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# PART I

# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this plan is to provide direction so as to help assure that decisions made at the local, regional and State levels are in accordance with the goals and policies established by the citizens of the Town. Like all plans, it must be subject to continual improvements, updates and changes to reflect our changing times. Therefore, this plan should be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect the opinions of the people of Westminster.

This Town Plan is the product of the work of many of our citizens:

Judith Berkley, John Cook, Jay Eschelman, Woodbridge Fuller, Mike Ghia, Jim Grandy, Paul Harlow, Mike Kelley, Ann Kebbell, Obie Lisai, Bev Major, Stephen Major, Jim Matteau, Dick Miller, Lori Miller, Verna Newcomb, Bill Noyes, Judith Petry, Margo Tucker (Ghia), Leslie Turpin, Frank Walter, Karen Walter, Janice Wojcik, Doreen Woodward and Marie Wright

In addition, John Bennett and Jeff Nugent of the Windham Regional Commission and Town Manager Glenn Smith provided significant assistance.

And a big thanks goes to Jim Grandy for editorial assistance.

To all of these people we offer our deepest appreciation for the work they have done toward the betterment of our community.

Westminster Planning and Development Commission

Lorraine Kane, Malcolm (Sam) Streeter, Vice Chair; Myra Ashcroft, Roger Farnsworth  
Walter Jennison, Fran Renaud, Robert Ross,

2007 Westminster Planning and Development Commission

Christian Blake, Lou Blanchard, Melinda Bussino, Chair; Rick Cowen, Vice Chair; Steve  
Durand, Rose Fowler, Fran Renaud, Clerk.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of our town plan is to foster active cooperation between our three village centers, enabling us to work together for practical solutions that benefit all. Our aim is to preserve our inherited village character by employing appropriate land use and town government decisions to guide growth that will enhance the continuity of work and family life in an active, caring community that holds a long-standing appreciation of our land and historical character.

Westminster must look to the future, and plan not just for today but for generations to come.

## **WESTMINSTER TOWN PLAN GOALS**

*The goal of the Westminster Town Plan is...*

1. To plan development so as to maintain the historic pattern of compact village centers separated by rural countryside, working toward an ongoing and respectful relationship among the three communities in our town while at the same time honoring the uniqueness of each.
2. To encourage diverse enterprises that provide satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and maintain high environmental standards.
3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all residents.
4. To provide for safe, convenient, economic and efficient transportation and communication systems that respects the integrity of the natural environment and that includes paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.
5. To recognize the critical importance of preserving our natural resources and to implement specific measures to guarantee for future generations: clean surface and ground waters, monitored fragile areas, sensitivity to scenic corridors and perpetual protection of our extensive wildlife, our forest and plant life, our soils, topography, and mineral deposits. To identify, protect and preserve educational, scientific, historic and cultural features that can include structures, sites, or districts and archeologically sensitive areas.
6. To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources.
7. To encourage the efficient use of energy, the development of renewable energy resources, and the recycling, reduction and reuse of waste.
8. To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
9. To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries by developing strategies to protect the long-term viability of those lands.
10. To provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.
11. To plan for meeting the needs of basic social services for Westminster citizens.
12. To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs, so as to assure and maintain a healthful environment for our people; and to address any changing social needs of the community with clearly defined information available to all and resultant decisions for change in our Town Plan and/or ordinances, keeping the individual's needs in mind but favorable to the citizenry as a whole.

PART II

**COMMUNITY**  
**PROFILE**

## **HISTORY OF WESTMINSTER**

Westminster is the oldest town in Vermont. Jonathan Belcher, Governor of Massachusetts, granted the territory to inhabitants of Taunton, Massachusetts in 1735. Originally known as Township No. 1, and/or New Taunton, it was regranted under its present name of "Westminster" in 1752 by Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire, who claimed Vermont for his state. Governor George Clinton of New York disputed New Hampshire's jurisdiction over Vermont, a position that was upheld by the British Crown in 1764. The status of Vermont, whether as a part of New York or New Hampshire or neither, caused continuous trouble until this strife was for a time overshadowed by the outbreak of the Revolution of 1775. It was chartered in 1772 as part of Cumberland County in the colony of New York.

Westminster's place in the history of the Revolution revolved around an incident that took place at the County Court House. In 1772, the County Court House was located in Westminster and remained there until 1806. In the beginning, it was run by Tory judges who were loyal to King George. This Loyalist domination proved to be too much for area Colonists (or Patriots).

The authority of the royal courts was usurped by an act of the Continental Congress in May of 1774. In November of that year a convention held in Westminster reaffirmed the act of the Continental Congress for the residents of Cumberland County. However, the General Assembly of the colony of New York refused to adopt the resolves of the Continental Congress, opting instead to retain the authority of the royal courts. When they still insisted on holding court, people in this town rebelled. In March, a court session was to be held to consider action to collect debts, when a history-making event occurred.

Several men tried without success to talk the present sitting judge out of opening court. Realizing that they would have to be inside the building first to be heard, as they would not be allowed admittance once the officials had arrived, a group of about one hundred (100) citizens entered the Court House during the afternoon preceding court day, with a plan to remain until the judge heard their complaints. They went into the building armed only with clubs from a neighbor's woodpile, already having been assured by the judge that there would be no blood shed by their presence.

While the patriots were in possession of the building, they were attacked by Tories the night of March 13, 1775 resulting in the death of two Patriots, William French of Westminster and Daniel Houghton of Dummerston. William French is buried in the cemetery across the road from where the courthouse once stood, marked by an historic monument. (A model of the old courthouse is presently on display in the Museum in the Westminster Town Hall.)

As a result of this "Westminster Massacre", about five hundred (500) Patriots quickly assembled in Westminster the next day, equipped for a battle. The judge and other court officials were taken to prison.

After the Revolution, apparently owing to New York's continuing opposition, the Continental Congress still refused to recognize Vermont as a State separate from New York. As a result, it was here in Westminster, in January 1777, that Vermont settled its own destiny, declaring itself an independent state in the same courthouse that was the scene of the Massacre two (2) years previously. In 1791, Vermont decided to join the Union as the Fourteenth State.

The main street in Westminster Village on US Route 5 was originally laid out during the reign of George the Second, and called the "King's Highway". It is ten (10) rods wide and two (2) miles long, having been designed for use as a training area for a military company.

Westminster succeeded in breaking ground in many ways. The following is a list of only a few of those things that the Town was "first" for in the State of Vermont:

- 1778 First printing press - run by Spooner and Green
- 1781 First newspaper - the Vermont Gazette (or Green Mountain Postboy). This press is preserved in the Vermont Historical Museum in Montpelier.
- 1738/9 First sawmill
- 1807 First State Bank

In 1765, the first school in the Town was established and was taught by Joshua Webb. The Town's first church came two (2) years after.

In 1785, the West Parish (presently known as Westminster West) was set off by a Town vote to consequently establish the East Parish (or Westminster Center), and this was legalized by the State legislature in 1797. A church was then organized in the West in 1799. In 1803, the West Parish unsuccessfully petitioned the State to become separate from Westminster, to be renamed "town of Westbury". The Boyden Grange #157, and Maple Grove Grange #156, were founded in 1874.

The Westminster West Library was originally established in the West parish in 1870. Generous private gifts had been given to the East Parish by Isaac Butterfield and George Dascomb, among others, for the construction of the building that houses the Butterfield Library and Westminster Institute, which was dedicated in 1926.

The Kurn Hattin Children's Homes were started in 1893 by the Reverend Charles Dickinson, a native of Westminster, as a place for wayward or orphaned children. Today New England Kurn Hattin Homes continues to be a major presence in our town.

Early in the history of Westminster, the Connecticut River provided an important means of access to the Town. Commercial river traffic eventually died out in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the exception of the big annual spring logging drives which continued until approximately 1919. The Vermont Valley Railroad came through the Town in 1851 and provided connections to Rutland, Boston and elsewhere. This made Westminster Station a very busy passenger and freight depot for several years. Passenger service was finally discontinued in 1966. Today, several freights still stop per week.

Gageville, known later as North Westminster, originated in 1863 around a one-time basket factory established by William Penn Gage on the Saxton's River, site of the first water turbine in Vermont to be used for manufacturing. The community of North Westminster grew up along the former trolley line between the Villages of Bellows Falls and Saxton's River around 1900. The two communities have since become one, and in 1925 North Westminster was incorporated for the purpose of lighting the streets.

Westminster was an early regional leader in agriculture. In the past, it has been noted for its sheep, cattle (beef, milk, and milk products) horses, apples, tobacco and maple syrup. Prize Merino sheep were imported here from France in 1857 by George Campbell and Westminster became the wool center for the region. Later, a Campbell ewe was sold for \$1,500 and exported from Westminster to Australia for stock breeding purposes. The wool industry eventually disappeared here in the late 1800's, but may be making a comeback as some farmers are returning to sheep farming.

By the late 1800's more than three-fourths (3/4) of Westminster was cleared for agriculture. Today Westminster is now more than three-fourths (3/4) wooded.

The Town has in the past supported a variety of industries, a number of which were dependent upon the waterpower of the Saxton's River. Many of these were located close by the Twin Falls, a rocky gorge which is located in Gageville. At one time or another, there have been a paper mill, a large tannery, a number of sawmills, a large woolen mill, a box factory, and a power plant in this area. Canneries and tobacco processing plants were located at Westminster Station. A truck express firm in North Westminster by the name of "Gay's Express" was established in 1928, contributing significantly to the growth of the local trucking industry. Today, the economy is a blend of trucking, agriculture, light manufacturing, public and private studio arts and crafts and service industries.

