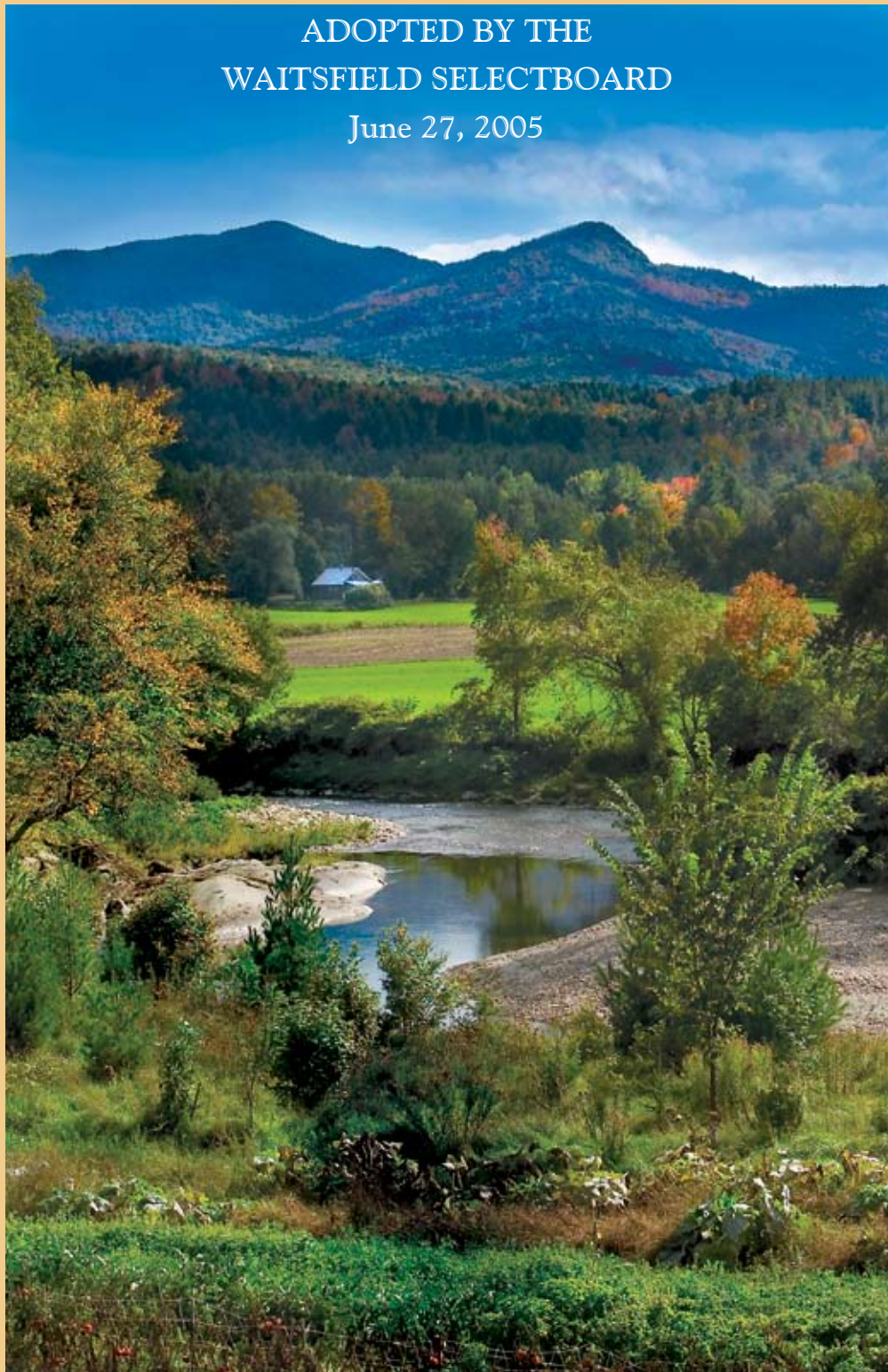


WAITSFIELD, VT TOWN PLAN

ADOPTED BY THE
WAITSFIELD SELECTBOARD
June 27, 2005



Shari Edmands, Zoning Administrator
Bill Bryant, Town Administrator

The Town Plan was prepared
with the assistance of:
Burnt Rock Inc., Associates in
Community Planning
Waitsfield, Vermont.

Funded in part by a
Municipal Planning Grant
awarded by the Vermont Agency of
Commerce & Community Affairs

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Sandy Macys, Beverly Kehoe

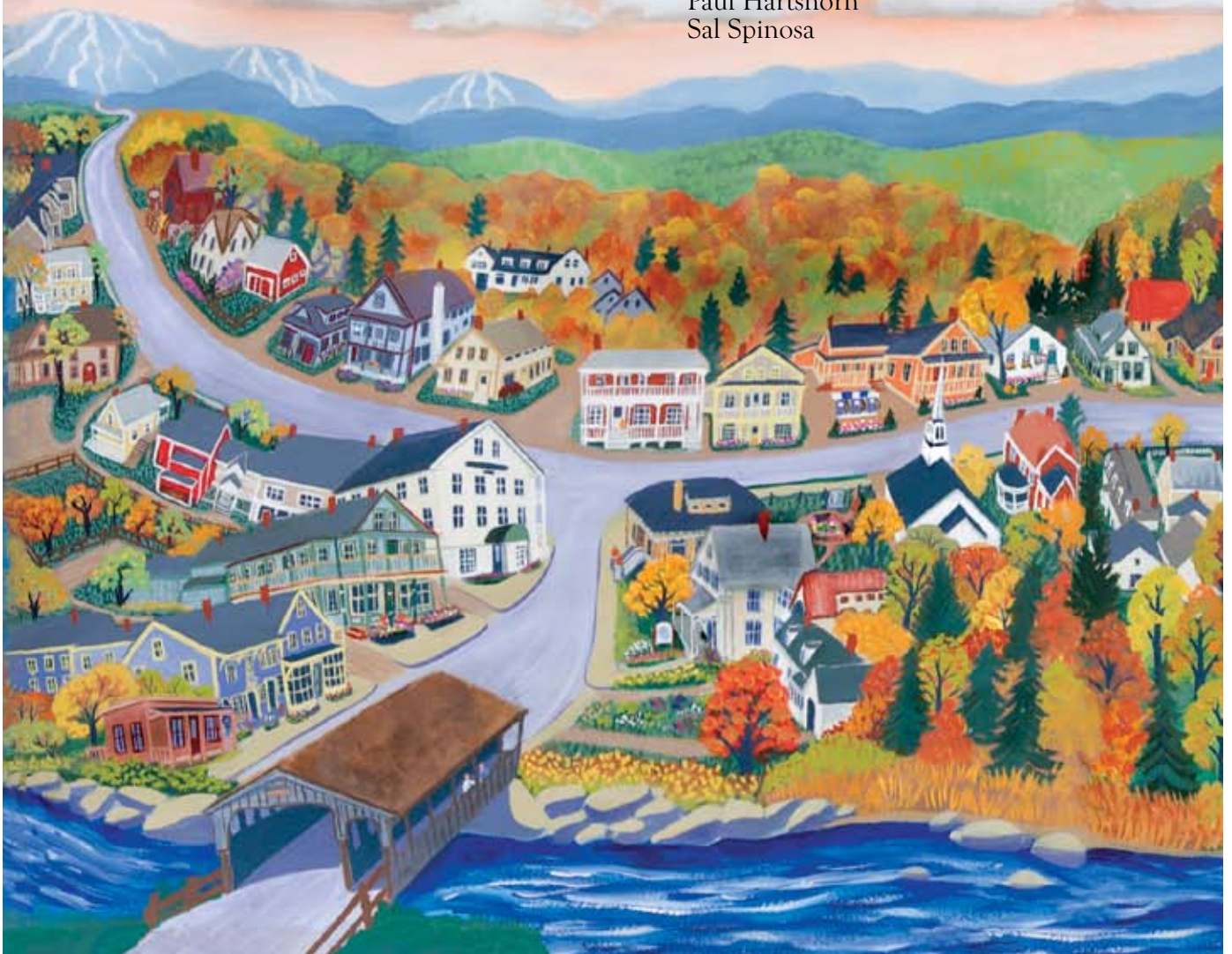
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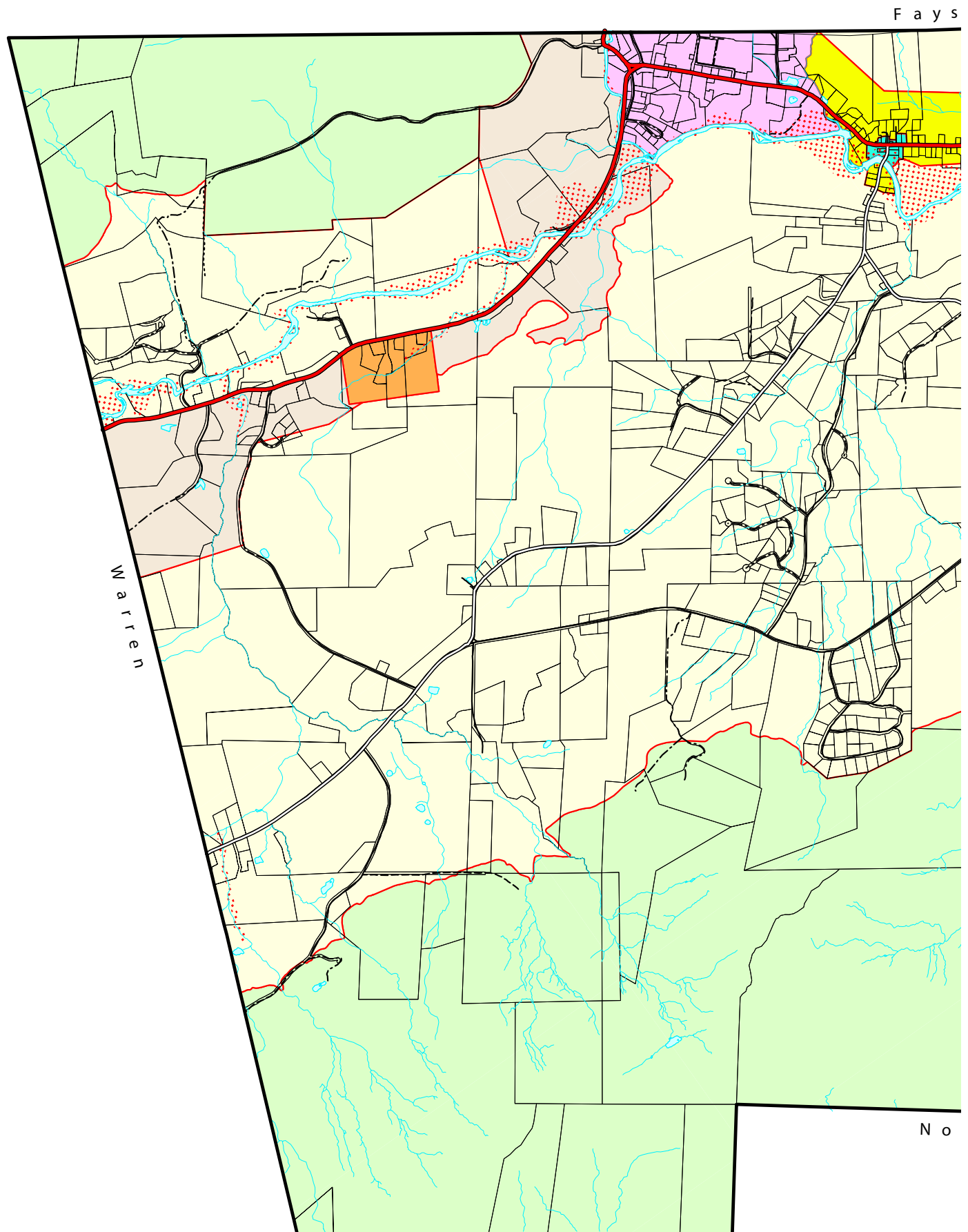


WAITSFIELD TOWN PLAN

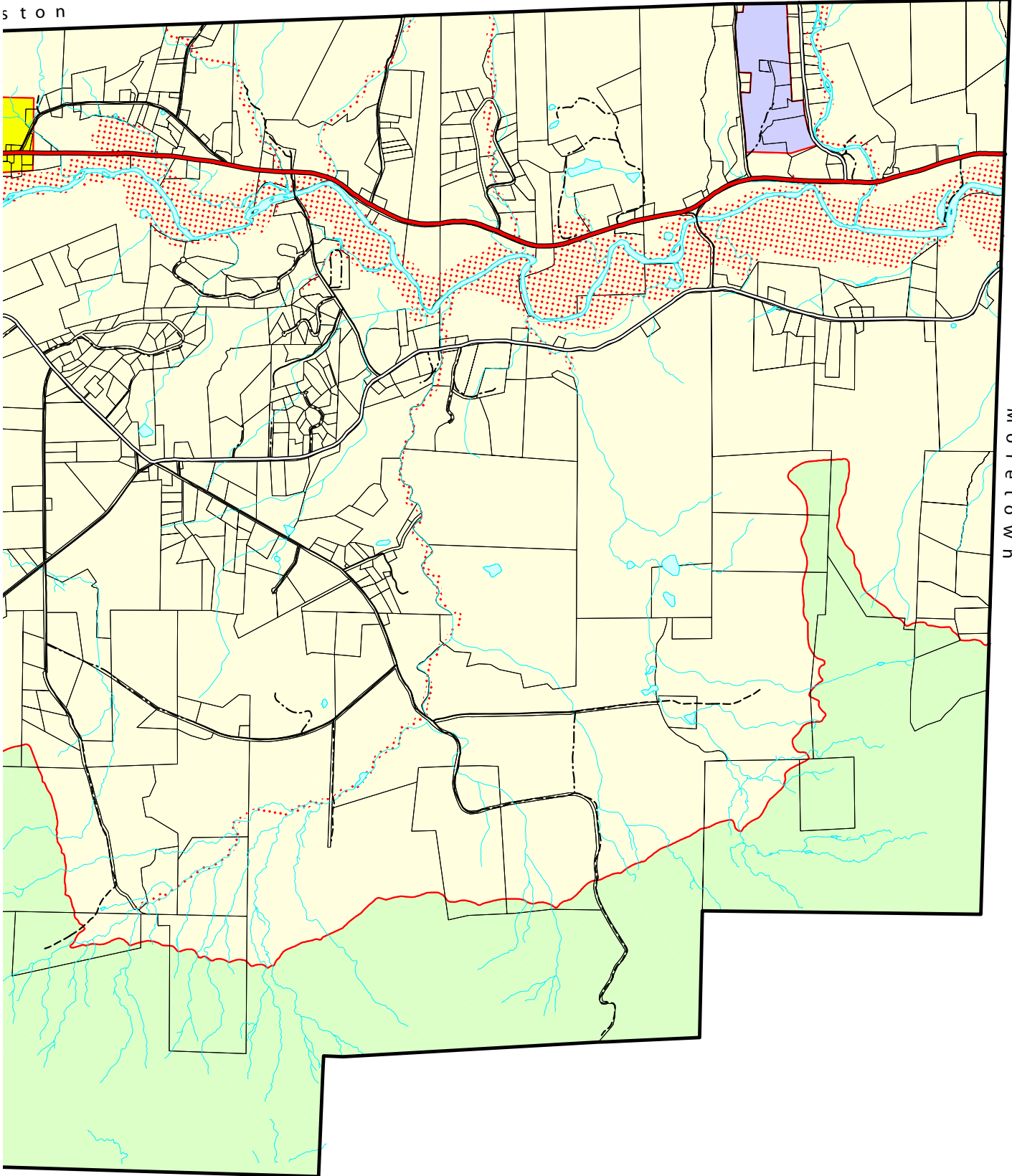
Approved by the Waitsfield Planning Commission
on September 1, 2004

Adopted by the Waitsfield Selectboard
on June 27, 2005



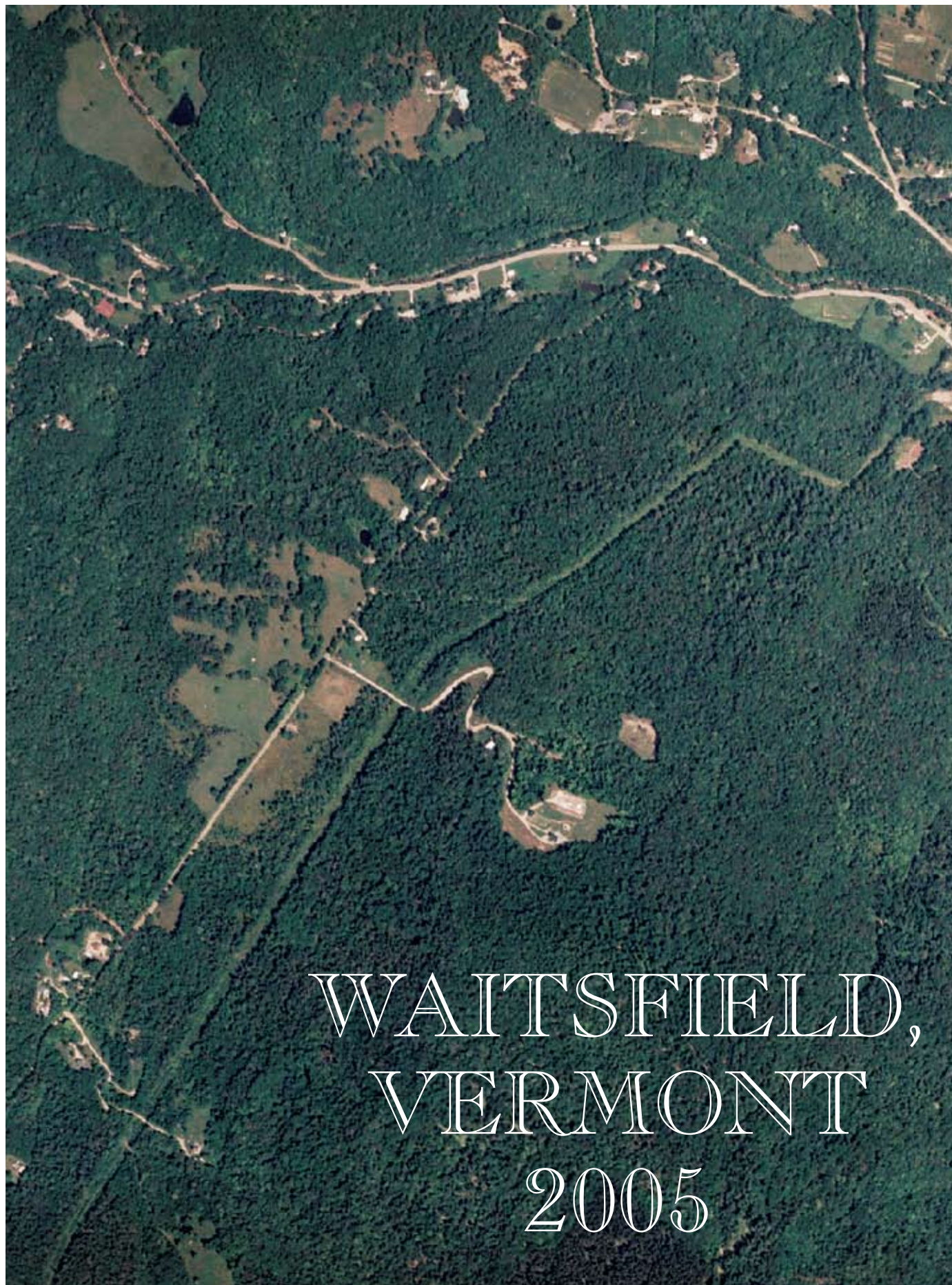


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WAITSFIELD, VERMONT 2005



2005 TOWN PLAN WAITSFIELD VERMONT

Contents

1. Introduction.....	9
2. Historic Development	17
3. Natural Resources	27
4. Historic & Cultural Resources.....	43
5. Population.....	51
6. Housing.....	57
7. Local Economy.....	67
8. Transportation	77
9. Community Facilities & Services	89
10. Local Education	107
11. Energy.....	113
12. Land Use.....	121
13. Implementation	139
14. Maps	143
15. Index	155

1. Introduction



FOREWORD

The Town of Waitsfield has a rich history and heritage grounded in the Vermont doctrine of freedom and unity. Our agrarian past has left a legacy that is prominent in our landscape and continues to influence the character of our community. While we are indebted to our past, the town's recent history has been one of transition.

The changes that have affected the town mirror those influencing the state as a whole. Our resource based economy, founded on agriculture and forestry,

is now built on recreation and an enviable quality of life. Thus, the town has been transformed from a quiet farming town to a resort destination, bedroom community and, increasingly, a center for innovation and commerce. This transformation has not been without costs: to tranquility, to the landscape and to the insular nature of the community. Waitsfield has managed, however, to retain many of the best elements of its past and merge them with a modern economy driven by tourism, technology, accessibility and respect for our natural and social heritage.

As we look to the future, we can only conclude that change will become more rapid and that the consequences of town decisions will become more profound. To best confront the future, the town should look to its past, to the path provided by our forebears. In this way we can arrive at the following principles which are found throughout this plan.

- ◆ **Open debate, accessible institutions and democracy are the bases of our local government;**
- ◆ **Economic and cultural opportunities for local citizens enrich the entire community;**
- ◆ **Access to quality education, a livable wage and safe and affordable housing are critical elements of a civil society;**
- ◆ **All current and future residents of the town share the same rights and responsibilities, regardless of status or background;**
- ◆ **As economies become more globalized, focusing on sustainable development and the careful stewardship of local resources will become increasingly important;**
- ◆ **The town's heritage, as defined by the historic settlement pattern of concentrated villages surrounded by an open countryside and forested mountains, is among its greatest resources;**
- ◆ **Individual rights and responsibility to the community should be balanced, as provided by local, state and federal law.**

AUTHORITY TO ADOPT A TOWN PLAN

Authority to adopt and implement the town plan is provided by the Vermont Planning and Development Act, 24 VSA, Chapter 117. The purpose of the Act is to “encourage the appropriate development of all lands...in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, prosperity, comfort, conve-

nience, efficiency, economy and general welfare; and to provide a means and methods for the municipalities and regions of this state to plan...and to implement those plans”. In 1988 the Vermont Legislature revised the state planning statute with the adoption of Act 200, which established a series of goals and objectives and added them to the Purpose of Chapter 117. That statute was revised once again in 2004, when provisions that enable the adoption of local land use and development regulations were overhauled and the relationship between the municipal plan and regulations strengthened.

Waitsfield's first plan was the original town charter of 1782, which established a subdivision plan for the town and prescribed how private property would be developed. The modern era for town planning began when the town adopted its first town plan in the early 1970s. In 1980, the town began to coordinate its planning program with other Valley towns through the *Valley Growth Study*, which resulted in a major revision to the town plan in 1983, and a subsequent update of that plan in 1988.

In 1993, the Planning Commission undertook a comprehensive re-write of the plan. The result was a plan with a much broader scope and level of detail than the prior plan. It served the community well, and was re-adopted with minor amendment in 1998. This plan represents a significant update of the 1993 plan, and incorporates the outcome of the many planning and community outreach efforts that have occurred over the past decade.

PURPOSE OF THE TOWN PLAN

The town plan is the principal policy statement for the Town of Waitsfield. It articulates the aspirations of the community, and provides a framework for achieving those aspirations. It is intended to guide how the town addresses such diverse community issues as land development, the provision of municipal services and facilities, environmental protection, economic development and transportation.

In developing this plan, an attempt was made to look beyond the typical five year time frame of many municipal plans. The Planning Commission tried to consider the factors which will affect the town's growth well into the future, and to define how we as a community should work to influence those factors. In addition to guiding local officials



and citizens in making decisions regarding our future, the town plan is intended to be relied upon as the basis for making decisions in a number of specific settings. Such uses of the plan include the following:

- ◆ **Provide the framework for planning the future of the town;**
- ◆ **Guide local decision-making in local regulatory reviews—while the Town Plan is not a regulatory document, it does provide a basis for determining compliance with Plan policies in specific regulatory settings;**
- ◆ **Serve as the basis for local decision-making during the Act 250 review process, most importantly guiding the Planning Commission and Selectboard in making determinations of compliance with the town plan;**
- ◆ **Provide a foundation for updating and revising subdivision and zoning bylaws;**
- ◆ **Assist in the ongoing update and implementation of the capital budget;**
- ◆ **Assist with the formulation of local policies and programs;**
- ◆ **Serve as the primary resource document for private parties desiring to learn of the town and its goals and policies;**
- ◆ **Establish a basis for the town's interactions with neighboring towns and with other levels of government.**

FORMAT OF THE PLAN

This plan contains thirteen chapters addressing a range of topics, including all plan elements required under Vermont statute [§4382]. Each chapter presents background information and analysis related to the main topic of this chapter. This background information is intended to provide a basis for plan goals, policies and tasks. The narrative included in these chapters is *not* intended to serve as specific policy statements. Such policy statements are located at the end of each chapter as goals, policies and tasks. When reviewing the plan, the reader should be aware of the distinction between goals, policies and implementation tasks. For the purpose of the Waitsfield Town Plan:

- ◆ **Goals** express broad, long range community aspirations relative to one or more categories of topics. They should be considered aspirational statements for the community.
- ◆ **Policies** are statements of the town's intent, or position, with regard to specific issues or topics. In certain settings, such as during Act 250 proceedings and local zoning and subdivision reviews, policy statements shall serve as the basis for determining a project's conformance with the plan. While other

sections of the plan, including goal statements, provide useful context for understanding policies, it is the policies alone that serve as the final statement regarding the town's position.

- ◆ **Implementation Tasks** are specific actions to be taken by an identified entity to support one or more policies and achieve the community's long term goals. Where feasible, the municipal entity responsible for carrying out the implementation task is identified. Where a partnership with a private entity is desirable, such partnership is noted as being encouraged. Tasks are designed to assist the town to achieve its long term goals. Failure to implement a specific task, however, does not alter or negate a specific plan policy.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Waitsfield residents have a rich tradition of democracy and participation in town government. Spirited debate, and occasional discord, is a predictable part of resolving important community issues. This plan builds upon that history of public discourse, and supplements it with a focused public outreach effort designed to solicit greater community input regarding key issues facing the town's future.

Since the last major plan update in 1993, Waitsfield has undertaken dozens of special studies related to a range of planning topics, and has sponsored scores of public forums and hearings related to such issues as growth management, land use, transportation, community facilities, and housing. The debate and subsequent outcome of these public processes are referenced, as applicable, throughout this plan.

The preparation of this plan also involved a postage-paid return mail community survey of all town voters. The six page survey, which was returned by over 25% of the recipients, addressed a wide range of topics addressed in this plan. A report entitled *Waitsfield 2002 Community Survey Final Report*, dated January 15, 2003, summarizes the survey results.

Prior to holding formal public hearings on this plan, the Planning Commission advertised that a preliminary draft was available and solicited the advice of town residents and landowners, interest groups and affected parties. Local non-governmental organizations—especially those that have been identified as playing a potential role in partnership with the town to implement specific tasks—were also invited to review the draft and provide comments on the preliminary draft.

As is usually the case, there is room for additional public involvement at all levels of the planning process. The use of surveys and questionnaires, public forums and greater coordination between interest groups and the town has ensured the past participation of town residents in local decision making. The ongoing coordination with local citizen groups, businesses and regional agencies will ensure that such involvement continues to shape town policies.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

The Town of Waitsfield has been meeting regularly with the neighboring towns of Fayston and Warren to discuss issues of mutual concern for nearly 25 years. This relationship was formalized by the creation of the Mad River Valley Planning District (MRVPD) in 1985. The MRVPD is a unique entity that has undertaken a number of planning initiatives designed to address a wide range of issues on a multi-town basis, including:

- ◆ **Affordable housing;**
- ◆ **Economic development;**
- ◆ **Growth management associated with ski area development;**
- ◆ **Highway improvements;**
- ◆ **Public transit;**
- ◆ **Recreation;**
- ◆ **Watershed conservation;**
- ◆ **Rural resource and historic preservation;**
- ◆ **Trails and greenways development; and,**
- ◆ **Wastewater treatment and disposal.**

In addition to the wealth of information available through these planning efforts, this cooperative relationship allows Waitsfield to coordinate its local planning program with those of neighboring towns through the MRVPD's staff and Steering Committee, thereby ensuring plan compatibility with Fayston and Warren. This coordination has resulted in, for example, the recognition of Irasville as the commercial "downtown" in Fayston's, Warren's and Moretown's town plans.

While the success of the town's cooperation with Warren and Fayston is well documented, communication and cooperation with other neighboring towns has been less extensive. This is due largely to the geographic barriers separating Waitsfield from Northfield, and less formal coordination with Moretown and Duxbury due to less active local planning programs in those communities (each of which

are partially located within the Mad River watershed). Some formal relationships do exist with those communities, however, in order to address specific community needs. Examples include the Harwood (Washington West) Supervisory Union and the Mad River Solid Waste Alliance. In addition, several non-governmental organizations, such as the Friends of the Mad River, focus their efforts on the larger watershed which includes all Valley towns.

The policies set forth in this plan were crafted to ensure compatibility with the plans of neighboring towns, as required by the Act. Compatibility with neighboring towns is particularly important with regard to land use, where incompatible policies could result in conflicting development activities and land uses along town boundaries. Waitsfield's land use plan calls for agriculture, forestry, low to moderate density residential development and very limited non-residential uses along the boundaries of Moretown, Northfield, Warren, Fayston and Duxbury. These uses and densities are similar to those allowed in adjacent towns along the boundary.

Finally, the town continues to play an active role with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. Through that involvement, potential conflicts with neighboring towns outside of the Mad River watershed can be addressed. More importantly, the town has considered the policies of the Central Vermont Regional Plan, and has subsequently drafted a town plan that is compatible and consistent with the regional plan.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLANNING GOALS

Under current Vermont enabling legislation (the Act), Vermont towns are encouraged to plan in accordance with State planning goals [§4302] and to contain specified elements [§4382]. While this Plan was developed foremost to meet the needs and reflect the desires of the Town of Waitsfield, careful attention was also made to ensure that all specified elements have been included, and that the goals, policies and tasks set forth in subsequent chapters are consistent with state planning goals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Plan was formed largely in response to the active participation of Waitsfield residents and landowners over the years. That participation—which

takes many forms, such as serving on local boards, attending hearings and meetings, returning completed surveys, and of course voting—is the foundation of local planning. A special thanks to those Waitsfield citizens who continue to help shape our community's future.

In addition, the Plan was prepared with the assistance of Burnt Rock Inc., Associates in Community Planning, a community planning firm based in Waitsfield. Burnt Rock assisted with all aspects of drafting the plan.

The Town History in Chapter 2 was drafted by town resident Rick Thompson in 1993, as part of the preparation of a prior Town Plan, and was updated by Burnt Rock in 2004.

Historic photographs were made available by Jack Smith and the Waitsfield Historical Society from

their exhaustive collection of historic glass slides. Aerial photographs were taken by Alex McClean, whose firm Landslides Inc., has received international acclaim for documenting land patterns. Alex's photography was funded by the Mad River Conservation Partnership. Other photos were provided by David Garten, Sandy Macys, Dennis Curran and Beverly Kehoe. Finally, this Plan—and several of the planning studies and documents referenced herein—was funded in part by a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant awarded by the Vermont Department of Housing & Community Affairs.

PLANNING & COORDINATION GOALS

The widespread involvement of Waitsfield citizens and landowners at all levels of the local planning and decision-making process.

PLANNING & COORDINATION TASKS

- 1) Develop and maintain a Town web page to post meeting agendas and minutes, documents of local interest, such as this plan, and share information with the general public. *[Town Administrator]*
- 2) Explore making child care available at regular and special Town Meetings to encourage greater participation among families with young children.
- 3) Strictly comply with Vermont's Open Meetings Law [1 VSA §§310-314], as applicable. *[All official bodies of the Town]*
- 4) Continue to see that meetings of interest to the community are broadcast on Mad River television (Channel 44). *[Town Administrator, Selectboard, Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, School Board, Conservation Commission]*
- 5) Publish regular meetings of local boards in the local newspaper. *[Town Administrator, Zoning Administrator]*
- 6) Investigate the use of mediation to resolve disputes as an alternative to litigation wherever possible. *[Selectboard]*

PLANNING & COORDINATION POLICIES

- 1) Opportunities for citizen input will be provided at every stage of the planning and decision-making process and decision making shall only occur in an open, public environment.
- 2) Adoption of a town plan which is consistent with state planning goals [24 VSA Chapter 24 §4302]. This plan has been determined to be consistent with those goals.
- 3) Statutory hearing requirements will be recognized as a minimum level of public involvement, and will be exceeded in all instances where public interest is evident. Public forums, direct mailings, broadcasts on Mad River Television (Channel 44) and notices placed in local newspapers will be used to inform the public of governmental activities on a regular basis.
- 4) The town plan and related planning documents will be reviewed on a regular basis and modifications made as appropriate to address changing circumstances.
- 5) Waitsfield will continue to participate in the Mad River Valley Planning District to support regional cooperation and communication on matters of area-wide concern.
- 6) Waitsfield will continue active participation in the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission to coordinate local planning activities with those of neighboring towns and the regions, and continue to support regional organizations which most efficiently provide services and facilities to local residents and those of surrounding towns (e.g., Waterbury-Mad River Valley Solid Waste Alliance, Mad River Valley Recreation District, Waitsfield-Fayston Volunteer Fire Department).
- 7) Provide neighboring towns with an opportunity to comment on local matters of concern through notification of pending decisions which may affect them.

WAITSFIELD TOWN CHARTER

The Governor, Council & General Assembly of the State of Vermont

To all People to whom these presents shall come Greeting:

Know Ye, that whereas it has been represented to us by our worthy friends the Honble General Roger Enos, Col. Benjamin Wait & company to the number of seventy, that there is tract of vacant Land, within this State, which has not been heretofore granted, which they pray may be granted to them. We have therefore thought fit for the due encouragement of settling a new plantation, & other valuable considerations us hereunto moving. Do by these presents in the name & by the authority of the freemen of the State of Vermont, give & grant unto the said Roger Enos, Benjamin Wait & the several persons hereafter named their associates Vizt Joel Mathews, Daniel Mathews, James Mathews, Ephraim Edey, Nathan Edey, Barnabas Strong, Aaron Whipple, Ezekiel Rooks, Charles Nelson, Daniel Brown, Amasa Brown, William Lathrop, Luther Richards, Sanford Kinsbury, Charles Kingsbury, Reuben Spencer, Barnabas Spencer, John W. Dana, Ebenezer Brown, Samuel Harriss, Samuel Treat, Edward Whitman, Ezra Jones, Zebulon Lee, Joseph York, Gideon Luis, Moses Levet, Christopher York, Benjan Burk, Enoch Emmerson, John Benjamin, John Strong, Theophilus Clark, Wm Strong, Andrew Spawlding, Ammi Curer, Solomon Burk, Gilbert Hodges, Benajah Strong, Stephen Jacobs, Joseph Farnsworth, Amos Bigelow, Ephraim Smith, Beriah Green, Stephen Tilden John Marsh, Roger Enos Juner, Solomon Strong, Isaac Dana, Charles Killim Jur Isaac Maine, John Hodges, Pascal P. Enos, Noahdiah Bissell, John Barret, Stephen Maine, Daniel King, Stephen Keyes, Gilbert Wait, Joseph Fay, Ezra Wait, George Denison, James Hawley, John Bean, Dearing Spears, Josiah Averil John Fay, & Eli Willard,

Together with five equal shares to be appropriated to public uses as follows Vizt One Share for the use of a Seminary or College within this State. One Share for the use of grammar Schools throughout this State, One Share for the first settled Minister of the Gospel in said Township to be disposed of as the inhabitants within said Town shall direct, One Share for the support of the Ministry to be disposed of in like manner, for that purpose & One Share for the benefit & Support of a school or Schools within said Town to be disposed of for that purpose as aforesaid; he following tract or parcel of Land Viz. Beginning at a stake & Stones in the southwesterly corner of Moretown, thence running south forty six degrees 30 Minutes East in the line of Moretown to the Southeasterly corner thereof, thence south forty four degrees west in the westerly line of Northfield, five Miles & 27 Chains to a Spruce Staddle standing in the northerly Line of Roxbury or Warren, Thence in the northerly line of Warren North 61 ° West about six miles to a beach tree Marked June 17th 1787. Thence North 41 Do East six Miles 67 Chains & 40 Links to the first mentioned bounds, Containing 23,040 Acres, And that the same be & is hereby incorporated into a Township by the name of Waitsfield & the inhabitants that do or shall hereafter inhabit said Township are declared to be enfranchised & entitled to all the privileges and immunities that other Towns within this State do by Law exercise & enjoy.

To Have and to Hold the said granted premises as above expressed with all the privileges and appurtenances to them and the irrespective heirs & Assigns forever, Upon the following Conditions and RESERVATIONS VIZt. That each proprietor of the Township of Waitsfield aforesaid his heirs or assigns shall plant and cultivate five Acres of Land & build a house at least Eighteen feet square on the floor or have one family settled on each respective right or share of Land in said Township agreeable to the time allotted by the Legislature of this State, on penalty of the forfeiture of his right or Share of Land in said Township; And the same to revert to the freemen of this State to be by their representatives regranted to such persons as shall appear to settle & cultivate the same.

In Testimony whereof I have here unto set my hand & caused the Seal of this State to be affixed this 25th day of February 1782 in the Sixth Year of the independence of this State.

Thomas Chittenden

By his Excellencys Command

Joseph Fay Sec.

CHAPTER 3.

AN Act, in amendment to an act, entitled, an act annexing a part of Waitsfield to the Town of Northfield.

Passed Nov. 3, 1823

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont, That four tier of lots off of the easterly end of said Waitsfield, including one tier of small lots, and all the small lots on the southerly line of said town, lying east of lot number one hundred and fifty, be and the same are, hereby annexed to the town of Northfield; and the inhabitants, who do, or shall hereafter inhabit said lands, shall have, enjoy and exercise all the rights, privileges, immunities, and be subject to the same disabilities and penalties, which the other inhabitants of the town of Northfield can or ought, by the laws and constitution of this state, to have, exercise, enjoy, or be subject to.

Sec. 2. And it is hereby further enacted, That so Part of formermuch of an act, entitled an act annexing part of the town act repealed. of Waitsfield to the Town of Northfield, passed November 7, A.D. 1822, as comes within the purview of this act be, and the same is, hereby repealed.

No. 13. An Act to annex a part of the Town of Waitsfield to the Town of Northfield.

Approved, October 26, 1846

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont, That the eastern and north-eastern part of the Town of Waitsfield, to wit: lots No. twenty-four, twenty-six, twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-two, thirty-four, thirty-six, thirty-eight, forty, fifty-nine, sixty-one, sixty-three, sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven, and sixty-eight as numbered on the original plan of said town, be hereby annexed to the Town of Northfield, and shall hereafter constitute a part of said Town of Northfield, the same as if it had been included in the original charter thereof.

2. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT



On Feb. 25, 1782, Col. Benjamin Wait, the Honorable Roger Enos and about seventy others were granted a charter by the Governor, Council and General Assembly of the State of Vermont for the township of Waitsfield. At the time, Vermont had not been accepted into the United States of America. Vermont was a self-declared republic with its own constitution, currency and self-government.

The new township of Waitsfield was chartered into the far southeastern corner of Chittenden County, close to the geographical center of the state. In 1810, adjoining parts of Chittenden, Addison, Orange and Caledonia Counties were reorganized into a new central Vermont county called Jefferson. The county's name was changed to Washington in 1814.

First surveyed by William Strong in 1788, Waitsfield included approximately 23,000 acres of hills and valley covered in virgin woods. The valley was oriented and drained to the north by a flood-prone, 'Mad' river and surrounded by 2,000–4,000 foot mountains. The river ran in a narrow floodplain near the western town line closely guarded by steep hills.

Two of Vermont's highest peaks lay six to ten miles west, their rounded foothills forming the Town's western border. Above the hills to the east, the land flattened into a broad, mile-wide plateau which spanned the length of the township beneath the low ridges of the Northfield Mountain Range. Originally, Waitsfield included lands east of those mountains, but geographical proximity later dictated their

annexation to Northfield in 1822 and 1846. Today Waitsfield encompasses about 15,540 acres.

The summits surrounding Waitsfield belong to the Green Mountains, a backbone of double mountain ranges that longitudinally bisect Vermont. In turn, these grey ledge summits represent the northern extension of a much longer continental cordillera stretching in eastern America from Alabama all the way north through Vermont into Canada. These Appalachian Mountains are 500–900 million years old. Their worn, grandfatherly knobs are thought to be the weathered cores of an ancient mountain range which may have towered to Himalayan heights. They would have been raised from continental crusts that were buckling under the tremendous stresses of proto-continental collisions in the long, convoluted, geologic history of earth.

Perhaps the most dramatic chapter of Waitsfield's natural history was written by the great continental ice sheets that covered all of New England ten to fifteen thousand years ago. Flowing into the valley from the general direction of Camels Hump, a mile thick glacier of ice gouged the valley clean of all vegetation and soil. The islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard give testimony to the great piles of glacial debris scraped from New England and deposited at sea. Once climates warmed, the glaciers melted northward in retreat, redepositing the sands, silts, clays and stones that became the parent material of the valley's soils.



At one time a large meltwater lake flooded the Mad River Valley. Some glacial features can be seen throughout Town. Kame terraces and a huge glacial erratic (a boulder whose rock is not native to its resting location) can be seen just west of the elementary school. Gravel pits and clay banks along the brooks are remnants of this deposition. Channel scars from old lake bed currents and meltwater courses can be seen throughout the valley's meadows.

Little evidence of Native American activity has been discovered in Waitsfield though it is known that Algonquins, roaming on the western fringe of their tribal territory, periodically lived or passed through Vermont. Fine campsites would have been found along the Mad River, but the river's periodic flooding may have destroyed, buried or carried away any evidence of use. A recent archaeological study of the Town-owned "Munn" site, however, turned up a "chert projectile point" and a "quartz biface knife", both of which date from the Middle to Late Archaic period (ca. 5500–900 B.C.).

Archaeologists believe other sites may be found within Waitsfield in the future—a map of the Valley showing areas of high archaeological sensitivity was prepared by the state archaeologist in 1988. An initial assessment of the Valley's archaeological potential, *Archaeology in Vermont's Mad River Valley from Paleo-Indian Times to the Present*, was completed for the MRVPD in 1990.

In 1789, less than a year after Strong's survey, General Benjamin Wait led a small



group of settlers, mostly family members or friends from his home in Windsor, Vermont, into the area. By 1791, Vermont had finally been accepted into the Union, and the first federal survey of the 14th State showed 13 families and 61 people living within the surveyed lots of Waitsfield.

Wait may have built the Town's first log house upon a hillock north of the village, which now holds the cemetery bearing his grave. He soon constructed the first frame house in Waitsfield on a small terrace about half a mile west of that log cabin site. Three sons and a half-brother built upon lots nearby.

General Wait was 53 years old when he moved from the Connecticut River westward over the mountains. He had recently resigned his rank of brigadier general for the Third Brigade of Vermont Militia, the culmination of a military career that had started in the French and Indian War and carried on through the War for Independence. He had been a renowned and successful resident of Windsor, having served as a representative to Vermont's constitutional conventions. He had been high sheriff of Windsor County as well. He continued to be a civic leader in Waitsfield, being elected Selectman and representing his new town in the State Legislature. He died in 1822, at the age of 86. His home was moved off the terrace sometime near 1830 to its present location next to the village cemetery. A second story was added about that time. The Wait house is among those structures that comprise the Waitsfield Village Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

With southern New Englanders hungry for land, settlement of all corners of Waitsfield soon followed General Wait's arrival. By 1795, the poll tax list showed 50 voters. By charter, homesteaders had to clear and cultivate a minimum of five acres. A house at least eighteen feet square had to be built upon their lot. Sam and John Barnard built north along the river near the Moretown line. Samuel Pike and his sons from Brookfield, Massachusetts (General Wait's birthplace) built homes on the hillsides below Scrag Mountain in the east. Francis Dana was located on lots 143–44 in the far southwestern corner of Town, high on the western hill which parallels the Mad River upstream to Warren. Moses Chase was established at the base of Bald Mountain in the northeast.

At first, town life centered around the Wait family lots. General Wait's home was used for town meetings until 1798. The first church services were held in his barn. What little commerce was available was here as well. Slightly northeast, at the foot of nearby ledges, Samuel Chandler of Worcester, Massachusetts, and Henry Mower of Woodstock, Vermont, had the first store in town. Edmund Rice, a cabinet maker, town clerk, merchant and surveyor, lived close by. The Carpenter tannery and a potash works were within the vicinity as well. North along the old county road, another store was established in 1815 by Hebard, Baldwin and Woodward. This building held the first Post Office for Waitsfield in 1818.

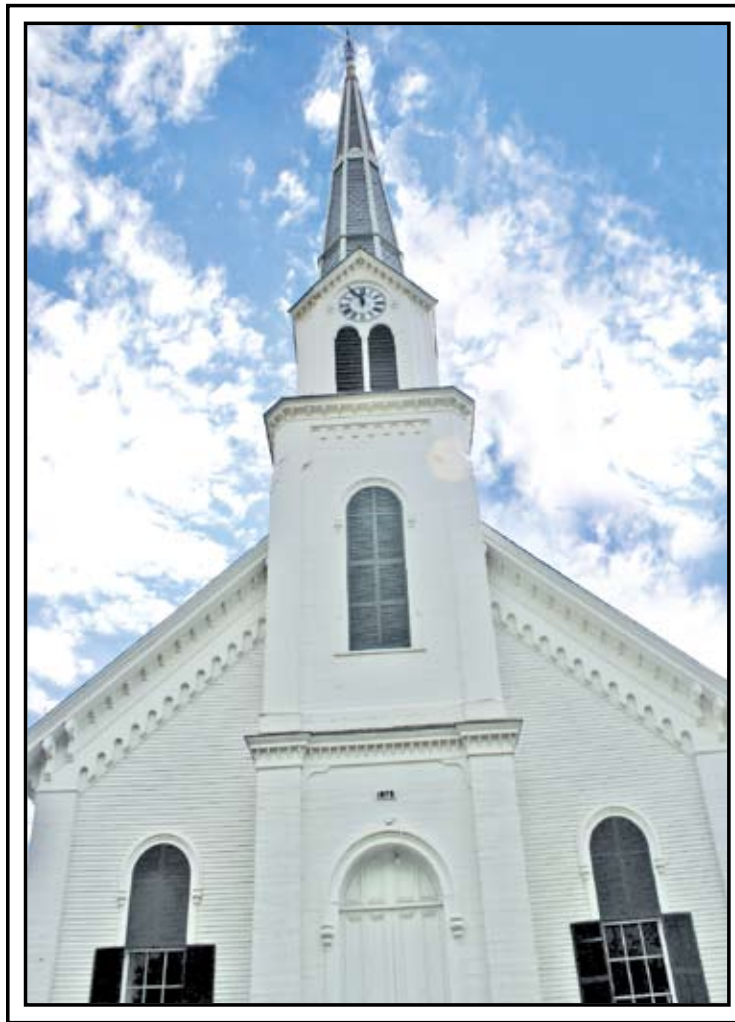
The frequent flooding of the Mad River may have kept the first settlers away from the floor of the val-



ley. Instead, many built their homes on the high plateau east of the river. The first real village center was established up on the 'Common' in the early 1800s. It remained as the Town's political and social center for forty years. In 1798, a donated piece of land on the Common was first 'chopped over' and the cemetery that is there today laid to its western side. A meeting house for the Town was built in 1807 in front of the cemetery. Roderick Richardson Sr. had a store on the Common by 1806. Potash works, tanneries and a blacksmith shop were there as well. Palmer Hill, a small knoll east of the Common at the foot of Old Scrag, was densely settled with the growing Bartlett, Quimby, Wheeler, Grandy and Palmer families.

To help build a successful community, the Proprietors of Waitsfield voted a tax of two pence an acre. One half of this money was to be used building roads and bridges. The rest was used to attract business and industry.

As the clearing of land is the most prevalent occupation of any woodland frontier, potash works were quickly established to wash the ash and char of the bonfires with lye. The residue used in the making of soap was then traded into southern New England for tools, clothes and seed. Lumber mills were also important to frontier communities. They not only gave land owners a commodity (logs) to barter for other goods, they also milled the board feet of lumber that became the comfortable frame homes, meetinghouses, churches and businesses: the infrastructure every new town needs to attract emigrants.



Six brook-sized streams fed the Mad River from the slopes of the surrounding mountains. Three fed from the west and three from the east, spaced at fairly equal margins from the southern Town line to the north. With flooding such trouble on the Mad River, these small streams became important sources of power for early millworks. General Wait may have had the first sawmill in Town just east of the present High Bridge on Clay Brook, a shallow stream which flows off Scrag Mountain, emptying into the Mad River just north of the village.

In 1793, as a result of the tax subsidy, John Heaton Jr. built the

first grist and saw mills on Mill Brook in Irasville. Until then, grains were milled in an old hollowed out birch stump near the covered bridge, or taken many miles south through the Kingston Mountains, (Granville Woods), where the nearest grist mill was found in Hancock. Turned over to successive owners, Heaton's Mills became known as Green's Mills, then Richardson's. They occupied a site just upstream from the present location of the Baird lumber mill today.

Helped by the presence of these mills, the hamlet of Irasville grew into some prominence. Named for Ira Richardson, who had a 'commodious' homestead along the flats, Irasville became the center for the Methodist Church when in 1835, First Elder Rufus Barrett donated land for a Methodist cemetery and oversaw the construction of a barn which became the Methodist meetinghouse. In 1870, the Methodists built the large white church in Waitsfield Village. Their old barn still stands in Irasville. It is occupied today by The Store.



Early roads were surveyed and built through taxation. By 1796, a bridge had been built over the Great Eddy of the Mad River carrying a road through what is now the village center. But perhaps from fear of flooding, the village did not become established until the 1820s and 30s. By 1797, the earliest road in Town ran south from the Barnard place near the Moretown line up along the west bank of the river, bending westward onto the terrace to pass General Wait's house, from which it proceeded south, curling past his son's place which would have been near the present village parsonage. From here a fork of the road turned south over a small knoll and out onto the Irasville flats, then pitched down the 'Dugway' and crossed Mill Brook on a bridge built near Green's Mills. It then climbed the steep hill towards the Francis Dana place.

As noted, there was a bridge over the Mad River at this time. Another fork of the old county road crossed the river and continued up over Mill Hill southeast, following the general direction of the present East Warren Road until it curved up onto Roxbury Mountain passing what is now the present Folsom/Great Lake Carbon Farm. This road over to Roxbury was the first highway that

ran into or out of the Mad River Valley.

The old bridge at the Great Eddy was destroyed several times by fire and flood. A covered bridge, which remains today, was built on the site and is the second oldest covered bridge in the state of Vermont. The bridge was restored in the early 1970s.

A north road was quickly laid out from the Roxbury/Kingston highway, across the eastern plateau to the Common, branching up Palmer Hill along the way. Another headed southerly from the Common, back down into the valley towards the Great Eddy bridge. In 1803 a road was extended northeast from the Common, entering Moretown high on the slopes under the knob of Bald Mountain. What are now the main routes through the village were not established until 1837.

Throughout the 1800s there was frequent talk of rail lines into the Mad River Valley, but finances were never found for the various schemes. Granville Gulf effectively sealed off any major southern exit for the valley. Eventually a good highway was established north along the Mad River through Moretown, and goods and supplies soon found transport to the railhead in Middlesex.

During the first three decades of the 19th century, more and more farms were established among the hills, and the demand for services grew. The village of Waitsfield slowly took form. Roderick Richardson



had a house there by 1817. In 1831 he built a store next door. The building was damaged by fire in 1845 and the present two story brick structure was built. It is now the Masonic Hall. In 1851 Richardson also moved a building from Irasville to the corner diagonally across from the Masonic Hall. This large building became a hotel. Its ground floor was used for fifty years as a hall for town meetings.

A few hundred yards north of the Richardson buildings, a Union Meeting Hall was built in 1836. At the turn of the century, this red brick building was purchased by the Odd Fellows Association and a second story was added. Dan Richardson built a brick house next door in the 1840s.

There was a blacksmith's shop across the river by 1838; a Congregational parsonage by 1840. George Kidder lived in a house next door to the parsonage. Today it is a half-brick, half wooden building. The wooden part is the oldest, having been used by Kidder as a store and a post office as he was made Postmaster in 1822. Across the road from Kidder's, at the foot of Mill Hill, Roderick Richardson built a large complex of grist and lumber mills in 1829–30. In order to supply his mills with power, he and his two partners hand dug a canal to the river, passing behind the post office. The slough is visible today.

By 1850, Waitsfield Village would have been the commercial and social center of the township.

The history of agriculture and industry in Waitsfield closely follows the patterns for Vermont as a whole. Initially, the pioneer settlers were engaged with the clearing of lands for subsistence farming. Virgin forests were chopped over and burned, their ash sent to the potash works, becoming the first marketable product of the farmers. The clearings were then planted with a variety of grains: wheats, barley, hay, rye and oats as well as corn and potatoes. Maple sugar was made in the spring. (Maple syrup was too perishable, so the sap was boiled longer to the sugar stage). These products were often used as currency to



pay taxes or bills, and directly bartered for other goods.

Sheep raising was the first dominant agricultural activity. To attract farmers, the town fathers again turned to tax incentives, allowing in 1804 a deduction of one dollar per sheared sheep off any taxpayer's property assessment. The Merino sheep did well with the Vermont climate and stony soil. Sheep were necessary for their wool to make clothes as cotton goods were only available far away in the bigger Towns of southern New England. In lieu of money, wool was often bartered locally for supplies.

The sheep industry remained strong throughout Vermont until the middle of the 19th Century when ranglands in Texas began to dominate the supply of wool. During this period, farmers often drove their excess range stock to market in southern New England some two hundred miles away!

The population of Waitsfield peaked during this period. In 1840 there were 1048 people in Town, a number that's been surpassed only in recent times. Of course many citizens left Waitsfield for more promising lands out in the Midwest, attracted by the Erie Canal and the reports of fertile lands in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Minnesota. Two of Benjamin Wait's sons left, while a third, Ezra fathered the first child in Town, Catherine Cutler Wait, born Oct. 21, 1790.

With the loss of the sheep industry, farmers in Vermont and the valley turned to dairying. As there was no refrigeration at the time, milk products were quickly turned into less perishable butter and cheese. For the next thirty years Vermonters produced the majority of dairy products for New England. Local farmers increased their dairy herds. To meet container demands, many mills in Waitsfield turned to the manufacture of butter and cheese tubs.

Farms increased in numbers from 95 in 1850 to 135 in 1880. Agricultural societies were chartered and exposition fairs were held throughout Town to display

products and animals. By 1870, it is estimated that Vermont was 70 percent cleared land and only 30 percent forest. That ratio is the reverse today.

In 1889, Child's Washington County Gazetteer and Directory showed M.L. Richardson's mills on Mill Brook to be producing 400,000 board feet of lumber. Fred Parker's shingle mill in Irasville produced 1,200,000 shingles annually. The Palmer Bros. grist and saw mills in Waitsfield Village were cutting 200,000 feet of clapboards and 250,000 feet of lumber a year. In the northern part of Town, Elmer Trask's mill turned out 600–800,000 feet of lumber, 350,000 feet of clapboards and 100,000 shingles. George Olmstead butter tub factory in the village made about 400 tubs a year. In 1880, all these wood products came from land farmers were clearing for new pasture and meadow. There were 1,161 milk cows in Town in 1880.

Irassville had a population of 125. Waitsfield Village about 250, including a dozen merchants, three doctors, one lawyer, a photographer, three churches, (Congregational, Methodist, and Universalist), a hotel and a school. Schools were important to the community. All Town charters granted by the State of Vermont held a reserve of land to be used for schools. College lands were set aside as well, though as major colleges became established in the state, the lands were often sold off. As early as 1797, Francis Dana, General Wait and three others formed a committee to divide the Town into school districts.

Each district was responsible for building its own school and attracting a teacher. Initially schools

were held in private residences. For instance, a "winter school" was held in Deacon Moses Fisk's spare bedroom until funds for the session were expended. Sometimes teachers received salary, other times they were paid in bushels of wheat or other bartered goods. "Summer schools" were frequently held. Often taught by women, they were attended by only girls and small boys, as all the older boys were busy in the mills and fields and woodlots of the family farms.

One room schoolhouses were built close to the geographical center of each district. Over time, chimneys and stoves were added, allowing winter sessions in the buildings. Teachers were boarded within the districts, a service which was auctioned to the lowest bidder. In the summer of 1848, sixteen weeks of teacher's board was paid off at 66 and one half cents a week. Winter board for the male teacher was 73 cents. Costs for Waitsfield District One School in 1838 showed expenditures of \$80.95. Eliza Jones received \$15 for teaching summer school; Mr. Taylor \$57 for winter school. J.S. Wilder was paid \$1.34 for building fires and 50 cents for banking the schoolhouse.

In 1802, there were 201 pupils in four districts. In 1812, there were 269 in five. Today the school has an enrollment of 160 students. Another 112 are sent to Harwood Union High in Duxbury. The Town's total school budget for the 2002–2003 fiscal year was estimated at over \$2.3 million.

In 1847 the Village District voted to build a new two story school. Complete with belfry, this building was



PHOTO: SKINNER BARN

built next to the village cemetery north of Town. Each floor was one room. The upper floor was often used for advanced classes in the 1850s and 60s. These classes eventually disappeared and the building was used exclusively for grammar grades until a two year high school program was created in 1906. The Old High School still stands today, converted into condominiums.

Military service has long been important to Waitsfield citizens. In fact many of the original settlers had served under General Wait, or taken part in the Revolutionary War. For many of the early decades in Town history, local militia were organized and drilled on 'June training day'. Though the War of 1812 was somewhat unpopular, a part of Waitsfield's "Floodwoods" militia was sent to support Plattsburg, New York, in battle with the British. They arrived too late to join in the fighting. Ten percent of Waitsfield's men served during the Civil War. Ten sons died in fighting, while ten more died of disease. In the World Wars of the twentieth century, 130 men served and eight died in combat. Twenty-eight served in Korea. Fifty-three served during the Vietnam War, and two Waitsfield men died in Southeast Asia.

In the twenty years before the turn of the century, agriculture changed again. Refrigeration meant milk could be stored in the fluid stage. The new DeLaval cream separators allowed raw milk to be skimmed of cream in large quantities. Until then, most butter and cream were produced on the farm. These new machines allowed for centrally located creameries which could process the product of many farms at one time. Cream skimming stations were built throughout Waitsfield. By 1893, a creamery was operating in the village. In 1897, several Waitsfield farmers founded a Cooperative and built a creamery in the northern part of Town, near the present Hartshorn farm.

