 1990	1990 - 2000
Barnard	28.0%	10.4%	9.9%
Bethel	21.5%	8.8%	5.5%
Bridgewater	9.7%	3.2%	9.5%
Killington	37.4%	-17.2%	48.4%
Pittsfield	37.1%	-1.8%	9.8%
Rochester	16.1%	12.0%	-0.8%
Stockbridge	23.4%	21.7%	9.1%
Windsor County	13.6%	5.9%	6.2%
Vermont	13.1%	10.0%	8.2%

Figure 3- POPULATION CHANGE in SELECTED AREAS 1970 – 2000

Source: U.S. Census

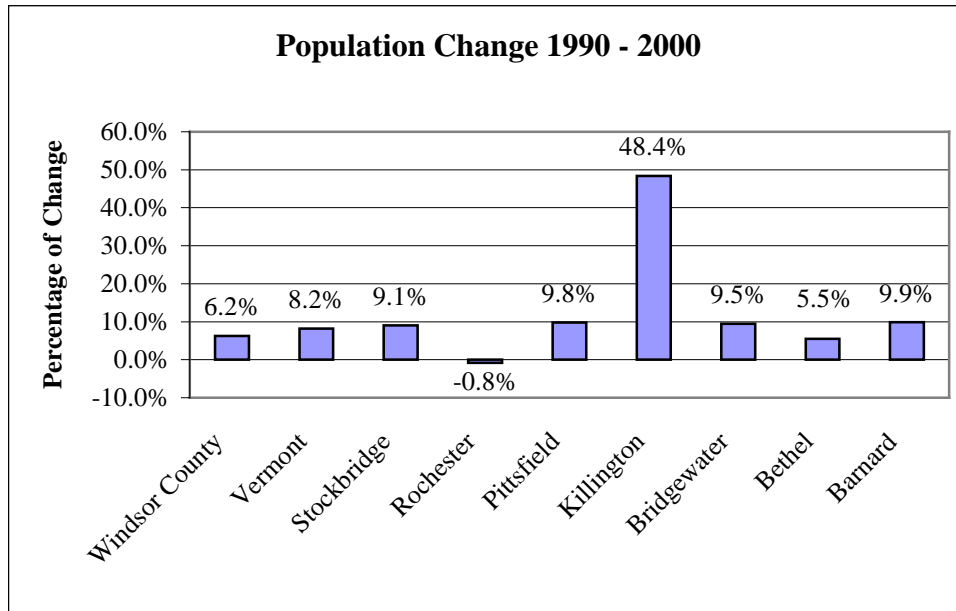


Figure 4- POPULATION CHANGE 1990 – 2000

Source: U.S. Census

	Stockbridge	Windsor County	Vermont
Under 5 years	6.7%	5.0%	5.6%
5-9 years	6.4%	6.3%	6.8%
10-14 years	5.9%	7.5%	7.5%
15-19 years	5.2%	6.6%	7.5%
20-24 years	3.6%	3.9%	6.2%
25-34 years	11.0%	10.8%	12.2%
35-44 years	18.2%	16.5%	16.7%
45-54 years	15.6%	16.7%	15.4%
55-59 years	7.0%	6.2%	5.4%
60-64 years	4.9%	4.7%	4.0%
65-74 years	9.8%	8.1%	6.7%
75-84 years	3.6%	5.7%	4.4%
85 years and over	2.2%	2.0%	1.6%
65 years and over	15.6%	15.8%	12.7%
Median age in years	41.3	41.3	37.7

Figure 5- STOCKBRIDGE DISTRIBUTION of POPULATION by AGE in 2000

Source: U.S. Census

Stockbridge and Windsor County had very similar age profiles; they had identical median ages, and their populations aged 65 and over were nearly identical. The profiles differed in that Windsor County had slightly larger populations of youth (aged 24 and younger), and Stockbridge had slightly larger percentages of people aged 25 to 44 years old. A similar distinction can be made between Stockbridge and the State of Vermont. Vermont had larger percentages in the younger age groups, where Stockbridge had larger percentages in the older age groups; this is evidenced by the State's lower median age, and smaller percentage of those aged 65 years old and over.

As for place of birth, data from the 2000 Census show that 51.4% of the population in Stockbridge was born in Vermont. This was higher than the 36.6% in Windsor County, but slightly lower than the 54.3% reported statewide.

B. Incomes

The Vermont Department of Taxes publishes tax statistics which include a summary of personal income tax returns filed with the State. For 2001, 299 personal income tax returns were filed from residents in Stockbridge; five hundred and nine (509) exemptions were claimed. Total adjusted personal income reported for Stockbridge residents was \$8.6 million. Stockbridge, compared with the State, had larger percentages of returns filed for incomes of \$19,999 and lower, as well as for incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,999. Conversely, Stockbridge had a significantly lower percentage of returns filed for incomes of \$75,000 and higher.

Tax Returns Listed by Income Grouping - 2001			
	Stockbridge - Number of Returns	Stockbridge - Percentage of Returns	Vermont - Percentage of Returns
Negative	0	0.0%	1.0%
None/Missing	0	0.0%	0.3%
\$0 - \$9,999	44	14.7%	19.1%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	74	24.7%	17.3%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	46	15.4%	15.4%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	63	21.1%	19.4%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	55	18.4%	14.5%
\$75,000 & Higher	17	5.7%	12.9%
Total Number of Returns:	299		289,095

FIGURE 6- PERCENTAGE of TAX RETURNS by INCOME GROUPING in 2001

Source: Vermont Department of Taxes, 2003; <http://www.state.vt.us/tax/statistics.htm>.

According to the 2000 Census, the per capita income for Vermonters was \$20,625; it was \$22,369 for Windsor County. The per capita income in Stockbridge was \$21,379, in between the

State and County figures. Per capita income is derived by dividing the aggregate income of an area by the total population of that area.

The median family income in 2000 for Stockbridge was \$44,821; this was lower than the State and the County. The median family income for Windsor County was \$49,002; the State's median was \$48,625.

C. Future Population Trends

Future population changes are functions of two primary components; natural changes in population (births and deaths) and extent of migration into or out of the Town. The State of Vermont - Office of Policy Research and Coordination, in conjunction with the Department of Health, conducted a study on population trends and forecasts. In its report, Vermont Population Projections, (1990-2005) published in December 1989, two important trends emerged. Migration of families into the State has increased significantly and birth rates continue to decline overall.

Using past population data trends and demographic factors, the report provides a forecast for Stockbridge. It needs to be noted that the forecast cannot attempt to identify unexpected changes in local conditions, such as a major housing development or industry moving into the area.

Overall the growth in population for the Region was not projected to be dramatic. Regional growth was anticipated to be in the range of 4%-5% during 1995-2005. For Stockbridge, growth rates for the ten year period were projected to range between 8% and 10% with a high projection for 2005 being 662. As evidenced by the 674 population count for Stockbridge in 2000, the projection has already been exceeded.

In summary, the area is not expected to experience a “boom era” over the next ten years. Rather, growth will be moderate to slow. Living in rural Vermont presents a certain mystique for persons seeking a rugged lifestyle and the varying seasons. Thus, Stockbridge, like other small communities, is a haven for young families and retirees. Despite the lack of high paying jobs, a large number of families are willing to remain or relocate here for the reasons cited above.

ECONOMY

A. Occupations

The 2000 Census contained information on what Stockbridge residents do for work and the number employed. More than half of the 363 people that live in Stockbridge work in professional and/or office occupations. Roughly 15% work in service sector jobs, and 25% work in construction, earth moving, or material moving occupations.

Compared to the County and the State, Stockbridge had a smaller percentage of residents working in management or professional occupations, and larger percentages of residents working in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations, and production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

Occupations in Stockbridge, Windsor County & Vermont			
	Stockbridge	Windsor County	Vermont
Management/Professional occupations	29.8%	36.8%	36.3%
Service occupations	14.9%	15.3%	14.6%
Sales and Office occupations	27.5%	24.1%	24.5%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	2.8%	1.0%	1.3%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance occupations	10.5%	9.5%	9.3%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations	14.6%	13.3%	14.0%

Figure 7- OCCUPATION of RESIDENTS in 2000

Source: U.S. Census

Educational Attainment in Stockbridge, Windsor County, VT and U.S.				
	Stockbridge	Windsor County	Vermont	United States
High School graduate or higher	88.4%	88.1%	86.4%	80.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	24.6%	30.2%	29.4%	24.4%
Graduate or Professional degree	6.3%	11.9%	11.1%	8.9%

Figure 8- EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT in 2000

Source: U.S. Census

Stockbridge had a higher percentage of high school graduates than the County, State, and Nation, but lower percentages of residents that went on to higher education.

B. Places of Work

The 1990 Census Transportation Planning Package contains information on origin and destination patterns of residents and workers. Through analysis of this data, a determination can be made regarding a worker's place of work and place of residence. This information reveals some interesting characteristics for Stockbridge.

For 1990, 303 workers 16 years or older who did not work at home were commuters to or within Stockbridge. Seventy-three (73) or 24% of Stockbridge's workers who commuted, lived in Stockbridge. As might be expected, a fairly large number of commuters were from area towns in close proximity to Stockbridge. Outlined below is a breakdown of key places from which commuters come to work in Stockbridge.

TABLE 1: COMMUTERS TO STOCKBRIDGE - 1990 CTPP FILES

Stockbridge	73
Royalton	36
Sherburne	30
Pittsfield	23
Randolph	19
Rutland City	15
Bethel	15
Woodstock	15

Source: 1990 U.S. Census - Census Transportation Planning Package

Workers from those communities above, excluding Stockbridge, represented 71% of the total commuting work force for workers employed in Stockbridge, but not living here. Where do the residents of Stockbridge work? Of the 198 workers who did not work at home, as reported above, 73 were commuters within their own hometown. As expected, most of the others worked close by in neighboring communities. See Table below.

TABLE 2: COMMUTERS FROM STOCKBRIDGE - 1990 CTPP FILES

Stockbridge	73
Rochester	34
Randolph	22
Bethel	18
Pittsfield	10
Montpelier	10
Granville	9
Rutland	8

Source: 1990 U.S. Census - Census Transportation Planning Package

As noted above, a vast majority of the Town’s workforce is employed outside of Stockbridge. Available from the Census Bureau at the writing of this plan were data on modes of commuting. Stockbridge had a higher percentage of residents that drove single-occupancy vehicles to work. Stockbridge residents had a longer commute to work: four and a half minutes longer than the Region’s average commute, and roughly 7 minutes longer than the commutes of the State or County. Stockbridge also had a smaller percentage of residents working at home.

