

Sutton Town Plan

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*Prepared by the Sutton Planning Commission with the assistance of the
Northeastern Vermont Development Association*

Sutton Town Plan

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Town of Sutton is located in the northernmost part of Caledonia County. Covering 38.2 square miles, Sutton is bordered on the west by Barton and Sheffield, on the northeast by Newark and Westmore, on the southeast by Burke and on the south by Lyndon.

Sutton is a rural community whose residents are generally satisfied with the way things are and see little need for dramatic change or growth.

A Sense Of Place

Sutton's rural environment includes scenic vistas and wooded beauty, wetlands and wildlife, and a compact village center which is home to the Town's municipal services.

Sutton has several scenic vistas worth mentioning. To the west is Hardscrabble Mountain (2,225 ft), to the east is Burke Mountain (3,267 ft) with its ski slopes, and to the north is the dramatic Willoughby Gap. This gap is formed by Mt. Pisgah to the east at 2,751 ft. and Mt. Hor to the west at 2,648 ft. with the southern end of Lake Willoughby lying between these two mountains.

While family farms are increasingly at risk and are going out of business or consolidating they continue to keep Sutton a vital part of Vermont's working landscape - a landscape in which the wise use of natural resources are integral to the area's economic well-being. Sutton's mix of working forests, wildlife management areas and state forests creates a wide range of economic and recreational opportunities for its residents and visitors.

A Sense Of The Future

Sutton's population has more than doubled since 1970, with nearly three-quarters of that growth coming from the migration of people to the Town. The population of Sutton in 1970 was 438. The 2000 Census indicated that the Town's population had grown to 1,001. The population of Sutton according to the 2010 Census is 1,029. This represents a plateauing after a rapid increase of 562 persons or 128.3% in the three decades leading up to 2000. In spite of this influx of new residents, there is a common view for the future.

Sutton residents appreciate the balance of the "pretty and the practical" which characterizes the town. Sutton offers living proof that scenic vistas and forested highlands are best maintained by those whose livelihoods depend upon their continued growth and healthy development. Sutton demonstrates that a working landscape is best preserved by the townspeople who earn a living from it.

The following plan is based on Sutton's shared vision of the future - a future in which the Sutton of 2020 will look much like the Sutton of 2002; a future in which any development in Sutton maintains the balance between environmental and economic sustainability; and a future in which

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Sutton and surrounding towns carefully consider both the local and regional impacts of any new growth and development.

II. HISTORY OF SUTTON

The town of Billymead was granted to Jonathan Arnold and associates on February 26, 1782. Named for Arnold's son, William, it probably meant Billy's Meadow. People from Lyndon and other nearby towns as well as from New Hampshire settled Billymead. Twelve years later the town was formally organized on Independence Day, July 4, 1794. Citizens chose James Cahoon to be town clerk and John Anthony, Samuel Cahoon, and Samuel Orcutt as the first three selectmen.

Unfortunately by 1810 William's bullying and drunken behavior had made him into an undesirable neighbor and citizens thought the town should disassociate itself from him and find a new name. A resident who had come from Sutton, Massachusetts, suggested "Sutton" and the name was accepted at town meeting. The state recognized the name change in 1812.

Sutton, situated in northern Caledonia County, is generally level in its southern and central portions with rises called South, North, East, and West Ridges. The highest point is 2,648 foot Mount Hor, rising at the north end of Sutton and dropping to Willoughby Lake in the Town of Westmore. Norris Mountain at 2292 feet in the northwest portion of the town is the second highest elevation. Three branches of the Passumpsic River flow through Sutton: the West Branch, Sutton River, and Calendar Brook.

Bogs in the town provided a clay and calcium carbonate (marl), which was used to make lime, putty, and plaster, and as an ingredient in fertilizer. Other resources included sulphur springs, iron ore, slate, and several ponds, Marl, Vail's, Duck, Blake, Bean, Dolloff, and others. Natural timber was mostly maple, fir, spruce, birch, ash, and white cedar especially along the streams.

Most inhabitants were farmers and some millers because the favorable water sources provided power for several mills, especially along Calendar Brook. Alden R. Rennie had a shingle mill; George Bean, a carriage factory; and George Whipple had a firkin factory, a place where small covered vessels were made to hold butter. Records show that a woolen and carding mill burned in 1852. William Dinsmore rebuilt a mill on the same site and also made potato starch. Later the mill became Alfred Burnham's carding mill and a lumber mill as well. He also produced butter tubs and shingles.

There was also a Bundy's grist mill and sawmill, brought on a hand sled from New Hampshire. Ninety years later it was still in use and owned by Freeman Hyde. Near West Burke, Elmer S. Roundy operated another grist mill originally built by Daniel Beckwith. Roundy also made shingles and sawed lumber there. In later years the U.S. Bobbin Shuttle Mill on Route 5 was a major operation and used a railroad spur that joined the main line.

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C. Parker ran a cedar distillery, and Alvin W. Brockway, in the general painting business, had a horse and carriage shop as well. The Orleans and Caledonia Lumber Company operated a steam mill, later owned by Henry F. Pillsbury. Pillsbury's ten Jersey cows on the farm connected with the mill were pronounced the best in the state.

In the early 1800s, Sutton had the distinction of producing the most maple sugar of any other town in Vermont. In 1840, for example, the output was 85,430 pounds.

Stephen Easton opened a hotel on Road 26. In 1887 the directory listed the Sutton Hotel with a Lucius J. Campbell as the proprietor.

The Sutton Grange Hall, also used for Town Meetings, was built in 1917 and burned around 1937. It was rebuilt on the same location and is now the grange hall and fire department.

Some of the early settlers were Freewill Baptists, and though they worked long hours in their fields and shops, they often met in their homes for fellowship and worship. On one occasion, it is said, so many crowded into a home that the floor gave out and dropped the worshippers into the basement. Some groups met in the log school house near the center of town.

In 1804, a traveling minister, John Quimby, helped organize the Freewill Baptists. John Colby, son of Thomas Colby, a farmer and deacon of the church, had become a preacher and was the first minister. Because of financial difficulties partly due to the War of 1812, people were reluctant to pay for building a church. John Colby sold some of his property and built a church near the village cemetery at his own expense.

After many difficulties other Baptist groups were formed and some confusion resulted. A new church was built in 1832 and Rev. Jonathan Woodman, its first minister, reorganized the church as the General Baptist. Again in 1837, the church was reorganized as the Second Freewill Baptist Church. It flourished and for a time was the largest society of its denomination in the state.

In 1886 there were ten school districts with ten common schools. Of the 192 pupils, five were in private schools. The village school was originally a brick church when there was more than one community congregation. The steeple was removed and now with additions it is the present Sutton School. The building has been used for Town Meetings and also was used for Grange meetings after the Grange Hall burned until it was rebuilt.

The Willoughby State Forest was developed for reforestation by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, but being off the beaten path did not get much use. Buildings were ravaged by time and vandalism until all that remained standing was a fireplace or two. Although discontinued as a park, it is maintained by Vermont as a state forest.

Revolutionary War soldiers who came to the area after the war are buried in South Ridge Cemetery. The other cemeteries are North Ridge, East Ridge, and Village.

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Portland Pipe Line Company maintains an automatic pumping station in Sutton, but the old brick pumping station and houses for their workers on Vermont Route 5 were sold for private use.

Book publisher Henry O. Houghton, founder of Houghton, Mifflin Co. was born in Sutton, as were E.O. and B.L. Silver, founders of Silver, Burdett & Co., publishers of schoolbooks.

Sutton's history is one of farmers, millers, and small manufacturers of products from the town's natural resources. They have a history of taking pride in their lives and town—no Billymead for them, rather a respectable town renamed Sutton. Surviving together by sustainably using the water, mineral, forest, and farmland resources, they organized themselves in 1794 and provided for community needs through a local government structure, churches, schools, grange hall and Town Meeting hall. Current residents carry forward that tradition and care deeply about their community. The Freewill Baptist Church has a refurbished white steeple rising above the landscape, the vibrant school, and the revised town plan and bylaws that provide for maintaining the benefits of the community into the future are testimony to that sentiment.

III. LAND USE PLAN

The 1887 Hamilton Child's Gazetteer of Caledonia and Essex County describes the physical landscape of Sutton as "generally level, laying in four ridges which are called the South, Middle, North and East Ridge. These divisions are made by the three branches of the Passumpsic River, which have their sources in the northern and western part of the town, and running south-easterly unite in Lyndon. There are in the northwestern part of the town several ponds which are situated on an elevation where the waters divide, a part running southerly to the Connecticut River, and a part north to the St. Francis River."

The geology of the town is a foundation of old metamorphic rock with intrusions of granite and overlaying pockets of limestone. The soils are generally glacial till with many boulders and fragments that were deposited by the glaciers and have since dissolved and rehardened at a depth of one to three feet in many sites. This hardpan limits drainage through soils and contributed to the large amount of wetland in town.

A. Goals

- ❖ Agriculture and Forestry - Continue sustainable logging practices and monitor development so that flood plains and wetlands are not endangered. Continue to support farms and sustainable farming practices. This is important to maintaining the landscape and has been a central part of Sutton's history. Care should be taken to keep residences and agriculture in balance. The Town should also attempt to control land conversion by actively supporting the Use Value Appraisal Program and the use of zoning and conservation easements to prevent the subdivision of large parcels of land that are economically viable for agricultural and forestry purposes.

