

Town of Wolcott Town Plan 2008

Prepared by the Wolcott Planning Commission

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the Lamoille County Planning Commission on May 27, 2008**

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

In many ways, Town Plans are a place where communities have an opportunity to reflect on past accomplishments, take stock in where they are, and set a course for the future. For Wolcott, this is our opportunity reflect on our present challenges and opportunities and chart our course for the twenty-first century. The success or failure of this, or any other planning effort, rests with the community. A bold plan needs inspired persons to support it.

This plan is not intended to be a plan for only some of the community or of a certain special interest, but instead a plan that reflects the aspirations and values of all of the residents of Wolcott. The Planning Commission has made every effort during the development of this plan to reflect the values and ideas of the entire town. Of course, it would be foolhardy to imply that this plan is a consensus opinion of the town's residents - it is impossible to draft a plan of this magnitude without disagreement by some. However, the Wolcott Planning Commission has listened to and considered all of the comments and viewpoints posed during the drafting of the plan. What follows is a reflection of our common history, the present status of our town's facilities and services, an expression of the views of the residents of Wolcott, and the direction proposed for the Town of Wolcott over next five years and into the future.

How is a Town Plan useful to the people of Wolcott?

There is a range of ways in which a town plan can be used - from simply a source of information to a foundation for regulations. Ultimately, the residents of Wolcott determine the uses of the Wolcott Town Plan. Among the potential uses of the municipal plan are the following:

1. **A source of information:** The plan is a valuable source of information for local boards, commissions, citizens and businesses. The information in a plan could serve to familiarize residents, potential residents, and development interests with Wolcott and its resources.
2. **A basis for community programs and decision-making:** The plan is a guide for the recommendations contained in a capital budget and program, for any proposed community development program, and for the direction and content of local initiatives such as economic development, recreation planning and housing.
3. **A source for planning studies:** Few plans can address every issue in sufficient detail. Town Plans not only record and discuss what is known about the resources and residents of the town but also what is not known. Therefore, many plans will recommend further studies to develop courses of actions on a specific need.
4. **A standard for review at the state and regional levels:** Act 250 and other state regulatory processes identify the municipal plan as a standard for review of applications. Municipal plans are important to the development of regional plans and regional and inter-municipal programs. In addition, state proposals must comply with town plans including the purchase of state land for parks and recreation.
5. **A long-term guide:** The plan is a long-term guide by which to measure and evaluate public and private proposals that affect the physical, social, and economic environment of the community.

6. **An eligibility requirement and/or positive factor for state and federal grants:** In 2000, the state began requiring towns to adopt plans in order for communities to be eligible for most grants and low interest loans. Planning grants, water and wastewater grants, community development grants, and other key sources of funding all now require the municipality to have an adopted plan. While many other public and private funding sources do not require town plans in order to be eligible, having a town plan that documents the need for funding will generally strengthen the application.
7. **A basis for regulatory action:** The plan serves as a foundation and guide for the creation or amendment of the zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, the official map, shoreland bylaws, flood hazard bylaws and for the decisions made under these regulations.

What is required in a town plan?

Vermont municipalities are authorized to create municipal development plans under 24 V.S.A. §4381. All local plans in Vermont, regardless of whether they are for rural or urban municipalities, must include the following ten components:

1. A statement of objectives, policies, and programs of the municipality to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment;
2. A land use plan and map;
3. A transportation plan and map;
4. A utility and public facility plan and map;
5. A statement of the municipality's policies for the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, and scenic and historic resources;
6. An education facilities plan and map;
7. A recommended program for implementing the plan's objectives;
8. A statement of how the plan relates to adjacent municipalities' plans and the regional plan;
9. An energy plan, including policies and programs to implement those policies; and
10. A housing element, including a recommended program for addressing low and moderate-income persons' needs as identified in the regional plan.

These represent the minimum requirements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, the *Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act*, which governs local land use planning and regulation in Vermont. Each town plan will be different depending on the unique qualities that exist in every community.

How was the Town Plan developed?

A town plan is arrived at by:

- identifying community visions for the future as well as current issues and needs;
- collecting social, economic and environmental information about the town;
- establishing goals and policies based on the information collected; and, lastly,
- making recommendations as to how best to implement the plan.

The need for involvement of town residents in the planning process cannot be overstated. While it is the responsibility of the planning commission to develop the plan, citizens, committees, and other local groups can have an active role in gathering information and formulating plan policies for guiding development. A better plan will be the result of a group

effort. Without the participation of residents, the balancing of needs, values, and resources can be difficult to achieve.

Finally, planning is a continuous process, and plans can be amended to meet new challenges or situations. Town Plans are only valid for five years and then must be readopted. This provides an opportunity to review a plan's policies and goals and, if necessary, to amend the document.

In the case of the 2008 Wolcott Town Plan, the plan is the result of a revision of the existing 2002 Wolcott Municipal Development Plan. During the development of the 2008 plan, all Wolcott Planning Commission meetings were open to the public. A schedule of plan topic areas and the dates on which they would be addressed by the Planning Commission was publicized at the 2007 Wolcott Town Meeting, at the Wolcott Town Offices, and in local newspapers. Finally, the Planning Commission held a public hearing, as required by State statute, before submitting the plan to the Wolcott Selectboard for consideration and adoption.

Purpose of the Wolcott Town Plan

The primary purpose of the 2008 Wolcott Town Plan is to provide guidelines for the development of Wolcott in the best interests of all its residents so that all may have:

- the full enjoyment of their land,
- their property rights both respected and protected, and
- a safe and healthy environment in which to live.

The balance of private property rights and regulation is a delicate one. On the one hand, someone who has paid taxes on their land should have the right to use and develop their property as they so choose. On the other hand, that same property owner needs regulations to ensure he or she is protected from undue nuisance from their neighbor's actions. The two most common ways that a property owner can impact a neighbor's property is by creating a nuisance, such as loud noise or offensive smells, and by causing a burden on public facilities and services.

There is also the possibility that rapid residential development in town could apply increasing pressure on property taxes in order to cover the additional services used by your neighbor's development. Taxpayers should not be burdened with sudden or unreasonable expenses associated with their neighbor's land use decisions. While nuisances can be resolved in court, it is in the best interest of the residents to establish some public standards by which a property owner should abide. This will not prevent lawsuits but should help to offer some public recourse to a problem.

The purpose of the Wolcott Town Plan is not to strictly regulate land. In fact an Act 250 hearing is the only venue in which the Town Plan, itself, will hold any sort of regulatory capacity. The Wolcott Town Plan will guide the development of any new or revised land use regulations in the spirit of the purpose listed above. Any regulation should be the minimum necessary to accomplish the goals of this plan. This town plan will set forth to:

1. **Protect natural resources for this and future generations.** Wolcott is fortunate to have so many natural resources such as forests, water, agricultural soils, gravel deposits, wildlife and fisheries. These resources provide important raw materials for construction, good paying jobs in agriculture and forestry, excellent hunting and fishing, and other outdoor enjoyment. The use of these resources is an important part of our past and current life, and we should ensure that these same opportunities are available to our children and grandchildren.

2. **Ensure that development does not create a hazard for the residents of the property or public at large.** For example, the roads should be safe for cars and pedestrians, the water and air should be kept clean, development should avoid flood hazard areas and should occur on soils suitable for the type of construction proposed, and hazardous materials should be stored and used in a manner that does not pose a risk.
3. **Monitor public services and facilities so as to provide control of development in order to prevent an undue burden from being placed on them.** Over the last few years, residential development has continued at a fairly rapid pace. It must be kept in mind, though, that the town remains fairly poor. The road system is extensive and fire, medical and other services are limited. For these reasons, the rate of growth must be regulated so as to not exceed available services.
4. **Retain the rural character of the Town by establishing a plan for orderly growth.** Historic and scenic Vermont is typically described as having compact village centers surrounded by agricultural and forest land. Maintaining this development pattern is generally accomplished by ensuring quality development rather than preventing development.

The structure of the plan

The Wolcott Town Plan is divided into 13 chapters that address both the required elements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 and other key areas of concern. Each chapter begins by identifying:

1. **Goals**, which can be defined as the “desired future condition” – although some may not be attainable for many years;
2. **Policies** that describe the conditions or standards by which a homeowner or planning commission member can evaluate a project to ensure compliance with a goal;
3. and finally the **Actions and Recommendations** for implementation of the goals and/or policies.

Justification and background information, including past trends, current status, and future needs conclude each chapter.

Since the last adoption of the Wolcott Town Plan...

There have been many key developments in Wolcott since the 2002 Town Plan.

- In 2006 Wolcott celebrated its 225th birthday with public gatherings, historical exhibits, Civil War reenactments and more!
- The Town of Wolcott created a Development Review Board to more efficiently perform the site plan review duties of the Planning Commission and fully replace the Zoning Board of Adjustment.
- In 2006 Wolcott adopted significant amendments to its subdivision and Zoning ordinances. New provisions include driveway access and sidewalk guidelines in site review and the possibility of planned unit developments (PUDs) in Wolcott.
- North Wolcott Recreation Park, on former flood-damaged land parcels, has slowly begun to develop into another great recreational resource for Wolcott residents.
- A public facility assessment has been performed with recommendations for the Town Office, School Street Center and Fire/Highway department building.
- The Town has moved the Town Office to a newly-renovated portion of the School Street

- Center.
- A Sewer Feasibility Study has been performed for Wolcott Village and North Wolcott, giving recommendations for new and increased wastewater capacity in each area.
 - Wolcott has hired a Road Foreman, adopted road and bridge standards and performed a highway infrastructure (bridge and culvert) inventory.
 - The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail has begun its steady evolution into a 4-season multi-use recreational trail from one side of the state to the other, through Wolcott. This trail system will be a recreational and economic development boon to the Town.
 - Public-private partnerships to bring high-speed, broadband Internet access to Wolcott are nearing fruition.

These developments provide context and a starting point for this new plan.

Top 7 Items to Be Addressed in the Next 5 Years

Before this Town Plan needs to be revised again within the next 5 years, the Wolcott Planning Commission recommends that the Town addresses and completes the following action items:

1. Take part in a public-private partnership to ensure access to high-speed broadband Internet services for all Wolcott residents.
2. Apply for Village Center Designation for Wolcott Village through the Vermont Downtown Program.
3. Update Wolcott's Highway Infrastructure (bridge and culvert) Study.
4. Enhance and increase the wastewater treatment capabilities of North Wolcott and Wolcott Village.
5. Either alone or in partnership with other organizations, develop a comprehensive plan for amenities, facilities and aesthetics for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail in town.
6. Perform an updated study on the location and extractability of gravel, sand and other land resources in Wolcott.
7. Explore ways to locally ensure the safety of private water impoundments below the state regulation threshold of 500,000 cubic feet.