Regional Commute to Work - Mode of Transportation 2000							
	Car, Truck, Van (driven alone)	Car, Truck, Van (carpooled)	Public Transportation (includes taxis)	Walked	Other means of Transportation	Worked at Home	Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)
Stockbridge	82.3%	11.0%	0.0%	2.8%	0.8%	3.1%	28.7
TR-O Region	73.2%	13.1%	0.4%	4.9%	0.9%	7.6%	24.2
Vermont	75.2%	11.9%	0.7%	5.6%	0.9%	5.7%	21.6
Windsor County	76.4%	12.0%	0.5%	4.2%	0.8%	6.1%	21.3

Figure 9- COMMUTING to WORK in 2000

Source: U.S. Census

C. Regional Employment and Economic Development

Population projections indicate that the number of people entering the work force in the next decade (1990-2000) will increase despite relatively low unemployment levels. The number of jobs created within the White River Valley area relative to the natural growth in the work force will affect future population of the area, including housing. If few jobs are created, workers will be forced to migrate elsewhere outside of the area. Rapid job formation, exceeding natural job growth, will result in a net in-migration of people.

Stockbridge operates in a regional economy. Cooperation and coordination among neighboring employment center communities is essential to secure the proper balance between population, employment and housing. As noted above, natural work force changes in Stockbridge (job entries versus job attrition rates) can more than likely be accommodated in the Upper Valley. Beyond this, new industries or commercial expansions in the employment centers of the Upper Valley and Rutland regions will place growth pressures on surrounding towns to provide services and housing. The cost of providing schooling and other government services to new households is the primary reason for the Town to be concerned about the number of new jobs created. The income to provide these services comes from property taxes and, on average, property taxes paid on residences do not cover the full costs of providing services to families residing year round in those homes.

D. Child Care

In Stockbridge, as in many other Vermont towns, the lack of sufficient affordable and available childcare impacts the ability of residents to obtain employment. A report by the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Planning division shows only a 34.1 percent met need for child care in this area (Stockbridge, Bethel, Rochester, Pittsfield, Granville and Hancock) in 2002. A “before school hours” program in the Stockbridge elementary school provides some care for school age children, although there is no “after school” program. There are presently two approved child care providers in town, although some of the children in their care come from outside of Stockbridge. Those providers agree that there is a need for more child care in this community – neither has the capacity to take in additional full time children. Finding acceptable nearby childcare is a problem for many local families and limits the ability of both parents to seek and obtain good jobs.

Stockbridge’s present zoning regulations pose little or no hindrance to persons who wish to provide daycare within the town. However, the Stockbridge Planning Commission should support any efforts to expand the availability of local child care.

In 2003, the Vermont Legislature added a thirteenth goal to Chapter 117. “To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.”

The Utility/facility map should locate the licensed day care facilities in Stockbridge. The town of Stockbridge supports the private development of additional facilities to meet the needs of its residents.

Recommendations

1. Work with the regional planning commission to conduct a needs assessment analysis.
2. Maintain an inventory of all child care programs.
3. Address barriers to increasing capacity created by zoning regulations.
4. Work with developers to consider the child care impacts of their developments.
5. Consider seeking grant funds to assist with the development of child care infrastructure.

The following are the current licensed childcare facilities in Stockbridge:

Karen Furman
Box 239
Stockbridge, VT 05772

Laurie Novotny
Route 100 Box 19
Stockbridge, VT 05772

E. Future Economic Development

Future economic investment in Stockbridge can have a significant economic impact on the community. Discussion and coordination regarding future land use development options should be encouraged between the community and economic development interests. For the larger and more complex projects, review and analysis of proposed developments should measure community-wide impacts on the financial capacity of government to service the economic development and likely mitigation measures to accommodate such growth in the most equitable manner.

Goals

1. To nurture a strong and diverse regional economy that provides satisfying and rewarding employment opportunities for residents while maintaining environmental standards.
2. To strengthen and maintain the town's agricultural and forest economies and to ensure continuance of small town village and rural character.

Policies

1. It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with neighboring towns, regional planning commissions and economic development groups to plan for and maintain a balance between the type and number of jobs created and natural population growth in the area.
2. It is the policy of the Town to support the development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services.
3. It is the policy of the Town to encourage new business development in appropriate locations where services such as roads, fire protection and power supply are available or planned.
4. It is the policy of the Town to support creation of regional economies that do not place unreasonable financial burdens on the taxpayers of Stockbridge to support those economies.
5. It is the policy of the Town to attract diverse and sustainable businesses in Stockbridge which contribute to the small town quality of life.
6. It is the policy of the Town to provide for reasonable zoning standards enabling home occupations and home businesses to be developed or to continue.

Recommendation for Action

1. Zoning regulations should be reviewed and perhaps revised to insure that there are distinct areas suitable for high density economic development. Such areas should be proximate to existing village centers, roads, utilities, and have favorable sites characteristics. This will encourage a traditional growth pattern and lessen commercial sprawl throughout the Town.

TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES

A. Fire Protection

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

At present there are fifteen volunteers, five of whom are inactive. Fire department equipment consists of a 1988 pumper truck, one forest fire truck (750 gallons) and three portable pumps. The Red Phone System was replaced in 1984 with 24-hour dispatch service with beepers for each fireman. It is hoped this change and the maintenance of modern equipment will help to provide responsive service and reduce homeowner's insurance rates.

B. Law Enforcement

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

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

C. Schools

The Stockbridge School Board serves the Townspeople to establish policy, and oversee academic programs and budgets for the education of K-6 students of Stockbridge.

The Planning Commission recognizes the impact that land use decisions can have on the ability of the Town to provide education services. Any large development, with the potential of increasing the number of students beyond that for which the School Board has planned, could significantly affect the Town of Stockbridge.

At present, any major, unexpected increase in the student population could test the physical capacity of the expanded Stockbridge facility, the quality of primary education provided to Stockbridge children, or the ability of the town to provide educational services.

Stockbridge Central School - General School Information					
	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Vermont (most recent)
Total School Enrollment	47	51	55	74	100,867
Attendance Rate	96.5%	96.8%	95.8%	95.2%	94.7%
Retention Rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
Average Class Size	13.4	14.6	15.7	15.3	16.6
Student/Teacher Ratio	11.8	10.5	11.5	13.1	11.4
Eligible Special Education	6.4%	7.8%	9.1%	5.4%	13.5%
9-12 Dropout Rate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.7%
Home Study (Number)	2	3	4	2	1,819

Figure 10- STOCKBRIDGE CENTRAL SCHOOL 1998 - 2002

Source: Vermont Department of Education School Report, 2003;
<http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt/cfusion/schlrpt02/complete.cfm?psid=PS285&city=27095>

For grades 7-12, students are tuitioned to neighboring schools with costs being paid by the District. For 1997/1998, it is anticipated that 26 students will attend Whitcomb High School in Bethel, and 19 will attend Woodstock Union High School, with the remainder attending schools in Sharon, Randolph or Rutland. *(Barb—if you call the Supervisory Union, they can give you this information for 2003—2004.)*

Significant changes are likely in Vermont’s educational system at both the State and local level due to the recent Vermont Supreme Court decision declaring Vermont’s current funding system unconstitutional. Presently, the Vermont legislature is evaluating several proposals to provide “equal educational opportunities”. What is apparent is that the impact of the reform could be significant on who pays for the expense of education and the extent of programs to be offered by school districts.

D. Recreation

The Town of Stockbridge provides no formal recreation facilities or services. This is not to say that recreation opportunities do not exist within the Town, in fact, recreation opportunities abound.

Of note are the numerous swimming holes to be found along the White and Tweed Rivers. These spectacular spots are major summer recreation sites, attracting people from throughout the region. Access to these swimming holes is often through private land holdings. Should these accesses be threatened, a major loss to Stockbridge and its residents would result.

The stretches to the White River passing through Stockbridge also attract people from throughout the region for tubing, rafting, boating and fishing. Of note here is the Salmon Fisheries Restoration Project being carried out on the Bethel stretches of the river. It is hoped

that salmon populations can be restored to the White River, in which case Stockbridge has the potential of attracting major numbers of fishermen during that season. Again, access to the river is a major concern in order that residents of Stockbridge and other areas might enjoy the benefits of this Federal program.

Due to the considerable acreage of State and Federal lands within the Town of Stockbridge, further recreation opportunities for fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, etc. abound.

E. Public Sewer/Public Water

At present, there are no municipally owned public water or sewage disposal systems in Stockbridge.

It is not anticipated that any such systems will be constructed or proposed during the five year life of this Plan.

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

F. Solid Waste Management

The Town of Stockbridge contracts with Benson Rubbish Removal for weekly roadside solid waste and monthly pick-up. Annual costs to the Town for the service are approximately \$29,000. Both disposable waste and recyclable items are taken to the Bethel-Royalton Transfer Station in Royalton, off Route 107. The Town of Bethel charges Stockbridge a tipping fee for this waste. Northeast Waste Services, Inc. collects refuse from the station which is taken to its final destination and disposed in a state certified facility.

For several years, an alliance consisting of area towns has been evaluating future solid waste disposal options within the White River Valley. Participating communities include Stockbridge, Pittsfield, Rochester, Bethel, Royalton, Barnard and Granville. Town representatives to the Alliance have been focusing their efforts on waste reduction, recycling, and alternative means to disposal at an economical cost.

G. Town Garage/Offices

The Town Garage, located on “Blackmer Boulevard”, houses the Highway and Volunteer Fire Department equipment. At present, this facility, located on .57 acres of land, may be adequate for interior equipment storage and maintenance, but is small for certain exterior Highway Department storage such as winter sand. The building may also be inadequate for future expansion of the equipment needs of the Town Volunteer Fire Department.

In late 2003, a new Stockbridge Town Office was built on Route 100, adjacent to the existing Stockbridge Post Office. The new building is attractive and conveniently located, and contains both adequate office and meeting space and sufficient vault storage space to meet the town's needs for the foreseeable future.

Goals

1. To encourage public investments in governmental and public utility facilities, services, and lands which support existing and future needs within or near the villages, or other designated and planned growth areas.
2. To avoid unnecessary or unreasonable disruption or endangerment of agricultural and other conservation areas, by discouraging location of principal public utilities and facilities in rural areas.
3. To foster a partnership between public investment planning and implementation activities and the private sector, in a manner which advances the goals and policies set forth in this Plan.
4. To ensure that the expansion or construction of new facilities and utilities do not impose an undue financial burden on governmental resources and taxpayers.
5. To promote effective, efficient and accessible public services, including schools, health care facilities and libraries.
6. To support innovative and stable sources facility funding to supplement traditional funding resources which have become limited or are no longer available.

Policies

1. The scale, type, and design of major public utilities and facilities should be undertaken so as to complement the future land use settlement patterns recommended in this Plan.
2. It is in the interest of the Town to promote environmentally sound and affordable wastewater treatment facilities to concentrate development in selected growth areas and to advocate for research and reform for existing on-site sewage laws, and programs.
3. The Town discourages land development within existing or planned wellhead protection areas which pose reasonable threat of contamination to public water supplies.
4. The Town encourages installation of community wastewater treatment facilities and water supply systems in areas of concentrated settlement where conventional on-site septic systems have failed or are marginally inadequate.
5. New land development shall be discouraged where it is found that the necessary supportive governmental facilities services are unavailable or have not been planned for or when new development places an excessive or uneconomic demand on such services. To mitigate or prevent any such unreasonable burdens, use of permit conditions, impact fees, exactions, and similar methods are acceptable alternatives.

