

Town of West Haven



Photo: The West Haven School House

Town Plan

Adopted June 23, 2003

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Executive Summary

The 2003 West Haven Town Plan is a framework and guide for accomplishing community aspirations and intentions. Included in this document are the overall Plan document, its four maps, and a technical appendix.

The overall Plan is based on the technical reports and includes a community overview, overall goals and objectives, and plans for future land use, transportation, community facilities and services, natural resources, historical and cultural resources, and housing. It contains each of the 10 required elements of a town plan in Vermont.

The technical appendix provides data and background information, as well as analyses, for each of the sections listed above.

It is the intent of this Plan to further the goals listed in Chapter 24, Section 4302 of the Vermont Statutes. The Plan supports the implementation of each goal unless specifically stated to the contrary.

The issues and trends identified by the Plan suggest that West Haven is typical of many Vermont communities. It is struggling with the challenge of meeting local needs for services on a limited budget, while experiencing concern over changes taking place in the community's environment. For example, the town is searching for cost-effective ways to maintain its roads, and dispose of its solid waste. It is also trying to conserve its bountiful natural resources in a manner that is fair to individuals and to the community as a whole.

The town is clearly taking steps to address these issues, such as by preparing this Town Plan. The development patterns promoted by it reinforce the tradition.

1.0 Introduction

West Haven's new Town Plan is a framework and guide for accomplishing community aspirations and intentions. This introduction explains the purpose and use of a Town Plan and describes the steps followed in its preparation. The statutory authority for Town Plans, as well as important statutory requirements are also mentioned.

1.1 Purpose and Use of the Plan

The primary purpose of this Town Plan is to create a blueprint that shows what local citizens want West Haven to be like in the future and to set out goals, objectives, and priorities for action that will help the community's hopes for the future to be realized.

It also attempts to balance the wide range of competing interests and demands found in the Town, coordinate the pattern of development and the use of important natural resources, and address both current and long-term needs. It promotes equity and efficiency and the recognition of the public interest in the resources and investments that are found in the Town.

The Plan can, and should, be used in a variety of ways. First and foremost, the Plan should be a basis for community programs and decision-making. It should influence, for example, the Town's capital budget, community development efforts, and natural resource protection initiatives. As required by law, it should also serve as a foundation for local land use controls such as zoning, subdivision, and health regulations. Furthermore, the Plan should be given full effect in all appropriate regulatory proceedings, such as Act 250 and the Section 248 (Certificate of Public Good) process.

Because it is not able to address every important local issue fully, the Plan should also be looked at as a source of topics for further study. Indeed, many aspects of the Plan are based on limited evaluations or on evaluations that should be updated. Finally, the Plan and its technical reports should be used as a source of local information. All contain information that can be valuable to citizens, businesses, and members of local boards and commissions.

1.2 Preparation of the Plan

Responsibility for the preparation of the Town Plan rests with the West Haven Planning Commission. In the course of developing the Plan, the Planning Commission and town contracted for technical assistance with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

This Plan is an update based on two previous Plans, adopted by the Selectboard in January 1993 June 1998. Work on this update began in November 2002. Monthly public meetings of the Planning Commission culminated in a Planning Commission Public Hearing, a Selectboard Public Hearing, and the adoption by the Selectboard.

1.3 Statutory Authority and Requirements

Preparation of Town Plans is guided by Chapter 117 of Title 24 of Vermont Statutes. Chapter 117, section 4382(a) requires that all plans contain ten items or elements. These elements include: a statement of objectives, policies, and programs; a land use plan; a transportation plan; utility and facility plan; a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas; an educational facilities plan; an implementation program; a statement indicating how the Plan relates to development trends in adjacent communities; an energy plan; and a housing plan. While all ten elements must be incorporated into a Plan, communities are not prohibited from combining closely related elements, such as the element for educational facilities and the element for other utilities and facilities.

In addition to containing all the required elements, plans must also be consistent with a series of twelve statewide planning goals listed in Section 4302. Consistency with the goals means that the goals have been considered and addressed in the process used to prepare the Plan, not that the Plan include all twelve goals. Furthermore, where any of the goals do not apply to the Town or are incompatible with it, the Plan need only document the goal's inapplicability or incompatibility with local desires.

1.4 Plan Elements

The West Haven Plan is comprised of the following elements: the overall Plan document, its technical appendix, and its five maps.

1.5 Plan Implementation

The West Haven Plan is designed to be implemented in a number of ways. Each section of the Plan contains clear implementation strategies for work needed in the future.

The Plan, and its goals, objectives, and implementation strategies will serve as the foundation for revisions to the town's zoning and subdivision regulations, and may be used to help craft other regulations such as those guiding the installation of wireless telecommunications facilities. The Plan also carries weight in Vermont's Act 250 process.

The West Haven Plan is also intended to promote non-regulatory implementation. It supports work done to improve housing, natural resources, cultural and historic facilities, recreation opportunities, economic development, and transportation access and safety. Strategies for all of these, and others, are listed throughout the plan.

1.6 Relationship Between Plan and the Development Trends and Plans for the Surrounding Area

Efforts have been made to ensure that the revised plan for the Town of West Haven is compatible with development trends and goals set forth by neighboring communities and the Rutland Region as a whole. For the purposes of this Plan, the surrounding area includes the Towns of Fair Haven and Benson.

This Plan promotes residential, agricultural, conservation and small-scale commercial activities at levels consistent with the community's place at the rural, agricultural edge of the Rutland Region and the Town's rich endowment of natural resources.

Review of the development plans of surrounding communities suggests that the future land use pattern promoted by this Plan is generally compatible with those of West Haven's neighbors. Surrounding communities promote land development consistent with the physical capacities of the land and the continuation of resource-based uses (such as agriculture) in outlying areas and higher density and commercial uses in existing built-up areas. Sensitive areas (such as floodplains) are also identified and targeted for conservation, as they are in West Haven.

Policy statements in the Plan are also generally compatible with those of surrounding communities' plans. Particularly noteworthy is Fair Haven's desire to meet its needs by encouraging a balance of activities—residential, commercial, industrial and agriculture and Benson's goals to preserve rural character, protect natural resources and the environment, maintain services and promote the community's welfare, and sustain the community's heritage. All three communities promote levels and types of growth that are sustainable.

West Haven has a long history of cooperation with its neighbors. As indicated elsewhere, West Haven coordinates education of its elementary and high school-age children, solid waste matters, and rescue services with the Town of Fair Haven. Use of recreation facilities is coordinated with the Town of Benson.

The West Haven Town Plan is, also, consistent with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission's Regional Plan, most recently adopted in June, 2001.

2.0 Community Overview

2.1 Location and Setting of the Town

West Haven is located in western Rutland County, surrounded by the Towns of Fair Haven, Benson, Dresden (New York), and Whitehall (New York). It is 20 miles west of Rutland, Vermont's second largest City, and 20 miles northeast of Glens Falls, New York.

The physical setting of the Town is a reflection of its topography, physiography, and land use. The topography of West Haven is highly variable, ranging from a low of 100 feet at Lake Champlain to a high of 1,080 feet at the top of Bald Mountain. Its physiography reflects the fact that the town lies at the southern extreme of the Champlain Valley. Physiographic regions consist of areas with distinct combinations of relief, geology, soils, and climate.

Land use in West Haven reflects the historical tradition as a self-sufficient farming community. The land use pattern of farms separated by farm and forest land predominated through the 1960s and '70s. This pattern has started to give ground to diffuse residential development as more households seek employment outside of town.

2.2 Demographic Characteristics

The social and cultural setting of the Town is a reflection of its past and present population. West Haven's population, according to the 2000 Census, was 278, having risen very slightly from 273 in 1990 and 240 in 1970. West Haven remains the second least populated community in Rutland County.

Despite the stability in the total number of residents, West Haven's population has undergone several significant demographic changes in the past thirty years. The median age of West Haven residents was 41.3 years in 2000. That figure represents a jump from the median age of 33.6 in 1990 and just 23.1 in 1970. The ageing baby-boomer population and a decline in the number of children under 18 in the town (down from 71 to 63 between 1990 and 2000) are the primary reasons for the dramatic change. A related trend has been a decline in the average household size, from 3.00 person per household in 1990 to 2.67 in 2000. As recently as 1970, the average household size was 3.93 persons.

The decrease in average household size is the result of a combination of factors. These include increases in the number and proportion of older couples and single seniors living alone, increases in the number of couples who choose to have fewer or no children, and increases in the number of single parent households. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people living alone increased from 9 to 19, while the number of families with children under 18 declined slightly from 38 to 33.