SECTION 2. POPULATION & GROWTH

Population information is some of the most basic and important data needed in order to plan for a community. Historical growth trends, the age structure, and future predictions are just a few pieces of information which can help decision makers in guiding the future of Wolcott. Knowing the number of residents in Wolcott, for example, is necessary in order to evaluate the amount of services required. Forecasting future changes in the population, meanwhile, allows the town to look ahead and prepare for the next five or ten years. This is especially important when preparing for the number of students expected in the Wolcott Elementary School in the next few years.

Summary of Trends in Wolcott Population and Growth

1. The most recent population figure for Wolcott is an estimate of 1,672 people in 2005.
2. Wolcott's population has been increasing since 1970, far surpassing the population peak of the late 1800's.
3. Current and projected trends show this population increase continuing, yet slowing down.
4. Net in-migration is representing a decreasing share of Wolcott's population growth, with natural increase making up the difference.
5. Older age groups are likely to increase as a proportion of Wolcott's population, in line with statewide trends.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations of this Section

In order to accomplish the Primary Goal of this Town Plan – to provide guidelines for the development of Wolcott in the best interest of its residents – the town will need to monitor growth rates in order to anticipate situations that may have a negative impact on the community.

It is not the intention of Wolcott to stop growth. The Town expects to accommodate its 'fair share' of the county's population growth rate, which is anticipated at around 20% for the decade from 2000-2010. The Planning Commission and Selectboard intend only to moderate growth to prevent the need to increase taxes to provide new or expanded services. New growth and development should not place an undue burden on services and facilities.

GOAL

- For Wolcott's population to have a slow to moderate growth rate so not to place an excessive burden on the existing facilities and services. Growth should be balanced with the Town's ability to provide services to support the population.

The Town has developed the following policy and recommendations in order to help guide the growth rate in Wolcott as deemed appropriate. The policy and recommendations were drafted in the effort to guard against rapid population growth over a short period of time, e.g., the excessive subdivision of lots for the purpose of development.

POLICY

- Large developments should be phased over a few years so as to not overburden the town's services and facilities. The Wolcott Development Review Board is given this authority under Section 3.02 (8)i of the Town Zoning Regulations and Section 3.01(5)c of the Town Subdivision Regulations, both as amended in 2006.

The recommendations are for the planning commission to monitor future growth trends and be prepared to draft regulations if needed.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

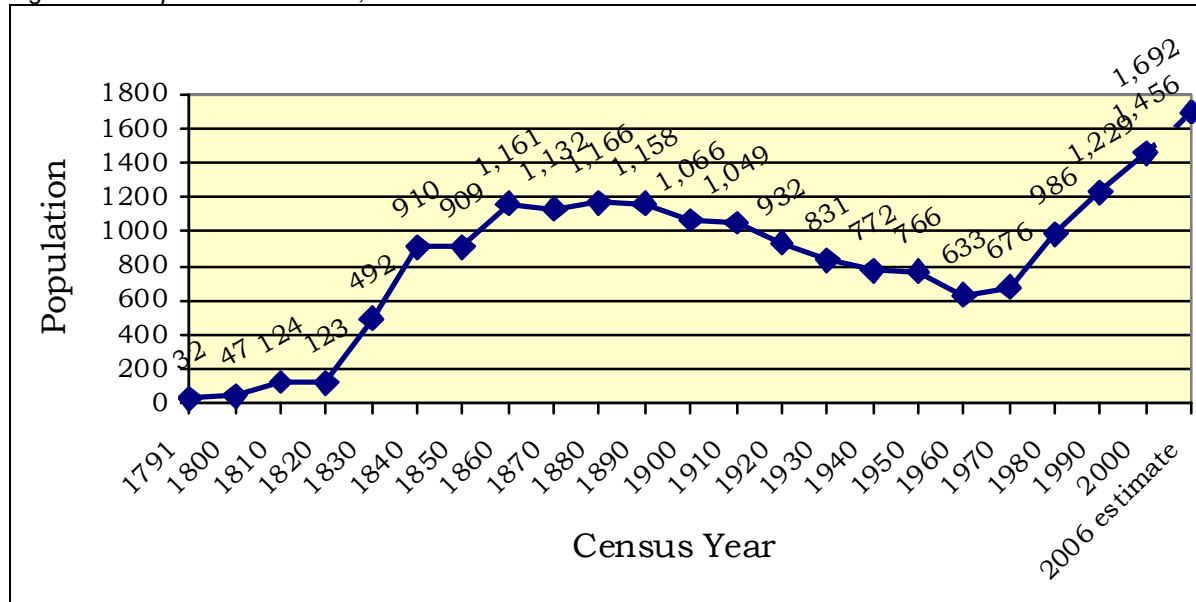
- If the number of persons moving into Wolcott becomes a major issue over the next five years, the town should consider relevant revisions to Wolcott’s growth management tools, such as subdivision and zoning regulations.
- The Wolcott Development Review Board should exercise their ability to require phasing of development projects where the potential of an excessive public burden exists.
- The Planning Commission should review and amend the *Future Population Projections* information in this chapter when figures are released by the State of Vermont, or other reliable source. This information will represent an update of how external entities view Wolcott’s growth pressure. This update should be conducted, at minimum, every five years in association with the update of the municipal plan.
- The Town should review the annual population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau and verify the growth rates with local data sources. This activity would help to gauge if growth rates are within the Town’s expectations.
- The Planning Commission should review all ‘Act 250’ applications for their impact on the growth of the town. If an application is determined to not conform to this chapter or any goal or policy, the Planning Commission should participate in the ‘Act 250’ process in order to ensure the concerns of the town are addressed.

Historic Census Counts

Since 1791 the U.S. Census Bureau has conducted an actual count of persons living in each town in the country. The historical data in Figure 2-1 tells a story of our past. After rapid growth between 1820 and 1860, there was a relatively stable population of around 1,150 for the next forty years. Beginning just before the turn of the twentieth century, the number of residents in Wolcott slowly declined until the 1960 Census, after which the Town’s population began an increase that continues to this day. It is interesting to note the new trend that has followed. The population has more than doubled in the past thirty years and, while the rate of increase is slowing slightly, appears to be on a track to continue growing into the future. Additionally, the current population is at an all time high for the town.

A review of historical reports would be needed in order to accurately explain factors contributing to the rise, fall and rebound of Wolcott’s population over the past two centuries, but it would be safe to say it is likely tied to the economy of the town and the county at large. Indeed, the 2000 Census recorded that nearly 80% of Wolcott’s resident workforce commuted outside Town to work, 45% to Morristown and Stowe. The linkage between the surrounding economy and residential increases and decreases in Town are likely strong.

Figure 2-1. Population of Wolcott, 1791-2000



Sources: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census of Population and Housing (1790-2000) and the Estimates Branch of the Population Division (2007)

Components of Population Change

Population change is the result of two sets of factors – natural increase and net migration. The population change shown on Table 2-1 is the difference between Census counts. In each of the past three decades the population has increased – from a low of only 227 more people in town in 2000 compared to 1990 to a high of 310 persons when the 1980 and 1970 Census are compared.

Table 2-1 Changes in Wolcott population between Census counts from 1970-2000.

Period	Change in population	Percent change
1970-1980	+ 310	45.9 %
1980-1990	+ 243	24.7 %
1990-2000	+ 227	18.5 %

Source: US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing (1970-2000)

Populations increase ‘naturally’ when more people are born over a certain time period than die. The Vermont Department of Health has kept birth and death statistics for each town since 1857. Table 2-2 shows the number of recorded births and deaths in the town of Wolcott in each of the past three decades. One observation of this table is that the growth due to natural causes has been steadily declining since 1970. If this trend continues, it would result in more moderate population growth in the future.

Net migration is the second factor affecting population change. This information is determined by subtracting the natural increase from the total change in population. For example, it is known from Census data that there was an increase of 310 persons in Wolcott between 1970 and 1980 (see Table 2-1). It was determined that, of the 310 persons, 127 were the result of natural increase (see Table 2-2) therefore the other 183 were the result of migration (see Table 2-3). Similar to natural increase, net migration has been steadily slowing. In fact, while net

migration represented the majority of population growth between 1970 and 1990, it held the minority share between 1990 and 2000. If the current slowdown in migration rates continues, the population will continue to grow but at a more moderate rate.

Table 2-2. Wolcott Population change due to natural increase, 1970-2000

Period	Births	Deaths	Increase	Natural increase as % of total population change
1970-1980	192	65	127	41.0 %
1980-1990	190	72	118	48.6 %
1990-2000	227	80	147	64.8 %

Source: Vermont Department of Health Vital Statistics (1970-2000)

Table 2-3. 10-Year Net migration in Wolcott, 1970-2000

Period	Net migration	Net migration as % of total population change
1970 – 1980	183	59.0 %
1980 – 1990	125	51.4 %
1990 – 2000	80	35.2 %

Source: US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing (1970-2000)

Over the past thirty years, the increase in population has been split evenly between natural increase and migration. Since 1970, the population has increased by 780 persons of whom there was a natural increase of 391 persons and a net migration of 389 persons. The difference between the two components is that, while both have been slowing, the number of new persons moving to Wolcott has slowed much more rapidly.