Throughout the 20th—and into the 21st century—farming has been on decline in Waitsfield. Empty cellar holes, crumbling barns and neglected stone walls and fences can be found among the thick brush and woods which is now growing up in the old pastures and meadows. Of the 135 farms of Waitsfield in 1880, only about a dozen remain active today. Farms are larger in acreage, and may produce as much as the many smaller farms once did a hundred years ago.



A new industry has become the focal point of Waitsfield's economy. In 1948, the Mad River Glen Ski Area was opened on the slopes of Lincoln Mountain southwest of Town. Thus began an era of recreational, tourist oriented development that continues today. Two more ski areas (Sugarbush and Glen Ellen) were added southward along Lincoln Mountain and their webs of white ski trails economically bind Waitsfield and the other Mad River towns to their success.

Waitsfield is now the commercial center of the Mad River Valley. The old mills, meetinghouses and homes of the village are shops and restaurants. In the late sixties and early seventies, the Post Office, grocery and hardware store all moved out of the village into new shopping centers upon the Irasville flats. Thousands of tourists come to Town on weekends now to ski at the Mad River and Sugarbush Ski Areas, dine in restaurants and sleep in old farmhouses renovated into country inns. Summer tourism is important as well with vacationers coming to hike the Green Mountains, fish the valley's streams, canoe the Mad River, play golf, attend an annual arts festival or simply relax in the country air.

Vermont aesthetics and the expanding demographics of Waitsfield have attracted a population estimated at 1,659 in 2000, according to the U.S. Census. A wide variety of businesses and activities are located here. Waitsfield is now home to high tech computer and energy companies, specialty food stores and bakeries, garden centers, construction companies, craft shops, real estate and financial services, a movie theater and play house and award winning maple syrup manufacturers.

The old gravel roads of Town are no longer snow rolled by draft teams of horses. Some have been widened and paved and are plowed and sanded regularly in winter and often graded during the summer. New houses have been built among the old pasture and woodlots. A volunteer ambulance service and a medical center have been



organized to serve the public's health. Waitsfield also has one of the most modernized, independent phone companies in the nation—phone service was established locally by 1900. Zoning ordinances have been drafted and district planning coordinated to help assure and control growth.

Physiographic, economic, and cultural change has prevailed throughout the history of Waitsfield. Great floods of the Mad River have washed out many of the bridges and roads and buildings of the community, striking violently in 1850 as well as in the notorious flood of 1927 which devastated the whole of Vermont.

In August 1989, the Town of Waitsfield celebrated its bicentennial. Two hundred years from the date of Benjamin Wait's entry into Waitsfield, a small parade saw descendants of five original town settlers recognized. Families of Jonathan Palmer, Benjamin Wait, Samuel Barnard and others still live within the

Town. Guest speakers from our government saluted the Town's perseverance and established its importance for the future of Vermont. A historical exhibit of Town memorabilia attracted over 600 visitors.

With the 1990s Waitsfield began its third century as an organized community. That decade also brought a period of



continued change, as the population of the Town and surrounding Valley communities continued to grow.

The Mad River (formerly Fly In) Industrial Park finally began to reach its potential as several small manufacturing and wholesale businesses flourished, bringing the number of jobs in the park to well over 100. Irasville—Waitsfield's commercial center since the 1970s—also experienced the first significant development in nearly 20 years, including the conversion of the former Valley Inn to senior housing, the establishment of the area's third bank and a variety of other retail, office, manufacturing and residential development.

Land conservation became a household term when the Town allocated \$20,000 in 1991 to acquire development rights from a local dairy farm, thereby keeping the former Ed Eurich Farm in agriculture. The conservation of the Eurich Farm was part of the Maple Avenue conservation project which saw the protection of nearly 1,000 acres in the vicinity of the Common Road. Other notable properties protected were the Donald Joslyn Farm and the newly created Scrag Town Forest which was the result of a gift of approximately 360 acres to the Town.

Additional conservation efforts helped to secure public access to the Mad River (including the Lareau Swimhole, which was developed as a public park in 2002) and to support local farmers. Unlike the 1980s, few farm operations went out of business in the 1990s and as the decade came to a close several new commercial vegetable farms and organic beef operations had been established. Horses have also become an increasingly common sight throughout the Valley—one Vermont Department of Agriculture estimate found that the Valley now has the highest density of horses in the state.

Finally, in 1998, the Mad River reminded Town residents that despite our modern technologies and declining reliance on the land for our livelihood, the forces of nature still have a profound impact on our lives. Early on the morning of June 25th, a torrential rain fell on the Mad River Valley. The resulting 500 year flood covered portions of Route 100 and inundated Waitsfield Village. Despite widespread property damage, no lives were lost. And, in case Waitsfield residents had forgotten, we were again reminded of the Mad River's central role in our community.

*(Contributed by Rick Thompson, 1993;
updated in 2003 by Brian Shupe)*



3. Natural Resources



OVERVIEW

The Town of Waitsfield lies within the heart of the Mad River Valley, defined by the Northfield Range to the east, and the main range of the Green Mountains to the west. The physical features of Waitsfield's landscape have greatly influenced local patterns of human activity, settlement and commerce. Waitsfield Village developed around the most reliable source of power at the time—the Mad River. The Town's traditional agricultural base, which once extended into the surrounding hills, is today largely confined to its most productive soils, found along the river valley and the broad plateau around Waitsfield Common. Those areas least desirable for development—Waitsfield's remote and rocky uplands—form a scenic backdrop and include productive forest lands, headwaters, and important wildlife habitat.

Though water power has long been replaced by other sources of energy, and the town has slowly shifted away from its agricultural base, the physical landscape and the quality of the natural environment continue to attract visitors and residents and influence local development patterns. Waitsfield's natural setting offers a range of cultural, environmental and economic opportunities, while at the same time posing a number of significant constraints and challenges.

The town's natural landscape is enhanced by its built environment, described in the following chapter. This integration of natural and cultural features create a distinct sense of "place" that is unique to Waitsfield. The following describes the natural features that contribute to the town's unique sense of place, and options for conserving and protecting these resources for existing and future generations.

CLIMATE

Climate represents the average weather conditions characteristic of an area over time. Weather patterns are an important planning and design consideration because of their effect on such things as soil erosion, plant growth, air quality, storm water runoff and flooding, groundwater supplies, road maintenance, energy demand for cooling and heating, access to alternative energy sources and the viability of weather dependent industries such as skiing.

Vermont's northern climate is dominated in winter

months by cold, dry Canadian air, and in summer by warm moist air from the Gulf of Mexico. Weather patterns vary locally with topography and relief. Located on the eastern side of some of the state's highest mountains, Waitsfield experiences slightly lower average winter temperatures and higher rates of precipitation than other parts of Vermont. On average, the town experiences over 43 inches of precipitation (measured as rainfall).

Vermont may come to resemble New Jersey, in more ways than one...

Some climate models predict that average temperatures in Vermont could increase by 6°F over the next several decades, resulting in a climate more like that of New Jersey. The result:

- ◆ **More volatile and variable weather conditions**
- ◆ **More frequent dry spells and water shortages**
- ◆ **Increases in heat-related illnesses and deaths**
- ◆ **Increased storm events and stormwater runoff**
- ◆ **Decreased water quality**
- ◆ **Loss of hardwood forests, including sugar maples**
- ◆ **Loss of migratory bird and endangered species**
- ◆ **Introduction of warmer climate species and pests**
- ◆ **Loss of cold water fisheries**
- ◆ **Shorter ski and fall foliage seasons**

Source: Climate Change and Vermont, US EPA 1998



Much attention has been given to global climate change in recent years. The vast majority of scientists studying the earth's evolving climate agree that average temperatures are rising, which raises a host of considerations regarding the fate of the planet and humankind. Waitsfield should anticipate that a changing climate may bring dramatic social, economic, and environmental change to the Valley.

AIR QUALITY

Weather patterns, especially wind, impact **air quality**. Like most of Vermont, Waitsfield's is fortunate to enjoy exceptional air quality. The town lies within a Class II "attainment" or "clean air" region as defined by Vermont's Air Quality Implementation Plan. As such, moderate changes in existing air quality are permissible, although a maximum level of pollution cannot be exceeded in accordance with Vermont's Air Pollution Control Regulations.

Given the absence of large scale pollution generators in the community, local air quality concerns are limited mainly to emissions from traffic, especially traffic congestion and associated idling at busy intersections, heating systems (e.g. woodstoves) and some agricultural practices. While no existing problems have been identified, the cumulative effect of these sources may increase with additional growth and may have a greater impact on air quality in the future. Efforts to avoid periods of congestion, such as at the Route 100/17 intersection, can help to maintain local air quality. Of more immediate concern are impacts on air quality resulting from out of state activities, such as coal-burning power plants, which pose a particularly serious threat to fragile, high elevation ecosystems.

TOPOGRAPHY

Waitsfield, Warren and Fayston comprise the upper watershed of the Mad River, which drains northward into the Winooski River and Lake Champlain. Much of Moretown and a portion of Duxbury also share the watershed to the north. Waitsfield's topography is characterized by a mountainous eastern border, marked by the ridgeline of the Northfield Range; the broad plateau west of the range that runs from East Warren to the south of Waitsfield Common; the Mad River Valley below; and a series of steep, intermittent ridges and hills bordering the river valley, leading west into Fayston.

Elevation

Elevations range from a height of 2,911 feet above mean sea level (MSL) at the summit of Scrag Mountain, the town's most prominent peak, to 608 feet MSL at the point where the Mad River flows into Moretown. Dramatic changes in elevation affect local climate, weather, and growing seasons, which vary throughout town. Traditionally, settlement has been concentrated in the valley, between the elevations of 650 and 1,500 feet. Land over 1,500 feet in elevation (4,507 acres) remains largely undeveloped, although some residential development has occurred in recent years. Land over 2,500 feet in elevation (393 acres) is somewhat protected from incompatible development through Act 250, although that law does not prohibit development.

Slope

Waitsfield's steeper slopes and hillsides are poorly suited for most types of development, posing serious limitations for site clearance, construction and the

ELEVATION

Local Elevations • Above mean sea level in feet

Scrag Mountain	2,911
Bald Mountain	2,668
Kew Hill	1,961
Waitsfield Common	1,073
Waitsfield Village	698
Mad River-Warren Line	780
Mad River/Moretown Line	608

TABLE 3.1 SLOPE CONSTRAINTS

Slope	Management Considerations
0-3%	Suitable for development; may require drainage improvements
3-8%	Most desirable for development, having the least restrictions
8-15%	Suitable for low density development with consideration given to erosion control, runoff & septic design
15-25%	Unsuitable for most development and septic systems; Construction costly, runoff & erosion problems likely
25+%	All construction should be avoided; careful land management required
US Natural Resource Conservation Service	

installation of infrastructure and utilities; and serious risks for stormwater runoff, slope failure, soil erosion, and the sedimentation of surface waters. The U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has identified general development constraints and management recommendations for different slope categories (Table 3.1).

According to the NRCS, careful management to limit site disturbance is necessary on slopes in excess of 15%. All construction activities should be avoided on slopes in excess of 25%. State regulations also prohibit the installation of on-site wastewater systems on slopes in excess of 20%. General areas of steep slope are identified on Map 3; however site assessments may be needed to determine slope limitations and management requirements for a particular development site.

In addition to physical constraints, development on steep slopes and prominent ridgelines can adversely impact the town's scenic landscape. Development in such areas, particularly at higher elevations, is often highly visible from numerous vantage points, and contrasts dramatically with the scenic backdrop provided by unbroken forest cover. Land above an

elevation of 1,500 feet and the steep hillsides and prominent knolls rising from the valley floor have been identified through computer-based visual sensitivity analysis and community visual assessments as being especially vulnerable. Special measures must be incorporated in local land use regulations to prevent such development, or otherwise minimize its aesthetic impact through careful siting, landscaping and screening.

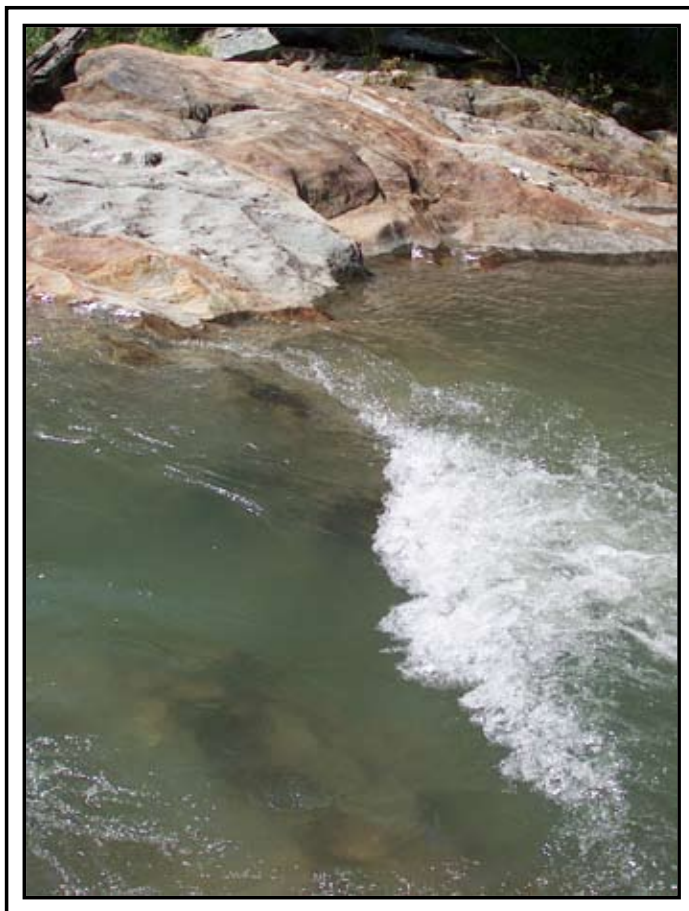
WATER RESOURCES

Clean, plentiful water is a basic resource that is too often taken for granted. Waitsfield's water resources include abundant, naturally replenished surface and ground water supplies that sustain the natural environment and support a variety of human activities. Surface waters include upland headwaters and tributaries of the Mad River, the main stem of the Mad, and small ponds scattered throughout town. Local ground waters include one of the largest identified aquifers in the state. The quality of these waters, which is thought to have improved over the past 30 years, must continue to be maintained and enhanced.

Rivers & Streams

Waitsfield is located entirely within the Mad River watershed (with the very minor exception of limited high elevation acreage located east of the ridgeline of the Northfield Range). The river, which extends 7.5 miles through town, is fed by upland headwaters, and a number of major tributaries, including Folsom, Pine and High Bridge Brooks which form in the Northfield Range, and the lower sections of Mill and Shepherd Brooks flowing in from Fayston (see Map 1). The Mad River and each of its major tributaries are distinct in character, and serve a number of important ecological, cultural, recreational, and aesthetic functions.

Most surface waters in Waitsfield are designated by the state for management purposes as "Class B" waters which are intended to support a variety of environmental, public and recreational uses. Headwater streams, defined by the Vermont Environmental Board as all year-round and intermittent streams above an elevation of 1,500 feet MSL are provided limited protection if a development is subject to Act 250 review. Headwaters above 2,500 feet in elevation are defined as more pristine "Class A" waters.



Surface waters can serve as a barometer of environmental well-being. In 1991, the Mad River Valley Planning District issued a report prepared by the Montpelier-based River Watch Network entitled *Watching the River's Health: The Condition of the Mad River and How to Improve and Protect It*. This report included analyses of five years of water quality monitoring data, a survey of aquatic life, and a streambank inventory of the river and its tributaries. It identified issues to be addressed, including water quality, streambank erosion and sedimentation, and recreational access; and also recommended a coordinated, multi-town approach to river conservation. This effort supported the formation of the **Friends of the Mad River**, a nonprofit river advocacy group, and the subsequent development of an award-winning river management plan, *The Best River Ever*, in 1995.

Major problems and threats to the river and its tributaries identified in *The Best River Ever* included:

- ◆ **Accelerated erosion and stream sedimentation** resulting from poor construction, road and land management practices;
- ◆ **Lack of streambank vegetation**, resulting in streambank erosion and higher water temperatures that affect local trout habitat;
- ◆ **Water pollution** from failing on-site septic systems, stormwater runoff, and poor agricultural practices;
- ◆ **Threats to public river access** from development, overuse, misuse and changes in land ownership;
- ◆ **Other threats**, from contaminants, excessive water withdrawal for snowmaking, and gravel removal; and
- ◆ **Lack of information and education about the river**, including how the river functions, and how we contribute to the river's problems.

The Best River Ever also included over one hundred specific recommendations to address each of these areas, many of which have been implemented.

The Friends have sponsored a number of programs and projects over the years to monitor and enhance water quality, support recreational uses, and learn more about how the river functions. These include annual river cleanups, assisting riparian landowners with streambank stabilization and tree planting projects; wildlife monitoring through sponsorship of Keeping Track®; the publication of a Mad River resource guide for teachers; the publication and distribution to every Valley household of a guide for

Significant Resources of the Mad River Watershed

- ◆ **Healthy populations of native brook trout and introduced rainbow and brown trout.**
- ◆ **Swimming holes which have been rated among the best in the state.**
- ◆ **Forest cover (86%) which provides scenic beauty and an economic resource.**
- ◆ **Boating opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.**
- ◆ **Active farms in the valley that contribute to its pastoral and scenic beauty.**
- ◆ **Mountains that form the watershed's boundaries, direct water into upland brooks and groundwater aquifers, and provide critical wildlife habitat, spectacular views, and a variety of recreational opportunities.**

Source: *The Best River Ever*. 1995

protecting the Mad River; and the **Mad River Watch Program**—an ongoing lay monitoring program that collects and publicly reports water quality data, including bacteria (*E. coli*) counts—an indicator of the presence of human and animal waste, acidity (pH) and nutrient loading (total phosphorous and phosphates). The ultimate goal of the Friends is to restore and maintain the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the river system, and build public support for clean water.

High bacteria counts have long been documented through local monitoring data, and also in a 1998 study that examined spatial and temporal distributions of *E. coli* in selected tributaries of the Mad

River in relation to predominant land uses and storm events. Currently the Folsom Brook and the Mad River, from the covered bridge in Waitsfield Village to its mouth, are included on the state's list of impaired waters targeted for improvement through the development of total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) by 2007. These surface waters



are listed because monitoring data indicate that bacteria levels—resulting from failing septic systems, agricultural runoff, and other sources—currently exceed state water quality standards, and impair the use of these waters for swimming and other contact recreation. TMDL development will involve pollutant source assessments, the calculation of pollution loading rates that meet water quality standards, and associated source reduction requirements.

Gaining and protecting public access to the river is also a local priority. Prior to 1993, the only permanent access to the Mad River in Waitsfield was the Couples Club Recreation Field. In 1993 the town, with contributions from the Valley Rotary Club, the Mad River Planning District (from Sugarbush Resort environmental mitigation funds), and a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, acquired the six acre Lareau Swimhole parcel, accessed from Route 100, for use as a wayside park. Improvements to the park, which were delayed pending the removal of the state salt shed, were finally completed in 2001.

Other river accesses acquired since 1993 include the five acre former Austin parcel, adjacent to the Lareau Swimhole, a deeded access to the River on the former Woliner (now Neill) parcel which includes a segment of the Mad River Greenway, and a small parking area for the Greenway adjacent to the Meadow Road. In 2003, the town acquired additional land with river frontage immediately upstream of the Lareau Swimhole (Tardy parcel). In addition to Waitsfield's efforts, the Town of Warren also has secured at least two additional river accesses in recent years.

Groundwater

Groundwater sustains base flows for the Mad River and its tributaries. It also currently provides 100% of the potable water supply for Waitsfield's homes and businesses, through a combination of private and small community wells and springs. While the town benefits from generally abundant groundwater supplies, this dependence on scattered wells, particularly along Route 100 and in village areas, poses risks of potential groundwater contamination from a variety of sources. Once a groundwater source is contaminated, remediation, if feasible, is typically very expensive.

There are six known contamination sites listed on the state's hazardous sites list [October 2002]. All

are located along Route 100, and were the result of leaking underground fuel storage tanks. Three sites are under active investigation; the other three have undergone remediation and are being monitored. Groundwater supplies are also affected by periods of drought—2001 was the fifth driest year on record in Vermont, and many shallow wells and springs dried up temporarily.

Fractured bedrock in the high elevations of the Northfield Range and gravel deposits in the lowlands and along the valley floor serve as the principal recharge areas for local groundwater supplies. Aquifer recharge areas have yet to be adequately mapped, but five “source protection areas” (SPAs), comprising



2,427 acres, have been delineated to date, as required by the state to protect public community water systems (PCWSs) serving 15 or more service connections,

or 25 or more users year-round. Under new state and federal regulations, source protection plans also must be developed for “non-transient, non-community” (NTNC) public water systems which serve more than 25 people for at least six months of the year—including individual water systems serving schools and office buildings.

Within designated SPAs, special consideration must be given to prohibiting, or carefully managing, development and practices that could contaminate local ground water supplies. These include poorly designed or failing septic systems, underground storage tanks, and the storage of hazardous materials and road salt.

The largest source protection area, located in the Northfield range east of Waitsfield Common, supplies an artesian well permitted by the state for a withdrawal of up to 600 gallons per minute. The water supply has been considered for a commercial water extraction and bottling operation—currently a growth industry in Vermont. It is critical that private commercial use of water resources not adverse-

ly impact current or future public or private water supplies.

There is currently no municipal water system in town. Most community system sources in Waitsfield are located in areas of higher density development served by those systems—including the Industrial Park, the Verd-Mont Mobile Home Park, and the entire Irasville commercial district. Given the density of development, and the lack of a centralized sewer system, these source areas are particularly at risk for contamination, and underscore the need for the town to develop a municipal water system to serve Irasville and Waitsfield Village [see Chapter 9].

EARTH RESOURCES

Geologic Features & Hazards

The bedrock underlying Waitsfield consists largely of highly metamorphosed graywacke, phyllite, gneiss and schist. Despite its location in the heart of the Green Mountains, there are no large scale commercial rock quarries or mineral deposits in town. Only two small-scale quarry operations exist, both of which are operated on a limited basis. The Mad River does offer the recreational collector a chance to find small amounts of placer gold in return for a hard day's work—and hand panning for recreational purposes does not require a state permit.

Geologic hazards are minimal, though isolated rock falls and slides are common on steep or unstable slopes. Regional earthquakes, typically centered in the Adirondack Mountains or southern Quebec, occur with enough frequency and strength that public infrastructure, buildings and utility systems should incorporate basic seismic standards for earthquake resistance.

Sand & Gravel

Sand and gravel, found in association with glacial and stream deposits, are locally more abundant and economically viable to extract for commercial and municipal purposes. The total extent of these deposits is unknown, although soils maps indicate roughly 2,200 acres of sand and 1,875 acres of gravel in town. There are two permitted sand and gravel pits in town, but only one is active.

Until the late 1980s, gravel extraction from the Mad River was common. Through most of the 1970s and 1980s, rapid economic development in the Valley prompted an unprecedented local demand for con-

struction gravel, and many upland sources were exhausted. The value of river gravel reached \$2.00 per cubic yard, sitting in the river. Many landowners were selling 1000–5000 cubic yards annually, and a few up to 10,000 cubic yards. By 1985 gravel extraction had deprived the river system of the sediment needed to maintain its stability, resulting in extreme streambed degradation [Options for State Flood Control Policies and a Flood Control Program, Vermont Water Quality Division, 1999]. Gravel extraction from the rivers and streams is now carefully regulated by the state.

Upland extraction operations also raise a host of potential conflicts. On one hand, few people would choose to live near an active pit because of the associated noise, dust, truck traffic and visual blight. Such operations also can create safety hazards, affect groundwater supplies, and result in the deterioration of local roads and infrastructure. On the other hand, in order to maintain safe, attractive roads in a cost-effective manner, the town must secure a reliable and economic source of gravel. Construction concerns also rely on local sources of sand and gravel to help contain construction costs.

Given the importance of sand and gravel resources to the town, and to the local economy, commercially viable deposits should be identified and reserved for future use. The Waitsfield Selectboard has been investigating potential gravel sources for several years, recognizing that a municipally-owned source of sand and gravel is in the long-term interest of the town. A reserve fund was established several years ago for the purpose of acquiring such a site.

The adverse impacts of sand and gravel operations can be addressed to a certain extent through local and state regulations, and good management practices. Regulations can ensure that extraction operations have minimal impact on the town and neighboring properties, and that sites are adequately restored to allow for subsequent use once extraction is completed.

Soils

Agricultural Soils. Within the Mad River Valley, Waitsfield contains the greatest concentration of soils defined by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as “**primary agricultural soils**”—including 1,232 acres of “prime” agricultural soils, and another 3,098 acres of soils of “statewide” agricultural importance. Most of these soils are found in

valley bottomlands, but also extend along the broad plateau south of Waitsfield Common (see Map 4).

The town's less productive upland soils went out of production during the last century with the abandonment of hill farms, but local farmers continue to rely on the best soils to remain economically viable. The location of active farmland in town strongly correlates with the location of primary agricultural soils. Because these soils are relatively well-drained and support on-site septic systems, they are also inexpensive to develop for a variety of other uses. Subdivision and associated development continue to threaten productive farm land, particularly outside of designated floodplain areas.

Primary agricultural soils are a finite resource. Once converted to other uses, they are rarely returned to production. They sustain and enhance local capacity for food production, and support existing and future farming operations. For these reasons, the Town's best agricultural soils must be protected from other forms of development.

Farmers are also required to observe accepted **agricultural practices (AAPs)**, including the maintenance of buffer strips along waterways, to help minimize soil erosion and loss from farming operations.

Forestry Soils. NRCS also has identified the best soils to support commercial forestry, including many upland soils that are too shallow, rocky or steep to support other types of development. As a result, primary forestry soils are generally less threatened by develop-

ment, but are more sensitive to site disturbance and erosion. To help prevent soil erosion, the state has adopted **acceptable management practices (AMPs)** to prevent soil erosion and maintain water quality on logging jobs.

Development Suitability. Currently, all the town's sewage needs are addressed through individual or clustered on-site systems. Soil suitability for on-site septic systems, as determined from state design standards, varies widely throughout town. Map 5 gives an indication of soil suitability for different types of systems under state standards in effect through 2002. Under this soil classification system, approximately half of the total acreage of Waitsfield is considered either marginally suitable or unsuitable for on-site systems. The majority of the unsuitable soils are located on very steep slopes, with the heaviest concentration being above 1,500 feet MSL in the Northfield Range.

New state standards adopted in 2002, however, which reduce required isolation distances to bedrock and groundwater and allow for alternative technologies, may open up more land to development. The potential impact of new on-site system design criteria should be assessed, particularly in upland areas, to ensure that local land use regulations adequately safeguard these areas from incompatible forms of development. New state regulations also may allow for higher densities of development in areas currently served by on-site systems, where the town wants to promote more concentrated patterns of development.



FOREST RESOURCES

Forest land is the dominant land use in Waitsfield, accounting for almost 12,300 acres, or approximately 75%, of the Town's total land area. Forest resources provide a number of benefits, including an economic return for local landowners, water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities for town residents and visitors, and an important visual backdrop to most scenic vistas. In assessing issues relating to forest resources in town, an understanding of concerns relating to timber management and ownership patterns is important and are addressed under the land use chapter of this plan (Chapter 12).

Forest Management

Sound forest management results in a stable economic return for landowners, local resources to support local industry, and perhaps most importantly, an incentive for keeping large tracts of land free of development and available to the public for recreation, wildlife and scenic enjoyment. However, poor forest management can result in the degradation of biological diversity and can damage scenic landscapes.

Generally, a sound forest management plan should be based on a number of objectives, including sustainable timber production, the protection of water quality, maintaining a diversity of wildlife habitat, and aesthetic enhancement. Whatever the objectives of a forest property owner, developing and implementing a forest management plan is the best means of managing a forest parcel for long term, sustainable forest production. Such a plan also provides an opportunity to balance timber production with other important objectives including wildlife protection and recreation.

Private Forest Lands

The majority of town forest land is under private ownership. While much of the private forest is made up of large parcels associated with single family residences, many undeveloped parcels under forest management also exist. Much of this privately owned forest land is located in the Northfield Range, although large tracts of forest currently under timber management are located adjacent to the Valley bottom. Of the privately owned forest land in town, over 4,000 acres are currently enrolled in the state current use program, and are therefore managed in accordance with a forest management plan approved by the

county forester. In addition to land under forest management, small saw mills currently operate in Waitsfield, providing a value added industrial base utilizing local forest resources.

Scrag Municipal Forest

In 1991 the town received a gift of 360 acres located on the southern portion of Scrag Mountain, including much of the summit. The 360 acre parcel provides recreation, wildlife, scenic and timber management benefits to the town. An additional 20 acre adjacent parcel was acquired by the town in subsequent years. The nature and location of the property, however, create limitations for multiple-use management of the parcel. Limited access, previous logging practices and fragmented land ownership within nearby watersheds, all present management constraints.

Opportunities to expand the municipal forest through the purchase or gift of land may exist. Any expansion of the forest, however, should be based on a comprehensive management plan for the municipal forest, and should result in the acquisition of those lands which will enhance the town's ability to manage the forest for a range of management objectives. Regardless of whether the forest is expanded, the acquisition of a better access for forest management and recreation from the Bowen Road and/or Palmer Hill Road should be explored with adjacent landowners.

Camels Hump State Forest (Howe Block)

Approximately 550 acres of the Camels Hump State Forest are located in Waitsfield, in the "Howe Block", along the Fayston boundary immediately south of Irasville on Dana Hill. This land is under multiple use management, subject to a Land Management Plan developed by the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation (last revised in 1986). In addition to protecting much of a highly visible hillside, the state forest is actively used by local residents for hunting, hiking, skiing and biking.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

Environmentally sensitive areas include those areas or features that serve important ecological functions, and are especially susceptible to degradation from land use and development activities. As such, they are generally considered for protection through both regulatory and non-regulatory means.

Wetlands

Wetlands historically were viewed as worthless, mosquito ridden bogs best suited for draining and filling for more productive uses. Wetland areas are now known to serve a variety of important ecological functions—including but not limited to stormwater management and flood control, surface and ground water recharge and protection, and wildlife habitat— that have garnered their protection under state, federal and local regulations. Wetlands also present significant development constraints associated with poor drainage and high water tables.

There are no extensive wetland areas in Waitsfield, but many smaller wetlands are scattered throughout town (see Map 6). The largest concentrations are found in the flood plains of the Mad River, and in poorly drained areas in higher elevations south of Bald Mountain, including Printice Swamp. At present there are roughly 640 acres of mapped wetlands regulated by the state as shown on the **Vermont Significant Wetland Inventory (VSWI)** map for the town. Not all wetlands appear on this map; site specific information and delineations also may be required for the review of impacts associated with a particular development. Protection is provided through the designation of buffer areas at least fifty feet in width, within which very few activities are allowed.

The loss of wetlands, especially upland (palustrine) wetlands, is an issue of national, state, and local concern. In some circumstances, mitigation analysis may result in no net loss of wetland area or func-

tion may be appropriate. Wetlands have been identified in areas designated for development within the Irasville Growth Center. In 2001, the town retained the services of Lamoureux & Dickinson Consulting Engineers to perform a functional evaluation of delineated wetlands in Irasville. They determined that the majority—though not all—of the wetlands in the district were “wet meadow,” characterized by limited wetland functions.

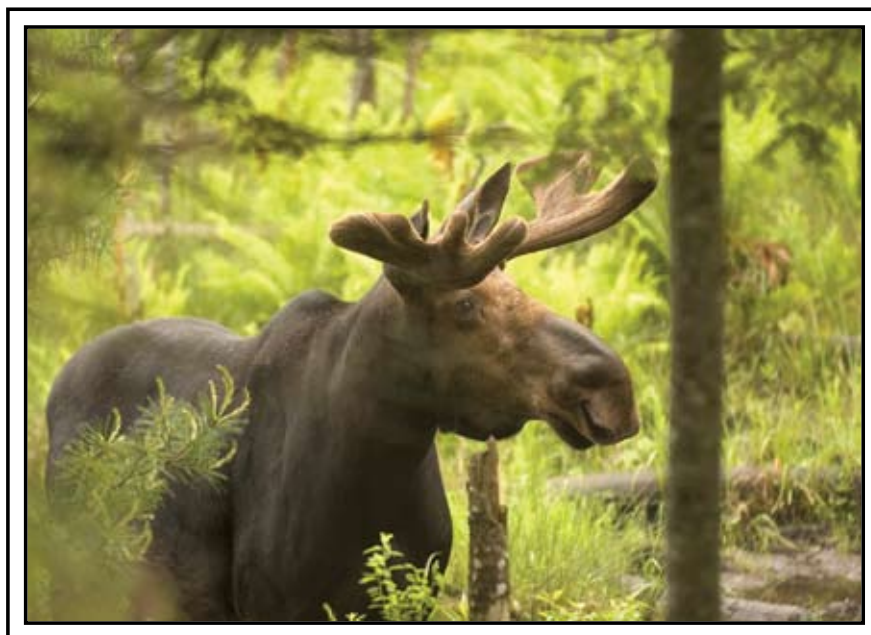
To the extent feasible, Irasville’s wetlands should be incorporated in site planning, design, and stormwater management systems; however, in order to achieve higher densities of concentrated development as envisioned for this area, mitigation analysis will be necessary. The town is currently exploring its options for wetlands mitigation with state and federal officials. The purpose of such mitigation analysis is to examine whether a concentrated development pattern may be allowed to encroach upon a portion of the wet meadow located between Mad River Green and the Carroll Road.

Flood Plains

Mapped flood plains include those areas that are anticipated to flood at least once every 100 years. These areas serve as a “safety-valve” by temporarily carrying and retaining bank overflow from spring runoff and heavy storms; and are vital to the health of the river and the safety of the community. Waitsfield’s mapped 100-year flood plain extends over 755 acres, mostly along the Mad River and the lower reaches of its major tributaries (see Map 6). Recent flooding

episodes, however, including a “500-year” flood in 1998, indicate that additional mapping is needed to more clearly identify flood hazard areas associated with more dynamic segments of the Mad River, particularly from the Warren town boundary to the Lareau Swimhole. In 2004, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is in the early stages of an effort to verify floodplain boundaries and revise the National Flood Insurance Program (FIRM) floodplain maps.

The town has adopted flood hazard area regulations to limit development within flood hazard areas, as required



for municipal participation in the federal flood insurance program. These regulations are intended to protect life and property, and to allow property owners to obtain flood insurance and mortgages at relatively affordable rates. The town should continue to enforce regulations to strictly limit—or preferably prohibit—development on these lands.

Wildlife Habitat

Waitsfield is home to a variety of plant and animal species that contribute to local biological diversity and ecological integrity, and support traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and foraging. Forested upland areas harbor bear, deer, bobcat, moose, coyote and rumored catamount populations. The Mad River and its tributaries support natural and stocked populations of brook, brown and rainbow trout. Wetlands, road and field edges also provide critical habitat for a variety of species. Wetlands supporting wildlife habitat—although not common in Waitsfield—are essential for the survival of mink, otter, beaver, black bear, moose, ducks, herons, other wading birds and shore birds and other species.

Human activities, however, can have devastating impacts on local wildlife populations, including;

- ◆ **The fragmentation and loss of contiguous habitat areas due to subdivision and development;**
- ◆ **The fragmentation or interruption of seasonal travel corridors;**
- ◆ **Habitat degradation from air and water pollution, and.**
- ◆ **The introduction of exotic species.**

The chart on page 38 generally illustrates the impacts of land subdivision and fragmentation of large tracts of forest land on wildlife populations in northern New England. The left-hand column identifies expected species in large (3,000+ acres) tracts of undeveloped forest, while each subsequent column depicts the species likely to be extirpated as the land is subdivided into smaller parcels for scattered development. Certain species such as black bear, which require large contiguous habitat areas that also support a variety of other species, serve as indicators of the health and diversity of local wildlife populations.

The extent of knowledge about wildlife habitat in Waitsfield is surprisingly limited, in part because of the amount of field work and mapping needed to document local populations. For example, there are no known **endangered or threatened species** in Waitsfield, but much of the town has yet to be sur-

veyed. For this reason, site specific evaluations may be required to determine the potential impacts to wildlife and important habitat associated with a particular subdivision or development proposal and to identify appropriate management strategies.

For planning and development review purposes, the **Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department** maintains a database of known threatened and endangered species, and has generally mapped known habitat. The Department is developing a statewide GIS database of wildlife travel corridors that should prove useful for conservation of habitat connectivity in Waitsfield. The Vermont Biodiversity Project has also identified areas of contiguous habitat and potential travel corridors in a generalized manner using satellite land use/land cover imaging. The Keeping Track® program, sponsored by the Friends of the Mad River, has started to systematically monitor wildlife populations in the Valley, which should provide more detailed information about contiguous habitat areas and travel corridors.

The town continues to support a healthy deer population—in the 2000 hunting season, 78 deer were harvested (4% of the county total), representing a harvest of 3.44 deer per square mile (compared with 3.24 for the county and 2.62 statewide). Several **deer wintering areas** (deeryards) that provide critical winter cover and browse have been identified in town (see Map 6). These are composed of coniferous forest on predominately south or west facing slopes, typically below elevations of 2,000 feet MSL. Not only are such areas critical to deer, but nearly half (169 species) of Vermont's vertebrate wildlife species rely on coniferous forests for at least part of their life needs. Past development activities in Waitsfield have resulted in the loss of some deer winter habitat. The extent to which town can suffer continued loss of this important habitat and still sustain a regionally viable deer population is not clear.

In Waitsfield, deeryards cover approximately 4,000 acres, and are concentrated primarily along the valley wall which runs parallel to the Mad River, and in the Folsom Brook drainage. Most of these areas are relatively steep, otherwise unsuited for development, and merit protection. In a few areas, however, the protection of local deeryards may be in conflict with other town land use policies intended to protect active farmland from development (by siting homes in adjoining woodland areas), or to accommodate de-

IMPACT OF FOREST FRAGMENTATION ON WILDLIFE SPECIES

IMPACT OF FOREST FRAGMENTATION ON WILDLIFE SPECIES				
				
TIER 1: Undeveloped Forest	TIER 1: 500-2,500 Acres Developed Parcels	TIER 3: 100-499 Acres Developed Parcels	TIER 3: 20-99 Acres Developed Parcels	TIER 3: 1-19 Acres Developed Parcels
Raccoon	Raccoon	Raccoon	Raccoon	Raccoon
Hare	Hare	Hare	Hare	
Coyote				
Small Rodent	Small Rodent	Small Rodent	Small Rodent	Small Rodent
Porcupine	Porcupine	Porcupine	Porcupine	
Bobcat				
Cottontail	Cottontail	Cottontail	Cottontail	Cottontail
Beaver	Beaver	Beaver	Beaver	
Black Bear				
Squirrel	Squirrel	Squirrel	Squirrel	Squirrel
Weasel	Weasel	Weasel	Weasel	
Mink	Mink	Mink		
Fisher				
Woodchuck	Woodchuck	Woodchuck	Woodchuck	
Deer	Deer	Deer		
Muskrat	Muskrat	Muskrat	Muskrat	Muskrat
Moose	Moose			
Red Fox	Red Fox	Red Fox	Red Fox	Red Fox
Songbirds	Songbirds	Songbirds	Songbirds	Songbirds
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	Sharp-Shinned Hawk	Sharp-Shinned Hawk		
Bald Eagle	Bald Eagle			
Skunk	Skunk	Skunk	Skunk	Skunk
Cooper's Hawk	Cooper's Hawk	Cooper's Hawk		
Harrier	Harrier	Harrier		
Broad Winged Hawk	Broad Winged Hawk	Broad Winged Hawk		
Goshawk	Goshawk			
Kestrel	Kestrel	Kestrel		
Red-Tail Hawk	Red-Tail Hawk			
Horned Owl	Horned Owl	Horned Owl		
Raven	Raven			
Barred Owl	Barred Owl	Barred Owl		
Osprey	Osprey	Osprey		
Turkey Vulture	Turkey Vulture	Turkey Vulture		
Reptiles	Reptiles	Reptiles	Most Reptiles	Most Reptiles
Garter Snake	Garter Snake	Garter Snake	Garter Snake	
Ring-Neck Snake	Ring-Neck Snake	Ring-Neck Snake	Ring-Neck Snake	
Amphibians	Amphibians	Amphibians	Most Amphibians	Most Amphibians
Wood Frog	Wood Frog	Wood Frog		

Source: Designing Communities to Protect Wildlife Development and Accommodate Development, a report of the Patterns of Development Task Force, Maine Environmental Priorities Project. July, 1997

velopment on land close to town roads and services. These include areas south of the Tremblay Road and east of Route 100, wooded areas adjacent to Brook Road, and land to the south of the Airport Road, west of Route 100 and north of the Center Fayston Road.

Black bear habitat in Waitsfield has been identified in upland areas of the Northfield Range, east of the Mad River and Route 100; and in the vicinity of Camel's Hump State Park west of the river and Route 100. Identification of these areas is based upon a very broad, statewide assessment of potential habitat performed on a very large scale. Anecdotal information is that the Northfield Range is regularly inhabited by black bear and, providing it continues to contain a large tract of unfragmented forest, should be expected to continue serving as bear habitat. In particular, mast stands (American beech, oak, mountain ash, and cherry) are critical feeding habitat for black bear. They provide an essential source of nutrition in the fall and spring that directly affects survival and cub production. It is important to identify, map and protect these habitats.

The lower elevation habitats within the Mad River Valley support a diversity of vegetation types including early succession forest, and grassland habitat. These areas support an array of wildlife that may not be found at the higher elevations in Waitsfield. Special consideration should be given to land conservation in these biologically rich areas of Waitsfield, as well as focusing on the conservation of the Town's upland areas.

The Mad River System is a popular **cold water fishery**, and is stocked annually with brook and rainbow trout from state fish hatcheries in Roxbury and Grand Isle. Some natural regeneration of local trout populations also occurs, although generally upstream in the Mad River and in smaller tributary streams.



PHOTO: SANDY MACYS

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOALS:

The responsible stewardship and sustainable use of Waitsfield's natural resources in a manner that protects and enhances the Town's environmental well-being for the benefit of future generations.

The preservation of natural features that contribute to Waitsfield's ecological health and biological diversity.

NATURAL RESOURCES

POLICIES:

- 1) The Town will continue to support efforts to identify and protect fragile features and important natural resources, including primary agricultural soils, forest soils, contiguous wildlife habitat and deeryards, water resources and other features described in this plan.
- 2) The protection of identified natural resources shall be accomplished through measures and programs that support, where appropriate, the sustainable use of those resources, including management of productive forests, agricultural use of productive soils, commercial and non-commercial recreational use of land and water, and the generation of renewable energy in appropriate locations (see Chapter 11).
- 3) Support the continuation and expansion of the state current use program to tax farm and forest properties at their productive value rather than their development potential (i.e., highest and best use value). Encourage the participation of Waitsfield property owners in that program.
- 4) Support the efforts of local, regional and statewide conservation organizations to protect open space in Waitsfield through voluntary programs (e.g., purchase or donation of development rights). Priorities for open space protection include:
 - a. productive agricultural land and working farms;
 - b. primary agricultural soils, including those not presently in production, unless such soils are located on parcels identified as appropriate areas for future development (e.g., village districts, rural "hamlets"—see Chapter 12);
 - c. high elevation land (above 1,500 feet MSL) in the Northfield Mountain Range;
 - d. contiguous wildlife habitat and travel corridors;
 - e. trail corridors, river accesses and areas for dispersed recreation (e.g., hunting);

- f. riparian lands and floodplain;
 - g. identified scenic viewsheds; and
 - h. the above features where they serve to characterize and/or support the Valley's historic landscape, including land in the Mad River Valley Rural Agricultural District and land adjacent to designated growth centers which reinforce the contrast between compact village and open countryside.
- 5) Notwithstanding policy #4, above, land conservation projects should be pursued in accordance with the overall policies of this plan, including, but not necessarily limited to, those related to land use, housing and economic development.
 - 6) Support the efforts of the Mad River Valley Planning District, Mad River Valley Rural Resource Commission and other organizations to implement and update the Mad River Valley Rural Resource Protection Plan.
 - 7) The Green Mountain National Forest proclamation boundary should be expanded to encompass land located in the Forest Reserve District.
 - 8) The extraction of finite earth resources, including sand and gravel, shall be carefully conducted to minimize adverse impacts on surrounding properties and the community at large, and to ensure restoration of the site upon completion of the extraction activity. Development of such resources should be carefully sited to retain, to the extent possible, future access.
 - 9) Prohibit land development on slopes of 25% or greater and, outside of the Waitsfield Village Business District, on 100 year floodplains.
 - 10) Outside of designated growth centers (see Chapter 12), land subdivisions and land development shall be designed to prevent development on, and minimize fragmentation of, land characterized by primary agricultural soils.
 - 11) Land development on slopes between 15% and 25% shall be carefully designed to control erosion and avoid off-site impacts associated with stormwater run-off.
 - 12) Land development shall be prohibited on wetlands, unless it can be done in accordance with appropriate mitigation analysis, particularly with regard to any critical ecological function that may be compromised by development.
 - 13) All land subdivision above an elevation of 1,500 feet MSL shall be carefully designed to minimize or mitigate adverse impacts to contiguous wildlife habitat, productive forest land, scenic viewsheds, shallow soils and headwater streams. Appropriate methods to avoid or mitigate such impacts include clustering development on the least sensitive portion of the site and retaining the bulk of the subdivided parcel(s) as open space.
 - 14) Land development, including the construction of roads and extension of utilities, shall be prohibited above an elevation of 1,700 feet MSL, with the exception of activities related to non-commercial recreation, forest management and low-impact seasonal camps.
 - 15) Land subdivisions shall be carefully designed to avoid the fragmentation and/or development of identified wildlife travel corridors.
 - 16) Land subdivision and land development shall be designed to protect deer wintering areas located outside of designated growth areas, including village and industrial districts and appropriate areas for residential hamlets (see Chapter 12).
 - 17) The quality of Waitsfield's surface waters shall be protected and enhanced through the maintenance of vegetated buffers along all streambanks.
 - 18) The removal of gravel from the Mad River and tributaries in excess of volumes presently allowed by the state shall be prohibited.
 - 19) Land subdivisions and land development shall be designed to control stormwater runoff and avoid adverse off-site impacts to water quality.
 - 20) Support the efforts of the Friends of the Mad River and other organizations to implement and update the *Best River Ever: A Conservation Plan to Protect and Restore Vermont's Beautiful Mad River Watershed*.
 - 21) Support the establishment of municipal water and sewer facilities to serve designated growth centers as a means of avoiding contamination of ground and surface waters.
 - 22) Existing classifications of the Town's surface waters shall be maintained, with the exception of headwater streams above an elevation of 1,500' which should be upgraded to Class A.
 - 23) A plan to allow the encroachment into wetlands with limited ecological functions within the Irasville Village District should be developed and implemented. Such a plan should include clear strategies for the maintenance or replacement of any lost ecological functions either within or outside of the district.
 - 24) Land development within mapped water supply source protection areas shall be carefully designed to avoid groundwater contamination, and uses posing a high risk of contamination shall be avoided.
 - 25) Extraction of groundwater for commercial purposes shall be carefully controlled to ensure that water is extracted at sustainable rates and to prevent the depletion of water supplies in the community.
 - 26) Forest Management should comply with Best Management Practices (BMPs) to ensure the maintenance of water quality, the enhancement of wildlife habitat and the avoidance of adverse impacts on scenic resources, including upland areas in the Northfield Mountain range.

NATURAL RESOURCE TASKS:

- 1) Enact, through zoning and/or subdivision regulations, measures to preserve primary agricultural soils for continued and future agricultural use and prevent the fragmentation and development of these resources. *[Planning Commission]*
- 2) Continue to evaluate development proposals against the policies of this plan during local and state regulatory processes to ensure that such proposals are in conformance with the plan. *[Board of Adjustment, Planning Commission]*
- 3) Update the Town's zoning and subdivision regulations to incorporate appropriate resource protection standards in accordance with the aforementioned policies. *[Planning Commission]*
- 4) Form a committee, to include willing landowners, to develop a multi-property management and conservation plan for lands in the Forest Reserve District. *[Conservation Commission, Planning Commission, Tree Warden]*
- 5) Implement a master plan for Irasville (see Chapter 12), including the development of a municipal wastewater system and comprehensive stormwater man-



- agement system, to correct and avoid contamination of surface and groundwaters. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission]*
- 6) Appoint representatives to participate, on behalf of the Town, in the preparation of TMDLs (total maximum daily load) for the Mad River and larger Winoski River watersheds. *[Planning Commission, Friends of the Mad River*]*
- 7) Consult with the Friends of the Mad River and local fishery groups on projects that may potentially impact the Mad River and tributaries. *[Planning Commission, Friends of the Mad River*]*
- 8) Acquire a long term source of gravel for municipal purposes. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator]*
- 9) Work with private conservation organizations and the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife to inventory critical wildlife habitat in Town, including wildlife travel corridors, and to develop strategies for the preservation of that habitat. *[Conservation Commission, Planning Commission]*
- 10) Participate in the review and revision of the Camels Hump State Forest (Dana Hill Forest) management plan to ensure that wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and aesthetic resources are protected and enhanced. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission]*
- 11) Develop a management plan for all Town-owned lands to ensure sustainable use and management. *[Conservation Commission, Selectboard]*
- 12) Develop a criteria/ranking system with which the Town can evaluate proposed conservation projects for conformance with this plan. *[Conservation Commission]*
- 13) Consider preparing and/or adopting Best Management Practices (BMPs) to guide for forest management activities in Waitsfield, and explore appropriate means with which to encourage or require local compliance with those BMPs. *[Tree Warden, Planning Commission]*
- 14) Coordinate with land conservation organizations to ensure that conservation projects in Waitsfield are consistent with the goals and policies of this plan. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership*]*
- 15) Maintain a reserve fund to support local land conservation efforts, with annual allocations included in the capital budget and program. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator]*
- 16) Explore ways to educate landowners, especially new arrivals to the community, about techniques for good land stewardship and natural resource conservation. *[Planning Commission, area real estate brokers*]*

* Participation strongly encouraged

4. Historic & Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

~ WAITSFIELD LISTINGS ~

GREAT EDDY COVERED BRIDGE
1974

PINE BROOK COVERED BRIDGE
1974

WAITSFIELD VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT
1983

JOSLYN (ROUND BARN) FARM
1988

MAD RIVER VALLEY RURAL DISTRICT
1994

WAITSFIELD COMMON HISTORIC DISTRICT
2001

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Waitsfield residents have long had an interest in preserving the town's rich social and cultural history, including its historic sites and structures. The **Waitsfield Historical Society**, a volunteer organization with over 100 members, is committed to preserving and celebrating local history. The Society, housed at the town-owned General Wait House, sponsors a variety of special events and educational programs. Long term plans for the Wait House possibly include renovating the attached barns to house a three-season historic museum and meeting space.

In 1987, the Mad River Valley Planning District and the Vermont Land Trust initiated the Rural Resource Protection Project, with the goal of identifying and developing a strategy to protect the Valley's historic resources within their rural context. This resulted in 1988 in the founding of the district's **Rural Resource Commission**—the first multi-town “certified local government” created under the National Historic Preservation Act. Managed by a nine-member board, the Commission's mission is to advocate for the protection of historic resources that contribute to the area's rural character, to assist towns in protecting these resources, and to provide educational opportunities.

The Rural Resource Project also resulted in the 1988 publication of the **Mad River Valley Resource Protection Plan**—the first such resource protection plan in the state. The Valley's historic and archaeological resources were identified as a major element of rural character, along with scenic resources, agricultural and open land, and river and trail resources. The Commission has since worked to update initial sites and structures surveys and compile oral and video histories, and most recently completed an inventory of the Valley's historic barns.

Traditional Settlement Pattern

Waitsfield's historic development is written on the local landscape. The town's historic settlement pattern—of clustered villages surrounded by an open river valley and forested uplands—has been well-established since the 19th century. The town's agrarian heritage and rural character have been maintained largely through the preservation of its working landscape. Waitsfield's villages and smaller hamlets developed at a scale and density that is pedestrian friendly, with clearly defined streetscapes and public spaces,

prominent public buildings, and a variety of goods, services and employment opportunities—all within easy walking distance of nearby residences.

Waitsfield's traditional settlement pattern contributes significantly to the town's scenic character. The town is blessed with one of the most extraordinary scenic landscapes in Vermont. Encompassing a pleasant blend of rolling meadows, wooded hills, a meandering river, and imposing historic structures, the town's landscape is a source of pride to residents and an important attraction to visitors. Historic settlements, open farm fields, forested hillsides and ridgelines, and tree-lined roads are all important scenic resources. The preservation of the town's historic and scenic character is important for a variety of reasons: to promote tourism, to preserve the agricultural land base, to enhance recreational opportunities, and to protect important natural and cultural landscape features. Careful sight selection and design, and more detailed cultural, environmental and/or visual impact assessments where appropriate, can minimize adverse impacts to the town's cultural and scenic landscape and resources, and its rural character.

Archaeological Sites

As noted, knowledge about the town's distant past is limited. Buried archaeological sites are often uncovered only when disturbed by site development work. As a result, these important sources of information about the town's past are not readily identifiable, but can be easily destroyed through subsequent development.

An initial assessment of the Valley's archaeological potential was conducted in 1990 for the Planning District. Two previously reported prehistoric sites were investigated, and five new historic sites were documented. It was concluded that numerous sites likely exist in the Valley, including buried riverine and scattered upland prehistoric sites, historic homesteads, and industrial mill sites along the Mad River and its tributaries. Areas of “high” archaeological sensitivity or importance include:

- ◆ **Level, undisturbed, well-drained soils near water or other strategic resources, including the Mad River,**
- ◆ **High terraces (700+ feet above msl) bordering ancient Lake Vermont shorelines,**
- ◆ **Locations adjacent to major river confluences,**
- ◆ **Known mill sites, and**
- ◆ **Sites of structures that are no longer standing, as identified from historic maps.**

Also of historic significance, though not well-documented, are other cultural landscape features, including stone walls, fences and corner posts or “witness trees” that once marked field and property boundaries; foundations and cellar holes; quarry sites, old road beds, and other visible remnants of past land use and occupation. Such features, if identified on subdivision and site development plans, can be documented, incorporated in subdivision and site design, and protected where appropriate. For development within highly sensitive areas, further archaeological assessments may be necessary.

Historic Sites & Structures

Waitsfield has a wealth of historic resources that includes hundreds of documented historic sites and structures, and others that have yet to be identified or catalogued. Some of the town’s most historic structures, including its two covered bridges and the Joslin Round Barn, have been accepted for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (see Map 7). Inclusion on the National Register places no restrictions on the use of property, but is typically a source of pride for property owners.

A comprehensive historic sites and structures survey for Waitsfield, initially conducted by the state in 1979-80, identified one historic district—the Waitsfield Village Historic District, with 59 contributing structures—as well as 78 other historic structures located throughout town. A structure must be at least fifty years old and retain its historic integrity to be eligible for listing on state and national registers. Most structures identified were historic homes, but also included several farm complexes, school houses, and public buildings. Not included on the initial survey were potential archaeological sites, including mill sites along the Mad River; town cemeteries; and a more extensive listing of historic structures such as barns and outbuildings that also contribute to the town’s cultural heritage.

The Rural Resource Commission recently completed a barn inventory, identifying 74 barns of historic significance in Waitsfield. These buildings help culturally and visually define the town’s agrarian heritage. Many barns included on the state survey, however, are no longer actively used for agricultural purposes, and as such there is little economic incentive for their maintenance. There are several examples in town of barns which have been successfully convert-





ed to nonagricultural use, while retaining their historic integrity—most notably the Joslin Round Barn, which houses the Green Mountain Cultural Center and the Skinner Barn which is used for performing arts. Such “adaptive reuses,” as allowed under local zoning regulations, may help preserve these historic structures.

Historic Districts

The state sites and structures survey also has been updated to include the designation of two additional historic districts—the Mad River Valley Rural Resource District and the Waitsfield Commons Historic District. All three of the town’s historic districts are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and are shown on Map 7.

The **Waitsfield Village Historic District**, initially surveyed in 1980, encompasses approximately 75 acres and 71 structures within its boundaries—including historic homes, stores, public buildings, barns and outbuildings. The village is a typical New England village, having a concentration of historic structures in a classic village setting. Contributing structures date from 1790 to 1930; all but seven are wood-framed. The district’s predominant architectural style is Greek Revival, but other styles are also represented. Prominent buildings include the Waitsfield Federated Church, the Joslin Memorial

Library, the Benjamin Wait House (the recently restored home of the town’s founder), and the Bridge Street Market Place, which was restored with the assistance of historic preservation tax credits. The district also includes, near its center, the Great Eddy Covered Bridge—the oldest continually used covered bridge in Vermont.

While the historic character of the village is largely intact, contemporary buildings dominate the northern part of the district—including the Waitsfield Elementary School, the Waitsfield-Champlain Valley Telecom building, and other single story residential and commercial structures. Efforts are ongoing to ensure that new development within this district is more compatible with its historic architecture and character.

The **Mad River Valley Rural Historic District**, listed on the National Register in 1994, stretches four miles and incorporates roughly 2,000 acres along Route 100 in Waitsfield and Moretown. The district was the first of three designated rural historic districts in the state, and is noted for its fine collection of well-preserved historic farmsteads representing the agricultural history of Vermont. Farm complexes date from the early to mid-1800s, and include a number of late 19th century barns. Land along the river has been in farming since the valley was first settled in the 1790s. Farming has kept the valley bottom open, in sharp contrast to the forested slopes of the Green and Northfield mountains, bordering it to the east and west.

The **Waitsfield Common Historic District**, listed in 2001, was the first settlement in the Valley by those of European descent, and is considered an important example of an 18th century hilltop settlement. The district contains five vernacular Federal-period houses dating from 1793 to 1810, an 1810 farmstead, a cemetery dating from 1793, and a 1798 public common (divided into two parcels by town roads). Though the area has changed somewhat over the years—from the loss of structures to fire and as a result of new development—it remains largely intact and could serve as a model for new compact residential developments .