Rural-free delivery of mail began in Westminster on July 1, 1903 with George Walker as Postmaster; originating out of the Walker Store located on Main Street. The rural route was delivered by horseback until 1922, after which the animals were replaced by a car, except during mud season when only horses could get the mail through. The service was discontinued in 1933 after thirty years of service. During this time there was only one day when the mail did not go through, and that was during the blizzard of March 1919. There are currently two post offices in Westminster, one in Westminster Village and one in Westminster Station.

In the early 1960's the town changed significantly when Interstate 91 was constructed along its north-south route. The highway splits the town geographically; access is provided by an entrance/exit in the northeast section of town.

Additional information on the history of Westminster can be obtained from Town Hall, the Westminster Historical Society, and at the Butterfield Library.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

The total land area of Westminster is 45.32 square miles (approximately 29,000 acres). The soils over much of the Town originate from glacial till derived from granite, gneiss, schist and shale. They are mostly very stony loams low in silt and clay, often acidic and usually well drained but sometimes shallow. Those soils in the major stream valleys are of alluvial or outwash origin and are commonly quite deep. There are also a few pockets of organic soils of bog origin.

The soils of the Connecticut and Saxton's River valleys are deep, medium textured, nearly level alluvial or outwash soils. They are generally free of stones and in places are poorly drained. These areas are well suited to dairy farm and cropland uses. Some locations provide good sources of sand and gravel. Excess wetness may interfere with sewage disposal systems.

Much of the northeastern quarter of the Town and the valley south of Westminster West Village is covered with deep moderately sloping medium textured soils with numerous surface stones except where cleared. The soils are sometimes acid and occasionally influenced by limestone. These areas are well suited to pasture cropland, apple orchard, or woodland uses. A compact subsurface layer may be present which interferes with sewage effluent.

Much of the western half and southeastern quarter of the Town is covered by shallow, stony soils with numerous rock outcrops and many steep slopes. These are medium textured, sometimes acid, soils with numerous surface stones except where cleared. These areas are well suited to woodland or pasture uses. The often-limited distance to bedrock can be a serious problem where excavating is necessary and where septic systems must be installed.

There are a half dozen relatively small areas in the central and southerly portions of the East Parish with deep poorly drained and sometimes stony and organic soils that are fairly level. During much of the year the water table can be near or even above the surface. These areas are somewhat well suited to woodland or pasture areas. They are usually ditched or otherwise drained for farming. Excess wetness is a serious problem in road building and where sewage systems must be installed.

During much of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the Connecticut River was a dumpsite for many factories and mills. As a result much of the fish and wildlife population was eliminated during this time. Fortunately, this condition was reversed in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century as the result of the work of many private and public groups. Today the river hosts a vibrant ecosystem, although some work remains to be done.

## CLIMATE

Westminster has an average precipitation of forty-four (44) inches per year. There are roughly one hundred twenty (120) days per year of measurable precipitation.

The Town receives an average of eighty (80) inches of snow per winter. There are roughly thirty (30) days per year in which one inch or more of snow falls and there are an average of one hundred (100) days per year when the ground is covered with at least one inch of snow. Most winters have several snowstorms dropping five (5) inches or more of snow, and at least one freezing rain can be expected each winter.

### Mean Daily Temperature in degrees F

	Maximum	Minimum
January	31	11
July	82	56

The mean length of the Town's freeze-free period is one hundred twenty (120) days.

Westminster lies in the region of the prevailing westerlies, northwest winds in the winter and southwest winds in the summer. Several major storms, including northeasters and tropicals can be expected each year, summer or winter.

## POPULATION

The 2000 Census shows Westminster's population is still increasing, but at a slower rate than in the recent past. In the decade of the 1990's our population has increased by 6.08%, or 184 individuals. This is the smallest increase since the decade of the 1950's and is a dramatic reduction from the increases experienced during the 1970's and 1980's when the census showed increases of 32% and 21% respectively. The population density is 71.3 persons per square mile. Population centers include Westminster Village, North Westminster Village and Westminster West, although it is estimated that more than half the population lives in the rural countryside that connects these three centers.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Numerical Increase</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>	<b>Population per Square Mile</b>
1900	1295	-	-	28.6
1910	1327	32	2.47%	29.3
1920	1289	-38	-2.86%	28.4
1930	1324	35	2.72%	29.2
1940	1403	79	5.97%	31.0
1950	1400	-3	-0.21%	30.9
1960	1602	202	14.43%	35.3
1970	1875	273	17.04%	41.4
1980	2487	612	32.64%	54.9
1990	3026	539	21.67%	66.8
2000	3210	184	6.08%	71.3

The 2000 census provided some interesting information concerning trends in Westminster's population. This data shows that in the 1990's we got slightly older. We experienced a slight decrease in the percent of our population under age 20, a significant (8.23%) decrease in our young adult population and an almost ten percent increase in the number of adults 45 years old and older. This demographic shift, which roughly mirrors that found in the rest of northern New England, may play a significant role in our future planning.

	<b>1990 Census</b>	<b>2000 Census</b>	<b>Difference</b>	
<b>Total Population</b>	3026	3210	184	6.08%

Under 5	231	7.63%	182	5.67%	-49	-1.96%
5-9 years	287	9.48%	228	7.10%	-59	-2.38%
10 – 14 years	223	7.37%	300	9.35%	77	1.98%
15 – 19 years	201	6.64%	236	7.35%	35	0.71%
20 – 44 years	1252	41.37%	1064	33.15%	-188	-8.23%
45-64 years	569	18.80%	870	27.10%	301	8.30%
65-84 years	243	8.03%	291	9.07%	48	1.04%
85 years and over	20	0.66%	39	1.21%	19	0.55%

## **ECONOMY**

Westminster sits balanced between the commercial centers of Brattleboro, Springfield, Keene and Claremont. This is reflected in the town’s workforce statistics. According to the 2000 census 78% of our working citizens work out of town, while only 22% work in town. Of the businesses in town, agriculture dominates the landscape. While agriculture provides employment to only 6% of the workforce it does provide for significant seasonal employment in the area.

Other important industries, as measured by the percent of people employed in that industry include: educational, health and social services (26%), manufacturing (15%), and retail trade (12%).

The fastest growing industries that employed Westminster residents between 1990 and 2000 were wholesale trade and the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food industries.

Future economic development in Westminster is hindered by the lack of infrastructure. The town has no water system or wastewater disposal system. However, Westminster is well situated to take advantage of its transportation infrastructure. The town is host to an interstate highway exit and the only bridge across the Connecticut River between Brattleboro and downtown Bellows Falls.

PART III

**TOWN PLAN**  
**ELEMENTS**

## **A. NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Westminster prides itself on the quality of its natural environment. The purity of the air and water, the abundance of wildlife, and the integrity of land resource are critical contributors to Westminster's strength and character, as well as to the health and welfare of all our citizens. Unless the location, type, and quality of development receive careful attention, the quality of these resources will quickly degrade.

The wise use of Westminster's hills, forests, fields, streams, lakes and rivers and the protection of the landscape beauty are matters of public good. Because of the interconnection of these valuable resources, the policies listed in the following section will overlap and will need to be implemented in conjunction with each other.

Natural resources are composed of many elements, which are addressed in the following pages.

#### **Policy**

1. To be more proactive in addressing our conservation issues in our planning and permitting processes.

#### **Recommendation**

1. The Town shall create a conservation commission pursuant to Vermont Statutes.

### **2. GROUNDWATER**

Groundwater is one of our Town's most valuable resources. Groundwater provides the primary supply of potable water for Westminster's citizens.

Large and potentially productive aquifers are found in the Northeast part of town. Farther south are smaller aquifers with lower groundwater potential that are usually adequate for domestic use. Depth of wells in the southern part of town is often over three hundred (300) feet.

#### **Policies**

1. To protect water resources throughout Town.
2. To limit land uses within wellhead protection areas to those uses, which pose no threat of contamination to public water supplies.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall encourage voluntary water testing for contamination in areas of commercial farming practices.

2. The Town shall petition the State to have no salt/low salt areas along US Route 5 and I 91 where our prime agricultural lands and wellhead areas are located.
3. The Town shall maintain a septic system Ordinance that provides maximum protection to our water resources while not placing an undue burden on taxpayers.

### **3. SURFACE WATER/WATERWAYS**

Westminster rivers and streams are important assets to our community, providing recreational and aesthetic functions as well as supporting agriculture. We have two rivers, the Connecticut River, which borders our East and the Saxton's River, which runs through North Westminster, emptying into the Connecticut River. We have many significant streams and brooks, vernal pools, and seasonal runoffs from melting snow and spring rains.

The Connecticut is an American Heritage River. It figures strongly in the scenic beauty of the area. Its health has been improved over the past several decades. The Town recognizes and encourages the multiple uses of the Connecticut River Corridor, including but not limited to recreation, agriculture, and flood management.

Flood Plain lands have been identified on the Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), and on the FIA Flood Boundary and Flood way Maps for the Town of Westminster. These lands will be reserved for agricultural use, recreational use, natural preserves, and other open space uses.

Westminster wishes to protect its rivers, streams, and other surface waters by preserving natural riparian vegetation. This provides shading, shelter, and source of food and travel corridors for aquatic life and wild life.