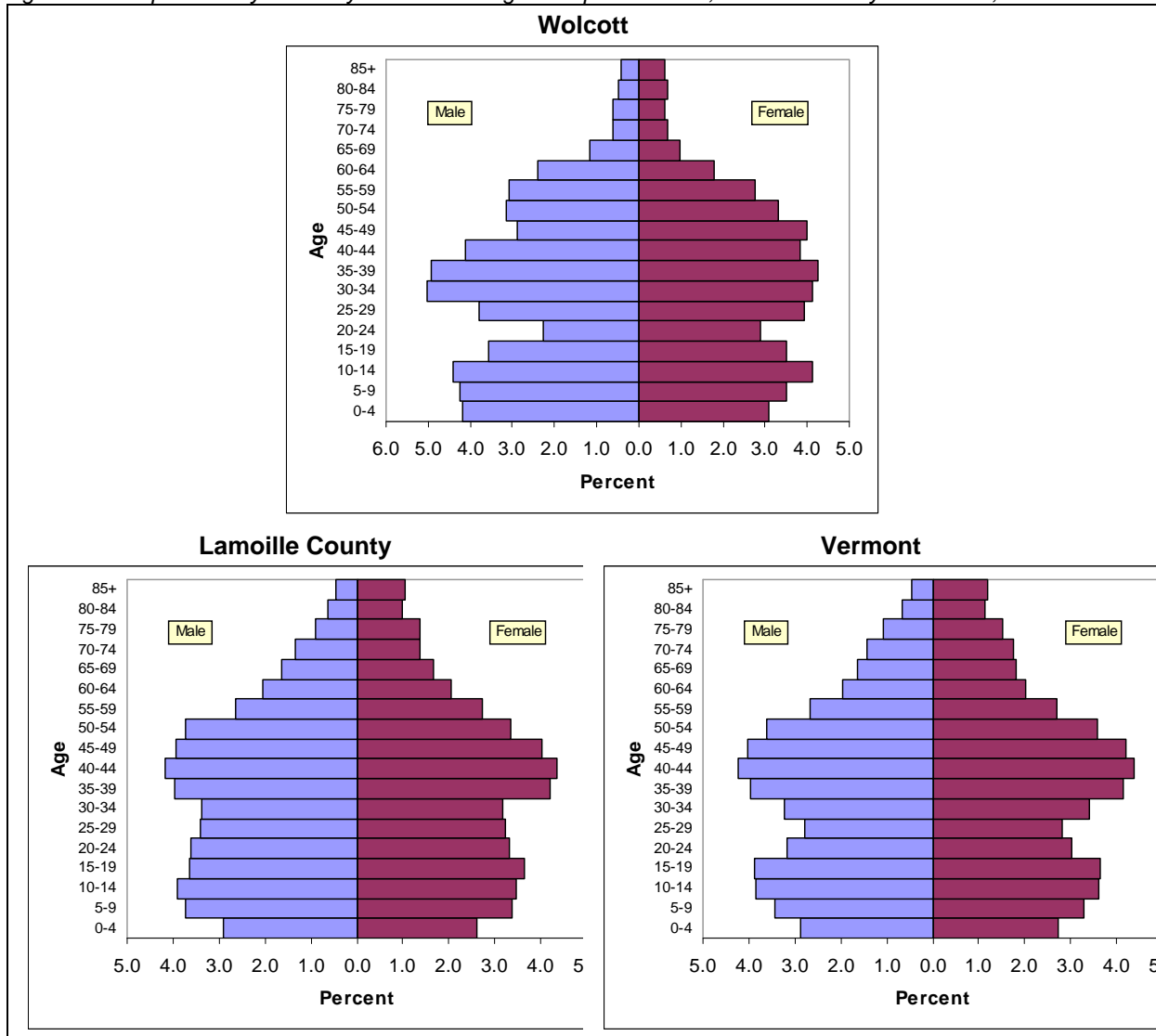
Current Population and Age Distribution

The most recent Census count for Wolcott was 1,456 persons in 2000. This number has since been updated to 1,692 with a 2006 Census Bureau population estimate. The median age for the town in 2000 was 33.4 years, which was 4.3 years younger than the state average and 3.1 years younger than Lamoille County as a whole.

Figure 2-2 below contains population pyramids showing age groups of 5 years broken out by gender for Wolcott, Lamoille County and Vermont. A population pyramid is likely the best visual representation of the essential demographic indicators of any area. For Lamoille County and Vermont the large bulges centering on the 40-44 age group represents the ‘baby boomers’ and are typical. The next bulges down around the 10-19 age groups represent the ‘boom echo’ of children raised by the baby boomers. It is likely that this boom echo generation will produce another bulge in time. It is also typical to see a higher proportion of females to males in the 65+ age groups, since females tend to live longer.

Wolcott’s population pyramid varies from the county and state pyramids in a few different ways. First of all, the baby boom bulge in Wolcott seems dominated by younger ages (30-39). In a related manner the trough between the baby boom and boom echo bulges is also in a younger age group than the county and state (20-24). These two differences may have to do with the overall younger median age of Wolcott, as well as the loss of college-age individuals with towns with colleges and universities. The other noticeable difference is the thinner peak in Wolcott of the 70+ age groups. This could be due to higher mortality rates in town and the relative lack of senior housing in Wolcott, but most likely the latter.

Figure 2-2. Population Pyramids by Gender and Age Group for Wolcott, Lamoille County & Vermont, 2000

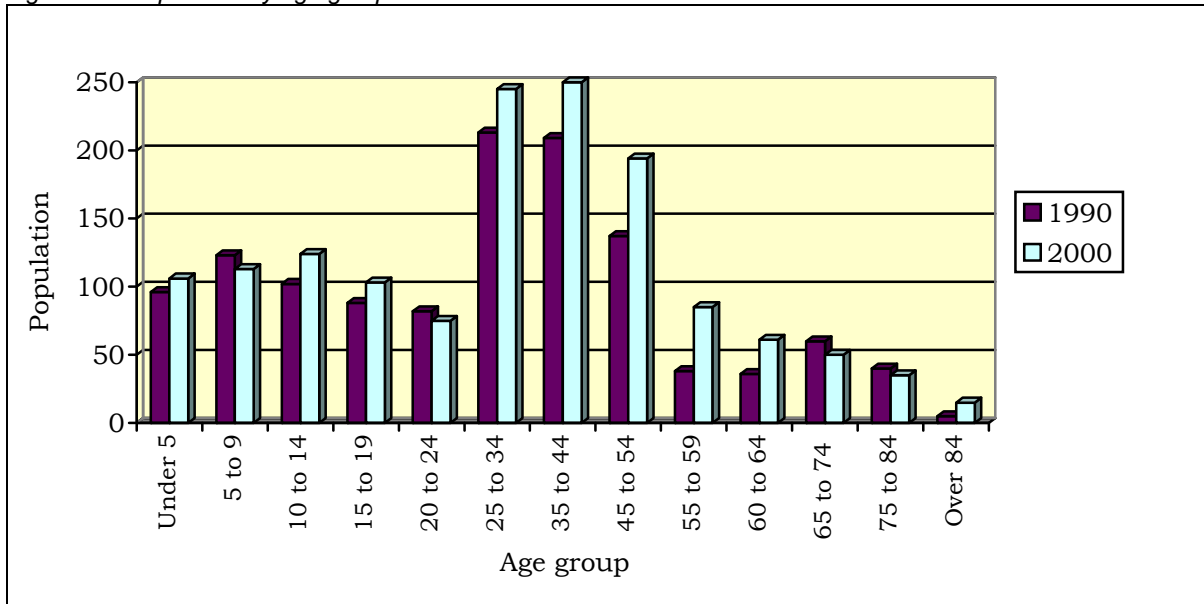


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census of Population and Housing

Age distribution information is important in order to predict future service needs, especially schools. Breakdowns by age categories in Figure 2-3 depict the trends between 1990 and 2000. Two important observations are the relatively slight increase in school age children and the dramatic increase in the middle age groups (25 to 64).

The actual increase in school age children between 1990 and 2000 was 37 new students (or 9.0%). Considering the rate of growth in town over that period (18.5%), this figure is actually quite low. The increase in the young adults (25 to 34 age group) is important because they are the individuals most likely to have families which tend to have children. Therefore, Wolcott must continue to watch for increases in school age population. The 35 to 54 year old age group is important because this age group is not likely to have more children but does need single-family homes in which to raise their children. Finally, the increase in the early retirement groups may indicate a need for new services in the future which have not been needed previously.

Figure 2-3. Population by age groups in Wolcott 1990-2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing (1990-2000)

Regional Population Data

Wolcott is located on the eastern edge of Lamoille County, which is experiencing rapid growth. While the State grew by 8.2% between 1990 and 2000, Lamoille County grew at greater than double that rate. Wolcott grew at rates similar to those of neighboring towns to the west (see Table 2-4) although not nearly as fast as Elmore to the south. The towns to the north and east of Wolcott tended to grow at much more moderate rates (7.1% to 14.3%).

Table 2-4. Populations and percent change since 1990 for Wolcott, neighboring towns and surrounding areas.

Area	1990 Population	2000 Population	% Change, '90-'00
Craftsbury	994	1,136	14.3
Elmore	573	849	48.2
Hardwick	2,964	3,174	7.1
Hyde Park	2,344	2,847	21.5
Morristown	4,733	5,139	20.5
Wolcott	1,229	1,456	18.5
Lamoille County	19,735	23,233	17.7
State of Vermont	562,758	608,827	8.2

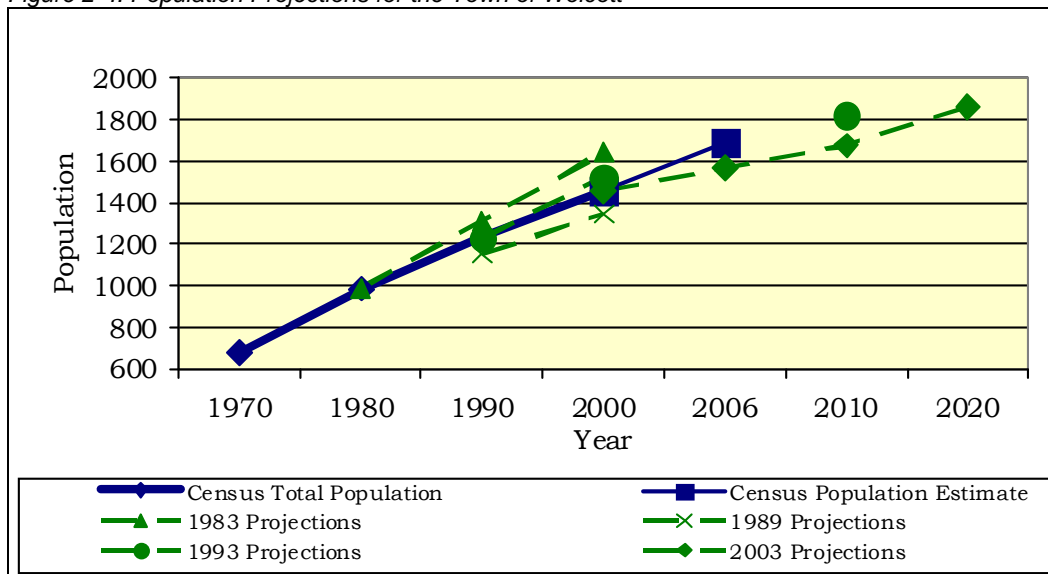
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing (1990-2000)

Future Population Projections

Various agencies in state government periodically make future population predictions based on complex models that factor in expected fertility and mortality rates for the town as well as projected migration into or out of the town. It should be noted that population projections are expectations of what *may* occur. As with any prediction, the accuracy depends on the validity of its underlying assumptions. While each projection release may be potentially inaccurate over time, and the entire collection of projections is imprecise as a whole (see Figure 3), they can give an idea of where the overall population may be headed. At the very least, a projection provides insight into current components of population change by illustrating how trends could play out over time, assuming no substantial changes in any one or more factors.

Figure 2-4 illustrates the difficulties and drawbacks of population projections. There have been four sets of projections released by State agencies over the past two decades, and each has not quite matched the 2000 Census total population or 2006 Census population estimate for Wolcott. The most recent projection places Wolcott's population at 1,861, growing at 15.1% from 2000-2010 and 11.0% from 2010 to 2020. These rates are lower than Wolcott's Census 1990-2000 rate of 18.5% and reflect the slowing rate of growth illustrated by current data.

Figure 2-4. Population Projections for the Town of Wolcott



Sources: Vermont Population Projections 1985-2000 (Vermont Department of Health 1983); Vermont Population Projections 1990-2005 (Office of Policy Research and Coordination 1989); Vermont Population Projections 1990-2015 (Vermont Health Care Authority 1993); Vermont Population Projections 2000-2020 (Massachusetts Institute on Social and Economic Research, for the Vermont Dept. of Aging and Disabilities); 2000 Census of Population and Housing (U.S. Census Bureau); 2000-2006 Population Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau Population Division).