Scenic Resources

As mentioned above, Waitsfield’s traditional settlement patterns and associated rural landscape is the

community's greatest aesthetic resource. This landscape consists of several key features, however, that have been identified as distinct scenic resources in a variety of studies and public opinion surveys over the past 20 years, including the 1988 Rural Resource Protection Plan and the 1992 and 2003 community surveys. It is the protection of each of these distinct features that will ensure the preservation of Waitsfield's scenic landscape and—by extension—much of its rural character. These features include:

- ◆ **Open farmland and meadows, which often serve as the foreground for expansive views;**
- ◆ **Forested knolls, steep mountain-sides and ridges which provide the unbroken background for most distant views, most significantly land above an elevation of 1,500' and lower hillsides and forested knobs that rise steeply to the east of the Mad River (between the River and the Waitsfield Common/East Warren plateau) and are highly visible from Route 100;**
- ◆ **The historic context of development, including compact villages surrounded by open land and the relationship of clustered farm buildings (of mixed scale and massing) surrounded by farmland;**
- ◆ **Scenic roads, especially those of a scale and character that discourage high speed travel while offering a pleasant walking and recreational environment (see Chapter 8);**
- ◆ **The Mad River and adjacent riparian land and floodplain;**
- ◆ **Individual buildings which, because of their scale, character or historic significance, such as a large barn, serve as a visual and cultural focal point in the landscape; and**
- ◆ **The night sky which, despite increasing light pollution associated with commercial development in Irasville and scattered residential development, still provides a magnificent view of the stars.**

CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

The 2002 Community Survey reconfirmed findings from earlier surveys—that there is a great deal of local support for preserving the town's rural character, including its traditional settlement patterns, and historic, scenic and recreational resources. There are a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory options available to encourage, or in some cases require, the protection of local cultural resources (see sidebar).

In recent years the town has pursued a number of these options, including the establishment of a local conservation fund for the purchase of

land and interests in land (e.g., the Scrag Mountain municipal forest, Maple Avenue Farm multiple-property conservation project, and the Lareau Swim Hole), a local tax stabilization program for land kept in agriculture, and, under recent (2002) zoning amendments, additional regulatory protections. Adaptive reuse provisions for historic barns were also adopted prior to the 2002 zoning revisions.

Current zoning regulations also include the "Historic Waitsfield Village Overlay District," the purpose of which is to maintain the historic character of the Waitsfield Village Historic District as listed on the National Register. Structures within this district that are classified as conditional uses are subject to exterior alteration standards. Also, the proposed demolition of any contributing structure must meet associated review standards intended to require the documentation and/or preservation of historic structures within the district.

The town, in association with the Rural Resource Commission and local property owners, should also continue to pursue nominations of historic



properties to state and national registers. Listing on the National Register may afford some protection in the review of federally and/or state funded development projects, and also ensure that property owners are eligible for available state and federal assistance, including preservation grants and tax credits. Additional state assistance is available for historic properties within designated villages under Vermont's Downtown Program (see Chapter 7), Village designation should be pursued for historic Waitsfield Village and Irasville.

In 2000, the Mad River Valley Planning District, Vermont Land Trust and Friends of the Mad River formalized nearly two decades of cooperation and coordination regarding local land conservation with the establishment of the *Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership*. The Partnership is intended

to focus the resources of the three organizations to more actively promote land conservation as a means of preserving the Valley's rural character. Since the partnership was formed it has worked closely with the town to conserve several important properties

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCE

GOAL:

To identify, protect and preserve Waitsfield's cultural landscape and resources, including its traditional settlement pattern, historic built environment, and scenic features.



HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCE

POLICIES:

- 1) Development shall be sited and designed to be consistent with Waitsfield's traditional settlement pattern, including historic densities and scales of development, local road networks, and streetscapes, particularly within designated historic districts.
- 2) Development shall be sited and designed to avoid adverse impacts to Waitsfield's historic sites and structures, and historic architectural styles should be considered when developing within designated historic districts.
- 3) Changes to historic structures should maintain their historic integrity to the extent feasible. Adaptive reuse shall be allowed where appropriate, including the re-use of historic barns, to preserve structures that no longer serve their original function.
- 4) Any building listed on the state historic sites and structures survey should be documented prior to demolition (to identify and record significant historic and architectural details, preferably in consultation with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation or a qualified historic preservationist) Copies of the

documentation should be provided to the Waitsfield Historical Society for safekeeping.

- 5) Development shall be sited and/or clustered to avoid undue adverse visual impacts to scenic resources, including open fields, steep hillsides and ridgelines, as viewed from public vantage points. Screening, buffer areas and/or landscaping may be required where appropriate to minimize visual impacts.
- 6) Site design should maintain and/or enhance the appearance of properties as viewed from off-site. To this end, the town shall require all development, other than single family homes on existing lots, to comply with site design and landscaping standards under the town's zoning regulations.
- 7) Wind generation and telecommunication facilities, and utility line extensions shall be sited and designed in a manner that avoids impacts to cultural and scenic features, and shall not be located within the Forest Reserve District at elevations of 1,700' and above. In no case shall telecommunications towers be lighted or exceed an elevation of 10 feet higher than the nearest forest canopy.
- 8) Utilities serving developments shall be located underground, unless the Board of Adjustment or Plan-

ning Commission (whichever is applicable) finds that requiring utilities to be placed underground is not necessary due to presence of above-ground utilities serving nearby contiguous properties and that the requirement would place an unfair financial burden on the applicant.

- 9) Those scenic features within the rights-of-way of designated scenic roads, including but not necessarily limited to road width, surfacing materials, bordering trees, walls and fences shall be protected and maintained in accordance with an adopted municipal scenic road maintenance program.
- 10) Tree canopies shall be maintained and/or re-established along public roads in accordance with an adopted tree planting program; and shall be established along new roads as required under local land use regulations.
- 11) Visual access to the night sky shall be protected through the careful design and control of lighting to prevent glare and minimize sky glow. Lighting shall

be carefully designed to avoid new light pollution (e.g., glare, sky glow) , and reduce existing light pollution, through the use of appropriate techniques, including cut-off fixtures, down-casting, and limiting levels of illumination.

- 12) Signs shall be designed to be harmonious with the historic character and pedestrian scale of the town's village centers, consistent with traffic safety, and to avoid roadside clutter or interference with the enjoyment of the rural landscape outside of the village centers.
- 13) The town shall continue to support the efforts of the Waitsfield Historical Society, and the Rural Resource Commission (CLG), to work with local property owners to identify, protect and promote Waitsfield's resources, including its historic sites and structures.
- 14) Incentive and assistance programs and other non-regulatory means of cultural and scenic resource protection shall be encouraged where feasible, in accordance with adopted resource protection plans.

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES TASKS

- 1) Continue to inventory, catalogue and map Waitsfield's historic and scenic features *[Rural Resource Commission*, Waitsfield Historical Society*]*
- 2) Update land use regulations as needed to further protect Waitsfield's historic and scenic resources, including the adoption of conservation and "residential hamlet" subdivision design standards, and consideration of adopting additional historic and/or design review overlay districts to protect the town's traditional settlement pattern, cultural resources, and scenic landscape (see Chapter 12). *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*
- 3) Review the town's existing sign regulations and revise as needed to ensure consistency with this plan and to ensure an appropriate number, size and location of signs on various sites and within different land use districts. Consider options for the mandatory phasing out of signs that do not meet adopted standards. *[Planning Commission]*
- 4) Adopt specific lighting standards under the town's zoning regulations and, at the same time, conduct public informational meetings to educate the public regarding strategies to avoid light pollution. *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*
- 5) Develop a scenic road inventory and associated maintenance plan and program. *[Planning Commission, Road Commissioner, Selectboard]*.
- 6) Update the town's tree planting and maintenance program, particularly as needed to re-establish tree

canopies along public roads and rights-of-way. Implement the Waitsfield Street Tree Master Plan. *[Tree Board, Selectboard]*

- 7) Apply for village designation from the Vermont Downtown Program for Waitsfield Village and Irasville Districts to access additional resources and financial assistance for historic preservation (see Chapter 7). *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*.
- 8) Seek funding as needed for the redevelopment of the town's historic properties, including Waitsfield's historic public buildings. *[Rural Resource Commission*, Selectboard, Library Commission, Historical Society*]*.
- 9) Seek funding as needed to conserve significant rural resources, through the purchase of land or interests in land (e.g., conservation easements, development rights). *[Conservation Commission, Selectboard, Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership*]*.
- 10) Support restoration of the Wait House barn for use as a historic museum, or if the use or expansion of the Wait House barn is not feasible, explore the establishment of a historic museum elsewhere in Waitsfield Village or Irasville *[Rural Resource Commission*, Waitsfield Historical Society*, Selectboard]*.
- 11) Promote private use of available historic preservation assistance programs (e.g., Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Barn Again grant program). *[Rural Resource Commission*, Historical Society*]*
- 12) Explore the establishment of a "town Green" in Irasville to serve as a center for community events and outdoor gatherings (see Map 9). *[Planning Commission]*

*Participation strongly encouraged

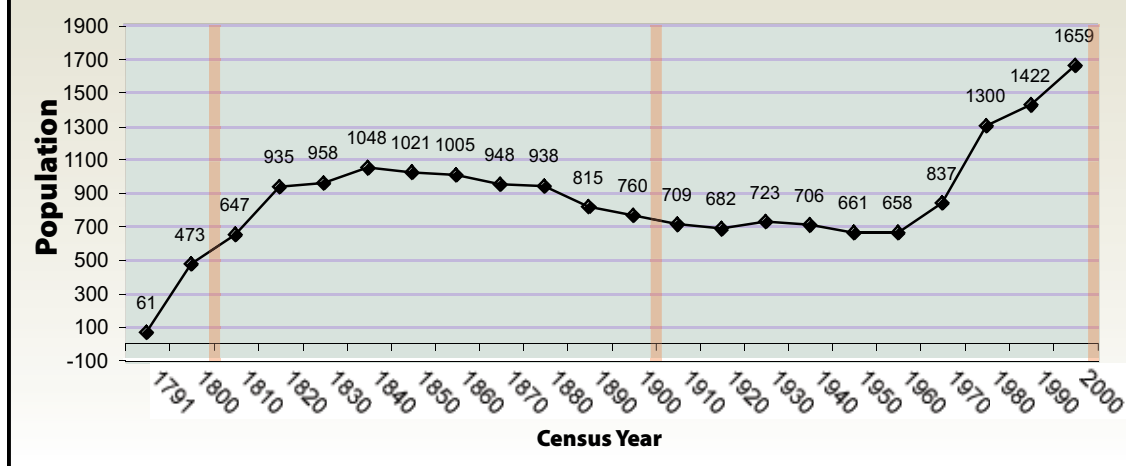
5. Population

POPULATION TRENDS

The year 1960 is often cited as a turning point in Vermont history. For the preceding 100 years, the state experienced out-migration, resulting in steady population decline. The year 1960 marked the first time in 100 years that Vermont's population increased between census periods. The 1960s also marked the beginning of a period of population growth in Waitsfield, as shown in the figure on next page.



Figure 5.1
Waitsfield Population Trends: 1791-2000



Recent population growth in Waitsfield relative to other Mad River Valley towns, the county, and the state, is illustrated in Table 5.1.

The entire Mad River Valley experienced rapid population growth in the 1990s, but Waitsfield continued to grow at a slower rate than Fayston and Warren, which together with Waitsfield comprise the Mad River Valley Planning District. This is explained in part by our neighboring towns' lower base populations (prior to 2000), larger land areas and fewer acres committed to farming, which result in lower population densities and greater immediate development potential. When compared with the larger region, the town's rate of growth was nearly three times that of Washington County.

The town's population growth during the 1990s, as in the 1980s, was due largely to a natural increase in the population—where the number of births exceeded the number of deaths. However, as a result of renewed

in-migration, people moving to town also contributed significantly to local population growth in the 1990s (see Figure 5.2).

Population Profile

The U.S. Census provides current information on the makeup of the town's population. A statistical profile of Waitsfield's 2000 population is provided in Table 5.1. Waitsfield's population in 2000, compared with that of the county and state, was:

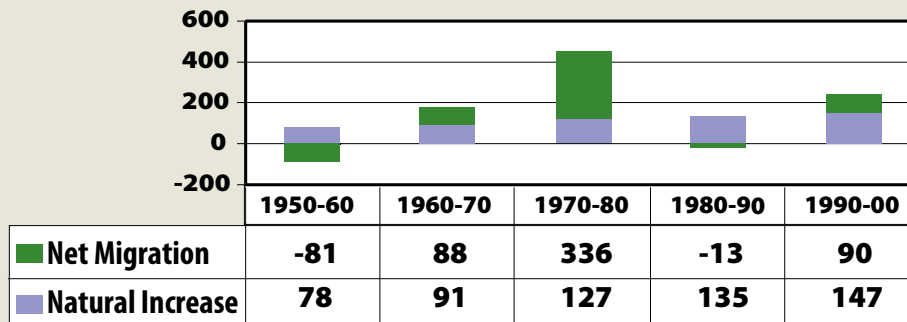
- ◆ **Somewhat older**— with a higher median age, and relatively fewer children, but also a slightly smaller percentage of population over 65 years of age,
- ◆ **Less "native" to Vermont**— with relatively more residents having been born out of state, and in foreign countries,
- ◆ **More formally educated**— with higher percentages of residents having obtained high school and college degrees,
- ◆ **Generally wealthier**— having higher per capita and

TABLE 5.1 • MAD RIVER VALLEY POPULATION GROWTH: 1980-2000

	1980	1990	2000	Change (#)		Change (%)	
				1980-90	1990-00	1980-90	1990-00
Duxbury	877	976	1,289	99	313	11.3%	32.1%
Fayston	657	846	1,141	189	295	28.8%	34.9%
Moretown	1,221	1,415	1,653	194	238	15.9%	16.8%
Waitsfield	1,302	1,422	1,659	120	237	9.2%	16.7%
Warren	956	1,172	1,681	216	509	22.6%	43.4%
Washington Co.	52,393	54,928	58,039	2,535	3,111	4.8%	5.7%
Vermont	511,456	562,758	608,827	51,302	46,069	10.0%	8.2%

Source: U.S. Census.

Fig. 5.2
Components of Population Growth



Source: UVM Center for Rural Studies

TABLE 5.2 WAITSFIELD POPULATION PROFILE, 2000

	Waitsfield	Washington County	Vermont
Population	1,659	58,039	60,8827
% Male	49.1%	49.0%	49.0%
% Female	50.9%	51.0%	51.0%
% Minority	2.0%	1.7%	2.1%
% Born in Vermont	40.6%	58.5%	54.3%
% Foreign Born	5.1%	3.6%	3.8%
% Veteran (civilian pop 18 years and older)	12.7%	13.9%	13.6%
% with a Disability (civilian non-institutionalized)	12.2%	17.3%	16.1%
Median Age	40.3	38.5	37.7
% Children (< 18 years old)	21.3%	23.5%	24.2%
% Elderly (> 65 years old)	12.2%	12.9%	12.7%
% High School Graduates (pop 25 years and older)	93.4%	88.4%	86.4%
% College Graduates (pop 25 years and older)	46.2%	32.2%	29.4%
Per Capita Income	\$24,209	\$21,113	\$20,625
% Below Poverty Level	5.9%	8.0%	9.4%
% Children Below Poverty Level	7.1%	9.1%	10.7%
% Elderly Below Poverty Level	2.0%	6.8%	8.5%
Families	485	15,147	157736
% Families w/ Children	29.4%	31.0%	31.8%
Average Family Size	2.73	2.91	2.96
Median Family Income	\$54,868	\$51,075	\$48,625
% Below Poverty Level	3.7%	5.5%	6.3%
% with Children Below Poverty Level	7.0%	8.7%	9.7%

Source: U.S. Census data.

median family incomes,

- ◆ **Less impoverished**– with relatively fewer individuals, families, children and elderly below the poverty level; and
- ◆ **Similarly lacking in ethnic diversity**– with minorities representing only 2.0% of the town’s population,

A profile of the town’s, county’s and state’s population is presented in Table 5.2.

The population characteristic that is perhaps most important for planning purposes is the town’s age distribution and how this distribution has changed over the past twenty years (Figure 5.3). The most striking aspect has been the growth in the 35-64, and 65+, age brackets, and the corresponding decrease in the younger age brackets. Waitsfield’s population, following nationwide trends, is aging. This trend is attributable to a number of factors, including the natural aging of the baby boom generation—the large 1980 18–34 year old population that moved to Waitsfield in the 1970s and stayed. Recent growth in the 35–64 bracket also may be attributable to the 1990s in-migration of middle-aged residents seeking an improved quality of life and/or early or partial retirement.

The aging of the population is evident locally in the recent decline in elementary school enrollments and a tight local labor market for seasonal and entry-level jobs. The town’s age distribution is also important for anticipating future trends and planning for future needs. Waitsfield, and the rest of the Mad River Valley, is somewhat unique because of the area’s status as an attractive, recreation-based resource community. This is especially evident when examined in a regional context (Table 5.3).

It is likely that Waitsfield, along with other valley towns, will continue to attract aging baby boomers, including a growing number of “empty-nesters” who are more mobile, and seek more leisure time activities, an attractive environment, and a high quality of life. If current trends hold, Waitsfield’s population will continue to grow, with in-migration accounting for a greater share of the total population increase. This suggests the ongoing demand for more cultural and recreational facilities and services, and services needed to support an aging and elderly population.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Table 5.4 provides the most recent population projections for towns in the Mad River Valley. These projections were derived from related forecasts prepared for the Central Vermont Region, and represent a “status quo” forecast based on past trends.

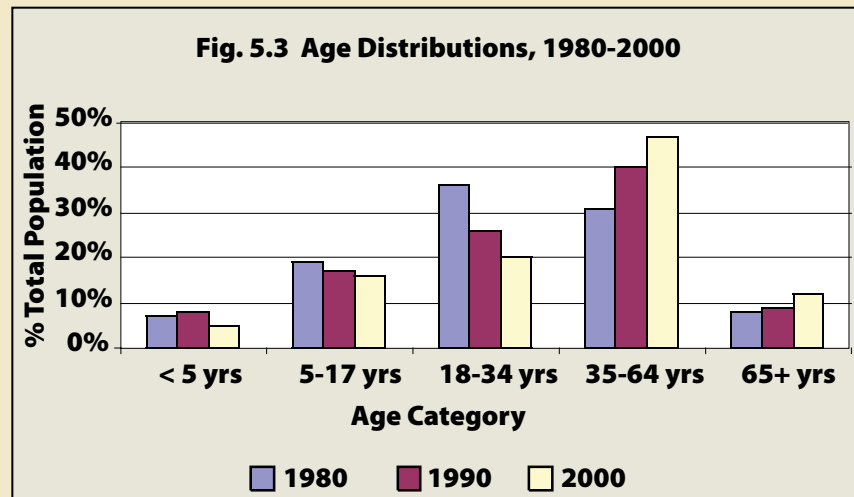
As noted above, the town is expected to maintain a relatively stable rate of population growth through 2020, averaging between 25 and 35 persons per year, and continue to grow more slowly than its neighbors. At these rates, the population will exceed 2,000 by the year 2015. Policy changes, infrastructure improvements, or other events that affect population growth, however, including zoning density changes, the construction of a municipal sewer system in Irasville, or the loss or gain of a major employer, could alter these projections.

SEASONAL POPULATION

While the number of full-time residents is traditionally used for planning purposes to determine a community’s size, needs, and rates of growth, seasonal and visitor populations can also place significant demands on local facilities and services.

Though Waitsfield’s 159 seasonal housing units represent only 8.3% of second homes in the Valley, the town houses approximately 30% of the valley’s commercial lodging beds. Waitsfield is also the Valley’s regional commercial center, serving the needs of nearly all the Valley’s seasonal and year-round residents. It is estimated that the Valley’s temporary population can reach 13,000 during the peak tourist season.

Past growth projections often assumed that future vacation housing would be located adjacent to recreation attractions, and therefore result in only minor seasonal population increases in Waitsfield. Experience has shown, however, that any growth in population or seasonal visitation in the Valley impacts town infrastructure, services and facilities. The larger effective population—the year-round population plus the total visitors who could be expected to be in town for a sustained (as opposed to peak) period—is a critical factor in determining the town’s capacity for future growth, and the impact of future regional development on Waitsfield.

**TABLE 5.3 COMPARATIVE AGE DISTRIBUTIONS, 2000**

Town	< 5 years	5—17 years	18—34 years	35—64 years	65+ years
Fayston	6.1%	16.7%	17.4%	50.2%	9.6%
Moretown	6.2%	20.4%	18.6%	45.4%	9.4%
Waitsfield	5.2%	16.1%	19.7%	46.8%	12.2%
Warren	4.2%	18.7%	18.3%	49.2%	9.6%
Washington Co.	5.4%	18.1%	20.8%	42.8%	12.9%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census.

TABLE 5.4 PROJECTED POPULATION

	Historic		Forecasted				Absolute Change			Average Annual Rate ¹		
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
Fayston	846	1141	1252	1375	1536	1766	295	234	391	3.0%	1.9%	2.5%
Moretown	1415	1653	1768	1892	2047	2301	235	239	409	1.6%	1.4%	2.0%
Waitsfield	1422	1659	1777	1914	2071	2250	237	255	336	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%
Warren	1172	1681	1832	1996	2135	2421	509	315	425	3.7%	1.7%	1.9%
Total	4855	6134	6629	7177	7789	8738	1279	1043	1561	2.4%	1.6%	2.0%

Source: Economic & Policy Resources Inc. "Integrating Economic and Demographic Analysis in the Irasville Growth Center Master Plan" April 2002. ¹Compounded average annual rate of growth.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT GOAL

Accommodate a sustainable level of population growth in a manner that fosters a diverse population which includes people and families from a range of income and age groups, and which does not over-burden community facilities, services or the town's natural and cultural resources.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICIES

- 1) Anticipate and plan for a year-round population growth rate of 1.4% to 1.6% per year (23 to 27 new residents each year) for the next 5-10 years.
- 2) Coordinate with neighboring Valley communities to accommodate a reasonable effective (seasonal) population, and peak populations, in a manner that benefits local residents and businesses and does not overburden Town services and facilities.
- 3) Encourage, through land use and housing goals and policies, a socially and economically diverse population, including families, and opportunities for youth to remain in the community after attaining adulthood.
- 4) Due to national and global population growth (an increase of nearly 33 million and 800 million people, respectively, from 1990 to 2000), efforts to plan for a sustainable rate of population growth are strongly endorsed.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT TASKS

- 1) Monitor, on an ongoing basis, population and housing estimates, prepared by the Vermont Department of Health, and annual permit data to identify correlation between housing development and population growth. *[Planning Commission]*
- 2) Consider appropriate mechanisms, including regulatory tools, to manage the rate of development in the event that population growth exceeds the rate referenced in the aforementioned policies on a sustained basis (3 consecutive years). *[Planning Commission]*
- 3) Periodically review and update population and enrollment projections. *[Planning Commission, School Board]*
- 4) Prepare a Capital Budget and Program on an annual basis to schedule capital improvements relative to anticipated population growth. *[Selectboard, Planning Commission]*
- 5) Exercise party status in the Act 250 development review process and other state regulatory proceedings, as appropriate, to ensure that the Town's growth needs and limitations are properly addressed relative to this Town Plan. *[Selectboard, Planning Commission]*



6. Housing



OVERVIEW

Housing is one of life's basic necessities, yet safe, affordable housing and the American dream of home ownership are increasingly beyond the reach of many Vermonters, including many local residents. Waitsfield has long recognized the need for a variety of housing alternatives to support a socially diverse and economically viable community.

In 1990, the town, together with other Valley towns, the Planning District, Sugarbush Resort and the Mad River Valley Housing Coalition (a nonprofit advocacy group), initiated a project to identify and address area housing needs. The result of those efforts, a 1991 report entitled *A Future for Affordable Housing in the Mad River Valley*, documented a variety of housing issues, including the need for more affordable, elderly, and employee-assisted housing. It also included several recommended policies and strategies to address local needs. Over the past ten years many of these recom-

mendations, incorporated by reference in previous Waitsfield plans, have been implemented by the town and neighboring communities.

A 2001 update of the 1991 report, *Mad River Valley Affordable Housing: Needs & Strategies*, prepared by UVM's Center for Rural Studies, documents recent successes, but also the fact that, despite all efforts to date, housing has become even less affordable for many Valley residents.¹ The reasons for this are varied, and need to be addressed locally as well as within the larger regional context.

"At the Irasville Public Forum, Housing is an Issue"

There was one constant theme that was shared by all three groups; the need for more housing and a variety of housing types in the Valley. One statement reflected the general thinking; housing is needed for people of all ages in all income groups. No matter how it is articulated, the need is clear to most people living in the Valley, housing is in very short supply.

[Summary of November 2001 public forum on the future of Irasville, MRVPD]

Waitsfield Voters Agree

Nearly 74% of respondents to the 2002 community survey agreed that Waitsfield needs additional housing.

¹The report expanded the original three-town study area to include Moretown, based on its demographic and market similarities to other Mad River Valley towns. Moretown is therefore included here in references to the larger Valley area.

THE CURRENT HOUSING SHORTAGE

Housing development over the past decade has not kept pace with growth in the town's year-round population—even as the average household size continues to shrink.

Between 1990 and 2000, Waitsfield's year-round population increased by 16.7% (around 24 persons per year), while the town's housing stock grew by only 9.3% (less than 8 units per year). The rate of housing construction has slowed significantly valley-wide since the boom of the 1970s—especially in Waitsfield and Warren—but still exceeds that of the county and state (Table 6.1, Figure 6.1).

Waitsfield accounts for nearly 19% of the area's total housing stock, and 3% of the county total. During the 1990s, residential development in town contributed 19% of the area's total housing growth. Higher rates of development in surrounding towns during this time reduced Waitsfield's share of total units only slightly (0.1%).

Following national and statewide trends, the average household size in the valley has continued to decline over the years, in association with an aging population and changing household composition. Waitsfield currently has the lowest average household size (2.26 persons) of all four towns. Locally there are relatively more elderly and single parent households in town, and fewer households with children (Table 6.2).

The number of households in town increased by 160 (28%) in the 1990s—the result of both population growth (in-migration) and declining household size. Waitsfield households remain largely family households (of related individuals), but these declined over the years in relation to smaller single elderly and non-family households (Fig 6.2). Family house-

TABLE 6.1 • MAD RIVER VALLEY HOUSING UNITS: 1980-2000

	1980	1990	2000	Change (#)		Change (%)	
				1980-90	1990-00	1980-90	1990-00
Fayston	701	787	900	86	113	12.3	14.4
Moretown	544	639	727	95	88	17.5	13.8
Waitsfield	684	831	908	147	77	21.5	9.3
Warren	1,337	1,949	2,078	612	129	45.8	6.6
Mad River Valley	3,266	4,206	4,613	940	407	28.8	9.7
Washington Co.	22,113	25,328	27,644	3,215	2,316	14.5	9.1
Vermont	223,154	271,216	294,382	48,062	23,166	21.5	8.5

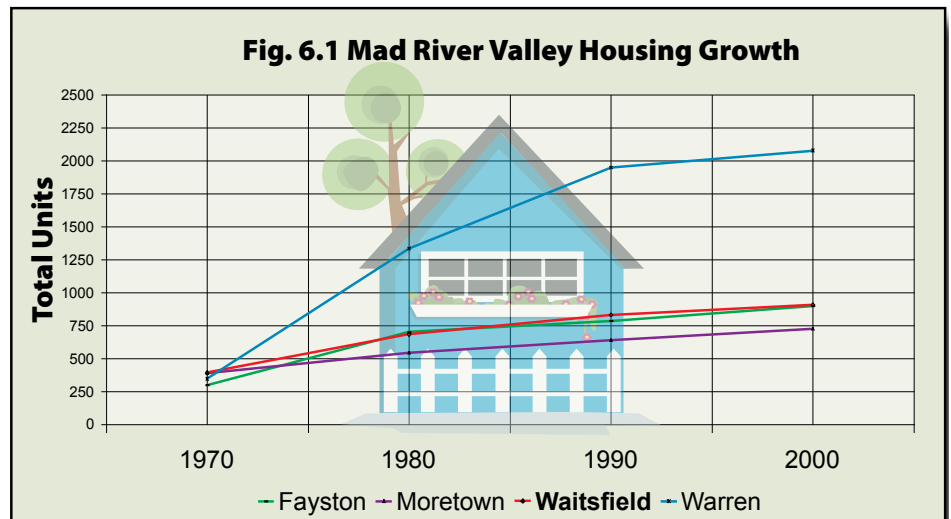
Source: U.S. Census.

holds are also getting smaller—in 2000 less than half (45%) of family households had children living at home; 62% of married couples, including many “empty nesters,” had no children less than 18 years old at home.

The rate of household formation far exceeded the rate of housing development in the 1990s, resulting in the increased demand locally for year-round housing—and a very tight housing market. This is evident in recent vacancy rates for both rental and sale units, which were far below those reported in 1990 (U.S. Census). Waitsfield’s vacancy rate for sale units dropped from 3.5% in 1990 to 2.5% in 2000.

Even more telling, the town’s rental vacancy rate plummeted from 10.4% in 1990 to 1.9% over the same ten year period. These data support local observations that there is currently not enough year-round housing on the market to meet local demand. Respondents to the UVM/CRS survey, conducted as part of their housing update, indicated that rental units are in such demand that they are rarely advertised, but are quickly let by word of mouth. Two-bedroom units are especially in short supply in the area.

Housing trends and shortages are expected to continue, and may be exacerbated over the next decade by “echo boomers” (children of baby boomers which caused a population spike in the late 1980s/early



1990s) entering the housing market. Assuming no change in current demand, projected populations, and average household size, Waitsfield will need to accommodate at least 115 to 120 new units over the next ten years. Policies promoting Irasville growth center development and regional economic expansion—particularly if supported through new infrastructure—could dramatically alter both the rate and pattern of local housing development.

CHANGING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

The shortage of year-round housing has resulted in both the construction of new units, and the conversion of seasonal to year-round units. According to valley realtors, as reported in the 2001 UVM/CRS housing study, the lack of affordable single family homes has lead buyers to consider condominiums as an alternative to traditional housing.

TABLE 6.2 • VALLEY HOUSEHOLDS, 2000

	Fayston	Moretown	Waitsfield	Warren	Mad River Valley	Washington County	Vermont
Total Number	484	650	734	742	2,610	23,659	240,634
Avg Size	2.36	2.54	2.26	2.27	2.35	2.36	2.44
% Family	64.5%	67.2%	66.1%	58.9%	64.0%	63.6%	65.6%
% Non-family	35.5%	32.8%	33.9%	41.1%	36.0%	36.4%	34.4%
% w/ Children	31.4%	37.2%	29.8%	29.1%	31.8%	32.6%	33.6%
% Single Parent	5.6%	7.7%	8.3%	6.2%	7.0%	8.8%	8.5%
% 65+ alone	5.6%	7.7%	6.5%	5.9%	6.5%	10.2%	9.5%
Median HH Income	\$53,472	\$47,750	\$45,577	\$47,437	NA	\$40,972	\$40,856
% built 1939 or earlier†	4.8%	21.6%	21.5%	8.6%	NA	35.4%	30.0%

Source : U.S. Census. † Source: U.S. Census [including sample data which cannot be used to determine values for the Valley]

TABLE 6.3 WAITSFIELD HOUSING UNITS, 1990-00

	1990	2000	Change	
			Absolute	Percent
Units	831	908	77	9.3%
Occupied	574	734	160	27.9%
Owner	385	523	138	35.8%
Renter	189	211	22	11.6%
Seasonal	190	159	-31	-16.3%
Persons/Owned	2.63	2.41	-0.22	-8.4%
Persons/Rented	2.17	1.9	-0.27	-12.4%
1-unit detached	535	594	59	11.0%
1-unit attached	13	36	23	176.9%
2-4 units	112	128	16	14.3%
5-9 units	72	76	4	5.6%
10+ units	24	23	-1	-4.2%
Mobile Homes	75	44	-31	-41.3%
>1 person/ room	7	7		0.00%
lack plumbing	0	0	0	0.00%
lack kitchen facilities	2	0	-2	-100.00%
Built before 1939	224	195	-29	-13.0%

Source: U.S. Census



Our recent 24-month search indicates zero availability of affordable units that don't require major cash outlays to make the units livable. It's a market for only the upper classes of the economy.

—Respondent to the Mad River Valley Housing Survey [UVM/CRS Report, 2001].

Fig. 6.2
Waitsfield Households, 1990-2000

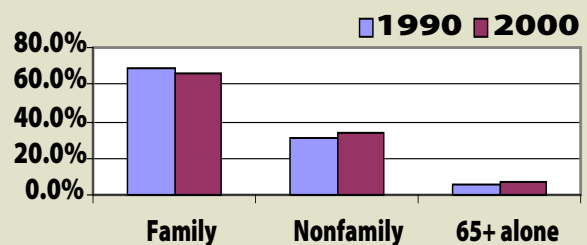
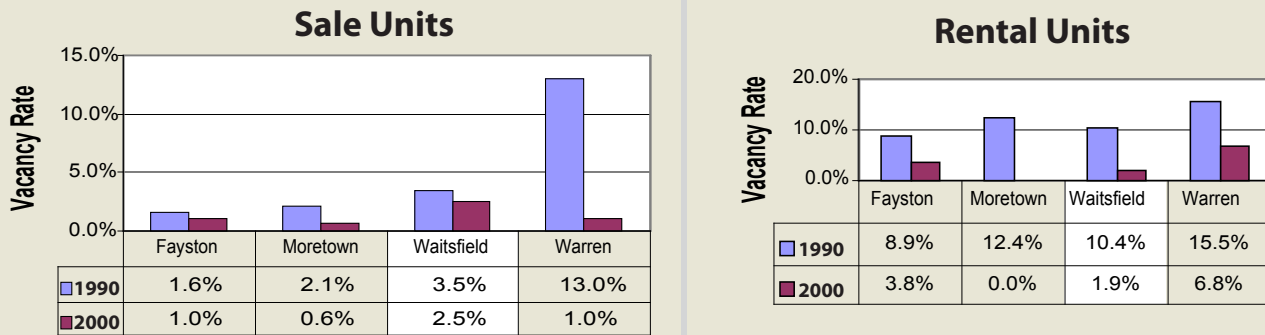


Figure 6.3 • Valley Vacancy Rates 1990-00



During the 1990s, owner-occupied units in town increased by 36% (138 units); while the number of rental units increased by 12% (22 units). Census data regarding condominiums are not yet available, but Waitsfield's seasonal housing decreased by 16% (31 units) over the same period (Table 6.3).²

Local housing continues to consist largely of single family homes, but also includes a relatively higher percentage of dispersed, multi-family units (3–9 apartments or condos per building) than the surrounding area (Figure 6.4). Such units have been developed over the years through new construction, including mixed use development, the adaptive re-use of historic structures such as the old high school, and the conversion of older single family homes into multi-family units.

On the other hand the number of mobile homes, generally considered a relatively affordable housing alternative, decreased by 31 units (41%) during the 1990s, and presently make up slightly less than 5% of the local housing stock. This is a relatively high percentage for the Valley (with the exception of Moretown), but is less than that for the county (6%) or state (8%).

Waitsfield's housing stock is also relatively older, but in generally good condition. Over 21% of the town's housing, including many of its historic homes in Waitsfield Village, were built prior to 1940. These homes lend much to the town's historic character, but are also more difficult and expensive to maintain. Current zoning allows for their conversion into multi-family units, but also re-

² Waitsfield grand list data (1995-2000) indicate that number of vacation units on list six acres (vi) has declined in recent years, as would be expected from conversions to year-round units; however the number of vacation units on larger lots (v2 properties) has increased.

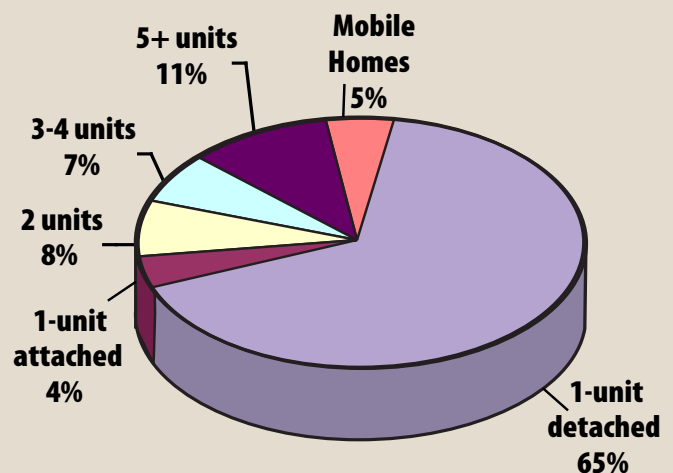
quires that the historic character of houses within the Waitsfield Village Historic District be maintained. Older homes have generally been updated over the years to incorporate modern conveniences. Census data indicate that all housing units in Waitsfield now have complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. A local housing survey would provide more detailed information regarding local housing conditions, including the degree of substandard housing.

Overcrowding is not a local problem—Waitsfield homes tend to be larger (with a median of 5.8 rooms per unit), than homes in surrounding communities. This is due in part to the number of large older homes in town. It also reflects the fact that—despite decreasing household sizes—newly constructed single family homes, on average, are getting bigger.

THE GROWING AFFORDABILITY GAP

A tight housing market typically results in escalating housing costs for both buyers and renters; and in the

Fig. 6.4 • Housing Units by Type



Source: U.S. Census

1990s, local household incomes did not keep pace with rising housing costs for many local residents.

Waitsfield's reported median household income increased by 38% (to \$45,477) over this period, while the median mortgage and associated costs increased by 51% (to \$1,204 per month), and the median gross rent (including utilities) increased by 16% (to \$570). This suggests that while rents remained relatively affordable, homeownership was increasingly out of reach for many local residents (Figure 6.6).

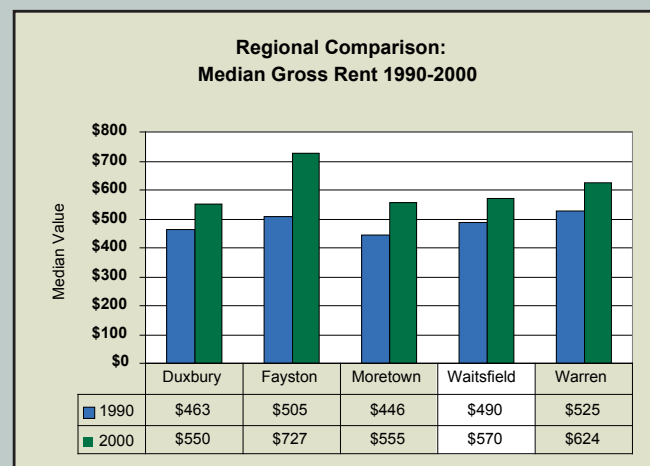
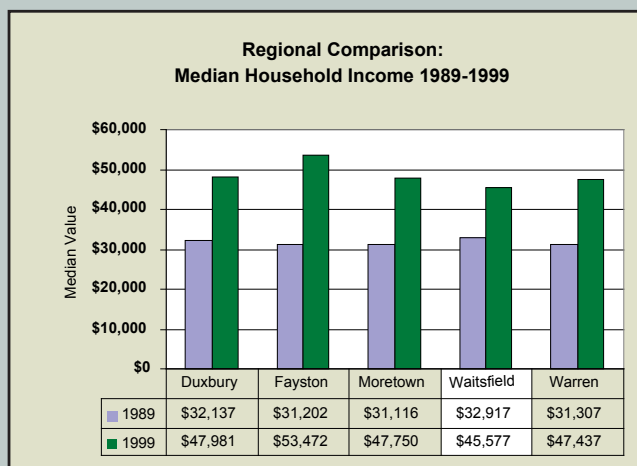
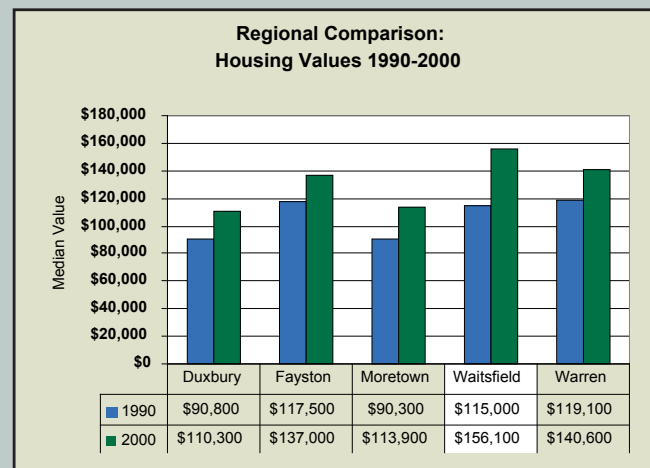
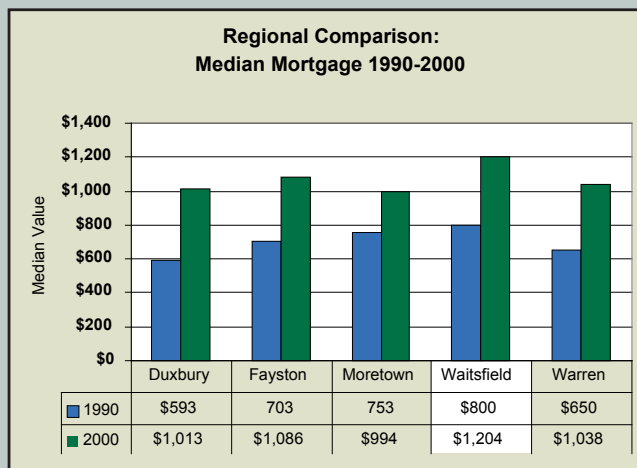
Waitsfield's 2000 median household income, though not the highest in the Valley, was 12% higher than the state median. The median reported value of an owner-occupied unit in 2000, however, at \$156,100, was the highest in the area—40% higher than that of the state and 52% higher than the county median. A more recent analysis of rental rates, included in the UVM/CRS housing report, found that the average rental rate for all advertised units in the four-

town area in 2000–01 was \$750, not including utilities—suggesting that rental units now coming on the market may also be out of reach of many valley wage earners.

A common definition of “affordability” assumes that a household should not pay more than 30% of its gross income on housing costs. An affordability “gap” analysis for Waitsfield, based on reported income, wage and housing costs—which generously assumes two wage earners per household—is presented in Table 6.5. This suggests that homeownership is not a viable option for many households at or below reported incomes and wage levels, even under current subsidized homeownership programs.³³ Rental units, however, remain affordable for all but the town's lowest income residents, which likely include

³³ Locally reported median incomes meet current Vermont Housing Finance Agency income limits for homeownership financing assistance, but the report median value of a house, at \$156,100, exceeds the current VHFA purchase limit of \$152,000 for an existing home.

Figure 6.6 • Regional Housing Affordability Comparisons



single wage earner households, single parents, and retired elderly on fixed incomes.

Another common measure of whether wages are keeping up with the costs of housing is the “housing wage”—the hourly wage that a working family has to earn so that it does not pay more than 30% of its income for shelter.⁴⁴ The housing wage is typically

⁴⁴ A 2001 state and county-level analysis of housing wages is presented in the Vermont Housing Council's commissioned study *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Housing and Wages in Vermont*,

calculated for a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. As reported in the UVM/CRS study, the average advertised rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the valley in 2000-2001 was \$733 per month. The area housing wage, based on this rental rate, was \$14.10/hour (or \$29,320 per year)—more than twice the state's minimum wage (\$13,000) and 13% higher than the average reported wage for Waitsfield.

March 2002. The housing wage reported for Washington County was \$12.27 per hour, and for the state \$13.21 per hour.

TABLE 6.5 • HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ANALYSIS

	Household Income	Monthly Income [÷12]	Monthly Costs [x.30]	Monthly Payment [x.80]	Mortgage Amount [÷7%]	Price w/ %Down [÷.95]	Owner-ship Gap @\$156,100	Rent Gap [÷\$570]	Rent Gap [÷\$750]
Census (1999)									
Median	\$45,577	\$3,798	\$1,139	\$912	\$137,074	\$144,288	(\$11,812)	\$569	\$389
Low (80%)	\$36,462	\$3,038	\$912	\$729	\$109,659	\$115,430	(\$40,670)	\$342	\$162
Very Low (50%)	\$22,789	\$1,899	\$570	\$456	\$68,537	\$72,144	(\$83,956)	(\$0)	(\$180)
HUD County									
Median	\$43,900	\$3,658	\$1,098	\$878	\$132,030	\$138,979	(\$17,121)	\$528	\$348
Low (80%)	\$35,120	\$2,927	\$878	\$702	\$105,624	\$111,183	(\$44,917)	\$308	\$128
Very Low (50%)	\$21,950	\$1,829	\$549	\$439	\$66,015	\$69,490	(\$86,610)	(\$21)	(\$201)
MAGI (x2)									
Median	\$58,426	\$4,869	\$1,461	\$1,169	\$175,717	\$184,966	\$28,866	\$891	\$711
Low (80%)	\$46,741	\$3,895	\$1,169	\$935	\$140,574	\$147,972	(\$8,128)	\$599	\$419
Very Low (50%)	\$29,213	\$2,434	\$730	\$584	\$87,859	\$92,483	(\$63,617)	\$160	(\$20)
Avg Wage (x2)									
Average	\$52,060	\$4,338	\$1,302	\$1,041	\$156,571	\$164,812	\$8,712	\$732	\$552
Low (80%)	\$41,648	\$3,471	\$1,041	\$833	\$125,257	\$131,850	(\$24,250)	\$471	\$291
Very Low (50%)	\$26,030	\$2,169	\$651	\$521	\$78,286	\$82,406	(\$73,694)	\$81	(\$99)

Notes:

- 1) Housing is defined as “affordable” when households with incomes at or below median income pay no more than 30% of their gross income on household expenses.
- 2) HUD County income is the estimated median family income for Washington County in 2000 [US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development].
- 3) Median adjusted gross income is as reported by the state for Waitsfield in 2000; doubled to estimate household from 2 wage earners [VT Tax Dept.].
- 4) Average annual wage is as reported by the state for Waitsfield in 2000; doubled to estimate household income from 2 wage earners [VDET].
- 5) Mortgage amount assumes financing over 30 years at a fixed rate of 7%.
- 6) The median reported value of an owner-occupied unit in Waitsfield was \$156,100 as reported in the 2000 U.S. Census; the median sale price of an R1 property in Waitsfield in 2000 was \$120,105, and an R2 property \$434,400 [VT Tax Dept., Transfer Tax Data].
- 7) The median gross rent of an occupied rental unit was \$750 as reported from the 2000 US Census; the average advertised rent in 2000-01 in the Valley Report for the four-town area was \$750 [UVM/CRS Report 2001].

Census data confirm that the percentage of households in town paying more than 30% of their gross income on housing has increased since 1990. As reported in 2000, 24% of local homeowners, and 37% of renters, were paying more than 30% of their 1999 household income on housing.

SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

While the 1991 housing plan identified the need for more affordable single family dwellings in the Valley, many of the included recommendations focused on ensuring that affordable housing was available for Valley residents with special needs—defined at that time to include elderly and low income residents, and seasonal employees of local ski areas. Specific recommendations at that time called for:

- ◆ **The development of subsidized elderly rental housing in Irasville,**
- ◆ **The retention of “at risk” housing, including Mad River Meadows, and the VerdMont Mobile Home Park, and**
- ◆ **Employer-assisted housing for seasonal employees.**

Waitsfield has since provided significant financial assistance for the development of Evergreen Place in Irasville, and for the purchase of the Verd-Mont Mobile Home Park by the Central Vermont Community Land Trust. These projects were assisted by grants to the town through the Vermont Community Development Program.

In 1999, \$292,000 in grants and loans, was awarded to Mad River Senior Citizens Inc. for the acquisition and renovation of Evergreen Place, a senior citizens center and 22-unit assisted living facility located in the former Valley Inn in Irasville. During its first three years, the facility experienced chronic high vacancy rates that endangered its financial viability. Ownership was turned over to Cathedral Square in 2002, a nonprofit housing corporation based in Burlington. Management is shared with Evergreen Place Inc., a local nonprofit, which also operates the senior center. The facility has been approved to accept subsidized (Section 8) residents, and long empty rooms are now filling up.

Verd-Mont Mobile Home Park, the town’s 29-unit mobile home park, was considered at risk for sale or closure through 1998. It was retained largely through the efforts of the Central Vermont Community Land Trust, which in 1999 was awarded \$192,500 in grants and loans to purchase and upgrade the

park. It is now managed by the CVCLT in association with the Vermont State Housing Authority, and upgrades have been made to the site and several trailers. Mobile homes in the Verd-Mont park are now eligible for home ownership financing assistance through the Vermont Housing Finance Agency.

Mad River Meadows, located in Irasville, is the town’s only fully subsidized housing project. It has 10 one-bedroom, 8 two-bedroom and 6 three-bedroom units (24 in all), including 12 elderly and two handicap-accessible units. In 1991 the project, owned by a private developer, was eligible to be converted to fair market housing at some time in the future, and was therefore considered at risk. At present it is under a 5-year renewal agreement, and is not considered at risk for conversion, subject to penalties, through 2012. Historically all units have been “deep subsidy” units, with an income limit at 50% of the median county income. Under the current agreement, however, some units are now available at 40% of the median income. Vacancy rates, however, remain low.

Seasonal employee housing issues, associated largely with ski area employment, have not impacted Waitsfield directly, but may affect the local rental market. Sugarbush and Mad River Glen have both endeavored to provide housing for their seasonal employees, currently outside of town. Sugarbush has 28 beds available in dormitories and rents up to 36 condos annually to house their seasonal employees. According to local management, employee housing remains on the agenda, as the resort struggles to find and keep workers who have had to look outside the valley for housing. The master plan for Lincoln Peak must be updated before housing needs can be quantitatively addressed. Mad River Glen provides three units that provide combined housing for up to 16 employees.

While independent and assisted living housing is now available locally for elderly residents; there are no state licensed residential care facilities in town that provide personal care, limited medical care, and 24-hour supervision. The nearest facilities of this type are located in Northfield, Montpelier and Waterbury. There are also no local emergency shelters.

HOUSING PRIORITIES

Renewed efforts to address affordable housing in the Valley are now underway. The Mad River Housing Coalition has been inactive for years, but a “Valley Housing Committee” was recently formed, under the auspices of the Planning District, to address affordable housing. In April 2002, the committee hosted a “Mad River Housing Summit” at the Waitsfield Elementary School to identify housing needs, available state and local resources, and possible solutions. Housing was also a main focus of a November 2002 public forum on the future of Irasville. The need for more affordable housing options, including affordable single family housing, was highlighted in both sessions.

The results of the Center for Rural Studies’ 2001 housing survey— sent to local officials and planning boards, the Planning District, the Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce, ski areas, and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission— included an updated ranking of housing priorities, taken from the 1991 housing plan. Based on a 56% response rate, the following strategies were identified in order of priority (% medium/high responses) for the four-town area.

- ◆ Provision of affordable single family housing (96%)
- ◆ Local monitoring of opportunities to develop affordable housing (93.7%)
- ◆ Support for growth centers (e.g., Irasville), infill and infrastructure development (86.7%)
- ◆ Municipal action through plans and bylaws (84.4%)
- ◆ Allocation of water, sewer reserve capacity (if developed) for affordable housing (83.9%)
- ◆ Conversion of existing structures for elderly and family rental apartments (81.3%)
- ◆ Promotion of economic development to increase local wages (78.2%)
- ◆ Provision of employer-assisted housing (68.8%)
- ◆ Retention of at-risk housing (62.1%)
- ◆ Development of subsidized elderly housing in Irasville (53.1%)

HOUSING GOAL:

The availability of safe and affordable housing for all Waitsfield residents.

HOUSING POLICIES:

- 1) Encourage a variety of housing types to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups, particularly for Waitsfield residents of low and moderate income, individuals and families employed by local businesses, and local residents with special needs, including elders.
- 2) Plan for and accommodate Waitsfield’s fair share of regional housing growth, including affordable housing development. The rate of residential development, however, shall not exceed that which can be supported by existing and planned municipal facilities and services. Without additional infrastructure capacity, a rate of 10 dwelling units per year is anticipated.
- 3) With development of supporting wastewater infrastructure, 50% of anticipated housing growth (total dwelling units) will be targeted to occur in Irasville and in the Waitsfield Village Residential District.
- 4) When a municipal sewer system is developed, sewer allocation and phasing policies shall ensure that the rate of commercial (non-residential) development does not significantly exceed the rate of new residential development within the sewer service area(s), and particular consideration shall be given to residential units serving moderate income residents.
- 5) The town’s existing and new subsidized housing should be retained in perpetuity as affordable units. If necessary, ownership and/or long-term management should be transferred to a nonprofit housing corporation to ensure that units remain affordable.
- 6) Sites for manufactured housing will be made available in locations similar to those used for conventional single family dwellings. Manufactured housing will be excluded from zoning districts only upon the same terms and conditions as conventional housing is excluded.
- 7) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, and located conveniently to employment and commercial centers.
- 8) Upper story residential apartments are encouraged in both Waitsfield Village and Irasville.
- 9) An apartment or dwelling will continue to be allowed as an accessory to a single family dwelling in all districts in which single family dwellings are allowed. Such units may be attached or detached, and may

be rented to non-family members, but shall be maintained in common ownership unless subdivided in conformance with local regulations.

- 10) Higher densities of residential development, including multi-family dwellings and infill development, will be accommodated in designated village centers and rural hamlets (clusters) supported, to the extent practical, by municipal or community wastewater systems and infrastructure.

- 11) The conversion of single to multi-family dwellings, including rental units, will be allowed in designated village districts, given that adequate infrastructure and off-street parking are available, and the character of historic structures is maintained or enhanced.

- 12) A variety of housing types will be considered within planned residential and planned unit developments. Density bonuses will be provided to encourage the provision of affordable units within these developments.

HOUSING TASKS:

- 1) Implement a master plan for Irasville, including the development of a municipal wastewater system, to accommodate higher densities of residential and mixed use development that includes housing, in appropriate locations within Irasville. Allocate municipal wastewater reserve capacity specifically to support a mix of housing development in this area. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission]*
- 2) Coordinate affordable housing efforts with those of Fayston and Warren in order to develop a valley-wide approach in assessing the full extent and nature of the need, allocating each town's fair share of the responsibility. *[Planning Commission, Mad River Valley Planning District, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission]*
- 3) Inventory development capacity within the Agricultural-Residential District to determine appropriate sites or areas able to support rural hamlets (clusters), while simultaneously strengthening resource protection standards elsewhere in the district. Update zoning regulations as needed. *[Planning Commission]*
- 4) Review and update current zoning and subdivision regulations as needed to accommodate higher densities of housing, including affordable housing and infill development, within designated village districts. Consider the adoption of inclusionary zoning provisions as appropriate. *[Planning Commission]*
- 5) Review and update current zoning and subdivision regulations as needed to impose lower densities of housing outside designated village districts and rural hamlets. This review should examine the use of economic incentives and variable, lower density zoning, at a minimum, to deter housing development determined to be excessive or otherwise inappropriate for areas outside designated village districts and rural hamlets. *[Planning Commission]*
- 6) Consider amending the Town's zoning regulations to allow up to four units of multi-family housing in a single building, on a single parcel, within Irasville and designated hamlets as a permitted (as opposed to conditional) use. *[Planning Commission]*

- 7) Consider adopting phasing policies, enacted through zoning and/or subdivision regulations, to ensure that the rate of housing development does not significantly exceed projected rates of growth. Such policies might exempt affordable housing development and/or housing within designated growth centers. *[Planning Commission]*

- 8) Explore securing legislative authority to adopt a municipal property transfer tax to fund local efforts to create affordable housing in Waitsfield. *[Planning Commission, Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce*]*

- 9) Draft a proposal for the Selectboard's consideration, which supports the development of affordable housing, new or otherwise, for those individuals and families who qualify for such housing and/or are employed in local businesses. The following, without limitation, shall be examined and considered for inclusion in the proposal:

- a. the designation of a specified percentage or number of subdivided housing lots as intended for affordable housing;
- b. a specified monetary fee, imposed on all subdivisions, single lot development and/or commercial development;
- c. annual Town Meeting appropriations to fund the development of affordable housing;
- d. the use of transferred development rights, regulatory and/or impact fees, grants, donations and any other appropriate economic mechanisms to support affordable housing development;
- e. the establishment of a fund to receive, retain and disburse proceeds gathered for use in the development of affordable housing; and
- f. the effects, if any, on individual property rights and mechanisms for the protection of those rights, if necessary.

[Planning Commission with other community input at its discretion]

**Participation strongly encouraged*

7. Local Economy



Considering Waitsfield's relatively small size and rural character, the town maintains a surprisingly diverse economic base. While tourism remains a dominant industry in the Mad River Valley, Waitsfield has experienced significant economic diversification over the past decade. This is due in part to Irasville's function as the Valley's "downtown" for commercial and service businesses, and recent development activity in Mad River Park (formerly Fly In)—the Valley's only industrial park.

The following chapter highlights relevant economic trends in the Valley, including changes in jobs, wages and business receipts, and discusses the town's economic prospects. In addition to data available from various state agencies and the U.S. Census, information concerning the town's economic outlook was provided in a study entitled *Integrating Economic and Demographic Analysis in the Irasville Growth Center* prepared for the town by Economic & Policy Research, Inc. (ESRI), of Williston, VT in April 2002.

ECONOMIC TRENDS & CONDITIONS

Labor Force

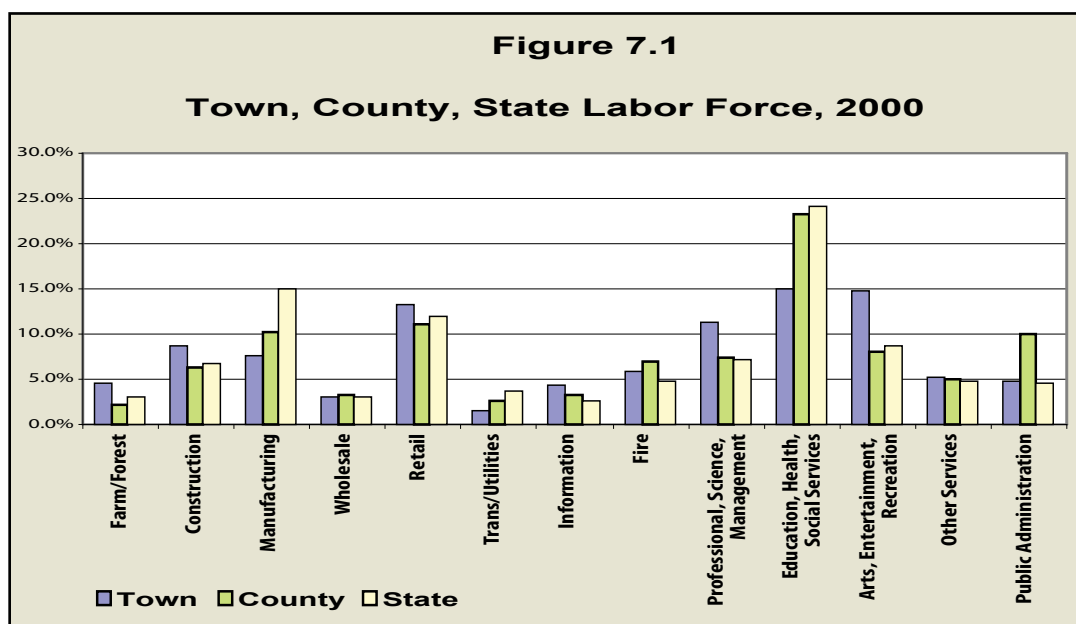
Seventy-five percent of Waitsfield's population aged 16 and over (1,014 people in 2000) make-up the town's **labor force** (the labor force excludes retired individuals and others aged 16 or older who are not employed or actively seeking employment). According to the 2000 Census, 73.2% of the local labor force were classified as private wage and salary workers, 11.6% worked for government, 14.2% were self-employed and 1% consisted of unpaid family workers. The percentage of self-employed workers is higher than that for the county (9.5%) or state (10.3%) as a whole. Likewise, Waitsfield has a much higher percentage of local workers who work at home (10.5%) than the county (5.9%)

Washington County (3.8%) and the state (3.6%). That Waitsfield's unemployment rate is higher than that of other Valley towns, the county and state has been a consistent trend for the past 5 years. The reasons for this trend are not clear.