Much of West Haven's population is employed in surrounding towns. In-town employment takes the form of home-based businesses and agriculture. Over 30 percent of West Haven residents are employed in management and professional occupations. Another 22 percent of residents are employed in sales and office related occupations. Many residents are employed by educational, health and social services industries. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining industries represent the employment of 13 percent of West Haven residents. Please refer to the Housing Technical Appendix for a discussion of wage levels in relation to community affordability.

These general trends are likely to continue in West Haven as the population ages. In the coming years, these changes will begin to affect the need for adjusted housing supply, services, transportation modes, and facilities in West Haven and Rutland County. These trends are highlighted and discussed throughout the Town Plan alongside the needs of current and future residents.

2.3 Transportation and Community Facilities:

Primary access to the Town is via Vermont Route 22A, an arterial stretching from Middle Granville, New York, to Vergennes, Vermont. Not surprisingly, highways are the single most important component of the transportation system in West Haven. They provide for automobile, school bus, and emergency vehicle access to all parts of the Town. They also provide for the movement of goods and services, for public transportation, and for recreational activities such as bicycling and walking. See Map 1: Transportation / Utilities and Facilities

Highways in the Town include 3.0 miles of state highways and 35.2 miles of Town highways. Of the Town total, 12.6 miles (35.8 percent) are class 2 highways, while the remaining 22.6 miles (64.2 percent) are class 3 highways. Class 2 highways are designed to be important routes of travel between towns and are generally characterized by higher speed vehicular movements and reduced numbers of driveway access points. Class 3 highways, by contrast, are routes designed primarily for year-round, local use. They are characterized by lower design speeds and more open access for driveways and multi-use trails.

Besides the private automobile, other forms of transportation serving West Haven, - albeit somewhat indirectly - include paratransit, taxis, rail, air, bicycle, and foot. The Marble Valley Regional Transit District provides services to members of the public and to clients of area social service agencies on an "on-demand" basis in West Haven. Taxis are available to those who request a dispatch from Rutland. Passenger rail service is available in Fair Haven and Whitehall, while passenger air service is available in Clarendon at the Rutland State Airport, in Burlington, and in Albany, New York. Cyclists and pedestrians may use town highways and any designated trails.

Other important community facilities and services in West Haven include the old elementary school, which today serves as the southern Lake Champlain office for The Nature Conservancy, the Steven Pettis Memorial Field, the volunteer fire department, the town clerk's office, the seasonally operated Baptist Church, and the Buckley Memorial Community Center. Ambulance and rescue services are provided by the Fair Haven Volunteer Rescue Squad, of which West Haven residents may be members. Students in grades K-eight attend the Fair Haven Grade School, while older students continue their education at Fair Haven Union High School.

Located in the Buckley Memorial Community Center, the town clerk's and treasurer's office is the center of local governance. The Baptist Church, where services are offered in the summer months, is of importance historically and architecturally. The Buckley Memorial Community Center is an important meeting and social space.

Solid waste management services are provided by agreement with the town of Fair Haven. Developed recreation opportunities may be found at the old elementary school, where there is a playground, soccer and baseball field (used by West Haven and Benson) and an outdoor basketball court. Outdoor

recreation opportunities in West Haven are quite extensive providing hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, as well as other opportunities on private land.

Central Vermont Public Service Corporation provides electrical service to the Town, while communication services (telephone) are provided by Verizon.

2.4 Natural and Cultural Environment

Major natural resources in the Town include its agricultural and forest lands, mineral resources, wildlife habitats, wetlands, lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, and recreation areas. Many of these resources contribute directly to local economic activities, such as farming and forestry.' Resources may also contribute indirectly, for example by attracting travelers and tourists who purchase goods and services in the Town. By making West Haven a desirable place to live, these resources also contribute to the Town's high quality of life.

Lands within West Haven with high potential for agricultural production are found throughout the Town but are focused in its eastern section. Lands with high potential for forestry production are concentrated on the rolling hills of West Haven's western section.

Mineral resources, including sand and gravel, are present to a limited extent.

Important surface water resources (lakes and ponds, rivers and streams) include the Poultney River, Lake Champlain, Cogman Pond, Billings Marsh Pond, and the Hubbardton River. Groundwater resources include the Town's aquifers, which appear to have their greatest potential along the base of the Great Ledge. Water resources also include wetlands, which are found throughout the Town.

Cultural resources in the Town include its historic buildings, historic village center, and institutions (such as churches). Like natural resources, cultural resources also contribute positively to the local economy and the quality of life.

3.0 Overall Goals and Objectives

3.1 Introduction

The Goals and Objectives of this Plan establish the overall direction for public and private actions that affect land use in the Town of West Haven. They are intended to guide the future growth and development of land and public services and facilities. They are also intended to guide the protection of the environment and the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features, and special resources. Insofar as they address energy, they are the Town's statement of policy on the conservation of energy.

3.2 Overall Goals

It is the goal of the Town of West Haven to:

Land Use Goals

Maintain the historic settlement pattern of more densely settled villages and neighborhoods surrounded by working farm and forest land.

Protect and encourage the maintenance of agricultural lands for the production of food and other agricultural products. Conserve all working farmlands, particularly in the three primary farmland sections of town.

Encourage the types, locations and intensities of land use that are compatible with the long-term environmental and economic capability of the community.

Economic Goals

Nurture a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities for residents and maintains high environmental and community standards.

Strengthen and protect the town's agricultural economy, including farming, forestry, and related activities.

Transportation Goals

Create a transportation system that promotes the other goals and policies of this plan and makes it easier - not harder - to direct efficient land use patterns and economic development.

Provide and maintain a transportation system that is safe and efficient.

Provide and maintain a transportation system that meets the needs of all segments of West Haven's population

Provide a level of public benefits from each component of the transportation system sufficient to outweigh the social, environmental, economic and energy costs.

Minimize transportation energy consumption and trips.

Water Quality

Improve or maintain water quality.

Establish public access, including visual access, to water and shoreline.

Maintain high quality groundwater and sufficient yields to adequately serve current and future residents of West Haven.

Wetlands Goals

Retain the present amount (no net loss) of significant (Class One and Class Two) wetlands and the values and functions that they serve.

Protect and enhance the ability of wetlands to provide values and functions of significance to the nation and state or of importance to the town.

Wildlife Habitat and Natural Areas Goals

Maintain and improve wildlife habitat and natural areas in the town and region to the fullest extent possible.

Cultural and Historic Resources Goals

Protect and preserve significant historic structures, sites, or districts; known prehistoric archeological sites; and areas where prehistoric sites are likely to be found.

Preserve the historic traditions and values that give West Haven its rural character and make it a special place to live.

Energy Goals

Conserve renewable and nonrenewable energy resources.

Reduce reliance on nonrenewable energy sources such as oil and gas, and increase use of renewable energy sources such as wood, methane, solar and wind.

Public Facilities, Utilities, and Services Goals

Provide educational opportunities that enable every child to become a competent, self-assured, caring, productive, responsible individual and citizen who is committed to continued learning throughout life and prepared for a world of rapid change and unforeseen demands.

Maintain a safe, secure learning environment where quality educational opportunities are provided to all students.

Provide an environmentally sound, and energy and cost efficient system of public facilities and services to meet present and future demands for fire protection, public safety, emergency medical services, water supply, sewage treatment, solid waste management and disposal, and other essential needs.

Provide the desired levels of public facilities and services, including Wireless and land-based telecommunications infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Recreation Goals

Maintain and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities and public access to them.

Establish and maintain a community based system of trails and greenways linking village centers, concentrated residential settlements, centers of employment and commerce, public places (eg. schools, parks, churches), and important recreation sites (eg. lakes, ponds, streams, vistas, woodland areas).

Protect and enhance the natural beauty and scenic characteristics of significance to local landscapes, including focal points and characteristics such as:

- landscape diversity,
- order and harmony of landscape elements,
- unique combinations of natural +/- or cultural features,
- distinctive distant views,
- foregrounds in harmony with distinctive distant views,
- skylines,
- shorelines,
- steep slopes,
- agricultural and forest land,

traditional villages and streetscapes,
historic buildings and cultural features,
significant scenic roads and pathways.

Housing Goals

Provide housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups,

particularly households of low and moderate income.

Provide safe, sanitary housing that is conveniently located to public facilities and services, and employment and commercial centers.