At best, the predictions are most accurate after Census counts and for short time periods (not more than ten years). The lesson to be learned here is that, when viewing the new population forecasts, it should be kept in mind how inaccurate the State predictions have been over the past 20 years and then judge accordingly.

It should also be considered that population projections assume a steady state for many conditions of growth (or decline), including factors that could be substantially affected by what is in this Town Plan. What this Town Plan contains and how land use is planned and regulated within the Town of Wolcott by its citizen volunteers will have as much influence on the Town's future growth as any projection's assumptions will. This Town Plan represents the desire of Wolcott's residents to have a say in how future growth will occur.

SECTION 3. HOUSING

Wolcott's population is growing, but the number of people in each household seems to be decreasing. This means that more housing units may be necessary to house the same amount of people in town. The expectation, therefore, is for an overwhelming need for single-family homes and two-family and mobile homes as Wolcott grows. There is less need for apartments although some smaller one to two bedroom units could fill the needs of many persons living alone. As would be expected from the needs stated above, nearly 81% of Wolcott's occupied housing units in the 2000 Census were owner occupied while the remaining 19% were rentals. It is also no surprise, therefore, that less than 1% of homeowner units were vacant while just over 10% of rental units were vacant.

There is more to Wolcott's housing picture than simple supply. The nature and cost of housing and its ability to provide opportunities for a spectrum of means and needs must also be measured. Wolcott is no different from other locations in the fact that housing affordability is a major concern. Home prices and housing costs have been increasing at much higher rates than regional income. In addition, there can be seen a future need for more housing options for Wolcott residents in their senior years and if they possess disabilities.

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

To ensure that Wolcott has safe and affordable housing available in a variety of types for all incomes, ages, and for those with special needs.

Safe housing

- All housing should be safe for both the occupants and the public at large at risk.

Affordable housing

- Working residents of Wolcott should have the opportunity to find housing, for purchase or rent that is affordable based on a typical wage in town.

Variety of types

- Wolcott should have a variety of housing to meet the various needs of the residents of town including vacation homes, single family, two family, mobile homes, and apartments.

Special needs housing

- To ensure that households and individuals with special housing needs, including the elderly, handicapped, and low-income households, are able to attain suitable and affordable housing.

POLICIES

Safe housing

- Residential development is not permitted in the flood hazard area and existing housing in the floodplain should be flood-proofed for the safety of the residents and the town as a whole.
- All housing must have approved wastewater treatment to ensure the health of the residents and public at large.

Affordable housing

- Sites for manufactured homes are allowed in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.

- Affordable housing should minimize long-term living costs through high quality design, efficient construction, energy efficiency, and proximity to employment.
- Wolcott encourages land use patterns that are inherently more affordable by the nature of cost efficiencies associated with their construction (e.g. shorter access roads, smaller lots, proximity to utilities).

Variety of types

- Vacation homes are encouraged where appropriate.
- Accessory apartments are encouraged as they provide needed income for the homeowner and needed small apartments for residents living alone.

Special needs housing

- Wolcott supports efforts to assist elderly and disabled residents who wish to “age in place” in their homes and to partner with community based health care systems that enable elderly and disabled people to remain in the community.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Safe housing

- The Wolcott Selectboard should consider the recommendations of the 2004 sewer feasibility study¹ for Wolcott Village and North Wolcott and pursue the planning and funding necessary to implement agreed-upon improvements and services.

Affordable housing

- The Planning Commission should work with Lamoille Housing Partnership to find ways to ensure working residents have housing they can afford.
- The Wolcott Planning Commission should poll town residents on current opinions toward various tools and avenues for facilitating fair and affordable housing.
- Wolcott’s zoning and subdivision regulations and permit fees should be reviewed for their effect upon housing construction costs and affordability.
- Currently any structure of 3 or more residential units is subject to conditional use review in any of Wolcott’s zoning districts, excluding those where development is restricted overall. In the interest of allowing for cheaper housing, Wolcott should consider allowing 3+ family structures as permitted uses in some areas of town or at least provide for expedited review.

Special needs housing

- The town should pursue partnerships and funding to develop senior housing near the village center. Both Level III and Level IV facilities are needed and would be appropriate for Wolcott.

Household and Family Characteristics

Housing needs differ based on household types. Of the 552 households in 2000, 402 (or 72.8%) were family households. The Census breaks families into three groups:

- married couples,
- female householder with no spouse present, and
- male householder with no spouse present.

Over half of all households in Wolcott (58.2%) were married family households in 2000. In Lamoille County, only Cambridge and Elmore had higher percentages of married families. Data show that married couple families overwhelmingly live in home-ownership situations. In 2000, 92.8% of Wolcott’s married couple families owned their homes, versus renting. Approximately half of Wolcott’s married couple families had children in 2000.

¹ 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott* performed by Stone Environmental, Inc., Montpelier, VT and Forcier, Aldrich & Associates, Essex Jct, VT.

Single parent families are evenly split between male or female householders and similarly with children. In the 2000 Census there were 41 female householders without a husband and 33 had children. There were 40 male householders without a wife and 29 had children. These groups also desire home-ownership but generally have more difficulty than married couples.

In addition to families, the Census breaks households into non-families. These groups include individuals living alone or with one or more non-relatives. In Wolcott there were 150 non-family households in 2000, of which 104 were individuals living alone. Non-families tend to rent (67.3% in Wolcott in 2000) as opposed to owning their homes.

The size of a typical Wolcott family, and all households in general, seems to be shrinking. Table 3-1 depicts a decrease in the average size of families and all households between 1990 and 2000 for the town, the county and the entire state. Wolcott's households seem to be slightly larger, however.

Table 3-1. Average Size of Families and all Households, 1990-2000

Year	Wolcott		Lamoille County		Vermont	
	Household	Family	Household	Family	Household	Family
1990	2.90	3.27	2.56	3.07	2.57	3.06
2000	2.63	2.99	2.45	2.94	2.44	2.96

Sources: 1990 and 2000 Censuses of Population and Housing

Housing Stock Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census, the majority (477 units or over 77.4%) of the housing units in Wolcott in 2000 were detached single-family homes. The second most common housing unit type in Wolcott in 2000 was mobile homes (95 units).

Compared with neighboring communities, Wolcott has a relatively young housing stock. Over 69% of the housing units counted by the Census in 2000 were built during or after 1970. About 23% of the housing units in town were constructed prior to 1940. Wolcott's percentage of homes built prior to 1940 is lower than that of neighboring towns and lower than the countywide figures for Lamoille, Caledonia and Orleans counties. The Census 2000 median construction date for Wolcott housing units was 1976.

Table 3-2. Units in Structure and Occupancy for Wolcott, 1990, 2000.

	Vacant/ Seasonal		Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Total	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Single Family Homes	66	49	288	388	38	40	392	477
Single Family Attached Units	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	5
Units in Multi-Family Buildings	2	4	5	2	22	33	29	39
Mobile Homes	19	4	46	60	20	31	85	95
Other	41	0	5	0	0	0	46	0

Sources: 1990 and 2000 Censuses of Population and Housing

Housing types in Wolcott are fairly homogenous, with single family detached and mobile homes being the most common type. Table 3-2 above shows the housing units in Wolcott in 1990 and 2000 classified by type of structure and occupancy status. The number of owner-occupied single family homes grew by 34.7 % between 1990 and 2000. Conversely, the number of units in multi-family building being rented grew by half. Without knowing the lifecycle of each housing unit in Wolcott over the course of this decade, it can still be assumed that most of this growth is being driven by the construction of new units, probably supplemented by the conversion or selling/renting of previously vacant and seasonal units. Overall the number of single family structures grew by 21.7%.

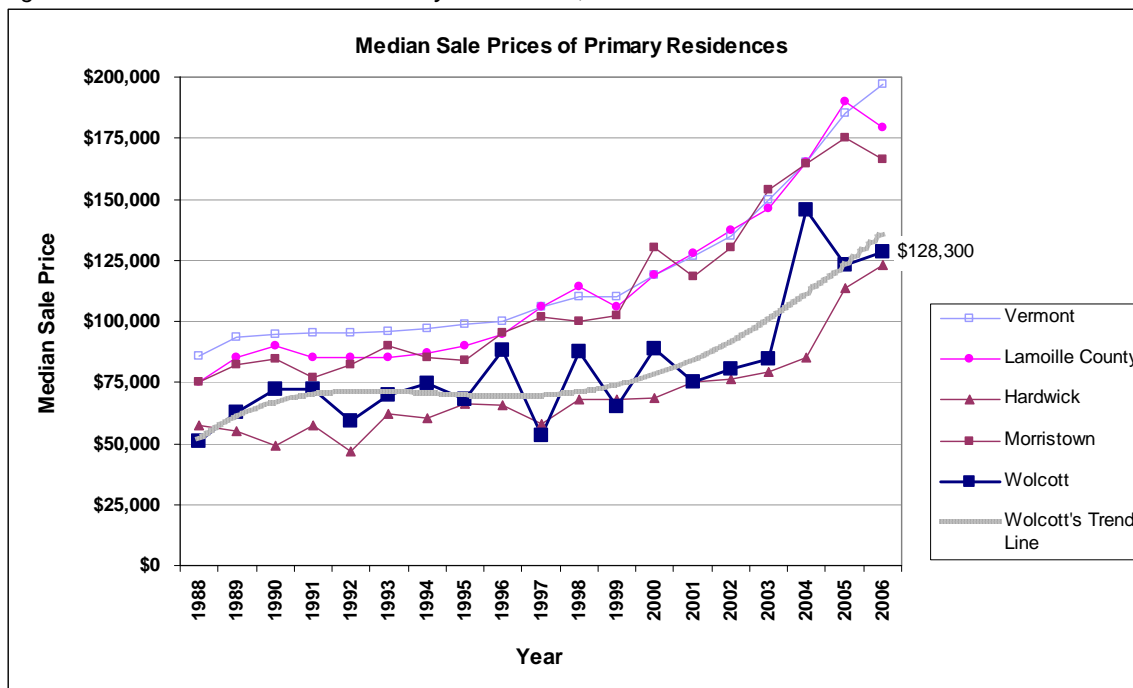
Housing Costs

The U.S. Census also collected data in 2000 on the median housing values for homeowners and the median contract rent costs for those who rent in Wolcott. Unfortunately this is still the most recent data of this type for Wolcott. Median home values in Wolcott in 2000 were \$82,100. Of 199 Census-selected homeowners in 2000, 140 had a mortgage while 59 did not. Individuals with a mortgage spent a median of \$806 per month to pay the mortgage plus monthly owner costs while those without a mortgage spent a median of \$313. The 90 renting households paid a median of \$537 per month for rent, utilities and other costs in 2000.