#### **Policies**

1. To protect the natural characteristics and visual integrity of our rivers, streams, ponds, and vernal pools while providing for agricultural and recreational uses along our shorelands.
2. To adopt by reference the Connecticut River Joint Commission (CRJC) Corridor Management Plan as a toolbox of potential planning and land use techniques.
3. To protect shorelands along the Connecticut River.
4. To encourage sustainable agricultural practices along rivers and streams.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall require the use of natural and planted riparian buffers along the rivers and streams to reduce the risk of flood damage and the possibility of pollution.
2. The Town shall require that developers seeking an industrial or commercial permit bordering on a river or stream will meet State requirements regarding potential hazardous waste with the risk of pollutants entering a surface water resource.

3. The Town shall adopt policies that mitigate the adverse impacts of run-off into surface waters, and at a minimum will prohibit impervious cover within a designated distance of a river or stream.

#### **4. WETLANDS**

A wetland is an open area of land where water is sufficient to support vegetation and/or aquatic life that depends on saturated or seasonally saturated areas for growth and production. Wetlands are commonly known as marshes, swamp, bogs, fens, mudflats, beaver flowage and other similar areas.

Wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide benefits to people and the environment. Some of these functions and benefits are (1) fish, wildlife, migratory bird and rare or endangered species habitats; (2) water quality protection and ground water recharge; (3) storm and flood water storage; (4) erosion and shoreline stabilization; (5) education and research; (6) recreation and scenic enjoyment.

In the Town of Westminster, there are no designated Class I wetlands. There are four hundred ninety-five (495) acres of Class II wetlands and a significant acreage of Class III wetlands. The approximate location of our Class II wetlands are listed on the National Wetland Inventories Maps #38 and #48, and are protected through federal programs and the Vermont Wetlands Rules. Class III wetlands are not currently identified in Westminster, but are local resources to protect. In many instances this is addressed under Vermont's Environmental Act 250.

#### **Policies**

1. To protect Class II significant wetlands from development.
2. To protect Class III important wetlands and other areas surrounding them will be protected from activities resulting in *filling, altering, draining*, runoff or discharge, which would diminish the benefits and functions that wetland provides.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall adopt policies that protect Class II wetlands that maintain an undisturbed naturally vegetated buffer strip around the wetland edge, sufficient to ensure the integrity of the wetlands. A one hundred (100) foot buffer zone is recommended, with a minimum of fifty (50) feet.
2. The Town shall take action to protect Class II significant wetlands from development according to the environmental conservation wetland requirements.

#### **5. FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Our town has a large and diverse wild animal population that includes, among others, deer, moose, fox, bear, rabbit, squirrel, chipmunk, muskrat, beaver, fisher, raccoon, porcupine, woodchuck, skunk, bobcat, coyote, songbird, turkey, pheasant, grouse, quail, owl, hawk, eagle,

vulture, duck, goose, bittern, heron, crane and water dwellers like frog, turtle, other amphibians and all the diverse fish life within.

We realize that in order for future generations to enjoy a stable population of wildlife, we must enact and maintain ordinances to insure a consistently high quality of water in our streams and rivers as well as wetland and forest preservation and secure breeding and wintering habitat.

### **Policy**

1. To protect and preserve wildlife and fish habitat population.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall amend the zoning ordinance to limit high density residential and commercial/industrial development to areas that will not infringe upon the continued survival of our wild animal population.
2. The Town shall encourage landowners to convey their property into conservation easement areas.
3. The Town shall work with other towns, as well as the Windham Regional Commission, the Natural Resources Conservation District, State and Federal officials, to identify and map information relating to fish and wildlife within our boundaries in order to identify the critical areas for wild animal and fish preservation.

## **6. NATURAL AREAS**

Fragile areas are designated and managed by the Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. There are no designated fragile areas in Westminster. Natural Areas are designated and managed by the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation.

Some threatened, and endangered species and significant natural communities have been identified in the Town of Westminster and are protected by the Vermont Endangered Species laws and Federal Endangered Species Act. These areas are on private lands and are not available to the general public without permission. Rare species are not protected by state or federal laws but are identified for local actions. The data about these areas are maintained by the Non-Game and Natural Heritage Program of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and can be located on the significant Habitat Map.

### **Policy**

1. To protect native plant and animal species and their ecosystems by planning development that will minimize impact on these areas.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall support state, federal and local conservation groups in identifying and acquiring lands or easements to protect critical plant and animal habits with adequate

compensation to landowner and when such action does not undermine the property tax base of the town, the school district or the fire district.

2. The Town shall encourage private and public landowners to recognize the importance of protecting, maintaining, and enhancing critical plant or animal habitats and ecosystems by supporting a variety of community, regional, and state education and incentive programs.
3. The Town shall support the designation of State Natural and Fragile Areas for significant features and resources.

## **7. SCENIC RESOURCES**

Westminster offers its residents and visitors a special scenic attractiveness and historic character. Our three (3) villages are separated by rural countryside. Westminster West, with its handsome church and picturesque little library, and North Westminster, with the old Community Center building and historic saw mill still in use, have changed little from early times. Westminster Village, with King's Highway Main Street, lined with well-kept houses, some built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, tall trees and gardens, seemingly endless fields of corn and vegetables behind them, the farm stands, and our unique and historic Town Hall, all reflect a pride of place and love of the soil that Westminster has maintained throughout our long history. Between the villages are scenic farmlands and forested hillsides.

The people of Westminster do not intend to change this special scenic attractiveness and historic character. Our aim is to keep our agricultural land intact, our forests healthy, our ridgelines natural, our highway border screened, our residential development orderly and appropriate, our commercial growth controlled, our villages intact, and our river and stream frontage protected for generations to come.

### **Policy**

1. To protect our scenic resources by preserving our historic buildings, landmarks and archaeological sites and other scenic lands.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall develop and implement guidelines for the preservation of ridgelines, the screening of the interstate and the preservation of our agricultural lands and riverbanks.
2. The Town shall encourage the maintenance and preservation of lands in order to enhance the protection of the Windmill Mountain Nature Reserve and Trail.
3. The Town shall encourage the donation of scenic easements on private property to public and private resource/conservation agencies and organizations.
4. The Town shall encourage incentives for preserving scenic lands that may be subject to development and when such action does not undermine the property tax base of the town, the school district or the fire district.

5. The Town shall encourage the construction of new towers or facilities in town that will not detract from the scenic attractiveness and historic character of the area, in accordance with the telecommunications facilities ordinance.
6. The Town shall encourage use of exterior illumination designed to minimize its impact on the appearance of the night landscape.
7. The Town shall encourage careful planning of new or improved roads to maintain or enhance scenic resources.
8. The Town shall cooperate with the Connecticut River Scenic By-Ways program to enhance the enjoyment of our great river valley by our citizens and visitors.

## **8. AGRICULTURE**

The Connecticut River bottom lands and the limestone-rich valley and slopes of the western part of the town are well suited for agriculture; and it is not by accident that Westminister is home to some of the most notable farms in Windham County. The farms are diverse – medium and large dairy farms, farms that produce an award-winning aged sheep cheese; a number of vegetable farms, including some of the best organic farms in Vermont, and eleven (11) sugar bushes, including one of the largest in the state. Farm shops and product diversity should continue and be encouraged.

The open lands along the rivers contain some of the best soils in the state. The fields are level, with fine and medium textured soils that are free of stones. In Westminister West, there is a narrow band of limestone tainted with iron, no more than a couple of miles wide, which runs north-south through Windham County. Within this band lies most of the hill farms that remain in Windham County, including the flourishing farms of Westminister West.

While Westminister protects most of its valuable farmland, there are fewer and fewer farmers. The number of full-time farmers in town now totals ten (10) to twelve (12), whereas a generation ago, it was closer to fifty (50). This trend follows the national one, as prices do not keep up with inflation and it now takes more acreage to maintain a farm business. Westminister's total value of farm product approaches \$3,000,000, of which less than five percent (5%) stays in town. More than half of Westminister farms are organic.

If Westminister is able to hold onto its land and farmers, the town will do well in the future. Keeping local produce in the local market will help maintain the beauty and farmland of the town and make farming more viable. By supporting ecologically sound farming, the town will provide residents with healthy food and will protect water quality, as fewer toxic pesticides will be used.

### **Policies**

1. To preserve farming as a viable occupation and part of the community.
2. To continue to give priority to the LESA (Land Evaluation and Site Assessment) ratings and the agricultural overlay in it's development planning.

## Recommendations

1. The Town shall support the purchase or gifting of development rights of agricultural land as a benefit to the entire community.
2. The Town shall encourage sustainable farming practices in order to protect our water resources, provide healthier food, protect wildlife, and maintain the long-term health and viability of our soils.
3. The Town shall support value-added processes on the farm, diversification of products, and local marketing efforts. It will support small processing businesses for farm products, such as cheese making, freezing and canning vegetables and fruits, juice making, flour mills, and meat and fish processing plants.
4. The Town shall establish an Agricultural Advisory Commission for enhancing educational outreach to the farming community.
5. The Town shall encourage the distribution of locally produced food to those in need.
6. The Town shall continue to support the agricultural educational program in our schools.
7. The Town shall continue to support the Use Value Appraisal Program.
8. The Town shall encourage zoning practices that preserve and protect locally significant agricultural lands.

### 9. FOREST LAND

Of Westminster's 29,000 +/- acres, approximately seventy percent (70%) is forest. This includes both privately owned land, four town-owned lots (Holton, Filippi, Davenport, and Aiken) as shown on the attached map, and a portion of the Windmill Mountain Nature Reserve and Trail. The Town has two (2) sawmills, eleven (11) maple sugaring businesses, and over one hundred (100) parcels (in excess of 10,000 acres) that participate in the use value appraisal (current land use) program. Predominant tree species include black locust, oak, hickory, beech, birch, maple, spruce, hemlock, pine and ash.