3.3 Overall Objectives

It is the objective of the Town of West Haven to:

Land Use Objectives

Work actively with landowners and land developers to achieve the goals, policies and objectives of this plan.

Approve subdivisions or developments only if they are consistent with the broad goals of the plan.

Conserve undeveloped lands surrounding existing built-up areas.

Discourage strip development along roads.

Base development densities for different areas of town on existing and desired settlement patterns, distance to and availability of town services, physical capability of the land for development, the presence of important natural resources, the size of parcels, the need for affordable housing, and consistency with goals and policies of the town plan.

Conserve the town's primary agricultural soils for agricultural uses.

Economic Objectives

Cooperate with other towns to maintain a balance between jobs created and natural growth in the region's workforce.

Participate in Act 250 reviews of business proposals that could accelerate development pressures in West Haven.

Support the creation of job opportunities that enable employees to use fully and develop their skills and abilities.

Support development of local businesses that create markets for locally produced goods and services or which themselves create value added products from locally produced goods.

Encourage manufacturing and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products.

Encourage use of locally grown agricultural and forest products.

Transportation Objectives

Manage roads to meet community level demand and maintain a rural character.

Analyze and compare a reasonable range of alternatives before supporting any new transportation projects, policies or improvements.

Examine alternatives in terms of environmental costs, energy use or

conservation, social costs, and public investment.

Compare the ability of each alternative to meet the goals and policies of the town plan.

Support new transportation projects, policies or improvements if:

the public need and benefit outweigh public costs; and

they provide, on balance, the most efficient way to meet demonstrated public need.

Plan land use and take actions to avoid the need to increase the capacity of town highways.

Promote energy conservation, public transportation and ride sharing programs.

Support bike lanes, greenways and pedestrian paths, particularly in conjunction with new development or transportation projects.

Lake and Pond, River and Streams and Groundwater Objectives

Ensure new development near streams is designed and sited to blend with the natural surrounding and will not disrupt the desired recreational uses, scenery or ecological functions of the stream corridor.

Work with towns and state and federal agencies that directly affect West Haven's surface water quality.

Protect surface water quality from new development by maintaining or establishing undisturbed, naturally vegetating buffer strips on their banks. Ensure adequate erosion control measures are taken if development activities are allowed within the buffer strip.

Limit development in areas of high erosion potential (e.g., steep slopes and thin soils) and

high susceptibility to surface water pollution (e.g., along wetlands, streams and ponds).

Prohibit or control the removal of gravel from streambeds and banks.

Allow 30 days for comments from a fisheries biologist from Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department prior to permitting construction of any pond on any stream, or the use of stream water as a source for a pond.

Ensure new development and land use activities do not impair groundwater quality or exceed the capacity to supply adequate groundwater yields to existing residents and businesses.

Participate in Act 250 hearings on projects in neighboring towns that are likely to impair West Haven's or the region's groundwater supplies.

Wetlands Objectives

Ensure new development is located and designed so that it will not impair the values and functions of important wetlands.

Require developers requesting zoning permits for projects within the buffer zone of important wetlands to prepare reports for submittal by the town to the Agency of Natural Resources. The reports will contain the information required in 24 V.S.A. Section 4409 (c) - Local approval should not be granted prior to the expiration of a period of thirty days following the submission of the report to the Agency of Natural Resources.

Wildlife Habitat and Natural Areas Objectives

Identify, protect and preserve important natural features of the West Haven environment.

Consider West Haven's major habitat components as areas of regional significance because of their relative scarcity, their important roles in this portion of Rutland County and their

interconnectedness with other habitats in the region.

Ensure long-term protection of major habitats through conservation easements, purchase, lease, tax incentives or other measures.

Minimize impacts of development on the system of interconnected habitats and the functional qualities of individual areas of biological significance.

Protect rare, endangered and threatened species and habitats.

Help landowners design development proposals that would fully comply with the goals and policies for biological diversity.

Minimize unnecessary fragmentation of large woodlands.

Maintain functioning wildlife corridors between major habitats and minimize the creation of artificial barriers between them.

Cultural and Historic Resources Objectives

Regard the town's cultural resources and historic settlement pattern as significant, non-renewable resources that create a special sense of place and community well-being.

Evaluate the significance of all historic districts, structures and archeological sites prior to permitting disturbance or alteration.

Allow 30 days for the Division for Historic Preservation to review and comment on permits for earth disturbing activities within areas likely to have prehistoric archeological sites.

Energy Objectives

Create settlement patterns that reduce travel requirements for work, services, shopping and recreation. For example discourage land uses that would create or lead to energy inefficient

sprawl and strip development and encourage clustered and multi-family housing in new residential developments.

Establish a strong and visible commitment to energy efficiency in buildings by promoting energy efficiency and increased use of renewable fuels in all buildings, especially new ones.

Create opportunities for walking, cycling and other energy efficient, non-motorized alternatives to the automobile.

Consider production of energy from methane to be a desirable agricultural practice.

Conserve forest land as a renewable energy resource.

Public Facilities, Utilities, and Services Objectives

Continue to provide a wide variety of community services including, but not limited to: education of children and adults, preschool and senior citizen programs, recreation, and meeting facilities.

Design and operate the old elementary school grounds as a model for responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship.

Ensure the construction, expansion or provision of public facilities and services are consistent with the goals and policies of this plan.

Locate, to the greatest extent practical, new or expanded public utilities within existing highway or utility rights-of-way.

Encourage maximum waste reduction, conservation and recycling to reduce need for new solid waste management facilities.

Recreation Objectives

Protect and enhance recreation resources of state or regional significance.

Consider requiring developers of larger subdivisions to provide land or facilities for parks, public access, or trails if the need for those lands or facilities have been identified by the community and would benefit the residents of the subdivision.

Over time, create and maintain shoulders suitable for use by bicycles and pedestrians.

Preserve Class 4 roads for recreational use or downgrade their status to a "trail." (19 V.S.A. Section 535).

Continue to provide adequate levels of recreation facilities and programs to serve the residents of the town.

"Paying for Services" Objectives

When appropriate analyze the fiscal impact of proposed projects - both inside and outside West Haven's boundaries.

The analysis should include the impact of related secondary development, such as residential growth.

The relationship between the tax bill on the median value house in West Haven and the

median income in Vermont should be used as a measure of the financial ability of residents to support growth.

Phase major capital expenditures to protect taxpayers from sudden increases in tax bills.

Manage growth so there are no sudden significant tax increases.

Housing Objectives

Encourage the provision of affordable housing for special needs populations such as: the physically handicapped, mentally disabled, single parent households and the elderly. Seek to fully integrate such housing into the community.

Treat proposals for multi-family, manufactured, and single-family conventional housing fairly and equitably.

Protect existing rental housing from deterioration and ultimate removal from the existing housing stock for alternative purposes.

Recognize that keeping housing affordable means encouraging:

- multi-family dwellings;
- accessory apartments;
- innovations in design;
- flexibility in local regulations; and
- other reasonable provisions.

4.0 Natural Resources

4.1 Physical Setting and Geology

West Haven is located at the southernmost end of the Champlain Lowland region. The Town owes its unique shape to the Poultney River and Lake Champlain. These waterbodies played major roles in the formation of West Haven's wetlands and marshes, home to many diverse ecosystems. The natural communities that develop in a region are highly influenced by underlying geological and topographical characteristics. The exposed bedrock of Bald Mountain within the Buckner Preserve, the glacial till along its flanks, and the heavy lake bottom, pluvial and recent sediments deposited by retreating glaciers, all form the varied environments that characterize the Town. These landscape features vary in elevation from 100 feet along Lake Champlain to nearly 1000 feet at the summit of Bald Mountain.

Soils

West Haven is made up of many different soil types, and their individual qualities directly affect the capabilities and possibilities to support varying uses.

The most common soils in the Town are ones generally well suited for the cultivation of crops but have slow permeability and high water tables, making them undesirable for septic leech fields. These soils generally occur in low lying, sediment filled areas

Soils found on the mountains, hills and ridges of West Haven consist of loamy till and are often found overlaying slate and schist. These soils vary in depth from shallow to moderately deep, and are well drained. In areas where these soils are shallow, they are poorly suited for cultivated crops, pasture, trees, and most development. These soils also support many fragile ecosystems containing rare plant and animal species.