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- ❖ Residences - encourage orderly and compact development that minimizes impacts to rural land uses. Respondents to the 2002 Survey of Residents (Survey) wished development to stay the same. Encourage more housing in and around village.
- ❖ Commerce - encourage home-based businesses. King George School also was cited as good "commerce" for town. The town needs businesses that place few demands on town services but that generate tax revenue. Most residents seek retail and services in Lyndonville, Barton or West Burke. The adequate provision of child care services also needs to be encouraged and are important to the economic well being of those families with two working parents as well as single parent households. Please note that this plan update contains a now-required 11th element for approved town plans: "(11) An economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects, and programs necessary to foster economic growth.
- ❖ Industry - retain level of industry and encourage additional development along the Rte. 5 corridor where there is rail access. While there is three phase power available along most of this corridor, the town should work to upgrade the capacity of the line and to ensure that it is completed for the entire length of the corridor. If any industry should develop, great care should be taken to safeguard the environment and rural quality of life - including quiet and peaceful night skies.
- ❖ Recreation - preserve natural beauty and scenic areas so recreation can continue.
- ❖ Public buildings - no changes immediately necessary, although the municipal water system needs improvement to support further residential growth in the village.

B. Existing Land Use

1. Forestry

The forests of Sutton are classified as a mixed northern hardwood. Although logging is an ongoing activity in Sutton, there has been no large clear cut logging in Sutton. The regenerating forest provides habitat for white-tailed deer, black bear, moose, snowshoe hare, ruffed grouse, woodcock, bobcat, fisher, coyote, beaver and mink and the ponds and rivers are home to brook trout. As these are remote and sensitive areas, the Sutton Zoning Bylaw currently limits intensive development in woodland areas. The State of Vermont administers 5,226 acres (21.2%) of Sutton's land and there are 7000.92 (28.4 %) of land in current use and all of these lands have a management plan.

The wetlands and state lands maps are located in the town offices.

2. Recreation

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Sutton's natural resources provide many opportunities for outdoor recreation. The ponds and streams provide fishing areas. Hunting for deer, moose, rabbit, grouse and woodcock are popular in Sutton. According to the Survey, only small percentages (18%) of landowners post their land to prevent trespassing, but posting may be emerging as an issue because of unauthorized OHV use. Snowmobiling takes place on the Vermont association of Snow Travelers (VAST) trails through Sutton. Residents and visitors also cross-country ski and snowshoe on trails and back roads. Cyclists enjoy the scenic beauty and rolling hills of Sutton's roads. There is a park at the Sutton School with a playground, baseball fields, a basketball court and a volleyball court. A gymnasium in the school provides space for other activities.

Numerous recreational opportunities for Sutton residents also exist outside of Sutton. With both the Green and White Mountains not that far away there are many places to go hiking and skiing, both Nordic and Alpine. Cycling is also possible elsewhere. In addition, not far from Sutton it is possible to go bowling, to the movies, theater and other performing arts productions. The area's high schools also offer sporting events that people can attend. It is also possible to engage in many other recreational pursuits both in and outside of Sutton.

3. Agriculture

There are presently ten active farms in Sutton. Two of which, Simpson Farm and Don Sim Farm, are in the Vermont Land Trust and their open fields and spectacular views will be permanently protected. The Survey results indicated that residents valued agriculture and wished to support local, small family farms. Residential development converts field areas and puts some pressure on agricultural practices. Agricultural vehicles driving through the village and manuring practices also cause some concern. Other farms in the Town of Sutton include the Solinsky Farm, the Seymour Farm, the Riendeau Farm, the Jackson Farm (leased to Simpson Farm), the Tanner Farm, the Sylvester Farm, the Belanger Farm and Burton Hodge's farm (leased to Simpson Farm). This last farm may very well be the most scenic in Town.

4. Residential

When the 2000 Census of Population and Housing was conducted, there were a total of 439 housing units. 366 of these units were occupied with 308 of these units being owner occupied and 58 being renter occupied. The remaining 73 units were vacant with 50 units held for seasonal or recreational use. The remaining 23 vacant units were either for rent, for sale, had been rented or sold but not yet occupied or had been classified as "other". According to the 2010 Census, there are 486 housing units, 403 of which were occupied. Of the occupied units, 341 were owner-occupied, and 62 were renter occupied. The remaining 83 units were vacant, with 49 units held for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. The remaining 34 vacant units were either for rent, for sale, had been rented or sold but not yet occupied, or had been classified as "other."

There has been a dramatic increase in primary homes in Sutton in the last four decades; many young families are moving to the area (according to the 2010 Census a quarter of Sutton's population is 19 years old or younger). This development puts pressure on open agricultural fields and forestlands as well as town services. In the Survey, most respondents felt the rate of

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development was "just right." State regulation of wastewater management affects development in town because wet, clay soils in some areas require special systems. Respondents to the Survey overwhelmingly supported the protection of ground water.

5. Commerce

Other than agriculture, maple sugaring, Max's Dance Hall, the now closed King George School, and one saw mill, there is little visible commerce in the town. Survey respondents would like to see more home-based businesses (hairstyling, pottery, computer businesses, etc.). Several respondents proposed developing more of a village center with perhaps a small store but with the closure of the Sutton Post Office and with the proximity of stores in West Burke development of such an enterprise is unlikely.

The King George School, which was a private boarding school, was an important asset to the Town of Sutton. This school did not demand much in the way of services from the Town and added to the Town's tax base. The closure has the potential to reduce the Town's tax base.

6. Industrial

The Town of Sutton has only three land uses that could be considered industrial in nature. The first is the Greenwood Mills sawmill on the Calendar Brook Road (presently operating part-time). The second is the Portland Pipeline. This pipeline follows Route 5 as it passes through the Town from Burke to Barton. Finally, located on the west side of Route 5 just outside of the village of West Burke is the Old Burke Mill. This mill, however, closed in 2001 and the site is being used as a logyard. This change in use reduced the Town's tax base. A feasibility study was done on this property which looked at the possibility of establishing a wood pellet manufacturing plant (the study concluded such a plant was feasible and would be profitable).

7. Public and semi public

While predominantly residential, the Sutton town center contains the Town Clerk's office and Town Garage, Sutton School, the Grange Hall and Fire Department, and Sutton Baptist Church. The Post Office was permanently closed during the spring of 2011.

The Town Clerk's office contains the town offices, two small public meeting spaces and a safe. While the first floor of the building is handicapped accessible the second floor is not. The building does have public restrooms and ample parking. Attached is the town garage where road maintenance equipment is kept and maintained.

The Sutton Town School is on the adjacent property and in 2010/11 housed 105 students in grades K through 8. The multipurpose room in the school is used by public and private groups for meetings, activities and community dinners.

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The Grange Hall is also located in the village center and has a meeting space on the second floor with public restrooms and handicapped access. The Sutton Fire Department is located on the first floor of this structure and is also handicapped accessible.

The Sutton Baptist Church is a beautiful landmark in the village center. It has regular Sunday services and has undergone an extensive restoration.

8. *Open spaces reserved for*

a) Flood plain

At this time, there is no land in Sutton that has been set aside for the protection of flood hazard areas. The current Sutton Zoning Bylaw does have a section that regulates development in flood hazard areas but it needs to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Town of Sutton is not active in the National Insurance Program.

b) Wetland protection

As with the flood plain areas, there are no wetland areas that have been set aside for conservation. However, the Town of Sutton would discourage any kind of development in wetland areas. The community is very concerned (according to the Survey) about water quality and the protection of wildlife habitat. New state regulations regarding water quality help prevent development within wetland areas.

c) Other conservation purposes

The current Sutton Zoning Bylaw does have a district devoted to the protection of the forested areas in Sutton. This district was established to protect forested areas from overdevelopment so that they can be maintained for their resource and recreational values. Wildlife habitat was also an important consideration in the establishment of this district.

Much of the Willoughby State Forest lies in the northern corner of the Town of Sutton. Within this area are a number of small ponds and some wetlands. This state forest includes a relatively mountainous landscape including Mt. Bartlett, Mt. Hor, and Wheeler Mountain.