Recommendation for Action

1. It may be in the Town's interest to investigate purchase of easements or rights-of-way for public access to the White and Tweed Rivers.

HOUSING

A. Background

This section discusses the number, type, ownership characteristics, values, market characteristics, need and availability of housing in Stockbridge. Much of the data collected for housing has been compiled from U.S. Census Report, Town Listing Records, and Property Transfer Tax Reports. Data collected from these sources does not match exactly due to variations in record-keeping and classifications. In spite of this, the information provided below can serve as a reasonable basis on which to evaluate Stockbridge’s future housing goals, policies, and implementation measures.

B. Number of Housing Units

A housing unit as defined by the U.S. Census includes houses, apartments, mobile homes, and rooms for occupancy. According to the U.S. Census data, there were 528 housing units in Stockbridge in 2000; 488 housing units in 1990; and 413 housing units in 1980. The average annual rate of housing growth over the 1990s was 4 units per year, down from the 7.5 units per year experienced over the 1980s. The increase of 40 units, including second-homes, created an 8.2% rate of growth housing units in Stockbridge. This rate was consistent with the State’s rate of growth, but was higher than the rate experienced in Windsor County and the Two Rivers – Ottauquechee Region. Amongst its neighbors, Stockbridge had the highest rate of growth, followed closely by Bethel.

Change in Housing Units 1980 - 2000							
	1980 Housing Units	1990 Housing Units	2000 Housing Units	Change in Units 1980-1990	Percentage of Change 1980-1990	Change in Units 1990-2000	Percentage of Change 1990-2000
Barnard	555	607	629	52	9.4%	22	3.6%
Bethel	823	888	956	65	7.9%	68	7.7%
Bridgewater	486	571	582	85	17.5%	11	1.9%
Killington	1,111	2,470	2,528	1,359	122.3%	58	2.3%
Pittsfield	298	401	393	103	34.6%	-8	-2.0%
Rochester	662	737	768	75	11.3%	31	4.2%
Stockbridge	413	488	528	75	18.2%	40	8.2%
TR-O Region:	16,433	19,220	20,442	2,787	17.0%	1,222	6.4%
Windsor County:	24,275	29,849	31,621	5,574	23.0%	1,772	5.9%
Vermont:	223,199	271,214	294,382	48,015	21.5%	23,168	8.5%

Figure 11- HOUSING UNIT CHANGE 1980 – 2000

Source: U.S. Census

C. Type of Housing and Ownership Characteristics

Data from the 2000 Census for Stockbridge indicated that 451 (85.1%) of the housing stock was in single-family homes; the bulk of the remainder was made up of multi-unit housing and mobile homes. Multi-unit housing (mostly duplex structures) constituted 7.4% of the housing stock, or 39 units. The thirty-five mobile homes in town constituted 6.6% of the Stockbridge housing supply. Boats, recreational vehicles, and vans rounded out the supply with 0.9%.

Annually, the Stockbridge Listers certify the Grand List. This certification is sent to the Division of Property Valuation and Review. The Division maintains a listing of property categories by types including the number of vacation and year-round residences. Three trends emerge after reviewing the data from 1981 to 2001: the percentage of year-round residences increased after dipping in 1995; the percentage of vacation homes decreased after peaking in 1995; and the percentage of mobile homes on the grand list has steadily increased. The Stockbridge Listers do not use the same methods of classifying or defining housing as the Census Bureau does; as a result, there are differences in the data.

Stockbridge Grand Lists - Residential Elements						
	2001		1995		1981	
Year-Round Residences	215	44.9%	188	42.2%	173	43.7%
Vacation Homes	229	47.8%	232	52.0%	204	51.5%
Mobile Homes	35	7.3%	26	5.8%	19	4.8%
Residential Totals	479		446		396	

Figure 12- RESIDENCES on the 2001 GRAND LIST

Source: Vermont Department of Taxes - Property Valuation and Review, 2001.

Percentage of the Total Equalized Value that is Owned by Residents whose Primary Residence is in that Town - 2002	
Barnard	50.77%
Bethel	74.92%
Bridgewater	44.66%
Killington	17.35%
Pittsfield	47.26%
Rochester	55.16%
Stockbridge	43.33%
Windsor County	55.87%
Vermont:	59.21%

Figure 13- LOCAL OWNERSHIP by VALUATION in 2002

Source: Vermont Department of Taxes, 2003;

<http://www.state.vt.us/tax/pdf/pvr/2003annualreport/ResidentOwnershipbyCounty.pdf>

Compared to neighboring town, the County and the State, Stockbridge has a relatively low percentage of its grand list value that is owned by the people whose primary residence is in Stockbridge. Nearly 60% of the real estate value in Vermont is owned by people making the State their primary residence; that number is 43% in Stockbridge. The neighboring ski resort town of Killington represents the low in the group with roughly 17%, while the traditional center of Bethel represents the high with 75%.

As for tenure, the 2000 Census reported that of the 530 housing units in Stockbridge, 281 (53%) were occupied. The definition of an occupied housing unit is: “A housing unit that is the usual place of residence of the person, or group of people, living in it at the time of enumeration.” Of the 281 occupied units in Stockbridge, 88.3% were occupied by their owners, and 11.7% were occupied by people renting the unit. This percentage of owner-occupied units has increased from the 1990 rate of 81%.

D. Household Characteristics

Stockbridge, like many communities in Vermont and the nation, has experienced a trend towards a smaller household size. This trend is not likely to be reversed. Coupled with the increase in population generally, this results in an increased demand for housing. This trend will affect the number and type of units required in Stockbridge. Several special population and household groups, such as the elderly and single head-of-households, can be identified as having these particular housing needs. For the year 2000, the average household size was 2.4; this was down from the 1990 figure of 2.6, and a further reduction from the 3 persons per household that was reported in 1980.

E. Housing Need and Availability

The average purchase price of a home in Stockbridge in 2002 was \$160,988; this is based on the transfer-tax filings received by the Vermont Department of Taxes. The Department of Taxes defines the “average home price” as the mean selling price of all single family, primary residence homes for the given year. The average home price in Stockbridge was comparable to that for Vermont’s value of \$160,767, but was lower than the Windsor County value of \$170,532. Approximately eight homes were sold in Stockbridge in 2002, while four building permits were reported for 2001.

The minimum income necessary to purchase a home priced at \$160,767 and not spend more than 30% on housing is \$48,296. Households that pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs are considered to be living unaffordably; income is being diverted from other costs to cover high housing costs.

The 2000 Census reported the median household income in Stockbridge to be \$37,292; the median family income reported for Stockbridge was \$44,821. The annual average wage paid by jobs in Stockbridge in 2001 was \$30,127. The median incomes, and annual average wage, illustrate the financial challenges faced by people looking to purchase a home in Stockbridge, or

maintain the financial commitment needed to retain their home in Stockbridge while valuations and taxes rise. The numbers depict a gap in the ability of local residents to afford housing in the town in which they already live or work. The cost of housing exceeds the financial resources of many households which results in longer commutes to more affordable communities, or strained incomes that spend increasingly larger percentages of income on housing.

Housing Affordability in Stockbridge, Windsor County, and Vermont			
	Stockbridge	Windsor County	Vermont
Percentage of Owners paying 30% or more of their household income on Housing:	18.2%	23.7%	23.1%
Percentage of Renters paying 30% or more of their household income on Housing:	37.5%	35.2%	37.5%

Figure 14- HOUSING AFFORDABILITY in 2000

Source: U.S. Census

The 2000 Census reported that Stockbridge has a lower percentage of home owners that are living unaffordably (paying more than 30% on their housing); but the percentage of renters living unaffordably is higher than in Windsor County, and equal to the State.

The solution to the affordable housing problem is complex. It needs to reflect the social, cultural, and economic values through which the Town desires to prosper. Recognizing that affordable housing serves the public good with benefits for the Town is difficult to accept by some. Reducing housing costs for low and moderate income families, the elderly, and other groups has been effectively accomplished through below market interest subsidies on mortgages.

Much of this has been a result of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) in cooperation with conventional lending institutions. VHFA has assisted many Stockbridge families in financing their homes. This trend will continue as the gap between income and housing costs is not expected to close over the next several years.

Goals

1. To continue to promote sufficient affordable primary housing for Stockbridge residents by revitalization of existing or construction of new housing.
2. To assist the Stockbridge community to more closely attain the income of the average Vermont household.
3. To encourage innovative planning, design and construction of primary housing which minimizes the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of housing.

Policies

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

Recommendation for Action

To better undertake the goals and policies set forth above, the following implementation measures are recommended.

1. Community leaders should work with state housing agencies, non-profit organizations, and lending institutions to insure the availability of loan or grant funds for Stockbridge residents to acquire or improve their primary homes.

NATURAL RESOURCES

A. Wetlands

Background

Wetlands are ecologically fragile areas and are considered part of the interface between land and water. How these lands are managed have a direct bearing on the quality and quantity of water resources.

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

1. Retaining storm water run-off, reducing flood peaks and thereby reducing flooding;
2. Improving surface water quality through storage of organic materials, chemical decomposition and filtration of sediments and other matter from surface water;
3. Providing spawning, feeding and general habitat for fish;
4. Providing a wide diversity of habitat for wildlife and protection of rare, threatened or endangered species of plants and animals; and
5. Contributing to 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 items 1-5 above. Rules establish three classes of wetlands that are used to determine the level of protection. Class 1 and Class 2 wetlands are "significant wetlands" and are regulated. Class 1 wetlands are wetlands determined by the Vermont Water Resources Board as exceptional or irreplaceable. Class 2 wetlands are significant and are sometimes contiguous to Class 1 wetlands. Class 3 wetlands are not regulated by the Vermont Wetland Rules, but can be protected by other regulations or laws.

Under the rules, if land development can be expected to impact a Class 1 or 2 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 Stockbridge, as well as the State, the most significant wetlands have been mapped and are included as part of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) prepared by the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service. These wetlands have been delineated on USGS topographic maps, and have been included as part of Vermont's GIS mapping component.

Although not mandated by law, towns are responsible for undertaking studies and making recommendations on wetlands protection and identification. In addition, in those towns that have zoning or 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 4409). It is important to note that future investigations of wetlands within Stockbridge may result in additional areas being determined as significant or important for conservation.

Goals

1. To identify and protect significant wetlands and the values and functions which they serve in order to minimize loss of such wetlands.
2. To identify and encourage land use development practices that avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on significant wetlands.