Deep and well drained soils are found along present and past river and stream channels. These soils have high potential for cultivation as well as the possibility of development as sand and gravel resources, but are not good locations for permanent structures because of flooding potential

Agriculture Resources

Agriculture is the foundation of a highly valued rural lifestyle, an important economic activity, and a significant feature of the Vermont the landscape. Within the West Haven Community Needs Survey (1991), residents expressed a desire to maintain the Town's open spaces and rural atmosphere. The continuation of working landscapes helps preserve these qualities appreciated by local residents. Land capable of supporting agricultural uses require prime agricultural soils as well as moderate slope, adequate parcel size, and access.

Soils suitable for agricultural use are scattered throughout West Haven, with larger contiguous areas limited to the flatter northwest and south central areas of the Town. Prime and statewide agricultural soils only constitute about 16% of West Haven's acreage, and few tracts of land in the Town consist entirely of soils capable of supporting agricultural operations. Because of these limitations, many

farmers rely on lower quality soils to support their operations, or diversify their business with sugaring or grazing operations.

The viability of continuing West Haven's traditional working landscape is dependent on factors outside of the soil resources of the town. Limiting factors such as highly variable and uncertain commodity prices, the loss of local markets, and the conversion of agricultural land to other uses such as residential development can work against the existence of farming related activities.

Supporting working landscapes means supporting the rural characteristics that help identify West Haven. Many programs are available to aid in the continuation of farming. The statewide "Current Use" program helps alleviate undue taxation on large tracts of farmed land.

Forestry

Silviculture has a long history in the region. Lands capable of supporting forestry are critical to the forest products and fuel wood industries, as well as providing benefits such as wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. Many of these benefits are not associated with values found in commercial forestry, but are more general, benefiting all of West Haven's residents.

High quality forest lands are scattered throughout the Town, with the greatest concentration found in the flatter north central portion. Aside from chemical and physical characteristics, other factors affecting the capability of land to support forestry include parcel size, contiguous acreage, access, land use, and forest type and quality.

Mineral Resources

West Haven's mineral resources are primarily sand, gravel, and shale. These are important as raw materials, and are used widely in construction-related activities and processes.

The process by which the extraction of these resources occurs must acknowledge and address conflicts that can arise concerning environmental effects of the extraction, as well as the proximity of the potential site to other land uses such as residential development.

4.2 Wildlife Habitats

The benefits provided by wildlife habitats and other natural and fragile areas are numerous. They contribute to the regional economy by attracting travelers, recreation seekers, and wildlife admirers as well as add to the community's character and sense of place.

West Haven's wildlife resources are diverse. The Town has a large array of natural communities, supported by varied landscape features such as Lake Champlain, the Poultney River, large wetlands, and many marshes. The wetlands and marshes provide migratory birds a unique place to rest during their travels along the Atlantic flyway. These natural areas are worthy of attention and protection as the state's prime representatives of Champlain Valley flora and fauna.

Deer wintering areas, natural heritage sites incorporating rare plants and animals, and fishery resources can all be found in West Haven. Deer wintering areas are predominantly located in areas in low, south

facing slopes and along watercourses, and consist of approximately ten percent of the Town's land area. West Haven hosts many rare plants, uncommon bird species and rare reptiles. Please refer to the Natural Resources Technical Appendix for a detailed listing of these rare species.

Decisions regarding use of the land should consider the impact on these natural resources. One private landholder in West Haven, The Nature Conservancy, is working to preserve the many diverse and ecologically important plant and animal communities in the Town. Much of their landholdings can be found in the southern tip of West Haven, as well as along the Poultney River. Lands conserved by the Nature Conservancy, as well as other conservation programs are presently protecting many fragile ecosystems found along steep slopes, deer wintering habitat, and wetlands.

Much of West Haven surrounds the southern end of Lake Champlain, an area characterized by an ecologically rich landscape of undeveloped lake and river shoreline, deep emergent wetlands, calcareous cliffs, and oak-hickory woodlands. The Nature Conservancy in Eastern New York and Vermont has protected over 8,000 acres in Southern Lake Champlain Valley including over 5 miles of Poultney River shore in New York, along with two significant holdings within West Haven. This landscape-scale project is a bi-state partnership: Eastern New York and Vermont Chapters share site-based staff and office space.

The town of West Haven should coordinate efforts to protect its valuable natural resources with these organizations to further the goals of this plan. While much has been accomplished in West Haven, many of the rare plant and animal sites, as well as wetlands and other important habitats are not currently protected. (Please refer to West Haven's natural resources maps 1 and 2 concerning the location of these resources)

4.3 Water Resources

Watersheds

A watershed is a distinct, topographically defined land area that drains into a single river, river system, or standing body of water. The activities taking place in a watershed play a critical role in the quality of the water draining from it, and water quality awareness is an important key to maintaining a healthy watershed.

The eastern half of West Haven lies in the Poultney River watershed, while the western half of the Town drains directly into the Lake Champlain watershed. Much of the eastern portion of the town actually drains into the Hubbardton River, a large tributary to the Poultney River.

Surface Water

Surface water resources, which include lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands, provide many important benefits. For example, surface waters support economic activities such as agriculture; residential activities such as drinking and cleaning, and recreational activities such as swimming and boating. They also serve as habitat for wildlife and as an important component of the hydrologic cycle.¹

¹Rutland Regional Plan, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, page 82

West Haven's primary water bodies—the Poultney and Hubbardton rivers are both used for recreational and educational opportunities, as well as providing wildlife habitat and harboring archeological resources. In June 1991, the Lower Poultney River was designated as an Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) because of its exceptional natural, cultural, and scenic values.

Lakes and ponds constitute the other surface water resources in West Haven. Major lakes and ponds include Lake Champlain, Coggman Pond, and Billings Marsh Pond. These resources offer recreational opportunities as well as supporting warmwater fisheries. Recently, the discovery of aquatic invasive species, such as water chestnut, potentially limits the uses of ponds in the town. The Nature Conservancy has launched an eradication campaign to manage these aquatic plant infestations.

Discharges to the surface waters in West Haven occur from a variety of sources and involve a wide range of pollutants. Pollution occurs in the form of point source pollutants, or those discharged directly into the waterbody, and non-point source pollutants, which can include agricultural and other surface runoff that affect the water quality of the rivers and streams. When surface waters become polluted, humans can be affected directly through exposure to pollutant concentrations in the aquatic environment, or indirectly through exposure to secondary impacts, such as algal blooms associated with excessive nutrient discharges. Incidental contact with contaminated water, as well as the consumption of contaminated water or aquatic organisms can also affect human and animal health. Please refer to the Natural Resources Technical Appendix for a detailed discussion of specific pollutants affecting the Poultney and Hubbardton rivers, as well as West Haven's lakes, ponds and streams.

Wetlands

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated with water at least part of the year and include marshes, swamps, sloughs, fens, and mud flats and bogs. Wetlands provide important wildlife habitats, but also provide other benefits such as storing stormwater runoff, purifying surface and groundwater supplies, recharging aquifers, controlling erosion, and providing areas for recreation.

Wetland losses may be incurred both directly and indirectly. In addition to direct loss of acreage, the quality of the habitat may deteriorate due to several factors—the infestation of exotic weeds, vulnerability to a variety of pollutants; litter from recreational users; and atmospheric pollutants that alter chemical compositions of wetland waters. Because of their many beneficial functions, direct loss of wetlands due to filling can have dramatic ecological effects besides habitat losses.²

The majority of West Haven's wetlands are found along the shore of Lake Champlain and East Bay; along the banks of Coggman Creek and the Hubbardton River; and in the northeast corner of Town. Horton Marsh, East Bay Marsh, Schoolhouse Marsh, Billings Marsh, and Coggman Marsh comprise the significant portion of West Haven's 1,300 acres of wetlands.

Ground Water

Ground water is water that has infiltrated into the soil through sand, gravel, or rock. The areas where groundwater is stored are called aquifers. An aquifer is a geologic formation containing enough water to

²Rutland Regional Plan, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Last Adopted June 2001, page 90.

yield significant quantities to wells and springs. Places where groundwater is replenished by surface waters are known as recharge areas. Groundwater is drawn from aquifers through wells. Areas surrounding wells are called areas of influence. In the same way that pollutants introduced from watersheds can affect the water quality of streams, rivers, and lakes, contaminants can be introduced into groundwater supplies through areas of influence as well as through direct discharge to the subsurface (as through an abandoned well or leaky storage tank). Groundwater pollution in rural areas is primarily associated with agricultural practices, road salt, and septic tank problems.³

Groundwater is a critical water resource for West Haven. It meets the needs of residences, agriculture and businesses. Groundwater in the town is usually of high quality and quantity. Since the Department of Water Supply began logging well data in the 1980's, 84 wells have been recorded for West Haven. Wells drilled before data was kept by the department and still operating are unaccounted for in this analysis. Yields of these wells vary widely.