C. Proposed Land Use

1. *The Town of Sutton: A Vision for 2020*

This is a strong statement of our vision for the future. As wished by its residents, in many respects Sutton has remained the same. The scenic beauty of our forested ridgelines, highlands, and vistas has been maintained (with the exception of the Sheffield Wind Project, the ridgeline for which is in Sheffield but which dominates the town) We have stemmed the loss of family farms that occurred in the late 1900s. Together with our working forests, our farms continue to

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sustain a natural resource-based economy that complements the economic activity from recreation and the increasing number of residences in the town. We have retained the balance of the “pretty and the practical” and kept most land uses the same. Our wildlife management areas and state forests increasingly play a role in providing places for Sutton residents to hunt, fish, hike, and participate in other non-motorized recreation. Fortunately, our private lands in general have also remained open to such activities, and posting of lands against trespass is not yet a problem. While the Town’s population has continued to grow, the explosive 128 % growth from 1970 to 2000 has slowed as a result of an economic downturn and because of education of Town residents regarding the cost of new services (enlarged school, more miles of paved roads, and new/expanded municipal water and sewer systems) to support increased development. Subsequent easements/purchases of development rights and changes in zoning have achieved a balance between natural resources-based economic sustainability and growth. An agricultural district has been created to maintain the large acreages necessary to support the family farms in the Town. The acreage requirement for the forestry district has been increased in recognition of the minimum needed for economic viability of forestry, maple production, and Christmas tree production activities. Incentives have been put in place to encourage development in the village district, and the rural residential district has been focused in the southern part of the Town along major paved roads. Finally, an industrial district with short term tax relief incentives has been created along Route 5, which has the railroad line, and availability of three-phase electric power to focus manufacturing in areas capable of absorbing the additional transportation and other services needed and to relieve pressure on other districts in the Town. Through negotiations with surrounding towns and the NVDA, our regional planning commission, with the exception of Sheffield, we have achieved continuity of land use policy across the landscapes that can be seen from the Town.

2. Forestry

Every effort should be made to maintain the unfragmented tracts of woodland habitat in Sutton and to keep them connected to each other. The Planning Commission has been discussing whether the current regulations (minimum 10 acre lot area) are sufficient to curtail and limit development in the forestry district. Therefore, the 10 acre minimum lot size in the Sutton Zoning Bylaw should be reviewed to determine if it protects the lands in the forestry district from excessive development.

3. Recreation

Recreational pursuits are important to help people maintain both their physical and mental health. Therefore, it is equally important for the Town of Sutton to maintain the roads, areas, and facilities that are currently being used for recreational purposes. The Town may even wish to consider the creation of additional recreational facilities such as bike paths, trails, or tennis courts, for example. At a minimum the Town should undertake to put together an inventory of recreational facilities around the area which could be posted on local websites and be available in hardcopy for distribution.

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4. Agriculture

Those who responded to the Survey would like to see the continuation of the working farms in Sutton. Therefore, the Planning Commission would encourage the farmers to place their farms in a land trust or current use as a means of protecting these important lands. The Planning Commission should be directed by the Selectboard to meet with farmers to discuss the tax and other benefits of enlisting in such programs.

5. Residential

In a town like Sutton that serves as a bedroom community for the surrounding towns, residential development could perhaps create the most problems as residential development will, more than likely, exceed other types of development. Residential development needs to be clustered in areas that have the soils that will support foundations, and on-site water and sewer systems. In addition, such areas must also have access to good roads to avoid impact to areas that should not be traversed by automobiles. Perhaps the best area for future residential development would be in the southern half of the Town, particularly in the vicinity of the Village of Sutton.

6. Commerce

As Sutton is, for the most part, a bedroom community for the larger towns in the area it seems unlikely that there will be much in the way of commercial development in Sutton. However, in the interest of the Town's economic future, this plan will recommend that any commercial development, other than home occupations, take place in the industrial zone and in the Village of Sutton.

Home occupations would be a great way for someone to work in the Town of Sutton and are therefore encouraged. A home occupation is defined in statute as a business that is 1) carried on within a person's home by the occupant thereof, 2) uses a minor portion of the dwelling, and 3) does not change the character of the neighborhood.

7. Industrial

Sutton is seen more as a bedroom community for Lyndon and St. Johnsbury and not as a place for industry. Narrow, hilly roads discourage any large industry from being developed in the town. The Planning Commission recommends promoting industrial development in the Town of Sutton only in areas capable of supporting such land uses. The area suitable for an industrial district is along Route 5 where there is access to the rail line and to three phase electric power. Accordingly, the Sutton Zoning Bylaw should be revised to create a mapped industrial district where the Town can promote industrial development.

Wind energy development is a potential industrial activity for high elevation ridgelines in the northern portion of the Town (Norris Mountain and adjacent summits and the higher elevation summits and ridgelines in the Willoughby State Forest). Such developments, however, because

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of their visual impact, their accompanying noise, their potential impact on wildlife and the environment, and their impact on property values are not appropriate for these areas.

8. *Public and semi public*

Buildings and uses necessary for the conduct of municipal business and provision of public services need to be permitted in those areas where need is anticipated. These types of uses should be located in the village to make them easily accessible to Town residents unless the nature of a particular public or semi-public use requires it to be located outside of the village (town forest or gravel pit for example).

9. *Open spaces reserved for*

a) Flood plain

The Planning Commission recommends that the Town review the Sutton Zoning Bylaw to ensure new flood hazard area regulations will protect land owners and to allow them to purchase flood insurance. It will also make the Town eligible for funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to repair damage to roads and other town facilities in the event of flooding or other natural disaster.

b) Wetland protection

Wetlands serve a multitude of purposes, including recharge of aquifers, wildlife habitat; they help to absorb flood waters, and so on. Pollution and / or destruction of these areas can have dire impacts on water supplies, wildlife, and increase damage due to flooding. Wetland areas in Sutton have been mapped and the Sutton Planning Commission is confident that the State's wetland regulations will be sufficient to protect the Town's wetlands from development.

D. Existing and Proposed Land Use Maps

These maps are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

IV. TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A. Goals

- ❖ To provide the residents of Sutton with transportation facilities that are safe, efficient, and adequate to the meet their needs.
- ❖ To minimize runoff and sedimentation impacts to wetlands and surface waters.

B. Existing Transportation Facilities

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1. Highways and Streets

Sutton is located approximately 10 miles north of Lyndonville. After traveling north on U.S. Route 5 from Lyndonville, visitors to Sutton turn off on to the Calendar Brook road and four miles later arrive in the village itself. Because of the layout of Sutton, some parts of Sutton can be reached by continuing up Route 5 or traveling on Vt. Rt. 5A, which splits with Rt. 5 in West Burke. Visitors from the north reach Sutton by traveling south on Rt. 5 from Barton.

The town of Sutton maintains 52 miles of roads. Twelve of these miles are paved and the remaining 40 miles are dirt. The Town currently requires that all privately owned or built roads be built or upgraded to Class 3 standards prior to acceptance by the Town.

TOWN OF SUTTON HIGHWAY MILEAGE	
Road Class	Mileage
Two	12.31
Three	34.94
Four	5.61
Total	52.86

2. Transit Routes

The main routes into Sutton are US Route 5 and State Route 5A. These roads bring travelers from the surrounding towns of Lyndon, Burke, Barton and Newark. Dirt roads lead motorists to Sheffield, Wheelock and Lyndon. Interstate 91 is close by with exits in Lyndon to the south and Barton to the North.

3. Terminals

There are no public transport terminals in Sutton. People choosing to catch a Greyhound bus can leave from either Montpelier or White River Junction. Passenger train service is also available from Montpelier and White River Junction and freight rail service is available in St. Johnsbury. There is a small local bus line, Rural Communities Transportation (RCT), which operates between Lyndonville and St. Johnsbury, from St Johnsbury to Montpelier, and which serves other locations on a periodic basis. The former West Burke Mill site has a railway a spur but it would have to be repaired to make it serviceable.

4. Bicycle Routes and Trails

At the present time there are no established bicycle trails in the town of Sutton although the town's roads are well suited to bicycle touring. The narrowness of some of the more traveled roads could cause safety problems for both cyclists and motorists as the population increases.

5. Scenic Roads

Scenic roads are everywhere in Sutton, from the main roads to any of the dirt roads. Maintaining these views should be a main priority. Future planning efforts should include an inventory of the Town's scenic roads and vistas as well as the preparation of a set of regulations to be included in the Sutton Zoning Bylaw that are designed to protect these roads and vistas.

6. Airports

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There is a small, state-owned commuter airport in Lyndon and there are larger commercial airports in Burlington, Vermont and West Lebanon and Manchester, New Hampshire. Some residents also fly international flights from Montreal, Quebec and Boston, MA.

C. Proposed Transportation Facilities

1. Highways and Streets

There is no need to increase the number of roads in Sutton. The future of the town's roads needs to be concerned mainly with improving the maintenance of the roads, with increasing visibility at certain intersections (i.e. in Sutton Village and at the junction of Union House Road and Sheffield Rd.), and possibly with the widening of some of the more heavily traveled roads. The Planning Commission recommends the Selectboard develop a multi-year roads budget including an analysis of how best to fund major maintenance/improvement projects.

The Planning Commission recommends the Selectboard have the road crew take “Vermont Better Back Roads” training in order to minimize sedimentation of brooks and wetland areas and to improve annual maintenance.

Making Sutton’s roads safer should be an important consideration for the Town. This could be done by increasing site distances on blind curves, making roads wider, installing hazard signs, and/or more rigorously signing and enforcing traffic laws and the Town’s OHV ordinance.

2. Transit Routes

Because of the importance of Routes 5 and 5A to the residents of Sutton, the Planning Commission would like the Selectboard to stress to the State of Vermont how important it is to maintain these roads in a manner that allows both safe and efficient transportation.

3. Terminals

White River Junction and Montpelier will continue to be the closest areas for bus and rail service.