Policies

1. Structural development or intensive land use is discouraged from locating in significant wetlands or within buffer zones to significant wetlands.
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.
3. Maintenance of a naturally vegetated buffer strip between a wetland and land development is encouraged to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination and direct discharges into a wetland.

B. Flood Hazard Areas and Floodplains

Background

Floodplains are low lands adjacent to the White River and its tributaries which periodically become inundated with water during times of high rainfall and spring runoff. Similar to wetlands, these are significant for retaining water that might cause damage or destruction to public and private property elsewhere.

Under the provisions of the National Flood Insurance Act, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has conducted a series of evaluations and engineering hydrologic studies to determine the limits of flood hazard areas along Vermont streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. These areas are generally representative of the 100 Year Base Flood or areas where a flood level is likely to have a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The FEMA has prepared a Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) depicting the boundaries of the flood relative to the river, its tributaries and elevations.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency administers the National Flood Insurance Program. Under the program, affected property owners are eligible to purchase flood hazard protection insurance at subsidized rates. In order to qualify for the insurance under the program, the municipality must first have in place a bylaw to control land development within these areas. In addition, such regulations must meet minimum standards set by FEMA.

Floodplains are often rated as the best agricultural lands because of their rich alluvial deposits, minimum slope, and proximity to surface water. Floodways are stream channels and are off limits for any development in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation significantly.

Goals

1. To minimize and prevent loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, the impairment of the tax base and the extraordinary public expenditure and demand for public service that result from flooding.
2. To ensure that if new development is to be undertaken in the flood hazard areas that it be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes or eliminates the potential for flood damage.
3. To maintain wise use of agricultural land and open space in flood-prone areas.

Policies

1. Structural development within the limits of the 100 year floodplain is discouraged and inconsistent with the overall purposes of this Plan. Where careful planning necessitates development within areas subject to flooding, the development should be designed and located so as not to impede the flood waters and endanger public safety. No structural development can be located within the limits of a floodway.
2. Outdoor recreational and agricultural uses are the preferred land uses and are encouraged to locate or remain within floodplains. New commercial, industrial and residential uses are generally discouraged.

C. Water Resources

Background

Stockbridge's water resources include aquifers (groundwater) and surface waters. With increasing reports of water shortages and contamination throughout the nation, the public-at-large is becoming increasingly concerned about the management and use of water resources. Sustainable yields of quality water attract users and provide a source of direct or indirect livelihood for the Region including Stockbridge. The high value of the White River as an outstanding recreational resource has an economic benefit to the residents and businesses in Stockbridge.

Public opinion confirms the public's interest in and support for the maintenance of high quality water. Water quality and character are major factors defining rural character and lifestyle. A vast majority of Stockbridge's residents and business users are dependent on groundwater for drinking.

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 of 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 is subject to rigid standards.

Goals

1. To maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of drinking quality groundwater resources.
2. To allow use of groundwater resources by new development in a manner which protects the public right to adequate quality and quantity of the resource.
3. To allow multiple and balanced uses of groundwater while maintaining or improving its quality and quantity.
4. To consider groundwater impacts and effects related to proposed or existing uses of land.
5. To maintain or improve surface water quality and quantity.
6. To allow multiple and balanced uses of surface waters.
7. To consider surface water impacts and effects related to proposed or existing uses of land.

Policies

1. Water withdrawal from underground sources should be carefully considered to ensure 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. Efforts to abate pollution in the White River and its tributaries are encouraged and supported by the Town. Priorities for abatement should include direct discharges, failing or inadequate on-site sewage disposal systems, and surface run-off of chemicals and other pollutants.
6. Given the public's high interest in the use and enjoyment of the White River for recreation and fishing and relevant goals and policies expressed in this Plan, establishment of additional waste management discharge zones by the Agency of Natural Resources as part of its permitting process is inconsistent with this section.
7. It is the policy of the Town to protect from risk, the degradation of headwaters and the ecosystems they sustain. To ensure high water quality, these areas should be principally maintained for forestry and recreational uses.
8. The location, sizing and density of on-site sewage disposal facilities should be determined by the capacity of the soil, the natural limitations of the site, and underlying substrata conditions, such as depth to bedrock and seasonal high water tables.
9. 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 vegetation including trees, together with wildlife habitat.
10. Given the statewide recreational and natural resource values of the free flowing White River, hydropower development or damming of the river should be carefully evaluated to insure that these values are not unduly compromised.

D. Wildlife Resources

Background

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

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

Nearly all open space provides habitat for game and non-game species. There are, however, some areas in Stockbridge which provide critical habitat that should remain intact. These areas include wetlands, deer wintering areas, 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.

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

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.

Housing developments and excessive logging have detrimental effects on deer wintering areas. If an area proposed for development encompasses a deer wintering area, utilizing certain planning strategies may lessen the impact on the area. For example, should the entire area proposed be winter cover, clustering of house lots might be a planning consideration. This may minimize negative impacts by reducing the area consumed and maintaining a larger continuous area of cover for utilization by deer than if house lots were scattered. When a proposed area is not entirely winter cover, development outside of the softwood cover that has the potential as a future deer wintering area is also a consideration. It is important to note that attempts to negate the impact of human development on winter deer range do not always accommodate the needs of the deer. A wildlife biologist from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department should be consulted before implementing proposed plans in or near deer yards.

State and Federal efforts to restore the Atlantic Salmon to the Connecticut and White Rivers and its tributaries are in the public interest. However, the potential impacts of the restoration should be an immediate and ongoing consideration at all levels of government and in the private sector. Negative impacts include rising land prices, loss of private access, overcrowding, traffic problems, strains on public facilities and conflict with other river uses.

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.
4. To allow sport and subsistence hunting of ecologically sound intensities to provide continued success of the species.

Policies

1. Development should be designed and sited in a manner to preserve contiguous areas of active or potential wildlife habitat. Fragmentation of significant and necessary wildlife habitat is discouraged. On-site and off-site mitigation measures are supported.
2. The rate of harvest of wildlife for sport or subsistence should not exceed the capacity of an area to replenish the species.
3. Wildlife populations and natural diversity should be maintained or enhanced when the public interest is clearly benefited.
4. The Town should enable long-term protection of major habitats through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives.
5. It is the policy of the Town to protect deer wintering areas and other critical habitats from developments and other uses that adversely impact the resources.

E. Mineral Resources

Background

The use and management of Stockbridge's earth and mineral resources are matters of public good. Maintenance of sustainable quantities of gravel, sand, crushed rock and other materials are essential for 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 Stockbridge business owners and residents to enable utilization of these resources when such uses do not significantly inhibit or conflict with other existing or planned land uses, or are in conflict with other stated goals in this Plan.

Goals

1. To enable appropriate utilization of mineral resources.
2. To encourage 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 minimize loss of significant prime agricultural land.
2. In planning for the expansion or development of new mineral extraction facilities, full consideration shall be given to rehabilitation of the site. Factors that should be included in a rehabilitation are phasing and timing for the restoration of the site, replacement of cover soil, landscaping or vegetative planning, and areas of excessive steep cuts or fills.
3. Projects that are unsightly or unattractive have a high potential for adverse visual impact or do not include detailed plans for site restoration are inappropriate.
4. Mineral extraction and processing facilities need to be planned and developed so as not to place an excessive or uneconomic burden on local and state highways and bridges.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

A. Background

Agriculture and forestry define the character of Vermont and comprise major industries in the Region. Unfortunately, these industries are by no means secure. The shape of Vermont agriculture and forestry are changing and the pressures for change come from both inside and outside the state. This poses difficult challenges, not just for landowners, but for all who desire a rural lifestyle and working landscape. Unless policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels, citizens, and the farming and forestry community confront the economic problems facing the industry and seize the opportunities that the challenges present, the agriculture and forestry sectors will continue to erode away. Jobs will be lost to other pursuits and the Town will lose much of what it desires to be.

B. Farm and Forest Land Issues

Land and Taxation - Steady growth in the Town's population and an economic restructuring or a shift away from agriculture to the service and tourism industries has placed economic pressure on farm owners. The higher cost of owning land make it difficult to rationalize conventional farming. Owners of forestland most often are faced with a tax bill on land that exceeds its economic value for timber production. This coupled with a need for house lots or development land in general, has prompted landowners to place their land on the market for these purposes.

The old town roads in this area are fragile in their nature and not suited for the heavy loads of today. Although historically the towns roads have been used for logging, they could sustain significant damage in a short time if misused. Road maintenance is a major cost factor for town residents. It is advisable to review logging projects as to their impact on town roads.

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

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

In 2002, a total of 55 parcels comprising 14,484 acres of farm and forest land were enrolled under the Program. This amounted to roughly 23 square miles or nearly 50% of the total area of 46.17 square miles in Stockbridge. Only one dairy farm was operating in Stockbridge in 2003.

Forestry Trends - Three primary trends have affected the Region's forestland and its productivity. First, forests and farms are being increasingly "parcelized" or subdivided into small lots which threaten the economic viability of forestry. Orange County in 1989 ranked second in the State in the amount of land being subdivided and sold. Development pressure in the Region has been relaxed since the early 1990's, but the economy is predicted to rebound and the trend of land moving out of forest use to other uses will continue, particularly in those areas where access and development suitability are not severe. Funding of the Current Use Program has been identified by the Northern Forest Lands Council as vital to landowners keeping their patience, not over harvesting the forests or opting for liquidation cutting of tracts. High taxes contribute to a low rate of return on timber sales, and have prompted some conversion to non-forest uses. Second, markets for timber and wood have been responsive to a glut of some products affecting prices, at least in the short run. While the number of mills in the Region have declined, there has been a move to new markets, one being an export demand for hardwood logs and another being a demand for pulpwood and other specialty types. For a state mostly known for hardwood, the demand for pulp has led to better managed forests because it is generally the lower grades or poorer cuts that are being used. Third, federal and state estate and inheritance tax laws have placed family landowners into financial predicaments where they need to subdivide or develop forest land in order to cover taxes. Current tax law bases estate values on the market value of land rather than at use value. By allowing land to be assessed on the basis of current use, family landowners are able to realize a more reasonable return on investment for long-term timber management.

Forest products continue to be a significant share of the Region's manufacturing sector, although the way statistics are kept makes it hard to quantify. Overall, according to the Vermont Department of Employment and Training, jobs in the lumber and wood products industries have increased statewide. In looking at the Vermont forest products industry, it is worth noting that the industry, like agriculture, has virtually no impact in setting trends as it is a relatively small national producer.

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

C. Sustaining Agriculture and Forestry

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

Just as there is a variety of interests, there is a variety of tools than can be used to conserve these resources. Some are directed primarily at sustaining agriculture, others forestry, some are regulatory in nature, others are compensatory, and others voluntary. It is in the public interest to encourage conservation groups, landowners, local officials, and policymakers to utilize all of these tools.

Goals

1. Encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the town's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features.
2. Protect the Region's rural agricultural character, scenic landscape, and recreational resources.
3. Preserve recreational and scenic access by ensuring that at the completion of logging projects all roads are restored to their previous condition.