The approximate location of aquifers and recharge areas have been developed through geology, soils and well log data. The limestone and dolomite bedrock found to the east and west of Bald Mountain are conducive to the occurrence of bedrock aquifers. The eastern edge West Haven along the Great Ledge has been identified as the most productive areas in Town. Please refer to the Natural Resources Technical Appendix for a detailed discussion on types and classifications of aquifers.

4.4 Scenic Resources

In the course of planning for West Haven's future, it is important that the presence of high quality open space and scenic resources, broad scenic areas as well as scenic landmarks, are recognized and the integrity of such resources is preserved. Scenic resources have aesthetic, historical and economic value. Siting of future construction, as well as community facilities and infrastructure, should always consider the potential impact on the aesthetic qualities of the community and preserve the undisturbed integrity, wherever possible, of West Haven's quality scenic and open space resources. Scenic resources enhance the quality of life of West Haven's residents, but these resources are fragile. Use of these areas must be balanced with their protection and preservation so that misuse and overuse do not destroy the delicate balance of form and pattern that defines scenic beauty.

West Haven residents have identified the view from Bald Mountain, Buckner Preserve, and views along the Poultney River corridor to represent important scenic landmarks within the Town.

³Rutland Region Natural Environment Technical Report, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, pages 36 & 37

4.5 Natural Resource Implementation strategies

Develop a program to ensure that agriculture remains a viable land use.

Create overlay zones to ensure protection of sensitive areas and resources.

Establish and implement voluntary programs for stream conservation and water quality protection.

Establish stream buffers that conserve water quality, natural habitats, wildlife movement and other ecological processes along the Poultney and Hubbardton Rivers and other important sections of streams.

Implement a program to inventory, evaluate and protect West Haven's scenic resources, including scenic roads.

In local zoning, require appropriate setbacks from surface waters for maintenance yards and storage areas for road salt, fuel, and other potential sources of pollution.

Establish a program to coordinate West Haven's stream conservation activities with other governmental plans and programs.

Encourage farms to protect stream banks by fencing animals out of waterways and developing appropriate crossing points.

Support Nature Conservancy projects on the Hubbardton and Poultney rivers.

Coordinate with neighboring towns to establish and implement an intermunicipal program for groundwater protection, study and monitoring.

Establish a program to gather more detailed information about the town's wetlands and evaluate their importance to the town.

Develop and implement a community-based wildlife conservation program. Encourage

owners of existing developments, farms and forests to minimize the effects of their activities on biologically significant areas.

Establish a program to create and sustain functionally interconnected areas of lowlands, large woodlands and other areas of biological significance.

Create a program of incentives for landowners who protect and improve important wildlife habitats.

Create a program to encourage cooperation among adjacent landowners to protect and improve important habitats and corridors.

Work with the Historic Society to develop an overall program to study and preserve West Haven's rich past and important traditions.

Again with the help of the Historical Society develop a program to help citizens understand the importance of the town's prehistoric and historic resources and ways residents can help preserve them.

Enact regulatory tools that improve the energy efficiency of land uses.

Encourage management of woodlots for fuel production.

Educate citizens about the need for sustainable energy practices.

Make public buildings models of energy efficiency.

Distribute energy efficiency guidelines to homeowners planning major additions or renovations to existing structures and to landowners/builders planning new construction.

5.0 Transportation

5.1 Introduction

The Transportation Plan is based upon the information and analyses contained in the Transportation Technical appendix.

5.2 Present Facilities and Services

Transportation facilities and services in or available to residents of the Town include highways, rail, bus and paratransit, air, and trails for biking and walking.

There are 3.0 miles of state highways (VT Route 22A) and 35.2 miles of town highways in West Haven. The town's highways are further divided into two classes: Class 2 and Class 3. West Haven contains 12.6 miles (33 percent) of class 2 highways, which are those that are judged to be the most important in the community. The 22.6 miles of Class 3 highways are routes negotiable by a standard automobile on a year-round basis. All other routes, private and public, are Class 4 highways.

The condition of highways in West Haven is generally good. Surface conditions are adequate, although extensive sections of Main Road require attention. Initial examinations suggest that these sections may need to be rebuilt before being repaved in order to solve the problems.

None of the roads in West Haven are so dangerous so as to be classified as High Accident Locations (HALs) by the Vermont Agency of Transportation. The town recognizes, however, that problems do exist and should be addressed. Local officials have identified several safety concerns; more easily fixed problems are listed at the end of this section, while longer-term projects are described in the Technical Appendix.

Traffic volumes are well below design capacity. The average daily traffic on VT 22A in 1991 was estimated at 4640 trips in northern West Haven and 5090 trips in southern West Haven. The average daily traffic on Main Road was 440. Traffic on some roads is so low so as to raise questions about the need for continued maintenance by the town. The roads - TH 6 (Bay Road) and TH 26 (old 22A), - could be reclassified as class 4 roads if the town found that year round maintenance was not required.

While West Haven has no officially designated scenic highways, several highways in the Town might warrant such a designation.

Given West Haven's rural nature, there is very little need for public parking. Parking at public buildings like the church and grange hall is generally adequate.

Transportation in West Haven is dominated by automobiles and highways. Although the town is not directly served by any other major modes of transportation, the existence of alternatives to traditional automobile travel needs to be recognized.

Access to freight oriented rail service is possible at Rutland. The nearest tracks pass south of West Haven through Fair Haven and Whitehall. The nearest air service is found at Rutland State Airport in

Clarendon and Fair Haven Airport in Fair Haven. Many general aviation activities, including some which benefit West Haven, take place at the Fair Haven Airport. Air service is also available in Burlington and Albany. The Marble Valley Regional Transit District provides paratransit services to members of the public.

Bicycling and pedestrian travel are recreational as well as practical transportation modes. No formal cycling routes exist in West Haven, though hiking paths exist in the Buckner Preserve (see recreation facilities section).

5.3 Prospective Facilities and Improvements

Town officials have identified the need for a number of upgrades to West Haven's transportation network. Below is a list of a number of short-term transportation improvements / projects that would most serve the community. Included in the Technical Appendix is a list of more long-term improvements that will likely require outside assistance to complete.

1. The curve on Main Road (TH 1) immediately east of the Hubbardton River Bridge should be warned and signed.
2. Ghost Hollow Road between the Humbert and Pettis properties should be warned and signed.
3. The portions of Main Road (TH 1) and Book Road (TH 3) showing the worst conditions should be rebuilt.
4. Reclassify as Class 4 roads those Class 3 roads not now being maintained.
5. Erect stop sign on Adams Road (TH 20) at its intersection with TH 4 because of limited sight distance at this intersection.
6. Erect stop sign on Pettis Road (TH 5) at its western intersection with Main Road (TH 2) because of limited sight distance at this intersection.
7. Erect stop sign on Coggman Road (TH 3) at Book Road (TH 3) when repairs to the bridge to New York are complete, because of limited sight distance due to the bridge superstructure.
8. Move stop sign at Best Road (TH 10) closer to Main Road (TH 2), to follow Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Standards.
9. Replace guardrails in town as needed and as funding allows.
10. Move stop sign on Hackaddam Road (TH 13) closer to Main Road to conform with MUTCD.
11. Improve signage at the intersection of Stage and Main road

5.4 Transportation Implementation Strategies

The following strategies suggest ways that West Haven's transportation goals and objectives should be implemented. The town should:

Coordinate with local, regional and state organizations.

Work with neighboring towns to ensure that proposed developments in those towns will not overburden West Haven transportation systems.

Work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation to ensure that policies for land along VT 22A balance the needs for safety and appropriate future development.

Develop a program that reduces energy spent for transportation and reduces excess automobile trips on West Haven's roads.

Revise local regulations to promote West Haven's transportation goals and policies in concert with future land use goals.

Adopt local standards for construction, improvements and maintenance of town roads.

Develop criteria for reviewing proposed intersections of driveways or side streets with town highways.

Amend regulations to require that private development roads meet standards for town roads.

Develop a program and budget for major capital investments in the community transportation system.

Assess the entire transportation system's current conditions, desired conditions, deferred maintenance which needs to be performed, and levels of routine maintenance needed to sustain desired conditions.

Study the potential benefits of a scenic road designation

The Town should require that development roads be brought up to town standards before being taken over by the town.