4. Bicycle Routes and Trails

Bike travel increases during the summer and fall as local enthusiasts join with popular tourist groups to travel the area. Consideration should be given to the widening of some of the roads. While separate bike paths would be an even better option, they may not be feasible at this time. If the railroad tracks that pass through Sutton are ever abandoned, the State should perhaps be encouraged to convert the right-of-way into a bike path. Such rights-of-ways make wonderful places for both children and adults to cycle.

5. Scenic Roads

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Nearly every road in the town of Sutton has a scenic view somewhere along its length. The town's scenic beauty should be respected and protected. As a means of protecting these scenic views the Town should consider the preparation of an inventory of these scenic views. Then, if the Town so desires, a view shed ordinance or bylaw could be considered to protect these view sheds. The Planning Commission discourages industrial and commercial development that would impact Sutton's scenic vistas.

6. Airports

The cost of building and maintaining even a small airport makes it very doubtful that Sutton will ever have its own. The Sutton Planning Commission recognizes the importance of a local airport to the region's economy. It is also important to the Planning Commission that that airport be maintained in harmony with the natural beauty of the area, especially the serene, quiet night skies.

D. Existing and Proposed Transportation Maps

These maps are on file and posted in the Town Clerk's office.

V. UTILITY AND FACILITY PLAN

A. Goals

- ❖ To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

B. Existing Facilities

1. Educational facilities

The Sutton School is located in the town center. It is a K through 8 school. Enrollment for the 2010/11 year was 105. The school enjoys a good record for its many programs and educational achievements. The school has no major disciplinary problems.

Until spring 2011 Lyndon Institute was the designated high school for all of Sutton's high school students. High school students are allowed by school policy to petition the school board for approval to attend one of the other area high schools. These schools include: Burke Mountain Academy, St. Johnsbury Academy, Lake Region Union High School, East Burke School, and Lyndon Educational Alternative Resource Network (LEARN).

The school has a board of directors that monitors student achievement and works closely with school staff. New school personnel are screened carefully to make sure the students get the best available education in a safe and nurturing environment.

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2. Recreational facilities

This subject has been covered in the Land Use element of this Plan.

3. Hospitals

The nearest hospital is the Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (NVRH) in St. Johnsbury, which operates in conjunction with Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H. NVRH has a staff of 340 and is licensed for 75 beds (however, the number of beds in use is significantly less) and a walk-in emergency room. Other nearby hospitals are the North Country Hospital in Newport, Copley in Morrisville, Dartmouth – Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH; and Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington. There are numerous health care clinics in Lyndon, St. Johnsbury, and Barton.

4. Libraries

Sutton no longer has a public library, but the town donates funds to the Cobleigh Public Library in Lyndonville which provides a bookmobile that stops at the Sutton School on a regular basis.

5. Power generating plants and transmission lines

Electric service has been available in Sutton since the days of the Civilian Conservation Corps and has continued to grow with the town. Although not the entire town currently has service, the local provider, Lyndonville Electric, will expand the service to accommodate new development. Recently, electric service has expanded to part of Morey Road and to both ends of Station Road. Lyndonville Electric has signed agreements with several electric power producers who are either now providing electricity or are ready to provide electricity for many years to come as Sutton continues to grow. Vermont Electric Cooperative has one customer in Sutton and Barton Municipal Power provides power to one Sutton home on Rt. 5.

6. Water supply

The Sutton Municipal Water System is owned by the Town of Sutton and governed by the Board of Selectmen. The system is located on the Underpass Road and serves 23 connections - 20 residential and three non-residential. It was upgraded in 1994 with an equipment life expectancy of 20 years. The system has a drilled rock well and pumps 30 gallons per minute with a storage capacity of 2,500 gallons. The quality of the water from this system is periodically tested as required by law and is generally reported as being very good.

7. Sewage disposal

Each residence in Sutton has its own septic system. There is no public sewer system, but the town has a septic ordinance which has been considerably strengthened by the State's new waste-water regulations.

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8. *Refuse disposal*

Residents make their own arrangements for trash pickup. Most use Casella or Meyers Waste Management which also picks up recyclables at no extra cost. A local entrepreneur picks up bagged waste on Saturday morning at the Town Clerk's Office parking lot. Sutton is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District. Recyclables, hazardous waste and bulky items can be brought to the recycling center in Lyndonville.

9. *Storm drainage*

Storm drainage in Sutton is limited to culverts and ditching along the roads.

10. *Similar facilities and activities*

a) Telephone

Local landline telephone service is provided by Fairpoint Communications and residents have the choice of several long distance carriers. The Enhanced 911 system is in place, enabling quick assistance in the event of fire, criminal activity, and / or sudden illness or accident.

b) Internet

Part of Sutton is serviced by high-speed Internet lines (available through Fairpoint Communications, Charter, Kingdom Connection, or via satellite. The Selectboard should strongly encourage the State of Vermont to include Sutton in its initiative to provide high-speed service to all residences. The availability of such service would facilitate the establishment of home-based commerce throughout the town.

c) Radio and Television

Radio reception is good in Sutton. Although television reception by antenna is limited, there are several local providers for cable and satellite packages.

d) Cell Towers

At the time of this writing, Sutton does not have any wireless telecommunication facilities. Service comes from the summit of Burke Mountain.

Technological developments in the telecommunications industry have resulted in demands for development of properties that would allow the erection and construction of cell towers and other facilities. It may be only a matter of time until such facilities are proposed in Sutton. There is, therefore, a need to establish a plan to regulate their orderly development. Location, height, design, appearance and impact on the surrounding environment are some of the critical areas that will need to be addressed.

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Construction of these facilities has not been without controversy. The residents of Sutton will want to preserve the character and appearance of their town when considering the development of adequate wireless telecommunication facilities.

e) Wind Turbines

From the point of view of visual impacts, wind towers are a lot like cell towers. The Sutton Zoning Bylaw should be revised to insure that any wind turbines that are not connected to the grid are erected in such a manner as to not negatively impact the Town's scenic vistas. Wind turbines that will be connected to the grid are regulated by the Public Service Board under the authority of 30 VSA, § 248 and cannot be regulated by the Town. Therefore, it will be very important for the Town to become involved in the § 248 permit process for such turbine projects.

f) Fire Department

The fire department, with 2 trucks and 15 active volunteers, is located on the first floor of the Grange Hall. The first truck is a 1989 Chevrolet tanker, capable of carrying 1,200 gallons of water and has a pump rated at 500 gallons per minute. The second truck is a 1989 E1 pumper capable of pumping 1250 gallons/minute and carrying 1,500 gallons. At this time the Department has access to a private pond in the Village as a water supply to fill the tanks on the trucks.

The challenges facing the fire department are varied and many. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the need for additional volunteers. The need to keep the Department's equipment up to date is also a challenge. Challenges are also presented by the current fire house and the need for additional water supplies to fill the trucks' water tanks. The current fire house is small, has room for only two trucks, will not house larger trucks, and lacks a ventilation system to remove truck exhaust and bring in fresh air.

A basic Emergency Management Plan has been completed for Sutton and is available at the Town Clerk's office. The fire chief and each selectboard member has a copy.

g) Law Enforcement

This service in Sutton is provided by two sources. The Town has a first and second constable and, also has a contract with the Caledonia County Sheriffs Department.

C. Proposed Facilities

1. Educational facilities

Please see Section VII, Educational Facilities Plan, for further information about the Sutton School.

2. Recreational facilities

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This subject has been covered in the Land Use element of this Plan.

3. Hospitals

Having health care facilities in the area that are of high quality, accessible, and sufficient to meet the needs of the Town's population is critically important. The Town and its residents should do whatever is necessary to insure the health facilities in the area are adequate to serve peoples' needs. This could be done in a number of ways. Individuals could write letters to the facilities, legislators, and / or the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (the organization that accredits hospitals). Writing letters directly to local health care facilities and / or completing and returning evaluations may also be helpful. Healthcare is expensive; therefore, towns may be able to improve the quality and affordability of health care by providing financial support to local healthcare organizations. Providing appropriations, even small ones, may also give the Town more of a say in terms of how health care services are provided.

4. Libraries

As the residents of Sutton are now dependent upon the Cobleigh Public Library for library services it is important for both the library and the residents of Sutton for the Town of Sutton to have open lines of communication with the library. As the Town of Sutton makes an annual appropriation to the library, it is necessary and important that the Town have a say in how that money is used by the library. Therefore, questions like "Is the Cobleigh Public Library providing the Town of Sutton with the services and books that we need and want?" and "What does the Town need from the library?" need to be asked and the answers must then be communicated to the library. Only in this manner can the library improve its services when that becomes necessary.

5. Power generating plants and transmission lines

The availability of electricity in Sutton was perhaps limited at one time and considered by some to be a luxury. Today, however, electricity has become a necessity that many of us could live without but would rather not. Therefore, it is vitally important that the electric customers in Sutton communicate to the providers the problems they experience. This will enable the providers to correct the problems and perhaps even upgrade the services they provide to the residents of Town. Likewise, the Town Selectboard should also be communicating its needs (the upgrading and extension of three phase electric service along the Rte. 5 corridor) to the providers as well.

6. Water supply

The Selectboard approved the purchase and installation of a "triple throw switch" so a back up generator can be used to operate the pump during power outages as daily usage is 3,100 gallons (600 gallons more than present storage capacity). The system could handle a few new connections before larger storage would be required.