Home Prices

Luckily home sales price data is much more recent for Wolcott and all of Vermont. The State's property transfer data on all annual home sales is periodically analyzed and updated by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. From 1988 to 2006, the number of primary residences sold in Wolcott varied from a low of 6 in 1991 and 1992, to a high of 34 in 1994. Most recently in 2006, 19 primary residences were sold, 15 of them single family homes and 4 mobile homes with land.

Figure 3-1. Median Sale Prices of Primary Residences, 1988-2006.



Source: 2007, Vermont Dept. of Taxes, Property Transfer Data, as analyzed by Vermont Housing Finance Agency.
 Note: The small number of home sales at the town level explains the wide variability in prices seen from year to year. Thus a polynomial trend line is provided for Wolcott. The line attempts to show the trend in Wolcott's home sale prices over time. Statisticians know that the closer a trend line's R² value is to 1 (between 0 and 1), the more the line's slope corresponds to the actual data. The Wolcott trend line's R² value is 0.7433, which shows that the line is a pretty good representation of home sale trends in Wolcott but also that the variability presents a challenge.

Figure 3-1 shows that median home prices have been rising in Wolcott and countywide over the past two decades. Wolcott's median price has been consistently below the county and the entire state. It is also lower than Morrisville and Stowe, where 45% of Wolcott's resident workforce commuted to according to the 2000 Census. Morrisville and Stowe may attract jobs across the county, but their higher home prices (especially Stowe's) may be helping to steer growth to places like Wolcott. Conversely, Hardwick, on the other side of Wolcott along Route 15, has had slightly lower median home prices. Table 3-3 illustrates the difference in prices with a snapshot of the 2006 numbers.

Table 3-3. 2006 Median Home Price.

	Wolcott	Lamoille County	Vermont	Stowe	Morristown	Hardwick
2006 Median Home Price	\$128,300	\$179,000	\$197,000	\$400,000	\$166,000	\$123,000

Source: 2007, Vermont Dept. of Taxes, Property Transfer Data, as analyzed by Vermont Housing Finance Agency.

The Need for Fair and Affordable Housing

It would be ideal for all residents of Wolcott to have fair and equal opportunity to secure affordable housing that meets their needs for shelter and accessibility. Unfortunately that is presumably not always the case. Common barriers to housing include low incomes, high housing costs, accessibility and self-care needs due to age and disability, and possible discrimination based on these factors, race and ethnicity, familial status, and more.

The ability of this plan to formulate a permanent solution for fair and affordable housing in Wolcott is very limited. First of all, it is difficult to fully describe the problem – there is very little in the way of data gathering to directly identify fair housing problems and the associated factors. Second of all, the land use functions of this particular effort can have little effect on the actions of people during housing transactions or when making market decisions.

The land use provisions of this plan, however, can help create the windows and opportunities for others, namely housing developers and service providers, to do their part in the fight for fair and affordable housing.

Housing Affordability

Housing is considered affordable if a household spends less than 30% of its income on housing-associated costs. As a general rule, the lower the income, the smaller the chance that available housing will be affordable. According to the 2000 Census, 31.5% of Wolcott households were in unaffordable housing situations; 54 of 199 home-owning households and 37 of 90 renting households were paying 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. Unfortunately the fact that Census 2000 is still the most recent data available to directly measure the affordability of housing for Wolcott residents illustrates the dearth of data on this subject.

It is possible to use more current annual average wage numbers from the Vermont Department of Labor to provide some context however. For instance, a Wolcott resident making the town's 2006 annual average wage of \$25,745, with no other income source, would have to pay no more than \$644 on monthly housing costs to stay within the 30% affordability threshold. At the county's 2006 annual average wage of \$28,773, \$720 would be the monthly affordability limit. One could double these numbers to simulate a situation of a household with two wage earners. In addition, one could use the wage numbers provided for different industries and towns in the county to add further nuance.

Table 3-4 attempts to determine whether or not local and regional income sources have been keeping up with increases in home sale prices. Home sale prices are a primary driver of housing costs, and increases in average wages can affect all local households, regardless of how many earners may be present. However this table does not take into account mortgage rates, utility costs, tax rates, and other non-wage income sources, including public subsidies. Nevertheless the table reveals that increases in annual average wages in Wolcott and Lamoille County – where most Wolcott residents work – are not keeping up with increases in local and county median home sale prices. This may be an indicator that the housing affordability gap has been widening.

Table 3-4 – Percent Increase in Median Home Prices versus Annual Average Wages

Time Period	<i>Wolcott Median Home Price % Increase</i>	<i>Lamoille Co. Median Home Price % Increase</i>	Wolcott Annual Average Wage % Increase	Lamoille Co. Annual Average Wage % Increase
1988-2006	151.6	138.7	82.4	98.4
1996-2006	45.3	88.6	65.5	49.7
2001-2006	71.1	39.8	28.5	22.3

Sources: 2007, Vermont Dept. of Taxes, Property Transfer Data, as analyzed by Vermont Housing Finance Agency.
2007, Vermont Department of Labor, Quarterly Covered Employment and Wages Report.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission received a Community Development Block Grant in 1990 to study the need for affordable housing countywide. *A Comprehensive Analysis of Housing Needs and a Long-term Affordable Housing Plan for the Communities in Lamoille County* suggests that by the year 2000, over 450 units of affordable housing would be needed to meet the county growth requirements. During the 1980's, the real purchasing power of households decreased. In 1980, a household earning the median income for the county could afford to purchase a typically priced home. By 1989, this was no longer true. The cost of housing increased faster than incomes increased, thus reducing real purchasing power. Based on 1990 Census data, 25 percent of owner occupied units had mortgages which were not affordable and 47 percent of rents were not affordable – by 2000, 27% of owner occupied homes were not affordable, as were 41% of rents.

Based on the expected growth in the population through the year 2000 and an assumption that the average number of people per household will remain unchanged, the report stated that 50% of the new housing units developed should be affordable. The report estimated that the Town of Wolcott's share of affordable housing units was 28. The 2000 Census indicated that 141 new units were constructed in the 1990's but it is not known how many of these housing units were affordable. Overall no data source has replicated the analysis of this 1990 report.

Special Needs Housing

Within every community are individuals or families with special housing needs. The elderly and families with children in poverty are examples of groups with special needs that are found in most communities. The disabled or infirmed may also require special arrangements. A final category of special needs housing is group quarters or institutional care. Living arrangements such as college dormitories, nursing homes, group homes, and homeless shelters fall into this category.

The amount of special care required may be more or less depending on the situation. Some individuals need only special construction (such as handicapped accessibility), while others need assisted living arrangements (visiting nurses) while still others may require full institutional care.

Listed below are groups with special needs which are found in Wolcott and an evaluation of how well their needs are being met. Generalizations are made throughout this section based on age and they are not intended to be derogatory in any manner. With each generation, individuals are staying healthier longer and can live independently much later in life. But, in general, taking care of oneself and ones home get significantly more difficult as one gets older especially if someone loses a spouse.

- Seniors living alone: According to the 2000 Census there were 32 seniors living alone in Wolcott. This group is important for social reasons as being retired and living alone in northern Vermont can be hard. In many cases, opportunities to rent apartments in senior housing are desired. Wolcott currently has no senior housing available (Level IV-senior living).
- Seniors 70-85: Most seniors between 70 and 85 continue to live independently, but many require some assistance especially as they get older. These may be situations where seniors have difficulty driving or require a visiting nurse periodically. In Wolcott there were 54 seniors in this age group and there are no Level III living arrangements available.
- Seniors 85 and over: Beyond age 85, seniors increasingly need more intensive care. In the most serious cases, full institutional care is required. There are 15 seniors in Wolcott over 85 and 9 of them live alone. There are relatively few individuals in this category but this may be due to the fact that anyone who requires assisted living are forced to move to towns which have these facilities available. Wolcott has no Level II or Level I housing. It is unlikely that a Level I nursing home will be constructed in Wolcott as they are generally located near hospitals where emergency services can be available.
- Mobility and self care limitations (disabilities). In 2000 237 Wolcott residents 16+ were identified as having at least one disability, representing 21% of the 16+ population. There are many types of disabilities, and it should be noted that 42 of those individuals reported solely employment and/or "go-outside-home" disabilities, which may not affect their housing needs. Table 3-5 depicts information on Wolcott residents who possessed disabilities in 2000. Depending on the severity of the limitations presented by one's disability, human services, transportation services, or special construction (handicapped accessibility) may be required. Social services are available in Wolcott although special living situations for those in serious conditions do not exist.
- Families, children and seniors in poverty². There were 42 families determined by the 2000

² The 2000 Census compared 1999 individual and household total income levels to the 1999 poverty thresholds (based on aspects of a person or family's situation) to determine the number of individuals and families in poverty in 1999. There are 48 threshold levels in all, depending on the age of an individual/householder and the number of children in a household. For instance, a single person under 65 taking in less income annually than the poverty threshold of \$8,667, was considered to be in poverty in 1999. For a family with two adults and two children, the poverty threshold was \$16,895. The highest threshold, for a family of 1 adult and 8 or more children, was \$32,208.

Census to be living in poverty in Wolcott, representing a rate of 10.2; 40 of these families had children under 18, and 20 had children under 5. The total number of children in poverty was 105, representing a rate of 25.1, with 37 under the age of 5. The number of seniors 65+ in poverty was 19, representing a rate of 18.6. These are groups with housing needs that are difficult to meet. Federal programs provide housing under “Section-8” but none are currently available in Wolcott.

Table 3-5. People with Disabilities and a Tally of Disabilities by Type, 2000

	Age		
	16-64	65+	Total
Total population, 2000	1,017	102	1,119
...with at least one disability	193	44	237
...with two or more types	79	31	110
Total tally of disability types possessed*	337	110	447
...sensory disability	59	27	86
...physical disability	108	34	142
...mental disability	41	17	58
...self-care disability	17	7	24
...go-outside-home disability	33	25	58
...employment disability	79	n/a	79

*Note: The tally of types is not a count of people. People can possess more than one type of disability.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing

Public Opinion on Housing Types

1992 was the last time that Wolcott residents were surveyed on their feelings toward certain types of housing. Prevailing opinions revealed some challenges for fair housing in the town. Survey respondents were supportive of 1-2 family homes on at least an acre of land, and there was support for more elderly housing. However, cluster housing, multi-family housing, rental units, and mobile home parks were viewed negatively by a majority of respondents. Such housing types are conducive to housing affordability.

These thresholds are increased yearly, largely due to inflation. The corresponding 2006 thresholds were \$10,488, \$20,444 and \$38,975, respectively.
Source: 2007, U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division.

SECTION 4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The foundation of Wolcott's economy is its resource base. Initially, agriculture and forestry dominated the community's economy, but over the past 30 years, the economy has increasingly relied on its residents to commute to work in other communities. The resources still exist for agriculture and forestry to be an important component of the community into the future but changes in national and regional economics have forced these types of operations to change to keep up.