Complete and maintain an inventory database of culverts and bridges within the community.

6.0 Facilities, Utilities, and Services

6.1 Introduction

The Public Facilities Plan is based upon the information and analyses contained in the utilities, facilities, and services technical report. For detailed information and analyses of each subject, please refer to the Appendix. The Facilities, Utilities, and Services map also provides geographic information for key facilities and utilities.

6.2 Present Facilities, Services, and Utilities

Public facilities, services, and utilities in or available to residents of West Haven include elementary and high schools, fire protection, rescue, public safety, recreation, solid waste disposal, electric power, and communications.

6.3 Education

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade attend Fair Haven Grade School, while older students continue their education at Fair Haven Union High School. The number of students attending from West Haven has declined slightly at both schools over the past few years; in 2002-03, 23 West Haven residents attended the Grade School while 18 attended the High School. Both schools have adequate capacity for projected enrollment.

Both schools are funded using Act 60 formulas, which are based on per pupil spending for each school and communities. Local tax rates are calculated based on a statewide “block” amount and a locally-determined “above-block” amount.

6.4 Fire and Rescue

Fire protection is provided by the West Haven Volunteer Fire Department, located at 59 North Road. The Department currently has 18 active members and annually responds to between 12 and 18 calls. Rescue services for Town residents are provided by the Fair Haven Rescue Squad.

The most pressing needs for the Fire Department are upgrades to communications equipment and protective gear for volunteers.

6.5 Law Enforcement

Public safety services in West Haven are provided by the Vermont State Police, and the local constabulary. Because of the rural nature of the Town, public safety service is generally provided on an on call basis, though the town is covered during regular area patrols.

The actual level of crime experienced in West Haven is low relative to the rest of the Region although the number appears to have increased slightly in the past decade. Minor crimes in West Haven have

registered at a rate of approximately 44 per 1,000 population annually, while more serious crimes have been listed at 10-15 per 1,000 population.

The adequacy of public safety services is currently considered good by local standards. In the future, the adequacy of public safety services could change if development increases in remote areas where the detection of criminal activity is more difficult.

6.6 Solid Waste and Recycling

West Haven manages its solid waste in cooperation with the Town of Fair Haven. Fair Haven hosts a solid waste transfer station and recycling center that is open for use by West Haven residents at a fee basis.

6.7 Water Supply and Wastewater

Water supply and wastewater are managed entirely at an individual scale in West Haven. Dug or drilled wells and on-site septic systems serve nearly all residents. Given the rural settlement pattern of community, the town has no immediate intention to examine municipal water supply or wastewater facilities.

The physical constraints of West Haven's soil are among the key factors guiding future development in the town. The predominance of clay and other soils, which do not percolate well has historically made the installation of on-site septic systems difficult. Newly adopted statewide water supply and wastewater rules will likely open landowners to more possibilities, however.

6.8 Energy

The majority (53%) of West Haven households used fuel oil for home heating in 2000, according to the US Census Bureau. Bottled or tank gas and wood were the other primary sources, accounting for 26% and 19% respectively. Household electricity is provided by Central Vermont Public Service. Energy facilities in the town include a hydroelectric dam at Carver's Falls and a transmission line strung parallel to Route 22A.

The Town of West Haven is committed to encouraging energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources throughout the community. The Town recognizes the link between promoting a reduction in resources and efficient patterns of land use development.

6.9 Communications

Communications exist in several forms in West Haven. Traditional land-based telephone access is provided by Verizon through a network of strung lines. Dial-up Internet access is available from a variety of providers. Wireless telecommunication is possible in select areas throughout the community based on reception, though no towers or repeaters are currently located in the town.

Obtaining high-speed Internet access and improved wireless communications are priorities for the Town of West Haven. In that light, the town has recently adopted regulations to encourage wireless telecommunications facilities to be constructed in a manner that is unobtrusive and consistent with the goals of this plan.

6.10 Recreation

Recreation is important to Vermont and Vermonters. Recreational opportunities available to the residents of the Town are found inside and outside of West Haven. Developed recreation opportunities are available at the Steven Pettis Memorial Recreation Field next to the old elementary school, while undeveloped facilities include Bald Mountain and the Poultney River corridor. Managed by a volunteer Recreation Committee, this field has places to play baseball, soccer, and basketball.

West Haven’s location and geography provide the town with unique opportunities to promote outdoor recreation. Preserves maintained by The Nature Conservancy couple with the Poultney River and the southern end of Lake Champlain to provide varied undeveloped areas for hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, and other activities.

Designing and implementing a plan to promote year-round recreation in West Haven is a priority.

6.11 Facilities, Utilities, and Services Implementation Strategies

The following strategies suggest ways that West Haven's facility, utilities, and service goals and objectives should be implemented. The town should:

Develop a long-term program outlining present and anticipated school capital expenditures.

disposal options for the special wastes generated.

Work with Supervisory Union members to ensure high-level, cost effective education for West Haven students.

Continue to support the volunteer fire and rescue efforts, including obtaining funding for updated equipment, vehicles, and dry hydrants, and encourage continued training for personnel.

Aggressively pursue increased recycling by education, information on the costs of recycling vs. mixed solid waste disposal, collection programs for additional materials.

Maintain an updated community Rapid Response Emergency Plan and Develop a Community Emergency Management Plan.

In cooperation with Fair Haven schedule additional special wastes events such as metals days, tire collections, construction and demolition, etc.

Undertake a study to help guide planning and funding for future crime prevention and law enforcement services.

In cooperation with Fair Haven identify and educate small quantity generators of hazardous wastes concerning the nature of and proper

Study the possible effects of new statewide water supply and wastewater regulations and consider revisions to the West Haven zoning regulations.

Promote energy efficiency in land use decisions and construction.

Adopt permanent bylaws for the regulation of wireless telecommunications facilities that serve residents' needs and maintain West Haven's character.

Promote the establishment of high-speed Internet access in the community to serve the needs of residents and businesses.

Develop a program to establish and maintain community forests, parks, trails, and recreation areas.

Support regional efforts that promote recreation and physical activity.

Study the potential for additional bicycle, hiking, and cross country skiing trails and easements in West Haven.

7.0 Historic and Cultural Resources

7.1 Introduction

For a more detailed examination of West Haven’s Historic and Cultural Resources, see the Plan’s Technical Report. West Haven’s historic and cultural resources are tied to the town’s agricultural past. The majority of the town’s 31 sites listed on the State Register of Historic Places are homes or agricultural buildings dating from the turn of the 20th Century, when the local population stood at nearly 800 residents. The small West Haven village traces its history and some of its key buildings to the earliest settlements in the community

Historic resources are important; they stand as powerful and readily visible reminders of the past and present. Historic buildings also make a major contribution to the celebrated Vermont environment that is crucial to both the area’s economic prosperity and to personal well-being. The West Haven Historical Society was incorporated on July 12, 2000 with the mission of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting anything related to history of the town.

The Historical Society’s immediate goals include the restoration and relocation of the old Center School for re-use as the Society’s museum. The Society is also in the process of collecting artifacts that pertain to the history of West Haven, including old town reports and pictures.

Agriculture remains important in West Haven, a small farming community with many architectural remnants of its long agricultural history. It is the many working farms, however, with their historic houses, barns, and other out-buildings, that tell the story of everyday life in 19th century West Haven.

Cultural resources include a wide range of features, institutions, organizations, interrelationships, and beliefs that impact daily lives. Cultural resources in the Town of West Haven include the old elementary school, the local church, the grange, the volunteer fire department, and any activities set up to increase the sense of community in West Haven.

Threats to historic and archeological resources in the town do not appear to be significant. Archeological resources could be affected by increased water levels or flooding of shoreline areas and by unauthorized collection. Historic resources could be affected by deferred maintenance and deterioration and development that alters the character of historic areas.

7.2 Historic and Cultural Resources Implementation Strategies

The following strategies suggest ways that West Haven's historic and cultural resource goals and objectives should be implemented. The town should:

Actively promote and support the efforts of the West Haven Historical Society

Encourage the use of town-owned buildings for community-oriented events

Provide support for efforts to rehabilitate historic structures

Support efforts to rehabilitate the Center School House

8.0 Housing

8.1 Introduction

The Housing Plan is based in part upon the information and analyses contained in the housing technical report. For detailed information and analyses of each subject, please refer to the Technical Appendix.

8.2 Housing Stock

Identification of housing needs requires an evaluation of housing demand, housing supply, and buying power. According to data gathered from the US Census Bureau, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and the Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign, housing remains difficult to buy or rent at affordable rates throughout Rutland County and in West Haven.