Policies

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

Recommendations for Action

1. Local land use planning activities and programs affecting agriculture and forestry should consider the ways to promote these industries.

This could include local bylaws and the creation of farm and forest land conservation programs, including:

- overlay districts
- agricultural zoning
- transfer of development rights
- purchase of development rights

- cluster development
 - area based allocation
 - performance standards
 - impact fees;
2. To promote a better understanding of the farming and forestry practices, and natural resource management in general; the industry, conservation organizations, public schools and the tourism and recreation industries should sponsor continuing educational opportunities to the public.

HISTORIC AND SCENIC RESOURCES

A. Background

Change is the fundamental element of time and history. Like most places, for Stockbridge this has resulted in growth. This growth is measured primarily by more people, jobs, income, and housing. Most development resulting from change has adapted very well to our historical and cultural landscapes, our lifestyles, and community values. Generally, the old and the new have been complementary. Stockbridge is an attractive and dynamic community. It is the intent of this Plan to keep this sense of community. In spite of the successes, change brings potential for degradation and needless destruction of our past.

Stockbridge has a wealth of historic resources. These survived earlier periods and are a visual record of Stockbridge's history. These surviving fragments contribute to the individuality of Stockbridge. Like many resources, they are non-renewable, once destroyed.

Areas in close proximity to water and low lying areas hold a high potential for prehistoric and historic archeological resources. Investigation of these areas has yielded useful information relating to the lifestyles of early settlers. The record of these ancient times is fragmented and development over time has the effect of eroding away these resources. Unfortunately, until development commences on a site, its value as an archeological site is, oftentimes, not known.

One of the most distinctive features of Stockbridge's landscape is its steep narrow valleys. The floors of these valleys consist of a mix of forest and meadowland with small groupings of buildings. Some of the valleys are still used for agriculture, while trees mark the course of streams and stone walls mark the old property boundaries. The surrounding hillsides provide a varied pattern of fields and woodcuts. Evidence of old fields reverting back to woodland is a predominant characteristic in some areas.

Special features of its two villages (Stockbridge and Gaysville) are an important resource for the town, lending a major element of visual character to the community. The villages are focal points for the whole town and are important for those who live in the rural areas as they help define a sense of place. Likewise, it is important for the people living within the villages to have a sense of the surrounding sparsely settled countryside with its farms, homes, fields, and forests. This balance between countryside and village, between busy spaces and quiet spaces, is important to all within the community in terms of giving all a sense of belonging to a community.

The landscape of the Town and the White River Valley is an economic asset. Tourists come to the Upper Valley and spend money here because they are attracted to our scenery and the values and quality of rural life. Tourism is a major and growing industry in Vermont. Because of its economic benefits, it is appropriate public policy to recommend design standards which, if

reasonably followed, will ensure that new development does not detract from our scenic resources.

Policies

1. It is the intent of this Plan to preserve outstanding scenic areas and to maintain the relationship between countryside and villagescape, and to discourage developments which have an undue adverse impact on locally recognized scenic resources. As a means of maintaining or enhancing the scenic values existing in Stockbridge, the following design considerations should be followed in creating plans for new development:
 - locate structures or buildings away from highly visible ridgelines to a lower backdrop on a hillside;
 - in sensitive areas, partially screen the development by placing it in wooded areas;
 - design buildings so that they are reasonably compatible with traditional patterns, scale, size, form, etc. and to leave vistas open;
 - minimize sprawling structures all over a site, resulting in a loss of open or farm land; and
 - place powerlines, towers, roads, drives, and similar structures in a manner as to reduce the visual impact, if any.
2. Land development should be planned so as to minimize the unnecessary loss of historic or archeological resources determined to be of local, state, or federal significance. In areas determined archaeologically sensitive, landowners are encouraged prior to construction to contact the State Archeologist for assistance.
3. Land development adjacent to recognized historic structures should be encouraged when the design fits the context of the character of the area.
4. Restoration and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and neighborhoods are encouraged when such projects do not significantly alter the distinguishing qualities of the structure or area.
5. Public improvements, such as road rebuilding, and utility construction, should be developed to avoid undue impacts on significant historic or archeological resources.
6. Strip development, being sprawling commercial type uses immediate to major roads (Routes 100 and 107), is generally viewed negatively and are to be discouraged. Developers seeking to place commercial projects in these areas is encouraged to use design principles to minimize adverse affects on scenic resources.

Recommendations for Action

1. To enable better understanding and evaluation of scenic resources, the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission should inventory and analyze scenic resources areas throughout the Town using generally accepted evaluation criteria and standards. This effort should be coordinated with townspeople. Following completion, this section of the Plan should be amended.

2. In cooperation with the Historical Society and others, the Planning Commission should assemble an inventory of all important historic, archeological and cultural resources in Town. Such areas should be mapped and a narrative section prepared for amendment to this Plan.

TRANSPORTATION

A. Introduction

As with any municipality, the transportation system serving Stockbridge is integral to the economic well-being and future growth of the Town. Transportation in Stockbridge relies primarily on a network of state and local highways. It is important that these highways provide for the efficient and safe movement of goods and people through and within the community and that safe access to individual properties be available. As funds expended for the maintenance and repair of town highways comprise a substantial portion of the annual town budgets, it is imperative that these highways continue to fulfill their function at a cost which is within the financial capabilities of the Town. Essentially, it is the Town's objective to provide for an economical transportation system that is safe through a modest network of roads. It is not Stockbridge's intention to build new roads, or to significantly improve existing roads.

B. Town Highways

Currently, Stockbridge has 60.51 miles of town highways. Use and function vary from local access to minor regional collectors. The State uses four classification of roads to distribute financial aid to towns. State aid decreases on a per mile basis from Class 1 to Class 3. No aid is available for Class 4 roads. There are no Class 1 roads in Stockbridge. Below is a breakdown of the local highway network.

Class 2 (5.12 miles) - These are roads which serve through traffic from one area of the community to another and are roads which serve a higher level of local traffic. Stockbridge has only one Class 2 road - Blackmer Boulevard, linking Routes 100 and 107.

Class 3 (32.93 miles) - These are all other town roads that are maintained year round and are travelable by standard pleasure car, all seasons of the year. These roads are almost totally gravel based and serve to link various neighborhoods in the community together.

Class 4 (24.46 miles) - Class 4 highways are all other town highways, including trails and pent roads. They are not maintained, except for bridges and occasional grading in some areas. Trails, although having a Class 4 designation, are not considered highways but merely a public right-of-way. A trail designation (established by the Board of Selectmen) can provide access for snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and other forms of outdoor recreation. Class 4 highways and trails can provide important transportation access to forest and agricultural land. For trail designation, a town is not liable for construction, maintenance, or repair.

The Town is not interested in expending tax dollars on improvements to Class 4 roads because of the great expense and relatively small public benefit accruing from Class 4 roads. Several sections of highways have been discontinued by the Selectboard and are no longer a part of the Town system.

C. State Highways

Vermont Route 107 is a primary state route across central Vermont linking I-89 to Route 14 and Route 4. U.S. Route 4 is the major east-west highway and the Route 107/100 is a road of lesser importance and status than Route 4.

D. Sustainable Transportation

Public transportation should be encouraged whenever possible. Other transportation alternatives include: carpooling, vanpooling, and park and ride lots. Many residents commute long distances to work in the Upper Valley and Rutland areas and there may be an opportunity for the community to foster a ridesharing program or to develop a community park and ride lot.

E. Scenic Roads

Stockbridge has numerous scenic roads which exhibit special qualities worth preserving or enhancing. Stockbridge residents and visitors enjoy their country roads. But as development occurs, oftentimes to keep pace, the State and the Town must improve their highway systems. This can mean for the sake of safety and speed, loss of majestic trees, stonewalls, and other important roadside features or once pleasant views marred by powerlines, and misplaced buildings. It is in the interest of Stockbridge to maintain or improve its roads in a manner that does not unnecessarily result in a loss of their scenic character. Where major modifications are being proposed to these roads, the public should first have an opportunity to discuss the changes with the Agency or Town, as appropriate.

Goals

1. To maintain a transportation system that is safe, efficient and complements the other goals and policies of this Plan.
2. To ensure that future development does not unnecessarily or unreasonably endanger the public investment in town and regional transportation systems or facilities, including highways, bikeways, trails, and rail.
3. To support local, regional and state-wide efforts to provide transportation systems that meet the needs of all population segments and not just those who use automobiles.
4. To minimize transportation energy consumption.

Policies

1. Prior to a final decision to proceed with a major capital transportation project, policy makers should first analyze the project against reasonable alternatives. In examining the alternatives, investigation should focus on the environmental, energy, social, and investment costs and the extent to which each meets the goals and policies of this Plan.
2. It is in the public interest to maintain the Town's current highways, bridges, and related facilities as it is necessary to ensure the current level of service.
3. The Town, as written in V.S.A. Title 19 Section 310, is not obligated to maintain Class IV Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. The policy of the Board of Selectmen is that before the Town would consider adopting a new road, the abutting property owners shall be responsible for the cost of improving and/or building the road to Town specifications. Final decision regarding the nature of the improvement rests with the Selectboard.
4. Given the interest in and benefits from biking, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and similar outdoor recreational activities, the Town should, as an alternative to complete discontinuance of a highway, give full consideration to preserving Class 4 roads for recreational use, or downgrading their status to a legal trail thus retaining the public's interest in them.
5. An integral scenic element of the rural countryside is the network of backroads comprising the Town's highway system. These byways are both visually and economically important to the Town. If improvements are needed to accommodate increased traffic, it is important to consider the relationship of the road to the surrounding features of the landscape.
6. Strip development is not encouraged as a land use pattern. Such development occurs in a linear path along a right-of-way which often restricts visual and physical access to interior lands.
7. Improvements to local roads should only be considered on roads leading into areas where the Town desires to encourage development. By keeping remote areas less conveniently accessed, the Town is establishing a clear policy on where future residential development is most appropriate.

Recommendations for Action

1. Continue participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Program through the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission.
2. Evaluate the Route 107 corridor to determine which areas have the best potential for desired development and enact review standards as part of the zoning regulations.

ENERGY

A. Background

Vermont planning law provides that municipal plans include an energy program for the community. Such a program is intended to promote efficient and economic utilization of energy. Pragmatic 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. Such a practice has benefits to 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 need 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.

Historically, energy has been taken largely for granted because it is relatively abundant and cheap. Society at large becomes “energy conscious” only when supplies are threatened and prices are up. The Town must not be paralyzed by the belief that many of the energy related issues are beyond its control and can only be solved at the national and international levels. Local governments and individuals are in key positions to influence energy policies and use.

According to the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (1991), the major fuels consumed in Vermont are oil (65%), electric (17%), wood (8%), LPG and gas (6%) and other (3%). 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 used by residential users who use private cars. Public transportation in Stockbridge is nearly non-existent and as a result there are few alternatives, if any, to the automobile.