To be prepared for future downturns in the market, Wolcott must have a diverse economic base. Manufacturing, light industry, retail, and tourism in addition to agriculture and forestry would cushion the town in the event one sector experiences a drop. Having so many residents that commute to other towns indicates that Wolcott will likely rise and fall with the regional trends. Creating jobs in Wolcott would stabilize tax bases and make the town more self-reliant.

Finally, economic development is key because residents must have opportunities to earn a livable wage, and there must be opportunities to learn the skills necessary to achieve gainful employment. Town policies must encourage and support, not discourage and hamper, business ventures. Land use regulations must be crafted to achieve their objectives while limiting the burden on the applicant.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

- For Wolcott to have a balanced and diverse local economy that provides rewarding job opportunities at a livable wage.
- To increase the number of Wolcott residents who live AND work in town.

The Town has developed the following policies in order to encourage and support local economic development.

POLICIES

- The Town must support and maintain initiatives to bring the availability of high-speed broadband Internet access to town.
- The town supports renewable energy projects.
- The town supports initiatives to make farming and forestry more economically viable into the future.
- The town supports industries which take advantage of our local resources to produce value-added products. Raw materials should not be exported outside of town without some local processing.
- The development of appropriate industries and businesses, which utilize the skills of the local labor force, are encouraged.
- The town supports proposals which will provide workforce training to improve opportunities for residents in new and existing businesses.
- The town supports existing and proposed businesses that provide jobs at a livable wage.
- The Town supports the use of the Lamoille Valley rail corridor as the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and recognizes the potential for trailheads and trail amenities in town. The Town also recognizes the future potential for reconstruction and return to use of the Lamoille Valley Railroad for the overall economic benefit it would serve to the community.

- Economic development at the expense of the environment is not encouraged. Businesses and industries should not degrade or endanger air and water resources.
- Industries that extract renewable resources, such as timber, should do so in a sustainable manner.

The actions and recommendations are intended to provide opportunities for economic development. Of primary importance for consideration is the creation of an economics task force to implement the goals and policies of this chapter.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- The Wolcott Selectboard and/or Planning Commission should pursue and utilize grant funding and organizational partnerships toward initiatives to plan for and implement the availability of high-speed broadband Internet access in town.
- The Town should create an Economic Development Task Force to be responsible for conducting a study of the potential for commercial and light industrial development along the Route 15 corridor in Wolcott and also to determine where the most appropriate places in town are for locating commercial & industrial development.
- The Wolcott Planning Commission, Selectboard, and/or aforementioned Economic Development Task Force should review the recommendations of the Wolcott Village and North Wolcott sewer feasibility study³, determine whether a municipal sewer system would encourage economic development in Wolcott, and pursue the next steps.
- The Planning Commission should review and, if necessary, revise the zoning and subdivision bylaws to ensure the regulations and the process of reviewing applications are fair and accomplished in a timely fashion. In this way, the local review process does not become a hindrance to good projects that will have a positive influence on economic development in Town.
- The Planning Commission should review all 'Act 250' applications for their impact on the economic development of town. Where an application is determined to not conform to this chapter or any goal or policy of this Town Plan, the Planning Commission should participate in the 'Act 250' process in order to ensure the concerns of the town are addressed. Where an application conforms to this chapter, the Planning Commission should participate in the 'Act 250' process to attempt to ensure the process is as smooth as possible for the applicant.

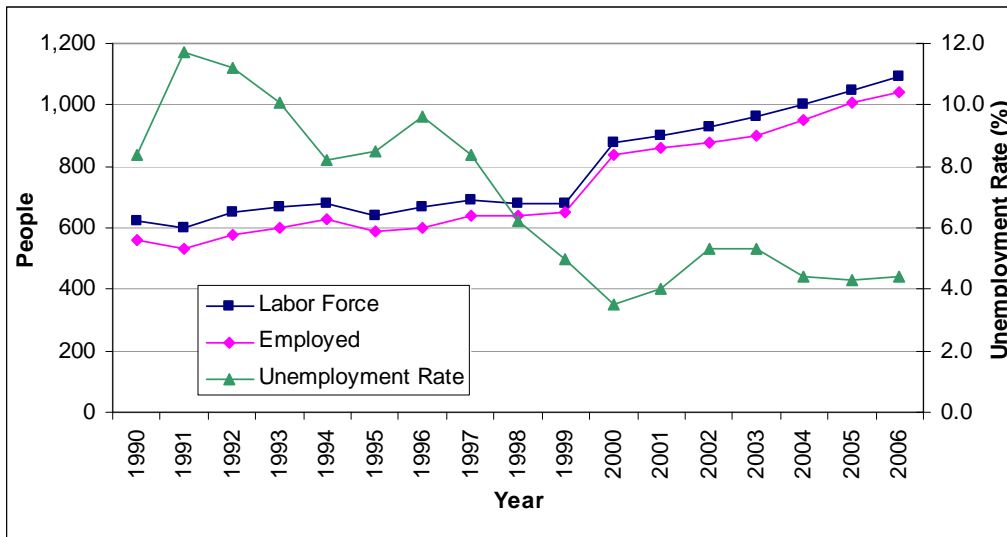
Wolcott's Resident Labor Force

The latest Vermont Dept. of Labor numbers showed that Wolcott's resident labor force was 1,090 strong in 2006. Figure 4-1 above reveals that, as Wolcott's population has grown, so has its resident labor force. Fortunately employment has also kept pace, and the 2006 unemployment rate of 4.4 was much improved from several years ago.

While Wolcott's unemployment rate has generally decreased over the past fifteen years, it has traditionally been higher than the rates of Lamoille County and Vermont, as shown by Figure 4-2.

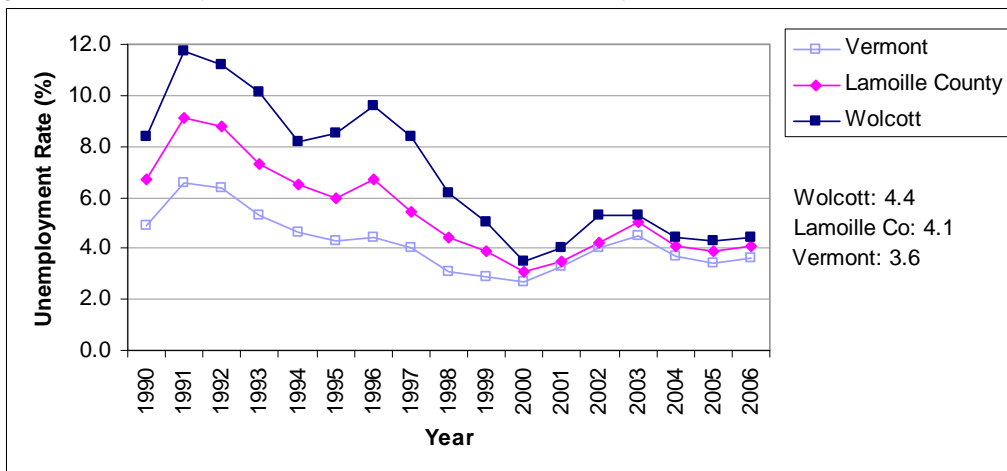
³ 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott* performed by Stone Environmental, Inc., Montpelier, VT and Forcier, Aldrich & Associates, Essex Jct, VT.

Figure 4-1. Wolcott Resident Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Rate, 1990-2006



Source: 2007. Vermont Dept. of Labor, Quarterly Covered Employment & Wages report
 Note: the 200-fold increase in labor force and unemployment between 1999 and 2000 is most likely due to recalculations to bring the numbers in line with Census 2000 population figures.

Figure 4-2. Unemployment Rates of Wolcott, Lamoille County, and Vermont, 1990-2006



Source: 2007. Vermont Dept. of Labor, Quarterly Covered Employment & Wages report

Educational Attainment

There are many different personal abilities, characteristics, skills, and other situational attributes that can determine if and where one is employed and what work is performed. However one of the only contributing variables that are measured comprehensively across the nation is educational attainment.

Table 4-1 shows that, in 2000, Wolcott adults tended to be more likely to have not completed high school nor to have moved on from high school into college when compared to Lamoille County or Vermont overall. However these facts may not be of concern, assuming that Wolcott’s resident labor force can find secure, quality employment that matches their education levels.

Table 4-1. Highest Education Attainment of Wolcott Adults 18+, 2000

	Wolcott		Lamoille County		Vermont	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Total Population 18 Years and Older	1,064	100.0	17,582	100.0	461,248	100.0
...Less than High School	178	16.7	2,325	13.2	64,578	14.0
...High School Diploma or Equivalent	410	38.5	5,286	30.1	147,980	32.1
...Attended College	476	44.7	9,971	56.7	248,690	53.9
...Bachelor's Degree or Higher	181	17.0	4,977	28.3	124,347	27.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing

Place of Work

Like most Vermonters, Wolcott residents tend to commute outside town to their jobs. According to the 2000 Census, Wolcott's proportion of those who worked outside town (nearly 80%) surpassed both county and state figures, as shown by Table 4-2.

Table 4-3 reveals that more Wolcott residents worked in Morristown in 2000 than anywhere else. The next most popular workplace outside Wolcott was Stowe. Together, Morristown and Stowe accounted for 45% of Wolcott workers.

Table 4-2. Place of Work for Wolcott Labor Force 16+ Years Old, 2000

	Wolcott		Lamoille County		Vermont	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Total workers 16 years of age and over	785	100.0	12,141	100.0	311,839	100.0
...who worked in their town	160	20.4	4,275	35.2	109,132	35.0
...who worked at home	66	8.4	835	6.9	17,651	5.7
...who worked outside town or city of residence	625	79.6	7,866	64.8	202,707	65.0
...who worked outside county of residence	202	25.7	3,472	28.6	66,901	21.5
...who worked outside Vermont	10	1.3	317	2.6	21,346	6.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 4-3. Top Ten Workplaces of Wolcott's Labor Force, 2000

Town	Count	%	Town	Count	%
Morristown	210	26.8	Waterbury	22	2.8
Wolcott	160	20.4	Hyde Park	19	2.4
Stowe	146	18.6	Cambridge	18	2.3
Hardwick	23	2.9	Johnson	16	2.0
Montpelier	23	2.9	Burlington	15	1.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Transportation Planning Package

Type of Work Performed

In 2000 most residents of Wolcott were employed in private wage or salary positions (70.6%) while the remaining residents were employed by the government (16.6%) or self employed (12.2%). The remaining 0.6% of workers was classified as unpaid family workers.

Tables 4-4 and 4-5 show the occupation and industry of residents of Wolcott in the 2000 Census. A manager of a construction company, for example has as his/her occupation 'management, professional and related occupations' while the industry is construction.