Nationwide, a trend towards fewer persons per households has changed the type of housing needs and increased the demand for housing – especially affordable housing – in many towns, even those with stable or declining populations.

Single family and mobile homes account for the overwhelming majority of housing in West Haven; of the 119 housing units in 2000, 89 were single family and 22 were mobile homes. The figures demonstrate only minimal growth from the 1990 Census. Town records indicate 19 new homes were constructed in West Haven between 1990 and 2000, several of which were replacements of existing structures

West Haven's housing stock, like its neighbors', continues to age. Over 25 percent of all structures in the town were built prior to 1940. These units require attention to ensure they remain in good structural form.

An interesting contrast is that according to the 2000 Census, over 54% of all householders in West Haven had lived in their homes for less than 10 years. This figure suggests that despite the stability in the total number of homes in West Haven over the past decade, there has been a great deal of turnover, and an assessment of the *affordability* of housing in the town is worthwhile.

8.3 Housing Affordability

National, state, and regional indicators identify affordable housing as an issue that is affecting households regardless of socioeconomic status, profession or household type. This overarching issue is based around the fact that everyone seeks adequate housing that is within the household budget, regardless of income. A very rough indicator of affordably priced housing is when a household is paying no more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs.

Estimating the number of households being forced to pay more than this is difficult in West Haven because of the community's size. Statistical analyses based on so few samples is generally unwise⁴. Therefore, the following paragraph examines the issue of affordability at a regional level.

According to the 2000 Census, over 40% of renter-occupied households in Rutland County were paying more than 30% of their gross income towards housing costs. Among homeowners, 23% spent more than 30% of their income on housing. Moreover, the National Low Income Housing Coalition reported that in 2001, the fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Rutland County was \$541; for a two-bedroom unit, it was \$661; for a three-bedroom unit it was \$830. The annual family incomes needed to afford the units listed above were \$21,640, \$26,440, and \$33,200, respectively. Over 21% of all family households earned less than \$25,000 annually in 1999, according to the 2000 Census. For those families, both two- and three-bedroom units were unaffordable.

Finally, according to the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition – a statewide organization focused on increasing the awareness of housing issues in the state – the median purchase price for a home in Vermont was \$127,000 in 2001; just five years earlier, the median price was just over \$96,000. In West Haven, this trend has not been as extreme. The most recent re-appraisal, however, showed an increase in the value of almost 70%, from \$63,800 in 1990 to \$108,300 in 2000⁵. West Haven's buying power increased disproportionately, the median household income rising from \$29,550 to \$45,417, or 54%⁶.

An analysis of West Haven's housing situation indicates three distinct issues affecting affordability. These include the aging of the population, the presence of low and very low income households, and the costs associated with development of the land.

In West Haven, 15 percent of all residents were over 62 in 2000. This indicates a trend towards an increasingly elderly population. This population's housing needs will shift as current residents may begin to search out smaller units in West Haven or be forced to search elsewhere.

West Haven, like every community in the Region, is home to low-income households for whom affordability is especially difficult. The majority of these households are comprised of young adults or elderly community members, indicating the need for housing types that fit the unique needs of these groups.

Finally, affordability in West Haven is greatly influenced by the costs associated with developing the heavy clay soils common in much of West Haven. The need for specialized septic systems pushes the costs of home construction out of reach for many possible residents.

Existing housing in West Haven is not able to meet the affordability of its low-income residents who desire to buy their own homes. While rental units are generally more affordable in West Haven, an accurate count of the number of rental units and their availability is lacking, and the number of units may not be able to accommodate the elderly and low-income households looking for smaller, less expensive living situations.

⁴The US Census Bureau bases its analyses on only 16 "specified" owner-occupied units and 2 "specified" renter-occupied units. "Specified" units are single family homes on less than 10 acres of land.

⁵ Source: US Census 1990, 2000—the median value of all owner-occupied housing units. These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

⁶ Source: US Census 1990, 2000—the median household income. These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

This situation is aggravated by the fact that the average household size has continued to drop, from 3.0 persons in 1990 to 2.67 in 2000. This trend has had several impacts: a rise in the demand for smaller housing units, a possible decline in school enrollment, and a change in the use of existing larger homes.

8.4 Housing and Land Use

In West Haven, housing and overall land use are closely linked. In fact, over 94 % of all structures in the town are residential. Given West Haven's character, future construction in the community is likely to follow this pattern. It is therefore important to consider the impacts of new single family housing on the town's overall landscape. As the Town's remaining farms continue to be divided into smaller, residential parcels, the need for an overall strategy for maintaining the Town's resources and uses is apparent. The Future Land Use element examines this issue in greater detail.

8.5 Future Needs

West Haven's population is not likely to grow significantly in the next ten years. Between 1990 and 2000, the town saw its population grow by only five, from 273 to 278. This is not to suggest that there is no demand for housing, at an affordable rate, among West Haven residents. To the contrary, the town recognized the need to support efforts to ease the cost of housing in the community so that it may continue to exist as a diverse community.

Much of the slow housing and population growth over the past decade can be attributed to the lack of suitable soil for septic systems. Recent changes in the statewide water supply and wastewater rules, however, combined with Vermont's increasing popularity as a residential environment suggest that there may be an increased demand for new housing.

8.6 Housing Implementation Strategies

The following strategies suggest ways that West Haven's housing goals and objectives should be implemented. The town should:

Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of the town's existing housing stock by various measures, including supporting applications for grants.

An assessment of housing conditions should be completed by the Town to determine the need for housing stock preservation and rehabilitation.

Coordinate with non-profit housing agencies to attain Community Development Block Grants to aid in the rehabilitation of West Haven's housing stock.

Increase public awareness on the town's affordable housing needs and policies making information on various assistance programs available and by offering technical assistance to those in need.

The town should work with non-profit agencies to pursue low interest rehabilitation loans for affordable housing units:

Whenever housing units are offered for sale, bring the offers to the attention of non-profit housing organizations such as the Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council or Rutland County Community Land Trust. These organizations

can look into the possibility of acquiring these housing units and thereby ensure e they will remain affordable and in sound condition.

Ensure that town regulations actively support the rehabilitation and construction of moderately-priced housing that maintains and enhances the town's character. Tools may include

- Re-examining minimum lot sizes to reflect changes to the statewide water supply and wastewater rule;
- Encouraging development to take place in a clustered form by implementing clear planned unit development regulations
- Permitting the conversion of larger homes and structures to multi-family housing where feasible under septic laws:

Identify units that can be rehabilitated to meet some or all of the unmet need

Ensure that West Haven's land use regulations support the community's vision for its future. Regulations should *encourage* the type of housing and land use patterns *most* desired by residents.

9.0 Capability of Land for Development

The potential for future development in West Haven is directed, in part, by a variety of environmental limitations of the land. In general, the three most significant limitations are steep slopes, soils that do work with on-site septic systems, and areas prone to flooding.

9.1 Steep Slopes

Areas with steep slopes are generally not conducive to development. They pose significant obstacles with respect to construction, potential erosion from the loss of vegetation, and the installation of septic systems that will filter correctly. The removal of vegetation from steep areas exposes loose soils and increases the speed at which rainwater can carry remaining plants and soil away from the site and into rivers.

In Vermont, the installation of septic systems on slopes greater than 20% are prohibited. In West Haven, all development on steep slopes is discouraged. Where logging is to take place, selective cutting is favored over clear-cutting.

Steep slopes are present in West Haven along the eastern and western borders of the town. Areas exceeding a 25% slope account for just under 25% of all land in the town.

9.2 Septic Suitability

The majority of West Haven's soils are not conducive to the installation of traditional on-site wastewater septic systems.

The most common soil association in the community, Kingsbury-Vergennes, contains high proportions of dense clay, which does not drain water well. Traditional leech fields, which are designed to allow clear, but unfiltered, wastewater, to slowly percolate through soils, are less effective in these conditions. Leech fields installed in these types of soils tend to force unfiltered water to the surface, which may pose a health hazard.

Other areas of the community contain soils with high proportions of gravel and/or sand, which drains water very quickly. As a result, wastewater from traditional on-site septic systems returns to the water table *too quickly*, before soils have had a chance to act as a filter. That water may re-enter the groundwater system from which drinking wells draw.