Employment

Waitsfield's labor force consists of town residents regardless of their place of employment. Local covered employment data, however, identifies jobs located in Waitsfield regardless of the place of residence of the employee holding those jobs. This is an important distinction in that Waitsfield was identified in the EPRI study as a "net importer" of jobs, meaning the number of jobs in town exceeds the number of resident workers.

Between 1990 and 2000, 336¹¹ new jobs were created in Waitsfield. This accounts for nearly 90% of new jobs created in the Mad River Valley during that period. Waitsfield's rate of job growth during the 1990s—36%—exceeded that of the county (18.1%) and state (17.5%). Waitsfield, however, accounts for slightly less than 4% of the



or state (5.7%). A breakdown of Waitsfield's labor force, by industry, is presented in Figure 7.1.

Compared with the county and state, a relatively high percentage of the local population is employed in farming/forestry, construction, retail, professional, scientific and/or management enterprises, information and arts and recreation. A relatively lower percentage are involved in manufacturing, education, health and social services and transportation and utilities.

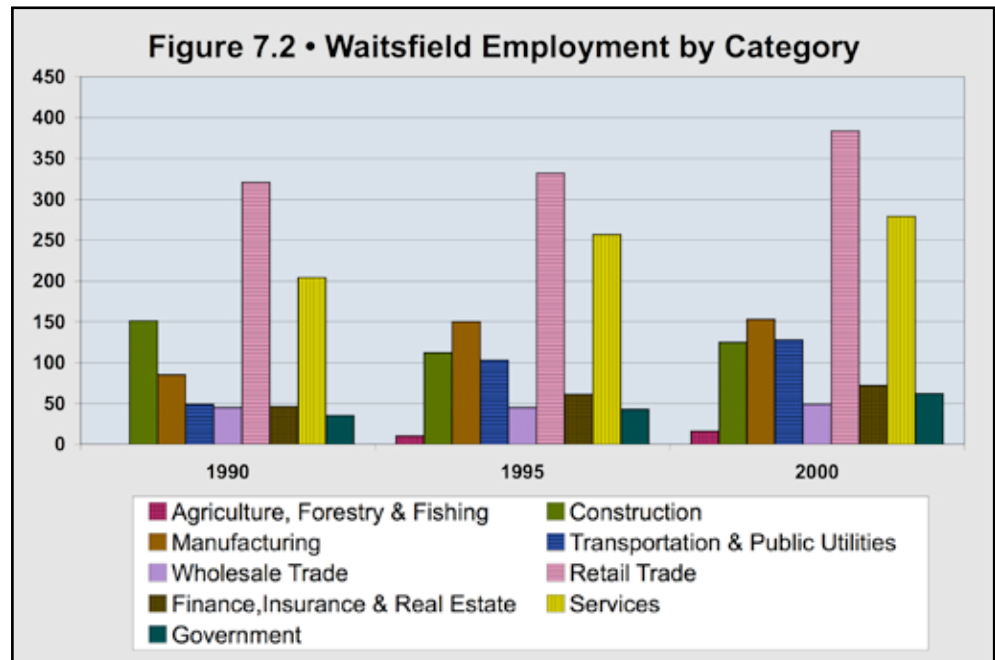
Despite a common perception that Waitsfield (and the Valley) has a very tight labor market, it is interesting to note that the town's average annual unemployment rate in 2001 was 3.9%. This was higher than the unemployment rate in Fayston (2.3%), Warren (3.4%),

total number of jobs in the county (the town comprises 2.9% of the county's population).

Industrial sectors experiencing the greatest increase since 1990 include Transportation & Public Utilities (79 new jobs); Manufacturing (68 new jobs); Services (75 new jobs); and Retail (63 new jobs). Government (27 jobs), Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE—26 jobs), Wholesale Trade and Agriculture & Forestry also saw minor increases. Construction was the only sector to show a decline in jobs over this period (reduction of 26 jobs) (see Figure 7.2).

¹¹Jobs reported include only positions covered by unemployment compensation insurance, which typically exempts sole proprietors. According to anecdotal information and recent census data, sole proprietors account for an increasing percentage of the Valley's labor force/local jobs.

It is not clear how many sole proprietors and other exempt employees there are in Waitsfield (i.e., not reported on the figure above), although according to the 2000 Census 100 local residents (10% of the civilian workforce) worked at home, and 139 local residents reported being “self-employed workers in own not-incorporated business.” Therefore, the total number of local jobs is likely higher than the 1,268 reported in 2000 and depicted in Figure 7.2 by more than 10%.



Local Employers

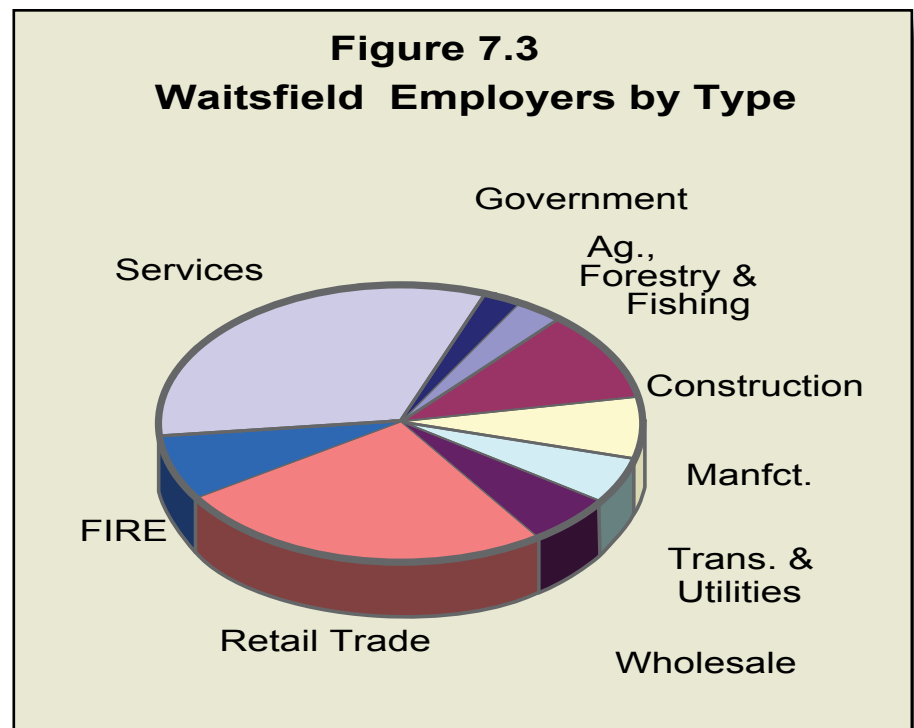
From 1990 through 2000, the **total number of employers** in Waitsfield increased from 176 to 191 (this includes reporting units with employees but does not include sole proprietors and other exempt employers). In 2000, this included 186 private businesses and 5 public sector employers. The average Waitsfield business employ 6.64 workers.

The greatest increase in employers during the 1990s occurred in the Manufacturing, Retail, Wholesale and Services sectors. The number of employers declined in the Construction sector. A breakdown of total employers by industry in 2000 is provided in Figure 7.3.

Thirty-three percent of local employers were in the Services sector, 26% were in the Retail sector, 11% in Construction and 7.3% in FIRE and Manufacturing, respectively. Waitsfield based employers comprise 60% of the total number in the Valley, which is slightly higher than the percentage of Valley jobs located in town (57%).

Wages

Wages in the Mad River Valley did not experience significant growth during the 1990s, although the 1 paid to Waitsfield employees experienced considerable growth between 1995 and 2000 after declining during the preceding five year period. Wages in Waitsfield are considerably higher than in Fayston and Warren, which may be explained by the seasonal nature of employment at local ski resorts and associated tourist businesses. Wages for hourly workers in those industries also tend to be lower than in many



other industries. A comparison of average annual wages among the three Valley towns, since 1990, is provided in Figure 7.4.

Despite rapid wage inflation between 1995 and 2000, average annual wages in Waitsfield—when adjusted for inflation—continue to lag behind the County and State as a whole (see Figure 7.5). The rapid increase since 1995 is largely attributable to the growing number of jobs in Utilities (e.g., communications), Wholesale Trade and Manufacturing, as well as the relatively high percentage of local jobs in the construction sector—all of which tend to pay wages above the local and state average.

Livable Wage

There is growing concern in the state regarding the ability of full-time workers to earn an income sufficient to meet a family's basic needs, commonly referred to as a "livable wage." The Vermont Joint Fiscal Office has identified that an annual livable wage for a family of four with two working parents in 2000 ranged from

\$11.34/hour per earner (\$47,163) to \$16.12/hour per earner (\$67,065), depending upon access to employer assisted health insurance. The range of a livable hourly wage for a single-parent with one child ranged from \$15.28/hour (\$31,728/year) to \$21.48 (\$44,678), while that for a single person was \$9.57 (\$19,905) to \$12.38 (\$25,750).

Based upon the Joint Fiscal Office study, many local wage-earners may be earning less than a livable wage, especially if workers lack adequate health insurance. Focusing economic development activities on the creation of well-paying jobs is especially critical in Waitsfield to ensure that local residents can meet their basic needs—especially in light of local housing costs discussed in Chapter 6.

Business Receipts

In addition to employment and wages, another useful measure of economic activity may be found in the gross retail sales, restaurant receipts, and commercial accommodation rentals generated by local businesses.

These data help to illustrate the extent to which Valley towns form an integrated local economy and highlight the importance of tourism.

Figure 7.6 shows total **sales receipts** reported by Valley and Waitsfield businesses for each fiscal year between 1996 and 2001. Gross receipts are for all reported retail sales, including those that are not subject to the Vermont sales tax (e.g., groceries, medicine).

Retail sales in Waitsfield increased by 76.4% between 1996 and 2001 (in 2000 dollars), but receipts declined by 21.2% in Fayston and Warren. Sales in Waitsfield outpaced the increase in Washington County (37.7%) over the same period by nearly two to one. In 1996, total retail sales in Waitsfield comprised 4.8% of the county total; in 2001, Waitsfield sales made up 6.2% of the county's total.

During this same period, **rooms and meals receipts** increased only 7.3% in Waitsfield (in 2000 dollars), compared with 23.6% in Warren and Fayston. Receipts throughout Washington County increased by 10.3%. In 1996, Waitsfield

Figure 7.4
MRV Average Annual Wages (2000 \$s)

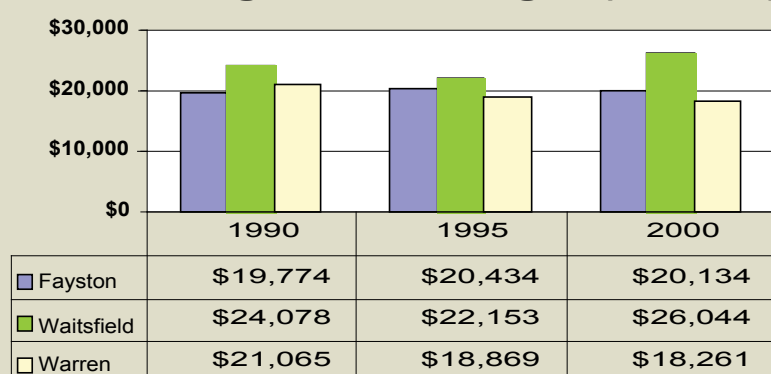
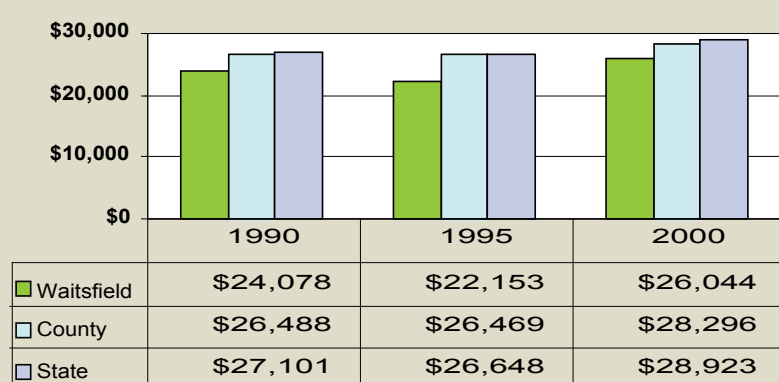


Figure 7.5
Average Annual Wages (2000 \$s)



accounted for 8.9% of the county total, while the entire Valley (Waitsfield, Fayston and Warren) accounted for 24.4% of the total. In 2001, those figures were 8.7% and 26.1%, respectively (see Figure 7.7).

It appears that Waitsfield retail businesses have benefitted from year-round population growth in the Valley over the past decade, as well as from the modest growth in tourism. That increase in tourism, however, appears to be related to ski area activity to a much greater extent than to summer/fall tourism, as indicated by the higher rate of growth in Fayston and Warren.

In addition to business receipts, the number of skiers who visit the Valley on an annual basis is also an indicator of tourism activity. During the 2001/2002 ski season over 305,000 skier visits were recorded at Sugarbush, down from nearly 358,000 the previous year. During the mid to late 1990s, Sugarbush averaged over 350,000 annual skier visits. The average number of skiers fluctuated from year to year, and experienced the best overall year in 1997/98 (388,000 skier visits) in 14 years. Annual skier visits since the 1983/84 ski season are shown in Figure 7.8.

While the annual fluctuation of skier visits is dependent on many factors, including weather, Sugarbush has experienced ownership changes and inconsistent management over the years. Presently, both Sugarbush Resort and Mad River Glen (a skier-owned cooperative) are benefitting from focused management and a sensitivity to local needs and conditions. Many local business owners are optimistic that the current ownership structure of both ski areas will enable the Valley to compete in a changing market.



PHOTO: DENNIS CURRAN

Figure 7.7
MRV Rooms & Meals Receipts (2000\$s)

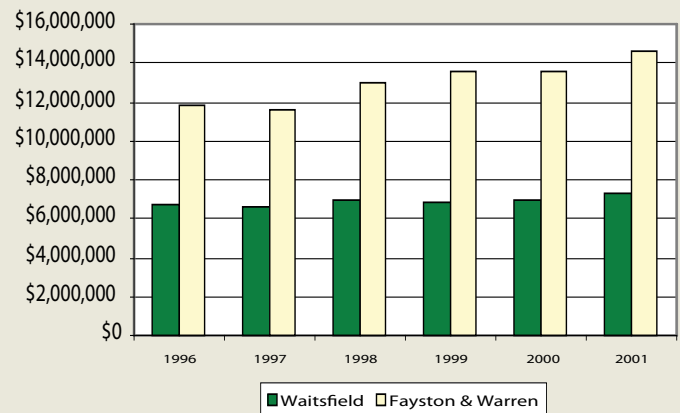


Figure 7.6
MRV Gross Sales Receipts (2000\$s)

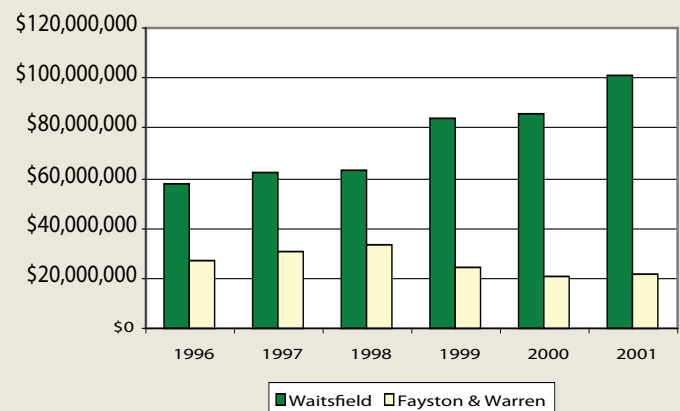
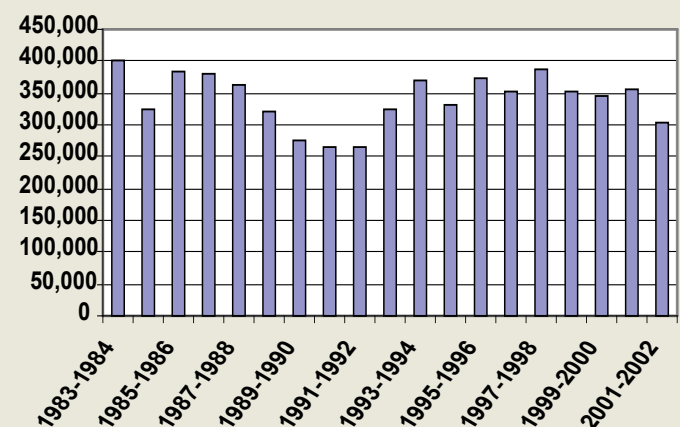


Figure 7.8
Sugarbush Resort Annual Skier Visits



Economic Outlook

The EPRI study identified several “big picture” factors that are most likely to affect the local economic climate over the next 10 to 20 year period. These external factors are beyond the control of the town or Valley to influence, although through awareness local governments and businesses may adapt to, and benefit from, them. These include:

- ◆ **Increasing globalization of markets and economies,**
- ◆ **Rapid advances in technology,**
- ◆ **Emergence of information based “new economy” which has fundamentally changed the competitive landscape,**
- ◆ **Aging of the population, and**
- ◆ **Increasing demand for high “quality-of-life.”**

The implications of these external factors are briefly addressed in the EPRI study. Generally, the Valley’s high quality of life, current demographic profile, presence of advanced communications infrastructure (e.g., Waitsfield Telecom services) and educated local labor force appear to position the Valley to take advantage of—or at least adapt to—these global factors. The EPRI study also involved some qualitative analysis of the Valley’s economic climate. The study identified the Valley’s “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats” through a series of interviews with Valley business and community leaders. A summary of that analysis is presented in Table 7.2.

The list of strengths and weaknesses highlights the degree to which Waitsfield’s economic well being is dependent upon—and may be influenced by—other community concerns addressed elsewhere in this plan (e.g., housing, environmental quality, education). This is an important point in that economic development policies and programs must be part of a comprehensive and integrated community planning effort. For example, agriculture and forestry may be minor local industries as measured by total jobs, but they are extremely significant to the extent that they help maintain the Valley’s rural landscape and cultural identity, which contributes to our quality of life and the community’s desirability as a tourist destination.

The Valley’s economic outlook is tenuous, however, in the face of global uncertainty regarding climate change, resource depletion, population growth, environmental degradation, war, and a growing gap between an affluent minority and an impoverished majority. It may become increasingly important to develop a sustainable local economy that focuses on local markets and local resources, and which serves to strengthen the local community as a means of responding to global uncertainty.

TABLE 7.2 ECONOMIC STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Strengths & Opportunities	Threats & Weaknesses
High quality of life, characterized by strong sense of community, good schools, excellent emergency service providers, and recreational opportunities	Shortage of affordable housing for low and middle-income families, which contributes to labor shortage
Clean environment, attractive rural landscape and local policies to maintain community character	Lack of infrastructure (sewer and water) in Irasville
State of the art telecommunications infrastructure, made possible by Waitsfield Telecom	Transportation deficiencies, including key intersection problems (Route 17/100) and lack of safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities
Excellent local labor force	Lack of “night-life”
Recent acquisition of Sugarbush Resort by group of local investors	Poor cellular telephone coverage
	Time consuming local permitting process, and the lack of areas in which high-density, mixed use development can locate and expand
Source: Integrating Economic and Demographic Analysis in the Irasville Growth Center Master Plan, April 15, 2002, Economic Policy & Research, Inc.	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainability has received growing attention in recent years as communities attempt to strike a balance between often competing, yet mutually dependent, matters of economic, social and environmental concern. Striking such a balance is not only a challenge facing local communities. To the contrary, the concept of sustainability has global dimensions and implications.

A common question when discussing sustainability is how can it be defined. In a global context, the United Nations has attempted such a definition with Agenda 21, the Declaration on Environment and Development adopted by 178 national governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. On a local level, sustainable development is commonly defined simply as **“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”** With regard to the local economy, sustainable economic development may be characterized by activities and industries which:

- ◆ **Maximize use of local resources in a manner that does not deplete those resources,**
- ◆ **Are energy efficient, and emphasize the use of local renewable energy sources,**
- ◆ **Maintain high standards of environmental health and don't degrade the quality of our water, air and soils or the viability of native wildlife populations,**
- ◆ **Provide goods and services that are needed locally, and which provide an alternative to goods produced outside of our community or region,**
- ◆ **Reinforce traditional settlement patterns,**
- ◆ **Employ local residents and pay a livable wage,**
- ◆ **Are locally owned and controlled, and reinvest in the community, and**
- ◆ **Contribute to the vitality of our community, including the social fabric and well being of the entire population.**

Economic development that emphasizes sustainability should take precedence over other economic activities that do not exhibit the characteristics listed above. To the extent that the town may exercise discretion when working with businesses and local and regional development agencies, local officials should always seek to achieve a high level of sustainability.

Municipal Programs

Traditionally, Waitsfield's town government has not aggressively pursued a program of economic development, focusing instead on supporting the local economic climate through land use policies, infrastructure development, and to a limited extent tax policy. Past efforts, and opportunities for future economic development activity, may be categorized and summarized as follows.

Public Facilities & Infrastructure

• **General Wait House.** The purchase and restoration of the historic General Wait house was the result of a partnership between state and local government, the Mad River Valley Planning District, Waitsfield Historical Society and Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce. The building, which is owned and managed by the town, serves as the Valley's tourist information center and Chamber offices, provides office and meeting space for Valley non-profits and service providers, houses exhibit space for the Historic Society, and contains the Valley's only public restroom. Its continued use for these purposes will support local organizations and enhance the experience of visitors to the Valley.

• **Irasville Water/Sewer.** The town has been actively planning for the development of municipal water and sewer facilities to address existing health and environmental concerns in Irasville (and Waitsfield Village) and to accommodate additional village-scale mixed use development within the town's primary growth center (see Chapter 12). Providing that infrastructure, and allocating available capacity in a manner that supports the sustainable development goals and policies of this plan, will further benefit local businesses and the community at large.

• **Capital Improvements.** The town maintains an annual capital improvement program to plan for anticipated capital improvement needs. In recent years, the town has reinforced the function of Irasville and Waitsfield Village as town centers through the planned construction of sidewalks, road and intersection improvements, and streetscape improvements. Continued planning for such improvements, including those necessary to implement the land use, housing and community facilities policies of this plan, will directly support the economic development policies listed below.

• **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District.** It has become increasingly important for the town to find alterna-

tive revenue sources to fund capital improvements. Securing a TIF district for Irasville would provide a new revenue stream to fund capital improvements within that district without increasing the tax burden for local landowners.

• **Community Services.** Due to its central location, and past land use and development policies, Irasville and Waitsfield Village serve as a service and commercial center for the Mad River Valley. The Mad River Valley Ambulance Service, Health Center, Farmers Market, and a myriad of commercial and business enterprises serving the entire Valley are concentrated in Waitsfield.

Business Assistance

• **Tax Stabilization.** The town has maintained a tax stabilization program for working farms since the early 1980s. This program, which reduces the property tax on commercial agricultural activities, not only supports farmers, but helps to maintain the town's rural landscape. The town also has the authority to enter into stabilization agreements with other types of local businesses, although the ability of municipalities to exempt property owners from the property tax is limited to the municipal portion of the tax bill unless the town makes up any loss to the state property tax.

• **Community Development Grants.** Waitsfield has sponsored two successful community development grant applications to maintain or provide housing to low and moderate income households and the elderly, respectively. These grants made possible a \$150,000 loan to Mad River Valley Seniors Inc. at 0% interest which will begin to be repaid in 2007, and a \$115,000 loan at 0% to the Central Vermont Community Land Trust to be repaid beginning in 2020. Proceeds from the loan payments may be used for eligible community development activities, including business assistance (subject to program requirements). Additional opportunities for community development grants could not only increase support for the Valley's housing shortage, but could also increase the revenue stream available for community development activities.

• **Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce.** The Mad River Valley business commu-

nity is represented by a non-profit chamber of commerce located in Waitsfield. The Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce dues paying membership includes an inclusive and diverse collection of businesses operating with two task forces or associations. The respective missions of the two associations are as follows:

The mission of the Valley Events and Marketing Association (VEMA) is "(t)o promote the Mad River Valley as a year round destination vacation area in harmony with the environment and the unspoiled rural resources of the community."

The mission of the Valley Economic Development Association (VEDA) is "(t)o promote and enhance the business community of the Mad River Valley by acting as a pro-business educator and advocate, and by serving as the business community's representative in key state and local processes."

A dues paying member of the Chamber is appointed to serve on the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee.

• **State & Regional Programs.** Waitsfield is a participating member of the Community Capital of Central Vermont revolving loan fund which provides financial and technical assistance to local businesses which employ persons of low and moderate income. The town also provides annual support to the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, which assists with business recruitment, financing and marketing.



Land Use Planning & Regulations

• **Growth Center Designation.** Waitsfield Village and Irasville have been designated as growth centers (albeit with different land use policies) in past and current town planning documents. These designations could be strengthened with the designation of Irasville as a downtown development district in accordance with the Downtown Development Act passed in 1998. This program establishes a process for designating downtown development districts, and provides access to a variety of benefits and incentives to encourage reinvestment in traditional community centers, including:

- ◆ State tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings,
- ◆ A sprinkler system rebate program,
- ◆ Reallocation of sales tax on construction materials,
- ◆ Employee training tax credit,
- ◆ A downtown transportation and related capital improvement fund, and,
- ◆ Access to funding from a state infrastructure bank.

In addition, the Mad River Park has also been designated as a growth center in this plan. Though not a traditional village center, the designation of industrial parks as municipal growth centers is consistent with several state policies and definitions regarding growth center planning.

• **Permit Processes.** In recent years, the town has taken specific steps to improve the efficiency of local regulatory processes. The position of Zoning Administrator has been made full time, and the Zoning Administrator now provides staff support to the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment. This provides better service to applicants, and ensures better coordination among review bodies. In addition, the town streamlined the review process in 2002 when new zoning was adopted. The new zoning eliminated the site plan review function of the Planning Commission, depending instead on the conditional use review process administered by the Board of Adjustment. This eliminated the need for overlapping and redundant review by both bodies.

• **Rural Resource Protection.**° The town, together with other Valley communities, has been a statewide leader on matters related to rural resource protection and environmental conservation. Such programs, described in Chapter 3, serve to maintain the town's environmental well being, scenic beauty and high quality of life—all of which enhance the Valley's business climate and desirability as a resort destination.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL:

A diverse, sustainable local economy which seeks to retain existing, and attract new, responsible businesses and employment opportunities that pay a livable wage.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

POLICIES:

- 1) The town will support the creation and expansion of businesses and industries, in appropriate locations, which pay a livable wage to local employees and incorporate sustainable business practices. Such assistance may include tax stabilization, grant procurement and/or revolving loan assistance.
- 2) Small business development should be supported within the Valley through the local provision of available federal and state assistance programs in partnership with existing local and regional organizations, preferably in cooperation with the Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce.
- 3) Support sustainable economic development through a future land use plan which supports the following land use policies:
 - a. With the exception of home-based businesses, agriculture, forestry, commercial outdoor recreation, well managed resource extraction (e.g., gravel, water) and appropriate small scale commercial uses in Waitsfield Village, commercial and industrial development shall be located within the Irasville Village and Industrial Zoning Districts.
 - b. The function of Irasville as a compact, mixed use commercial center will be supported through local land use regulations and the development of infrastructure, including municipal water and sewage treatment facilities.
 - c. Waitsfield Village will continue to serve as a commercial, cultural and civic center of the town, with an emphasis on businesses that are compatible with the Village's scale and residential character.
 - d. New and expanded industrial uses are encouraged in the Mad River Industrial Park (Industrial District), provided such uses are planned to maximize the efficient use of the limited land available and meet performance standards to avoid or mitigate the impact of industrial processes on the surrounding area.
 - e. Commercial Lodging and Limited Business districts will continue to serve the same purpose

as the Agriculture-Residential District, in addition to providing limited opportunities for low-impact, low density commercial uses associated with tourism, agriculture and forestry.

- f. Farming, forestry, outdoor recreation and low intensity tourist accommodations are encouraged within the Agriculture-Residential District, while forestry and dispersed, traditional outdoor recreation is encouraged in the Forestry District.
- 4) The town will encourage the maintenance and expansion of the local tourism industry by supporting efforts to protect the town's historic and natural resources, and expanding recreational and cultural opportunities for local residents and visitors.
- 5) Strategies to improve the economic viability of agriculture and forestry will be supported, including maintaining and expanding economic incentives (e.g., use value appraisal), promoting access to local markets (e.g., continuation of farmers market, use of local farm products in local schools) and maintaining an adequate land base (e.g., through land conservation and land use regulations).
- 6) The provision and upgrade of telecommunications technologies and infrastructure is strongly supported, provided that new facilities not diminish the town's scenic landscape (e.g., the placement of telecommunications towers that exceed the height of nearby mountain-tops and ridgelines is prohibited).
- 7) Strongly encourage the operation of one or more small-business incubators to foster the creation and growth of locally owned business enterprises through available space and shared services and facilities.
- 8) The town will continue to participate in and support, to the extent practical, regional economic development and business assistance programs (e.g., Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, Community Capital of Central Vermont).
- 9) The town will continue to support the Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce by providing the use of the General Wait House, at competitive rents, to function as a visitors center, public restroom, community meeting facility and Chamber office space.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASKS:

- 1) Implement a master plan for Irasville, including the development of municipal water and wastewater systems, to accommodate higher densities of mixed use development that includes housing, in appropriate locations within Irasville. Allocate municipal wastewater reserve capacity specifically to support affordable housing development and businesses which pay employees a livable wage in this area. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission]*
- 2) Explore forming an Economic Development Authority in conjunction with other Valley towns and the Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce to take better advantage of state and federal economic development programs. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission, Chamber of Commerce*]*
- 3) Actively support the vitality of a light manufacturing/small business incubator facility in town, focusing on the Irasville Business Park (former Mad River Canoe) complex or other appropriate site, pursuing partnerships with private business interests and state or federal development agencies. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission]*
- 4) Review all town assistance programs, including tax stabilization policies and administration of future revolving loan funds, and develop a funding policy which focuses assistance for sustainable economic development. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator, Planning Commission]*
- 5) Review the town's land use regulations to determine whether revisions are needed to carry-out the policies set forth above. *[Planning Commission]*
- 6) Explore the potential, and evaluate the implications of, enacting a property tax policy which reduces the tax burden on agricultural land that is actively managed for farming and increases the burden on agricultural land that is held out of production. *[Planning Commission]*.
- 7) Explore strategies for local schools to purchase local agricultural products as part of the school lunch program. *[School Board, Vermont Fresh Network*]*
- 8) The town will seek alternative revenue sources, in addition to the property tax, to reduce the local tax burden and support the land use and sustainable development policies of this plan. Specifically, the town supports the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing District encompassing Irasville. *[Selectboard, Town Administrator]*

**Participation strongly encouraged*



8. Transportation



As is the case in most of rural America, any consideration of transportation in Waitsfield is largely dominated by a discussion of the automobile and the impacts of an automobile-dependent culture on our community. The town is not directly served by rail, a commercial airport, or any regional bicycle and pedestrian network other than public roadways. Recognizing this dependence on the automobile, the town has attempted to coordinate land use planning with traffic and transportation policies as a means of providing pedestrian opportunities, promoting transit, and ensuring traffic safety and efficiency throughout the community.

This chapter examines the town's transportation network, including state and local roads, traffic safety, pedestrian travel and transit, and evaluates current conditions and issues relating to that network.

ROADS & HIGHWAYS

State Highways

Primary access to the town is provided by Route 100, which runs the length of the state and serves most tourist destinations along the main range of the Green Mountains. Route 100 links the Valley with Interstate 89 in Waterbury (exit 10) and Middlesex (exit 9), both approximately 10 miles to the north. It provides access to passenger rail service in Waterbury, as well as commercial air service and regional population and employment centers in Chittenden County and Montpelier. Route 100 not only serves town residents, but also provides the primary access to the Valley for visitors from Montreal and southern New England.

Route 100 serves Sugarbush (Lincoln Peak) in Warren, as well as the White River Valley further to the south. Access to Waitsfield is also provided from the west by Route 17, which crosses the Green Mountain Range over Appalachian Gap in Fayston, providing a link between Route 100 and Mad River Glen and Mount Ellen.

In addition to serving as the Valley's principal arterial highway, Route 100 functions as Main Street through Waitsfield Village and Irasville. A result of this can be high traffic volumes during peak periods, as well as potential conflicts between through-traffic and turning movements at busy commercial intersections. This raises specific concerns relative to traffic safety and efficiency within village centers, addressed in more detail below.

Highway Improvements. While the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has only planned a few highway improvement projects in the coming years, several of these have a significant bearing on the community. Projects which are presently under development by the agency are summarized in Table 8.1.

Of the projects under development, the replacement of the Route 17 bridge over Mill Brook and associated improvements to the Route 100 and Route 17 intersection are the most significant. The bridge is considered deficient by VTrans due to several geometrical problems, limited capacity and severe deterioration, resulting in a low sufficiency rating of 22.2 (out of a possible rating of 100).

TABLE 8.1 SUMMARY OF STATE HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

VTrans Projects	Description	Schedule
Route 17 BR 38	Reconstruct Route 17 bridge over the Mill Brook just before the Fayston Town Line (see discussion this chapter).	not scheduled (see discussion)
Route 100 BR 181	Rehabilitate/widen bridge over small stream (adjacent to Pines Rest Area)	not scheduled
Route 100—Irasville	Construct sidewalks along Route 100 from Bragg Hill Road north to elementary school.	2006/07
Route 100—North	Reconstruction, including widening and guardrail installation, of Route 100 north from North Fayston Road intersection.	2005

Source: VT Agency of Transportation



In addition, the intersection is characterized by limited sight distance (especially the northerly approach), steep grades and significant traffic delays at peak periods. The proximity of the Bragg Hill Road intersection further exacerbates the inadequacies of the Route 100/17 intersection. Existing conditions of both the bridge and intersection are described in detail in an initial scoping report prepared by VTrans in 1999. That report also evaluates several alternative bridge replacement and intersection redesign plans. The town has long maintained that replacing the deteriorated bridge on its present alignment will lock-in an inadequate intersection design for 50-75 years.

The intersection of Route 100 and Bridge Street also raises safety concerns due to the poor site distance to the south. This problem was improved several years ago when a power pole was moved from the southeast corner of the intersection, although the adjacent building, and attached porch, still limit visibility. While options to improve intersection safety should be explored, it is important that improvements not occur at the expense of the compact, historic character of the Village.

Of lesser concern, but still noteworthy, is the proposed widening of Route 100 and associated guard-rail installation north from the North Fayston Road into Moretown. This section of highway is located within the National Register Historic District (see Chapter 4). Improvements should be carefully designed to avoid negatively impacting the scenic and historic character of the area, should not interfere with existing farming operations, and should not result in excessive traffic speeds.

Highway Maintenance. Until 1998, the regional highway maintenance facility used by VTrans to maintain Route 100 and 17 in the Mad River Valley was located adjacent to the Lareau swimhole, approximately ½ mile south of Irasville. The 1998 flood, however, accomplished what Valley towns had attempted for at least two decades—the permanent removal of the riverside maintenance facility. A more modern facil-

ity has been relocated further to the south on Route 100, in the Limited Business District. This facility should meet the state's maintenance needs for the foreseeable future.

Highway Design Standards. Until 1997, VTrans applied the American Association of Surface and Highway Transportation Organizations (AASHTO)



highway design standards to roads in the state (as did the transportation agency for each of the other 49 states). In response to growing concern that AASHTO standards were inappropriate for Vermont's small villages and rural settings, the state prepared and adopted *Vermont State Standards for the Design of Transportation Construction, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Freeways, Roads & Streets* (1997). These include standards for roads serving urban, village and rural contexts that are designed specifically for use in Vermont. The upgrade and construction of state, town and private roads in Waitsfield should be guided by these standards.

Town Roads

Waitsfield maintains nearly 37 miles of town roads, including 9.45 miles of class 2 and 20.22 miles of class 3 roads, with an additional 7.2 miles of class 4 roads. Class 2 and 3 roads are maintained for year-round



TABLE 8.2 • WAITSFIELD ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

Road(s)	Mileage	Class	Function	Aid
Route 100, 17	7.83	State	Arterial	Federal/Primary
Town Highways	9.45	2	Collector	Federal/Secondary
Town Highways	20.22	3	Local Access	Local/State
Remaining Roads	7.16	4	Access/Recreation	Local
Total Miles	44.66			

travel. Class 2 roads serve as major collectors providing access between towns. These include the North Fayston Road, Bragg Hill Road, North Road and East Warren Road. Class 3 roads are all other roads except state routes that are negotiable in all seasons. A summary of road mileage by classification and function is included in Table 8.2. In most instances, regardless of classification, the town owns a 50' right-of-way (either as an easement or in fee simple) to accommodate town roads. The town road network, including road classifications, is depicted on Map 1.

Waitsfield's roads are generally in good shape and adequate to accommodate current traffic volumes. While the town does not maintain a formal, long-term road improvement program, the Selectboard, Town Administrator and Road Commissioner have attempted to schedule road maintenance in an efficient and cost effective manner which minimizes year-to-year fluctuation in the municipal property tax rate. Three significant road improvement projects have been undertaken in recent years: the repavement of the East Warren Road in 1998, the replacement of the Butternut Hill Bridge in 1999, and the repavement of the North Road and a portion of the Tremblay Road in 2002.

In 2002 there were no major road improvement projects included in the town's capital budget and program. The Meadow Road bridge over the Mad River, however, has been identified as deficient by the Selectboard and VTrans. A plan for the rehabilitation or replacement of that bridge has not been prepared, although such a plan could be expected within the next five years.

Future Road Connections. In addition to road improvements needed to address current deficiencies, several projects have been identified as necessary to accommodate anticipated development in accordance with

this plan. In 1997, the Planning Commission and Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission contracted with consulting engineers Lamoureux, Stone & O'Leary to prepare the *Waitsfield Circulation and Access Management Plan*. That plan identified several conceptual road connections designed to provide alternative routes to distribute local traffic and thereby improve highway efficiency, to support land use goals for Irasville and Waitsfield Village, and to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.

While several of the conceptual alignments are not feasible due to site constraints, others are widely viewed as offering potential benefits to the community. These include:

- ◆ **A route connecting the Old County Road with Carroll Road to the south;**
- ◆ **Extending the Slow Road and/or Mad River Canoe Road north to Carroll Road;**
- ◆ **A connection from the new Mad River Green (Northfield Savings Bank) Road south to Bragg Hill Road;**
- ◆ **A connection from Fiddlers Green to Route 100 north of Village Square shopping center; and**
- ◆ **A road running parallel to Route 100 from the Airport Road to the Old County Road.**

It is important to note that, in most instances, specific alignments for these connections have not been identified, and in many cases potentially affected landowners have not been involved in planning for possible routes. Such connections may take the form of collector roads serving through traffic, service roads creating a grid-network in village centers, or an interconnected network of rural roads providing alternative routes for local traffic. The construction of these roads could take place in response to proposed private developments on land within the potential corridor, or through the public process of laying out and constructing town roads. Should the town choose the latter, an official map should be developed to provide a mechanism for acquiring future rights of way. Regardless of the mech-

anism used, future development should not occur in a manner that would eliminate the possibility of aligning a feasible route through designated corridors.

Class 4 Roads: Unlike other town roads, class 4 roads are not maintained for year-round travel. With important exceptions (e.g., minor portions of both Rolston Road and Old Center Fayston Road), most class 4 road mileage is located within the town's Forest Reserve District and provides recreational opportunities and access for traditional forest-based land uses (e.g., forestry, hunting). Presently, the Selectboard has three management strategies for class 4 roads: municipal winter maintenance, although not improving the road to class 3 status (Rolston Road); allowing private winter maintenance through a maintenance agreement (Palmer Hill Road); and no winter maintenance (most class 4 roads).

Year-round development on class 4 roads may result in the need for road upgrades and additional maintenance to allow for year-round use and access by emergency vehicles. It can also interfere with recreational use. Options include regulating or prohibiting year-round development requiring such access, and/or downgrading selected class 4 roads to legal trails. These options are especially important with regard to class 4 roads which access properties located in the Forest Reserve District, where road policies should be consistent with the town's land use policies. One exception to this, however, is the Rolston Road, which is located entirely within the Agricultural-Residential District and serves to link Route 100 with the East Warren Road. Maintaining this road for year-round traffic is important for ensuring access between these two areas of town, especially in the event of damage to the Waitsfield Covered Bridge and/or the Meadow Road bridge.

Road Maintenance: The maintenance of the road system is the town's second largest annual expense, next to schools. In 2003 that expense was \$468,307, with only \$64,974 (14%) of the total funded through state aid to highways. The town maintains a road department staffed with three full time employees. A current listing of road equipment maintained by the town is provided in Table 8.3. The 2004 capital improvement program includes a schedule for replacing equipment. Reserve funds have been established to fund these acquisitions. The capital improvement program also identifies the replacement of the existing salt shed—which is inadequate to meet current needs—in 2007.

TABLE 8.4 • DESIGNATED SCENIC ROADS

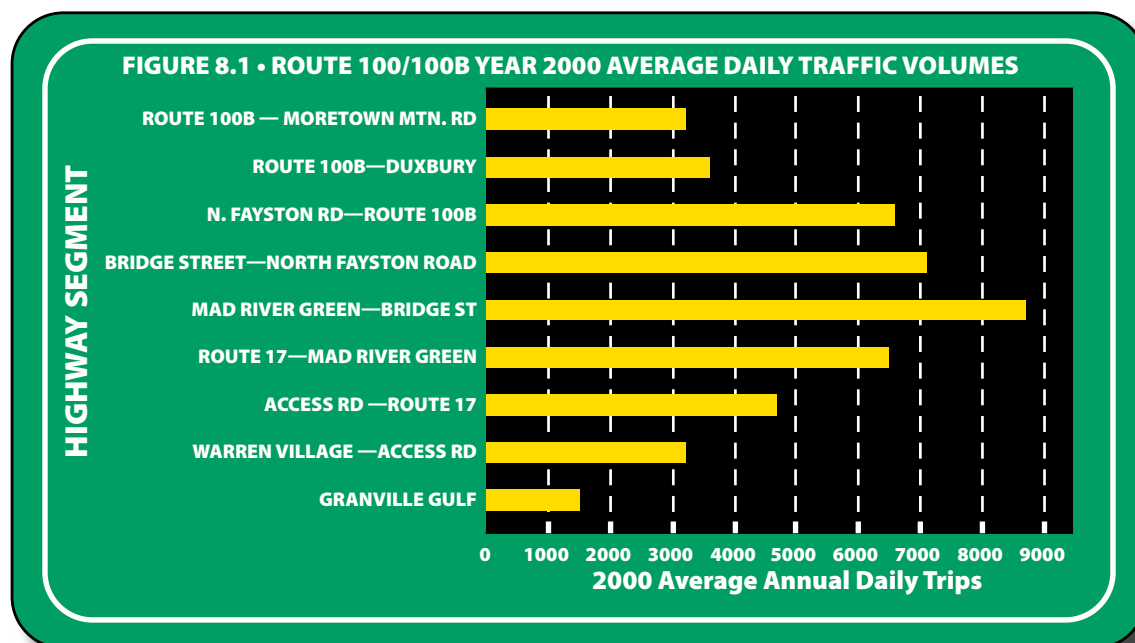
Road #	Name	Description
State Aid 1	E. Warren Rd	In its entirety
State Aid 3	North Road	In its entirety
Town Road 4	Common Road	In its entirety
Town Road 10	Floodwoods Road	In its entirety
Town Road 16	East Road	In its entirety
Town Road 20	Meadow Road	In its entirety
Town Road 26	Brook Road	In its entirety
Town Road 27	Cross Road	In its entirety
Town Road 28	Palmer Hill Rd	In its entirety
Town Road 31	Rolston Road	In its entirety
Town Road 35	Sherman Road	In its entirety
Vermont 100	Main Street	North of Waitsfield Village District to the Moretown Town Line; South of Irasville District to the Warren Town Line.

Another pressing road maintenance issue is a reliable, economical source of gravel. Should the town choose to maintain the character of its scenic roads, many of which are enhanced by gravel roads, a cost effective, long term source of local gravel must be found. Currently over \$66,000 is in a capital reserve fund to be used to option an adequate source of local gravel, should one become available. Potential gravel resources are identified on Map 6. As of the date of this plan, the Selectboard is discussing with the landowner the possible purchase of a parcel to serve as a gravel source.

Scenic Roads: Many of Waitsfield's roads have been identified as "scenic" (Table 8.4). These are also depicted on Map 7. While the reasons for designating a road as scenic are specific to each individual case,

Table 8.3 Waitsfield Road Equipment

1990 Eager Beaver Brush Chipper
1992 Caterpillar Backhoe
1994 Caterpillar Bucket Loader
1997 International Dump Truck (plow, wing)
1998 Galion Grader
2002 International (low profile) Dump Truck
2004 International Dump Truck (plow, wing)



common features that contribute to a road's scenic character, including stone walls and canopy trees, are often found within the right-of-way. As such, they are susceptible to detrimental road maintenance practices, including removal, to accommodate widening, ditching and/or paving.

Currently, no formal process exists for reviewing the potential impact of road improvements on the scenic features of a particular road. While the town's road crew has been sensitive to the scenic impact of road maintenance in the past, the lack of a formal process has resulted in some loss of significant scenic features and occasional conflicts between the town road department and town residents. A process of inventorying the features that contribute to the roads' scenic character, and the preparation of maintenance guidelines designed to protect those features, would avoid additional loss of scenic features.

Of particular relevance to the preservation of scenic roads is the question of whether existing gravel roads should be paved. This frequently involves work beyond resurfacing, including widening, ditching and upgrading the subsurface. To balance road maintenance and traffic safety needs with scenic preservation, a cost-benefit study which considers the aesthetic impacts of road improvements may be needed prior to the upgrade of a scenic road. Such analysis could be performed as part of a regular road program review.

Covered Bridges. Waitsfield maintains two covered bridges currently in use. Both are listed on the

National Register of Historic Places. The most heavily used bridge—which crosses the Mad River in Waitsfield Village—is reported to be the longest continuously used covered bridge in Vermont. Built in 1833, the Village bridge was last renovated in 2001. Given its 170 years of service—and the more than 2,000 cars which cross it on an average day—this bridge represents one of the better infrastructure investments made by the town over its long history. While much younger, the Pine Brook covered bridge (built in 1870) has provided similar value.

Private Roads

With few exceptions, roads constructed within the past 20-30 years are privately owned and maintained. This relieves the town of construction costs and long-term maintenance responsibilities; yet it is still necessary to ensure that private roads meet minimum public standards for emergency access and safety, and do not adversely affect the public road network. Standards for the development of private roads are addressed in the town's subdivision regulations. Such roads are typically maintained by a property or homeowners association, over which the town has little control. Given that public access can also be denied, the town should consider taking over private roads within designated village areas and/or where the entire community will benefit from an expansion of the town road network. Currently, the Selectboard may take over private roads provided such roads have been constructed to town standards.

TRAFFIC CONDITIONS AND SAFETY

Traffic Congestion

Waitsfield historically has been concerned about the high traffic volumes in town, especially along commercial sections of Route 100 where traffic volumes are at their highest (see Figure 8.1) The town, through the memorandum of understanding with other Valley towns and Sugarbush Resort, has attempted to control traffic at key intersections during peak weekend hours throughout the ski season with the aid of traffic control officers from the Washington County Sheriff's Department. This has been an effective traffic management practice in past years.

Another strategy to ease traffic congestion is the construction of alternative routes as discussed above. The benefits of this strategy were made apparent with the construction of the alternative access to Mad River Green shopping center in 1999, which has served to reduce congestion at the access immediately across from Irasville Common. Also, maintaining a viable transit system and improving pedestrian and bicycle circulation would reduce automobile congestion within Irasville and Waitsfield Village.

Finally, reviewing development proposals to ensure that they will not overburden the capacity of existing roads and intersections is an important traffic management tool. Generally, intersections outside of the town's villages should be maintained at a level of service (los) "C" during the design hour. A reduction to a los "D" may be appropriate in some instances within the villages. Private developers that propose projects that will exceed capacity may be required to mitigate the impact of their development and/or fund necessary improvements to increase road and intersection capacity.

Truck Traffic

Another growing controversy involving local roads is the conflict between large trucks travelling on rural town roads and the residential and scenic nature of those roads. This conflict is likely to intensify as more residential development occurs in rural sections of Waitsfield. According to the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) trip generation rates¹, every single family home can be expected to generate approximately ten automobile trips per day on adjacent roads. Therefore, not only will residential de-

velopment serve to intensify the interaction of commercial trucks and automobiles, the greatest cause of increased traffic on town roads will undoubtedly be residential development. Truck traffic, moreover, raises special issues related to greater wear on public roads and the impact on the quiet character of residential neighborhoods.

Due to load restrictions on several bridges, including both covered bridges, most truck traffic uses the Tremblay Road/North Road/Common Road/East Warren Road to access most of the town east of Route 100.

Access Management

The frequency, location and design of highway accesses—or curb cuts—has a direct bearing on the safety and efficiency of both town roads and state highways. Issues associated with access management were addressed in detail in the aforementioned Waitsfield Circulation and Access Management Plan. That plan identified several techniques for managing highway access, most of which may be applied through the town's zoning and subdivision regulations, and road policies and ordinances. These include requirements for:

- ◆ **Minimum sight distances at driveway or street intersections,**
- ◆ **Maximum number of driveways per lot,**
- ◆ **Mandatory shared driveways,**
- ◆ **Maximum curb-cut widths,**
- ◆ **Minimum and maximum driveway lengths,**
- ◆ **The installation of turning lanes,**
- ◆ **Easements to allow for future road extensions or connections to adjoining lots,**
- ◆ **Minimum or maximum on-site parking, shared-parking, and parking design,**
- ◆ **Minimum areas for loading and unloading, and**
- ◆ **Curbing, landscaping, and buffers to visually define and enhance access points.**

Approval by the Selectboard is required for access onto town roads, and by VTrans for access onto state highways. To receive approval, the access also must be consistent with local land use regulations. The Waitsfield Planning Commission has successfully applied several of the above tools through the site plan review process in recent years, especially along Route 100 in Irasville and Waitsfield Village. Continued attention to access management by the Board of Adjustment will balance the needs of motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists and improve safety and highway efficiency.

¹The ITE trip generation rates are the commonly accepted standard for projecting traffic generation from various land uses.

Traffic Calming

Techniques to maintain relatively slow traffic speeds in settled areas, enhance pedestrian safety, and improve the overall environment are often referred to as “traffic calming.” Such techniques include narrow vehicle traffic lanes, wide sidewalks, medians, on-street parking, roundabouts, raised and/or textured pedestrian crosswalks, bulb-outs, street-tree plantings and street furniture. Traffic calming is important in a variety of contexts:

- ◆ **At busy intersections where pedestrian crossings may conflict with traffic flow and turning movements,**
- ◆ **Along Main Street (Route 100) within Waitsfield and Irasville, where traffic volumes are high, but pedestrian traffic and circulation is encouraged, and**
- ◆ **Along neighborhood or rural residential roads, to reduce traffic speeds and maintain the road surface.**

The Waitsfield Street Tree Master Plan, prepared by Broadleaf Design in 2000, establishes detailed planting plans for the Route 100 corridor through Irasville and Waitsfield Village. Sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs, and on-street parking areas need to be more clearly defined in Waitsfield Village, and established in Irasville, as called for in the Irasville Master Plan currently in development. Traffic calming measures will be incorporated in the town’s sidewalk project, described below, and should be considered in any improvements to Route 100 and connecting side streets within designated village areas.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE TRAVEL

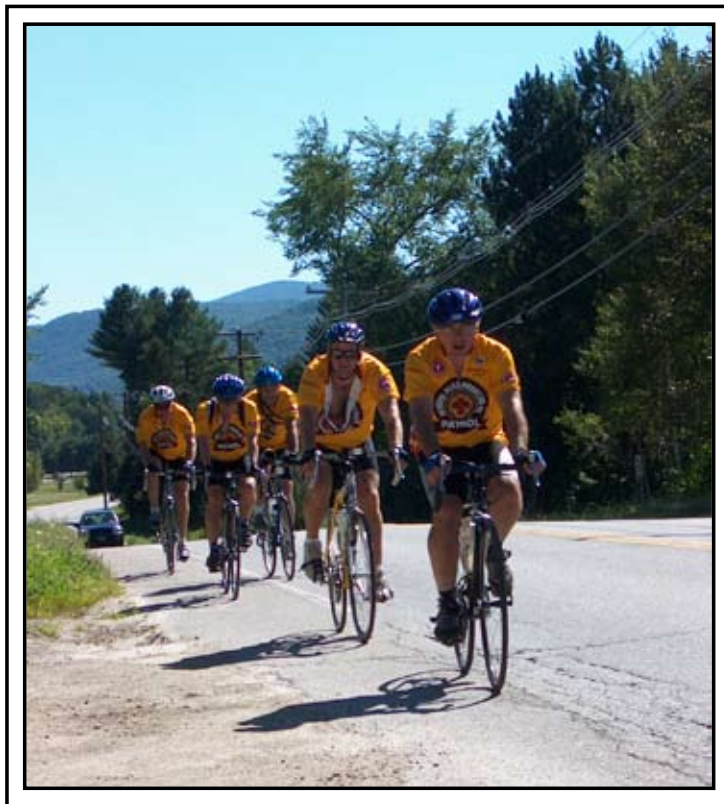
Despite the focus on the automobile, walking has been the principal mode of human transportation since the beginning of humankind. Enhancing local pedestrian—and bicycle—opportunities offers many benefits to the community. These include reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and our collective reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels, fostering healthy living, providing recreational amenities for residents and visitors and reinforcing historic, pedestrian-scale settlement patterns.

Waitsfield has encouraged efficient and safe pedestrian travel within Waitsfield Village and Irasville. In 1993, the town began planning with VTrans to upgrade and extend existing sidewalks, and to pave bicycle lanes, along Route 100 from Bragg Hill Road to the elementary school. Construction is anticipated in 2006/07. Additional extensions to link this

sidewalk with nearby commercial and residential uses should be pursued, as called for in the draft Irasville Master Plan. As Irasville develops, pedestrian facilities—including interconnecting sidewalks, and a non-motorized “greenway,” should serve as dominant organizational elements. To support this, it is important that safe pedestrian crosswalks be installed at appropriate locations along Route 100.

In addition to Irasville and Waitsfield Village sidewalks, the town holds several pathway easements and temporary licence agreements in conjunction with the Mad River Path Association. The Path Association is pursuing the establishment of an inter-connected network of walking, hiking and bicycling paths in the Mad River Valley, including a system of paths linking the Valley’s villages and schools. A key element of this network is the Mad River Greenway, a 4-5 mile long path parallel to the Mad River in Waitsfield. If extended, the Greenway could serve as an important pedestrian and bicycle connection from Waitsfield Village to Moretown Village and Harwood to the north, Fayston Elementary School and area ski resorts to the west, and Warren Village to the south.

Waitsfield also is fortunate to possess many miles of informal walking paths and trails. Class 4 roads provide excellent walking opportunities, especially in the Northfield Range where class 4 roads such as the



Bowen, Palmer Hill, East and Sherman Roads offer access to the largely undeveloped mountains. Also, the Dana Hill Road serves the Howe Block of the Camels Hump State Forest.

In addition to class 4 roads, many miles of private logging roads and trails are available to the public through the generosity of landowners. However, private roads are often at risk of being posted; public access may be prohibited as landowner-user conflicts arise. In the future the town may choose to explore the potential for formalizing many of these informal trails through the dedication of permanent easements. The continuing subdivision of land poses both a risk to this informal network and an opportunity to obtain path easements as a condition to subdivision approval. In addition, public education to discourage inconsiderate recreational use of private trails (e.g., littering, leaving gates open), is important if local residents are to continue to benefit from the generosity of landowners.

Another method of formalizing trails on private property is the use of temporary easements; a practice the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) has used with much success. The VAST network includes a number of winter-use trails along the Mad River north of Waitsfield Village, with links to the Green Mountain Range in Fayston and over Northfield Gap east of the River.

The Mad River Path Association is pursuing the creation of a permanent walking path along the Mad River to link the towns of Warren to the south with Moretown to the north. Approximately 4 miles of this pathway running north from the Tremblay Road is in place and is a widely used transportation and recreation resource. A section of this path and the parking area at the Meadow Road are protected through easements held by the town. Extending the path, through acquisition, easements or landowner agreements, from Moretown to Warren by the Path Association is encouraged.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Local Transit

Waitsfield, together with other Valley towns, has long supported the operation of an effective transit service. Between 1993 and 1998, Sugarbush Resort operated a shuttle service between Lincoln Peak and Mount Ellen. This was the only transit service avail-

able in the Valley. In 1999, the Valley “T” service was established through funding through the federal “Congestion Management & Air Quality (CMAQ) program and local sources (most significantly Sugarbush).

The Valley T (renamed Madbus in 2001), was operated by Wheels Transportation until 2002. The service was specifically designed to provide transportation options within the Valley for residents and visitors, including those lacking access to an automobile. Goals of the service include:

- ◆ **Improving links within the Valley, including transit connections between growth centers on the Valley floor (e.g., Irasville, Waitsfield Village) and the ski resorts;**
- ◆ **Improving links between the Valley and employment and residential centers in Waterbury, Montpelier and Barre;**
- ◆ **Reinforcing local land use policies of compact villages surrounded by rural countryside;**
- ◆ **Encouraging motorists to park their automobile to use alternative transportation modes; and**
- ◆ **Integrating different transportation modes by providing connections to Amtrak, Vermont Transit stops and Burlington Airport.**

Other benefits include reducing congestion on Route 100—thereby avoiding the need for costly improvements to increase highway capacity, alleviating parking demand and enhancing tourism. The 1998 Short Range Transit Plan for the Mad River Valley outlined the T service. Overall, the plan recommended 5 routes, two of which (a spine from Warren to Waitsfield and a commuter link) were year-round. The three other routes provide seasonal service to the ski resorts.