Table 4-4. Wolcott's Resident Labor Force by Occupation Category, 2000

Occupation	Count	%
Management, professional, and related occupations	236	29.4
Sales and office occupations	167	20.8
Service occupations	131	16.3
Production, transportation and materials moving	119	14.8
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	112	13.9
Farming, forestry, and fishing	38	4.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 4-5. Wolcott's Resident Labor Force by Industry Sector, 2000

Industry	Count	%
Education, health, and social services	139	17.3
Retail trade	106	13.2
Manufacturing	97	12.1
Construction	90	11.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation services	79	9.8
Professional, scientific, management, admin.	58	7.2
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, hunting, mining	49	6.1
Public administration	49	6.1
Other services	46	5.7
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	38	4.7
Finance, insurance, and real estate	30	3.7
Wholesale trade	19	2.4
Information	3	0.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

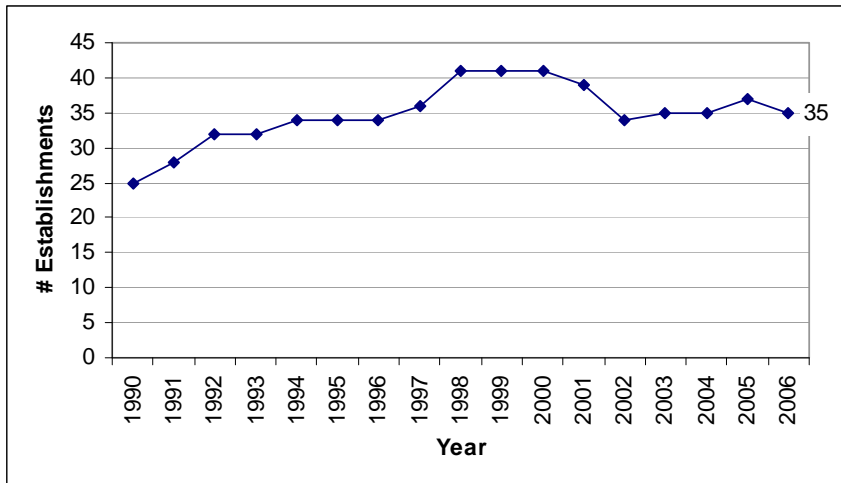
Employment & Wage Characteristics within Wolcott

Businesses in Wolcott

Vermont Dept. of Labor figures indicate that in 2006, 35 businesses provided 186 jobs in Wolcott. By comparison, the corresponding figures from 2000 were 41 and 188, respectively. These job and employment figures cover businesses that pay into Unemployment Insurance (UI). These figures, therefore, do not count self-employed persons or other businesses exempt from UI.

Figure 4-3 depicts the number of businesses that the Vermont Dept. of Labor has recorded in its reports for Wolcott from 1990 to 2006. Overall the number of businesses in the State reports has been increasing over the past two decades, with a recent drop after the 1998-2000 peak of 41 establishments.

Figure 4-3. Number of Wolcott Businesses Reported by State of Vermont, 1990-2006



Source: 2007. Vermont Dept. of Labor, Quarterly Covered Employment & Wages report

Table 4-6 shows that businesses in Wolcott employed workers from around the region in 2000. The majority of daily workers were Wolcott residents.

Table 4-6. Wolcott and Top Five Resident Towns of Those Who Worked in Wolcott, 2000

Town	Count	%
Wolcott	160	51.1
Hyde Park	27	8.6
Hardwick	23	7.3
Morristown	22	7.0
Cambridge	15	4.8
Johnson	14	4.5

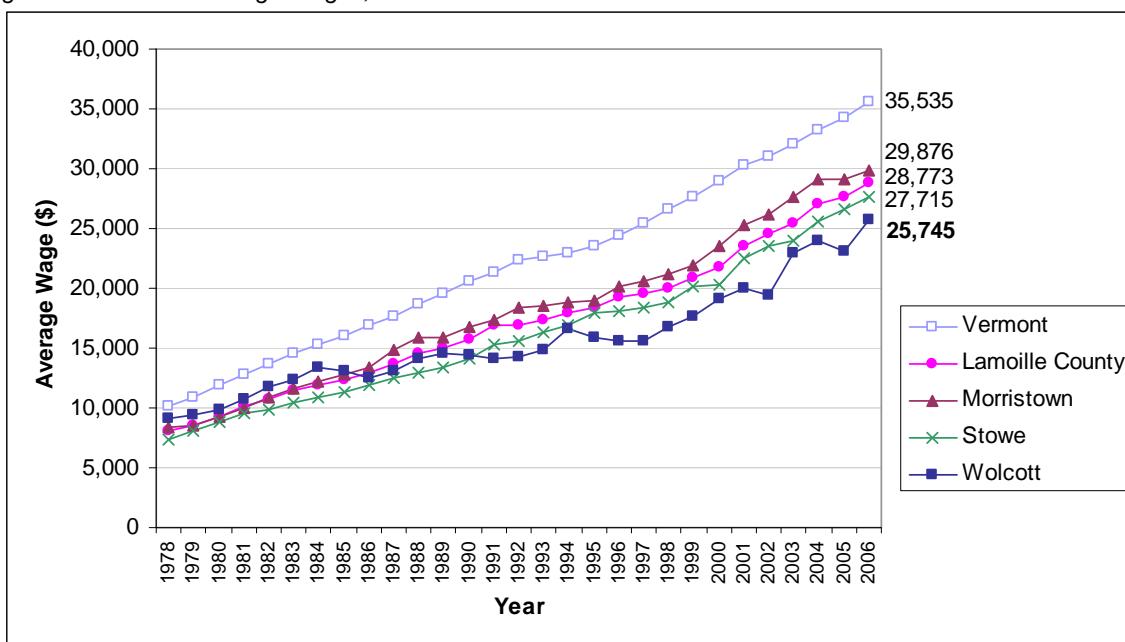
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Transportation Planning Package

Wages in Wolcott

The average annual wage paid by a job in Wolcott in 2006 was \$25,745 – an 11.4% increase from the previous year and a 34.8% increase from 2000. Figure 4-4 depicts that Wolcott’s wages have been increasing overall, as have the county’s and state’s. Morristown and Stowe have also been added to the analysis, due to their prominence in employing Wolcott residents. Wolcott’s wages have been consistently lower than the others’ since 1991.

A more detailed look at wages (Table 4-7) reveals how different industries in Wolcott compared in terms of wages in 2006. The reader is reminded that these numbers do not include businesses not contributing to Unemployment Insurance. Furthermore, low numbers of businesses and employees in certain industries have forced the State to suppress some figures to maintain confidentiality.⁴

Figure 4-4. Annual Average Wages, 1978-2006



Source: 2007. Vermont Dept. of Labor, Quarterly Covered Employment & Wages report

Government employment seems to provide both the highest and lowest wages in Wolcott. The following table shows that the highest wages in Wolcott can be found at the Post Office. The lowest wages on the table are next-door in the Town Office, which could be explained by the high number of part-time positions there. As for the private sector, the highest wages are shown above in the overall “goods producing” category, while the lowest recorded by the State is actually a sub-set of construction – “construction of buildings” – with an average wage of \$21,894. These numbers may not reflect the true situation, however, due to the large amount of suppressed data for Wolcott.

⁴ Data is not published that represents less than three private employers or where one private employer represents 80% or more of the data. In addition, Vermont does not publish data with fewer than ten private sector employees. All government data is publishable.

Table 4-7. Wolcott Employment and Wage Figures by Industry, 2006

Industry	# Businesses	# Employees	Average Wage (\$)
Goods Producing	16	83	27,022
...Mining	1	Suppressed	Suppressed
...Agriculture	1	Suppressed	Suppressed
...Construction	12	50	23,230
...Manufacturing	3	Suppressed	Suppressed
Serving Providing	13	55	25,554
...Retail Trade	4	27	24,853
Federal Gov't (Postal Service)	1	6	33,497
Local School	1	31	24,108
Local Government	1	10	16,155
Total	35⁵	186	25,745

Source: 2007. Vermont Dept. of Labor, Quarterly Covered Employment & Wages report

Measures of Total Income

In contrast with the State's average wage data, the U.S. Census Bureau measures total income (e.g. wages, dividends, public assistance, etc.) in its surveys. However the Census 2000 income data will continue to be the most recent for Wolcott until 2010 data is released. Generally Wolcott incomes have been lower than, but increasing with, county and state numbers, as shown by Table 4-8.

Table 4-8. Per Capita and Median Family Income (\$), Wolcott, Lamoille County and Vermont, 1969-1999

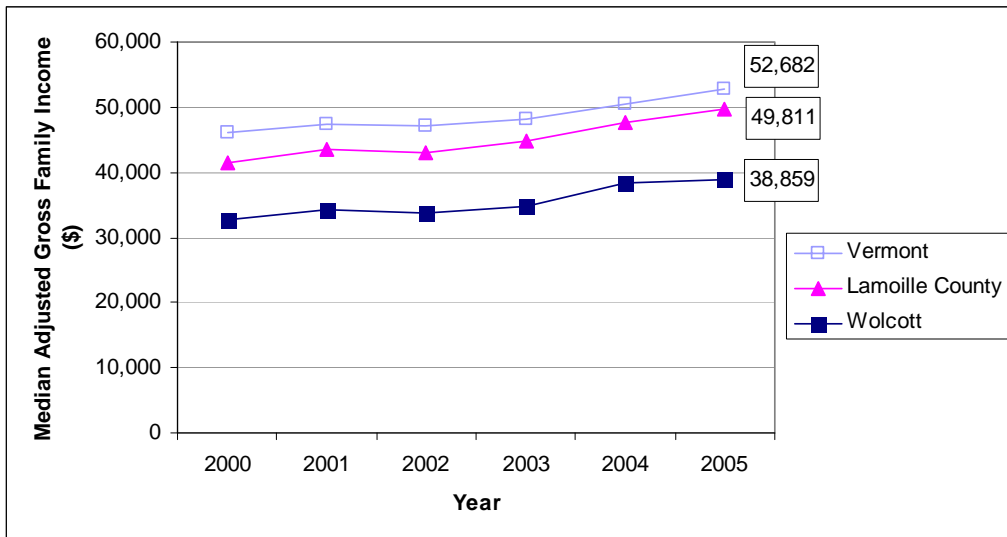
	Per Capita Income				Median Family Income		
	1969	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999
Wolcott	3,062	4,010	9,931	15,198	12,679	31,023	38,056
Lamoille County	2,820	5,572	12,519	20,972	15,766	31,772	44,620
Vermont	4,682	6,178	13,527	20,625	17,205	34,780	48,625

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990 & 2000 Censuses of Population and Housing

The median adjusted gross family income data from the Vermont Tax Department is also intended as a measure of total income and comes out much more frequently than Census data. However, it should be noted that tax data is subject to a multitude of intricacies, including periodical tax statute revisions, which may hinder their ability to represent local income situations. Like the Census income data, Figure 4-5 shows that Wolcott's median adjusted gross family income has trailed county and state numbers while following the same trends.