The State of Vermont has a statewide permit requirement for onsite disposal of wastewater. Standards were imposed requiring a minimum depth of soil above bedrock and the water table and infiltration rates. A provision was also added exempting all single and two family house lots of over 10 acres in size from obtaining a permit. This exemption was heavily used in West Haven on account of the poor soils and lower costs associated with unregulated septic systems.

During the 2002 Legislative session, a new law regulating water supply and wastewater systems was passed. The new law included two substantial changes to Vermont's septic regulations:

- First, the "10-acre" exemption was removed. As of June, 2002, all construction on new lots, regardless of the size of the lot, must meet the revised statewide standards.
- Second, the "standards" themselves were updated. In addition to reducing the minimum soil depths to bedrock and water tables required to install a traditional system, the new laws allow for new and innovative septic systems to be built that meet specific 'performance standards'. In other words, innovative systems may be designed to work in areas where traditional ones could not, so long as water being filtered back into the soil does not contaminate the water table or rise too close to the surface.

The full effects of the new law in West Haven are still unknown. Clearly, the traditional strategy of building single-family homes on lots greater than 10 acres in size is no longer relevant. The allowance for new and innovative designs may, however, present greater opportunities for development in West Haven. The downside to new systems, at least initially, will be the higher costs associated with any new product or innovation.

9.3 Flood-Hazard Areas

Among the greatest challenges associated with development in Vermont is dealing with the flat, well-drained lands bordering streams and rivers. Compared with much of the state's land, it is easy to access, build on, and install functional septic systems on. At the same time, those lands are prone to flooding from spring thaws or heavy rainstorms. As a result, they are generally considered unsuitable for construction, but can remain prime locations for agriculture and recreation.

Flood-prone areas are generally distinguished into two categories: floodways and flood hazard areas (or floodplains). Floodways are areas in or immediately next to the traditional watercourse of the stream. Flood hazard areas are usually described as a '100-year flood plain', meaning that in any given year, the odds are 1 in 100 that flooding will occur.

Flooding can cause significant damage, costs, and injuries to homes or other structures built within flood hazard areas, as has been demonstrated throughout Vermont and the United States.

10.0 Future Land Use

10.1 Introduction

The Future Land Use Section is shaped by the findings and recommendations made in all other elements of the Plan, as well as by analyses contained in the Technical Appendices. It translates and synthesizes ideas on a wide range of topics into a coherent policy on future development. The Future Land Use Section is where the Town "puts together all of the pieces" of the planning "puzzle."

While goals, objectives, and various maps help define the town's vision for the future, the Future Land Use section serves as a guide for the creation or amendment of programs (including bylaws) that implement the Town's vision. Local land use controls, for example, translate the desired development concept into a clear, attainable, and enforceable land use program.

As required by state law, the Future Land Use Plan contains both text and a Future Land Use Map. The future land use map displays the desired future development patterns recommended by the Plan, while the future land use text explains the basis or logic for the pattern and the desired sequence of land development.

To ensure that the distinction between the town plan and zoning remains clear, the future land use map in this plan is conceptual. The lines showing the edge of districts are deliberately blurred and generalized. The map does not reflect features such as property lines because property lines change over time. Moreover, property lines represent a level of mapping detail that does not "mesh" with the generalized nature of the data and analysis used in preparing this plan.

The conceptual future land use plan for West Haven contains three landuse districts. The characteristics of the land in these three districts suggest different planning needs, issues, and community objectives. The districts shown on the future land use map are intended to establish basic guidelines for future land use and intensity. The town's zoning should translate the goals of this plan into specific standards that regulate land development.

10.2 Settlement District

The Settlement District contains the Town's existing built-up areas and suggests where future development should be most compact in West Haven. It is divided into two areas of historic settlement.

One portion covers the center of West Haven and takes in West Haven village and a small surrounding area. The second portion covers the small built up area along Main Road, Hackadam Road and portions of River Road in eastern West Haven. The district, which covers approximately one tenth of the town, consists of a relatively flat, low plateau in West Haven village and varied terrain elsewhere.

The Settlement District contains the largest concentration of residential development in West Haven. It also contains the community's public buildings and institutions. Access to the parts of the Settlement District is very good, given its location and the presence of town highways.

The area, in general, is characterized by a mix of open and wooded lands. Residential and agricultural uses share the district, giving it a separate appearance and character than other, more agrarian or forestry-oriented parts of the community.

Natural features within the district include limited areas of agricultural and forest soils.

Future Development

The potential for future development in the Settlement District is constrained by soils with poor suitability for septic disposal. Otherwise, because of its location, proximity to services, and natural features, growth can be accommodated with relatively minor impact.

Specific recommendations for the Settlement District include the following:

- Future growth in West Haven should be targeted for this district;
- Regulations should permit a mix a housing types and affordability levels
- Lot layout, building design, should enhance the area's character and help maintain the balance of agriculture, forest, and residential uses.
- Water supplies should be protected through careful siting and design of septic facilities.

Development should occur at a density that reflects existing conditions in the district. Wherever possible, the Town encourages developments to use the least amount of land possible for private residential uses and in order to help retain land for agriculture.

10.3 Agricultural District

The Agricultural District is the largest district in West Haven. It occupies roughly one-half of the town and takes in areas not covered by the Settlement District or the Conservation District.

The Agricultural District contains and seeks to maintain West Haven's important agricultural resources - farmland, agricultural soils, and forest soils. Natural features in the District include significant natural areas, deeryards and sensitive areas.

The area is characterized by active farmland intermixed with forests and homes throughout the rolling landscape. The preservation of agricultural and forest resources and farms is the primary objective of this district.

Future Development

Development in the Agricultural District has not been extensive in recent years. However, because of the attraction rural living has for many people, the potential for growth pressure is real.

As is the case in the Settlement District, the soils' limited capacity for on-site sewage disposal is the primary constraint to development. Furthermore, access to some parts of the District is limited.

Specific recommendations for the Agricultural District include the following:

- subdivisions should be designed to preserve "Farmable" lots;
- roads should be maintained to permit easy transportation of agricultural commodities,
- natural areas should be avoided by development
- water supplies should be protected through careful design and siting of septic facilities and through the use of best management practices.

Development in the Agricultural District should, to the greatest extent possible, maintain the low-intensity, active use character of the land. The Town encourages the continued development of agricultural and forestry enterprises in this district. While residential development is encouraged to take place in the Settlement District, very low intensity construction can take place in a manner that is consistent with this Plan.

10.4 Conservation District

The Conservation District contains West Haven's most important habitat and natural resource lands.

The District, which takes up approximately 40% of the town, is predominately characterized by tall hills, steep slopes, wetlands, and stream corridors

Specific natural features in the district include Bald Mountain, East Bay and its associated marshes, numerous deeryards, and several significant wildlife habitats and communities. These areas are home to exceptional natural habitats.

Future Development

There has been little development in the Conservation district in recent years. Much of the land, including most of the lower peninsula, has been placed under permanent conservation easements.

Lands included in the district are generally unsuitable for development because of the poor soils, steep slopes, poor access, and the presence of many natural habitats of importance to the town.

Furthermore, access to much of the district is extremely limited.

Specific recommendations for the district include the following:

- all forms of development should be directed to other areas of the town whenever possible;
- development that does take place in the conservation district must avoid important natural areas;
- public access to important resource areas should be retained as much as possible.

Development in the Conservation District should be limited to very low impact uses. The Town, as well as The Nature Conservancy and other major stewards within the district, are committed to preserving

and making public use of the unique natural environments in an unobtrusive manner. Year-round residences should be prohibited; development density of allowed uses should occur at 25 acres per lot.

10.5 Land Use Implementation Strategies

The following strategies suggest ways that West Haven's land use goals and objectives should be implemented. The Town should:

Develop a program to ensure that agriculture remains a viable land use.

Stabilize property taxes for farmers and forest land owners enrolled in the Vermont Use Value Appraisal programs.

Create and implement zoning, subdivision and other bylaws that promote the land use and other goals of this plan.

Develop provisions in both the zoning and subdivision regulations that provide for greater flexibility and creativity in site planning.

Establish a Land Conservation Fund for the purpose of acquiring easements and/or title to significant agricultural, historic, or natural lands in West Haven. Money for the Fund may be provided by voluntary contributions, or by town appropriations, as decided by the town voters.

Create property tax incentives to conserve farmlands, river access points, critical trails, scenic areas, and key historic areas. If possible, couple incentives with right-of-first refusal held by the town.

Assemble a booklet and supplemental information on how to site and design development that promote the goals of the town and the landowner. Include a listing of voluntary conservation measures and resource people.