With over seventy percent (70%) of the Town made up of forestland, careful consideration must be given to the sustainability of this resource in the town planning process. Sustainable uses fall into four (4) overlapping categories. Forest preservation depends on understanding and tracking the resources and potential resources in each forest parcel, as well as attending to the overall balance of resources within the town. Some individual lots may be better suited to single use and others to an overlapping and integrated use management.

Forest based industries are vital to Westminster, protecting our economy, heritage, and rural character. It is essential that careful planning by foresters occur to enhance future forest products. Westminster has access to state, county, and private foresters to assist with planning.

Wildlife habitat. Diversity of forest type is essential in preserving wildlife habitats. It is important to evaluate existing wildlife habitats and to consider those in the forest planning

process so as to avoid forest use conflicting with wildlife preservation. Key habitat components include hard mast, soft mast, den trees, small herbaceous openings, and ledges, rocks, and outcrop.

Recreation. Currently residents have use of forest land (Aiken, Filippi, Davenport, and Holton lots) belonging to the town and Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association lands. Recreational use requires tracts of connected land. Logging trails are used for hiking and skiing.

Aesthetic Values. Scenic landscape is an important resource for the town. Distance (foreground, middle, and background), topography (slope, ridgelines, contrasts providing shape and texture), forest cover (mixture of broad leaf and evergreen), special features, visibility and protective screening are aesthetic criteria that need to be considered. Vermont's Environmental Act 200 identifies the need for protecting scenic resources.

### **Policy**

1. To enhance and protect our forest resources.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall explore opportunities to conduct forestland evaluation and assessments (FLESA) in order to identify and ensure the best uses for forestland in the town.
2. The Town shall pursue working in conjunction with local environmental graduate programs to do an environmental assessment of forestlands.
3. The Town shall obtain appropriate forestland that could enhance those already owned by the Town and Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association for public recreational use, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic value. Special attention will be given to lands that would connect already-owned lots.
4. The Town shall encourage: (A) participation in the Use Value Appraisal Program; and (B) purchase or gifting development rights to land trusts to encourage the preservation of prime forest land and continuous connection of forest properties.
5. The Town shall prohibit the use of all-terrain vehicles on town forest property and limit snowmobile use to designated trails in order to protect sensitive wildlife habitats and to protect the safety of others using these lands.
6. The Town shall support and encourage the efforts for recreational and educational use of town lands and those of the Windmill Mountain Nature Reserve and Trail, and shall encourage adequate parking, trail and boundary markers.
7. The Town shall discourage the further fragmentation of forestlands.

## **10. EARTH AND MINERAL RESOURCES**

Our existence depends upon only a few inches of good, rich topsoil with varying depths of subsoil beneath it, and ten (10) different rock types forming our bedrock. The entire area was covered by glacial till during the Ice Age by up to four (4) different glacial periods. This also can vary greatly in composition from fine sand to large boulders, and in depth from a few inches to over one hundred (100) feet.

Within our borders we have a formation of soapstone, two (2) inactive rock quarries, and many areas in which sand, clay and gravel could be, and still are, removed. We also have three (3) historic lime kilns.

### Soils - Types

Soils in Westminster are glacial in origin and belong primarily to three groups, (1) Quonset-Windsor-Warwick, (2) Tunbridge-Marlow-Lyman, and (3) Dummerston-Macomber-Taconic.

### Agricultural Soils

Westminster has some of the state's prime agricultural land, with much of it lying in the flood plains. These lands have been identified on the Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and on the FIA Flood Boundary and Floodway Maps for the town of Westminster. Most of this land borders the Connecticut River and is currently in agricultural use. Our prime agricultural overlay district was identified using the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment System in 1990.

### Forest Soils

Approximately seventy percent (70%) of Westminster's lands are forested. Our forested lands provide rich wildlife habitat and a source of income for those community members who market maple syrup products, firewood, timber, fruit, and Christmas trees, all of which are identified on Westminster's Forest Productivity Map.

## **Policies**

1. To ensure that commercial earth and mineral extraction is carried out in a manner and in locations that result in minimal adverse impact to the environment and character of the surrounding area.
2. To encourage judicious use of the mineral resources within the Town borders, taking into account physical and regulatory constraints.
3. To reserve Flood Plain lands for agricultural use, recreational use, nature preserves, and other open space uses that do not compromise flood water assimilating capacity.
4. To discourage development on wet soils.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall require proper restoration work on lands where commercial earth and mineral extraction occurs.

2. The Town shall adopt Zoning by-laws that will minimize areas of earth disturbances on slopes for which such disturbances will result in erosion and other environmental problems.
3. The Town shall ensure that non-agricultural and non-forest related development is designed to minimize adverse impacts on existing or potential agricultural or forest soils.
4. The Town shall ensure that soil characteristics are considered in conjunction with the formulation of land use controls (zoning, septic, geography, etc.)
5. The Town shall only allow uses of Flood Plain lands which will not restrict or divert the flow of flood waters or endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the public during flooding.
6. The Town shall work to ensure that logging activities conform to Best Management Practices.
7. The Town shall ensure that construction activities on steep slopes with shallow soils conform to an erosion control plan for the construction phases of the operation, and to a site drainage plan.

## **B. RECREATIONAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **1. RECREATIONAL AREAS**

Although Westminster is the town with the most land in Windham County, only four hundred (400) +/- acres are owned by the Town for outdoor recreation (parks, playgrounds, athletic fields). Included in this acreage are the two (2) town forests, the Senator Aiken Forest and the Sarah Davenport Forest.

The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (WHPA), in Westminster West, has opened its privately owned one thousand (1,000) acres to hikers, birdwatchers, and people enjoying a picnic. A map of these and other trails within the town borders can be found on the town community facilities map to help interested parties identify and use these resources.

#### **Policy**

To maximize the recreational opportunities available to Town residents within the limits of the resources available.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall coordinate the use of recreational resources within existing organizations, including but not limited to snowmobile clubs (local and state), the Westminster Recreational Club, Connecticut River Scenic By-way Association, and others.
2. The Town shall develop an alphabetically organized index of recreational opportunities and make the list available to residents. At a minimum this shall include public recreational opportunities, as well as those associated with schools located in town and those areas available to the public through covenants for public use, and any private recreational areas for which public use permission has been granted.
3. The Town shall periodically update recreational information and make such updates available to the public.
4. The Town shall facilitate the orderly development of needed public and private recreational facilities.
5. The Town shall pursue sidewalks in Westminster historic village, North Westminster and Westminster West.
6. The Town shall enhance public access to surface waters, including the Saxton's River and Connecticut River.

## **2. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Westminster is a very historic town, dating back to the land grants in the early 1700's. Among its many firsts is the distinction of being the first town chartered in what is now Vermont. Our rich and varied history is reflected in our landscape and architecture. The historic buildings located in Westminster Village have been protected through designation as a historic district. The town's Historic Review Board assures that all new construction in the Historic District is accomplished in a manner that preserves the character of the District.

The Westminster Historical Society is instrumental in preserving the archives and artifacts pertaining to the history of the Town.

Cultural resources in town are those typically found in small rural areas.

The following is a partial list of significant public historical and cultural resources in town:

### Town Halls:

- East Parish (c1889)
- West Parish (early 1800's)
- North Westminster Community House (c1930)

### Libraries:

- Westminster West Library (approx. 1920)
- Butterfield Library, in the Westminster Institute (c1923)

### Churches:

- Westminster Congregational Church
- Westminster West Congregational Church
- Christian Family Circle

### Cemeteries:

- Old East Parish and New East Parish, both located in Westminster Center
- West Parish in Westminster West
- Oak Hill in North Westminster
- Catholic and Sacred Heart, Cemetery Road, off Route 5
- There are approximately 12 other cemeteries that are not listed, as they are private.

Historic Sites are many within the Town. Most of these are within the Historical District:

- Westminster Massacre Marker
- William French Monument
- Water Trough
- The Bradley Law Office and
- Westminster Institute

Other historic sites can be found throughout the township.

## **Policies**

1. To preserve our historic heritage, both in the historic district and throughout the town.
2. To ensure that major historical and cultural sites are maintained and restored appropriately.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall work to ensure that major historical sites and markers are maintained, restored, documented and marked appropriately.
2. The Town shall encourage the protection of the original north-south range lines and east-west lot lines, and their intersections. These lines, often marked by stone walls, are crucial in title searching and the determination of property lines.
3. The Town shall encourage the owners of old homes to do a title search and record it with the Westminster Historical Society.
4. The Town shall work to protect the historic sites and structures that are eligible for inclusion in the Vermont or National Register of Historic Places.
5. The Town shall work to have the new memorial in North Westminster, erected in memory of Viet Nam, Grenada, and Persian Gulf Veterans included with the historic markers.

## **B. LAND USE**

In order to encourage a pattern of development that conforms to the goals and policies outlined within this Plan the following general land classification system has been prepared. This system is based upon the delineation districts that are described below and depicted on the Land Use Map. Together, descriptive and mapped information constitute the Westminster Land Use Plan, and present a generalized picture of the Town as it should develop in accordance with sound planning policies.

The classification of Westminster's lands into various districts described below is consistent with the Town Plan maps that identify resources, opportunities and limitations for development. The Land Use Plan is not a regulatory device, except for its possible application to the Act 250 review process. Its implementation will require further definition, adjustment, and clarification as the Town considers zoning regulations and other means of reaching its objectives, as outlined in the various recommendation presented throughout this Plan.