The Madbus service initially suffered from operational shortcomings of Wheels Transportation, who declined to continue in the role of operator beyond 2002. In late 2002, the Mad River Valley Planning District and Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce sought a different service provider better equipped to address local needs. With considerable assistance from VTrans, Alpha Transit of Morrisville contracted to provide the service. In addition, nine new buses were purchased by the Chamber with a combination of federal and state funds and matching contributions from Waitsfield, Warren and Fayston. The service was expanded during the 2002/2003 ski season. Through ongoing support of the Chamber and local businesses, the outlook for the Valley’s transit service is better than at any time since its inception.

Rail & Air

Amtrak passenger rail service to several New England cities, New York City and Washington D.C. is available in Waterbury Village and Montpelier. The nearest air passenger and freight services are located at the Burlington International Airport in South Burlington, and the state-owned E.F. Knapp Airport in Berlin. The Warren Airport—a private, seasonal airport in Warren used primarily for recreational purposes, including commercial soaring—also provides air transportation options.

PARKING

The town, through its zoning regulations, requires that most land uses provide off-street parking. In some areas, including some properties in Irasville, this has resulted in excessive paved area. To alleviate this, the town's zoning was revised to provide local boards with greater discretion regarding the amount of parking required. While ensuring that private developments are able to accommodate the resulting

demand for parking, greater use of shared parking facilities, including municipal lots, and on-street parking would create a more efficient development pattern. It may be appropriate to further reduce parking requirements where shared parking and/or transit service is provided.

Waitsfield Village, to a much greater degree than Irasville, has benefitted from municipal parking (adjacent to the Masonic Lodge), shared parking (Bridge Street Marketplace) and on-street parking (on Bridge Street and Route 100). Additional opportunities for public parking should be explored in Waitsfield behind the Joslin Library and Federated Church, and behind the Village Grocery on Parsonage Lane. In Irasville, greater use of on-street and shared parking, coupled with an expanded sidewalk network, should be incorporated into future master planning. In both village centers, better information signs and improved sidewalk connections would make better use of existing parking areas and reduce the need for additional parking associated with new development.

In addition to local parking needs, no formal commuter lot exists in the Valley, although several informal areas are used. The development of a safe, convenient commuter lot in an appropriate location should be explored. The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission could likely assist with this effort.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL:

To provide a safe, efficient and convenient transportation network for all Waitsfield residents, visitors and businesses.

TRANSPORTATION

POLICIES:

- 1) The town shall pursue a program of transportation planning which integrates road and infrastructure improvements with land use, housing, economic development and resource protection goals and policies, and which is coordinated with surrounding towns and the region.
- 2) Replacement of Route 17 Bridge #38 over the Mill Brook shall not occur in its present alignment. Rather, replacement of the bridge should occur concurrently with the reconstruction of the Route 100/Route 17 intersection in accordance with alternative 5 contained within the 1999 VTrans scoping report, or a variation of that alternative which results in the relocation of the intersection further to the south.
- 3) Maintenance and reconstruction of state highways' town roads and private roads constructed to accommodate new development shall be designed in accordance with the Vermont State Standards for the
- Design of Transportation Construction, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Freeways, Roads & Streets. As provided in those standards, road and highway improvement projects shall be designed in a manner that is sensitive to the setting and context of the highway segment. Improvements within village centers shall be designed in a manner that reinforces the scale and character of the village(s), promotes pedestrian circulation and safety and incorporates traffic calming.
- 4) The safety and efficiency of state highways and town roads shall be maintained through appropriate traffic control strategies and devices, including continued use of traffic control officers during peak periods provided by Sugarbush Resort during peak ski days and/or other entities during large events and activities that generate high traffic volumes.
- 5) Town roads shall be maintained and improved on an as-needed basis determined by the Selectboard and Road Commissioner. Significant capital improvements shall be scheduled in advance through the capital budgeting process.

- 6) The safety and efficiency of state highways and town roads shall be maintained through, in part, strict access management provisions administered through local land use and development regulations.
- 7) Development and land uses that would adversely impact traffic safety, the condition of town roads or over-burden road capacity shall be prohibited unless appropriate mitigating actions can be implemented.
- 8) Covered bridges shall be maintained for continued use in their present locations.
- 9) The expansion of the town's road network should occur in an integrated and coordinated manner; specific road connections, described in this plan, should be pursued by the town in conjunction with private developers. Wherever feasible and/or called for in this plan, new or expanded roads serving proposed subdivisions should be configured to provide connections to adjacent properties.
- 10) Scenic roads shall be maintained to protect, to the extent possible, those features located within the right-of-way which contribute to the roads scenic features (e.g., canopy trees, stone walls); pavement of gravel roads should only occur if necessary to ensure road safety and if no economic alternative exists.
- 11) Development within scenic road corridors shall be designed so as to protect the identified scenic features within those corridors (e.g., open fields, ridgelines and hilltops, historic structures or districts). Protection measures shall be implemented through the town's land use and development regulations.
- 12) The reclassification of Class 4 roads, or substantial upgrade to make such roads accessible to automobiles on a year-round basis, should only occur if such upgrade does not result in the loss of existing recreation values. The upgrade and/or reclassification of Class 4 roads shall not be permitted to allow year-round vehicular access and land development within the Forest Reserve District.
- 13) Irasville and Waitsfield Village should be served with an interconnected network of sidewalks and other pedestrian and bicycle paths, including incorporation of identified road and sidewalk connections into development and subdivision plans. New development shall provide such sidewalks and paths to be connected to existing or planned facilities.
- 14) The creation of an integrated walking path network—through acquisition, easements or use of landowner agreements—linking Waitsfield Village and Irasville with the Valley schools, and the village centers of Warren to the south and Moretown to the north, and other community centers and resources, including the Lareau Swimhole, Skatium and Harwood Union High School, is part of the transportation and recreation plan for Waitsfield and the Valley. To this end, the efforts of the Mad River Path Association are strongly endorsed.
- 15) The continued operation of a transit system linking Waitsfield Village and Irasville with the Valley's ski areas and regional population and employment centers should be maintained and expanded. To this end, shelters and designated stops, sidewalks and park & ride facilities within village centers should be created and/or expanded.
- 16) Safe, well marked bicycle lanes should be installed and maintained along Route 100, Route 17 and, to the extent practical, along paved class 2 town roads.
- 17) Continue to require that new development provide on-site parking in accordance with the town's zoning regulations, although the amount of parking area required should be based upon the actual demand likely to be created by the land use. Alternatives to on-site parking should be allowed in appropriate circumstances, including village centers. Such alternatives include shared and phased parking, credits for adjacent on-street parking, and payments in lieu of parking to fund public parking areas in the vicinity of the site.
- 18) Explore, with appropriate landowners, the creation of a municipal parking lot in Waitsfield Village behind the Federated Church/Joslin Library, off Parsonage Lane and/or other appropriate locations.
- 19) Continue to coordinate transportation planning with other Valley municipalities and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.
- 20) Landowners likely to be affected by major transportation construction projects should be involved early in the project planning process.



TRANSPORTATION TASKS:

- 1) Continue regional transportation planning through the Mad River Valley Planning District and Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. *[Planning Commission, TAC representative, town MRVPD representatives, Selectboard]*
- 2) Prepare and adopt an official map which depicts future road and sidewalk connections as outlined in this plan. *[Planning Commission]*
- 3) Continue to plan for the regular replacement of road maintenance equipment through the capital budget and program, and reserve funds. *[Selectboard]*.
- 4) Acquire a long-term source of gravel, including the possible purchase and operation of a municipal gravel pit, in accordance with applicable local and state regulations. *[Selectboard]*
- 5) In conjunction with Sugarbush Resort, review on an annual basis the need for traffic control officers and/or devices during peak traffic periods at the Route 100/Route 17 intersections and the entrance to Mad River Green and Village Square shopping centers. *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*
- 6) Continue to regulate traffic access, circulation and parking for all proposed non-residential land uses through conditional use and subdivision review. *[Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment]*
- 7) Require, through conditional use review and/or subdivision review, that new private roads meet the town's road standards. *[Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment]*
- 8) Complete the planned construction of the Route 100 sidewalk, and plan for the extension of the sidewalk and path network in Irasville and Waitsfield and connected to neighboring communities. *[Planning Commission, MRVPD representatives, Selectboard, Mad River Path Association*]*
- 9) Through curb cut permits and subdivision regulations, continue to require that all new roads and all private road and driveway intersections with Town roads meet minimum safety and design standards. *[Selectboard, Road Commissioner, Planning Commission]*
- 10) Prepare a scenic road inventory and subsequent scenic road maintenance and improvement plans for specific road segments. *[Planning Commission]*
- 11) Work with other Valley towns, CVRPC and VTrans to ensure that the function of Route 100 as a primary arterial is not diminished and that corridor issues are addressed in a cooperative manner. *[Planning Commission, Town TAC representative, Selectboard]*
- 12) Develop a clear class 4 road policy which identifies under what circumstances such roads may be upgraded, maintained and/or reclassified in accordance with the policies set forth above. *[Selectboard, Planning Commission]*
- 13) Encourage, through the subdivision review process, the dedication of easements to permanently protect pathways and trail connections for non-motorized use. *[Planning Commission]*
- 14) Work to ensure that the Valley transit system, initiated in 1999, is continued and expanded as needed. To this end, other policies and tasks which support the transit system, such as reinforcing compact growth centers, creating adequate parking areas (to serve as park and ride facilities) and improving pedestrian opportunities, should be pursued in an integrated manner. *[Planning Commission, Town TAC representative, MRVPD*, Selectboard]*
- 15) Review proposed road and highway improvement projects and encourage the incorporation of dedicated bicycle lanes wherever possible. *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*
- 16) Evaluate truck circulation within the community and consider policies or actions to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts, including designated truck routes and regulating the use of Jake (engine) brakes. *[Road Commissioner, Selectboard]*
- 17) Conduct a parking study of Waitsfield Village and Irasville to evaluate improvements to parking management (e.g., directional signs, dedicated employee parking areas), the need for additional public parking, opportunities for on-street parking, and parking standards under zoning. *[Planning Commission]*
- 18) Notify potentially affected landowners in instances in which major transportation projects, including road connections outlined in this plan, are being planned.
- 19) Prepare and implement a traffic calming plan for Waitsfield Village and Irasville *[Planning Commission, Selectboard, Tree Board]*

*Participation strongly encouraged

9. Community Facilities & Services



A primary purpose of this plan is to identify services currently available to town residents, evaluate the effectiveness of the town and other providers in delivering those services, anticipate future demands, and assess whether those demands can be met efficiently. Waitsfield residents enjoy a range of services and facilities, including an efficient municipal government, excellent emergency services, access to a variety of social, recreation and health-care services, and state of the art telecommunications infrastructure. Despite the wide range of excellent services available, the town faces several challenges regarding specific facilities and services.

The lack of municipal water and sewer hinders efforts to foster a compact settlement pattern, which can result in sprawl and a corresponding loss of the town's rural character. The local education system, despite maintaining a high standard of quality (especially K–6), is stressed by a growing tax burden under Act 60 that threatens the town's ability to fund necessary programs (Local Education is addressed in Chapter 10). And, continued growth in the community will require an ongoing assessment and upgrade of specific facilities. These issues are addressed in detail on the next pages.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Town Administration

Waitsfield is governed by a five-member Selectboard elected to staggered terms by the voters. The Selectboard is responsible for preparing the town's budget, setting policy, and administering town finances and a variety of related duties. The Selectboard is staffed by a full-time Town Administrator who assists with town administration and supervision, and serves as the day to day contact person for local citizens. Town staff also includes a full time Town Clerk and Treasurer, elected by the voters, and an Assistant Clerk hired by the Town Clerk. The Clerk and Town Administrator maintain regular hours in the town offices located on the first floor of the Joslin Library. A description of the office and related issues is provided below.

Like most small Vermont communities, Waitsfield is heavily dependent upon volunteers to fulfill many governmental duties. In addition to members of the Selectboard—who receive a nominal stipend for their long hours of service—several dozen local residents are elected or appointed to serve on boards and committees, and to represent Waitsfield on regional organizations. This dedication and sense of duty helps define our community, and keeps local institutions open and accessible.

One group of local citizens not typically represented in municipal government is non-voting youth. An opportunity to engage the town's youth in community affairs is to appoint local high school students to serve on one or more local boards as an ex officio (non-voting) member. This concept was supported by 66.4% of recent survey respondents.

Town Planning

Waitsfield has an active land use planning and community development program that dates back—at least—to the late 1960s when the first municipal plan was developed. Most planning functions were—and still are—carried out by a volunteer Planning Commission appointed by the Selectboard. When zoning regulations were first adopted, they were administered by a part-time zoning administrator who was reimbursed through permit application fees. The Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment,

also comprised of appointed volunteers, are responsible for much of the regulatory oversight of the regulations. Both bodies are assisted by a full-time Zoning Administrator, who is responsible for the administration and enforcement of local regulations, in addition to supporting the commission and board with their activities.

With the formation of the Mad River Valley Planning District (MRVPD)—comprised of Waitsfield, Fayston and Warren—in the mid-1980s, the Commission was able to augment its planning capacity with professional assistance. In the 1990s, increasing development pressure and growing complexity of local regulations prompted the town to make zoning and planning administration more consistent. Today, the town continues to participate in the MRVPD and use the services of its Executive Director, as well as outside consulting services on a project specific basis.

Government Finance

In Vermont, the principal mechanism for funding local government is the property tax. While certain types of outside assistance are available (including state highway aid, fees for services, miscellaneous special purpose grant programs—the primary state aid program), approximately 80% of Waitsfield's annual budget (excluding education, which is addressed in Chapter 10) is funded through the local property tax. It should be noted, however, that non-tax revenues consistently made up a relatively high percentage (20% or more) of Waitsfield's revenues for several years. This is due, in part, to an aggressive effort on the part of town government to identify and secure alternative revenue sources, such as grants, to fund specific projects.

Figure 9.1 shows annual municipal expenditures between 1996 and 2002. Both actual expenditures and expenditures adjusted for inflation are included. Education expenditures—by far the greatest municipal expense—are not included in the figure (see Chapter 10). The town has maintained a relatively stable budget for the past several years.

Waitsfield's municipal expenditures are generally higher than in neighboring communities, however, due partly to the town's function as the Valley's commercial center and the high level of service provided

by local government. In addition, the town does not enjoy as large a grand list (i.e. property wealth) as neighboring Fayston and Warren, nor large non-tax revenue sources such as those provided the town of Moretown in exchange for hosting the WSI landfill. As a result, Waitsfield's effective municipal tax rate (\$0.415) is higher than in most neighboring communities (see Figure 9.2). This, coupled with steep tax increases to fund local education, and related pressure to reduce municipal taxes, will limit the town's ability to maintain existing services, much less fund new initiatives, in coming years.

Capital Budget & Program

To limit fluctuations in town expenditures, thereby stabilizing tax rates, the town has adopted a capital budget and program on an annual basis for the past 20 years. The capital budget and program is a planning tool to help the town anticipate future capital expenditures and to schedule them so to avoid sharp increases in the tax rate during any one year. When combined with a capital reserve fund, the town may spread capital costs over a number of years, further stabilizing the municipal budget. It is also a mechanism for considering capital expenditures in the context of this Plan to ensure that budget decisions are consistent with the town's planning goals. The 2003 capital budget and program is included as an appendices to the Plan.

With regard to the town's capital reserve funds—which have been used effectively over the years—the town should always consider the appropriate balance between savings and indebtedness when making capital purchases. Interest rates on long term borrowing are at their lowest point in two generations. This—coupled with rapidly appreciating land costs in

town—presents an opportunity for the town to take advantage of low interest rates by bonding for key investments—such as acquisition of land for needed public facilities, conservation, recreation, housing and/or economic development.

Town Properties

The town owns several properties used for a variety of civic, recreation, conservation and cultural purposes. The following is a partial list of town properties and a description of relevant considerations related to each.

Joslin Library/Town Office. The town office is located on the first floor of the Joslin Library. The building has undergone several renovations in recent years, including exterior repairs and interior improvements in the library. Town office space is occupied by administrative offices, including the Town Clerk's office, meeting space and the vault housing the town's property records. Space in the building has become increasingly tight. The most pressing problem is

Figure 9.1 • Waitsfield Municipal Budget

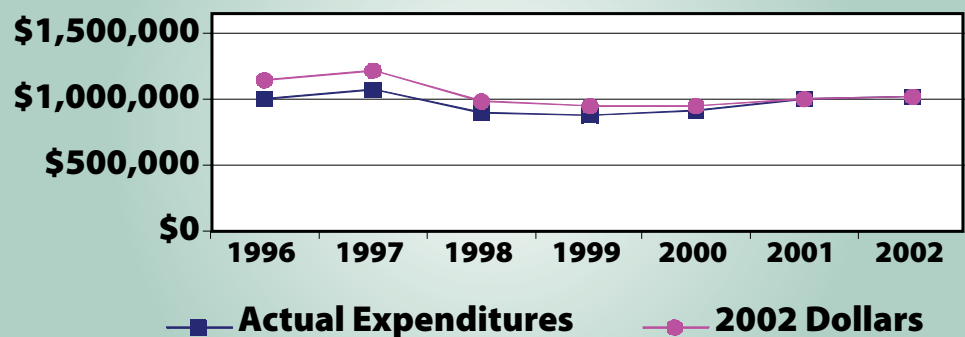
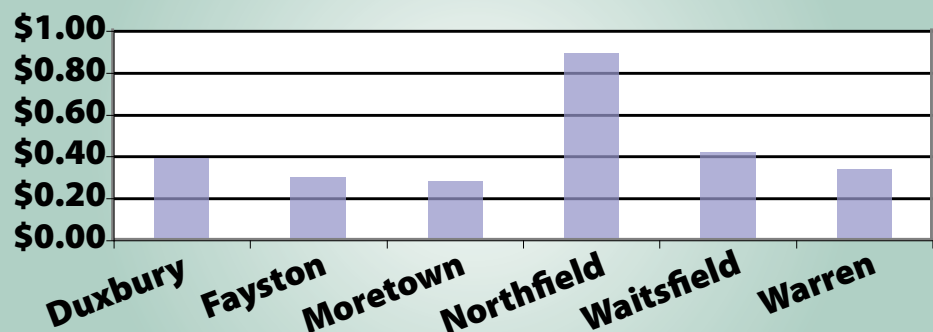


Figure 9.2 • 2002 Municipal Effective Tax Rates



limited vault space, which is projected to reach capacity within the next three years. In addition, storage and work space for staff is limited, and attendance at public meetings of more than 12-15 people typically requires attendees to occupy office areas and/or to stand in hallways.

It is uncertain whether the library building could be expanded to accommodate additional vault and work space. If an expansion could physically be accommodated, it would need to be carefully designed to avoid damage to the building's historic character. Other options include relocating to an existing building in Waitsfield Village, possibly adjacent to the General Wait House or in an existing Village building, or constructing a new facility elsewhere in Waitsfield Village or Irasville. Whatever the option, it is clear that planning should begin in the near future, with the goal of providing adequate office and vault space within Waitsfield Village or Irasville within the next 3-5 years.

An important consideration in planning for a new town office is the historic (pre-1950's) practice of designing civic structures to reflect the values of the community. A new town office should serve as a community focal point and convey a sense of permanence, pride of place and respect for tradition, while at the same time incorporating necessary elements of function and efficiency. The offices should also be centrally located to encourage community interaction.

General Wait House. The historic General Wait House—the original home of Waitsfield's founder, Benjamin Wait—was purchased in 1995. Funded

with the assistance of an “enhancement grant” from VTrans and private donations raised by the Waitsfield Historical Society, the building accommodates display space for the Historical Society, a visitor center operated by the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce, public restrooms, community meeting space, and office space for local service providers.

The main house was restored to serve the aforementioned functions; the attached barns were only stabilized and remain in need of restoration. Preliminary plans for the restoration include expanded display space for the Historical Society, and additional space for larger community meetings and functions than can be accommodated within the main house. Not only should the restoration provide a worthwhile community service, it should improve the outward appearance of the building and enhance the northern gateway to Waitsfield Village.

Waitsfield-Fayston Fire Department. (See Public Safety below).

Town Garage. The town's highway department, discussed in Chapter 8, is housed in a garage located off the Tremblay Road, near its intersection with North Road. Built in 1986 after a fire destroyed the previous garage, the garage is located on a 10.8 acre parcel. The current facility is adequate to meet anticipated needs, and the parcel can accommodate expansion should it become necessary.

Town Cemeteries (See below)

Other Properties. The town owns several parcels used for conservation, recreation and other community uses. These parcels (summarized in Table 9.1) are described in appropriate sections of this plan. In some instances, stewardship of these properties is the responsibility of a specific board or commission (e.g., cemeteries). In others, however, the responsibility falls to the Selectboard. With regard to those parcels used for recreation and conservation, the Waitsfield Conservation Commission, established in March 2003 by town voters, could assume the responsibility of preparing management plans for the use and sustainable stewardship of these properties.

Town/Village Green: With the exception of a small park adjacent to the Joslin Library, and the two undeveloped commons located at the intersections of the Common, Joslin Hill and East Roads, the community lacks a central common or green in a location

**TABLE 9.1 Town Properties
(excluding buildings & cemeteries)**

Scrag Forest/ Joslyn Parcel

- ◆ Lareau Swimhole/Austin Parcel
- ◆ Munn Field
- ◆ Brook Road Parcel
- ◆ Eclipse Theater Pond
- ◆ LeClair Parcel
- ◆ Tardy Parcel
- ◆ Neill/Woliner Trail Easement
- ◆ Lawton Trail Easement
- ◆ Dowdel/Cohen Easement

appropriate for community gatherings. Such a green could serve as a central focal point in Irasville as that area develops (see Chapter 12), and/or could serve as an organizing feature in the event land in the Village Residential District is developed in coming years.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Law Enforcement

The Vermont State Police and the Washington County Sheriff's Department are responsible for law enforcement in the Mad River Valley. The State Police operate out of the Middlesex Barracks located on Route 2 in Middlesex, and are primarily responsible for all law enforcement matters in our area, particularly major criminal investigations.

Waitsfield has contracted with the Washington County Sheriff's Department for local police coverage for the past fifteen years. The goals of this program are to enforce traffic safety and provide emergency response services. In 2003, the town contracted for 16 hours of local patrol by a deputy sheriff per week, which is augmented by cross-coverage through a similar contract between the County Sheriff and the Town of Warren. To support this program, the town maintains a police cruiser purchased in 2003. The annual cost of this service in 2002 was \$29,751, which was offset by \$27,265 in associated revenues (e.g., traffic fines, mileage for out-of-town calls).

The local patrol is widely viewed as a cost effective way in which to provide police protection without the burden of a local police department. A major reason for its success is the community's good fortune to have a locally elected constable and town resident serve as the primary sheriff's deputy staffing the program. This has undoubtedly contributed to the excellent service—and common sense and respect for local residents—that the sheriff's department has provided. In the event of a staffing change, which is anticipated to occur in the coming year, it will be important that the town and sheriff's department staff the position with a deputy who can maintain the high standards and dedication to the community that Waitsfield has come to expect.

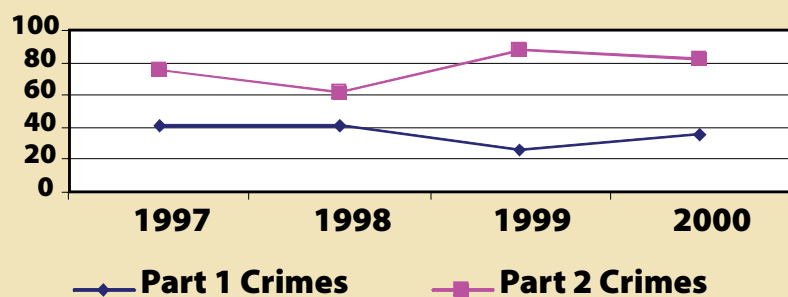
Sugarbush Resort also has an annual agreement with the sheriff's department to assist with traffic control

during the ski season and special events. Officers direct traffic at the intersection of Route 100 and Route 17. Similar traffic control services have been required for large special events, which are typically a condition of a special event's permit issued by the Selectboard under the Special Events Ordinance. This program ensures that traffic safety is maintained during periods of uncharacteristic high traffic.

While it is impossible to draw a correlation between the level of police coverage and crime rates, Figure 9.3 indicated the extent to which the number of crimes in Waitsfield has remained relatively stable in recent years¹. In 2000, the number of crimes per thousand Waitsfield residents was 26.6 "part 1" crimes and 49.3 "part 2" crimes. This compares favorably with crime rates for Washington County as a whole, which in 2000 had experienced 32.1 Part 1 crimes and 100.1 Part 2 crimes per thousand county residents, respectively. Part 1 crimes in Waitsfield in 2000 were limited to burglaries and larceny, while the majority of part 2 crimes committed were drunken driving, vandalism and family disputes.

One likely cause of the consistently low crime rate in Waitsfield is the strong sense of community that

Figure 9.3
Town of Waitsfield Crime Statistics - 1997-2000



exists. In many respects, a strong community is the best deterrent to crime. As the town grows it will be critical that it not develop in a way that serves to isolate community members or create barriers to local institutions, that options for civil interaction are provided, a strong sense of place is fostered, and that development is guided to reinforce traditional land use patterns—including attractive, pedestrian-scale villages—and maintain a clean, healthy environment.

¹"Part 1" crimes include homicide, rape, aggravated assault, arson and larceny. "Part 2" crimes are of a relatively less serious nature, including forgery, vandalism and drug and alcohol offenses.

Waitsfield-Fayston Fire Department

Fire protection services are currently provided by the Waitsfield-Fayston Volunteer Fire Department. The department covers both Waitsfield and Fayston and maintains a mutual assistance agreement with other nearby fire departments. Fayston funds 40% of the annual operating and capital costs of the department. This 60/40 split was determined by the approximate percentage of responses within each town. In addition to the funding agreement, many Fayston residents serve as volunteers. As both towns grow, the breakdown of calls should be monitored to ensure that funding remains fairly allocated.

Presently, 21 active volunteers (2 of whom completed training in 2002) serve as fire fighters—fewer than were active ten years ago. Volunteers are reimbursed a nominal fee for time spent on emergency responses; however, the bulk of time spent on administration, training and maintenance is voluntary. While the number of volunteers is adequate to maintain the excellent level of service presently provided, the number of volunteers should be monitored and additional fire fighters actively recruited.

Major equipment, which is maintained in the fire station located adjacent to the General Wait House in Waitsfield Village, includes a new (2003) 1,000 gallon International pumper, a 1987 Ford pumper, a 1982 GMC tanker and a 2000 Chevrolet van. A 1943 Ford Model A pumper is also maintained which symbolizes the department's years of dedicated service to the community. Annual contributions to a reserve fund are made toward future equipment replacement, although no major expenditures are included in the current capital budget and program.



From 1997 through 2001 the department averaged 47 calls per year, although 2001 saw the highest number of calls (60) during that period. In addition to emergency response, the department has emphasized fire prevention and education. The past performance of the fire department has been exceptional, and there is no reason to believe that performance will change in the coming years.

Ambulance & Rescue Services

The Mad River Valley Ambulance Service has been providing emergency medical care since 1971. The ambulance service, organized as a non-profit corporation, provides 24-hour service to residents and visitors of the Mad River Valley. The service operates from a Waitsfield Village facility purchased by the service in 2001. The facility—a former auto-repair garage—was purchased, renovated and equipped through a combination of private donations and one-time \$15,000 contributions from Valley towns. In addition to providing four garage bays, space is available for equipment storage, administrative offices and meeting and training facilities. New facilities include an emergency generator, base station radio and 25-pair phone cable so that the building is equipped to serve as an emergency disaster center.

Rescue equipment currently in use includes three fully equipped ambulances, a rescue/extraction vehicle (not used for transport) that carries heavy equipment, a “mass-accident” trailer, off-road rescue equipment, a dispatch radio and field radios, as well as a substantial amount of emergency medical equipment. The service has grown considerably over the years to meet the needs of the growing community.



Since 1983 the annual number of calls has increased by 81%, from 244 to 441 in 2002. The average first responder response time is 7 minutes, while the ambulance response time is less than 17 minutes. One reason for such a fast response time is the local dispatch service which notifies volunteers in scattered locations around the Valley of a call. Since the late 1990's, E-911 emergency response service has been available in the Valley.

SOLID WASTE

The management and disposal of solid waste is a growing challenge due largely to rampant materialism, excessive packaging and the prevalence of disposable consumer goods. This is exacerbated by the high cost of disposal—from both a financial and environmental standpoint. Efforts to reduce the amount of waste before it enters the waste stream, and recycle the broadest range of waste in a cost-effective manner, will become increasingly important as population increases.

Waitsfield is a member of the Mad River Solid Waste Alliance. The Alliance is a six-town district formed through an inter-local agreement in 1994. Other member towns are Duxbury, Fayston, Moretown, Warren and Waterbury. The Alliance is responsible for the preparation and adoption of a Solid Waste Implementation Plan, which is required under the state's solid waste law. That plan expired in 2002 and an updated plan was submitted to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources for review and approval in 2003. That review is still pending as of the date of this plan.

A representative and alternate from each town serves on the Alliance Board. The Board meets bi-monthly to set policy, determine programs and oversee the activities of a part-time administrator. A per capita assessment is charged to cover administrative and program costs (\$1.75 for the past four years). Additional funding is provided by Waste Systems International, Inc. (WSI), which operates a landfill in Moretown. WSI funds the Alliance's education programs and a portion of the hazardous waste drop-off events, which comprise approximately 40% of the Alliance's budget.

Free disposal of appliances, tires, and collected roadside trash is also provided in association with annual Alliance-sponsored events such as Green Up Day, Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days,

and tire collections. The Alliance works with the Association of Vermont Recyclers, and is a member of the Northeast Resource Recovery Association, which helps market some recyclable commodities.

Hauling, recycling and landfill services are provided under agreement with WSI. Trash collection services also are provided by other private haulers. As the "host district" for the WSI landfill, local residents can bring their recyclables to the Moretown facility at no charge. A regional transfer facility operates in Waitsfield's Limited Business District, providing area residents with a convenient solid waste disposal site as well as a place to recycle materials. The transfer station, which is privately owned and operated, was recently acquired by Casella Waste Management, Vermont's largest private solid waste operator. It appears that the transfer station is profitable, although should that change the Valley would be without a convenient disposal facility.

The WSI landfill has capacity to continue operation through 2005. Plans exist to open a third cell at the landfill which would extend its life through 2010, although it is not certain whether the third cell can receive all necessary permits. In the event the landfill closes in 2006, locally generated solid waste will need to be disposed outside of the district (some local haulers already truck trash out of the district). The Alliance is addressing the impact of a closure of the WSI facility in the updated solid waste plan.



SEWAGE DISPOSAL & WATER SUPPLY

Sewage Disposal

Municipal Wastewater Treatment. Currently, all of the town's sewage disposal needs are addressed by individual on-site systems. Lacking a central waste water collection and treatment facility, town officials have studied the feasibility of developing such a facility to serve the high density portions of town, especially Irasville and Waitsfield Village.

Over 41% of the respondents to the 2002 community survey either agreed or strongly agreed that a sewer facility is needed, although a fairly large percentage (35.3%) had no opinion on the matter. This is likely due to the many uncertainties regarding the cost and funding of such a facility.

In 1999, the town secured funding from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' (VANR) revolving fund to study the feasibility of developing a municipal wastewater disposal facility to serve Irasville and, possibly, Waitsfield Village. As a result of preliminary analysis, the town purchased a 12.2 acre parcel ("Munn" site) located south of Irasville for \$126,000 in November, 2000.

Subsequent to the acquisition of the Munn site, the town's consulting engineer continued to explore the feasibility of a wastewater system. While the Munn site appears adequate to dispose of up to 87,000 gallons per day (gpd) of treated waste, no additional sites with significant disposal capacity have been identified. Further exploration may identify additional sites, however, and potential exists to supplement disposal to the Munn site with coordinated management of other existing or potential scattered on-site systems.

Based upon initial estimates, a collection system and treatment facility to serve Irasville (with capacity of up to 87,000 gpd) will cost between \$4 and \$6 million. This cost estimate is, however, very preliminary. The Selectboard is presently exploring funding options for such a facility, including grants from a variety of state and federal sources. It would not be uncommon for 50% of the project costs to be covered through such programs. The remainder of the cost would likely be funded by the town through a 20 year bond. Debt service on the bond could be repaid through a combination of user fees and local tax dollars, although over 80% of the respondents to the community survey indicated that such a system should be funded by users.

Should a municipal system become a practical reality, it will be important that the allocation of available capacity be coordinated with other policies of this plan so that the system reinforces—rather than undermines—land use, housing and economic development goals of the town. Most importantly, service areas should correspond with designated growth center boundaries, and allocation policies should foster the type and rate of development desired by the community.

On-Site Disposal. It is important to note that a central collection and treatment system is only intended to serve designated growth centers. New and existing development outside of Irasville and, possibly, Waitsfield Village will continue to be served by on-site in ground disposal. In 2002 the Vermont Legislature amended the state's on-site septic rules to require all new development, regardless of lot size, to meet state septic system standards. This effectively eliminated the "10 acre loophole," which exempted lots greater than 10 acres from any design standards.

The new standards also allow for a number of "alternative" septic system designs which allow for the placement of septic systems on land that could not have met the previous standards. As a result of the rule changes, on-site disposal systems may now be located on hundreds of acres in Waitsfield previously unsuitable for on-site systems (see Map 5).

Water Supply

In addition to a municipal wastewater facility, the Selectboard has also explored the creation of a municipal water system through 0% interest loans from the VANR. As with suitable sewage disposal sites, the town has had difficulty identifying a suitable water supply within close proximity to the village centers. Several options exist, including piping water from known sources of groundwater located to the east of the villages, constructing a filtration system to use shallow-source groundwater associated with the Mad River, or consolidating existing community water supplies into a coordinated system.

Preliminary cost estimates indicate that a water system may cost approximately \$4,000,000, about two-thirds the cost of a wastewater system. And, many of the same issues related to funding a wastewater system also apply to a water system. The potential successes of a wastewater system—especially one that involves managed on-site disposal areas in Irasville—will

depend upon the installation of a water system and associated elimination of multiple source protection areas. For a discussion of groundwater resources, and the protection of those areas, see Chapter 3.

As with municipal sewer, the administration of a water system should be coordinated with other plan policies, including the establishment of a service area(s) corresponding to designated growth center boundaries.

Cemeteries

Waitsfield owns and maintains four cemeteries:

- ◆ **Irasville Cemetery, on Route 100 in Irasville;**
- ◆ **Village/Mill Cemetery, on Bridge Street just east of Waitsfield Village;**
- ◆ **General Wait Cemetery, behind the fire station in Waitsfield Village; and**
- ◆ **Common Cemetery adjacent to Waitsfield Common.**

The Waitsfield Cemetery Commission, a five member elected board, is the body responsible for the maintenance and management of the cemeteries. The town is fortunate that, due to decisions of current and past cemetery commissioners, Waitsfield has a perpetual care fund that is among the largest in Vermont. That fund is managed by a three member Board of Trustees who coordinates cemetery finances with the Commission. Due to the large endowment, and the Commission's careful management, each of

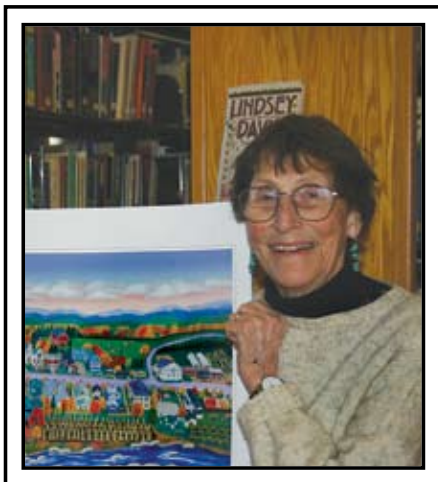
the four cemeteries is exceptionally well maintained on an ongoing basis.

Capacity exists in each of the cemeteries, although space is limited in all but the Common Cemetery (which was expanded with the purchase of nearly an acre in the early 1990s). Total remaining capacity, however, is approximately 600 spaces. In light of ongoing development pressure and the limited availability of suitable land, additional space may be required within the next 5 to 10 years to ensure that space will be available to serve future generations. Although expansion potential is limited for most of the cemeteries, such expansion would be most efficient to maintain on an ongoing basis. If expansion is not feasible, the establishment of a new cemetery might be required, although it should be located in proximity to one of the other four.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Joslin Memorial Library

The Joslin Memorial Library, located in Waitsfield Village, is administered by a five member Board of Trustees elected by town voters. A private organization, Friends of the Joslin Library, provides support on a regular basis. A part time librarian maintains library hours Monday through Saturday. Library staff is supplemented by a dedicated group of volunteers who perform a variety of tasks. Without these volunteers, the high level of service library patrons have grown accustomed to would suffer.



The library serves approximately 900 regular patrons from Fayston and Waitsfield, in addition to a large number of visitors and transients. The library houses over 9,700 books, supplemented by an interlibrary loan program with other libraries in the state. In 2002, annual circulation was approximately 16,500, which reflects a doubling in circulation over the past 10 years.

With the initial support of a private foundation grant, the library added a part-time children's librarian in 2000 which enabled the library to expand children's programs. These programs include a pre-school story hour, a Saturday reading program for school-aged children in addition to a summer program. The library also provides internet access, a large collection of audio book tapes, home book delivery for elderly and disabled residents and, also with support of a foundation grant, a newly expanded adult program.

In addition to private fundraising and income from various endowments, a large portion of the Library's operating costs are provided by the towns of Fayston and Waitsfield. In 2003 Fayston budgeted \$4,600 for operations and Waitsfield provided \$8,400. Waitsfield also leases the bottom floor of the library for town offices, which provided a much needed \$19,100 of income to the library.

Because the town has outgrown existing office space, it is likely that an alternate location for a larger facility will be considered in the coming years. Should a relocation occur, the library would be able to expand to provide additional storage and reading space. It would also provide limited handicapped accessibility, which is severely restricted today. When efforts to study town office space needs are initiated, a corresponding analysis of library space options should also occur. As stated above, the reason the town offices may be relocated is a lack of space—not due to the physical condition of the building. In fact, with the support of several state and foundation grants, the library has undertaken several maintenance projects in recent years which leave the building in good condition.

Recreation

The Mad River Valley offers a rich variety of recreation opportunities to year-round residents, seasonal home owners and visitors. A brief inventory of available facilities includes two major downhill ski areas; two cross country skiing facilities; an eighteen-hole

golf course; over sixty tennis courts; an airport offering gliding; a relatively clean river system suitable for fishing, paddling and swimming (the Mad River has been identified as one of Vermont's premiere swimming resources); several riding stables; and miles of trails, footpaths and old logging roads, including the four mile long Mad River Greenway in Waitsfield. Despite these many opportunities, only limited resources exist for formal or organized recreational pursuits, including youth sports leagues and services.

Public Facilities: Public recreation facilities in Waitsfield are limited, although in recent years the town has expanded the number and type of facilities available. Existing facilities include:

- ◆ **Ballfields and recreation facilities located at the Waitsfield Elementary School**, which are available for public use during non-school hours and the summertime. These facilities are limited, however, and do not presently meet state educational facility standards. There may be an opportunity in the future to acquire adjacent land in the floodplain for expansion.
- ◆ **Scrag Town Forest** consists of 360 acres acquired by the Town in 1991 (see Chapter 4). The forest offers backcountry recreation opportunities, although access is presently restricted. Efforts to secure permanent trail access from the north (Bowen Road) and/or south (Palmer Hill Road) should be pursued.
- ◆ **The Lareau Swimhole Park**, that was constructed with the assistance of a VTrans enhancement grant in 2003—in addition to two adjacent parcels (former Austin and former Tardy properties)—that provides less formal access to the Mad River.
- ◆ **The Mad River Greenway**—an extremely popular five mile grass path along the Mad River north of the Tremblay Road. The Greenway is maintained through a partnership between the Town, the Mad River Path Association, and landowners. Similar partnerships maintain a Village path network. This network could form the core of what could eventually be a single pathway linking Irasville with Warren Village to the south and the Fayston Elementary School to the west, and linking Waitsfield Village with Moretown Village and Harwood High School to the north.
- ◆ **An assortment of additional easements and license agreements** for trails and paths around town, although an extensive, integrated network has not been completed. Through continued partnerships with the Path Association and landowners, such a network could be developed in the future. In addition to trails, Class 4 Roads which are not maintained for year-round travel also provide recreational access, especially in the Forest Reserve District.

Private Not-for-Profit Facilities: Another facility open to the public is the Couples Club, an eight acre multi-purpose field located in the floodplain of the Mad River in Irasville which offers two baseball fields, a small pavilion and river access. The property is managed by the Couples Club, a private organization, and is exempted from property taxes by the Town of Waitsfield on an annual basis. The Valley Little League has entered into a long term lease with the Couples Club to ensure it will remain available for youth baseball.

The Skatium, an outdoor skating facility is located in Irasville and maintained by a not-for-profit organization. The Skatium has artificial ice and a Zamboni, but is susceptible to weather conditions due to the lack of a cover. The Skatium organization has identified enclosing the facility as a priority, which should be encouraged concurrent with efforts to improve the area's appearance, especially during non-winter months.

Several miles of winter trails for skiers and snow-machines are maintained by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) on private land in Waitsfield and surrounding towns. Part of an extensive statewide network, the local trails are maintained by the local VAST chapter—the Mad River Ridge Runners.

Recreation Programs and Planning: Waitsfield presently does not have an active recreation committee or board and does not offer any recreation programs. However, the town, together with Fayston and Warren, formed the Mad River Valley Recreation District in 1993. The purpose of the Recreation District was to support local recreation facilities and programs, and to identify and pursue opportu-

nities to expand existing facilities or create new facilities. The District has provided funds to improve the Couples Club fields and the Brooks Recreation Fields in Warren, in addition to providing support to other private non-profit recreation organizations such as the Skatium. In 1995 the District attempted to purchase land north of Waitsfield Village to establish recreation fields, although that effort was defeated by voters of each of the three member towns. A key reason for that defeat was the sites location and distance from town centers.

Health Care

For several years, the primary local source of health care has been the Mad River Valley Health Center in Waitsfield Village. The Health Center, which was created in 1981, is owned by a non-profit board which was initially formed to attract a doctor to serve the Valley. The facility is leased to a single physician who, together with nursing and administrative staff, provides general family medical care to Valley residents. In 1996 the Center was designated a Rural Health Clinic, which enhances the services to area Medicaid and Medicare patients.

The Health Center has been supported by small annual contributions from Waitsfield, Fayston and Warren for several years. In 2002, the Health Center Board began to explore options for expanding the small and outdated facility. The most promising option is to construct a new facility on the existing site. At this time, the Board is exploring options for creating a mixed-use facility that could include private office space. Locating all Valley health professionals into a single medical center is another option worth consideration.



In addition to the Health Center, a second medical doctor, providing medical care to adults, opened a practice in Waitsfield in 2001. This will raise the question of whether continued public support, through municipal contributions, is still required to ensure adequate local health care.

Other health care services available to local residents include:

- ◆ **A full service private dentist office** located in Irasville;
- ◆ **Visiting Nurse Service.** Home health care which includes therapy (physical, speech, occupational) and counseling, consoling the elderly; homemaker service (meals, shopping, housekeeping); Hospice consoling and counseling the terminally ill and their families; and child birthing classes.
- ◆ **Vermont Department of Health.** Well Child Clinic (pre-school immunization), WIC Programs (prenatal and preschool nutritional programs).
- ◆ **Washington County Mental Health.** 24-hour emergency service, outpatient clinic, substance abuse programs, job placement, day programs, day hospital and resident programs.
- ◆ Hospitals serving the Valley include the **Central Vermont Medical Center** in Berlin, **Gifford Memorial Hospital** in Randolph and the **Medical Center Hospital of Vermont** in Burlington.

Day Care

Day care facilities are regulated by the VT Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Day care providers operating out of private homes who care for not more than six pre-school children from two or more families, in addition to not more than four school age children for four or less hours each day, must be registered with the state. Presently only one home child care operator is registered in the town—a reduction from past years, when as many as five home child care services were registered in Waitsfield.

Larger facilities, and those not operating out of the care provider's home, are licensed by the state. A licensed facility is allowed to provide care to larger numbers of children, and is subject to more stringent regulation and periodic inspection. Currently five licensed facilities operate in Waitsfield, including the after school program which uses the elementary school.

Other than the use of the elementary school, the town is not involved in providing day care to local residents. No change in this policy is anticipated, although changing demographics resulting in one parent homes and more two working-parent families

have created a growing need for adequate day care. It is not known how adequately these needs are now being served. While there are few actions the town would be likely to take to remedy this, additional facilities could be encouraged through the elimination of any local regulatory barriers to their development and the continuation of the after school program.

Senior Services

The Mad River Valley Senior Citizens Inc. is a non-profit corporation which operates to coordinate and provide services for the elderly population of Fayston, Moretown, Warren and Waitsfield. Funding is provided through a combination of local, state and federal grant funds and donated time and energy of Valley residents.

The most important program provided by the seniors is the operation of the Senior Center and the Senior meals program, both of which operate out of Evergreen Place—a shared housing facility for elders located in Irasville. Evergreen Place, which occupies a converted inn, is owned and managed by the Burlington-based non-profit Cathedral Square Corporation.

Social Services

Most social services are provided by state government through a variety of programs coordinated through the Agency of Human Services. In addition to state programs, all of which are delivered from offices located elsewhere in Washington County outside the Valley, several private non-profit organizations provide varying types and levels of assistance to local residents. Several of these service providers receive annual appropriations from the town (see Figure 9.3). In addition, the following two organizations are located within the Mad River Valley and provide assistance exclusively to Valley residents:

- ◆ **Valley Community Fund**, a non-profit organization serving residents of the Mad River Valley. Funded entirely through contributions, the Community Fund provides financial assistance to local residents experiencing financial hardship.
- ◆ **Mad River Valley Food Shelf**, coordinated by the Valley Clergy Council, distributes donated food and groceries to Valley residents in need of such assistance.
- ◆ **The assistance of these, and other, private organizations will likely become increasingly important as the current federal administration reduces support for programs designed to assist the least fortunate members of society.**

Cultural Organizations

Mad River Valley residents enjoy access to a wide range of homegrown cultural resources and events. While not directly supported by the town on a regular basis, the following organizations provide a variety of performances and exhibits.

- ◆ **Vermont Festival of the Arts**, which, in cooperation with the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce sponsors an annual arts festival;
- ◆ **Valley Players**, a theater group operating out of the Oddfellows Hall in Waitsfield Village;
- ◆ **Green Mountain Cultural Center**, which sponsors a variety of exhibitions, performances and classes in the restored round barn in Waitsfield;
- ◆ **Mad River Chorale**, a local chorus group;
- ◆ **Phantom Theater**, an experimental theater group based in a restored Warren barn;
- ◆ **Skinner Barn**, which hosts a variety of performances and events in a restored barn on the Common Road;
- ◆ **Waitsfield Farmers Market**, which not only provides a direct market for local farmers, cooks, artisans and crafters, but also provides an opportunity for local residents and visitors to congregate and socialize on a regular basis between May and October; and
- ◆ **Bundy Center for the Arts**, which has been used for both the exhibition of visual arts as well as a venue for performing arts.

In addition, several individual artists and businesses support a strong community arts culture. Artists studios, which often include display space, are located throughout town, although several are concentrated in Waitsfield Village. Musicians regularly perform at Mad Mountain Tavern, Purple Moon Pub and the Eclipse Theater, which also functions as the Valley's only movie theater.

Community Center

Despite the range of recreation, community and cultural activities available to Valley residents and visitors—most of which are located in Waitsfield—several residents have lamented the lack of a central community center.

Such a center could serve as a gathering place and central recreation facility for the Valley's youth. It could also serve as a multi-generational facility that could serve as a recreational, social and cultural resource for a broad cross section of the community.

While there is clear support for a multi-purpose community center, the depth and breadth of that support is not yet clear. Should such support exist, the cre-

ation of a community center in Irasville could serve to strengthen that area's function as a growth center and activity center for the entire Valley.

COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES & FACILITIES

Waitsfield is served by both traditional and more modern forms of communication that inform the community and connect residents with each other and the wider world. In fact, Valley residents have access to telecommunications technologies that are on par with most urban areas and are considerably more advanced than in most rural communities.

Newspapers

The Valley Reporter, the valley's weekly newspaper, was first established in 1971 and is the town's official newspaper for public warnings, notices and announcements. The Vermont Journal, a second weekly paper covering the Mad River Valley and Waterbury, was founded in 2002 and is presently distributed free of charge to local residents. Waitsfield also receives limited local coverage in the Times-Argus, central Vermont's daily paper based in Barre. Other state and national papers are available through local outlets.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications facilities and services, until very recently, were limited to local and long distance phone systems, and wireless radio and television networks. The access provided by cellular phones and "personal digital assistants" (PDAs), on-line Internet services, and the World Wide Web was unheard of even a decade ago. Telecommunications services available to Waitsfield residents are now multiplying at an unprecedented rate, due to ongoing technological advances, industry deregulation, and an expanding number of local and national service providers. As explained in Chapter 7, the EPRI identified the Valley's advanced communications infrastructure as one of the area's greatest economic assets.

Technology and deregulation have blurred the lines between what were once distinct, separately regulated services—phone and cable systems are now used as much for data transfer as for more traditional forms of voice communication. Wired and wireless networks are being developed that allow for high speed internet access, voice and data integration, video conferencing, distance and on-line learning, and telecommuting.

Unlike traditional phone and broadcast networks, available for a nominal fee or the cost of purchasing a radio or television, many of the new technologies and services require a substantial initial capital investment (e.g., for computers, dishes or wiring), and subsequent monthly payments. There is also a learning curve associated with the use and application of new technologies. As a result, there is a growing information or digital divide, which affects mostly lower income households and the elderly on fixed incomes, who also are often less familiar or comfortable with new technologies.

Telephone Service: **Waitsfield Telecom** (Waitsfield-Fayston Telephone Company Inc.), Waitsfield's local, privately owned telephone company, was founded in 1904. In 1994 the company expanded to include GTE's former Central Champlain Valley service area, forming Waitsfield/Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT). It now has over 100 employees and more than 20,000 access lines. In 2000, WCVT received authorization from the Public Service Board to borrow \$3 million from the Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative to fund network additions and improvements, including a new switching system. WCVT currently provides a variety of telephone services to area businesses and residents for monthly fees. Local consumers have the option of selecting from a variety of long-distance service providers, including the phone company's Green Mountain Long Distance service.

Wireless Services. Cellular phones and other personal wireless services are an increasingly common means of communication, and provide access to remote areas not served by phone lines. Because of local topography, cellular phone service remains spotty in the Valley. Private service providers are actively pursuing tower sites throughout Vermont to expand wireless coverage. Under the federal 1996 Telecommunications Act, the town cannot exclude personal wireless services or unreasonably discriminate among providers, but can regulate facility siting, environmental impacts, and appearance through local zoning. Radio frequency emissions, including related interference and health considerations, are regulated separately by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), but can be subject to local monitoring requirements to ensure that FCC standards are being met.

Radio, Television & Cable: Because of the mountainous terrain, Waitsfield residents without cable or satellite service get limited radio and television reception. **Waitsfield Cable**, owned and operated by Waitsfield/Champlain Valley Telecom, has been serving the Valley since 1980. The company currently offers within its service area, for monthly fees, cable television, digital cable and radio, and pay-per-view options. The basic analog cable package includes three channels that feature local programming: Waitsfield Cable (Channel 11) advertising local events, Sugarbush Resort Television (Channel 12), and **Mad River Valley Television** (Channel 44), the Valley's designated public access station.

Channel 44, on the air since 2000, provides community access to local airwaves and coverage of local government, school and community events. MRVT is managed by an elected board of directors, and maintains a studio and production equipment for use by community groups. In 2003 and 2004, the town contributed \$2,000 to MRVT to support coverage of municipal meetings and public events. Nearly half of those responding to the 2002 community survey indicated that they watched Channel 44 at least occasionally (though less than 10% were frequent viewers). It is anticipated that viewers will continue to increase with additional local programming and coverage. Town residents outside the cable service area have access to other wireless television services for the price of dish installation and a monthly service fee.

Vermont Interactive Television (VIT) offers relatively low cost videoconferencing services to businesses, government, nonprofit organizations and schools at fourteen sites around the state. The closest site to Waitsfield is at the state office complex in Waterbury. VIT is increasingly being used by state government, the legislature, and statewide organizations to hold interactive public meetings and workshops, and thereby increase public access to state government and programs.

Internet & Web Services

Information and services, including government and educational services, also are increasingly being provided through Web sites, accessed via the Internet. Waitsfield residents with a phone line, computer, and modem, or a direct line connection, have access to a growing number of local and national Internet

service providers (ISPs)—and a variety of associated services, including e-mail, file and data transfer services, web sites, and access to the World Wide Web.

Green Mountain Access, founded in 1997 as an affiliate of Waitsfield/Champlain Valley Telecom, has grown from a local ISP to a statewide company that offers many of the latest Internet technologies. Residential internet services currently offered include dial-up access, high speed digital service lines (DSLs), roaming access, and web hosting. Local businesses, in addition, may also have access to dedicated (ISDN and T1) lines, frame relay services for higher speed service. **Mad River Access**, another local ISP, offers local dial-up services.

The Internet is increasingly important as an educational tool, for information access and on-line (“distance”) learning opportunities. Waitsfield Elementary School has dial-up access to on-line services and resources through “K12net,” an extension of Vermont’s GOVnet, which supports local and distance learning programs. The Joslin Library also provides public DSL access, and subscribes to the recently created Vermont On-line reference and database service.

The Town of Waitsfield has limited Web presence through **madrivervalley.com**, a commercially sponsored community Web site hosted by Green Mountain Access. General contact information and board meeting times are listed; but no other local information, such as meeting minutes, plans, ordinances and regulations, is provided.



PHOTO: BEV KEHOE

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES GOALS

To provide a full range of community services and facilities a cost effective, environmentally sound manner without creating an undue burden on local taxpayers.

To provide facilities and services in a manner that reinforces the town’s land use, development and natural resource protection goals and policies.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES POLICIES

- 1) Facilities and services shall be planned to accommodate anticipated future growth (see Chapter 4) to avoid unreasonable burdens on the town’s ability to provide one or more facility or service. To this end:
 - a. the scale, timing and location of development shall be controlled to ensure that the resulting demand for services and facilities does not exceed the municipality’s ability to provide them; and
 - b. in the event new or expanded public facilities required to accommodate proposed development are not available or planned, the developer shall fund the proportional cost of the facility(ies) needed to accommodate the new development unless the town determines that the proposed development will provide community benefits which outweigh or offset the cost of the required facility(ies).
- 2) The provision of facilities and services will be coordinated with land use and development goals and policies outlined in this plan, including the reinforcement of growth centers. To this end:
 - a. facilities that require regular access by the general public and are compatible with compact, mixed use development, such as municipal offices, post offices, community centers and fire stations, should be located in Waitsfield Village or Irasville;
 - b. facilities that are both land intensive and require regular access by the general public, such as recreation fields, should be discouraged in the Agricultural-Residential, Commercial Lodging and Forest Reserve Districts unless designed to serve the immediate neighborhood;
 - c. facilities that do not require regular access by the general public, such as highway maintenance, or are not compatible with compact, mixed use de-

velopment, such as solid waste transfer facilities, shall be located in appropriate centralized, non-residential locations, preferably in the Industrial District or Limited Business District.

- 3) Services and facilities shall be provided in an efficient and cost effective manner while ensuring a high level of service. To this end:

- a. capital expenditures will be programmed to avoid sharp fluctuations in the property tax rate;
- b. alternatives to the property tax to fund local services and facilities (including user fees, state/federal grants and loans, impact fees and negotiated exactions, special taxing districts, private foundations and assistance from non-governmental and/or local option taxes) will be used wherever practical, providing they do not place an additional burden on residents of limited financial means or undermine other policies of this plan;
- c. wherever practical, services and facilities to address Valley-wide growth and development will be provided in conjunction with neighboring towns.
- d. statewide efforts to restructure state educational funding to reduce the reliance on the local property tax (see Chapter 10) are strongly supported.

- 4) The town recognizes the importance of making the most effective and efficient use of existing services, structures and facilities and utilities before expanding capacity or constructing new buildings or facilities. In the event a new building(s) is required, it shall be designed to reflect the community's historic and architectural heritage, a strong sense of permanence, and to serve as a symbol of civic pride.

- 5) The General Wait House shall continue to be used primarily for civic, community and cultural purposes, including public restrooms, community meeting space, cultural activities, celebration of community history and heritage, and public information. To that end, restoration of the attached barns for one or more of these purposes is encouraged.

- 6) Town funded emergency services, including fire and police protection, should be maintained in a manner that continues their current high level of service as the community grows.

- 7) Municipal water and sewer systems should be developed to serve Irasville and Waitsfield Village. Such systems should provide the greatest volume of capacity in the most cost effective manner as possible. Once constructed, the system capacity shall:

- a. be allocated in accordance with the land use, housing, and economic development policies of this plan;
- b. be allocated only to serve users within a defined service area to include the Irasville Village District and, if practical, Waitsfield Village Districts,

unless an imminent threat to public health requires extension beyond those boundaries—in that case capacity will be used only to eliminate that threat and not to serve other users outside the service area; and

- c. be managed, together with the operation of the facility, to ensure maximum protection of water quality in the Mad River and its tributaries.

- 8) Stormwater runoff shall be managed within designated growth centers, including Irasville, in a coordinated and integrated manner that ensures the maximum level of protection of water quality in the Mad River and its tributaries. Outside of designated growth centers, stormwater runoff shall be managed on-site to avoid off-site impacts and the degradation of water quality (See Chapter 3).

- 9) Opportunities for the town to acquire land for conservation, recreation and community facilities are encouraged and should be explored. Priority should be given to parcels which provide multiple values to the community.

- 10) Undeveloped and semi-developed town-owned properties, including Scrag Forest, the Lareau Swim-hole, and other conservation and recreation parcels shall be managed for the protection of ecological resources and sustainable use.