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The following recommendations are offered:

- ❖ Continue regular testing of the well water quality as required by law.
- ❖ Affix a well identification tag on the well.
- ❖ Obtain a standby chlorine pump to have on hand in the event the existing pump fails.
- ❖ Update the Source Protection Plan every three years as required by the WSR.

7. Sewage disposal

Sutton is a small town with a very dispersed settlement pattern as well as limited resources. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Town of Sutton will develop a public sewage system within the foreseeable future. In addition, it is even more unlikely that such system, if installed, will serve the entire town. With this in mind, it becomes even more critical to monitor development especially in light of the fact that Sutton's land is wet and has mostly clay soils. Therefore, great care must be taken to protect both the Town's ground and surface water from contamination from failed or improperly installed septic systems. New state regulations establish stringent standards for wastewater management.

8. Refuse disposal

The Town of Sutton would like to encourage the trash haulers that serve Sutton to continue to provide their services to the town as efficiently and inexpensively as possible. The Town would also like to encourage its residents to recycle as much as possible and to dispose of the remaining trash properly.

9. Storm drainage

Maintaining the culverts and ditching along the roads is going to be important to prevent erosion and pollution of streams with silt. As noted elsewhere, Vermont Better Back Roads training for road crew is recommended. The ditches need to be lined with erosion resistant materials and the culverts need to be properly sized when installed and kept clean. Making sure that is done consistently will reduce damage to private property and liability on the part of the Town.

10. Similar facilities and activities

a) Internet

The provision of high speed internet service, such as DSL, is critical for small business development. The Selectboard should take the necessary steps to encourage the State of Vermont place Sutton on a high priority to receive such service.

b) Fire Department

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To alleviate the problems with the existing fire house the Department is developing a new and larger facility with an appropriate ventilation system. Such a facility will allow the department to store larger and more trucks if and when necessary. The larger facility will also provide the room needed to store other equipment as well. During those times when it is necessary for the firemen to work inside the firehouse with the trucks running, a ventilation system is very important. Such a system will maintain a safe and breathable environment in the fire house and reduce the firemen's exposure to the harmful exhaust fumes. The Department would also like to explore the possibility of installing additional dry hydrants around town so that there will more places to fill the tanks on the trucks.

D. Existing and Proposed Utilities and Facilities Maps

These maps are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

VI. PRESERVATION PLAN

A. Natural Areas, Features, and Resources

Sutton has a history of respect towards and appreciation of its natural landscape. Residents cherish the rural nature of the town. Zoning bylaws limit intensive development in woodland areas. In addition, the State of Vermont administers 5, 577.62 acres (21.2%) (5,068.3 acres Willoughby State Forest, 95.5 acres Mathewson State Forest, 0.35 acres Bean Pond Access, 0.47 acres Vail Pond Access, 413 acres Calendar Brook Wildlife Management Area) of Sutton land and there are 6,041 acres (24.5%) of conserved land in current use. These lands all have a management plan.

The Calendar Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA) covers 413 acres and is located between Union House Road, King George Road and West Ridge. Its forest is made up of 71% white spruce and balsam fir and 29% white cedar. Much of the cedar area is swamp. There are also small amounts of aspen, red maple and yellow birch mixed throughout. This area provides habitats for a variety of wildlife species including wintering yards for the deer.

Portions of both Willoughby State Forest and Mathewson State Forest are located in Sutton (5,068.3 acres and 95.5 acres respectively). The 30-acre Marl Pond and Swamp Natural Area is located in the Sutton portion of Willoughby State Forest. Marl Pond is a small, calcium-rich pond bordered by a mature northern white cedar swamp with several rare plants. The pond bottom was mined historically for marl (calcium and magnesium carbonate deposits), which was used locally for fertilizer.

B. Scenic Features And Resources

The Town of Sutton has a number of scenic roads that are lined with old maples and other trees. In the past few years many of these trees have died and have had to be removed. In an effort to maintain these scenic corridors, however, the Town needs to continue planting new trees to

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replace old ones that have died. This activity will be coordinated with landowners, utility managers, and with the Sutton road crew to avoid locations where plantings will present problems.

Most of Sutton's topography ranges from gently rolling to almost mountainous. The latter part of the previous statement is true especially in the northern half of the Town with Bartlett Mountain, Mr. Hor, Norris Mountain and Wheeler Mountain all being over 2,000 feet above sea level. The nature of the Town's topography provides for many scenic vistas that should be preserved.

Scenic protection areas shall include all lands above 2,000 feet elevation – specifically Norris Mountain and adjacent summits and high elevation ridgelines and summits in the Willoughby State Forest. While the Town of Sutton will welcome small, suitably sited domestic wind towers, the Town shall, nevertheless, preserve its undeveloped high land and its time honored natural horizons as a birthright for our children. Therefore, this plan recommends that any development above 2,000 feet in elevation not exceed 100 feet in height and strongly discourages the erection of wind towers on lands above 2,000 feet.

C. Historic Features And Resources

For information regarding the Town's historic features, please refer to section II, History of Sutton, of this plan.

D. Implementation

The Town of Sutton has a number of natural, scenic, and historic features that make a major contribution to the Town's personality and beauty. These features need to be protected and preserved. Zoning is one way to do this by requiring adequate lot sizes and the segregation of incompatible land uses. Zoning can also protect flood plains and wetlands by setting forth appropriate regulations for the development of these areas. Forested areas can be protected by avoiding clear cutting and practicing sustainable logging practices that follow the State's Acceptable Management Practices for Logging.

Zoning can also be useful with regard to the protection of the Town's scenic vistas. Zoning regulations can be written that would either require the placement of structures in a manner that would not obstruct the Town's scenic vistas or to require screening around structures that might be visible from a scenic vista. Zoning could also protect the ability to view the Town's historic structures in a similar manner.

Maintaining the Town's historic structures for tourists and future generations is important so that they may better understand the history of Sutton. Therefore, this Plan also encourages the maintenance of the Town's historic structures such as the Church, School, and the Grange Hall / Fire Department. Regular maintenance will prevent these structures and other historic structures from falling into disrepair.

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VII. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLAN

A. Goals

- ❖ Create and implement an instructional model that is educationally sound, fiscally responsible, capacity building, and sustainable over time.
- ❖ Continue facility improvements and building maintenance according to the School's three year plan, to be updated in the Fall 2011.
- ❖ Continue to upgrade the School's technology and infrastructure to improve communications in-house and with the larger community, maintain the School's web page, and utilize the School's technology to reach parents the community, and to reduce the use of paper.
- ❖ Continuously review and adjust the School Action Plan to reflect the changing needs of students and the community.
- ❖ The Action Plan should include goals for parent and community involvement in the development and evaluation of that Action Plan.
- ❖ Provide for a healthy and pleasant school climate by complying with Act 113 for a civil, safe, and drug free school that aligns with Sutton School's behavior philosophy. Continue professional development in the Positive Behavioral Supports in Schools program which began in 2009. Review/revise school rules and procedures as needed; revise the handbook annually. Review and adjust crisis prevention and child protection plans.
- ❖ Provide appropriate staffing and structure for the effective operation of the Educational Support Team.
- ❖ Follow the Supervisory Union's direction and leadership in curriculum matters and adjust instruction accordingly to insure a quality education for the children of Sutton.
- ❖ Revisit/rewrite Sutton School's vision and mission statement as necessary.
- ❖ Cooperate with the Supervisory Union in the compliance with Act 153 provisions for the consolidation of Special Education Services at the Supervisory Union level.
- ❖ Develop an effective Middle School Program.
- ❖ Update policies under Supervisory Union direction to be current with new State and Federal requirements, including the assessment and accountability systems established by No Child Left Behind.
- ❖ Encourage all staff members to participate in regular professional development activities.

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B. Present Uses of the Local Public School System

1. Elementary Education

Sutton children ages 5 through 13 attend the Sutton School, which has a Multi age classroom configuration for grades K through 8. A pre-school program is available at the Supervisory Union level and a full day kindergarten program is provided at the Sutton School. Beginning in the 2012 school year, Sutton children of high school age will have High School choice.

The Sutton School is located on the Underpass Road in the Village center. The original brick structure was built in 1833. It is framed to the north by the Town Clerk's Office and to the south by the Grange Hall and Fire Department. A map depicting the location of the school is on file at the Town Clerk's Office.

Four temporary mobile classrooms were moved onto the site and incorporated into the existing school structure in 1996 along with an addition that included a new kitchen and multipurpose room. The 1996 construction project also included additional space for two offices, but did not include any additional teaching spaces. Sutton School has high speed Internet access with the capacity and infrastructure to provide all students access. Our long-term goal is a one-to one student to computer ration. The Sutton Town School District stopped providing bussing services in 1997 and has no plans to reauthorize them.

We are experiencing the local and state downward trend in enrollment. In response to this trend, Sutton School recently implemented the Multi-Age Instructional Model across all grade levels and has improved our capacity to deliver specialized services to students in need. This new structure provides better control over class size and learning configurations. Ultimately, this new delivery model will allow us to accommodate 110 students, employing six classroom teachers, two special educators, and four Para-educators. Additional support services such as the Titles program, clinical and guidance counseling, nursing and Administration are funded through local dollars and both federal and State grant monies. Enrollment numbers for the elementary school continue to fluctuate between 90 and 110. The average number of Sutton students in high school programs is 53.