According to the 2000 Census, 41.4% of the households in Stockbridge used fuel oil for heating; 27.7% used bottled, tank, or LP gas; 22.5% used wood; 5.6% used electricity; 1.4% used utility gas, and another 1.4% used other fuels. No households reported using solar energy, coal, or coke to heat their homes. The Department of Public Service estimates that the average household uses between 3 and 4 cords of wood each year during the heating season.

Increased reliance on wood as a heating source can offset some demand for expensive alternative sources. Recently, prices of fuel oil have increased, causing many homeowners to supplement with wood. Stockbridge has thousands of acres of timberland that are underutilized and its own forests could supply all of its homes and other buildings with wood for heating.

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 and postpone the need for costly sources of energy.
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 educational efforts.

Policies

1. Planning which reduces the dependency and demand for new sources of energy is a matter of public good. Likewise, conservation of energy usage is encouraged. To meet this policy, the following practices are recommended:
 - a. development of existing and current transportation routes and highways needs to reflect design and location principles that complement the recommended land use and settlement patterns set forth in this Plan. Major public investments, such as schools, public recreational areas, and municipal facilities need to be situated within or in close proximity to the villages or primary highways;
 - b. the rehabilitation or the development of new buildings and equipment should be encouraged where use of proven design principles and practices demonstrates the lowest life cycle costs; and
 - c. where land development or subdivisions are proposed, design plans should work towards the goal of locating structures and buildings on the site which reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation and protective wind barriers. Use of the cluster planning concept, where buildings are concentrated in one area of a site with a complementing off-set of open space, is an approach that encourages energy conservation and efficiency.
2. 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.
3. 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 connecting settlements.
4. To reduce the demand for commuter transportation facilities and energy, the development of energy efficient home occupations and small-scale home business is encouraged.

Recommendations for Action

1. The Town, when undertaking review of its existing bylaws, should consider enacting provisions that encourage innovation of energy conservation and concentrate development in the best locations (e.g., grant density bonuses to projects that employ advanced energy design and efficiency).
2. Public education on the need for sustainable energy practices is lacking. The community should develop an education program on energy efficiency and distribute guidelines to builders planning renovations to or construction of new buildings. This effort could be coordinated with the Vermont Department of Energy.

LAND USE

A. Existing Land Use

The existing pattern of settlement and land use within Stockbridge is very different now from what it was at the turn of the century. These changes have been brought about by natural, economic and social forces such as the flood of 1927, expanded recreation and tourism, and greater mobility afforded by improved roadways and the automobile.

Stockbridge Common and Gaysville were once populous manufacturing centers with businesses, industry, school, libraries, even railroads. They were vital community centers. Stockbridge Common and Gaysville, each with a post office as testimony of their once having been major centers, now serve primarily as residential neighborhoods.

Commercial land uses once centered within and around these community centers are now scattered throughout the Town, primarily along State Highway Routes 100 and 107.

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

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

The forestland of Stockbridge continues to be a valuable resource. Due to the proximity of vital wood processing markets, the forest resources of Stockbridge can be expected to retain their resource value.

Tourism and recreation now play a significant role in the economy and therefore the land use of Stockbridge. Its role now extends into all months of the year, making Stockbridge an attractive site for visitor related business. Examples of these include; lodging, restaurants, tourist stores, sports equipment, recreation facilities, and general merchandising.

The following table presents a tabular summary of the number of parcels of real property as recorded by the Stockbridge Board of Listers in the 2001 Grand List Abstract.

Stockbridge Grand List - 2001		
Land Use Categories	Number of Parcels	% of Total
Residential	215	29%
Mobile Homes	35	5%
Vacation	229	30%
Commercial	23	3%
Commercial Apartments	0	0%
Industrial	1	0%
Utilities	6	1%
Farm	5	1%
Woodland	80	11%
Other	0	0%
Miscellaneous	159	21%
Total Parcels	753	

Figure 15- LAND USES from the 2001 GRAND LIST

Source: Vermont Department of Taxes - Property Valuation and Review, 2001.

Chateaugay No Town Conservation Area (CNT)

The Chateaugay No Town Conservation (CNT) Area is a remote upland wilderness area covering parts of the Towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Stockbridge, and Killington. The predominate land use is hardwood forest. The CNT Area has historically been very rural, except for a period during the mid-1800s when development flourished for a brief period due to gold mining speculation in Bridgewater. Today, human settlement in the Area is very sparse, year round public access is practically non-existent for most areas, and public services (electric or telephone) are very limited. For the few inhabitants living here, most are dependent on providing their own power and lighting, and maintaining and plowing their own roads. Roads are relatively narrow and steep and are not designed to sustain heavy vehicles or high volumes of traffic. For the public roads that lead into the Area, none are open or passable as through-roads, providing access to the abutting towns.

With limited exception, land parcels are very large, ranging upwards to several thousand acres in size. Much of this land is owned by timber companies or families interested in using the land for wood production. While there have been numerous land title transfers in recent years the number of land subdivisions has remained relatively low. Much of this land is enrolled in Vermont's Land Use Value Appraisal Program. Under this program, qualified landowners, owning at least 25 contiguous acres, elect to keep their forestland in production and to pay local property taxes based on its 'use' value rather than 'development' value. This Program has had the effect of slowing down the development of these lands.

Multiple use recreational activities are highly prevalent in this Area. Numerous seasonal hunting camps exist and there are valuable wildlife habitats including black bear, moose, bobcat, and deer. Hikers seeking a rugged wilderness experience frequent the Area at all times of the year, using old town roads and trails, and the Appalachian Trail which passes through the central section of the Area. Access to the Trail is relatively easy and the number of Trail hikers continues to increase. Snowmobiling remains a very popular sport, attracting both locals and outsiders to the Area. The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) retains an extensive system of snowmobile trails in the Area that serve as connector routes to other trails in Windsor and Rutland Counties. Local snowmobile groups have been active in maintaining these trails and working with landowners to ensure continued use of the trails on effected properties.



Figure 16: Chateaugay No Town (CNT) Conservation Area Map

The entire Area has been identified by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife as a bear production habitat or an area supporting high densities of cub-producing females. These production areas are contiguous to or within remote roadless forestland. The CNT Area of the Towns of Bridgewater, Barnard, Killington, and Stockbridge serves as a critical link between the production areas south and north of Route 4. The long-term stability of black bear depends on the retention of this Area in a predominately undeveloped state. Excepting busy Route 4, which acts as an unwanted crossing barrier, this Area provides a critical link for bears to move freely between the north and the south habitat areas.

In late 1997, the Chateaugay No Town Conservation Project was launched by the four towns of Bridgewater, Barnard, Killington, and Stockbridge. A locally directed project, its goals are “to foster, through locally sponsored conservation activities, the long term commitment to stewardship of exceptional forest, wildlife, and recreational lands” in the upland areas where these four towns meet. Consisting of approximately 55,000 acres, conservation planning and implementation in the Area will take years to complete.

Since 1997, a locally appointed Committee, in cooperation with the Vermont Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission, Appalachian Trail Conference, and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, has been evaluating ways to conserve this Area, to protect critical habitats, to promote sustainable forestry, and to ensure recreational opportunities. To date, Project activities have included working with landowners on long-term planning and conservation of their property. Several landowners have agreed to work with the Vermont Land Trust, and other land trusts on specific plans to voluntarily conserve their land. In some cases, landowners have donated easements, relinquishing their right to develop their property and others have agreed to sell rights to the Trust. The hope of this Project is that if enough people are inspired by the prospect of conserving the Area, land will be permanently protected from development. This will enable current use of the Area to be permanently retained in the future. In December 2001, Meadowsend Timber Inc., headquartered in New London, New Hampshire, and a large landowner with a strong conservation ethic, sold development rights to its land to the Vermont Land Trust, permanently protecting approximately 2,100 acres of land in the Project area. Most of this land is in Bridgewater. To assist the Project partners in the implementation of the Project, both a local and a regional conservation fund has been established to provide financial resources to assist landowners interested in conservation of their property.

The goals and policies set forth below are intended to supplement the Section C Policies – For Land Use Settlement set forth above. Land use activities involving or affecting land within the CNT Area need to be evaluated using all relevant sections of this Plan.

Goals for the Chateaugay No Town Conservation Area

1. To promote and endorse voluntary efforts between landowners and conservation trusts to conserve properties that have exceptional aesthetic, historic, recreational, and natural resource values.
2. To maintain or enhance use of land for forestry which provides wildlife habitat as well as recreational opportunities.

3. To support local, regional, and State efforts to foster conservation of the Area through planning, land acquisition, conservation easements, and tax incentives.
4. To limit public investments by the involved communities, the State of Vermont, and other governmental agencies when these investments unnecessarily or unreasonably endanger the long-term use of the Area for forestry, wildlife, and recreational purposes.
5. To discourage public or private development of major access roads or through roads connecting with public highways in neighboring towns.
6. To advocate against public utility upgrades or extensions unless the public is clearly benefited thereby and where it is determined not to compromise the land use goals and policies for this Area.
7. To ensure the protection and management of upland watersheds comprising the Area and that they remain in their pristine or natural state.

Policies for the Chateauguay No Town Conservation Area

1. Given the combination of factors that make conservation of this Area a high public priority, large development projects, including major residential subdivisions and tract development, in the Area are inconsistent with this Plan. Accordingly, they are discouraged. Development of non-commercial seasonal camps serving hunters, snowmobilers, and other outdoor recreational users are appropriate uses and are encouraged. Construction of conventional homes intended for permanent or seasonal occupancy with all modern amenities is not the intended use for the Area. In situations where developments of this type are being proposed, they should only be at extremely low densities. Where a landowner is proposing to undertake such a development, permanent conservation of the remaining land is encouraged as a means to ensure that future residential development will be limited on this tract.
2. Timber production should be the primary or dominant use in this Area. Logging operations are encouraged provided that they are in accordance with acceptable management practices. Accordingly, woodlots should be managed and harvested in ways to keep soil erosion and sedimentation of streams to a minimum.
3. Insofar as is reasonable, all future development should be planned and sited to promote the continued use of forestland for its intended purposes. To minimize conflicts between forestry, wildlife habitats, and recreational uses, projects should be designed with the following principles in mind:
 - a. be relatively small in scale, not be the dominant land use on the parcel or in the immediate area;
 - b. include or reserve a major portion of the land base for conservation or open space;
 - c. avoid improvements or development in areas exhibiting highly scenic or sensitive landscapes and design structures to minimize disruption of the natural condition of the Area.