The land use plan described herein is intended to maintain the historic pattern of compact village centers separated by rural countryside that has defined Westminster for centuries. Additionally, it provides for the establishment of commercial and industrial enterprises required to keep Westminster an economically vibrant community and for the protection of our natural resources.

A brief explanation of the purpose of each district, and policies and recommendations for development follows.

### **Resource Conservation District (RC)**

The resource conservation district consists of lands that are essentially undeveloped, lack direct access to arterial or collector roads, are important wildlife habitat, have high forestry value, are unsuitable for land development, or include irreplaceable, limited or significant natural, recreational, or scenic resources.

The purpose of the resource district is to protect the natural resource value of lands within the district. These areas are suitable for low intensity development and should be reserved primarily for outdoor recreation, forest management, wildlife habitat, and watershed protection.

### **Rural-Residential District (RU)**

The rural-residential lands consist of those that are already committed to rural development. The physical limitations to development in these districts range from great to nonexistent. Additionally, these areas are accessible to town services and appear suitable to residential and related uses.

The purpose of the Rural Residential District is to provide for agriculture, forestry, residential and other compatible uses at low densities appropriate to the physical capability of the land and the rural character of the Town. Development should not harm any irreplaceable, unique, or scarce resources or natural areas.

### **Village Residential District (VR)**

The Village Residential District consists of the lands surrounding the Village Districts that are easily accessible to public roads and community services and which have been identified as being suitable for moderate density residential development.

The purpose of the Village Residential District is to provide for moderate density residential development and other compatible uses around established village centers. It is anticipated that the bulk of new residential growth will take place within this district. Special care should be taken to protect the rural character of this district and to locate proposed development off of productive agricultural lands as much as possible.

### **Village District (V)**

The Village District consists of identified and potential clustered settlements. Each Village is a unique settlement dominated by established homes and interspersed with small commercial and/or community related structures.

The purpose of the Village District is to support the role of the village as the focus of many social and economic activities in the community and to provide for residential, commercial, and other compatible development that serves the needs of the community. Such development should occur at moderate to high densities and include uses that will maintain the traditional economic, social and physical character of the village including its historic, agricultural, and scenic resources.

### **Commercial District (C)**

The purpose of this district is to provide for commercial and light industrial development and other compatible uses at moderate densities that will conveniently serve the retail, service, and business, needs of the town. In order to prevent commercial strip development, minimize adverse visual impacts and encourage orderly growth, landscaping buffers, clustering and judicious placement of parking and other facilities shall be required in this zone.

### **Industrial District (I)**

The Industrial District provides a centralized and accessible location for employment opportunities in manufacturing, warehousing, and research and development, and allows for commercial uses that specifically serve the industries or their employees. Industrial uses should not create environmental hazards. In order to avoid potential conflicts in land use, residential, institutional, and recreational uses should not be permitted in these areas.

### **Overlay Districts**

To help identify areas that require special considerations, overlay district maps have been created for the following:

1. Flood hazard areas
2. Historic district
3. Agricultural land
4. Parcels
5. Roads from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> class; and
6. Zoning districts.

### **Policies**

1. To preserve the historic development pattern of the town of established village centers connected by rural countryside.
2. To provide for the development of diverse enterprises that provide satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and maintain high environmental standards.
3. To enhance the continuity of work and family life in an active community that holds a long-standing appreciation of our land and historical character.
4. To maintain the high quality of life through the separation of residential and commercial/industrial land uses.
5. To encourage the preservation of natural, historic, recreational, and cultural resources.
6. To protect habitats of rare, threatened, endangered, and economically significant fish and wildlife.

### **Recommendations**

1. The town shall, through its planning, zoning and related decisions forward a pattern of development that preserves the traditional settlement pattern of established population centers separated by a working rural landscape.
2. The town shall consider the capability of lands to support on-site sewage disposal and the capability of roadways to support traffic in identifying suitable densities for development.
3. The town shall adopt policies to discourage residential and commercial strip development.
4. The town shall encourage clustered residential and commercial development in designated areas so as to preserve natural resources, important wildlife habitat, existing agricultural uses, and to efficiently utilize the Town's services.
5. The town shall actively oppose any development that threatens environmentally sensitive areas.
6. The town shall discourage fragmentation of Westminster's lands into small parcels where it creates land use patterns which threaten important wildlife habitat, or adversely impact the

viability of forest management practices, agricultural uses, and the recreational use of important natural resource areas.

7. The Town shall encourage the acquisition of forestlands, sensitive environmental lands and agricultural lands for the purpose of promoting good forest, farmland and water conservation practices. These acquisitions should contribute to the long-range ecological stability of the Town and region.
8. The town shall encourage the use of town forests for low-impact activities including, but not limited to, hiking, picnics, nature study, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing.

## **D. ENERGY**

The United States is responsible for almost 25% of the world's total energy consumption. We use one million gallons of oil every two minutes. Energy currently wasted by cars, homes, and appliances equals more than twice the known energy reserves in Alaska and the US outer Continental Shelf. (Source: Natural Resources Defense Council, 1998)

### Energy Planning

Westminster is, and most likely will continue to be, dependent on energy sources generated or imported from outside its borders. Although energy resources are a necessity for transportation, heating, lighting, business, industry, electrical generation and human work in our community, the control of supplies and policy is presently largely in the hands of state and federal government and international energy suppliers.

Nonetheless, regional and local efforts can play an important role in energy conservation and development through control of local land use, solid waste management practices, and educational outreach to its residences and businesses.

Recycling reduces air pollution, water pollution and industrial water use, and provides energy savings, while diminishing our reliance on incineration and landfill usage. Westminster residents are encouraged to recycle; making use of the Rockingham-Westminster Recycling Center located in Westminster.

Recycling should be an important aspect of our community's solid waste management *system*. *Reducing* the amount of solid waste generated by homes and businesses provides the greatest energy and consequently greatest cost savings of all.

Included in local zoning are regulations regarding planned development (Planned Residential and Planned Unit Developments, or PRD and PUDs) to allow for the clustering of development and therefore the reduction of energy required to provide essential services.

The Town can directly support the implementation of energy conservation measures by participating in the Act 250 review process. Development of subdivisions involving Act 250 reviews is required to "reflect the principles of energy conservation and utilize the best available technology for energy efficiency."

### Current Energy Use

The Town's main supplier of electricity, Green Mountain Power Corporation, purchases electricity generated from hydro power (43.8%), nuclear power (40.6%), oil and natural gas (1.8%), wood (4.1%), wind (less than 1%), with 9.6% coming from various open market sources. Automobiles and heating account for the greatest energy use in Westminster. Because of limited employment opportunities in our Town, 78% of its inhabitants commute to work, with an average commuting time of 20.7 minutes. Approximately 26% of homes use wood as a primary heating source. Most of the remaining 74 use oil or propane.

## Energy Resources Analysis

Westminster has several potential renewable energy resources: solar, wood, hydro, and wind. Except for wood, these resources are not being used extensively. The Town has supported sound and sustainable forest management that encourages the use of wood for heating purposes and provides local jobs. The Town encourages the use of wood stoves that meet US Environmental Protection Agency standards for emission controls and maximum heating efficiency.

Solar energy remains a largely underutilized resource. Research shows the use of passive solar heating and photovoltaic electrical generation is a viable means of diminishing our dependency on outside sources of non-renewable energy. Hydro can be very expensive and is very limited.

Westminster's energy practices and policies should anticipate potential future problem areas, such as shortages of fossil fuels, rising petroleum costs, and increases in electrical rates consequent upon the recent deregulation. Any efforts to reduce the use of non-renewable energy will benefit everyone. Education on practices of conservation is believed to be an effective way of lessening this dependency.

### Policies

1. To promote energy conservation and use of renewable resources.
2. To encourage land use patterns that concentrate housing, work opportunities, and social services toward the existing villages in order to conserve energy by placing less demand on transportation.
3. To ensure that future energy transmission lines fall within (or as closely as possible) to existing rights or corridors.

### Recommendations

1. The Town shall promote the use of vehicles with improved gas mileage.
2. The Town shall promote car pooling.
3. The Town shall adopt policies to maximize solar potential in new house construction.
4. The Town shall work to make residents aware of recent state energy codes.
5. The Town shall encourage the institution of an energy awareness curriculum in schools.
6. The Town shall develop guidelines for energy conservation to be used in site plan or conditional use review. Whenever possible, development should be encouraged only in areas with characteristics most suitable for maximum energy conservation, including southern orientation and protective wind barriers.

7. Residential energy conservation programs that conduct energy audits and/or provide weatherization services for existing homes, especially for low income homes, should be fully utilized and promoted through information outreach.
8. The use of on-site or locally obtainable renewable energy sources should be encouraged as long as it is consistent with resource conservation policies of this Plan, including air quality.
9. The Town shall encourage generation and cogeneration of electrical energy from environmentally sound renewable sources in both public and private facilities.

## **E. HOUSING**

In Westminster, housing is the most predominant form of land development. To meet the needs of a diverse community, development of buildings has been away from agricultural land and on to land less suited for agriculture. As a result, much of the town has now been broken into larger sections of land ownership than would have occurred had these buildings been built around our existing villages. The town should encourage smart growth. Currently this point is moot, however, as there is limited central water supply and town sewage. The town should address these issues in the near future. These two essential elements are only available in the northeast corner of Westminster (Gageville, Kissell Hill, and Westminster Terrace). Westminster Aqueduct Society, in Westminster Village, provides limited water only.