Detailed information regarding elementary educational programs, staffing and enrollment data, testing results, before and after school programs, and other topics are included in the Annual School Report which is available at the Town Clerk's Office and the School.

The school facility is also used for a variety of community functions such as the before and after school programs, Town meetings, church and group dinners, clubs (i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Pilgrim Manor, the Caledonia-North Basketball Team), and others.

The school facility plan provides for ongoing maintenance during the summer months. Windows, doors and floors are replaced as needed to maintain the economic efficiency and safety of the facility. During the last three years several projects have been completed. These included: a

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lighting efficiency re-design and installation, a security system, the installation of new furnaces with a back-up geo-thermal heating system. An air quality evaluation and the implementation of the report's recommendations were completed in 2008. Regularly scheduled water quality tests show that the School's water is potable. The lower level and the north end of the building were remodeled in the 2008/09 school year. The School is on a replacement program for windows and exterior doors. The Administration maintains a Facility Maintenance plan which addresses larger projects such as roofing, paving, heating, and kitchen equipment.

2. Secondary Education

Until the 2012/13 school year, Lyndon Institute was the designated high school for all of Sutton's high school students. These students were allowed by school policy to petition the School Board for approval to attend one of the other area high schools, which include Burke Mountain Academy, St. Johnsbury Academy, Lake Region Union High School, the East Burke School, and the Lyndon Educational Alternative Resource Network (LEARN). With the exception of Lake Region Union High School, all of the alternative secondary schools available to Sutton's high school students are private schools. In September 2012, Lyndon Institute will no longer be the designated High School for area students; since this change will affect all local schools, a high school selection and enrollment process will be developed by the Supervisory Union Board (which is composed of Directors from each local school) during the 2011/12 school year for implementation in September 2012.

C. Proposed Uses of the Local Public School Building

The Sutton School Board and Administration have successfully solved most of the use of space issues identified in earlier Town Plans.

D. School System Map

This map is on file in the Town Clerk's office.

E. Implementation

The School Administrator and Board adjust the use of the School's facilities according to instructional needs.

The School Action Plan, available at the School, details the implantation plans for specific aspects of the Five Year Plan, which is updated regularly.

Detailed information regarding elementary educational programs, staffing and enrollment data, testing results, before and after school programs, and other topics are included in the Annual School Report which is available at the Town Clerk's Office and the School.

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VII. ADJACENT TOWNS

Sutton abuts a total of seven towns: Barton, Burke, Lyndon, Newark, Sheffield, Westmore, and Wheelock. Newport City and St. Johnsbury have also been included in this study even though they do not abut Sutton. The reason for this is because Sutton may serve as a bedroom community for Newport and St. Johnsbury. Therefore, development trends in these two towns could impact the Town of Sutton.

As of the writing of this plan, all of the towns abutting Sutton have adopted plans... Newark's town plan expired in January, 2011, but a new town plan is currently proposed for adoption. As for Newport and St. Johnsbury, Newport has a current town plan, and St Johnsbury has an expired plan. St. Johnsbury is also working to adopt a new town plan.

The population chart below age group shows how Sutton, the surrounding towns, and the region have grown between the years 1990 and 2010. Wheelock, Newark, Sheffield, and Burke have experienced significant rates of growth followed by Sutton, which experienced a 20% increase in population over the past two decades. Barton lost population. Of the three regional centers, St. Johnsbury, Lyndon, and Newport, only Lyndon experienced any significant growth.

A. Barton

Development pressures in Barton are focused around Crystal Lake. The south end of Crystal Lake is about 2.5 miles from the Barton / Sutton town line as well as down stream from the Town of Sutton. Therefore, it seems likely that development around Crystal Lake will have little or no impact on the Town of Sutton.

The boundary between Barton and Sutton is approximately 4.7 miles long. Much of this area is very hilly with slopes as steep as 20%. There are also several wetlands and small ponds right along Route 5 at that point where Route 5 leaves Sutton and enters Barton. While there may be some parcels of land in this area that might be suitable for development, either along Route 5 or the Wheeler Mountain Road, development in this area could have severe impacts on both towns.

The Barton Town Plan has categorized that part of Barton that abuts Sutton as remote land. Land uses permitted in this area by the Barton Zoning Bylaw are limited and the minimum lot size for development in this area is 10 acres. These requirements of the Barton Zoning Bylaw should help to mitigate any impacts of development in this area.

<i>POPULATION GROWTH 1990-2010</i>	
Area	% Change
Barton	-5
Burke	+25
Lyndon	+11
Newark	+64
Newport City	+3
Sheffield	+30
St. Johnsbury	0
Sutton	+20
Westmore	15
Wheelock	+69
Caledonia County	+12
Orleans County	+13
Northeast Kingdom	+11

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B. Burke

Unlike the area along the boundary between Sutton and Barton, the topography of the area along the boundary between Sutton and Burke is relatively flat. This area is also accessible by a number of different roads that cross this boundary, including Routes 5 and 5A. In addition, the Village of West Burke is very close to this boundary and development related to this village may already spread into Sutton. Due to the flat topography and accessibility of this area, the potential for development in this area is very great and could impact Sutton.

Following the adoption of its town plan in 2006, the Town of Burke amended its zoning bylaws to create multiple zoning districts. The core of the West Burke Village, along Routes 5 and 5A, is zoned for high density mixed-use, with minimum lot sizes as small as a quarter-acre. (In reality, the potential for dense development is currently limited by lack of off-site water and sewer.) The purpose of this district is to continue “the established pattern of mixed residential, institutional, and commercial uses” in the village. In order to prevent development from sprawling into outlying rural areas, the village is surrounded by “agricultural residential” districts, which provide opportunities for low-density housing and limited non-residential development. The northwest corner of Burke, north of Newark Street has a five-acre minimum lot size. While primarily intended for single-unit residential development, this area does allow for some forms for traditional rural industrial uses, such as earth extraction and heavy equipment yards. There are, however, some fairly significant development constraints, including steep slopes, wetlands, and deeryards. In addition, much of this area is located in a “scenic conservation overlay,” which subjects nearly all proposed development to conditional use review, limits clear-cutting, and requires careful placement of building envelopes in order to protect areas with scenic value.

In 2010, the Town of Burke adopted performance standards for industrial uses. The more intensive industrial operations -- such as unenclosed activities and uses that generate significant truck traffic – would most likely have to be located on Route 5 in order to meet these standards.

The Town of Burke has seen significant growth over the past 20 years, and can expect to experience more growth, due to the 1,000+ unit resort development that is proposed for Burke Mountain. In fact, a recent study of subdivision trends shows that in a single year (2003-2004) the community lost 7% of its total acreage from parcels of 50 acres or more. What’s more current use enrollment in Burke is fairly low – about half of statewide averages.¹

C. Lyndon

Like that area along the Sutton / Burke boundary, the area along the Sutton / Lyndon boundary is also relatively flat. Most of this area, however, is not quite as accessible as the area along the

¹ “Informing Land Use Planning and Forestland Conservation through Subdivisions and Parcelization Trend Information,” Vermont Natural Resources Council and Vermont Family Forests, 2011.

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Sutton / Burke town line. There are only two roads that allow access from Sutton into Lyndon and vice versa and only one of these roads actually comes into the Village of Lyndonville. This road is the Pudding Hill Rd which also provides access to the Old Coach Road via the Airport Road.

Most of the area described above is currently held in large lots that have been developed with expensive homes. Any recent subdivision activity in this area has also resulted in large lots. As long as the current development patterns in this area prevail, it is unlikely that development in this area will adversely impact the Town of Sutton. However, if any of these large lots are subdivided this could impact the Town of Sutton if such development should cross the town line.

Lyndon's hot spot for residential development at this time is along Route 5 in the Little Egypt and Hemond-Doyon Subdivisions. While this area is not directly adjacent to Sutton it could still impact Sutton if any of this development should cross the town line. It is more likely, however, that this development could have a greater impact on Burke due to this area's proximity to the Town of Burke. In addition, Burke may act as a buffer between these developments and the Town of Sutton.

Perhaps the greatest impact that Lyndon could have on Sutton will be caused by the fact that Sutton is a bedroom town to the surrounding towns. While between 1990 and 2010 Lyndon's population increased by 11 percent, Sutton's population increased by 20 percent. These increases in population may reflect the fact that Sutton may be acting as a bedroom community for Lyndon.

Lyndon adopted a new Town Plan in 2008. The area that abuts Sutton is currently zoned as Rural Residential. The Town Plan recognizes Lyndon's role as a regional center to outlying towns such as Sutton. Further it recognizes the importance of the Calendar Brook Road, and the access that it provides for shopping, work, and other activities. The Town Plan encourages development that will not hinder the functionality of this road.