- 11) The efforts of the Mad River Path Association to create a network of walking and bicycling paths in the Mad River Valley, including extending the Mad River Greenway to link Waitsfield Village with Moretown Village to the north, and with Warren Village to the south, are strongly supported. To this end, the town will assist the Path Association by:

- a. holding easements on segments of the path right-of-way;
- b. incorporating path easements into required open space and pedestrian connections as part of local development review processes; and
- c. incorporating path segments into management plans for town-owned land.

- 12) The Town will continue to work with the Couples Club to ensure the Club's recreation fields remain viable and accessible to local residents and youth sports leagues.

- 13) The town will continue to encourage the efforts of VAST to provide an integrated network of winter recreation trails in a manner that does not adversely impact neighboring homeowners and the natural environment, and will allow VAST trail use of Class 4 roads on a case by case basis to avoid conflict with other users of the road and neighboring residential properties.

- 14) The change in classification, maintenance, or use of Class 4 roads that result in an increase of automobile use, especially within the Forest Reserve District, shall

only occur if existing recreational uses are maintained or replaced or mitigated with comparable recreation opportunities.

- 15) Town cemeteries should be managed, and expanded if needed, to ensure that burial opportunities will exist for the foreseeable future, and to ensure that as undeveloped properties become limited, town cemeteries will continue to serve as an important cultural focus of the community.
- 16) The town will continue to participate as a member of the Mad River Valley-Waterbury Solid Waste Alliance, including the Alliance's efforts to reduce waste generation and provide environmentally sound waste disposal opportunities.
- 17) The Valley Transfer Station is encouraged to continue operation in its present location, and a privately operated bottle redemption center is encouraged in conjunction with the Transfer Station, or at a separate location in Irasville or Waitsfield Village.
- 18) Public and private social service providers, including state, regional and local agencies and non-governmental organizations, are encouraged to continue providing services to local residents. To this end, the town will continue to consider funding such organizations on an annual basis, and will support efforts to improve local delivery of such services through partnerships with local organizations.
- 19) The development and operation of a multi-generational community center is strongly supported within Irasville or Waitsfield Village.
- 20) The Valley Health Center should continue to provide the needs of local residents by serving as a designated Rural Health Clinic. The expansion of the Health Center is encouraged, and if possible such expansion should take the form of an integrated medical facility providing space for a variety of health care providers.
- 21) The expansion or development of wireless telecommunications facilities (e.g. cellular) requiring towers or similar facilities shall be integrated into the existing built environment, such as affixed to silos, steeples, cupolas, or on towers located within the Industrial or Irasville Village District.
- 22) The expansion of telecommunication service in the community, including broad-band Internet access, is strongly supported, as are efforts to ensure greater public access through the Joslin Memorial Library and local schools, and through greater municipal use of the world wide web to disseminate information.
- 23) The Town will continue to work with and provide support, to the extent practical, to community arts and cultural organizations.
- 24) The town will support and continue to help fund Mad River Television's (Channel 44) efforts to broadcast meetings of public interest, and will use this medium to expand local awareness of community events and issues.
- 25) Encourage the creation of recreation facilities that foster fitness and well-being (e.g., fitness courses) in a manner that is integrated throughout the community.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES TASKS

- 1) Update the municipal capital budget and program on an annual basis, and evaluate annual changes in the context of the town plan and projected community growth. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard, Planning Commission]*
- 2) Continue to maintain reserve funds for capital projects, including capital equipment, land conservation, and related projects, in accordance with the capital budget and program. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard, Planning Commission]*
- 3) Continue to work cooperatively with neighboring towns and the region on issues of mutual concern, and explore additional opportunities to share facilities and services with neighboring towns. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard, Town Boards and Commissions]*
- 4) Establish a special taxing district, or tax increment financing district, for one or more of the town's growth centers. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard, Planning Commission]*
- 5) Continue efforts to design, fund and construct municipal water and sewer systems to serve Irasville and, if practical, Waitsfield Village. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard, Study Committee]*
- 6) In the event a municipal wastewater treatment facility is constructed, delineate a service area and prepare an allocation ordinance to govern the allocation of available capacity in accordance with the goals and policies of this plan. *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*
- 7) Review proposals for development to identify potential impacts on the town's ability to provide adequate services and facilities without an undue burden on local tax payers, and place appropriate conditions on new development regarding the timing of construction and provision for services or facilities. *[Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment]*
- 8) Revise the Waitsfield Subdivision Regulations to include updated facility and infrastructure standards, including those related to stormwater runoff, wastewater disposal, impact on community services and facilities, and trails, sidewalks and pathways. *[Planning Commission]*

- 9) Prepare an Official Map for the Irasville Village District depicting future public improvements, including roads, sidewalks, paths and park areas, and a town green/common. *[Planning Commission]*
 - 10) Conduct a telecommunications facility siting study to determine appropriate locations for new facilities which will ensure complete wireless coverage in the Valley without adverse impacts to the scenic landscape. *[Planning Commission, MRVPD*]*
 - 11) Explore the creation of a municipal stormwater management utility to serve the Irasville Village District in conjunction with the implementation of an Irasville Master Plan. *[Planning Commission, Selectboard]*
 - 12) Appoint a study committee to evaluate town office space needs and prepare a strategy for meeting those needs within the next 5 years. *[Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Selectboard, Study Committee]*
 - 13) Evaluate space and facility needs of the Joslin Library in conjunction with the town office study, and prepare a strategy to address any changes to the Library resulting from changes to the town offices. *[Selectboard, Library Trustees*]*
 - 14) Explore options for expanding existing town cemeteries or, if expansion is not practical, for the creation of a new cemetery located in close proximity to Irasville, Waitsfield Village or Waitsfield Common. *[Cemetery Commission]*
 - 15) Develop a plan for renovating the Wait House barns for public and cultural purposes. *[Selectboard, Waitsfield Historic Society*]*
 - 16) Develop long range management plans for undeveloped town-owned parcels, including Scrag Forest, Lareau Swimhole and adjacent land, and the Brook Road parcel. *[Conservation Commission, Selectboard]*
 - 17) Create a web page to increase local residents' awareness of and access to municipal documents, public notices, meeting agendas and meeting minutes. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard]*
 - 18) Secure improved, year-round trail access to the Scrag Municipal Forest. *[Selectboard, Conservation Commission]*
 - 19) Review ongoing financial support for the Valley Health Center in light of the presence of other health care professionals located in, and serving, the valley. *[Town Administrator, Selectboard]*
- *Participation strongly encouraged*



10. Local Education



Providing quality public education for children and youth is among the most important functions of government in a democratic society. Waitsfield has long performed this task extremely well, especially with regard to grades K–6 which are educated at the Waitsfield Elementary School in Waitsfield Village.

Middle school (grades 7–8) and secondary (grades 9–12) education is provided at Harwood Union School, located on Route 100 in Duxbury. Waitsfield, together with Duxbury, Fayston, Moretown, Warren and Waterbury comprise the Washington West Supervisory Union, which administers Harwood.

The most critical education-related issue facing the town is school funding and the growing burden on local tax payers. This burden increased dramatically with the passage of Act 60 in 1997. Funding issues are addressed in greater detail below.

ENROLLMENT

Figure 10.1 presents enrollment figures for the Waitsfield Elementary School, and enrollment in Harwood attributable to Waitsfield students, for the past six years. In addition, enrollment projections through the 2006/2007 school year, prepared by the Supervisory Union, are also presented in the figure.

After peaking at 180 students in 1997/98, the elementary school's enrollment has remained relatively stable—averaging 158.5 students—for the following five years. Recent enrollments are higher than they were ten years ago, although current enrollments are well below projections made by the Supervisory Union in the early 1990s. At that time, the school was expected to reach its capacity of 185 students in 1996/1997—which nearly did occur. Enrollments were projected to continue to climb before stabilizing at the end of the decade, although this did not occur. Recent enrollment projections call for a continued decline, to 133 students, in 2006/2007.

The number of students that Waitsfield sends to Harwood has also remained relatively stable in recent years, averaging 106.2 students since 1998/99. Short term projections call for Waitsfield's share of Harwood's enrollment to remain stable, although as smaller student bodies advance through the elementary school it is likely that the number of Harwood students from Waitsfield will begin to decline in the next 6-10 years.

The projections prepared by the Supervisory Union are consistent with demographic trends (see Chapter 2). The percentage of the local population within the 18-34 year-old cohort—prime child bearing years—declined from 36% in 1980 to 26% in 1990, down to

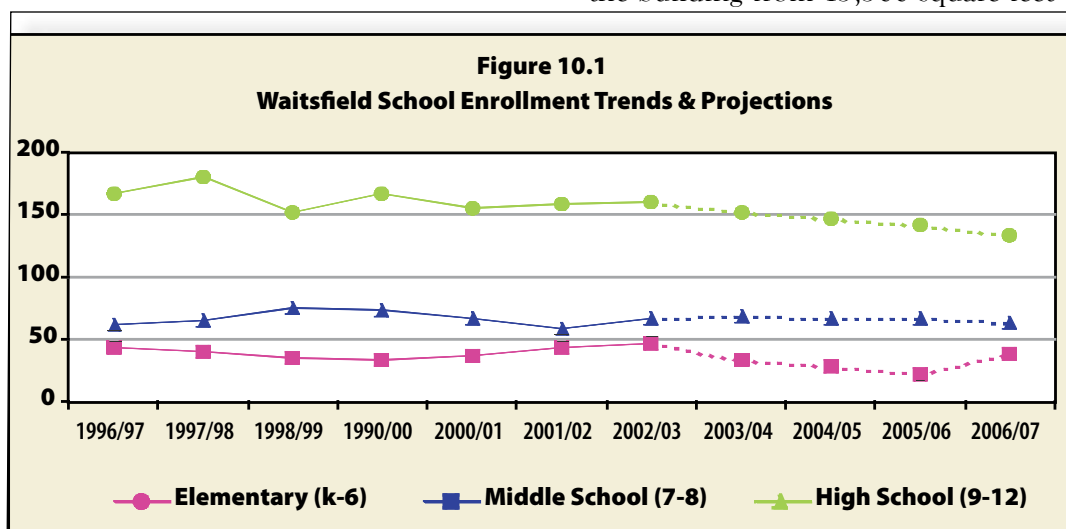
only 20% in 2000. Although the number of women postponing having children until their mid to late 30s is much higher than two decades ago, Waitsfield's ongoing shift to an older population is not likely to result in substantial enrollment growth in the near future. This could change, however, should the town experience significant in-migration of families with children. Policies to promote greater diversity in the housing stock—and greater demographic diversity—could cause enrollments to increase, although such increases are not likely to be immediate.

WAITSFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Waitsfield Elementary School is administered by the Waitsfield School Board, a five member body elected by town voters. In addition to overseeing the operation of the school and the management of school facilities, the Board serves as the town's liaison with the State Department of Education in ensuring that the Waitsfield school meets state education and facility standards. A summary of school enrollment, staffing and technology trends are presented in Table 10.1

The educational performance of the elementary school student body has been excellent. In 2002, the school received an award from the District Superintendent honoring the performance of Waitsfield students on state assessment programs. According to the respondents to the 2002 Community Survey, the elementary school was among the highest rated local services.

The school underwent a major renovation and expansion in 1991, which brought the facility's capacity up to 185 students. That expansion, which increased the building from 13,300 square feet to the existing



22,100 square feet, added three new classrooms, a new library, expanded gymnasium and stage area, an art/music room and additional administrative space.

From a facility standpoint, the projected decline in enrollment is good news in that additional space will not be needed to accommodate a growing student body. From a program and budgeting standpoint, however, the projected decline in enrollment is a matter of concern (see discussion on funding below).

Despite the expansion of the building, the school continues to suffer a lack of adequate land for recreation fields and associated outdoor facilities. The School Board acquired a small amount of land when

the town purchased the General Wait House, but that addition did not allow for the creation of new recreation space. A conservation easement was placed on farm land surrounding the school in 2002—much of which is in the 100 year floodplain. Several acres adjacent to existing recreation areas were retained from that easement in the event they might be transferred to the school in the future.

In 2003, the elementary school, in conjunction with the Supervisory Union, established partnerships with three private pre-schools—the Waitsfield Children's Center and Spring Hill in Waitsfield, and the Children's Space in Duxbury—as part of an effort to provide educational access to all 3- and 4-

TABLE 10.1 • WAITSFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

					Vermont (most recent)
Participation	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2001-2002
Total Enrollment	149	166	156	159	100,867
Attendance Rate	96.6%	97.4%	96.6%	97.4%	95.1%
Class Size					
Average Class Size	15.2	17.3	16.2	15.2	16.0
Student/Teacher Ratio	11.8	13.8	12.5	12.0	12.0
Eligible Special Education	11.4%	13.3%	11.5%	11.3%	13.0%
Home Study (number)	5	2	2	2	1,540
Technology					
Students per Computer	5.3	4.1	3.6	N/A	5.0
Internet Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	97% Yes
Type of Internet Connection	Dial-up	Direct Link	N/A	N/A	N/A
Personnel (FTEs)					
Classroom Teachers	9.36	9.4	9.4	10.20	6,413.16
Other Teachers	4.02	3.40	3.90	3.90	2,510.20
Instructional Aids	2.04	4.30	3.50	3.80	3,580.84
Coordinators/Supervisors	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	184.00
Licensed Administrators	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	420.81
Administrative Support	1.0	1.20	0.40	0.50	502.79
Other	3.23	3.50	4.60	4.40	2,715.38
Average Teacher Salary	N/A	\$39,546	\$38,403	\$40,557	\$39,166

Source: VT Department of Education

year-olds. The Supervisory Union will help develop curricula aligned with state standards, and the additional students will help the Waitsfield school reduce its per-pupil cost, which is significant in light of the declining enrollment and current education funding programs.

HARWOOD UNION HIGH SCHOOL

The Union District, under the guidance of a nine person board of directors, is responsible for the administration of Harwood Union Middle & High School. Representation on the Board is proportional among the member towns, with Waterbury electing four directors and each of the other town's electing one member each.

Located on Route 100 in Duxbury, Harwood was opened in 1967 with a capacity of 800 students. The school was upgraded and expanded in 1996/97, and now has a core capacity of between 900 and 1,000 students, depending upon program configuration. With the recent construction of Crossett Brook Middle School to serve 7th and 8th graders from Waterbury and Duxbury, additional capacity became available at Harwood. In 2001/2002 173 middle school (grade 7-8) students and 617 high school (grade 9-12) students attended Harwood, for a total of enrollment of 790. Of the total, 101 students—12.8% of the student body—were from Waitsfield.

Projections call for total enrollment to increase to near capacity next year, based on current numbers in lower grades, and then to fall off. This increase through 2004-05 appears to represent a “bubble” in the student population which could be weathered without a major facility expansion. There is concern, however, that rapid growth (or decline) in one or more member communities could place a burden on the school system as a whole. In light of the rapid population growth experienced in all District towns, this should be closely monitored.

Possible future options to address expanding enrollment that have been identified include the construction of a separate middle school for Mad River Valley towns, or building an addition

onto Crossett Brook to allow Harwood to serve only high school students. Neither of these options is presently receiving serious consideration. No expansion or major improvements—other than routine maintenance—to the school building are presently planned in the next five years.

As in the case of the Waitsfield Elementary School, there is concern over the adequacy of Harwood's athletic fields. The existing fields were originally designed to serve four teams. Apart from the construction of a track and hockey field in 1982, no additional field space has been created since 1967. Today the school fields 21 teams. The lack of field space at the school has limited program expansion, and requires that a number of teams be bussed off-campus in order to practice and/or play games. A 1999 study was undertaken to evaluate the possibility of expanding current fields—to include the creation of a softball field and another field to be used for soccer and lacrosse. A 2002 bond vote for \$285,000 to support this expansion, and also refurbish the track

Figure 10.2
Waitsfield Education Actual Costs (2002 Dollars)

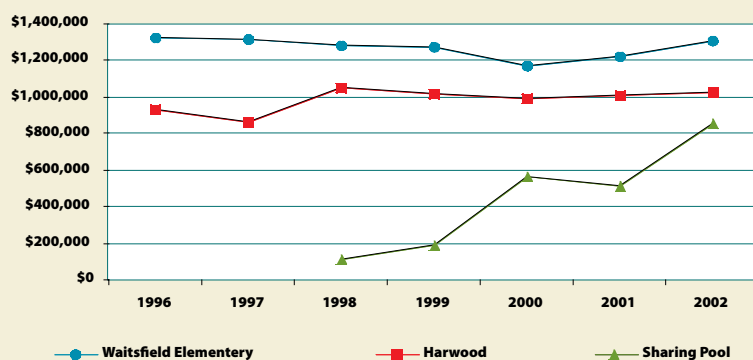
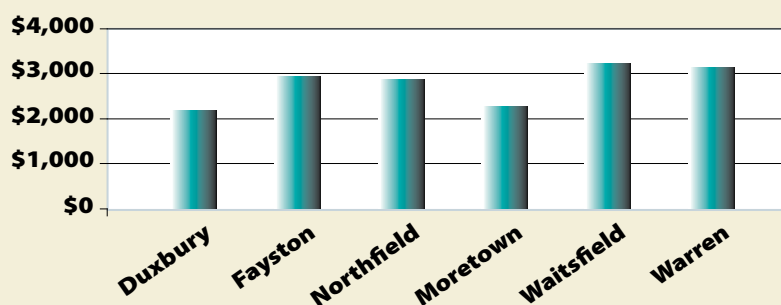


Fig.10.3 • 2002 Average R1 Property Taxes



and field shed, was defeated by voters.

Harwood's academic program includes college preparatory, business and limited vocational courses. The school has invested in technology, including the creation of a technology reserve fund. Expanded program offerings are available through various agreements with other educational facilities. The high school offers special education services through the Learning Resource Center located within the school complex. An alternative school for students in grades 10-12—the Waterbury-based Harwood Community Learning Center—was also established in 2001 to provide academic and work experience for students who are less successful in a traditional school setting.

The state currently provides vocational education opportunities through a system of sixteen vocational centers serving local high schools around the state. Unfortunately, the nearest such center to Harwood is in Barre. Presently, transportation is provided for Harwood students to attend vocational programs in Barre and, in some cases, Burlington. Harwood does provide some vocational opportunities on site, although these are limited.

Harwood High School has a much lower drop out rate (0.5% in 2002) than the state average (3.9%). Of graduating seniors, 75% planned to continue their education at 2- and 4-year colleges.

COST OF EDUCATION

It would be difficult to overstate the level of local concern related to educational funding. Property taxes was one of the two most common responses to the 2002 Community Survey question "what are the greatest challenges likely to face Waitsfield in the coming 5 years?"

While concern over taxes is likely as old as taxation itself, the passage of Act 60 in 1997 has resulted in overwhelming—and growing—concern that the current system of funding education is not sustainable. As this plan is being written, it appears that the Vermont legislature will revise Act 60, so a detailed description of the present funding system would likely be outdated before the plan is adopted. The past impact on the community may be seen in Figure 10.2, which shows annual education costs to the Town of Waitsfield since 1996, in addition to the town's contribution to the state "sharing pool" which is used to fund education statewide.

The town's contribution to the state—which is the "net" contribution excluding the amount of statewide property tax money that is used for local education—has increased from approximately \$100,000 in 1998 to \$850,000 in 2002. There are several reasons for this sharp increase, including:

- ◆ **A decline in enrollment at the elementary school which, because many fixed costs are not subject to change as enrollment fluctuates, results in a higher cost per pupil. Because state funding is based on per-pupil cost, as that cost increases above the state per-pupil block grant the required contribution to the sharing pool increases. Although Figure 10.2 shows that total education costs have experienced modest fluctuations in recent years (adjusted for inflation), the cost per-pupil has grown from \$6,872 in 1999 to \$8,027 in 2002. The state block grant was \$5,601 in 2002, up from \$5,010 in 1999.**
- ◆ **Related to declining enrollment has been the state's recent practice of transferring money from the state educational fund to the general fund, rather than returning the funds to communities' in the form of higher per-pupil block grants. In effect, the statewide educational property tax is subsidizing other state services.**
- ◆ **Rapid appreciation of real estate values which has adversely impacted the so-called "Common Level of Appraisal" (CLA). The CLA is the state's mechanism for equalizing property tax assessments of all municipalities through statistical formula based upon property transfers. While few would dispute that real estate prices have risen significantly in town, the sale of several very high end homes at prices twice their appraised value or greater has resulted in unpredictable fluctuations in the town's CLA, which has the effect of increasing the town's effective tax rate.**

Until recently, these problems were primarily the concern of property-wealthy "gold towns." Increasingly, this issues are creating problems for a greater number and variety of towns. In some respects Act 60 has achieved its purpose. Income sensitivity provisions which cap the amount of household income that property tax payers are required to pay for property taxes, for example, have sheltered lower income families from the growing tax burden. As Figure 10.3 shows, the combination of high property values and the factors outlined above have resulted in Waitsfield having the highest average property tax burden on R-1 homeowners (owners of single family homes on less than 6 acres) in the Valley—among the highest average in Washington County!

As this plan is being completed, the Vermont Legislature has adopted legislation that will significantly change Act 60 ("Act 68"). The law will "split" the grand list by levying a statewide property tax of

\$1.59 per \$1,000 in valuation on commercial properties and vacation homes, increase the per-pupil block grant to school districts, provide additional funding for local education through an increase in the state-wide sales tax, and eliminate the state “sharing pool.” The law is scheduled to be in effect by 2005. While it promises to provide some relief to local tax-payers, the long term effect on taxes and education remains to be seen.

ADULT EDUCATION

There are no formal opportunities for continuing adult education in the Mad River Valley. The nearest source of adult education opportunities are available through the Community College of Vermont (CCV)’s Waterbury campus, and at nearby schools, including the University of Vermont, and several other private colleges in Burlington, Northfield, Middlebury and the Vermont Technical College in Randolph. Opportunities for “distance learning” on-line and through Waterbury’s Vermont Interactive Television (ITV) site are also growing each year.

A variety of adult basic educational programs are available through Central Vermont Adult Basic Education, also located in Waterbury. These include individualized and group educational services to adults in their homes, at the learning center, and in community settings. Basic education programs serve those who wish to improve their reading, writing and math skills for use on the job or in daily life, those who are studying for their high school equivalency degree (GED) or adult diploma, and those who want to learn English as a second language. Computer training is also available.

The Adult Basic Education Center also offers a family literacy program, an out of school youth program, a teen parenting education program, and a getting ready to work program for welfare recipients who are seeking academic and job skills to improve their occupational outlook.

EDUCATION GOAL

The availability of high quality educational facilities and programs to enable all Waitsfield residents, especially children and youth, to become competent, productive and responsible citizens.

EDUCATION POLICIES

- 1) Continue to provide sufficient and appropriate K-12 school facilities to meet current and anticipated enrollments.
- 2) Support programs and efforts to strengthen the central role that the Waitsfield Elementary School plays in the community, including providing access to school facilities for community events and activities in a manner that does not interfere with the school’s primary function of educating the town’s youth.
- 4) Support activities to engage middle and high school students in community activities.
- 5) Acquire additional land adjacent to the Waitsfield Elementary School for recreation purposes, should that land become available for purchase.
- 6) Support local and state efforts to reduce reliance on the local property tax to fund education, and actively promote alternatives to current statewide property appraisal formulas which discriminate against local property owners.
- 7) Support creativity, innovation and imagination when planning for future educational needs of the town’s student population, and encourage efforts to strengthen the important role played by local schools in fostering community and a shared purpose among local residents.
- 8) To the extent practical, improve efficiencies through coordination with neighboring school districts.

EDUCATION TASKS

- 1) Continue to monitor enrollment and population trends, and to make regular enrollment projections to ensure that the school system is prepared for significant changes in enrollment trends. *[School Board, Planning Commission]*
- 2) Consider appointing high school students as ex-officio (non-voting) members of local boards. *[Select-board]*

11. Energy



Historically most of Waitsfield's energy needs were met locally—forests were felled for fuel, the Mad River was dammed for hydropower, and annual harvests required the physical labors of man and beast. Twentieth century modernization, in the form of the electric light bulb and the internal combustion engine, transformed society and national patterns of energy consumption. Rural electrification connected the town to an expanding power grid, and an ever growing reliance on fossil fuels locked the valley, and the nation, into a global energy market.

Overview

Recent international events, disruptions in oil supplies, and the rising costs of gasoline and heating oil are harsh reminders that such heavy reliance on these finite energy sources is not sustainable. Local businesses and residents of limited means are especially vulnerable to market conditions and fuel shortages. Current patterns of energy consumption also contribute to global warming trends that, if left unchecked, will dramatically affect Vermont's climate and economy over the next few decades.

Reliable, affordable and sustainable sources of energy are vital to Waitsfield's economy, social well-being, and future development. At present, factors influencing energy cost and availability are largely beyond the control of the local community. Changing technologies, and evolving national and state energy policies—including utility deregulation, demand side management, infrastructure investment, and the promotion of more efficient and renewable "green" energy—all have an effect on local energy supplies. Waitsfield, however, can take steps to influence the community's energy outlook.

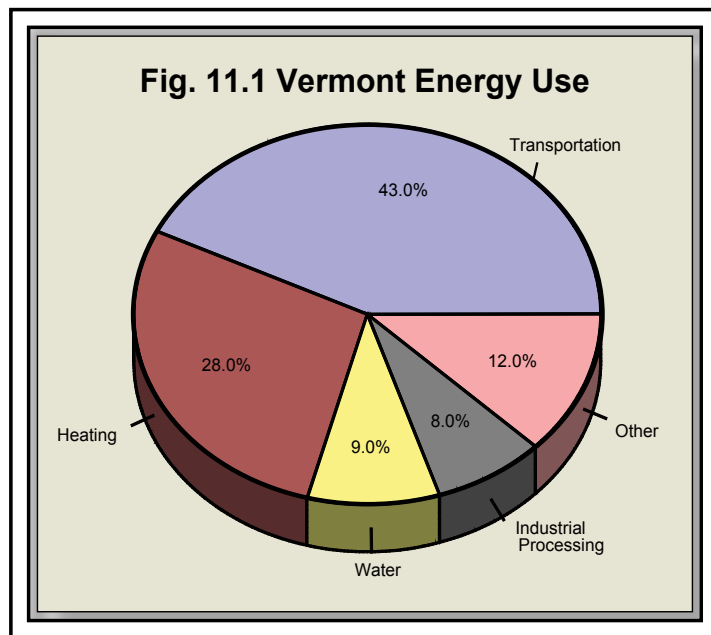
ENERGY DEMAND

Statewide Trends

There is little information on local energy consumption, however local demand likely tracks state and national trends. Statewide energy use is reported in the Vermont Public Service Department's most recent 20-year energy plan, *Fueling Vermont's Future*, released in 1998.

In Vermont, overall demand continues to escalate, largely due to dramatic increases in transportation fuel consumption. Each year there are more vehicles on the road, and more "vehicle miles" traveled. Space and water heating, and industrial processing, account for much of the remaining demand (Fig. 11.1).

According to department estimates, total energy demand statewide is expected to increase by 54% between 1990 (base year) and 2015. This is due largely due to continued growth in transportation fuel consumption resulting from more vehicles, more vehicle miles traveled, declining fuel efficiencies, and more



dispersed, auto-dependent patterns of development. Future energy costs are expected to increase accordingly (1.7% per year), due to increased consumption and rising fuel prices.

The impacts of such energy consumption on the environment are increasingly well-documented. Motor vehicles are the state's largest source of toxic and carcinogenic air pollutants—the average vehicle emits around a half a ton of pollution each year. Vehicle emissions, even at low levels, pose a health threat locally, contribute to acid rain, and can cause widespread damage to crops and forests. "Green house gases" such as carbon dioxide, emitted from motor vehicles and oil-fired furnaces, also contribute to climatic warming. Over the past century, average temperatures (as measured in Burlington) have increased by 0.4°F, and precipitation has increased by up to 5% in many parts of the state.

Local Energy Demand

Vehicle Use. As noted, there is little information on local energy use, but available data, including the 2000 Census, suggest that Waitsfield residents are driving more. The number of households reporting one or more vehicles increased from 561 in 1990 to 704 in 2000 (25%); though, the overall percentage of households with vehicles declined slightly over the same period, from 98% to around 96% in 2000 (Fig 11.2).

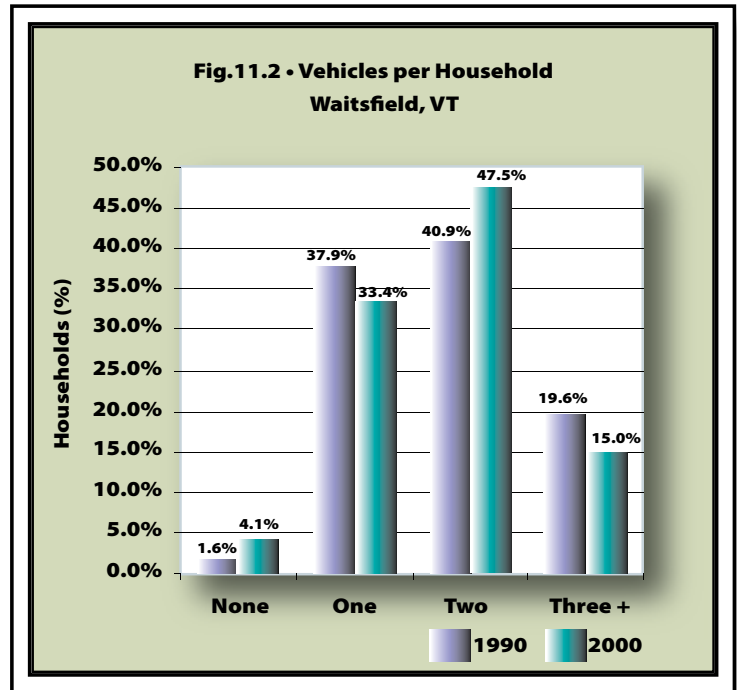
Census data also suggest that Waitsfield residents are car pooling less, following regional and statewide trends—in 2000 only 10.6% of local residents

car pooled, down from 11.1% in 1990. Though Waitsfield's rate of car pooling exceeded that of most other Valley towns, it was less than the rate for the county (12.5%—see Table 11.1). The percentage of those walking to work or working at home also decreased between 1990 and 2000. No Waitsfield commuters reported using public transit to get to work, likely due to the limited transit services available locally at the time of the census.

More trips by town residents and visitors to the valley, as well as increases in general through traffic, have resulted in more total vehicles miles traveled each year. According to Agency of Transportation information, total estimated vehicle miles traveled annually on state highways in Waitsfield increased from 35,773 miles in 1990 to 49,212 miles in 2000 (37.6%)—representing an average growth rate during the 1990s of nearly 4% per year. As Waitsfield develops as the valley's primary commercial and job center, local trips, vehicle miles traveled—and local fuel consumption—are expected to increase accordingly.

Home heating. Census data also provide limited information on the types of fuel used by town residents for home heating (Table 11.2). Interestingly, a much lower percentage of Waitsfield households relies on fuel oil or kerosene for heating (27%) than that of the county (63%) or state (59%). The percentage of local households using fuel oil has remained relatively constant in recent years, decreasing only slightly in relative importance during the 1990s.

The data suggest, however, a major shift during the 1990s from the use of wood as a primary heating source to the use of gas (utility, bottled, tank or LP). By 2000, over 50% of occupied housing units were



heated with relatively clean and efficient gas heat. The use of wood tends to fluctuate in relation to the price of oil and gas, and local availability. It likely remains an important supplemental source of heat for many Waitsfield households.

As noted for Waitsfield, the use of electricity, fuel oil and wood for space heating is decreasing statewide in relation to the use of gas. This reflects in part new home construction, which is incorporating cleaner, more energy efficient fuels and heating systems, and passive solar design. Many homes built in the 1960s and 1970s relied on inefficient electric heat, a practice that is generally no longer allowed under new 1998 state energy standards for residential construction. These standards apply to all new homes, and additions over 500 square feet.

TABLE 11.1 VALLEY COMMUTER TRENDS, 1990—2000

	Drive Alone (%)		Car pool (%)		Walk/ Work at Home (%)	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Waitsfield	71.1	74.0	11.1	10.6	16.5	14.3
Fayston	75.6	75.2	9.8	7.9	11.7	14.6
Moretown	70.9	75.6	15.2	12.9	12.7	11
Warren	74.8	77.9	9.9	9.3	12.9	11.9
Washington Co.	73.1	74.1	12.3	12.5	12.5	12.1

Source: U.S. Census [from sample data].

ENERGY SUPPLY

Electricity

Green Mountain Power Corporation (GMP), the second largest electric utility in the state, is the primary supplier of electricity to the town. GMP serves all of Waitsfield except for a small area along the North Fayston and Airport Roads, which is supplied by Washington Electric Coop. The primary transmission line serving the Valley enters Waitsfield from Northfield, in the vicinity of the Northfield Gap Road, and is distributed locally through a substation located in Waitsfield Village.

The near-term electric power supply is considered stable. GMP owns several small hydro facilities, and has long-term contracts with Vermont Yankee (through 2012) and Hydro Quebec (through 2015). Renewables, including hydro, account for 40% of the company's energy portfolio. GMP was also instrumental in building Vermont's first utility-scaled (6.1 MW) wind generation station near Searsburg,

Vermont. Utility rates are regulated through the Vermont Public Service Board. GMP's average reported rate of 10.44 cents per KWh for all electricity delivered is less than the New England average, particularly for industrial users, but the average residential rate (13.33) is higher. Rates were last increased in 2001, and remained frozen under order of the Public Service Board through January 2003. It is anticipated that GMP will apply for a rate increase in the near future.

Fossil Fuels

Vermont has no petroleum infrastructure, and relies on tanker trucks for supplies. Waitsfield residences and businesses are supplied by three local oil and gas distributors. Several gas stations in town serve local motorists and the traveling public.

Fuel prices are typically higher in northern New England, and have increased dramatically in 2003.

. Local businesses and residents, particularly low income residents, are very vulnerable to fuel shortages and price fluctuations.

The economic, social and environmental costs of such heavy reliance on fossil fuels are prompting state efforts to diversify Vermont's energy portfolio, to include in the mix more efficient natural gas systems, co-generation systems that produce electricity and heat, and greater reliance on renewable energy sources, including wood and wind power.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy resources found in Waitsfield include wood, wind, and limited solar and hydro power. The extent to which these traditional sources can be harnessed and used to replace fossil fuels is not clear; however rising fuel prices, new technologies,

and the availability since 1998 of "net metering"—which allows utility customers with small-scale renewable energy systems to sell excess power generated back to the utility—may promote increased use of renewable sources.

Wood. A "biomass fuel," wood is the town's most abundant, indigenous energy source. For

much of Waitsfield's history, wood was the principal source of heat locally. Though currently only 10% of local households use wood as their primary heating source, it is a relatively low cost fuel—currently averaging less than \$10/MMBtu, compared with over \$15.00/MMBtu for fuel oil.

Waitsfield has a large amount of forested land—an estimated 12,000 acres—including municipal forests. Under effective management, these could supply a sustainable source of energy. Extensive harvesting, however, if not properly managed, can cause increased stormwater runoff and soil erosion, sedimentation, water pollution, and habitat loss. Woodlot management, and adherence to accepted state management practices for logging operations, reduce the adverse impacts of harvesting, and can enhance local timber

TABLE 11.2

WAITSFIELD HOME HEATING FUEL, 1990-00

Heating Fuel	Households (#)		(+/-)	% Change
	1990	2000		
Gas	144	373	229	159.0%
Electricity	89	86	-3	-3.4%
Fuel Oil/ Kerosene	176	198	22	12.5%
Coal	0	0	0	0.0%
Wood	161	77	-84	-52.2%
Solar	0	0	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census [from sample data].

stands to meet a variety of landowner objectives.

New wood stoves and furnaces, if properly installed and maintained, provide effective and efficient home heating. Stoves sold since 1990 must be air tight and meet EPA emission requirements. Though wood-burning technologies have improved, wood heat remains less convenient than oil or gas heat. If oil prices continue to rise, however, more households may turn to wood as their primary heating source.

Several Washington County schools have shifted over to wood (chip or pellet) heating systems under state-sponsored programs, which could be considered for use locally. Automated wood-fired systems are proving to be an affordable heating alternative to conventional systems in such settings.

Hydropower. The Mad River and its tributaries once supplied water power for Waitsfield's earliest industries. Today these industries are gone, and while a hydro facility still exists downstream in Moretown, none currently operate in town. There may be limited potential for very small scale "microhydro" development that supplies individual users; but the Mad River through town lacks the deep gorges and falls that are needed to support larger, commercial operations. Also, while hydropower is often cited as a clean energy source, the environmental impacts of dam construction, operation and management—including the effects of changing water levels on river flow, stream habitat, and water quality, and on adjoining riparian areas—are now given much more weight in state and federal licensing proceedings.

Solar. The contribution of solar energy to Waitsfield's total energy supply is likely to increase only modestly over the next few years. More structures are being sited, oriented and designed to incorporate passive solar construction techniques for space heating and natural lighting. Up front costs for materials and installation of photovoltaic (PV) systems remain relatively expensive for the average home owner, although

emerging technologies are making them increasingly affordable. In addition, passive solar building design can significantly increase energy efficiencies and reduce costs. Technological advances, including the incorporation of photovoltaic components in roofing and siding materials, may make solar power an even more viable source of electricity in the near future.

Wind Power. Wind power, like hydro and solar power, is an emission free energy source that is not depleted with use. As a result of recent improvements in turbine technology, wind power is now receiving a significant amount of attention statewide for utility and small scale electrical generation. Green Mountain Power's 6MW Searsburg facility, which serves over 2,000 households, was established in 1997 to study commercial wind generation in cold climates— it was also the first facility to be sited in a forested area in the United states. In 2001, the Washington Electric Coop was awarded a \$1 million federal grant to establish Central Vermont's first large-scale wind energy project.

The Vermont Department of Public Service in association with Green Mountain Power Corporation and other energy interests, has since conducted a statewide wind resource assessment, including the mapping of Vermont's most favorable wind resource areas. The optimum sites are high elevation areas with steady, moderate to high winds (16+ mph) in proximity to access roads and transmission lines. From this initial assessment, the most favorable site locally is in the Northfield Range near the transmission line. Based on wind speeds, there is also some potential for development in the Green Mountain Range to the west. Current technologies, however, pose many potentially negative impacts. These include:

- ◆ **Aesthetic impacts associated with facility siting in highly visible, high elevation areas;**
- ◆ **Wildlife impacts including direct impacts (e.g., avian collisions) and secondary impacts, such as habitat fragmentation and disturbance (e.g., bear habitat);**
- ◆ **Impacts to significant natural or cultural features in the vicinity (e.g., the Long Trail);**
- ◆ **Noise impacts;**
- ◆ **Surface water runoff and soil erosion associated with site clearing and development, including road access;**
- ◆ **Safety hazards, if sited near populated areas; and**
- ◆ **Compounding these, the lack of direct community benefit from such facilities.**

The 2002 community survey results suggest that lo-

Northern Power Systems, a Waitsfield-based company, is a pioneer in the development of hybrid fossil fuel/renewable energy systems that supply high quality, reliable and cleaner electrical power. Founded in 1974 as North Wind Power Company, Northern Power now designs, builds and installs hybrid electric power systems for industrial, commercial, and government customers worldwide.



cal residents may be amenable to wind generating facilities, but still have concerns regarding their potential visual and environmental impacts. Some local financial benefits also may result from wind generators, such as property tax revenues, although those benefits could be outweighed by impacts to natural resources associated with the extension of roads and support facilities to serve high-elevation tower sites, and by the potential harm to the Valley's landscape—one of its most important economic assets. Under current national energy policy, there are no incentives for Waitsfield to accept the adverse impacts associated with large-scale wind generation while no progress is being made to reduce national energy demand, promote energy independence, improve air quality, and combat global warming.

Wind generation facilities regulated by the Public Service Board (including individual, net-metered wind systems) are preempted from local review. The Board, however, must find that such projects conform to the municipal and regional plan. The Department of Public Service has published planning materials for use by municipal and regional planning commissions, including a 2002 *Wind Energy Planning Resources for Utility-Scale Systems in Vermont* (www.state.vt.us/psd/ee/wind). The Department, and the Public Service Board which serves as the state's "Siting Council," have yet to develop a comprehensive statewide siting plan for such facilities. In the absence of such a plan, it is difficult to determine whether any locally identified sites are the most appropriate for utility-scaled development, in relation to clearly established state siting policies and standards.

The Department has also published a manual and scoring system, *Siting a Wind Turbine on Your Property*, for the siting of small wind turbines designed for individual residential or business use. These are typically under 15 kW, with a blade diameter of 20 to 24 feet, and an average tower height of 80 to 120 feet. Net-metered turbines regulated by the PSB do not require a local permit, but the PSB will consider local standards in its review. It is recommended that such systems:

- ◆ Incorporate a clean, simple turbine design without logos or symbols,
- ◆ Use unobtrusive colors (e.g., flat gray),
- ◆ Use guyed monopole rather than free-standing lattice towers,
- ◆ Have a low noise rating,
- ◆ Are sited to the edge, rather than in the middle of scenic views (e.g., an open field) so that they are not prominent focal points (as viewed from neighboring and public vantage points),
- ◆ Are limited in height to the minimum required for functional operation (e.g., 40 to 60 feet above nearby trees or other obstructions)
- ◆ Are sited to avoid impacts on significant natural and cultural features.

At minimum, recommended scoring system criteria should be applied to all such projects to evaluate and minimize potential impacts from public vantage points and neighboring properties. Other factors also may be considered as appropriate.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

The state's energy conservation efforts in recent years have focused on "Demand Side Management" (DSM) to increase energy efficiency, reduce energy demand, and in effect increase available energy supplies. In 1990, under order of the Public Service Board, all electric utilities were required to develop a variety of demand side management programs for their customers, which have since been consolidated into one statewide energy efficiency utility—Efficiency Vermont.

In recent years, the state also enacted energy standards for commercial and residential construction, which are administered and enforced through the Department of Labor and Industry. Net-metering, to encourage the use of more decentralized, renewable energy resources went into effect in 1998, and legislation is now pending to promote greater energy and efficiencies and renewables through the use of tax credits and other state support programs.

Statewide outdoor lighting standards are also under consideration.

The need for energy conservation, to reduce energy demand and use, is also recognized locally. A number of programs are available to the municipality, and to local businesses and residents, to increase energy efficiencies and reduce costs.

Efficiency Vermont

Created by the Public Service Board in 1999, Efficiency Vermont (www.efficiencyvermont.com) consolidates the energy conservation programs formerly offered by individual utilities into one statewide energy efficiency utility—the first in the nation. Energy conservation programs are financed by the state’s electric utilities through an “energy efficiency charge” that is passed on to rate payers. Current programs available to Waitsfield residents and businesses include:

- ◆ **Efficient Products**—energy efficient product information and discount coupons.
- ◆ **Vermont Energy Star® Homes Program**—technical assistance and rebates to homebuilders and buyers who build energy efficient homes.
- ◆ **Commercial Energy Opportunities**—technical and financial assistance to commercial and industrial businesses to improve the efficiency of existing and new facilities.
- ◆ **Dairy Farm Program**—technical assistance, financial incentives and low-interest financing for energy efficient farm equipment.
- ◆ **Residential Energy Efficiency Program (REEP)**—technical and financial assistance to developers, owners and managers of low income multi-family housing to reduce energy costs.
- ◆ **Income-Eligible Services**—technical and financial assistance to low-income Vermonters who are participating in the state’s weatherization program to make additional electricity-saving improvements.
- ◆ **Emerging Market Initiatives Program**—identifies, evaluates and tests innovating energy efficiency technologies, and practices to promote their use.

Transportation

Currently few transportation alternatives exist that would allow Waitsfield residents to become less dependent on motor vehicles to get around. Nevertheless, as gasoline prices climb and vehicle emissions continue to erode air quality, reasonable efforts should be made locally to promote ridesharing, alternative modes of transportation, and less auto-oriented patterns of development. The Central

Vermont Transportation Authority provides information on car pooling, ridesharing, van pooling, and special public transportation needs. Waitsfield continues to financially support, through annual appropriations, the Mad River Valley Transit system, including the MadBus –its newly re-established scheduled bus service in the Valley.

Local initiatives that could help reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled include the completion of proposed sidewalk projects in the Village, and the development of a local park and ride facility. Waitsfield could also take advantage of municipal programs offered through EVermont, a nonprofit affiliated with the Agency of Natural Resources, which advocates for the use of cleaner, more energy efficient alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs). AFVs include vehicles powered by electricity, compressed natural gas, propane, and biodiesel fuels. EVermont, in association with the Agency of Transportation, currently offers electric vehicle (EV) leasing programs to municipalities, businesses and institutions. It is also involved in testing a variety of alternative fuel technologies for use in Vermont.

Land Use & Development Patterns

Compact, mixed-use development, as envisioned for the proposed Irasville Growth Center, can reduce reliance on the automobile, vehicle miles traveled, and inherent system energy costs—including energy costs associated with maintaining roads and related infrastructure. Targeting economic and residential growth within areas intended for more concentrated development allows people to walk to their destinations, and makes public transit services between growth centers more economically feasible.

At the site level, a south-facing building orientation and landscaping can effectively reduce energy demand. Clustering, and other energy efficient development patterns can be encouraged, and/or required through local zoning and subdivision regulations.

Buildings & Equipment

In addition to energy codes for new residential, commercial and public buildings, there are number of other programs offered by the state to promote municipal energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources. These include but are not limited to the various programs offered through Efficiency Vermont, EVermont electric vehicle leases, the School Energy Management Program (SEMP) tar-

ENERGY GOAL

The availability of affordable energy supplies to meet the needs of current and future Waitsfield residents in a manner that maximizes energy conservation, the use of renewable resources, protects natural & cultural resources & reinforces traditional land use patterns & municipal development policies.

ENERGY POLICIES

- 1) Energy efficiency and conservation will be a primary consideration in new municipal construction projects, equipment purchases and operations. Life cycle costing shall be used by the town in evaluating energy-related capital expenditures as appropriate.
- 2) To minimize the need for new facilities and minimize the reliance on the private automobile, development will be directed toward designated growth centers and limited in the least accessible areas of the community.
- 3) Land use and conservation policies which encourage ongoing forest management to maintain a local source of fuel-wood, and which support local agriculture to maintain and increase the supply of locally produced food, will be supported.
- 4) Encourage dispersed, small scale and appropriately sited development of renewable energy generators, including, but not necessarily limited to, solar panels, wind turbines and micro-hydro. Wind turbines shall be discouraged in the Forest Reserve District above 1,700 feet elevation.
- 5) Through the Memorandum of Understanding administered by the MRVPD, continue to ensure that expansion and development activities at Sugarbush do not exceed the current or planned capacity of local electrical supplies and transmission facilities.
- 6) Discourage the use of electricity as a primary heating source.
- 7) Maintain an adequate land base for sustainable forest management through continued stewardship of public forests, support for current use tax abatement programs for managed woodland, and land use regulations which discourage the fragmentation of large tracts of productive forest.
- 8) Encourage, through Transportation policies (Chapter 8), opportunities for walking, cycling and other energy efficient alternatives to the automobile.
- 9) Encourage, to the extent practical, the use of energy efficient municipal vehicles (e.g., hybrid, bio-diesel).

geted to school administrators, and programs that support the conversion of school heating systems to wood-burning systems.

Municipal energy savings can be realized through regular energy audits of municipal buildings and the use of “life cycle costing” practices that incorporate long-term energy savings in the fiscal analysis of facility construction and equipment purchases. Such costing methods often demonstrate that long-term energy savings more than offset the higher initial purchase or construction cost of energy efficient equipment and building improvements. In recent years, the town has installed (historically compatible) storm windows in the Wait House and Joslin Library and added insulation in the attic.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Rising energy costs, for heat, electricity, and transportation are particularly hard on low income households who can least afford them. Programs administered through the Central Vermont Community Action Council, which are specifically targeted to help income-eligible residents, include seasonal and emergency fuel assistance, supported in part through the WARMTH donations collected by private utilities, and free weatherization services to help reduce heating costs. As noted, Efficiency Vermont also offers additional income-eligible services to weatherization program participants. Waitsfield can help in these efforts by providing program information locally, and by continuing to support Central Vermont Community Action.

ENERGY TASKS

- 1) Conduct an “energy audit” of town buildings and take corrective measures to reduce energy use. *[Select-board]*
- 2) Review the policies of this plan related to wind generators in the event the federal government establishes and pursues a common-sense, sustainable energy policy which emphasizes reduced consumption, conservation and energy independence. *[Planning Commission]*
- 3) Explore incentives to local employers (e.g., reduce on-site parking requirements) in exchange for programs to reduce their employees’ reliance on single-occupancy vehicles for commuting (e.g., ride-share programs). *[Planning Commission]*

12. Land Use

This chapter describes a future land use plan for Waitsfield. In doing so, it is, in part, the culmination of the preceding chapters of the plan. Many of the policies related to the protection and enhancement of cultural and natural resources, housing and economic development are closely related to land use. Likewise, questions concerning how Waitsfield will meet the needs of a growing population, address transportation needs and provide community facilities and services are all impacted by land use decisions and policies. To avoid redundancy, the policies of previous chapters related to land use are not reiterated, although those considerations are all reflected in the following discussion.

Identifying a common plan for the use and development of land, and achieving that plan through government policies and regulations, is among the most important, and controversial, planning issue faced by local communities. Historically, almost all land use decisions were made by individual land owners. Because of the profound impact that these many individual decisions have on the community—affecting property values, the demand for public services and facilities, environmental health, public safety, the availability of finite resources, economic opportunity, and the local quality of life, land use decisions are increasingly recognized as a legitimate public concern. These concerns must be balanced with the legal rights of landowners which are defined by a combination of local, state and federal law, and are afforded basic protections under both the Vermont and U.S. constitutions.

CURRENT LAND USE

Existing land uses are the result of over 200 years of Waitsfield's development and evolution. As stated elsewhere, Waitsfield is a rural community with a working landscape, a regional commercial center, a bedroom community, a tourist destination, and is home to a variety of species, habitats and natural re-

sources. This is reflected in the dominant land uses and types of land cover that presently exist. A breakdown of land use/land cover, by acreage estimated from infrared satellite-photos, is provided in Table 12-1.

A dominant characteristic of Waitsfield is the extensive forest cover, especially in mountainous areas and on steep slopes rising from the valley floor. The Town's physical character, however, is defined by the contrasting patchwork of that forest with large areas of farmland, especially in the vicinity of Waitsfield Common and the Valley floor, and an attractive built environment. Commercial development is concentrated in existing centers – Waitsfield Village and Irasville—and in the Limited Business and Industrial Districts. Residential development is widely distributed throughout Town, although concentrations exist in the village centers and in rural areas served by major roads nearby the villages.

PAST & FUTURE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Waitsfield has been actively involved in land use planning and development regulation since the early 1970's, and to a lesser extent for many years prior. The future land use plan for the Town builds upon historic precedent and past planning efforts. Put simply, it is based upon the desire to maintain and reinforce the Town's traditional settlement pattern. This pattern is distinguished by the following distinct features:

- ◆ **Compact, mixed use village centers, and industrial areas, served by major transportation routes,**
- ◆ **A rural landscape surrounding the village centers, encompassing working farms, open meadows and forest and low density residential development;**
- ◆ **Small, compact residential "hamlets" located in appropriate locations throughout the rural landscape, and**
- ◆ **The least accessible and most fragile areas, including the mountainous eastern boundary, remaining essentially undeveloped.**

To this end, the Town has designated distinct land use districts, each with a different character and subject to different pressures and land use considerations (see Map 10). The following sections describe the unique development context of each district, identify key considerations regarding future land use and development, and establish the foundation for goals and policies set forth at the end of this chapter.

**TABLE 12.1 WAITSFIELD
LAND USE/LAND COVER**

Category	Approximate Acreage
Forest Cover	12,265
Agriculture/Open Land	3,278
Residential	420
Shrub/Scrubland	372
Surface Waters	132
Commercial/Services	75
Government/Institutional	17
Industrial	16
Sand/Gravel	14
Outdoor Recreation	13
Cemeteries	11
Mixed Commercial / Residential	9
<i>Source: Central VT Regional Planning Commission, Land Use/Land Cover Data</i>	

It is noteworthy that much of the discussion regarding land use districts involves consideration of development regulations. Where appropriate, non-regulatory tools and programs are also addressed, although these were included to a greater extent in previous chapters. The reason for this is that the Town Plan serves as the blueprint for the Town's development regulations. An important goal of any planning process that results in the adoption of land use regulations is to balance the legitimate interests of the community, as expressed through public policies, with the rights and expectations of individual landowners. The extent to which a community achieves such a balance, however, is always subject to individual judgement and interpretation.

RURAL & CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Forest Reserve District

The Forest Reserve District is defined as all land with an elevation of 1,500 feet and above, a total of approximately 4,800 acres, most of which is located in the Northfield Range. The district boundary was established due to changes in geography and geology which make these upland areas poorly suited for development. This is especially true at higher elevations—above 1,700'—which deserves special consideration regarding land use and development. Distinguishing features of the Forest Reserve District include:

- ◆ **Extensive areas of steep slopes, especially above an elevation of 1,700 feet;**
- ◆ **Thin, highly erodible soils;**
- ◆ **Over 32 miles of small, fragile headwater streams;**
- ◆ **Highly visible—and scenic—hillsides and ridgelines;**
- ◆ **Very limited access to maintained roads, with no maintained roads serving land above 1,700 feet;**
- ◆ **Large tracts of productive forest land and, according to the Vermont Biodiversity project, extensive areas of "core" wildlife habitat.**

Although portions of the Forest Reserve District were once used for agriculture, as evidenced by stone walls and patchwork forest patterns, it is almost entirely forested today. Historically, development in the forest reserve district has been limited, with scattered camps and very few single family homes. All existing year-round homes are located below 1,700 feet. Changing construction and transportation technology in recent years, however, and a growing market for lots which afford a big view, have increased devel-

opment pressure in this district. This raises several land use concerns, summarized below.

• **Road Access.** The Forest Reserve District encompasses the least accessible areas of town. Few roads provide access, most of those being un-maintained class 4 roads (such as Palmer Hill, Northfield Gap and Bowen Roads in the Northfield Range, and the Dana Hill Road in the south-west corner of Town). Because of the physical conditions found throughout this district, road improvements are expensive and difficult to maintain. This is exacerbated by the distance from other Town roads and services.

Proposals to upgrade class 4 roads to provide year-round access for residential development have been made in recent years. Such upgrades could alter the character of the district through increased pressure to subdivide large parcels for year-round residences, resulting in the fragmentation of wildlife habitat (see Chapter 3). Emergency access to development in this district is also difficult due to site conditions, and the potential exists for conflict between year-round automobile traffic and other traditional activities, such as logging operations and recreation.

• **Residential Development.** Related to the encroachment of maintained roads into this district is the increased attraction of the area for residential development. The district has traditionally been used for timber production, primitive camps and recreation. Not only will additional residential development lead to further land fragmentation, it could burden the Town with increased demand for services in remote areas; increase the potential for conflict between homeowners and other traditional users of the area; result in the diminishment of water quality in headwater streams; and adversely impact prominent ridgelines and hillsides.

In order to limit the adverse impacts of additional residential development in this district, the upgrade of roads and subdivision of large forest parcels should be discouraged. If residential development does occur, careful site selection and screening of new homes should occur, and landowners should be encouraged to restrict further subdivision of large parcels. It is especially important that development be limited to those areas that are most accessible and pose the fewest physical constraints and lowest risk of environmental degradation—land below an elevation of 1,700 feet.

• **Forestry.** Much of the property within the Forest Reserve District is managed in accordance with a forest management plan, and two large parcels are in public ownership and under multiple-use management (Scrag Municipal Forest and Camels Hump State Forest). As was stated elsewhere in this plan, good forest management can ensure a sustainable income from timber harvesting while maintaining a healthy environment. A key to good forest management is incorporating Best Management Practices (BMPs) to ensure water quality, minimize soil loss, promote forest regeneration, maintain and enhance habitat and create forest conditions that are aesthetically pleasing.

Programs are available to provide financial incentives to landowners in return for sound management of their property. The state current use program provides tax relief for landowners in return for forest management, and several state and local programs are available to purchase conservation easements from willing landowners.

• **Wildlife, Headwater Streams & Recreation.** Important to any consideration of land use and/or development activity in the Forest Reserve District is the potential impact on wildlife habitat, aesthetics, water quality in headwater streams, and the availability of an adequate land-base for dispersed, non-commercial outdoor recreation such as hiking, hunting, and snowmobiling. The public has a clear interest in protecting some of these resources, such as clean water and viable wildlife populations, which is addressed above and in Chapter 3. Maintaining access for recreation, however, is largely dependent upon the cooperation of landowners. Several large parcels have been posted to prohibit recreational use in recent years, emphasizing the importance of maintaining class 4 roads for recreational use, and of securing better access to Scrag Town Forest. Other options to maintain public access, including property tax abatement in exchange for leaving property un-posted, should be explored.

Agricultural-Residential District

The largest land use district in Waitsfield—encompassing approximately 10,860 acres—is the Agricultural-Residential District. Within this district is the majority of the Town’s open land, including several active farms, significant wildlife habitat (especially deeryards), the majority of the Town’s housing

units, and a handful of small businesses.

As its name implies, this district was established to accommodate two dominant land uses—agriculture (including forestry) and housing. With single family homes on lots of varying sizes being the dominant type of housing, maintaining a balance between these two land uses, while maintaining the district’s rural character, is an ongoing challenge. Issues associated with this challenge are addressed below.

• **Rural Character.** The landscape within the Agricultural-Residential District is a critical element of Waitsfield’s rural character and special charm. The term rural character may be ambiguous, although in 1988 an attempt was made to identify the landscape features which define the Mad River Valley’s rural character. The **Mad River Valley Rural Resource Protection Plan** loosely defines rural character as the historic working landscape formed by open farmland, barns, farmhouses and other historic structures, the scenic backdrop formed by forested hillsides and mountains, tree shaded roads and a meandering river.

Maintaining the Town’s rural character has long been a planning goal of the community, and continues to be emphasized within this district. Methods to maintain the rural landscape include continued support and protection of the “working” features of the working landscape—agriculture and forestry—and balancing that with the careful development of new housing. Achieving this balance is among the most important land use challenges facing the community. The need for additional affordable housing—especially ownership opportunities for middle-income households—is critical to Waitsfield’s economic and social well-being. New approaches that support residential development in appropriate locations while protecting the land base needed to maintain a working landscape in this district are required for Waitsfield to avoid losing its rural character and to prevent excessive over development [see sidebar—page 128].