### Housing Inventory

<b>Unit type</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
seasonal	33	137	108
owner occupied	656	860	1,007
renter occupied	179	215	239
vacant	118	82	58
total units	986	1,294	1,412

As of January 2000, fifty-three percent (53%) of lots within the town were 5 acres or smaller. This will probably increase as housing pressure increases in the future.

Since 2003, there have been between 10 and 17 permits issued for new residential structures per year and there seems to be no reason for this to change in the foreseeable future. The trend for low- to moderate- income families has been toward mobile or modular construction. A survey of town residents conducted in 2000 shows support for keeping Westminster rural and affordable; the town shall keep this in mind on future development.

### **Policy**

1. To maintain approximately the same percentage of affordable housing opportunities, future development shall occur on sites capable of maintaining permanently functioning on-site sewage and water facilities.
2. To support projects for the handicapped and elderly.
3. To ensure that housing is available for a wide range of income levels.

### **Recommendations**

1. The town shall help Westminster Cares in their quest to obtain a piece of property for the purpose of affordable elderly housing.

2. The town shall encourage the participation in programs that have been established to assist in providing funding for housing improvements.
3. The town shall advise low and moderate income families of the availability of funds for home improvement from grants received from the Town's Home Improvement Program, the Vermont Agency of Development and Community Affairs and through Southern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA).
4. The town shall take action to keep housing in Westminster rural in character and affordable.
5. The town shall encourage manufactured and modular homes as a way to help fulfill the needs for low-and moderate-income families.

## **F. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The economy of the Town consists of activities that provide employment and income for residents. In Westminster no single business or industry dominates the economy. Much of the local work force is employed in surrounding communities. As such, Westminster continues to be a bedroom community within the regional setting.

Westminster has an estimated one hundred (100) businesses. Trucking, education, both public and private, manufacturing, agriculture, and vehicle sales and service are among the community's largest employers.

Other local businesses are very diverse, relatively small in size and number of employees, and most typically involve the owner directly in the business. An estimated thirty (30) of these small, owner-managed businesses exist in Westminster today. In addition, home occupations are located throughout the community. The importance of this has grown significantly in Westminster in the past decade.

Agricultural and pastoral qualities remain important to the Town. Westminster's rural landscape will continue to provide varied opportunities for farm and forestry-related employment. Home-based and small businesses are identified as a sector of the economy that can be expanded while not compromising the Town's rural and agricultural character.

As Westminster plans for and provides new industry and commerce to support its growing population and broaden its tax base, effective land use controls – including zoning, subdivision regulations, and health regulations –are of paramount importance. They will help to balance necessary growth with the protection of the community's natural resources and rural character.

### **Policies**

1. To ensure that new industry or commerce conforms to the pattern already set and be small in scope, preferably under local control or management, and be appropriate environmentally.
  - To place commercial and/or industrial uses of land areas nearest to major highways and arteries.
  - To discourage scattered commercial development, strip development and development that is incompatible with existing uses or which will otherwise negatively impact Westminster's natural, physical or social environments.
2. To promote economic development, which provides for the wise and sustainable use of Westminster's natural resources and preserves overall environmental quality, should be encouraged.
3. To promote home occupations, enhance the growth of small-scale businesses and craft and cottage industry.

## **Recommendations**

1. The town shall consider new industry or commercial uses in terms of all potential environments and fiscal impacts including:
  - water, air, noise pollution and waste disposal;
  - Negative aesthetic characteristics;
  - Traffic;
  - Agricultural soils;
  - Cost of expanded town services such as education, and road maintenance.
2. The town shall carefully consider the impact of any proposed commercial project on the tax base on a case by case basis. Any particular project may or may not benefit the property taxpayers, depending on the town services the project would require, the taxes it would be likely to pay, etc. These conditions shall, however, be secondary to the project's impact on the desired rural quality of life of the Town.
3. The town shall ensure that its Zoning Ordinance and by-laws recognize the significance of agricultural soils and encourage agricultural uses within the Town.
4. The town shall encourage local manufacturing and marketing of value-added agricultural and forestry products.
5. The town shall work to ensure that the economy of Westminster remains diversified, so as to include a range of retail, commercial, light industrial, non-profit, and agricultural establishments.
6. The town shall adopt ordinances to ensure that economic development occurs in a manner which preserves our natural and cultural resources and which does not compromise the rural character of our town.
7. The town shall support the work of farmers, developers, business owners and citizens in the development of commercial activities that provide a range of employment opportunities for our citizens.

## **G. FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES**

### **I. EDUCATION**

Westminster has two elementary schools, Center School in Westminster Village for grades K-6, and Westminster West School in Westminster West Village for grades 1-4. The Center School consists of thirteen classrooms, a gymnasium, kitchen, library, separate rooms for special education, art and music, and offices. The Westminster West School consists of two classrooms, a kitchen and a library/resource room. The Center school features a mini-school program and a Primary Program.

Westminster Elementary School Population

	<b>2002-2003</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>
Total Enrollment	233	229	212	202

Our 7-8 grades are currently tuitioned to various local and regional public and private schools.

Bellows Falls Union High School, located on 182 acres in Westminster, serves students in grades 9-12 from the towns of Westminster, Rockingham, Athens and Grafton. Together these towns form the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union.

#### **Additional Educational Facilities**

1. *New England Kurn Hattin Homes, Inc.*: A co-educational elementary boarding school for students needing special attention. Population: 100
2. *The Compass School*: An independent middle school and high school of approximately 60 students
3. *Head Start Program*: in the SEVCA complex
4. *Private Academies*: Vermont Academy, The Putney School and other academies are located in nearby towns,
5. *Westminster Libraries (Butterfield Library and Westminster West Library)*: These institutions offer after school programs, lectures and other programs.
6. *The Westminster Playgroup*: Provides socialization and other skills training for children age 0-5 years.
7. *Regional support groups for Home Schooling*: The Oak Meadow School (Waldorf inspired pre-school through high school) provides services in the area.
8. *Westminster Recreational Programs*
9. *Green Valley School*

#### **Policies**

1. To provide high quality education which meets state mandates.
2. To ensure that the cost of education shall remain affordable to all Westminster residents.
3. To support, in partnership with area business and industry, public and private cooperation in offering vocational and basic skills training.

4. To promote lifetime learning.

### **Recommendations**

1. The town shall encourage programs for preschool and elementary age children that support family activities, such as reading together, and encourage parenting skills programs.
2. The town shall monitor the pace of new regional development and population growth in order to evaluate the existing and projected capacity of the Westminster educational system in relation to growth.
3. The town shall promote teaching all its citizens, through educational programs, about good farming practices and the benefits of eating fresh, healthy food.
4. The town shall encourage the development of public, private and non-profit programs designed to provide educational programs for all ages.

## **2. TRANSPORTATION**

Because Westminster's development growth has resulted in a rise in our local population, there is an ever-increasing demand on the Town's transportation facilities. With this rise in use of our transportation system, it becomes essential that the system be well planned to promote public safety and to protect the rural character and scenic quality of our community.

Westminster's transportation network is essential to its economic vitality. Many residents commute to surrounding communities for employment, school, shopping, obtaining services, and for recreational and cultural activities. The private automobile is and will likely continue to be the principal means of transportation for Westminster resident for the foreseeable future.

### **Westminster Roads**

#### **Classification:**

The road network in Westminster consists of town roads, a state highway, and a federal highway.

As identified on the Town's highway map, there are 86.925 miles of roads in Westminster. The network of roadways has been categorized according to the State's town highway classification system and its functional classification.

There are three function classification categories:

1. **Arterial highways** - Generally refers to highways used for through traffic. Interstate 91 and Route 5 are two arterial highways.
2. **Collector roads** - Roads used for getting from residential areas to arterial highways. These include the Westminster West Road, Route 121, the Back Westminster Road, Patch Road, Westminster Heights Road, and Kurn Hattin Road.
3. **Local roads** - They are the rural/residential streets and roads that make up most of the community's road system.

Functional classification categories are useful in identifying conflict, such as local roads that are serving as collectors and causing a function conflict for local residents.

The State of Vermont has developed a classification system for the purposes of Town Highway Mapping and Inventories, maintenance schedules, and State Aid. These design classifications are defined in 32 VSA as:

1. Class 1 - Those town highways which form the extension of a state highway route and which carry a state highway route number.
2. Class 2 - Those town highways selected as the most important highways in each town. As far as practicable, they shall be selected with the purposes of securing trunk lines of improved highways from town to town and to places which, by their nature, have more than a normal amount of traffic.
3. Class 3 - All traveled town highways other than Class 1 or 2 highways. The minimum standards for Class 3 highways are a highway negotiable under normal conditions all seasons of the year by a standard manufactured pleasure car. A highway not meeting this standard may be classified as a provisional Class 3 highway if, within five years of the determination, it will meet all Class 3 highway standards.
4. Class 4 - All other town highways.

Road Classifications for Westminster

<u>Roads</u>	<u>Miles</u>
Class 1	0.000
Class 2	20.650
Class 3	47.740
State Highways	9.443
Interstate-Federal	9.092
 Total	 <u>86.925</u>
 Plus:	
Class 4 (Trails and Pent Roads)	7.520

Road Improvements

The Road Commissioner, the Road Foreman, and/or the Board of Selectmen do an ongoing evaluation of the local road conditions. The Road Commissioner, the Road Foreman, and many of the road crew have participated in the Vermont Local Road Program that provides transportation information exchanges at St. Michael's College in Winooski, Vermont.