D. Newark

Development pressures in Newark are focused in two areas. The first is along Newark St. (Newark's main street) where the Town's center and services are located. The second is on the west side of Newark Pond. While it seems that development along Newark Street will have little or no impact on Sutton, it would seem that extensive development around Newark Pond could. The water that drains out of Newark Pond flows into the West Branch of the Passumpsic River near the Sutton / Newark town line. This area is also a wet land. Careful monitoring of the development around Newark Pond by the Town of Newark will help to reduce any impacts on Sutton as well as points south along the Passumpsic River.

Although Newark's Town Plan expired in January of 2011, the town is working to adopt a new plan. Newark has no zoning, subdivision, or flood hazard regulations. In 2008, the planning commission conducted a feasibility study of various growth management strategies, primarily in

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response to recent growth and development pressures from Burke. Although the planning commission did explore zoning and subdivision regulations, but they ultimately decided that there was not enough support for local land use regulations at this time.

E. Sheffield

Much of that part of Sheffield that lies along the Sutton/Sheffield town line is both mountainous and inaccessible. With only three minor roads crossing into Sutton, and the nature of the topography, this area has not been experiencing much in the way of development. Development pressures in Sheffield are much more likely to be felt in the valley along or near Route 122, the only major highway, other than I-91, in the Town of Sheffield. In 2005 Sheffield approved plans for the siting of 16 industrial-scale wind towers on Granby Mountain, Libby Hill, and northeast along the unnamed summit to the south-southwest of Norris Mountain. While largely unseen from populated areas in Sheffield, this development is having a significant adverse visual impact on the Towns of Sutton and Barton and specifically to properties within sight of the project. In addition, the lights, noise, and visual impacts from the project could disturb the peace and tranquility of the neighborhood from the West Ridge to the Sutton/Sheffield town line. Based on documented effects of other projects, these impacts will likely cause diminution of property values in the viewshed of the wind project. Sheffield adopted a town plan in 2010; however, the town has no local land use regulations.

F. Westmore

The town line between Sutton and Westmore is dominated by a ridge of mountains including Wheeler, Hor, and Bartlett. To the east of Mt. Hor the land drops steeply down to the western shore of Lake Willoughby. As such the land between the Lake and the town line has severe limitations for development. Much of this land is also in the Willoughby State Forest. The land area in and near the triangle formed by Wheeler Mtn., Valley Mtn., and May Pond Mtn. appears to be more developable but some of this area still has some issues where the topography is concerned. Development, however, is more likely to occur between the northeastern foot of Valley Mtn. and the north end of Lake Willoughby as this area is relatively flat. This area has been identified by the Town of Westmore as a possible hotspot for development. The other area of Westmore where development seems to be occurring is along the Hinton Hill Road to the east of Lake Willoughby.

Due to the topography and the existence of the Willoughby State Forest, both of which will act as a buffer between the Town of Sutton and development in Westmore, it seems likely that development in Westmore will have only a minimal impact, if any, on Sutton. In addition, Westmore's town plan does promote development in a manner that will cause the least impact possible on the land.

G. Wheelock

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The town line between Sutton and Wheelock is only about a mile in length and most of it abuts or passes through the Mathewson State Forest. Access to this area is also limited as there is only one road that crosses the town line. In addition, the hotspot for development in Wheelock appears to be in South Wheelock which is 2 to 3 miles from the Sutton /Wheelock town line. Therefore, it seems very unlikely that development in Wheelock will have any impact on Sutton. To the benefit of both Sutton and Wheelock, the Wheelock Town Plan does recognize the importance and encourages the maintenance of the Town's natural environment. While, this fact may help to protect the Town of Sutton from development in Wheelock, Wheelock has no local land use regulations.

H. Regional Context

The table at the beginning of this section sets forth the percentage change in population for Sutton, the surrounding towns, Caledonia County, Orleans County and the Northeast Kingdom between the 1990 and 2010 Censuses. These numbers reflect the fact that Sutton's rate of growth during the 1990s and 2000s exceeded the rates of growth for all but four of the other geographic areas listed. Therefore, it seems that Sutton could have a greater impact on most of the surrounding towns than vice versa. It should be noted that of the four towns that exceeded Sutton's rate of growth, only Burke has zoning and subdivision regulation. Fortunately, none of these three towns have had growth pressures in the vicinity of the town lines and two out of these four towns have topography or land ownership issues that will reduce or eliminate impacts on Sutton and vice versa.

Finally, the land/use land cover data in Regional Plan indicates that the Town of Sutton is largely Forested and Open/Agricultural. The regional goals for these lands – which may be highly relevant to Sutton -- are:

- Sustainable forestry should remain an economically viable tool to preserve woodlands, open space for recreation, and local character.
- Mixed-use forests should allow for expanded economic benefits to forest owners while encouraging sound ecological practices and recreational access to the public.
- Value-added processing opportunities for wood resources in the region should increase.
- Farming and agriculture should remain an important and viable sector of the regional economy.
- Contiguous tracts of prime agricultural soils should be preserved.

IX. ENERGY PLAN

A. Goals

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❖ To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

B. Energy Resources

Most Sutton residents are supplied with electricity by Lyndonville Electric. Oil, propane, and wood are available from a number of private sources. Future increases in energy costs are a certainty, and, with the exception of electricity are a function of unregulated market forces.

C. Conservation of Energy

Using less energy, with greater efficiency saves money and conserves resources. To that end both State and Federal governments have initiated both mandates and educational programs. Efficiency Vermont, through its' website, as well as other forms of public outreach provides information and resources to both individuals and businesses. NETO thru its home weatherization programs and energy audits provides services to both low and average income Vermonters.

D. Development of Renewable Energy Resources

Domestic scale renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, hydro and wood ought to be encouraged. Vermont has a number of programs that encourage and defray the cost of renewable energy installations.

E. Land Use and Energy Conservation

There are several developmental techniques that lend themselves to the conservation of energy. Southern orientations, cluster housing, and the use of topography or vegetation to shield structures from the prevailing winds reduce energy usage.

X. HOUSING ELEMENT

A. Introduction

A town plan exists to encourage and maintain the well-being of the towns' residents. Housing is a necessity. Ensuring that housing remains affordable for the towns' residents is thus within the purview of the town plan.

In general, housing costs should not be greater than 30% of the occupants' income. Title 24 of VSA Section 4303 (1) defines affordable housing as follows:

(A) Housing that is owned buy its inhabitants' whose gross annual household income does not exceed 80% of the county median income, . . . , and the total annual cost of the housing including principal, taxes, insurance and condominium association fees is not more than 30% of the households gross annual income.

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(B) Housing that is rented by its inhabitants whose gross annual household income does not exceed 80% of the county median income, . . . , and the total annual cost of the housing including rent, utilities, and condominium fees is not more than 30% of the households gross annual income.

B. Goals

- ❖ To insure the provision of affordable housing to all of Suttons' residents, especially those earning less than 80% of the county median income (i.e. those considered to be low or moderate income).

C. Analysis

The data that follows is taken from the Census Department's American Community Survey. The information is not formatted in such a way as to allow the determination of the percentage of Sutton's household's making less than 80% of the Caledonia County median income which are also spending more than 30% of income on housing.

The median household income of Caledonia County is \$41,897. 80% of median is \$35,517. There are 390 households in Sutton. One hundred fifty eight (158) or 41.5% make less than \$35,000 per year, a figure which approximates 80% of county median income.

Of the 390 households, 276 are owner occupied, 191 with a mortgage. Eighty two (82) of those households or 42.9% spend more than 30% of income on housing. There are 85 un-mortgaged owner occupied households, 16 of which, (19.5%) spend more than 30% of income on housing.

There are 114 households which are deemed rentals. 42 are occupied without payment of rent. Of the remaining 72 renters 14.9% spend more than 30% on housing.

D. Conclusion

The percentages of those making less than the County median income, as well as those spending more than 30% of income on housing are virtually unchanged from the 2005 Town Plan. Thus, similar conclusions can be drawn; that Sutton's residents with low and middle incomes may be paying too much for housing, and consequently, the Sutton Zoning Bylaws should be amended to allow for the provision of multi-family dwellings as a way to provide affordable housing.

Making this change will also bring the Town's bylaws into compliance with 24 VSA, Section 4412(1), which requires the town to allow both affordable and multi-family housing. The town could further encourage multi-family development by abating taxes on multi-family dwellings.

XI. Economic Development

Because Sutton is largely viewed as a bedroom community, economic development strategies would be best viewed against a regional context. Northeastern Vermont Development has

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recently commissioned an analysis of “Strategic Industries in the Northeast Kingdom.” Prepared by Economic & Policy Resources, Inc, this report may provide an appropriate context for evaluating employment opportunities in Sutton.

A. Economic Overview

The first part of the analysis provides an economic overview of the Northeast Kingdom. The Northeast Kingdom’s labor market is undergoing fundamental changes. While employment in the Northeast Kingdom increased by one-sixth between 1990 and 2010, employment growth has been virtually flat during the latter half of the first decade of the 2000s. Significant structural change occurred within the Northeast Kingdom economy during the 2000s. Employment shares in the goods-producing sectors of agriculture, forestry, mining; construction and manufacturing continued to fall. Services, trade, transportation, and finance and insurance combined now employ about three in every four workers in the region.