4. Ensuring continued public access into the Area for snowmobilers, hunters, hikers, and others is critical to the future use and enjoyment of this Area for sporting and recreational purposes. Town roads, legal trails, and some private roads open to the public serve as primary access routes into the Area. Loggers, sportsmen, hikers, and snowmobilers, benefit from this, as they are able access woodlots and trails readily. Public policy decisions or actions need to reflect these values.
5. Retention of snowmobile trails, many which go over private land and are part of the statewide VAST trail network, is a priority. Where private lands are involved owners should be encouraged to keep their land open for these purposes. Local sports groups and snowmobile clubs should continue to have the support and cooperation of the Town in these efforts. Conservation plans developed for landowners in this Area should reflect, where practicable, the desire to retain this network of trails and not close or cut-off important trail routes. Where appropriate, tax or financial incentives should be employed by the Town, State, and conservation organizations to ensure that this policy objective is attainable.
6. Town highways and legal trails are the primary means of public access to land in the Area. Principal users of these roads are local residents, seasonal camp owners, hikers, hunters, snowmobilers, and loggers. These roads accommodate relatively few vehicles ranging from light ATV's and snowmobiles to heavy logging trucks. Town Selectboards retain jurisdiction over these roads, including maintenance, upgrading, reclassification, and discontinuance as well as trails Present and future programs or actions involving roads or trails for this area should be compatible and complement the long-term land use goals and policies of this Plan. Decisions that have the potential effect of altering the stated land use goals of the Area are discouraged.
7. New developments that necessitate improvements to existing transportation facilities, particularly on heavily traveled arterial and collector roads, should be designed to minimize disruption or loss of wildlife corridor crossings. Transportation enhancements projects should be pursued to mitigate driver conflicts with wildlife, including education and awareness programs along road corridors that host significant numbers of crossings. In addition, initiatives should provide for improvements to the transportation infrastructure to reduce vehicle collisions and wildlife fatalities.

B. Proposed Land Use

Future land use and development in Stockbridge must be properly planned if the town is to achieve a balance between its need for economic growth and its desire to preserve the natural environment. The following section seeks to accomplish this goal by designating five major land use categories and offering recommendations for development type and intensity within each. The boundaries of these areas are shown on the Future Land Use Map (see appendix).

1. Overall Land Use Goals

In formulating a future land use pattern, consideration needs to be given to the existing settlement pattern which includes, the Stockbridge village area, the surrounding low density

rural and agricultural areas, and its large open spaces and forests. This type of land use pattern is assumed to be attractive, desired, and understood by the residents of Stockbridge.

Accordingly, the following goals for land use are presented below:

- a. Future land use needs to maintain an identity for Stockbridge as a distinct community.
- b. Future land use needs to recognize Stockbridge as a place that is functionally and visually connected through work, family, and community.
- c. Future land use needs to allow Stockbridge to continue to be a socially, economically and physically diverse community.
- d. Future land use needs to retain clear evidence of the community's history while giving consideration for future needs.
- e. Future land use needs to respect the community's identity and share qualities of scale and form with existing development.
- f. Future land use needs to be adaptable to change which inevitably must occur if the community is to be vital.
- g. Future land use needs to allow easy access to the natural environment but protect it from destruction.

2. Village Residential District

Stockbridge is an unusual Town in that it is without a town center. There is no one area where town residents and visitors might congregate and interact with a sense of community. Town meetings are held at the school; two post offices and rural delivery preclude daily communication when one goes to gather mail; and existing commercial uses are both scattered and specialized.

This problem is not new to Stockbridge but has continued to be a major concern of town residents. The 1976 Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws were devised so as to encourage higher density, mixed use development into Stockbridge Common and Gaysville, yet without the presence of public water and sewerage facilities this type of development is not likely to occur. Furthermore, construction of such facilities is not within the financial capability of the Town at this time.

Policies

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

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

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

3. Business Enterprise District

To provide opportunities for business expansion and relocation, a Business Enterprise District is established along portions of Routes 100 and 107. Through designation of this area for business, it is intended that small enterprises will benefit from favorable access afforded by Routes 100 and 107 and higher traffic volumes.

Soil and slope conditions in this area range from fair to excellent. Some sites offer favorable conditions for on-site sewage disposal and water supply. Sight distances in this area are generally favorable.

The Business Enterprise District is dedicated for commercial use, but not without some limitations. This area is the gateway to the community and is scenic. Given its high visibility and immediate proximity to the White River and Tweed River, well-recognized recreational resources, future development needs to be sensitive to the preservation of its many scenic qualities. Commercial development must be designed to promote traffic and pedestrian safety, and to provide an attractive and convenient place to conduct business.

Policies

1. Business uses are intended to coexist with residential uses in this area. Maintenance or enhancement of the natural landscape and the introduction of development compatible with the site is the principal challenge for this area. The ill effects of strip development are highly evident in areas not too far from Stockbridge. These areas often lack focus and orientation, and contribute to a high level of confusion, especially when they are fully developed. To contain development in the Business Enterprise District in a way that makes it a more hospitable environment, design considerations should include:
 - location and size of parking areas;
 - landscaping;
 - pedestrian circulation;
 - size and scale of structures;
 - location of structures within the site; and
 - appropriate signage.

2. Recommended design considerations for planning new projects include:
 - a compact and densely developed project which utilizes land efficiently;
 - reducing the impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots and integrating landscaping;
 - providing pedestrian and vehicular links between projects;
 - green space between the project and the street, including use of large trees; and
 - signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being garish.
3. The creation of numerous curbcuts to access new development can contribute to lower travel speeds, extensive queuing of vehicles, and safety problems. Good planning discourages this type of practice.
4. To protect against commercial and industrial type uses encroaching upon established residential area, the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws need to classify most small enterprise as conditional uses. In addition, site plan review and approval procedures are recommended for non-residential uses.

4. Rural Residential District

Lands outside of the Village Residential Area are predominately rural. Historically, much of this outlying area was associated with agricultural and forestry uses. With the decline of the number of farms, much of the open land has reverted back to forests or has been set aside for residential uses.

Over the past thirty years nearly all new year-round and seasonal housing has occurred outside of the village area and in the rural areas, particularly where reasonable access is afforded. During the next few years, while the overall growth rate for new housing is expected to be moderate, new housing is most likely to occur in the Rural Residential District. Similar to the Village Residential District, future development will depend heavily on the availability of land to support on-site waste water disposal systems and private water supply systems. Despite these technical limitations, as demand for new building sites increases, new technologies for innovative systems will emerge, making rural land once considered undevelopable, desirable for residential subdivision.

Areas relatively free from site limitations, such as poor soils, steep slopes, and high elevations, have been utilized more for residential and agricultural uses. The less desirable areas have remained as or reverted back to forests. Land adjacent to Town and State highways has been subjected to more active land use changes due to the relative ease of access. The more remote areas, being those distant from the Town's primary services and main roads, have developed more slowly due to the relatively higher cost of development (e.g. power, telephone and driveways).

Favorable conditions for construction of buildings and wastewater disposal facilities should not be the sole determinant for development in Rural Residential District. New development needs to be sensitive and planned to minimize the reduction of forestry and agricultural potential and to occur at a reasonable rate of growth so as not to unduly burden the ability of the Town to provide services. Special or unique resources, including critical wildlife habitats

(e.g. deer wintering areas), historic sites, archeological sites and wetlands should be evaluated and planned for when developing projects in the Rural Residential Area.

Policies

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

5. Upland Conservation District and Public Lands Area

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

Multi-use recreational activities are highly prevalent in this area. Hikers, sportsman, cross country skiers, bikers, and snowmobilers use this area as it receives region-wide recognition as a quality recreational area.

Much of this area contains valuable natural habitats that are critical to conservation and management of wildlife populations, particularly black bear habitats. Research conducted by

the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife indicate this area, as well as neighboring areas, support relatively high densities of cub-producing females considered critical habitats necessary to bear survival. The long-term stability of Vermont's bear population depends on these areas for feeding and vital as travel areas for bears.

Much of the land base within these areas is considered fragile due to its unique and important ecological functions. Slopes are predominately steep (in excess of 25% gradient) and soils are shallow or wet making them poor sites for on-site septic systems or other forms of development. These highland areas generally serve as good sources of clean water for streams as well as groundwater supplies for wells and springs situated in the valleys.

Substantial acreage within the Town of Stockbridge is in public ownership. Although the Town has no direct control over the management of these lands, management decisions can directly affect the Town.

Public lands contribute to the local and regional economy, the rural atmosphere, wildlife population, recreation opportunities, scenic amenities, and other environmental aspects of Stockbridge. Payments from the federal government in lieu of taxes on these lands do not provide as much revenue as property taxes would but neither do these lands generate much in the way of public expenses.

A brief description of public ownership follows.

Green Mountain National Forest - is managed under the multiple use concept. The multiple uses for which the forest is managed are timber production, recreation, wildlife and watershed protection. All of these uses are clearly beneficial to the economic and environmental well being of Stockbridge. The District Ranger for the Green Mountain National Forest is located in Rochester.

Appalachian Trail - is a 2,100 mile continuous footpath running from Maine to Georgia, recognized by Act of Congress as a National Scenic Trail, with rights-of-way to be protected by the National Park Service. About 1.5 miles of the trail passes through the southern section of Stockbridge, with access at the end of Stoney Brook Road. This portion of the trail is managed by the Ottauquechee Section of the Green Mountain Club with offices in Woodstock.

Les Newell Wildlife Management Area - The State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources, (ANC) Department of Fish and Game, owns 3,276 acres in the central and southern parts of Stockbridge. This land consists of several parcels and is managed out of the District Offices of the ANC in Pittsford. These lands are not posted and are thus open to use by the Public for hunting, fishing, hiking, x-country skiing, snowmobiling and other outdoor recreation uses. Timber rights to these properties are in private ownership. For this reason the State does not actively manage these lands. There are also three smaller lots within the overall total state land with river frontage for fishing and recreational access.

Given the above conditions and characteristics, this area is recommended to be designated as an Upland Conservation District/Public Lands Area. Future land uses and management objectives should complement the goals and policies set forth below.

Goals

1. To encourage the conservation and wise use of the areas forestry and recreational resources values;
2. To maintain the environmental integrity and unique natural features of the area;
3. To ensure responsible outdoor recreational uses consistent with private landowners objectives; and
4. To maintain or enhance the natural diversity and population of wildlife and important habitat areas.

Policies

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

6. Flood Protection District

The Flood Protection District consists of a relatively narrow strip of land immediate to the banks of the rivers and high land. Included in the area are floodplains or flood hazard areas. These areas are low lying along the rivers that periodically become inundated with water during times of high rainfall or spring run-off. Floodplains serve several purposes, among them being storage of water which otherwise might cause damage or destruction to property. Much of floodplain land also comprises some of the best agricultural land. This is due to thick alluvial soil deposits and the minimal slope of the land.

In addition, some of the more important wetlands are next to streams and the White and Tweed Rivers. Use and management of these ecologically sensitive areas have a direct bearing on water quality. Both floodplains and wetlands are considered poorly suited for structural development. Many of the economic impacts associated with improper construction and poor building techniques in those areas are well documented. The Great Flood of 1927 and the 1973 flood are two disasters that many Vermonters still remember.