Most road systems in Westminster were not designed for the heavy truck traffic that there is on them today. Westminster schedules approximately 1 1/4 miles of repaving a year, but this does not keep up with the actual wear on these roads due to heavy use.

Westminster's problematic areas are mostly due to spring thaws resulting in difficult ongoing maintenance on some of the gravel roads.

At the present time, Westminster is not dealing with any areas of congestion.

### Bridges

There are six bridges in Westminster, excluding Interstate Route 91. Five of these are maintained by the Town; the sixth one is on US Route 5 crossing the Saxton's River and is maintained by the State of Vermont.

### Growth Considerations

There is a strong link between transportation facilities and land use patterns. The capacity of Westminster's roads and bridges as well as the land terrain play important roles in defining potential opportunities and limitations for growth and directly influence where development can and cannot be located. Westminster has zoned for non-residential development on those roads with easiest access to US Interstate Route 91 and with three phase power available. Residential development has taken place for the most part along our Class 2 and Class 3 roads. Westminster has numerous private roads servicing residences.

### Planning Initiative

Federal and State transportation legislation enacted over the past years has called for greater emphasis on state transportation planning. The Transportation Planning Initiative is the Vermont Agency of Transportation's (VAOT) program designed to meet the goals established by the legislature.

The Planning Initiative involves the decentralization of the VAOT's planning process to the local and regional levels. The planning will be facilitated through the Windham Regional Commission which will be responsible for coordinating with the towns to complete a Regional Transportation Plan.

Once the Regional Transportation Plan is developed, a Transportation Improvements Program will be prepared which will identify the prioritized list of eligible capital improvement projects within the region. Ultimately, the information prepared in the Transportation Improvements Program will be included in the VAOT Capital Program and Budget.

The following transportation-related resources are available in Westminster:

#### A. Land Travel

1. Bus: Vermont Transit, a common carrier, makes several regular stops daily at Fletcher's Store in Bellows Falls, connecting Westminster with all of New England and the USA. Connecticut River Transit offers commuter bus service to Bellows Falls, Brattleboro, Dummerston, and Putney.
3. Rail: Amtrak makes two stops daily at the railroad station in Bellows Falls, Central Vermont Railroad stops at Westminster Station Market for freight.

4. Taxi: Service is available from Bellows Falls and Brattleboro.
- B. Air Travel
1. Hopkins Airport in Keene, New Hampshire.
  2. Hartness State Airport in Springfield, Vermont has facilities for charter flights.
  3. Other airports are located in Lebanon and Manchester, New Hampshire; Hartford, Connecticut; and Boston, Massachusetts.
- C. Local Facilities
1. Westminster owns and operates its own school bus service for all students' grades Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Policy**

To ensure that the transportation system in Westminster maximizes public safety and provides convenience commensurate with need, while respecting the integrity of the natural environment and maintaining the community's scenic, rural character and historic sites.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall schedule necessary road and bridge improvements to maintain adequate capacity and establish an equitable and affordable means of paying for these improvements.
2. The Town shall continue reasonable efforts to research old public rights of way to determine where public access still exists.
3. The Town shall maintain existing rural roads as gravel roads for scenic purposes.
4. The Town shall continue to install road name signs on all Town roads (and reinstall, if necessary) for the convenience of the public, but especially for use of emergency purposes, i.e. firemen, police, ambulance, and rescue workers.
5. The Town shall work with other regional communities and the regional planning commission to identify and implement alternative means of transportation that would reduce the level of traffic on local and regional roads.

### **3. COMMUNICATIONS**

Communications between areas of the Town have been made difficult by the ridge separating the East and West Parishes. As a result, residents in the northeastern part of town have ties with Bellows Falls, and those in the southwestern parts of town with Putney and Brattleboro. The Town's postal services contribute to, and reinforce, the geographically imposed internal divisions. Townspeople in the different sections receive mail at four different post offices:

1. The Village of Westminster and the southeastern, western, and central portions of the Town receive mail through the Westminster Post Office (zip code 05158).
2. Residents north of the village receive mail at the Westminster Station Post Office (zip code 05159).
3. Residents in North Westminster receive mail through the Bellows Falls Post Office (zip code 05101).
4. Some residents in the north end of the West Parish receive mail through the Saxton's River Post Office (zip code 05154).
5. The balance of residents receive their mail through the Putney Post Office (zip code 05346)

Telephone service to the Town is provided by two companies, Verizon and VTEL. There are four different exchanges within the town (722, 463, 387, and 869). Long distance rates apply only to areas outside of these exchanges and also outside of the recently expanded local calling, which includes Springfield, Chester, southern Vermont towns, and a large number of exchanges in New Hampshire, depending on the home exchange.

Television reception varies in quality throughout the Town. Some portions of the Town are served by cable, while others are not. The use of satellite dishes to improve reception is widespread in many parts of town.

Radio reception is good, with a wide range of stations available to the listener.

Local call access to the global internet is available in all four of the Town's telephone exchanges.

Emergency ambulance and fire service through 911 dialing is now available throughout the Town.

### **Policies**

To provide an adequate communication system that does not adversely impact the rural character of the Town.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall adopt policies that require the consideration of aesthetics and safety in the siting of satellite dishes, antennae, telecommunications towers, and other transmission and receiving devices to minimize impact on natural and scenic resources.

## **4. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICES**

### **Health and Emergency Service**

We have a number of health services provided by organizations in town and surrounding communities. Hospital services are provided by Brattleboro Memorial Hospital and Springfield Memorial Hospital. Organizations include Women's Crisis Center, Mental Health Services of

Southeastern Vermont, Southern Vermont Home Health Care, Visiting Nurse Alliance, Vermont Department of Health Service Office, Westminster Cares, Council on Aging of Southeastern Vermont, Youth Service, and Food Shelf. Ambulance services are available through a contract between the town and Golden Cross Ambulance. All emergency help can be obtained by dialing 911.

### **Policy**

1. To support regional health facilities, services, and organizations.
2. To ensure that development shall occur in a manner that insures the safety of all citizens and visitors.

### **Recommendation**

1. To maximize, within the extent of the law, the extent to which all roads are constructed and maintained in such a manner so that all emergency services can be performed.

### **Fire Prevention**

Westminster is a member of the following Mutual Aid Systems: Connecticut River Valley Fire Mutual Aid Association (Springfield, Vermont) and Southwestern New Hampshire District Mutual Aid (Keene, New Hampshire). All fire and rescue shall use a 911 number for emergencies. We have two (2) fire stations, the Westminster Fire Station (Westminster Center) and Westminster West substation (Westminster West). Both departments meet ISO standards.

### **Policy**

1. To support the fire departments and rescue services which directly serve Westminster residents and businesses.

### **Recommendations**

1. The town shall adopt policies to ensure that all development is designed and sited so as to minimize the risk of fire, to maximize the fire departments' ability to combat fires, and is in conformance with the manpower and equipment capabilities of the fire department.
2. The town shall take action to address the increasing demands placed on the volunteers as the number of calls per year continues to climb.
3. The town shall support actions that ensure that fire fighting infrastructures (substations, equipment, dry hydrants, and main fire station) be maintained and improved where necessary.
4. The town shall take action to convince the State of Vermont to reimburse the small fire departments for the ever-increasing calls that they get for accidents on Interstate 91.

5. The town shall work with the State of Vermont to have a caution light installed at the intersection of US Rt. 5 and Grout Avenue, and the intersection of Westminster West Road and Wright Way, to be activated when fire vehicles are responding to an emergency.

### **Law Enforcement**

The town has two constables that provide animal control services. Other law enforcement is provided by the Vermont State Police and by contract with the Windham County Sheriff's Department.

### **Policy**

1. To support law enforcement agencies that will promote, as much as possible, peace and tranquility within the borders of Westminster.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Town shall strive for a better, long-term solution to the speeding problem that is prevalent within town limits.

## **5. SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING**

Westminster is a member town of the Windham Solid Waste Management District.

At present, Westminster's solid waste is collected by Gobin Disposal Systems. This service is paid for by town taxes.

The Towns of Westminster and Rockingham joined together to construct a recycling center in 1993. It is located at the old Bellows Falls Village dumpsite on US Route 5. This center serves as a transfer station for Rockingham residents. The Town has an active recycling program, sharing the facility with the Town of Rockingham.

### **Policies**

1. To encourage the responsible disposal of solid waste.
2. To encourage recycling.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall continue to explore any means to encourage recycling, including an enforcement plan.
  - A. The solid waste and recycling committee will develop the enforcement plan.
  - B. The recycling committee will request more funding to open the recycling facility more days and/or more hours.
2. The Town shall work to ensure that wastes are not produced or disposed of anywhere in Town unless in conformance with all applicable local, state and federal laws.

3. The Town shall work to ensure that development of commercial and industrial uses, which are responsible for unique or large amounts of solid waste, are required to demonstrate that the methods of disposal will not adversely affect the environment. Enterprises generating such waste shall be responsible for proper disposal and associated costs.
4. The Town shall move towards a system for solid waste disposal that encourages conservation such as a use-based fee system.

## **6. WATER SUPPLY**

The Town does not have a municipal water supply system. Residential and commercial buildings receive water supply from various sources:

- A. Most buildings depend upon private springs or drilled wells.
- B. Bellows Falls municipal system supplies part of the Village of North Westminster and a section of an industrial area.
- C. Privately owned community systems (of which there are five) supply part of North Westminster and the Village of Westminster as follows:

#5306 Westminster Aqueduct Society – natural spring and ground water  
#6308 North Westminster Water Company - both surface and well water  
#5309 Shady Pines Mobile Homes - well water  
#5451 Birchwood Heights - well water  
#5452 New England Kurn Hattin Homes - well water

Water resources, while adequate in certain parts of town, are not easily available in other parts. The industrial and commercial zones lack easy access to a reliable water source. Bellows Falls is the largest and nearest accessible supply.