Unemployment is a significant indicator of the vitality of a region’s economy. The unemployment rate in the Northeast Kingdom during the Great Recession spiked, reaching its 20-year high in 2009 with an annual unemployment rate of 7.2 percent was consistently higher—by around 2 percentage points—than the statewide rate. Thus far in 2010, unemployment rates in the Northeast Kingdom have once again trended downward reaching 7.8 percent.

While employers in the Northeast Kingdom have not added much employment in recent years, there has been a marked increase in self-employment. Compared with the state and other counties, self-employed workers in the Northeast Kingdom compose a significant share (a third) of total employment. This finding may reinforce Sutton’s call to “encourage more home-based businesses.”

The transportation infrastructure in the NEK is a mix of paved and unpaved roads, railways, and small regional airports. The region is bisected by Interstate 91 (I-91) and US Route 5 and represents the major north-south highways connecting the NEK with the rest of New England. Interstate 91 and US Route 5 – which runs through Sutton -- connect many of the major population centers within the Northeast Kingdom and both terminate at Derby Line, the US-Canada border. While Sutton has no airport, the Caledonia County Airport in neighboring Lyndon is open year-round and has planned improvements and expansions through the Vermont Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration. Sutton is also served by a freight-only rail line. The Washington County Railroad runs north-south between Newport and White River Junction, connecting to other lines such as the New England Central Railroad and the Green Mountain Railroad. The line provides service to many Northeast Kingdom Communities, including Orleans, Barton, West Burke, Lyndonville, St. Johnsbury, Barnet, East Ryegate, and Wells River.

Widespread attention has been given to the shift in the national economy from goods production toward services in recent years. The Northeast Kingdom exhibits a similar pace to its trend, but

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remains more dependent upon goods producing industries than the state and the nation. The goods-producing industries consist of the natural resources sectors of agriculture, forestry, and mining in addition to construction and manufacturing. Services-providing industries include transportation and warehousing, utilities and information; finance and insurance; real estate and rental; educational services; health care and social assistance; professional and technical services; management of companies; administrative and waste services; arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodation and food services; wholesale and retail trade; and government.

In 2001, Vermont's ratio was a full point higher than the Northeast Kingdom; 2.9 versus 1.9 services-providing jobs for each goods-producing job. By 2009, Northeast Kingdom region's ratio had increased to 2.7 services-providing jobs per goods-producing job, whereas statewide the ratio had increased to 4.0.

As is the case with much of Vermont, the workforce in the Northeast Kingdom tends to live within short distance of their workplace. In 2008, the latest year commuter data is available, 69.5% of the workers employed in the Northeast Kingdom lived in the Northeast Kingdom and 15.2% of the workers who live in the Northeast Kingdom are employed in the surrounding counties. In terms of the distance workers who live in the NEK travel to work, 45.2% travel less than 10 miles, 24.5% travel between 10 and 24 miles to work, which means that 69.7% of the workers living in the NEK travel less than 24 miles to work from their home; the remaining 30.3% travels over 25 miles from home to work, with 14.5% traveling 25 to 50 miles from their home in the NEK to their place of work and 15.8% traveling more than 50 miles from their home to place of work.

The second part of the study provides an industry cluster analysis of the Northeast Kingdom.

The process of identifying the Northeast Kingdom's industry clusters begins with an iterative analysis of detailed sector data, including employment concentration, wage performance and stability, growth and change, and supply chain interrelationships. Similar to the detailed analysis of major sectors, clusters can be typecast as mature, challenge, opportunity, or star.

- **Mature Cluster:** These clusters are composed of traditional mainstay companies operating in a region having a large number of employees, a high level of concentration (as measured by employment specialization ratio), but in recent years their collective performance is one of stagnation or decline
- **Challenge Cluster:** These clusters, while potentially large, may lack key industries or be dominated by a small number of firms. Collectively, this cluster has two characteristics that evoke the moniker of "challenging;" namely, a lower level of concentration and an eroding base of employment.
- **Opportunity Cluster:** These clusters, also called potential or emerging, show strong growth in both firms and employment in a number of segments, but overall lack the critical mass or

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collective concentration. For instance, if a cluster is composed of about 10 interrelated industries, an opportunity or emerging cluster would show firms and employment in only about half to two-thirds of these industries.

- **Star Cluster:** These clusters are identified as stars given both their high level of concentration and their solid recent performance. Given the recent “great recession” in the United States, there are few star clusters that have retained their economic luster in any particular geographic region.

Seven primary industry clusters were selected based on the analysis of various screening criteria of growth and expansion, competitiveness, linkage strength, and overall position (and subsequent label).

- **Agribusiness, food processing & technology cluster.** One of the “stars” of the Northeast Kingdom, this cluster is made up of twelve production, processing and distribution segments. With a 2009 critical mass of 75 establishments, employing 654 workers with average wages of \$33,270; this cluster has exhibited strong growth over the business cycle period of 2001-2009. Its measure of economic specialization (called location quotient) has increased over time; meaning its export orientation continues to strengthen. Overall, the Northeast Kingdom’s agribusiness cluster has outperformed its national counterpart over the study period. Finally, this regional cluster has not gone unnoticed—growth and developments in the Northeast Kingdom agribusiness cluster has been cited in national studies and the popular press.
- **Biomedical/biotechnical (life sciences) cluster.** One of the “opportunity” clusters in the Northeast Kingdom, this cluster is made up of biomedical-oriented manufacturing sectors, equipment and supplies wholesalers, health and personal care stores, and ambulatory health care services. Overall, this cluster experienced modest employment growth with some erosion of export orientation. Although it includes the relatively recent (and potential) “stars” of biotech/biomedical manufacturers, there remains some question marks about composition and related performance. In particular, there appear to be strong interconnections between the existing biomedical/biotechnical segments with area hospitals. Hospitals and other ambulatory health care services are directly tied to the significant and growing medical payment transfer receipts within the region.
- **Education and knowledge creation cluster.** Composed of education services (private), publishers and other information services, the education and knowledge creation cluster is in its incipient stage, with limited interconnections with other sectors in the region. This cluster showcases a number of nationally (and internationally renowned) educational institutions such as the St. Johnsbury Academy, Burke Mountain Academy, and Sterling College.
- **Fabricated metals and machinery manufacturing cluster.** A “mature” cluster, fabricated metals and machinery manufacturing is diversified. The combined industry is in the midst of a recovery after the debilitating great recession. Several fabricated metals segments were hollowed out by the recession. Given the significant orientation toward national and international markets, many

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firms within this cluster are once again showing signs of life and beginning to hire-back laid off workers and expand production. Workforce training issues are paramount within this cluster.

- **Forest and wood products cluster.** Overall, a cluster composed of several “mature” sectors including wood products manufacturing, paper manufacturing, and furniture products manufacturing. Though showing significant signs of decline (employment base of 2,500 workers in 2001 to 1,450 workers in 2009), the churning has spawned a number of developments in niche markets. As in the agribusiness and food processing cluster, forest and wood products is part of the traditional economic base of the Northeast Kingdom and as such have many opportunities for convergence and intersection with other economic activities, including visitor and tourism.
- **Visitor and tourism cluster.** Another “star” cluster for the Northeast Kingdom with solid growth during the study period of 2001-2009. Significant investments will help make the region a year-round destination. Though these developments will continue to add jobs to its solid base of nearly 1,000 workers; wages remain relatively low within this industry, due largely to continued seasonality and part-time opportunities.

B. Sutton’s Economy

As noted throughout this document, Sutton serves as a bedroom community for employees working in jobs that are outside the community. Many of these jobs have disappeared during the recent recession but plans (such as AnC-BIO’s to employ up to 200 people in the Newport area) offer hope for an improved employment outlook. The 2008 County Business Patterns analysis reveals that in March of that year Sutton had a total of 8 establishments with 12 paid employees. Having acknowledged that reality, however, the town has a viable network of working farms and logging firms that produce goods which contribute to value-added enterprises throughout the region. Many Sutton residents are also self-employed entrepreneurs and directly provide services to clients (house cleaning, landscaping, auto repair, etc.).

The feasibility study for the Burke Mill Site concluded that the only barrier to siting a wood pellet manufacturing plant there was the absence of three phase electrical service. Lyndonville Electric Department estimated it would cost \$3-5 million to upgrade and extend the existing line to the site. The \$0.18/kilowatt electricity cost which was factored into the business model for the study would have more than covered the cost of onsite generation and the project still was projected to yield a \$279% return on investment over a 20 year projection. While one investor was very interested in siting a plant there, he was able to find other sites (in Maine and Virginia) that had everything, including three phase power, available. With increasing energy prices the West Burke Mill Site may well be developed in the future as a pellet plant or for some other use.

The closure of the King George School was an economic blow to Sutton. At it highest student census of approximately 50 students it had nearly 50 employees and contributed over \$3 million to the local economy. The future of the school is unknown and the property is for sale.

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The status of the Greenwood Mills sawmill on Calendar Brook Road is an unknown. It appears to be running part time but its future operation is not known.

C. Conclusions

Sutton's economic base has continued to erode with the closure and uncertain future of the above-mentioned enterprises. The Planning Commission recommends the Selectboard take a more active role in engaging NVDA and our political delegation to lobby for the extension of three phase electrical power to the Burke Mill Site in order to make it competitive as a site for industrial redevelopment.