Maintenance or enhancement of environmental quality of the river's ecosystem is preferred. Recreational use of the rivers will continue to increase and some of the associated economic impact will benefit the community. It has been stated by residents that public access is a concern that needs to be addressed in planning for the future use of the rivers.

It is for these reasons that the establishment of this area be promoted as part of the overall land use pattern in Stockbridge.

Policies

1. In consideration of the exceptional resource value of the rivers, development of lands immediate to the river should focus on conserving the very special nature and integrity of the shoreline. Design considerations that need to be evaluated when planning a project here include the location of structures on the shoreline or site, size and scale of structures, and landscaping.

Recommendations for design include:

- setbacks sufficient to maintain the visual and natural integrity of the stream bank;
- siting projects so that they are not highly visible and thus do not detract from the existing character of the shoreline;
- development in established or designated built-up areas at a scale or character so as to be compatible with nearby development;
- maintenance and improvement of public access to the rivers in certain key areas; and
- avoidance of excessively large buildings or highly intensive uses which contrast with the generally rural character of lands immediate to the streambanks.

2. New structural development, such as the construction of homes and businesses within the limits of the 100 year floodplain, are discouraged. Improvements to existing buildings in the floodplain are acceptable, provided that careful planning is done to insure against unnecessary loss of property and public endangerment.
3. Where development is to be sited within the area, design plans should avoid constructing within or in close proximity to wetlands and areas of high susceptibility for erosion.
4. In consideration of the exceptional resource value of the rivers, the preferred land use for the area is outdoor recreation and agriculture. New commercial and industrial uses along the streambanks and shorelands are not encouraged.
5. Landowners are encouraged to maintain their land along streambanks in a predominantly natural vegetative state so as to preserve the natural character of the streambank and prevent erosion.

RELATIONSHIP OF STOCKBRIDGE'S PLANNING ACTIVITIES TO ITS NEIGHBORS

A. Keeping the Plan Realistic and Relevant

In developing this Plan, it was agreed at the outset that statements of goals and policies for guiding future growth in Stockbridge must come from the wishes and needs expressed by the people of Stockbridge. This Plan must be clear in articulating their vision for the future. The public bears the responsibility to remain involved in implementing the many goals and planning options that this Plan identifies. Likewise, the Planning Commission and other Town officials must see to it that the Plan is dynamic and remains realistic in responding accurately to the community on what it wants to be.

While individuality is recognized, neither the Town nor its citizens have total control over the forces that will affect growth. Stockbridge is part of a very complicated global network of social and economic factors directing how we each conduct our lives. For example, this Plan assumes that public policy on land use and property taxation will remain basically unchanged. Property taxes are, however, strong economic forces and, oftentimes, counter our efforts to promote rural character and living.

Towns rely heavily on local real estate taxes to finance public services. Thus, towns have a natural tendency to encourage those types of development that bring in net revenues. New taxes and financing schemes could impact investment plans for certain types of development.

B. Neighboring Town Planning Activities

Because of these inter-town relationships, this section evaluates the trends and plans of adjacent municipalities. This evaluation discusses how development proposals and planning activities, and adopted plans in neighboring towns could affect Stockbridge. Where there are plans that are incompatible with this Plan, it is important to identify them, and to seek ways to mitigate conflicts. Stockbridge is bounded by six towns. They are the Towns of Bethel, Barnard, Bridgewater, Sherburne, Pittsfield and Rochester.

Bethel has in effect a municipal plan last updated in late 1994. In April 1995, the Plan was formally reviewed and approved by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission which means the Plan meets with minimum statutory criteria set forth in the Vermont Municipal Planning Act. Bethel is a mid-sized rural community with its primarily socio-economic center being Bethel Village. The recommended land use scheme for its rural area fits largely with the pattern proposed by Stockbridge. Intense development is discouraged from environmentally sensitive areas and in areas where adequate public services are available.

Barnard has a Plan in effect, also. It was adopted in 1991 and is currently undergoing an update. The Plan sets forth policies for development similar to Bethel's. Bridgewater and Sherburne have current municipal plans. Bridgewater has no bylaws in effect, but has used its Plan in evaluating Act 250 projects in the Town. Sherburne has an active planning and regulatory review program. Major growth in this resort town has prompted the need for the Town to adopt sophisticated land use controls. Both Town Plans provide for a future land use pattern respective of many of the values expressed in the Stockbridge Town Plan.

Pittsfield has no Town Plan currently in effect. The Planning Commission completed a draft Plan in 1994 and held public hearings on it although it was never presented for adoption. Rochester, in 1996, completed a revision to its master plan. It provides for limited development in environmentally sensitive or remote areas and encourages mixed uses within the existing village areas and at certain locations on Route 100. Rochester's Plan was approved by the Regional Commission in 1997 as having achieved a standard of detail set by statute. In sum, Stockbridge believes that its Plan is compatible with its neighbors. To ensure that neighboring planning efforts are reasonably compatible with one another and that potential conflicts in land use development are identified and possibly addressed, it is recommended that the Planning Commission of these communities jointly meet from time to time.

C. Regional Planning Activities

Stockbridge is within the Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission. It is one of twenty-six (26) municipalities that comprise the Region. The Region covers northern Windsor County, most of Orange County and the Towns of Pittsfield, Hancock and Granville. The Commission was chartered in 1970 by the acts of its constituent towns. All towns are members of the Commission, and town representatives govern its affairs. One of the Regional Commission's primary purposes is to provide technical services to town officials and to undertake a regional planning program. As is the case in many areas of the State, the extent of local planning throughout the region is varied. Some municipalities are more active than others. Thus, the level of services to each of the towns changes with time.

The Regional Commission adopted its Regional Plan in June, 1996. It will remain in effect for a period of five years. This Plan was developed to reflect the general planning goals and policies expressed in the local plans. It is an official policy statement on growth and development of the Region. The Regional Plan contains several hundred policies to guide future public and private development in the Region. Policies for land use settlement are identified. These areas are: Town Centers, Village Settlement Areas, Hamlet Areas, Rural Area, and Conservation and Resource Areas. Delineation of each land use area is mapped or charted. Policies for management of new development within these areas are substantially similar to those set forth in the Stockbridge Town Plan. One possible exception to this, is the policy expressed in the Stockbridge Plan accommodating commercial and industrial in most areas along Routes 100 and 107. Conversely, the Regional Plan supports encouraging these types of land uses in designated growth areas. It is reasonable to conclude that the Stockbridge Town Plan and the Regional Plan are compatible, and complementary to one another and to the goals of the Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A, Chapter 117).

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan sets forth goals and policies relative to the future development of Stockbridge. Implementation of these goals and policies can be accomplished in many ways, all of which must be according to the authority given the Town through various State Statutes.

A. Regulatory Methods

The Vermont Municipal Planning and Development Act (24 VSA Chapter 117) sets forth the specific methods and procedures whereby Town Plans can be implemented.

1. Plan Adoption

Briefly, a Plan is prepared by the Planning Commission which then holds a public hearing to receive comment on the proposed Plan. Changes can then be made before the Plan is submitted to the legislative body, in the case of Stockbridge, the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen must then hold their own public hearing within a thirty to one hundred and twenty day period. Following a final public hearing, the Selectmen are then authorized to adopt the Plan by resolution. The Plan then becomes effective immediately upon its adoption by the Selectmen for a period of five years.

2. Plan Maintenance and Adoption

Following the five year period, the plan can be readopted and then becomes effective for another 5 years. Amendments to the Plan can be made to reflect changes in policy or goals according to the same procedures required for adoption of the Plan.

3. Bylaws

After the adoption of a Town Plan, the Planning Commission can prepare, for adoption by voter approval, any of the following bylaws. All four of these types of bylaws shall have the purpose of implementing the goals and policies of the duly adopted Plan.

Zoning Bylaws - Zoning is a legal process designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of a community through the control of the use of land. The State Statutes sets forth ways and means by which a municipality may implement the goals and policies of its Town Plan by the adoption of zoning bylaws. Traditionally, zoning bylaws involve the division of a community in districts within which certain land uses are permitted, prohibited, and upon satisfaction of certain criteria found to be appropriate. Zoning bylaws can include requirements as to lot size, dimensional and performance standards, procedures for procuring zoning permits, and other means where by land use activities can be regulated. Stockbridge has had permanent bylaws in effect since the late 1970's.

Subdivision Regulations - Towns can also implement a Town Plan by the adoption of subdivision regulations setting forth regulations and provisions for the division of land into

two or more parcels. The design and layout of streets, lots, utilities, and the reservation of open space or certainty land are normally regulated by subdivision regulations.

Official Map - Although frequently employed in Vermont, an official map sets forth the location and widths of all existing and proposed streets and roads, drainage ways and parks, schools and other public facilities. The adoption of an official map then serves to direct development into those areas where public facilities will be located rather than the town having to provide those facilities on an adhoc basis as development is proposed.

Capital Budgeting - Capital budgeting allows a municipality to list and describe an annual capital budget and program for a period of no less than five years. This allows growth of a Town to coincide with the economic and fiscal capabilities of the Town to provide capital expenditures to accommodate development proposals.

4. Act 250

Vermont's Land Use and Development Law provides opportunity to the Planning Commissions and Board of Selectmen to insure that development proposals involving lands within Stockbridge are in conformance with the goals and policies of the Plan.

In addition, the Town Plan provides a broad standard for local review and comment on Act 250 applications. Specifically, criteria 10 of Act 250 requires that proposals be in conformance with a duly adopted Town Plan, before an Act 250 permit will be issued.

5. Health Regulations

Municipalities may adopt health regulations relating to the installation and maintenance of sewage disposal systems. Such a regulation typically would require that, prior to the construction or replacement of an on-site waste water disposal system, a permit be obtained from the Town Board of Health. In granting permits for these systems, the Board would have to find that the systems, as designed and proposed for construction, complied with accepted standards related to system design and operation. The Town has had in effect a health ordinance regulating the installation of a sewage disposal systems.

6. Highway Ordinance

The Town administers an ordinance for the purpose of establishing a municipal policy and practice for the maintenance and upgrading of existing town roads and to set forth standards by which new roads may be added to the town highway system. Through this ordinance, the municipality prevents or controls highway improvements which would cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions or significantly affect the financial capacity of the Town to provide for such improvements.

B. Non-Regulatory Methods

Although the primary tools for the implementation of a Town Plan are regulatory in nature, there are other non-regulatory methods which can serve to supplement land use laws in the attaining of land use goals and policies. These methods include the outright purchase of lands sought for protection, the purchase of certain rights to those lands, tax stabilization programs, conservation restrictions, private land trusts, and receiving gifts of property or rights to these lands.

Non-regulatory methods require the cooperation of land owners, citizen groups, and the town government.