Clearly, groundwater provides the primary supply of potable water for Westminster's citizens. The greatest threats to groundwater resources are created by human activity, such as use of pesticides and fertilizers, road salting, animal husbandry and waste disposal. The duration, type and intensity of the activities determine the degree of risk that is posed to both the groundwater quality and quantity. Prevention of contamination, rather than the difficult and costly remediation after contamination has occurred, is a practical and effective means of protecting the community's drinking water supplies.

### **Policies**

1. To maximize water conservation practices when planning for development.
2. To discourage activities and land uses which may degrade the watersheds of public and private water supply systems.
3. To support the investigation of additional water supplies within Town.

4. To further study and protect the Connecticut River and East Putney Brook aquifer systems.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Town Health Officer shall encourage people to upgrade water using equipment so as to promote conservation.
2. The Town shall seek funding and technical assistance to better define aquifer resources and protection mechanisms, such as, maximum impervious surfaces in recharged areas.
3. The Town shall petition the State to have no salt/low salt areas along US Route 5 and I-91 where our prime agricultural lands and wellhead areas are located.

### **7. SEWAGE DISPOSAL**

With the exception of North Westminster, Terrace Village and parts of Westminster Station, which are partially connected to the Bellows Falls wastewater treatment system, sewage disposal in Westminster is accomplished on an individual basis, utilizing on-site sewage disposal systems. Most dwellings have concrete septic tanks plus leaching fields or pits. There are some individual systems utilizing steel tanks, which as they corrode, are a major contributor to environmental contamination.

Problems exist in the Village of Westminster and Westminster West due to relatively high densities, growth of the Villages and services normally provided by a village are severely limited because of the difficulty of developing good water supplies and properly disposing of waste water.

Sewage disposal systems shall be designed and constructed in consultation with a qualified state licensed professional engineer or technician in accordance with applicable State and local regulations.

#### **Policies**

To encourage environmentally sound and affordable waste water treatment.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Town shall adopt policies to ensure that development is planned to minimize water consumption in order to lengthen the life and efficiency of wastewater treatment facilities.
2. The Town shall encourage the use of alternative on-site disposal systems such as composting toilets and grey water recycling where feasible and appropriate.
3. The Town shall support installation of community wastewater treatment facilities wherever feasible and cost effective, such as villages, clustered housing developments, and other similar sites.

4. The Town shall encourage homeowners who have out-of-date sewage disposal systems and leach fields to upgrade their system.
5. The Town shall encourage the state to find more effective ways to handle sewage disposal, especially for private homes.

## **8. TOWN GOVERNMENT**

The business of the Town is conducted at the annual Town Meeting held on the day before the first Tuesday in March. Issues to be decided by Australian ballot are voted on the first Tuesday in March. Town Meeting may be reconvened on the evening of the first Tuesday in March, as needed, to complete any unfinished business.

Between Town Meetings, the Town is governed by a five-member Selectboard. In addition, an elected Clerk/Treasurer handles a wide range of statutory duties, including tax collection. The citizens also elect Listers, Auditors, and Justices of the Peace. The Selectboard appoints Assessors, Health Officer, Road Foreman, Fire Warden, Constables, Planning Commissioners, Zoning Board of Adjustment members, and a Town Manager, who also serves as Road Commissioner, Delinquent Tax Collector, and Zoning Administrator.

The Village of Westminster and North Westminster elect Village Trustees to perform certain duties relating to those entities.

### **Policy**

1. To keep town government small and centralized.
2. To actively encourage the participation of community members and volunteers in conducting Town business.
3. To enforce local ordinances and regulations to the maximum extent possible.

### **Recommendations**

1. The town shall assure equitable treatment and delivery of services for all residents.
2. The town shall not take over private facilities such as roads, water systems, etc. unless the Selectboard determines that it is in the public interest to do so and that taking over the facilities does not significantly and/or negatively impact the municipal tax rate.
3. The town shall encourage citizen participation by advertising through mailings or local papers for committee members for prospective projects.

PART IV

**COORDINATION WITH**  
**PLANS OF ADJACENT**  
**TOWNS**

## **COORDINATION WITH PLANS OF ADJACENT TOWNS**

Westminster shares boundaries with the Vermont towns of Putney, Brookline, Athens and Rockingham and the town of Walpole, New Hampshire.

The land use elements of the Putney, Brookline and Rockingham town plans are consistent with those proposed in this plan. With one exception all of these plans identify the boundary areas as low density residential and/or conservation areas which are compatible with each other. The only exception occurs in the northeast corner of Westminster, where the town abuts the Village of Bellows Falls. In this area too the plans are compatible in that 'Urban' designation given to Bellows Falls is adjacent to the Highway Commercial and Terrace Village areas proposed for Westminster.

Additionally, the plans serve to strengthen the existing interconnectedness between the towns. This can be found in the areas of education (Westminster, Rockingham, and Athens share a regional high school) transportation systems, public safety and natural resource protection.

The town of Athens does not have a town plan.

PART V

**GOALS AND**  
**STANDARDS OF**  
**REVIEW**

## GOALS AND STANDARDS OF REVIEW

Title 24 VSA Chapter 117, section 4302

*(a) General purposes ...*

*(b) It is also the intent of the legislature that municipalities, regional planning commissions and state agencies shall engage in a continuing planning process that will further the following goals:*

*(1) To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions and state agencies.*

*(2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.*

*(3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state as well as the community in which it takes place.*

*(4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.*

***(c) In addition, this chapter shall be used to further the following specific goals:***

### **State Planning Goal 1:**

*(1) To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.*

*(A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.*

*(B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas, or employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers, or both.*

*(C) Public investments, including construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #1 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Land use page 29-32

Economic development policy #1 page 38

### **State Planning Goal 2:**

*(2) To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities, that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #2 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Economic Development *pages 38-39*

**State Planning Goal 3:**

*(3) To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #3 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Education *pages 40-41*

**State Planning Goal 4:**

*(4) To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.*

*(A) Highways, air, rail and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #4 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Transportation *page 44*

**State Planning Goal 5:**

*(5) To identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape including:*

*(A) significant natural and fragile areas;*

*(B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands and wetlands;*

*(C) significant scenic roads, waterways and views;*

*(D) important historic structures, sites or districts, archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #5 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Groundwater *pages 15-16*  
Surface Water *pages 16-17*  
Wetlands *pages 17-18*  
Natural Areas *pages 18-19*  
Scenic Resources *pages 19-20*  
Historic and Cultural Resources *page 25*

**State Planning Goal 6:**

*(6) To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #6 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Fish and Wildlife *page 18*  
Agriculture *pages 20-22*  
Forest Land *pages 22-23*  
Earth and Mineral Resources *pages 23-25*

**State Planning Goal 7:**

*(7) To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #7 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Energy *pages 33-35*

**State Planning Goal 8:**

*(8) To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.*

*(A) Growth should not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.*

*(B) Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, should be identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #8 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Recreation Areas *page 26*

**State Planning Goal 9:**

*(9) To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.*

*(A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low overall density.*

*(B) The manufacture and marketing of value added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.*

*(C) The use of locally-grown food products should be encouraged.*

*(D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be encouraged.*

*(E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #9 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Agriculture *pages 20-21*

Forest Land *pages 21-22*

**State Planning Goal 10:**

*(10) To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #10 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

Earth and Mineral Resources *pages 23-24*

**State Planning Goal 11:**

*(11) Ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.*

- A. *Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income.*
- B. *New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.*
- C. *Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.*
- D. *Accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons should be allowed.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #11 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

*Housing pages 36-37*

**State Planning Goal 12:**

*(12) To plan for ,finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.*

*(A) Public facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal.*

*(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.*

How has the Town Plan addressed this goal and on what page(s) can this be found?

The Town Plan addresses this State goal through the adoption of its mission statement on page 4, town plan goal #12 on page 5 and the policies and recommendations under the following town plan element(s):

*Education pages 40-41*  
*Transportation pages 41-45*  
*Communications pages 45-46*  
*Public Health and Safety pages 46-47*  
*Solid Waste and Recycling pages 48*  
*Water Supply pages 48-50*  
*Sewage Disposal page 50*  
*Town Government page 51*

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF TOWN PLAN**

The Westminster Town Plan sets forth the vision for the future of our Town. The goals and policies stated herein provide the framework for managing Westminster's growth. To achieve these goals and policies, recommendations have been set forth in each of the program element areas. The implementation of the recommendations set forth in this Plan is a local responsibility, but must be accomplished within the environment established by regional and state planning agencies, state statutes and federal laws.

The recommendations set forth in the Plan reflect this interdependency between the Town, the Westminster School District, Westminster Fire District #3, the Village of Westminster, the Village of North Westminster, Westminster Fire District #2, the Windham Regional Commisison, the State of Vermont, Westminster Cares, the Westminster Recreation Club and other local private and non-profit organizations that serve the citizens of Westminster, and local volunteers.

The town acknowledges that many of the recommendations set forth in this Plan do not fall under the direct authority of the Town. Inclusion of these items in the Town Plan is intended to demonstrate the Town's commitment to support the positive efforts of all citizens who work toward the betterment of our community

# **Town of Westminster**

## **Survey**

**2002**