• **Agriculture & Forestry.** Despite widespread decline in agriculture in many areas of Vermont, farming has fared relatively well in Waitsfield since the last major plan update in 1993. Presently, nearly 3,300 acres of land is open, much of which is in agricultural production. This includes five dairy farms that were in operation in 1993. In addition, new farm enterprises

have started in the past few years, including two commercial vegetable farms and a beef operation. Other cattle and sheep operations also continue to operate, as does a commercial greenhouse that is something of a spring-time Mecca for gardeners from throughout Vermont.

In addition to commercial agriculture, there has been a sharp increase in the number of horses inhabiting the Mad River Valley over the past 10 years. This helps to maintain the agrarian landscape, fosters a direct relationship between landowners and the land, and provides a market for local agricultural products such as hay.

Maintaining a land base for farming and forestry not only helps to maintain Waitsfield's rural character and working landscape, it contributes to the local economic base in a sustainable manner. And, in the face of global climate change and an increasing world population, maintaining a local food supply may prove in the long run to be critical to the community's survival. At the same time, the current demand for housing options for local residents is not expected to decline in the near future (see Chapter 6), and much of the Town's new residential growth will likely occur in the Agricultural-Residential District. Maintaining a land base for the production of food and fiber while accommodating the demand for housing is among the greatest challenges facing Waitsfield.

Methods to prevent the conversion of farmland to development and support the economic viability of agriculture include both regulatory and non-regulatory programs. Both should focus on the most productive farm and forest land, such as large tracts of primary agricultural soils, and on lands which are characterized by multiple resources (e.g., outstanding scenery, historic structures, wildlife habitat). When considering the appropriate tool(s) to maintain the economic viability of farmland, it is important to maintain a long term (i.e., multi-generational) perspective of what is economically viable, rather than making such a determination at a single point in time.

Non-regulatory tools that have been used successfully in the past include the Town's tax abatement program for working farms, which reduces the tax burden on farmers, and land conservation programs in which a conservation easement may be purchased on farmland, thereby removing the development

rights and leaving the land affordable for farmers. All or portions of five farm properties, including three dairy farms, have benefitted from the purchase of development rights within the past 15 years (see Chapters 3 and 4).

• Land Subdivision & Residential Development. Due to traditional land uses in the Agricultural-Residential District, a great deal of property remains in large parcels under agricultural or forestry management. As fewer and fewer Town residents continued to be engaged in farming, however, land subdivision, primarily for residential purposes, has reshaped large portions of the landscape in recent decades. While the subdivision of large parcels frequently benefit the community by providing housing sites for local residents and allowing the transfer of property between parties, poorly conceived subdivision can result in a degradation of the environment and severe impacts on scenic and natural resources.

For the past fifteen years the Town has been actively guiding emerging development patterns through the regulation of subdivisions. While this has resulted in more thoughtful subdivision of land, and has ensured that the protection of important natural resources is a consideration during any subdivision application process, the rate of subdivision, and residential development, does not appear to have been affected. During the 1990s 148 new lots were created, almost all of which were located in the Agricultural-Residential District (see Table 12.1).

Through the subdivision regulations, the Town can ensure that new development does not harm sensitive natural areas, that adequate sewage disposal and water supplies exist, that new roads and utilities are coordinated with improvements on neighboring properties and will meet minimum standards, that farm and forest land remain available for production, and that residential development is encouraged at appropriate densities in appropriate locations.

Common methods of limiting impacts on natural resources and fragile features is through the identification of buildable areas on proposed lots, typically through the use of designated building envelopes, and through the use of "conservation" or "open space" subdivisions. A building envelope is the area on which construction will occur, typically selected as the portion of the lot upon which development will have the minimum adverse impact. Figures 12.1

TABLE 12.2 PERMITTED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT • 1990—2002

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
New Lots Created	18	38	—	—	32	32	2	18	—	8	9	13	14
Single Family Permits Issued	9	11	8	6	15	15	21	8	12	8	22	7	12

Source: Town Reports, 1991–2003

and 12.2 illustrate how a building envelope is used to allow for a house site while preserving the agricultural use of an open meadow.

Conservation subdivisions are intended to ensure that subdivision design is based on the identification and protection of key site elements, such as open fields, steep slopes, etc., and that building envelopes and site improvements are sited, and property boundaries configured, to minimize the impact and fragmentation of those features. Often, clustering of the development on the least sensitive portion of the subdivided parcel is an important feature of conservation subdivisions. Figure 12.3 illustrates how a small (four-lot) subdivision can be designed in this manner.

• **Residential Hamlets & Density.** As explained above, the Agricultural-Residential District is the primary location for housing development in the Town (although policies of this plan call for a greater concentration of housing within growth centers). Single family homes on moderate sized lots (2-15 acres) comprise the majority of housing in this district. The demand for residential development will increase, especially if the factors contributing to the desirability of Waitsfield as a bedroom community continue as expected.

While the current zoning allows one housing unit on a single acre, some areas of Town are better suited than others for moderate and high density residential development. This is especially true for areas

Figure 12.1

In this example, the house and driveway are sited in the middle of the open field.

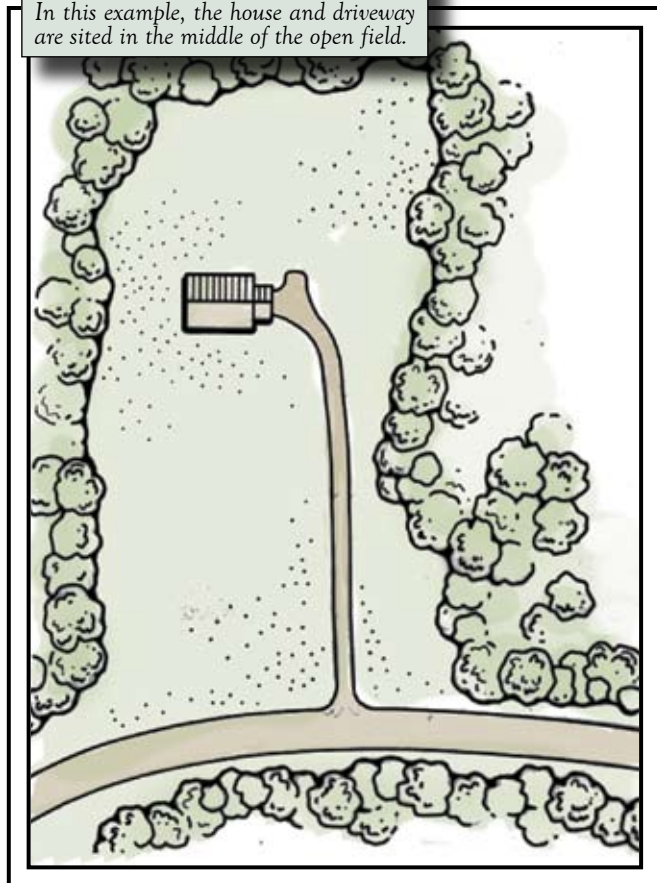
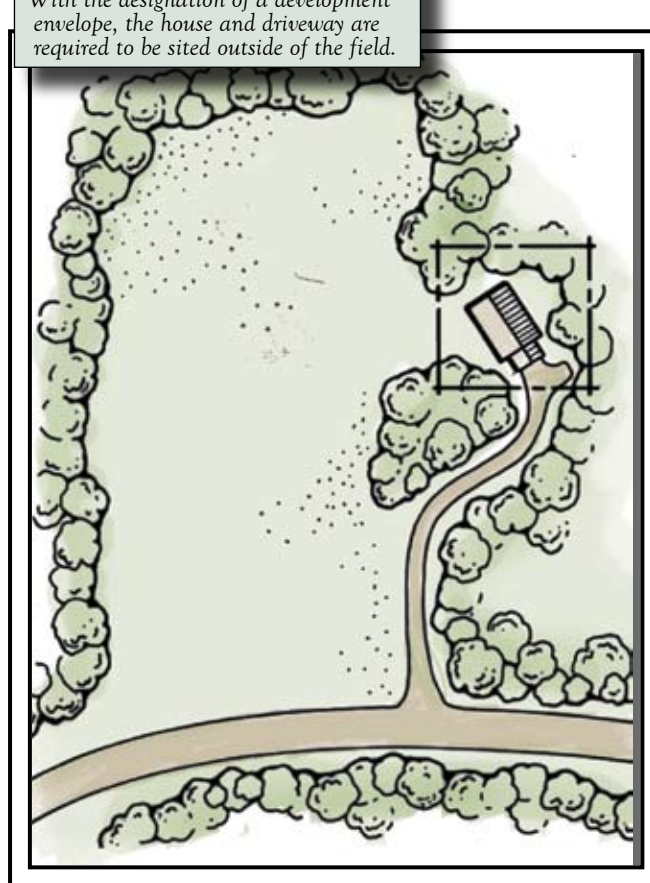


Figure 12.2

With the designation of a development envelope, the house and driveway are required to be sited outside of the field.



near Town services. Specific areas that have been identified for consideration for greater residential densities include:

- ◆ **Land north of Waitsfield Village and west of Route 100;**
- ◆ **Land adjacent to Route 100 and the Warren town boundary, in the vicinity of the Bundy gallery;**
- ◆ **Opportunities for small-scale in-fill development in the area to the south/west of the lower East Warren Road, including the area served by the Hastings and Palmer Hill Roads; and**
- ◆ **Other areas that may be identified through a public planning effort.**
- ◆ **Those areas characterized by undeveloped open land, significant natural resources (i.e. floodplains, steep slopes etc.), and limited proximity to town services, are not suited for moderate density residential development. These include:**
- ◆ **Productive farmland, especially along the Mad River/Route 100 corridor and the Common and East Warren Roads; and**
- ◆ **Areas with steep slopes and extensive deeryards; and**
- ◆ **Higher elevation ridges and knolls which rise above the Mad River and are highly visible from Route 100.**

Incentives to encourage higher density residential development and new residential “hamlets” (small clusters of houses configured in a traditional small-village pattern or oriented around common features such as a park or open space) in those areas that are appropriate for development, while discouraging development in other areas, should be explored. For such a strategy to work, the community will need to have an informed debate regarding desired development patterns and residential densities in the Agricultural-Residential District.

• **Commercial Enterprises.** Other than farming and forestry, housing is the primary land use in this district. Because of the potential conflict between residential and commercial uses, especially in a rural area, few commercial land uses are allowed in the Agricultural-Residential District. Potential conflicts include high traffic volumes generated by many commercial activities, noise and similar disturbances to neighborhood tranquility, and community support for strengthening village districts in Town which could be undermined by commercial sprawl.

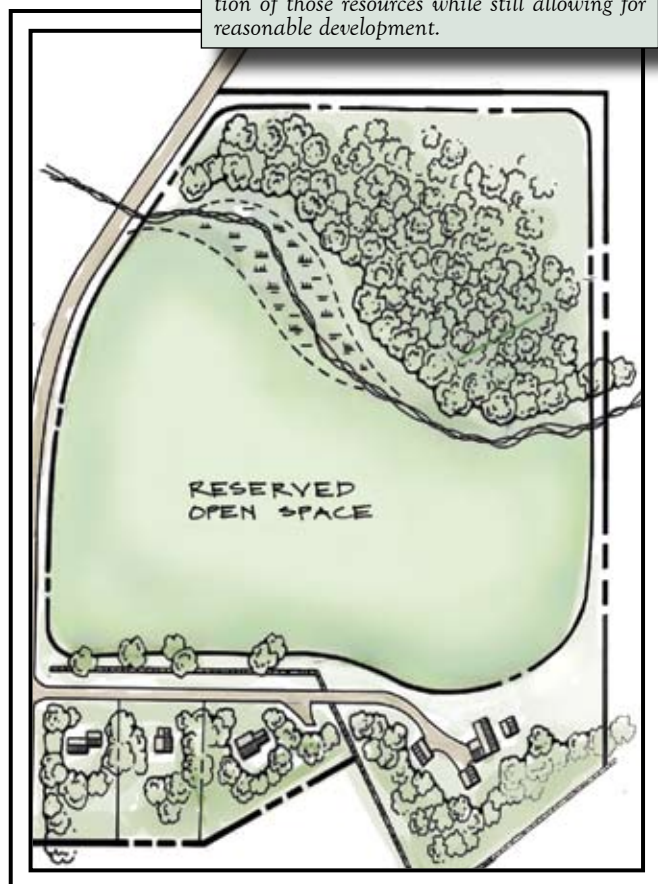
A commercial activity which is of growing importance in the Agricultural-Residential District are home-based businesses. Advances in communications and technology, and the trend toward small

cottage industries, have increased the important role played by home occupations in Vermont’s economy. According to the 2000 census 10.2% of Waitsfield’s labor force is employed at home, nearly double the percentage of the County’s (5.9%) and state’s (5.7%) labor force working at home. The challenge posed by home-based businesses is ensuring that they are compatible with the rural, residential setting, and do not impact neighboring properties through noise, outdoor storage or traffic, or disturb the residential character of neighborhoods.

A limited number of other commercial activities may be compatible with residential neighborhoods in rural settings. These include small lodges and inns and certain recreation and cultural facilities. Such uses can be designed to minimize potential conflicts with residential development and actually be an amenity to area residences. Methods to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts include prohibiting large scale activities

Figure 12.3

With the identification of critical conservation resources, and designing the subdivision carefully, the land may be subdivided in a manner that avoids adverse impacts and fragmentation of those resources while still allowing for reasonable development.



REGULATORY APPROACHES TO MAINTAINING RURAL CHARACTER

Several options for guiding development in a manner that protects fragile natural resources, conserves productive farm and forest land and maintains the rural character of Waitsfield's Agricultural-Residential and Commercial Lodging Districts have been identified. These include:

- ◆ Designate "Rural Hamlets"—locations within the Agricultural-Residential and Commercial Lodging District that are appropriate for higher density residential neighborhoods;
- ◆ Establish one or more "overlay districts" to protect primary agricultural soils, 100 year floodplains, critical habitat, wetlands and other sensitive natural features;
- ◆ Allow the transfer of development rights from land characterized by sensitive natural features to identified hamlets and other growth centers;
- ◆ Consider options for reducing residential density outside of designated hamlets, such as basing density on the amount of "developable" land on a parcel, larger minimum lot size and/or lower allowed density, and fixed-area based zoning, coupled with the possible establishment of minimum densities in appropriate locations (e.g., hamlets);
- ◆ Rather than a single minimum lot size, regulate density through a weighted criteria based upon a parcel's development capacity, proximity to community services, type of highway access, and impact on sensitive natural resources;
- ◆ Require, outside of designated hamlets, that subdivisions reflect a "conservation" design which limits impact on primary agricultural soils, 100 year floodplain, critical habitat and other sensitive natural resources;
- ◆ Develop siting and associated development standards for development, including single family dwellings, to avoid or mitigate impacts on sensitive scenic resources such as ridge-lines and hilltops.
- ◆ Continue to channel a significant portion of future development into designated growth centers.



and large traffic generators, ensuring that buildings and uses are of a scale and design that are compatible with residential uses, and locating such uses in historic structures that are no longer viable for their original function (e.g., historic barns—see Chapter 4).

• **Resource Extraction.** The demand for the extraction of such natural resources as sand and gravel and potable water for commercial sale are also important issues relating to land use in the Agricultural-Residential District. Unlike most other land uses, resource extraction by its very nature must occur where those resources are located. This presents the potential for conflict with such other less intensive land uses as housing and recreation.

Sand and gravel extraction may be controlled through zoning to ensure minimal impact on scenic resources during operation and after restoration of the site. Such safeguards as screening, landscaping, restoration plans, bonding for restoration, restricted hours of operation, limited rates of extraction and appropriate traffic management can be considered while reviewing proposed extractions. The impact of trucking sand and gravel on Town roads is of particular concern. This may also be addressed by controlling the number, duration and character of truck traffic to ensure road safety, minimize impacts on the neighborhood and avoid excessive deterioration of Town roads.

The commercial extraction of groundwater is another issue which has been much discussed locally in past years. Commercial groundwater extraction could provide benefits to the Town, including the potential for maintaining large tracts of undeveloped open space. As productive land becomes less economically practical to manage solely for agriculture and forestry, other financial incentives need to be available for landowners to maintain large tracts of undeveloped land. Commercial water extraction provides such an incentive.

Many of the same issues relating to gravel extraction also apply to water extraction, although the disruption of a site resulting from water extraction is not nearly as severe as a gravel pit. Truck traffic and impacts to groundwater are important considerations. With regard to traffic, however, alternative means of transporting water (e.g., pipelines) could be available that are not possible with gravel extraction.

The impact of groundwater extraction on neighboring water supplies, and on the public interest of ensuring that an adequate supply of water remains in the community, are also important issues. Prior to any large scale withdrawal safeguards to ensure that neighboring water supplies will not be adversely affected should be established, and issues associated with the impact that the privatization of a basic life

To Be or Not to Be?

What is a “Residential Hamlet”?

Compact residential “hamlets” are a common feature of the Vermont landscape. Historically, the term hamlet has referred to predominately residential clusters of development that lack the full range of civic and commercial buildings and activities associated with larger villages. In Waitsfield, it is hoped that one or more hamlets might be developed in appropriate locations to accommodate a share of the residential development that is likely to occur outside designated growth centers. Such hamlets would typically include a combination of the following:

- ◆ Compact settlement pattern characterized by homes clustered together with either a visual relationship to one another, the adjacent road, a common green or park, or sited to avoid impact to one or more natural resource;
- ◆ Concentrated density, with building lots of less than ½ acre, and preferably less than 1/4 acre;
- ◆ Small scale, with the number of residences being as few as four or as many as 20;
- ◆ Residential character, with the only non-residential uses being a focal point for the hamlet, such as a community building, place of worship or, in limited circumstances, a general store to provide goods to the surrounding neighborhood;
- ◆ The presence of a common, small green or neighborhood park;
- ◆ Surrounding open space (either farmland or forest), which helps define the compact hamlet relative to the open, rural character of the Agriculture-Residential District.

resource and the transport of that resource out of the watershed addressed.

Commercial Lodging District

The Commercial Lodging District, encompassing nearly 560 acres along portions of the Route 100 corridor between Irasville and the Warren Town line, is similar in character to the Agricultural-Residential District. A major distinction between the two districts, both with regard to historic development patterns and current zoning standards, is the presence of several commercial and cultural facilities. These include the Featherbed Inn, Lareau Farm Inn/American Flatbread, Madbush Inn, Bundy Gallery, and the Yestermorrow School. These uses are generally consistent with the original purpose of the district which, in addition to allowing comparable uses and standards as those allowed in the Agricultural-Residential District, was to accommodate tourist accommodations and related development in an area with direct access to Route 100 and reasonable proximity to the Valley's major tourist attractions.

Because of its location on the transportation loop formed by Routes 100, Route 17, German Flats Road and the Sugarbush Access Road, and the careful selection of district boundaries to avoid sensitive scenic and natural areas, this district is uniquely positioned to accommodate certain activities designed to serve both residents and visitors to the Valley. Changing economic conditions, including hotel development at Sugarbush Resort, and the expansion of certain existing uses beyond what was originally intended, have prompted a reconsideration of the district's purpose and standards. Unlike reconsideration of other districts, questions regarding the future of the Commercial Lodging District have yet to be resolved. Issues that should be addressed, however, include the following:

•Rural Character. The general character and landscape of the Commercial Lodging District is quite similar to that of the surrounding Agricultural-Residential District. District boundaries were generally drawn to exclude highly visible areas and productive farmland, that could mitigate the impacts of non-residential development. The district is also served by the Mad Bus, although the distance from village centers necessitates that most commercial activities be automobile-dependent.

The same strategies used to maintain the rural char-

acter of the Agricultural-Residential District apply to the Commercial Lodging District. Regardless of the use, careful consideration should be given to ensure that new development is well screened and landscaped, takes full advantage of natural site conditions and does not detract from the character of adjacent properties, including those on the west side of Route 100. Site design should reflect the traditional rural character of the Route 100 corridor, and every effort should be made to discourage suburban or strip development patterns within this district. In instances involving agricultural land, an effort should be made to site development in a manner which preserves the existing character of open fields. Commercial uses should only be allowed at very low densities, preferably in association with the preservation of open space.

•Land Use. A key concern regarding the future of the Commercial Lodging District is the appropriate mix of uses that should be allowed. Originally designed as a location for large-scale resorts on the Valley floor, recent pressure has been on the development of non-resort enterprises, including food products, and cultural and recreation facilities. The vision of large scale resort development may no longer be shared by the community, although the continuation of small and mid-size lodges and inns are an important tourist amenity.

Another option is to allow certain small-scale industrial businesses that are compatible with the rural setting as a way to promote well-paying jobs. Such businesses are encouraged within designated growth centers, however, and may not be appropriate throughout the district. If allowed, such uses could be limited to those that are low-density (e.g., require a sizable acreage) and which are associated with a value-added processing of local agricultural and forest products (e.g., food products, wood products), thereby linking the business to policies designed to protect the Town's rural character and working landscape.

VILLAGES & GROWTH CENTERS

Waitsfield Village

Waitsfield Village historically served as the Town's commercial and service center, although much of the retail and commercial base has shifted to Irasville in recent decades. But most community services, including the fire department and ambulance service,

library, town offices and elementary school, remain in the village.

The Planning Commission examined Village land use in 2001 to address concerns regarding the zoning that existed at that time. It was felt that the standards then in effect did not reflect historic settlement patterns, including setbacks and lot sizes, that the district boundaries were excessive and included land unsuitable for Village development, and that the zoning did not adequately promote Village housing. After considerable community debate, and the active participation of Village landowners and representatives of the Waitsfield Historical Society, significant changes to the zoning that had been in place for over 20 years were adopted. A key change was the creation of two districts—the **Village Business District** and the **Village Residential District** (the Village had until this point comprised a single district). Despite this distinction, considerations regarding future land use within the Village are addressed for the Village as a whole.

• **Village Character.** As was explained in Chapter 4, Waitsfield Village is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District. This designation recognizes the historic mix of architectural styles present in the village, as well its representation of the classic New England development pattern characterized by a compact development center, dominant public buildings and the contrast between the village and surrounding countryside. While the village's historic character is largely intact, much of the contemporary development at the northern end deviates from the traditional styles found elsewhere in the village. A Historic Village Overlay District was adopted in 2002 to ensure that future development is compatible with the Village's historic character, and to discourage the demolition of historic structures.

Discouraging single-story architecture also should help maintain the Village's traditional scale, and careful consideration should be given to the impact of signage and lighting to avoid detracting from the pleasant streetscape found in the Village. Opportunities for enhancing the streetscapes should also be pursued, including planting trees to reinforce a canopy along Route 100 and Bridge Street and to ensure the continued presence of shade trees in front and side yards.

Finally, an important element of the Village's his-

toric character is the sharp contrast between the compact village and the surrounding countryside. The wooded hillside west of the Village, and farm fields to the east, are subject to conservation easements and will remain undeveloped. The Mad River and the exposed ledges and winding character of Route 100 to the south also define strong boundaries and a clear southern gateway to the Village. The area to the north of the village, however, including agricultural land bordering Route 100, is critical to maintaining the sharp distinction between the village and the surrounding countryside. Although the Village Residential District begins adjacent to the General Wait House, the northern boundary of the Waitsfield Elementary School property and the row of pine trees north of the Waitsfield Telecom property create a strong northern gateway.

Village Housing. The Village Residential District was established to maintain the residential character of the Village outside of the historic commercial core in the vicinity of Bridge Street, and to encourage additional residential development. Land west of Route 100, surrounding the "polo field," provides an exceptional opportunity to expand the Village with the creation of side streets and high density single-family housing configured in a pattern and scale typical of traditional Vermont villages. The presence of the polo field also presents an opportunity to establish a formal "village green" which could be a powerful organizing feature around which to configure village housing and one or more prominent civic buildings.

Efforts are also needed to maintain the existing housing base of the Village, and to discourage the conversion of residential properties to solely commercial uses. Requiring that some commercial uses—such as retail and offices—locate within mixed use buildings, and encouraging upstairs apartments through incentives and favorable development standards, should maintain a housing base and protect the Village's residential character.

Business & Civic Land Uses. Waitsfield Village has historically served as the commercial and service center for much of the Mad River Valley. While many of the retail and professional businesses have relocated to the shopping centers in Irasville, between 80,000 and 90,000 square feet of commercial and institutional floor space is currently located in the Village. Much of this total is comprised of professional office

space and municipal services.

Existing retail uses are located throughout the Village, especially on Bridge Street and along Route 100 north of Bridge Street, which has been designated as the Village Business District. Most of these businesses are craft and specialty shops primarily catering to out of town visitors. The Bridge Street Market Place, a commercial complex in the core of the village consisting of four historic structures renovated with the aid of Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits, was designed as a retail center. Because of a high demand for office space, much of the marketplace is occupied by non-retail uses. While these firms don't contribute to the village's attraction as a commercial destination, they do provide high quality employment unaffected by the cyclical nature of the tourism industry.

District Boundaries. The Village Business District should continue as a retail, service and employment center for the Valley. Specialty shops should be encouraged to occupy the storefront shops along Bridge Street and Route 100, and professional and business offices should occupy rear areas and second floors. At only 7.4 acres, however, the Business District does not encompass all properties that could be considered part of the Village's commercial core. Modest expansion of the district both to the south and north could enhance the economic potential of the district, but should only occur if such expansion will not detract from the historic character of the Village, or the residential character of the Village residential District.

Irasville

The Irasville Village District has served as Waitsfield's principal growth center for nearly 30 years. Centrally located in the Mad River Valley at the crossroads of Routes 100 and 17, Irasville is the result of farsighted land use policies and public and private investment initiated in the 1970s and continuing through today. Encompassing approximately 190 acres—Irasville was envisioned as a compact, mixed use village serving the commercial, cultural and housing needs of the Mad River Valley. Nearly 200,000 square feet of mixed-commercial space, over 80 residential dwellings, and several recreation facilities have been constructed in Irasville since it was first designated as a growth center.

Irasville not only serves Waitsfield residents—the

neighboring towns of Fayston, Moretown and Warren all recognize Irasville as their communities' "downtown" in their respective town plans. This function as the Valley's downtown has been supported with strategic infrastructure improvements, including road construction to establish a partial grid street network, and sidewalk construction to provide pedestrian access within Irasville and a pedestrian connection to historic Waitsfield Village. The lack of community wastewater or water systems, however, coupled with the lack of integrated stormwater management, have resulted in a fragmented development pattern and limited capacity to accommodate anticipated growth pressure.

Master Planning. Several master planning efforts have been initiated in the years since Irasville was first designated as the Town's growth center. The goal of each of these efforts was the preparation of a master plan that:

- ◆ **Illustrates the desired future development—or "build-out"—of the district in a manner that reflects an efficient use of land and a high density, pedestrian oriented village center;**
- ◆ **Defines the development characteristics that should provide the necessary foundation for improved building and site design standards under the town's development regulations;**
- ◆ **Establishes a framework to ensure that development results in an inter-connected network of roads and paths, including specific road and path connections, which in combination will reduce reliance on the automobile and provide local alternatives to Route 100;**
- ◆ **Identifies open space that should be incorporated into development plans, including both formal (e.g., village green) and informal (natural area, wetland) types of open space; and**
- ◆ **Addresses facility and infrastructure needs, including stormwater management facilities needed to address the potential water quality impacts of high density development in a coordinated manner.**

Master planning efforts date back at least to the early 1980s. The first comprehensive physical design for Irasville, however, was prepared in 1997. This effort was partly an outgrowth of the Mad River Green expansion and addressed the area between Evergreen Place and Winter Park, west of Route 100. It proposed a compact downtown characterized by an interconnected grid of streets and sidewalks, well defined streetscapes, two village greens and multi-story buildings housing a mix of commercial, civic and residential uses.

The master planning efforts were expanded and further refined in 2002 when the town received a sustainable communities grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop a master plan for the entire district. That plan is summarized in the Master Development Plan for the Irasville Growth Center: A Vision for a New Village, dated September 2002, prepared by Lamaroux & Dickenson Consulting Engineers and landscape architect Robert White. This plan illustrates many of the design concepts that should characterize future development in Irasville, although further refinement of the plan is still needed.

While no single master plan has been formerly endorsed by the town, several key design concepts and development issues have been identified during the various master planning efforts. These were consolidated into a conceptual plan prepared by Landplan Inc. as part of the development of this town plan and are presented on Map 9.A. These concepts and issues are addressed in greater detail below.

Settlement Patterns. Much of Irasville's early development was designed to function as a more automobile oriented growth center, in contrast to Waitsfield Village. Thus, much of the development that occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s—Fiddlers Green, Mad River Green, Village Square, Shaws, Winter Park—lack pedestrian orientation and scale, and are poorly integrated with one another either functionally or visually. Following an approximately fifteen year lull in development, pressure to construct new office, retail and residential space resumed in the late 1990s.

The expansion of Mad River Green and the construction of the Northfield Savings Bank—and associated construction of a new road serving those uses—marked the first significant development since the early 1980s. That project also marked a shift away from automobile oriented development to a denser, more pedestrian oriented pattern reminiscent of traditional Vermont villages. That is the pattern that should continue to characterize new development in Irasville. Defining features of this desired settlement pattern include:

- ◆ **An interconnected network of roads and pedestrian paths;**
- ◆ **Well defined streetscapes, defined by closely spaced buildings fronting close to the road, sidewalks, street trees and, where possible, on-street parking;**

- ◆ **Opportunities for rear-yard “in-fill” development where defined streetscapes are not present or practical;**
- ◆ **Formal and informal open spaces, including a village green(s) and greenway network, possibly encompassing “green infrastructure,” such as stormwater facilities;**
- ◆ **Multi-story buildings;**
- ◆ **A pedestrian scale of site and building design;**
- ◆ **A mix of uses, including upper-story dwellings where practical; and**
- ◆ **A density of development that is considerably higher than adjacent districts, especially the Agricultural-Residential and Commercial-Lodging Districts.**

To achieve these development features, further refinement of the 2002 master plan will be required, and the town's development regulations will need to be updated so that new development is required—or allowed—to occur in the desired pattern. In addition, key development constraints, most significantly the wet meadows between Mad River Green and the Carroll Road, may need to be developed, provided that the ecological function of the wetlands can be mitigated (see Chapter 3).

Not only are the scale, design, location and orientation of buildings critical to Irasville's emerging settlement pattern, but also the location and design of open space is critical as well. Future development should incorporate two key open space features into the overall design of the district—the establishment of a public green, or common, which can be used for community events, gatherings and recreation, as well as a less formal greenway and path network that would provide a natural contrast to developed areas.

Land Use & Character. As noted, Irasville encompasses a full range of land uses, including the Valley's principal commercial and service enterprises, a mix of single and multi-family dwellings (including several upper-story apartments), office space for a range of professional and business enterprises, and a limited amount of light manufacturing space.

The focus of most past development activity has been along both sides of Route 100 from the intersection of Bragg Hill north to the Couples Club driveway. This area provides the greatest opportunity for new construction and infill development and should be developed as the area's “downtown core” with a full range of commercial services, civic and cultural facilities, offices and multi-family housing. Surrounding areas, including land to the west and south of Winter

Park and adjacent to Brag Hill, provide opportunities for new residential neighborhoods.

The Irasville Business Park (formerly Mad River Canoe manufacturing buildings) and adjacent land north to Allen Lumber raise specific challenges to the community. Currently, buildings in this area are large monolithic structures that create more an appearance of an industrial park than a traditional village. Future development or re-development in this area should occur in a manner that minimizes—or reverses—potentially adverse impacts of such structures on the surrounding area through building design that reduces the mass and scale of large buildings and extensive landscaping and screening. Industrial uses, including service industries that do not provide on-site services or products to customers, should be limited to the area along the Fayston boundary between Mad River Canoe and Allen Lumber, and should not be allowed to encroach further to the east toward Route 100.

A third distinct area or neighborhood in Irasville is located below the upper terrace on which Mad River Green and Village square are located. Fiddlers Green is a low density commercial complex housing offices and service businesses such as a car wash and laundromat. To the north of Fiddlers Green is a predominately residential area in which approximately fifty dwellings are located. Additional in-fill development consisting of commercial, office and residential uses—in a manner that uses land more efficiently than past development—is appropriate on land with frontage on the Fiddlers Green Road. Land to the north, served by the Dugway and Butcher House Roads, provides another opportunity for residential neighborhood development.

A generalized land use plan for Irasville, identifying appropriate areas for residential, industrial, commercial and mixed use development, is included as map 10.A.

Facilities & Infrastructure. The lack of water and wastewater infrastructure was identified as a critical barrier to development within Irasville in Chapters 7 and 9. With the development of much of the best land behind us, the provision of water and/or sewer remains the most important infrastructure need.

Wetlands mitigation and stormwater management are also addressed specific to Irasville in Chapter 3. Again, how these issues are resolved will shape how

the district develops and evolves over time. The 2002 master plan envisioned that several wet meadows could be developed with mitigation to maintain and enhance their limited ecological values.

Roads and pathways are another key infrastructure consideration, which are addressed in Chapter 8. One of the most significant shortcomings of the 2002 master plan is the absence of key roadway connections—most importantly an extension of a road network that links the Carroll Road to Brag Hill Road west of Route 100, and a future connection from Winter Park south to the Old County Road in Waitsfield Village. Where and how these road connections are established should be considered before any specific development eliminates a desirable connection opportunity.

Another public amenity that is supported by a wide cross section of local residents is open space, including one or more formal “village greens” of a size and character sufficient to serve as a community focal point and gathering place for events such as the farmers market. The farmers market presently takes place on, and is outgrowing, private property adjacent to Mad River Green Shopping Center). Additional locations for a formal green include a portion of the open field adjacent to the Skatium. A defining feature of a village green, however, are clear boundaries defined by an attractive collection of buildings (see Map 9.A).

Finally, Irasville is well served by broad-band telecommunications infrastructure and three-phase power (see Chapters 7 and 9). In the future, new utility extensions should be located underground, and the feasibility of burying above ground utilities should be explored.

Industrial District

The Mad River (formerly “Fly-in”) Industrial Park is located with direct access to Route 100 from the Airport Road. It was designed to accommodate industrial and other high intensity land uses in an area which would not adversely impact the quality of life found in more rural areas, and was located in an area which would not generate high traffic volumes in already congested areas, or detract from the historic character and pedestrian scale of Waitsfield Village and Irasville.

After several years with very limited development activity, the park changed ownership in the late 1990s

and has seen a great deal of activity in recent years. In response to a realization that local zoning was inadequate to address recent development pressures, the Planning Commission worked with landowners and other local officials to revise the zoning standards and district boundaries in 2001. Today, an estimated 100-150 people are employed by businesses located in the park, and additional development is expected in the coming years.

• Land Uses. Mad River Park is well suited for light industrial and manufacturing uses. Such uses can not only be encouraged through zoning, but through active promotion and economic development policies and infrastructure as well (see Chapters 6 and 8). While some recreational uses do occur in the district (polo field), the future build-out of the district should be primarily light industry and related uses. Commercial uses, especially those which generate high traffic volumes from customers or require frequent access to the general public, such as retail and some office uses, should be limited to enterprises that are intended to provide services and goods to on-site employees rather than the general public.

• Performance Standards. The nature of many industrial uses often impact neighboring properties due to excessive noise, odors, vibration or similar results of industrial processes. To avoid such impacts, it is especially important that development in the Industrial District comply with well defined performance standards to address potential impacts which should be measured and enforced at the boundaries to the district.

• Master Planning. Past development in the park has been the result of incremental subdivision of lots and subsequent development of single sites. While the building and site design have generally been of very high quality, the emerging development pattern does not reflect the most efficient use of the land. This is important as the district is comprised of a finite land area, and future expansion may pose conflicts with neighboring properties. To ensure that the build-out of the Park occurs in a logical, efficient manner, a master plan should be prepared prior to additional subdivision and site development. Such a plan should provide a conceptual build-out of the park, including lot and road configuration, which could be implemented over time and revised if needed.

The Limited Business District is a small (45+ acres) area located east of Route 100, between Irasville and the Warren town boundary. The area was initially designated due to its central location within the Valley, although the intent was to limit development to commercial uses then in existence. Over the years, the area has grown to include a mix of uses that currently includes light industry, offices, a few residences and public facilities, including a VTrans maintenance facility and the Valley's only transfer station.

Character & Land Use. Due to past development, and state permit conditions associated with wetlands and deeryards located in the district, only limited land is available for future development. Existing uses may seek to expand over time, however, and some vacant and/or semi-developed land is available for additional development. Careful consideration should be given to site design, including:

- ◆ **Landscaping and screening to avoid any adverse visual impacts along Route 100;**
- ◆ **The elimination of curb cuts where shared access with neighboring properties is possible,**
- ◆ **A restriction of retail sales and other traffic generators; and**
- ◆ **Avoiding additional "frontage" lots which could reinforce a linear pattern of highway "strip development."**
- ◆ **Minimizing the impact on neighboring properties as a result of excessive or obnoxious odors, noise, or lighting.**

District Boundaries. Consideration was given to reducing the size of the district when zoning revisions were drafted in 2002. In response to landowner concerns, only minor changes to the existing boundaries were made to coincide with property boundaries. Future changes may be appropriate, although none should be undertaken that would increase the size of the district.

Limited Business Zone

LAND USE GOALS:

The preservation of Waitsfield's historic settlement pattern, defined by compact villages surrounded by rural countryside.

The regulation of land development in a manner which protects important cultural and natural resources while encouraging a range of land uses in appropriate locations.

Maintenance of a reasonable balance between community imposed limitations on land use and the rights of individual land owners.

LAND USE POLICIES:

- 1) Maintain the Town's historic settlement pattern of compact growth centers surrounded by rural countryside in accordance with the land use plan and associated land use districts described in this Chapter and depicted on Map 10.
- 2) Administer land use regulations, including zoning and subdivision regulations, in a fair and consistent manner, in accordance with all applicable development and land use policies of this plan.
- 3) Maintain the **Forest Reserve District** for the purpose of protecting significant forest resources and headwater streams and to limit development in areas with steep slopes, shallow soils, wildlife habitat, fragile features, scenic resources and poor access to Town roads, facilities and services. To this end,
 - a. Land use and development shall be limited to forestry, outdoor recreation, small seasonal camps, and year-round residential dwellings below an elevation of 1,700';
 - b. Roads and utilities shall not extend at or above elevations of 1,700' except to provide seasonal access to camps, forestry operations and for recreation;
 - c. Development shall be carefully controlled to avoid adverse visual impacts, degradation of water quality, and the large-scale fragmentation of wildlife habitat and productive forest;
 - d. When land is subdivided, provision should be made to ensure access for future forest management and to avoid potential conflicts between land uses;
 - e. Residential development shall occur at low densities (maximum of one unit per 25 acres), although lot sizes should remain relatively small (less than

5 acres, with the balance of the land being held in larger parcels) to avoid the fragmentation of forest land. Planned Residential developments are an appropriate means for clustering development in this manner.

- f. Forest management should incorporate Best Management Practices
- 4) Maintain the **Agricultural-Residential District** for the purpose of supporting the continued operation and expansion of agricultural operations, forest management, the preservation of rural resources and natural features, and to accommodate low density residential development while encouraging moderate or high density clustered residential development in appropriate locations. To this end:
 - a. Limit land uses to agriculture, forestry, residences, land based uses (e.g., recreation, extraction) and very limited commercial or public facilities that are compatible with the rural, residential character of the district;
 - b. Provide for the creation of clustered residential "hamlets" in appropriate locations, while offsetting those developments with lower density development and land conservation elsewhere in the district; and
 - c. Ensure that land subdivision and residential development is designed in a manner to protect the rural landscape (e.g., farmland, open meadows, forested ridgelines) and land characterized by fragile features (e.g., floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes), and to avoid the fragmentation and development of land containing significant areas of primary agricultural soils.
- 5) Land within the **Commercial-Lodging District** should continue to support agriculture, the preservation of rural resources and natural features, and accommodate moderate or high density clustered residential development and appropriate non-residential uses, in appropriate locations. To this end:
 - a. Limit land uses to agriculture, forestry, residences, and land based uses (e.g., recreation, extraction);
 - b. In addition to the aforementioned uses, evaluate other land uses, including small-to medium scale lodging facilities and associated guest amenities and other uses supportive of agriculture and forestry, to determine how they can operate in a manner that is compatible with objectives of the district;
 - c. Provide for the creation of clustered residential "hamlets" in appropriate locations, while offsetting those developments with lower density development and land conservation elsewhere in the district; and
 - d. Ensure that land subdivision and residential de-

velopment is designed in a manner to protect land characterized by fragile features (e.g., floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes), and to avoid the fragmentation and development of land containing significant areas of primary agricultural soils.

- 6) Ensure that development within Waitsfield Village is compatible with the historic scale and pattern of development, and with historic architectural styles, and discourage the demolition or inappropriate alteration of historic structures.
- 7) Maintain the **Waitsfield Village Residential District** for the purpose of allowing high density mixed use development, especially housing, in a classic village setting in a manner compatible with the historic character of the Village. To this end:
 - a. Maintain a mix of residential, civic and commercial uses, while limiting retail and office uses to parcels adjacent to Route 100 and within mixed use buildings which contain residential dwelling(s);
 - b. Support the creation of a new street network and construction of single-family homes and civic buildings, and the establishment of a village green, in a traditional village-pattern west of Route 100. Such development should be connected to Irasville via a road running south from the Old County Road;
 - c. Maintain the well defined village boundaries and sharp contrast between the compact village and surrounding rural countryside.
- 8) Maintain the **Waitsfield Village Business District** for the purpose of allowing a high density mix of uses, including retail, services and offices, in the historic village core.
- 9) Maintain the **Irasville Village District** to serve as the Mad River Valley's primary commercial center, and Waitsfield's principal growth center, by allowing high density mixed use development in a compact development pattern. To this end, a full mix of commercial, civic and residential land uses in locations as generally described above, shall be allowed.
- 10) Development within the **Irasville Village District** shall reflect the general development concepts outlined on Maps 9 and 10. The resulting development pattern shall be characterized by:
 - a. an interconnected network of roads and pedestrian paths;
 - b. well defined streetscapes, defined by closely spaced buildings fronting close to the road, where practical, sidewalks, street trees and, where possible, on-street parking;
 - c. formal and informal open spaces, including a village green(s) and greenway network, possibly encompassing "green infrastructure," such as stormwater facilities;
 - d. multi-story buildings (except in instances involving small accessory structures or where a multi-story addition to a single-story structure is not feasible);
 - e. a pedestrian scale of site and building design;
 - f. a mix of uses, including upper-story dwellings where practical; and
 - g. a density of development that is considerably higher than adjacent districts, especially the Agricultural-Residential and Commercial-Lodging Districts.
- 11) Notwithstanding the design guidelines set forth in #10 above, additional opportunities for residential in-fill development shall also be encouraged where well defined streetscapes are not present or practical. Such opportunities include the rear yards of existing buildings and on lots occupied by other uses.
- 12) Large buildings (in excess of 4,000 square feet) shall be designed to reduce their apparent mass and bulk, to create visual interest, and to achieve an architectural scale that is pedestrian friendly. This may be accomplished through the use of a combination of the following elements:
 - a. modulation (wall projections, recesses);
 - b. articulation (varying building facades, footprints);
 - c. variations in roofline (e.g., dormers, gables, cornices, decorative facings);
 - d. upper story setbacks;
 - e. fenestration (spacing of windows, entryways);
 - f. smaller scale additions; and
 - g. avoidance of pre-fabricated metal structures.
- 13) Policies and tasks regarding sidewalk and road improvements (Chapter 8), water and wastewater infrastructure (Chapter 9), wetlands mitigation (Chapter 3), housing (Chapter 6), and economic development (Chapter 7) related to Irasville should be pursued in a coordinated manner.
- 14) Maintain the **Limited Business District** for the purpose of allowing non-retail commercial businesses, light industry and public facilities in a central Valley location, in a manner that minimizes visual impacts as viewed from Route 100 and avoids a linear pattern of strip development.
- 15) Maintain the **Industrial District** as a primary employment center and encourage a variety of light industries and compatible uses, separated from surrounding residential areas through screening, buffering and compliance with specific performance standards. A master plan should be developed to ensure the most efficient use of available land, and to ensure that development occurs in a logical, integrated manner.
- 16) Adopt an Official Map to identify future road and trail

improvements and important open space, including road connections in Irasville linking Bragg Hill Road with the Slow Road, the Slow Road with the Carroll Road, and the Carroll Road with the Old County (Loop) Road in Waitsfield Village, as well as locations for one or more town greens or commons.

- 17) Implement the community facilities, transportation, housing and economic development policies and tasks of this Plan as a means of reenforcing the function and viability of Waitsfield Village and Irasville.
- 18) Implement all policies and tasks set forth in this Town Plan regarding the preservation of the Town's cultural

and natural resources, and support the continued viability of farming and forestry.

- 19) Through an ongoing planning process, ensure that capital improvement planning is coordinated with land use planning to avoid conflict.
- 20) Ensure that local regulation does not deny the reasonable use of property (in contrast with the highest and best use), and that restrictions imposed on land use are based on clearly defined community objectives.

LAND USE TASKS

- 1) Review the Waitsfield zoning regulations on a regular basis and making revisions as deemed appropriate. *[Planning Commission]*
- 2) Revise the Waitsfield Subdivision regulations to incorporate stronger natural resource and farmland protection policies, and to ensure that the subdivisions are designed to reinforce the desired pattern of development of the district in which the subdivision is occurring, in accordance with the policies set forth in this Chapter (see sidebar—page 128). *[Planning Commission]*
- 3) Review the Agricultural-Residential District to identify and designate appropriate locations for residential hamlets, and to provide the regulatory mechanisms to allow for the development of such hamlets (see sidebar on page 128 to for partial listing of tools). Tools to consider include the transfer of development density from "sending areas" within the district and reconsideration of existing maximum residential densities to determine whether a reduction in density would best achieve the density transfer concept. *[Planning Commission]*
- 4) Review the Commercial Lodging District and consider whether changes to the allowable land uses should be made, including:
 - a. whether the size and scale of resort/hotel facilities should be capped,
 - b. whether additional commercial or light manufacturing uses which are associated with the processing of forest or agricultural products, or with the operation and/or protection of agricultural land, should be allowed,
 - c. whether higher density residential "hamlets" should be allowed in all or portions of the district, and
 - d. whether the district should be eliminated and pre-designated as the Agricultural-residential District. *[Planning Commission]*

- 5) Prepare an Official Map depicting future public roads, parks, trails and pathways improvements, including future road and path connections as part of a circulation plan and map for Irasville, and consider adopting this map as an official map in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4422. *[Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Selectboard]*
- 6) Revisit the 2002 Irasville Master Plan, and modify as necessary, regarding road connections, future land use and building and site design. *[Planning Commission]*
- 7) Revise the towns zoning regulations to establish clear site and building design standards to guide development in Irasville in accordance with the aforementioned master plan, as revised and modified by the Planning Commission. *[Planning Commission]*
- 8) Pursue mitigation analysis of wetlands in Irasville, as addressed elsewhere in this Plan, in order to accommodate future development needs and reinforce a compact development pattern in Irasville. *[Planning Commission]*
- 9) Refer to the goals, objectives and strategies set forth in this Town Plan during all conditional use, PUD/PRD. subdivision reviews and all state and federal regulatory reviews. *[Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, Selectboard]*
- 10) Review current administration and enforcement practices related to the zoning and subdivision regulations and ensure that all standards and associated permit conditions are efficiently administered and strictly enforced. *[Planning Commission, Administrative Officer]*
- 11) Evaluate historic preservation standards for Waitsfield Village to determine whether they are adequate to maintain the historic character of the Village, and strengthen said standards in the event they determined to be inadequate. *[Planning Commission, Waitsfield Historical Society*]*

**Participation strongly encouraged*

13. Implementation



In too many communities town plans are set aside and ignored soon after adoption. This may be due to several factors, including ambiguous plan goals and policies, a lack of local support for long range planning, and/or a lack of resources and money, people and time to accomplish everything called for in the plan. In Waitsfield, however, the Town Plan has traditionally been viewed as a living document which outlines a path for the community. This chapter summarizes many of the mechanisms that are available to make sure the plan remains current and relevant.

PLAN ADOPTION

Adoption by the Waitsfield Selectboard, pursuant to the procedures established in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 §4384 and §4385, is the first step in putting the plan into action. Through adoption, the Selectboard accepts this document as the guide for future physical growth and change in the Town.

REGIONAL APPROVAL

Approval by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) allows for greater regional planning and cooperation among towns in addressing mutual problems and challenges, maintains the town's eligibility for municipal planning funds as well as its authority to enact certain programs (e.g., impact fees). Once the plan is approved by the Selectboard, it should be submitted to CVRPC for regional approval.

ONGOING PLANNING & PLAN AMENDMENTS

One of the key differences between this plan and the plan adopted in 1998 (and largely drafted in 1992-93) is that this Plan incorporates the findings and conclusions of a wide range of special studies, public processes and related planning projects that have taken place over the intervening years. Thus, rather than relying on a planning process that lies dormant for four years only to re-emerge for the purpose of updating the Town Plan, Waitsfield has been actively engaged in an ongoing planning process. Such an ongoing effort—which should involve periodic evaluation of the plan against changing community conditions and needs—is critical for keeping the plan current and relevant.

As conditions in the community change and new information becomes available, amendments may be needed to keep the plan current. In addition to special studies and public forums to consider specific issues, regular meetings between local boards are an effective way to sustain an ongoing planning process. The plan automatically expires five years from adoption. Before the plan expires, it should be thoroughly reviewed, and information on which the plan is based should be updated.

STATE PERMIT PROCEDURES

Presently, any commercial development in Waitsfield

involving 10 or more acres of land, and any residential development or subdivision resulting in the creation of 10 or more dwelling units or lots, requires Act 250 approval. One of the 10 criteria that projects must meet to comply with Act 250 is that the development be in conformance with the Town Plan. In the case of Waitsfield, conformance should be determined by whether the proposed development is consistent with specific policies listed at the end of Chapters 3-12. If a project is not consistent with a specific policy, it should be determined to be not in conformance with the plan.

Both the Planning Commission and Selectboard have party status to participate in all Act 250 review processes. Both bodies should monitor project applications, which are reported to the town by the District 5 Environmental Commission, and participate in those processes whenever appropriate. Other state and federal regulatory processes, for example Section 248 (related to public energy facilities) and the National Environmental Policy Act (related to federally funded projects) also provide opportunity for local participation and review against the policies set forth in this plan.

LOCAL LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

This plan should serve as the blueprint and policy guide for future revisions to local land use regulations, including both zoning and subdivision regulations. Several suggestions for revisions, or for additional study, are described throughout the plan, especially in Chapter 3 (Natural Resources); Chapter 4 (Historic & Cultural Resources); Chapter 6 (Housing); and Chapter 12 (Land Use). In addition, certain provisions of the existing zoning, such as conditional use review, require that projects be consistent with the policies of this plan. To ensure that future development is consistent with the plan, the Board of Adjustment shall refer to it during the review process.

In addition to zoning and subdivision regulations, an official map is a form of a “bylaw” that the town may use to lay out future road and infrastructure improvements and provide a legal mechanism for the community to acquire necessary land for those improvements prior to its being lost to development. Features to depict on an official map are described in Chapter 8 (Transportation).

OTHER MUNICIPAL POLICIES & PROGRAMS

Local land use regulations are not the only means with which Waitsfield can implement various sections of this plan. Other ordinances and policies can also serve to carry out policies and strategies described in previous chapters. For example, a road ordinance or policy can further many of the policies included in Chapter 8. Transportation, and water and sewer allocation policies can not only ensure the efficient operation of these municipal facilities, should they be created, but can help to further policies set forth in Chapter 6. Housing and Chapter 7. Economic Development. Maintaining a special events permitting program can help to address peak demands for services and facilities caused by peak populations. And, perhaps most importantly, coordinating all municipal policies and programs with the land use policies established in Chapter 12 is a critical strategy for implementing the town's future land use plan.

PROPERTY TAX POLICY

Although a municipality's authority to use local property tax dollars to implement a town plan was limited with the passage of Act 60 (and subsequent passage of Act 68), there are still opportunities to use the property tax to achieve several of the policies included in the preceding chapters. Waitsfield maintains an agricultural property tax abatement program for eligible farmers, and has worked with local businesses to abate a portion of the property tax on new facilities and to help secure tax incentives available through the Vermont Economic Progress Council (see Chapter 7). In addition, there are opportunities to pursue special taxing districts, and to establish Tax Increment Finance Districts, to help fund local infrastructure improvements. Consideration of tax policy related to specific plan policies is addressed in Chapter 3 (Natural Resources); Chapter 7 (Economic Development); Chapter 9 (Community Facilities & Services); and Chapter 12 (Land Use).

PUBLIC SPENDING

Waitsfield has a history of making strategic investments in the town's infra-

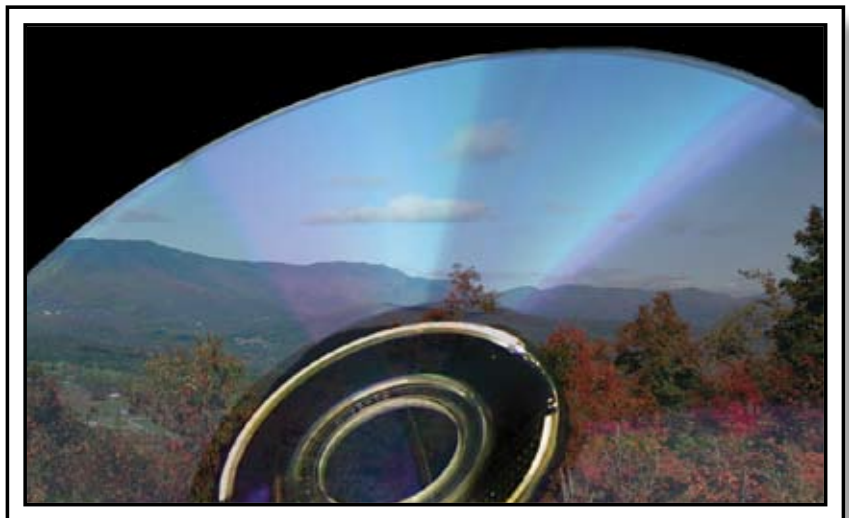
structure, public services, and for special projects. Over the past 10-15 years, the town has:

- ◆ **Acquired and developed parkland and assisted with the creation and maintenance of other recreation facilities,**
- ◆ **Supported private non-profits to expand needed facilities (e.g., Mad River Valley Ambulance),**
- ◆ **Acquired the General Wait House and created an information center and public restrooms,**
- ◆ **Contributed toward the acquisition of development rights on scenic and productive land,**
- ◆ **Funded sidewalk improvements,**
- ◆ **Developed plans for municipal water and sewer facilities,**
- ◆ **Acquired grant funds to develop senior housing and to acquire the Verd-Mont Trailer Park to ensure perpetual affordability, and**
- ◆ **Maintained the local road network and public buildings in excellent condition**

Many of these projects were supported by state and federal grants. Consequently, local tax dollars have helped to leverage millions of dollars of supplemental revenue for the town. Through the capital budget and program, continued emphasis on securing state and federal grants, and policies for the disbursement of community development loan funds that will become available in coming years (see Chapter 7. Economic Development), many of the policies of this plan may be directly supported.

LAND CONSERVATION

Land conservation is a common mechanism for implementing a variety of local policies related to farmland and forest preservation, natural resource protection, economic development and land use planning. One reason for the growing use of these tools is the availability of statewide funding sources—such as the



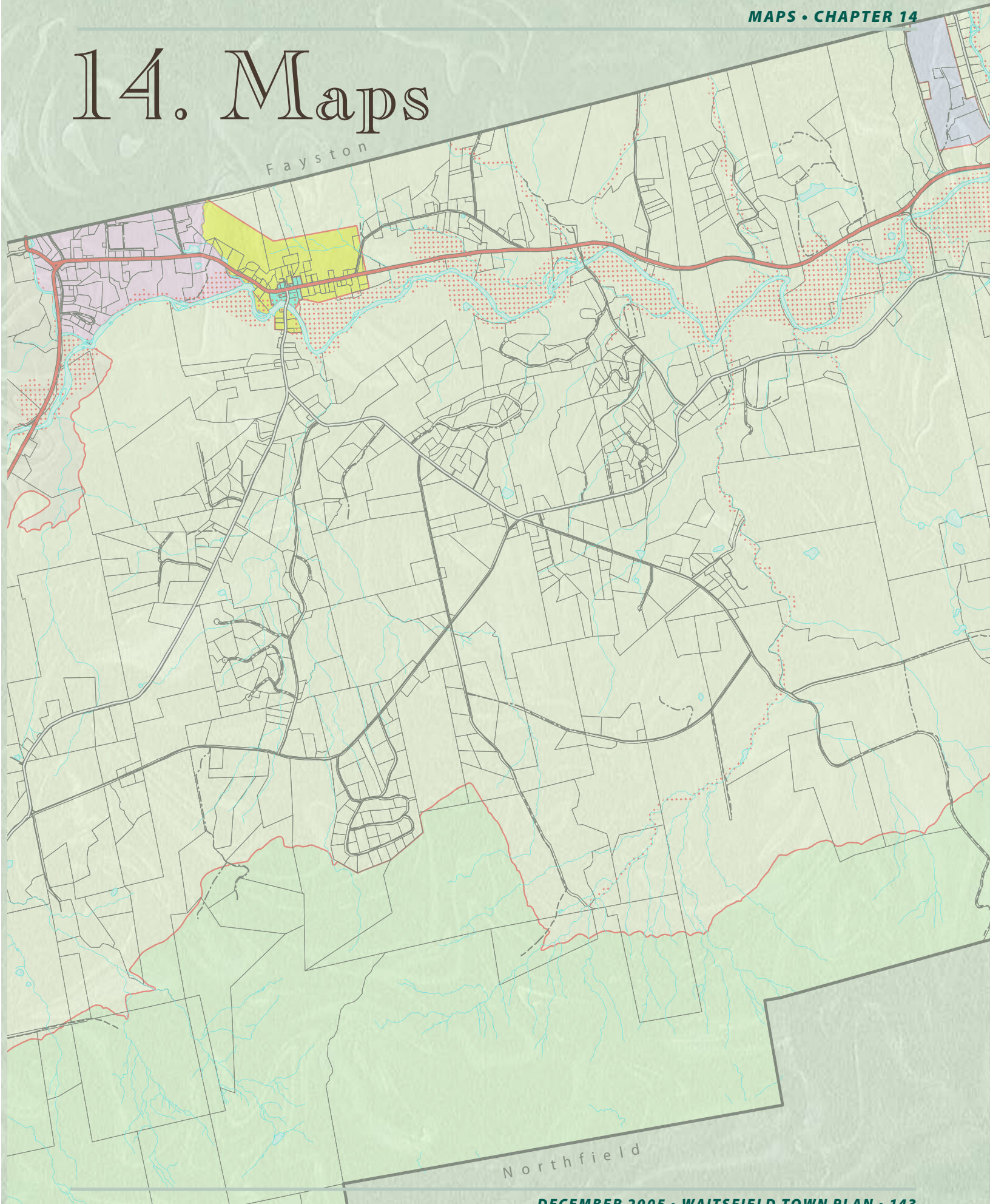
Vermont Housing & Conservation Fund and several private foundations—and the presence of active land conservation organizations. In the Mad River Valley, there is, in addition to statewide resources, a local partnership made up of state and regional organizations dedicated to protecting natural resources and open space within the Mad River Watershed. Coordination with these efforts could help the town achieve many of the policies described in the plan, especially in Chapter 3 (Natural Resources); Chapter 4 (Historic & Cultural Resources); and Chapter 12 (Land Use).

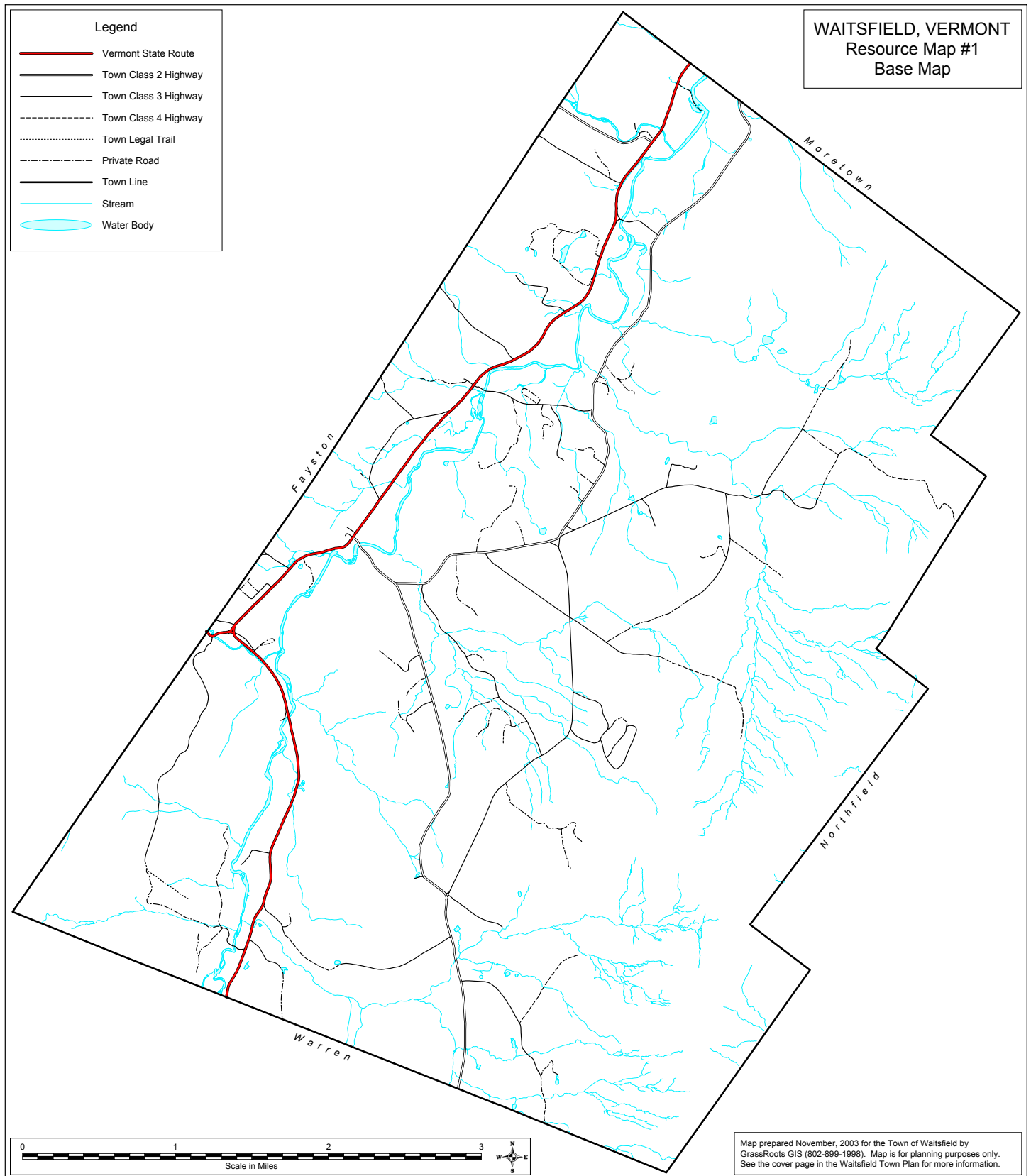
IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

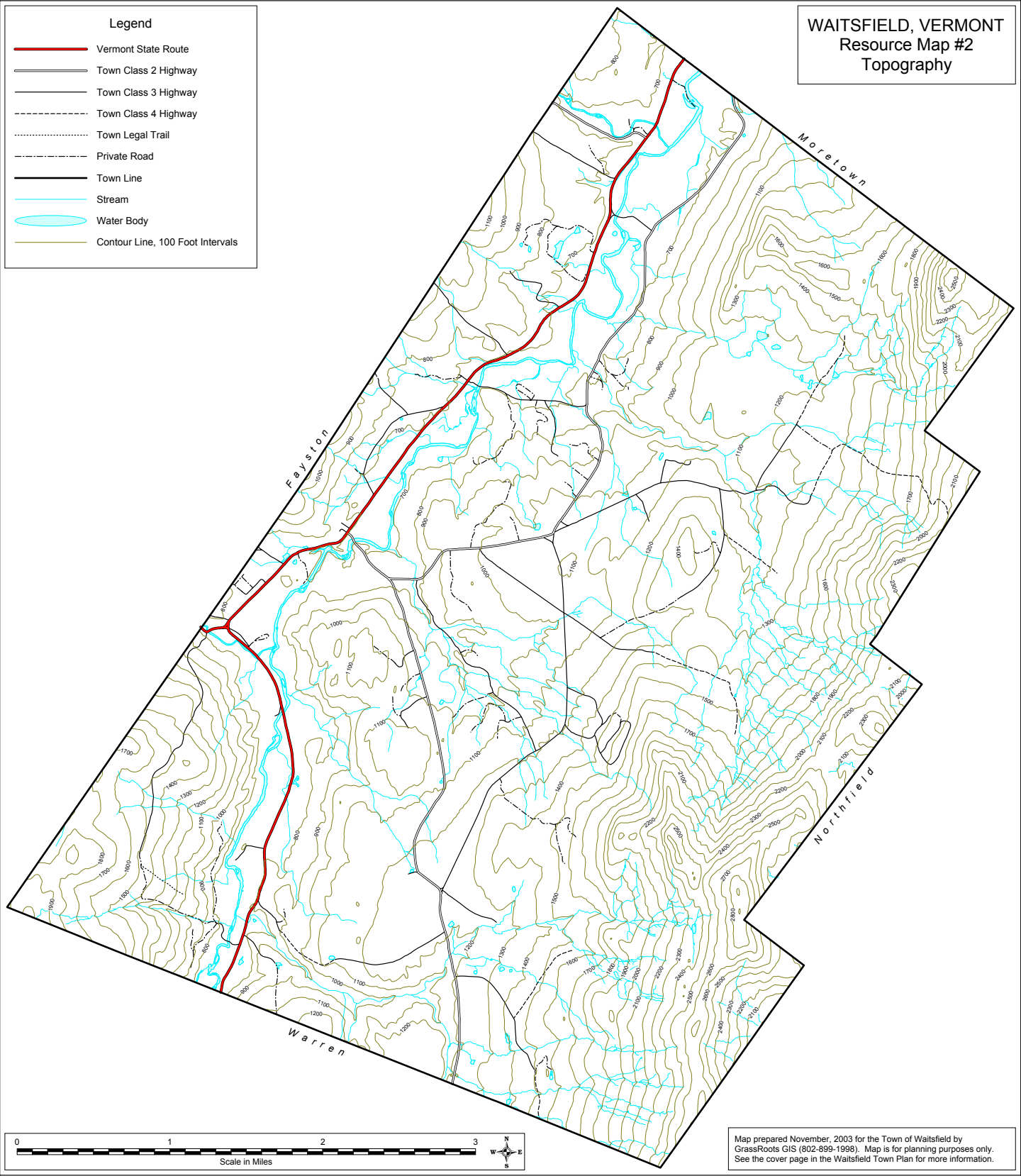
Most of the tools summarized above are described in greater detail elsewhere in the plan. At the end of each preceding chapter, goals and policies are provided to address the relevant topics addressed in the preceding chapter. In addition, implementation tasks—specific actions that can be undertaken by one or more specified body—are also listed. These tasks form the basis of the Planning Commission's action plan in the coming years, and should be periodically reviewed as a measure of the Commission's success implementing the plan.

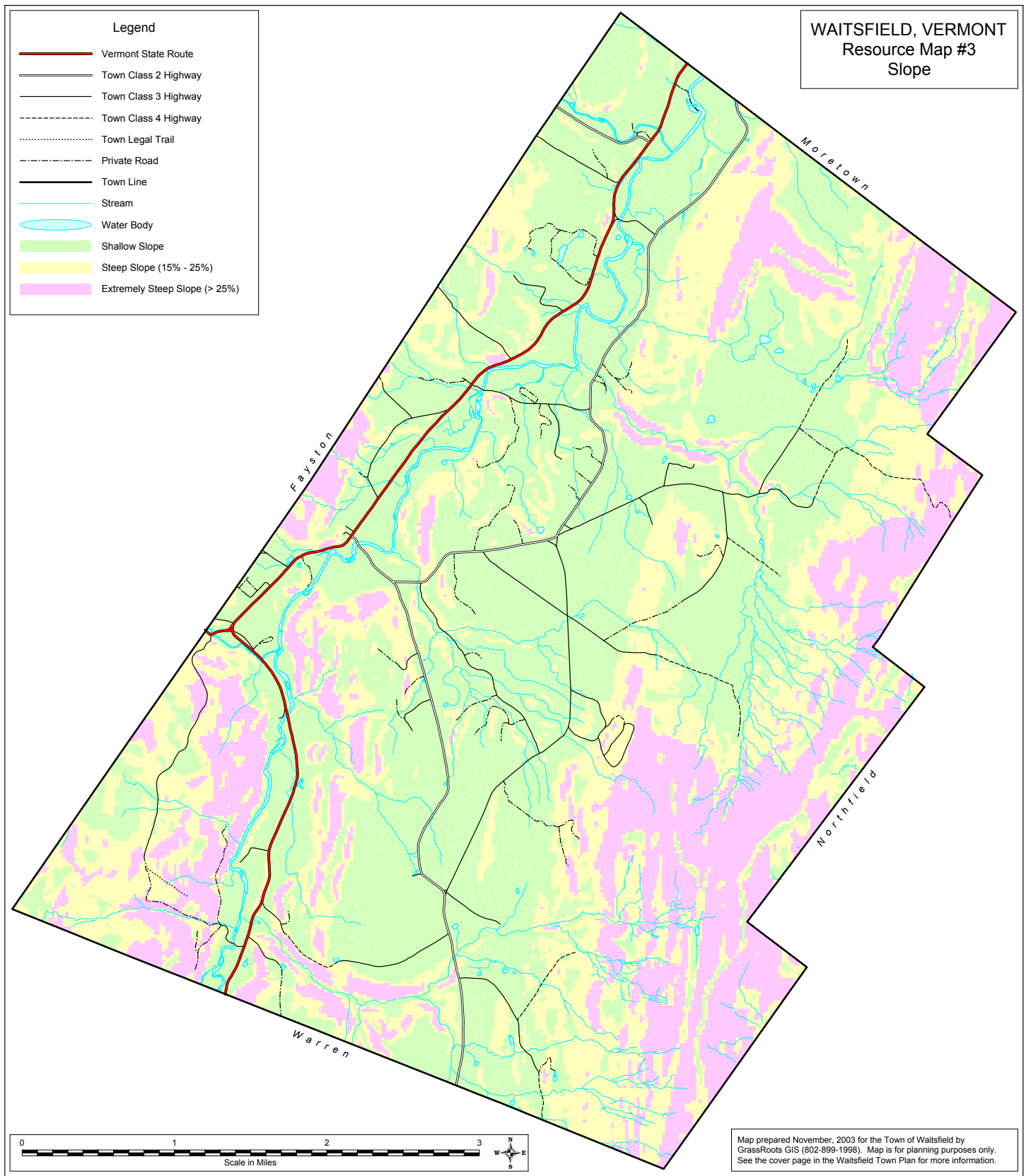


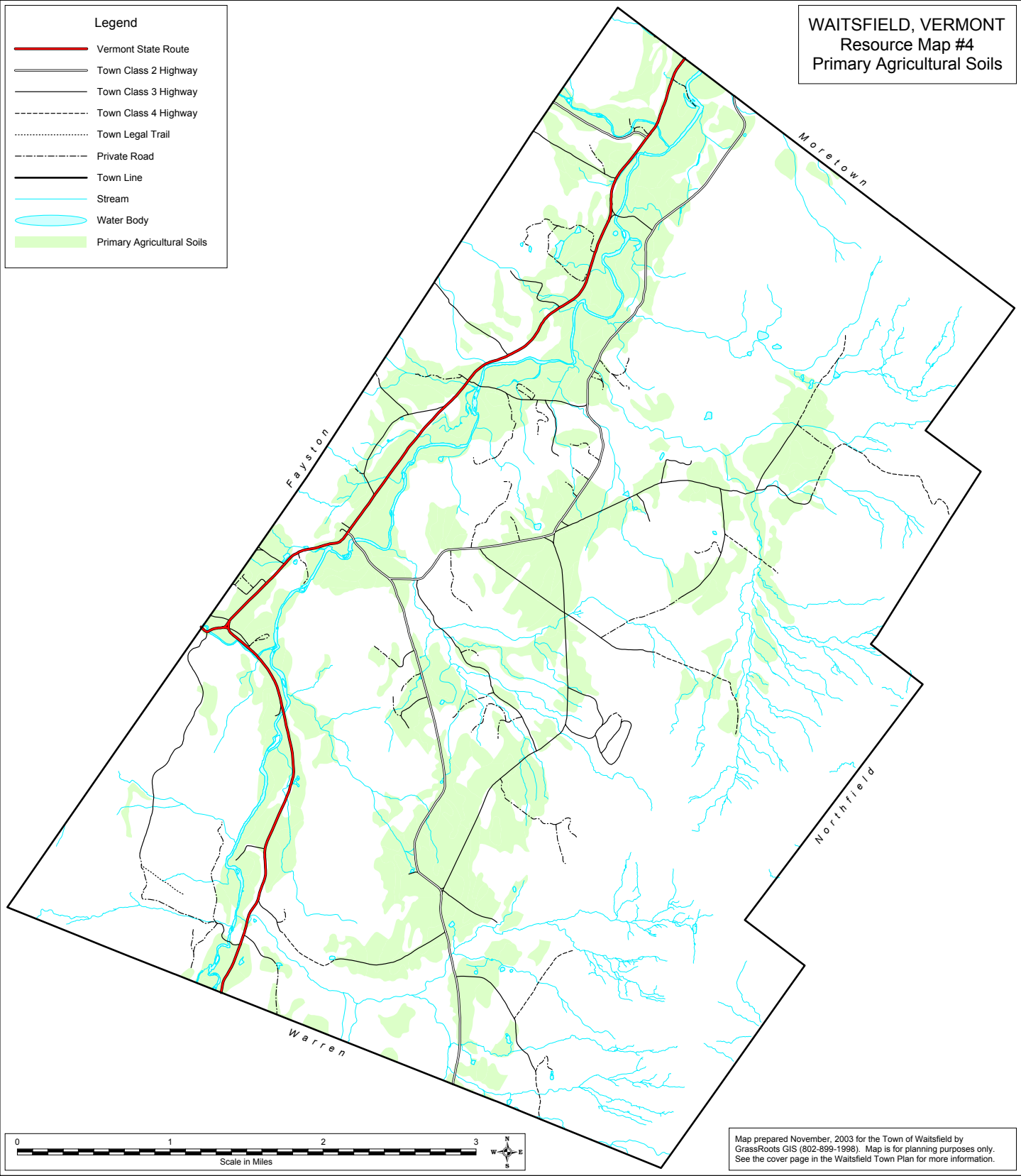
14. Maps

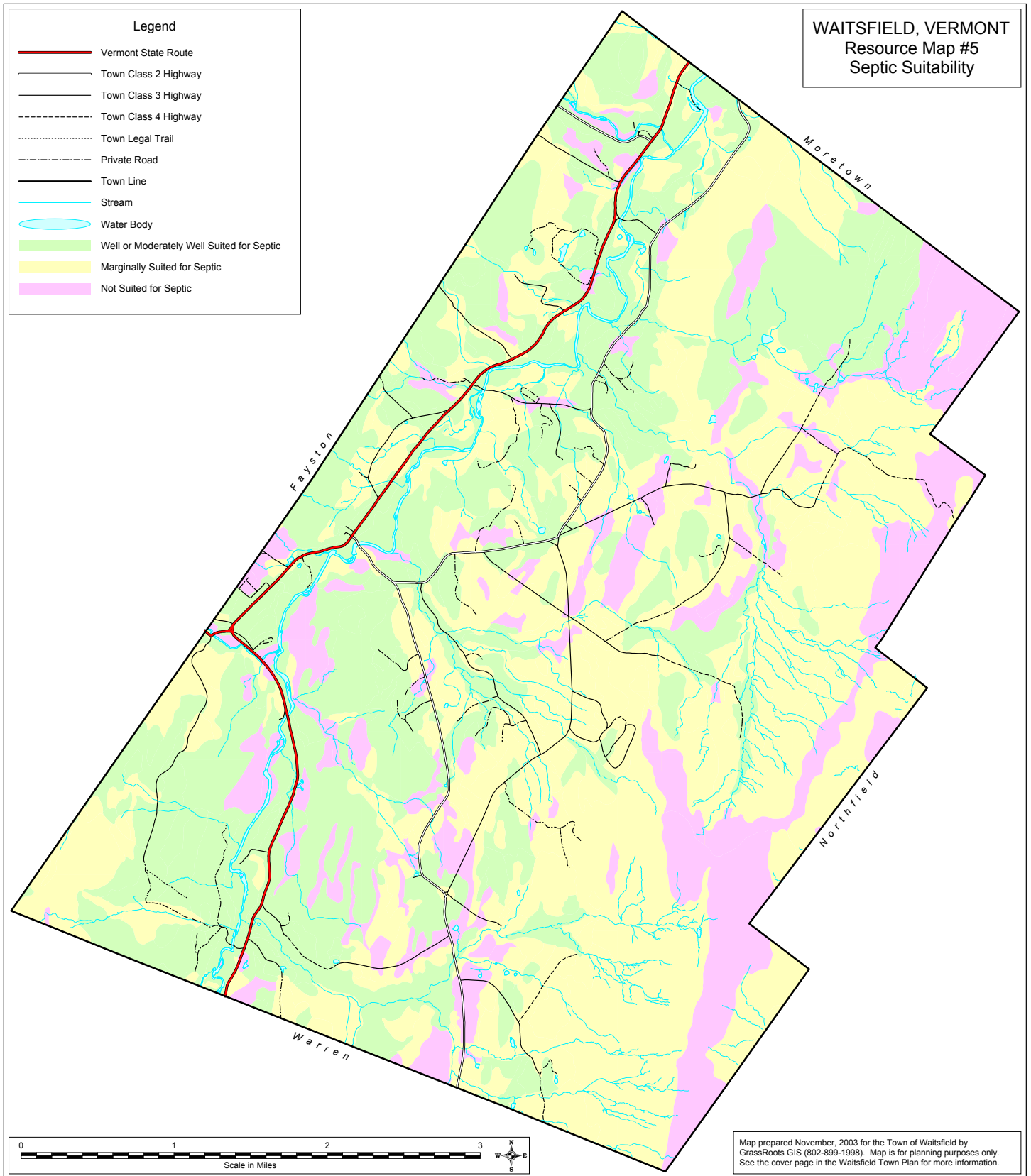


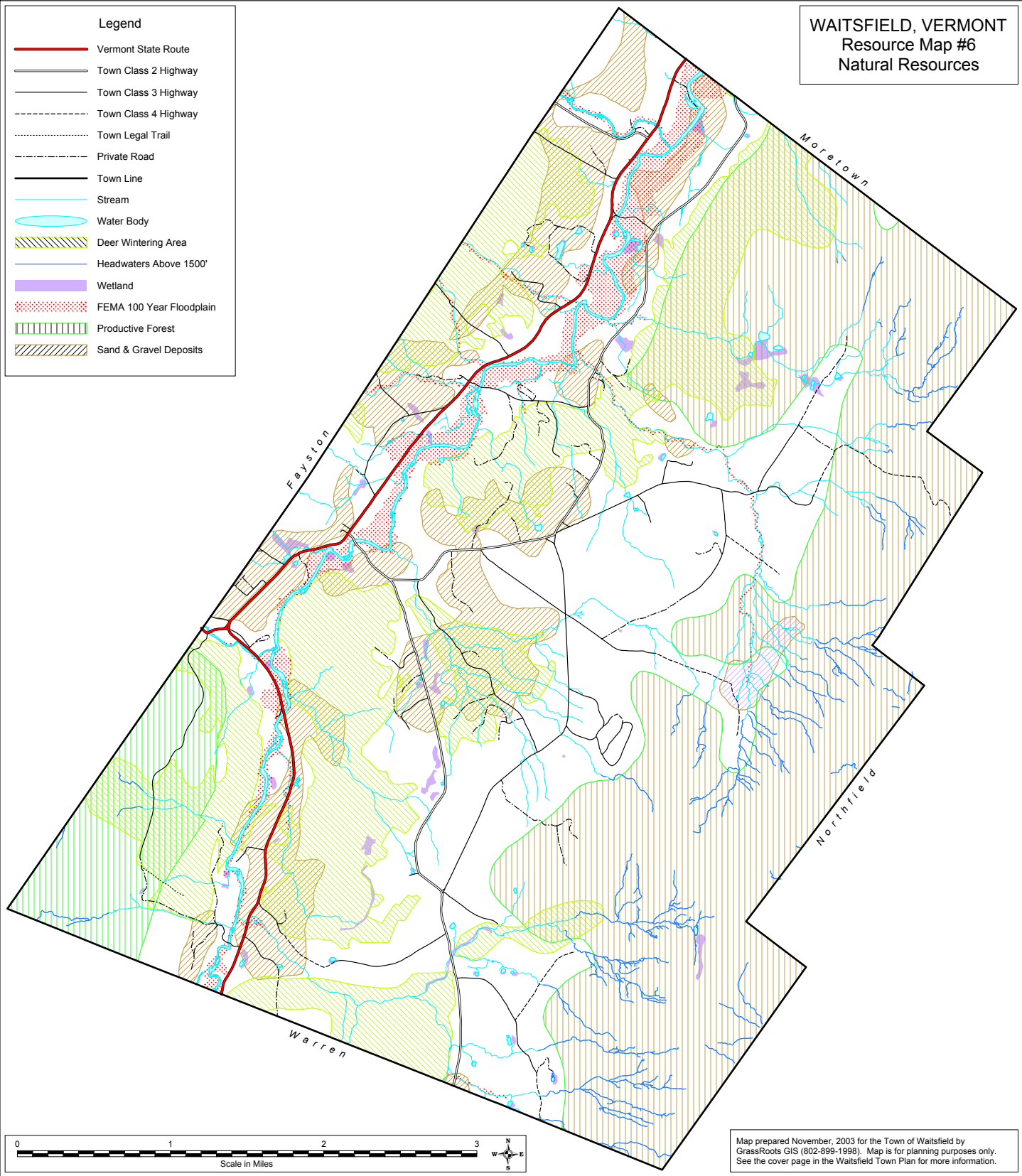


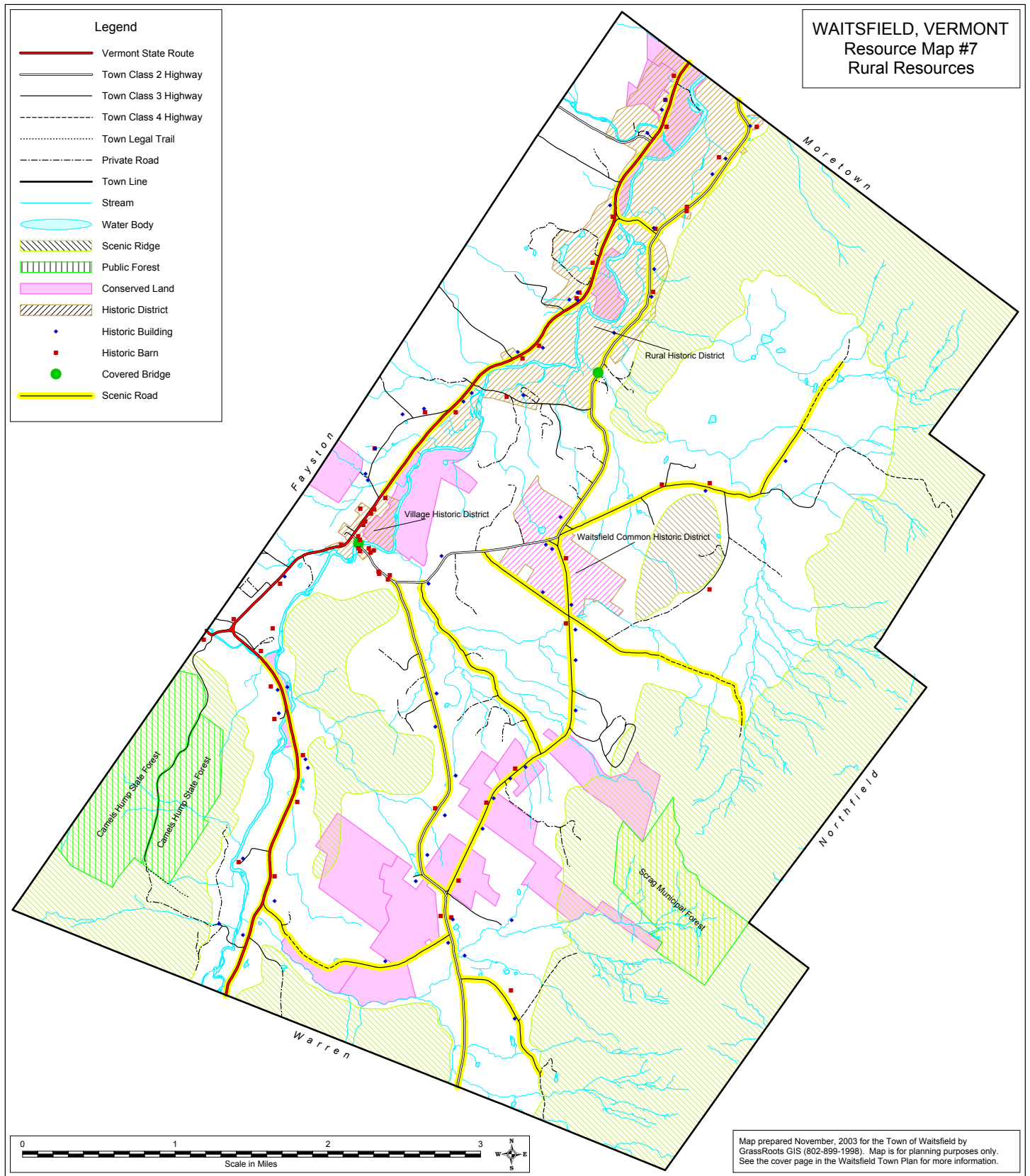


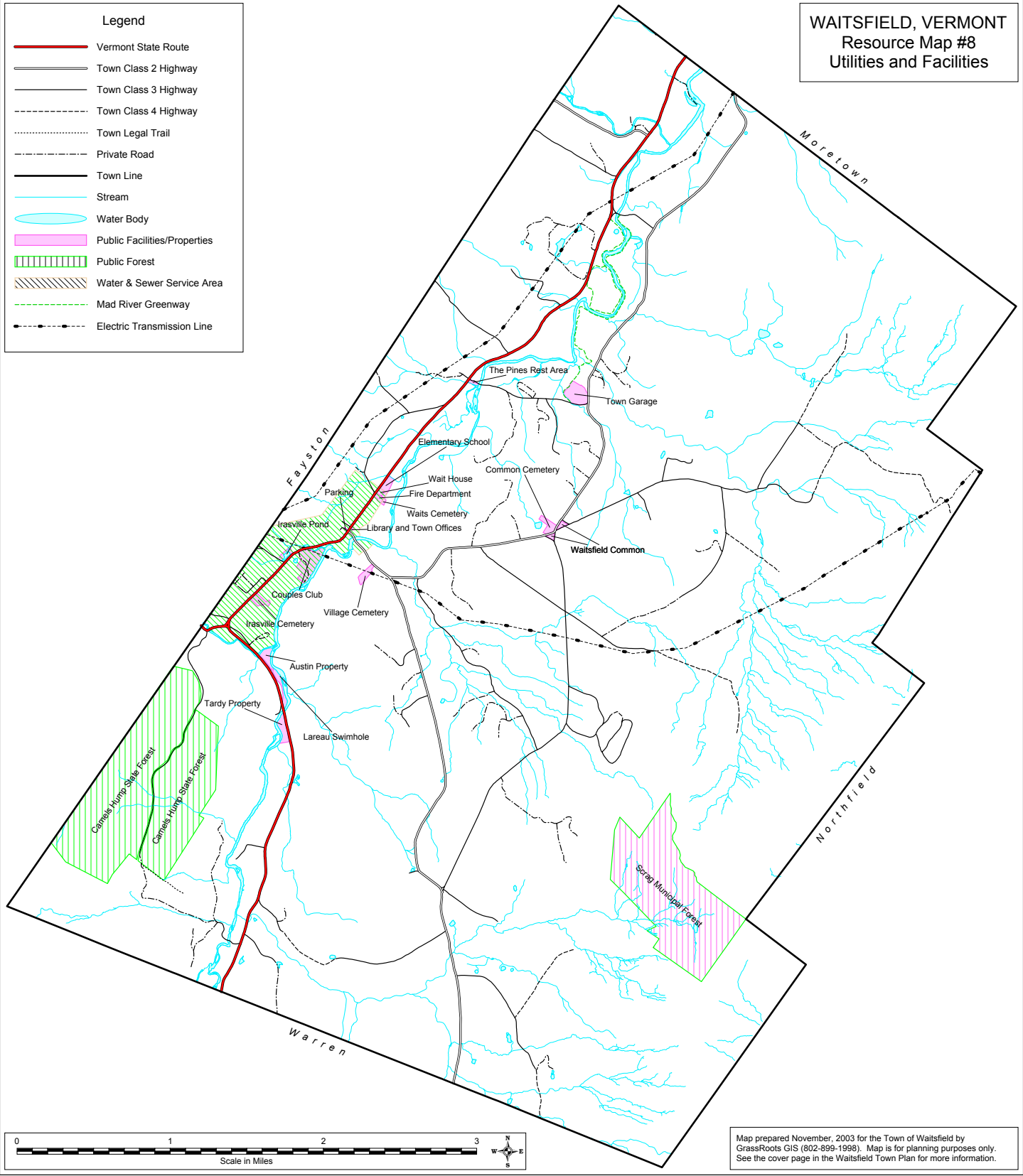


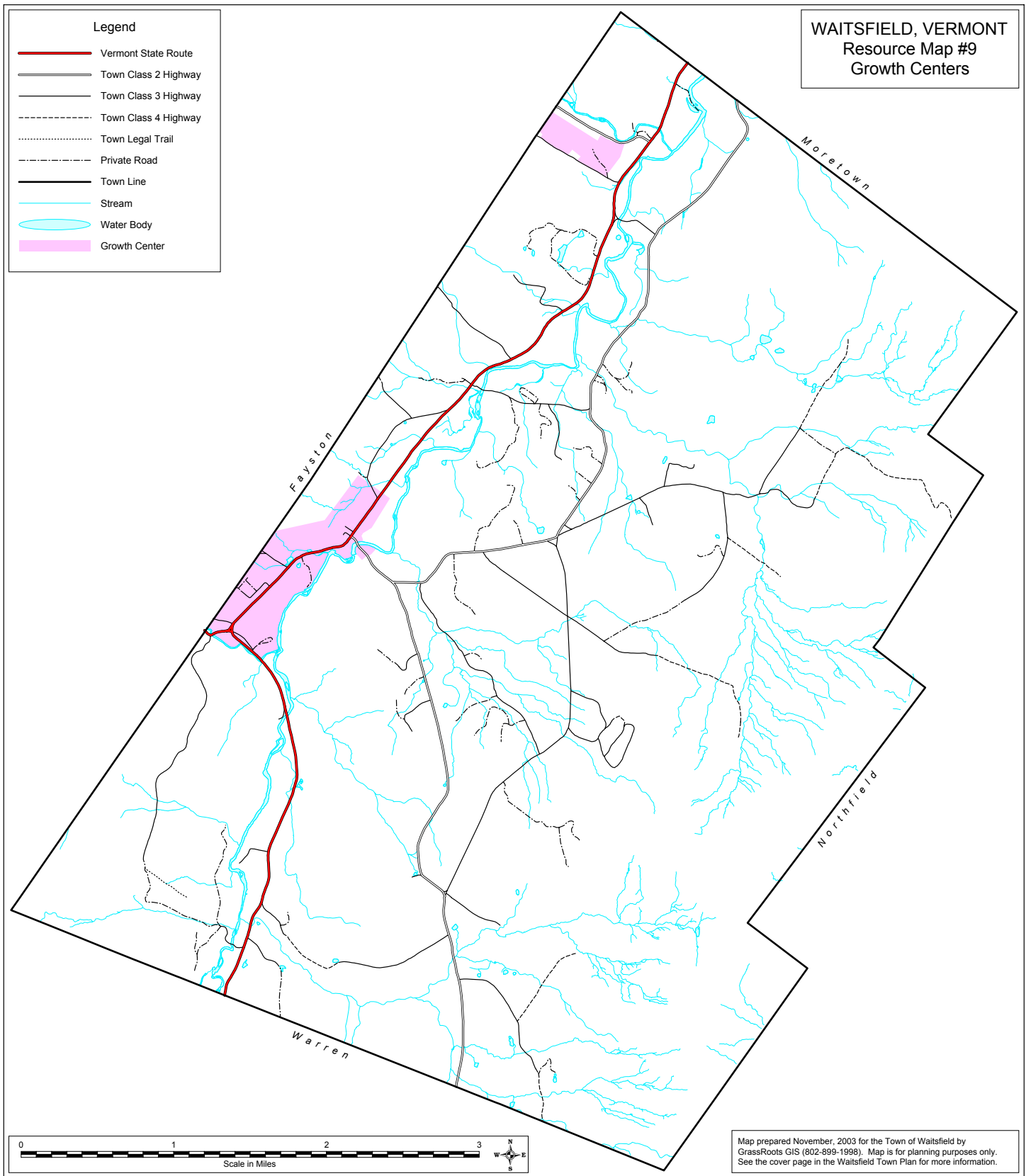


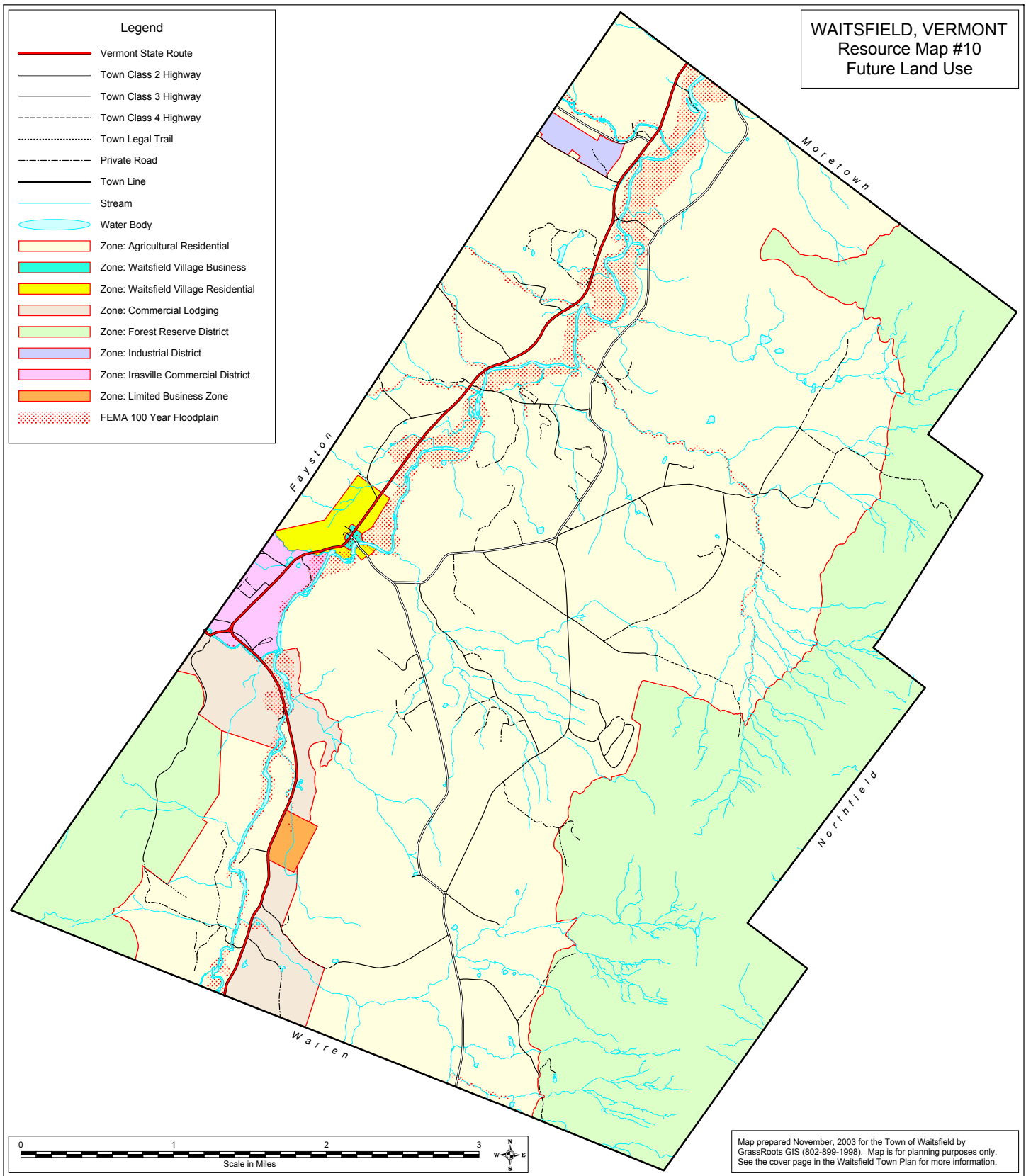


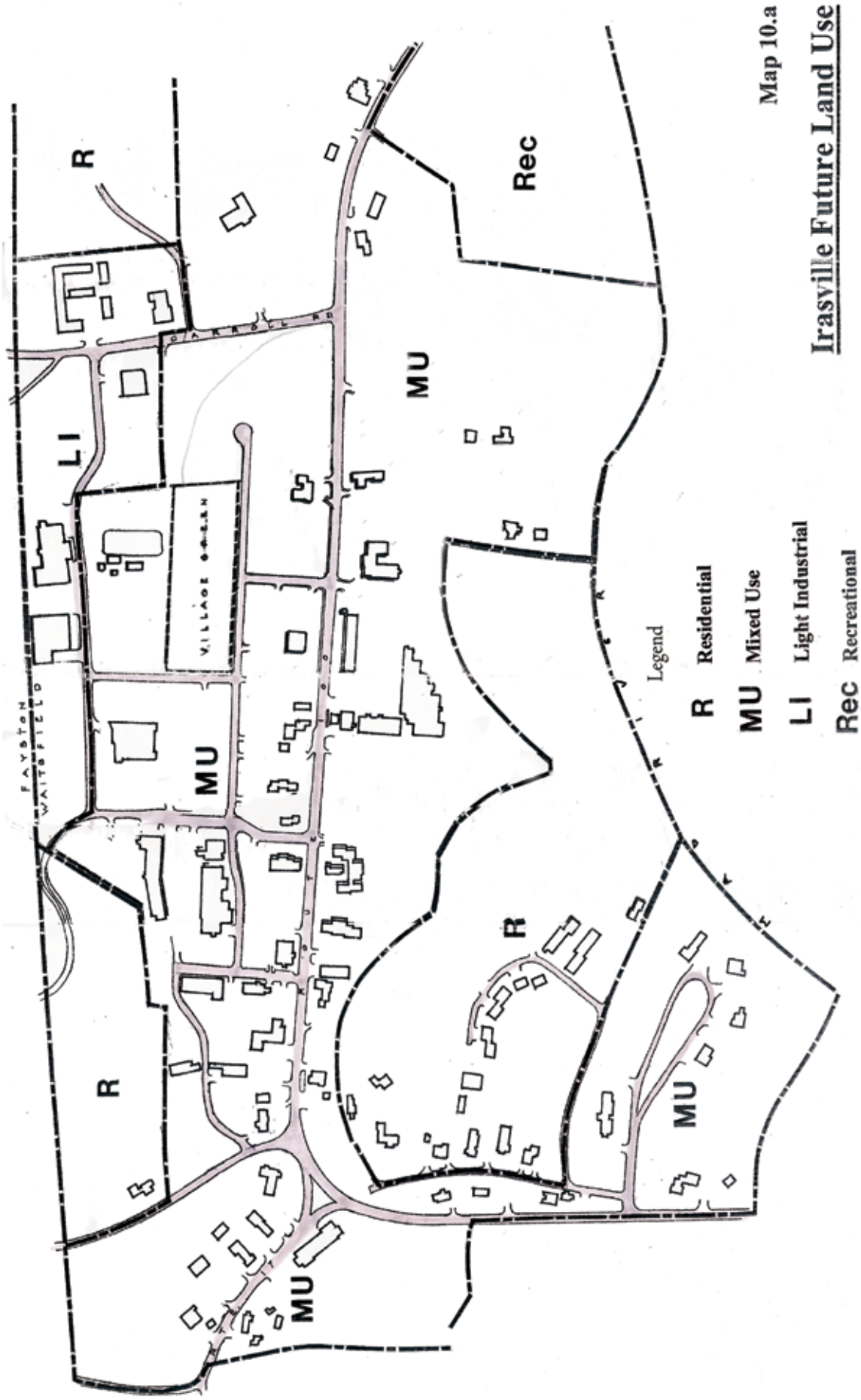


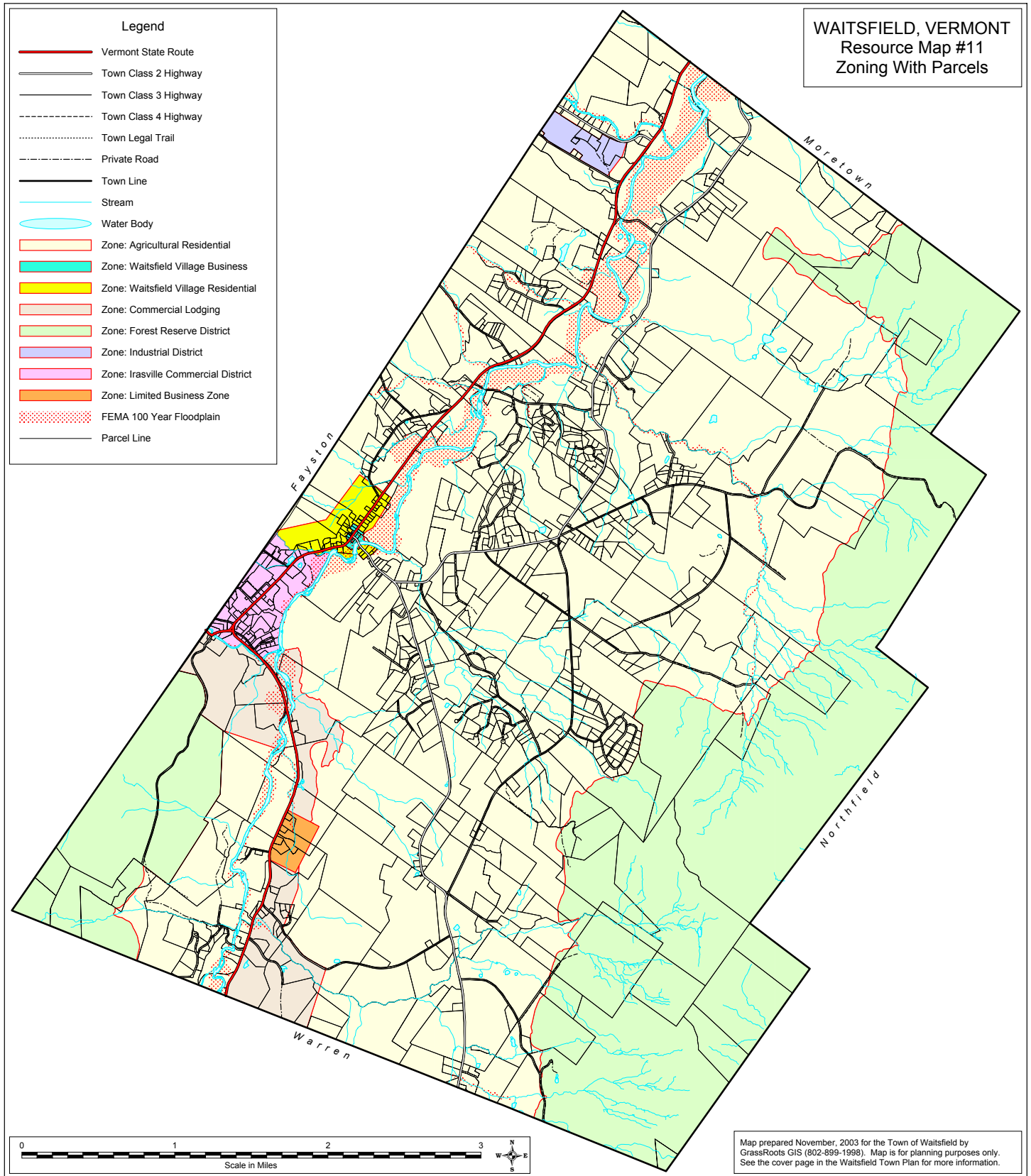












Index

- Access Management 80, 83
- Acknowledgments 12
- Act 200 10
- Act 250 11, 29, 30, 47, 56, 142
- Adult Education 111
- Affordability 61, 62, 63
- Agricultural-Residential District 66, 81, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 137, cxxxix
- Agriculture & Forestry 126
- Air Quality 29, 84
- Ambulance & Rescue Services 94
- Archaeological Sites 44
- Authority 10, 64, 76, 120
- Budget 11, 23, 41, 80, 90, 91, 93, 94, 105, 144
- Buildings & Equipment 120
- business 20, 26, 67, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 110, 118, 131, 132, 134
- Business & Civic Land Uses 132
- Business Assistance 74
- Business Receipts 71
- Cable 101, 102
- Camels Hump State Forest 35, 41, 84, 126
- Capital Budget & Program 91
- Capital Improvements 73
- Cemeteries 92, 96
- Character & Land Use 136
- Citizen Participation 11
- Class 4 Roads 81, 98
- Climate 28
- Commercial Enterprises 129
- Commercial Lodging District 127, 130, 131, cxxxix
- Communications Services 100
- Community Center 100
- Community Development Grants 74
- community facilities 11, 56, 74, 104, 123, 138
- Community Facilities & Services viii, 89, 90, 102, 105, 143
- Community Facilities & Services Goals 102
- Community Facilities & Services Policies 103
- Community Facilities & Services Tasks 105
- Community Services 74, 96
- community survey 11, 58, 95, 102, 118
- Comparative Age Distributions 54
- Conservation Districts 124
- Consistency with State Planning Goals 12
- Cost of Education 110
- Cultural Organizations 100
- Cultural Resource Protection 47
- Cultural Resource Protection Techniques 47
- Cultural Resources viii, 43, 44, 49, 142, 144
- Current Land Use 124
- Day Care 99
- decision-making 11, 13
- Designated Scenic Roads 80
- Development viii, 10, 30, 34, 36, 40, 48, 62, 64, 65, 72, 74, 75, 76, 87, 120, 125, 128, 133, 136, 137, 142, 143, 144
- development rights 26, 39, 47, 49, 66, 127, 128, 144
- District Boundaries 132, 136
- Earth Resources 33
- Economic Development 72, 74, 75, 76, 143, 144
- economic development 10, 33, 40, 65, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 87, 91, 96, 103, 123, 135, 138, 144
- Economic Development Goal 75
- Economic Development Policies 75
- Economic Development TASKS 76
- Economic Outlook 72
- Economic Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats 73
- Economic Trends 68
- Education viii, 89, 91, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112
- Education Goal 112
- Education Policies 112
- Education Tasks 112
- Efficiency Vermont 119, 120, 121
- Electricity 116, 117
- Elevation 29
- Employment 68
- Energy viii, 113, 114, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121
- Energy Assistance Programs 121
- Energy Conservation 119
- Energy Goal 121
- Energy Policies 121
- Energy Tasks 121
- Enrollment 108
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas 35
- environmental protection 10
- Facilities viii, 73, 89, 90, 98, 100, 102, 103, 105, 134, 143
- First surveyed 17
- Flood Plains 37
- Forest Lands 35
- Forest Management 34, 40
- Forest Reserve District 40, 41, 48, 81, 87, 98, 104, 121, 125, 126, 136
- Forest Resources 34
- Forestry 34, 68, 76, 125, 126
- Fossil Fuels 116
- Future Road Connections 80
- General Wait House 73, 92
- Geologic Features & Hazards 33
- Goals 12, 13, 84, 102, 136
- Government Finance 90
- Great Eddy Covered Bridge 43, 46
- Green Mountain Access 102
- Groundwater 32
- growth 10, 11, 25, 28, 29, 32, 40, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 85, 89, 96, 100, 103, 105, 109, 110, 114, 116, 120, 121, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 136, 137, 142
- Growth Management Goal 56
- Growth Management Policies 56
- Growth Management Tasks 56
- Harwood Union High School 87, 109
- Health Care 99
- Highway Improvements 78
- Highway Maintenance 79
- Historic viii, 13, 17, 19, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 55, 61, 73, 78, 82, 105, 131, 132, 142, 144
- historic 10, 12, 13, 40, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 61, 66, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 84, 87, 91, 92, 103, 124, 126, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 144

- cxix
- Historic & Cultural Resource Goal 48
- Historic & Cultural Resource Policies 48
- Historic & Cultural Resources viii, 49, 142, 144
- Historic & Cultural Resources Tasks 49
- Historic Development viii
- Historic Districts 46
- Historic Sites & Structures 45
- history of agriculture and industry 22
- Housing viii, 13, 32, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 132, 142, 143, 144
- housing 10, 11, 12, 26, 40, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 87, 91, 96, 100, 103, 109, 116, 119, 123, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 137, 138, 144
- Housing Goal 65
- Housing Policies 65
- Housing Priorities 65
- Housing Shortage 58
- Housing Tasks 66
- Housing Units 58, 60
- Implementation viii, 11, 29, 94, 141, 142, 144
- Implementation Tasks 11, 144
- Industrial District 75, 103, 135, 138
- Infrastructure 73, 134
- Internet 101, 102, 104, 108
- Irasville 12, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 33, 35, 37, 40, 41, 47, 48, 49, 55, 58, 59, 64, 65, 66, 67, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 120, 124, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, cxix
- Joslin (Round Barn) Farm 43
- Joslin Library 85, 90, 91, 92, 97, 102, 105, 121
- Joslin Memorial Library 46, 96, 104
- Labor Force 68
- Land Conservation 144
- land development 10, 40, 87, 136
- landowners 11, 12, 13, 31, 33, 34, 35, 41, 74, 81, 84, 98, 124, 125, 126, 128, 130, 131, 135
- Land Subdivision 128
- Land Use viii, 74, 120, 123, 124, 131, 134, 136, cxix, 142, 143, 144
- land use 10, 11, 12, 30, 34, 35, 38, 40, 45, 49, 56, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81, 83, 85, 87, 90, 93, 96, 102, 103, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 136, 138, cxix, 142, 143, 144
- Land Use Goals 136
- Land Use Planning & Regulations 74
- Land Use Policies 136
- Land Uses 132, 135
- Land Use Tasks cxix
- last major plan update 11, 126
- Law Enforcement 92
- levels of government 11
- Limited Business District 79, 95, 103, 136, 138
- Limited Business Zone 136
- Livable Wage 70
- local citizen groups 12
- Local Economy viii, 67, 68
- Local Employers 70
- Local Land Use & Development Regulations 142
- local resources 10, 34, 65, 72
- Local Transit 84
- madrivervalley.com 102
- Mad River Valley Rural District 43
- Mad River Watershed 31, 40, 41, 48, 49, 144
- Maps viii, 137, 145
- Master Planning 133, 135
- Military service 24
- minimum lot size 127
- municipal entity 11
- Municipal Policies & Programs 143
- Municipal Programs 73
- municipal services 10, 132
- National Register of Historic Places 43
- Natural Resources viii, 27, 28, 94, 95, 120, 142, 143, 144
- Natural Resource Tasks 41
- neighboring towns 11, 12, 13, 52, 103, 105, 133
- Newspapers 101
- One room schoolhouses 23
- Ongoing Planning & Plan Amendments 142
- overlay districts 47, 49, 127
- Parking 85
- partnership with a private entity 11
- Past & Future Settlement Patterns 124
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Travel 83
- Performance Standards 135
- Permit Processes 75
- Pine Brook Covered Bridge 43
- Plan Adoption 142
- Planning & Coordination Goals 13
- Planning & Coordination Policies 13
- Planning Commission ii, iii, 10, 11, 12, 13, 41, 48, 49, 56, 65, 66, 75, 76, 80, 83, 85, 90, 105, 112, 121, 131, 135, cxix, 142, 144
- Policies 13, 33, 39, 48, 56, 59, 65, 75, 87, 103, 109, 112, 121, 136, 138, 143
- policies 11, 12, 38, 40, 41, 56, 57, 65, 66, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 81, 83, 85, 87, 96, 102, 103, 105, 114, 118, 121, 123, 124, 129, 131, 132, 135, 136, 138, cxix, 141, 142, 143, 144
- Population viii, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55
- population 22, 23, 25, 26, 38, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 68, 71, 72, 78, 87, 94, 100, 109, 110, 112, 123, 128
- Population Projections 54
- Population Trends 51
- preliminary draft 11
- primary resource document 11
- principles 10
- Private Forest Lands 35
- Private Not-for-Profit Facilities 98
- Private Roads 82
- Projected Population 55
- Properties 90, 91, 92
- Property Tax Policy 143
- Public Facilities 73, 98
- Public Facilities & Infrastructure 73
- public forums 11, 12, 142
- public involvement 12, 13
- Public Safety 92
- Public Spending 143
- Public Transportation 84
- Radio 101
- Rail & Air 85
- Recreation 13, 32, 35, 79, 98, 126
- regional agencies 12
- Regional Approval 142
- Regional Coordination 12
- regulatory reviews 11, cxix
- Renewable Energy 116
- residential density 127
- Residential Development 125, 128
- Residential Hamlets & Density 129
- residents 10
- responsibilities 10, 82
- responsibility 10, 66, 92
- rights 10, 15, 26, 39, 47, 49, 66, 81, 124, 127, 128, 136, 144
- Rivers & Streams 30
- Road Classifications 79
- Road Maintenance 81
- Roads & Highways 78
- Rural & Conservation Districts 124
- Rural Character 126, 127, 130
- Rural Hamlets 127
- Sand & Gravel 33
- Scenic Resources 46

- Scenic Roads 80, 82
- Scrag Municipal Forest 35, 105, 126
- Seasonal Population 55
- Selectboard ii
- Senior Services 99
- Settlement Patterns 124, 133
- Sewage Disposal 95
- Sheep raising 22
- Slope Constraints 29
- Social Services 100
- Soils 18, 27, 33, 34, 39, 40, 41, 44, 72, 125, 127, 128, 136, 137
- Solid Waste 12, 13, 94, 104
- Special Needs Housing 64
- State & Regional Programs 74
- State Highway Improvement Projects 79
- State Permit Procedures 142
- subdivision 10, 11, 37, 38, 40, 41, 45, 47, 49, 66, 82, 83, 84, 87, 120, 125, 128, 129, 135, 136, 137, cxxxix, 142
- Sustainable Development 72
- sustainable development 10, 72, 73, 76
- Tasks 11, 49, 56, 66, 105, 112, 121, cxxxix
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District 74
- Tax Stabilization 74
- Telecommunications 101
- Telephone 101
- Television 13, 101, 102, 104, 111
- Topography 29
- Town Administration 90
- Town Cemeteries 92
- Town Government 90
- Town History 13, 18
- Town Office 91, clx
- Town Plan i, ii, iii, 10, 11, 13, 56, 124, 138, cxxxix, 141, 142, clx
- Town Planning 90
- Town Properties 90, 91
- town residents 11, 12, 34, 68, 78, 82, 89, 114, 116
- Town Roads 80
- Traditional Settlement Pattern 44
- Traffic Calming 83
- Traffic Conditions and Safety 82
- Traffic Congestion 82
- Transportation viii, 68, 73, 77, 78, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 87, 114, 119, 120, 121, 143
- transportation 10, 11, 68, 74, 77, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 110, 114, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125, 130, 138
- Transportation Goal 86
- Truck Traffic 83
- Two of Vermont's highest peaks 17
- Undeveloped Forest 36
- uses of the plan 11
- Valley Growth Study 10
- Vermont Legislature 10, 96, 111
- Vermont Planning and Development Act 10
- Vermont Planning and Development Act, 10
- Vermont statute [§4382] 11
- Village Housing 132
- Villages & Growth Centers 131
- Wages 63, 70
- Waitsfield-Fauston Fire Department 92, 93
- Waitsfield's first plan 10
- Waitsfield 2002 Community Survey Final Report 11
- Waitsfield Common Historic District 43
- Waitsfield Elementary School 46, 65, 98, 102, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 132
- Waitsfield Town Charter 14
- Waitsfield Village 19, 22, 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, 40, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 61, 65, 73, 74, 75, 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 116, 124, 129, 131, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, cxxxix
- Waitsfield Village Historic District 19, 43, 45, 46, 47, 61
- Waitsfield Voters 58
- Water Resources 30
- Water Supply 95, 96
- Web Services 102
- Wetlands 35, 37, 135
- Wildlife Habitat 37
- Wind Power 117
- zoning 11, 41, 46, 47, 48, 49, 55, 61, 65, 66, 75, 83, 85, 90, 101, 120, 127, 129, 130, 131, 135, 136, cxxxix, 142

TOWN PLAN FOR WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

Town Office is located on Bridge Street
on the first floor of the Library building.

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