⁵ Data suppression may produce a discrepancy between the number of businesses per industry and the total number of businesses.

Figure 4-5. Median Adjusted Gross Family Income (\$), Wolcott, Lamoille County and Vermont, 2000-2005



Source: 2006. Vermont Department of Taxes

Measures of Livability

The Livable Wage

Aside from an analysis of trends, the Wolcott wage and income data presented above means little without something to compare to. Vermont statutes require the State’s Legislative Joint Fiscal Office to release an annual study of baseline data of the cost of living in the state and the current wage levels within various sectors of the economy. The results of the study are estimates of a “livable wage” for various urban and rural family situations. A livable wage is the salary required in order to meet a family’s needs, including food, housing, clothing, taxes, meager savings, and personal portion of health insurance⁶. The larger the family, the more income is required to fulfill those needs. Table 4-9 below depicts the 2007 livable wage figures.

Table 4-9. Livable Wages for Rural Families in Vermont, 2007

Family Unit	Livable Wage (\$)	
	Annual	Hourly
Single person, no children	30,307	14.57
Single parent, 1 child	44,168	21.23
Single parent, 2 children	49,820	23.95
2 parents, 2 children – 1 wage earner	51,562	24.79
2 Parents, 2 children – 2 wage earners	71,735 total	17.24 each

Source: 2007 *Basic Needs Budgets and the Livable Wage* (revised March 2007), Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office, Montpelier, VT.

⁶ The livable wage data assumes that the employer is paying a portion of health insurance.

According to the 2007 data, as depicted by Table 4-9, a single person with no children needs to earn \$30,307 per year (\$14.57 per hour) to meet basic needs. This number is higher than Wolcott's 2006 annual wage of \$25,745 (Figure 4-4.). When the livable wages are compared to specific industry sectors (table 4-7), only the 2006 federal government wages paid at the post office would have sufficed. The same is true, even if one doubles the average wage in Wolcott to match the livable wage for a dual-worker household. The health insurance coverage factor could make the difference, however, since the annual average wage figures do not include that benefit.

One could use this simple analysis to explain why so many members of Wolcott's resident workforce commute to towns with higher average wages. This could be brought a step further to conclude that Wolcott needs more businesses and jobs in higher-paying industry sectors. However, before policy decisions are made based upon this data, the user must come to terms with the fact that data like these are based on many assumptions, and their application forces the comparison of averages to averages. These data are convenient and useful, but they will not substitute for exploring the issues and solutions with the affected community-members, themselves.

Poverty

An opposite condition of livability would be poverty. Census 2000 is still the most recent poverty data for Wolcott until 2010 data are released, however some insight may still be gained for the time being. Table 4-10 shows that poverty rates have traditionally been higher in Wolcott than in the surrounding county and state. In addition, poverty rates seemed to have increased between the 1990 and 2000 Census, to the point where a full quarter of Wolcott's children were determined to be in poverty in 1999.

Table 4-10. Poverty Rates, Wolcott, Lamoille County and Vermont, 1979 - 1999

Poverty Rate (%)	...of All Individuals			...of Children (under 18)		...of Families	
	1979	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999
Wolcott	21.0	12.2	14.6	14.5	25.4	8.8	10.2
Lamoille County	14.8	11.1	9.6	12.4	11.2	7.3	6.4
Vermont	12.1	9.9	9.4	11.9	11.2	6.9	6.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990 & 2000 Censuses of Population and Housing.

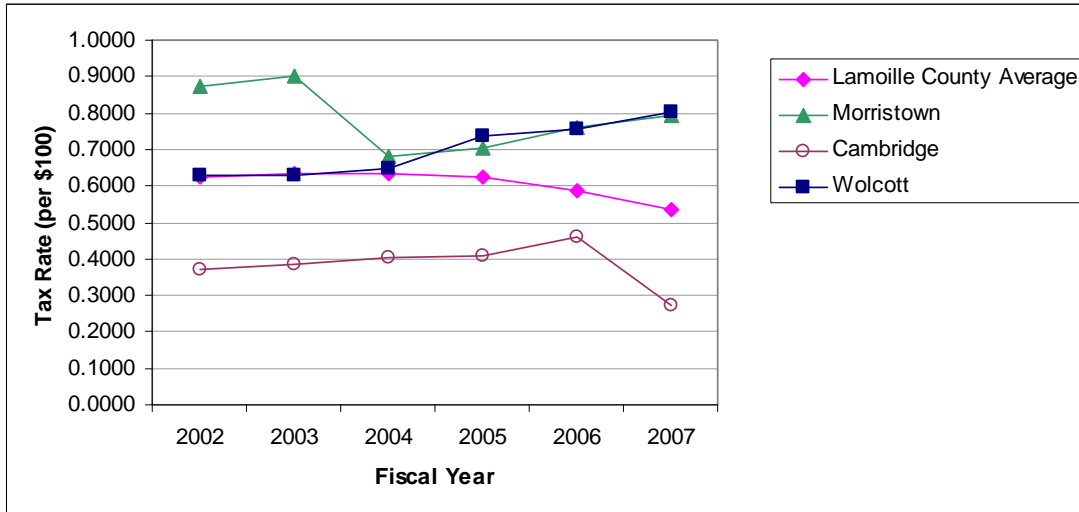
Local Taxes

Another important component of economics, and something against which to compare wages and income, is taxes. Federal, state wide and local taxes are raised to fund services and programs. For areas with larger or more expensive services, tax revenues will need to be higher to pay for them. From an economic development view, taxes need to be predictable and as low as possible. Residents of Wolcott have the most influence on their local tax rates. Rates can be kept steady through good budgeting including a capital budget and program. They can be kept low through efficient spending and by controlling increases in services. As roads and education are, by far, the services with the largest budgets, road policies and education policies (including land use decisions) are important to controlling tax rates.

Wolcott's municipal tax rates, which fund all non-education town services, are generally among

the highest in the county. Figure 4-6 shows that this trend began in fiscal year 2004. In fact, Wolcott’s fiscal year 2007 municipal tax rate of \$0.8045 per \$100 was the highest in the county. The second highest was Morristown at \$0.7956, and the lowest was Cambridge at \$0.2718. The Morrisville and Cambridge data reveal how erratic local tax rates can be as expenses and revenues vary from year to year.

Figure 4-6. Municipal Tax Rates, Wolcott and Lamoille County Average, FY2002 – FY2007



Source: 2007. Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review

As for education taxes, Wolcott’s are above the county average but not the highest. The rates have been increasing over the past few years. Table 4-11 reveals that the fiscal year 2007 homestead education tax rate of 1.4506 is up from the previous two years, as was the non-residential education tax rate of 1.7039. With municipal and education rates together, a homeowner would have paid a total rate of \$2.2551 per \$100, while a business-owner or landlord would have paid \$2.5084 per \$100.

Table 4-11. Education Tax Rates (per \$100) in Wolcott, FY2005 – FY2007

	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007
Homestead	1.3671	1.3931	1.4506
Non-Residential	1.5763	1.5861	1.7039

Source: 2007. Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review

Wolcott has little commercial or industrial property and relies heavily on residential properties to pay property taxes. Residential properties typically use more tax dollars in services than they pay in taxes. An increase in commercial and industrial properties could stabilize or even ease tax rates for homeowners in Wolcott.

The FY2007 Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) ratio for Wolcott, which was used by the State to calculate the fiscal year 2007 homestead education tax rate, was 0.8451. The CLA for fiscal year 2008 has been set at 0.7462. This ratio is below the county average and will continue to decrease until Wolcott funds a reappraisal and brings its grand list back in line with statewide averages. More often than not, bringing a town’s CLA close to or above 1.0000 will also lower the overall homestead education tax rate.

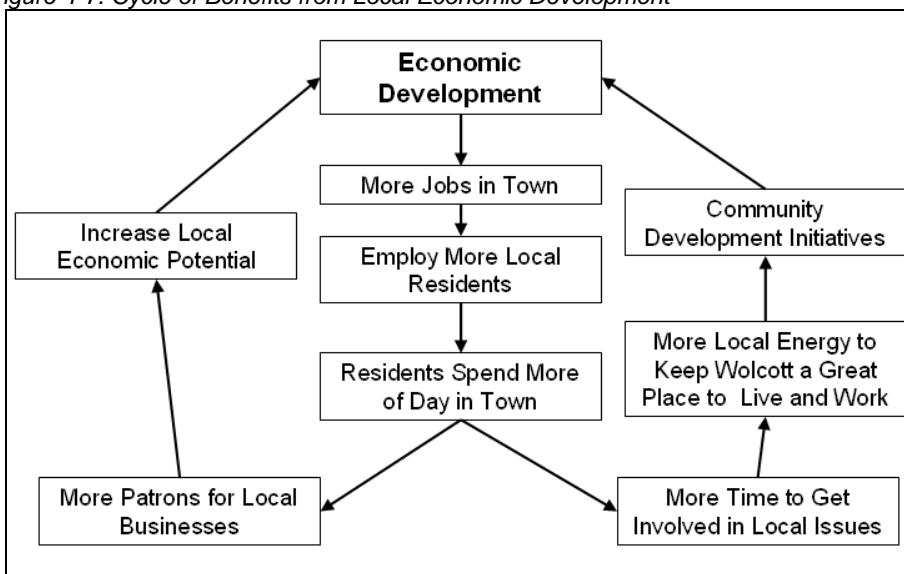
Challenges and Possibilities

Economic development is vital to the future of Wolcott. As we have become increasingly dependent on our neighboring communities for employment, residents are driving more and the town's grand list is becoming more reliant on residential properties to pay taxes. In the future, Wolcott will need more industrial and commercial properties to diversify the tax base. The jobs created will improve local incomes and decrease poverty rates.

More 24/7 Wolcott Residents

Wolcott is enjoying steady population growth, but many town-folk don't actually spend the majority of their day in town. They can potentially stay disconnected from local issues, and they aren't around to contribute to (prospective) local businesses during daytime hours. The vast majority of Wolcott's resident workforce commutes elsewhere to work. Increased economic development and job creation, while good in their own right, could stem the commuting tide and allow more residents live in Wolcott all day long. Figure 4-7 below depicts a hypothetical cycle of benefits that could come from more local employment.

Figure 4-7. Cycle of Benefits from Local Economic Development



Bring Broadband Internet to Wolcott

If recent initiatives to bring hi-speed broadband Internet access to Wolcott are successful, they could represent an economic boon to the town. The lack of broadband availability in Wolcott represents a divide between the town and the full capacity of the Internet to support access to information, e-commerce and educational resources. Hi-speed Internet could be an important piece of encouraging job creation in Wolcott, from the cottage software industry, to the creative economy, to informational and transactional resources that are commonplace in ANY business in the 21st century.

Potential to Add Value to Exports

One of the keys to a strong local economy in Wolcott is a diverse export segment. Exporting products bring money into the community, where it can be circulated through secondary businesses such as services and retail. For raw materials produced in town (e.g. lumber),

having industries that add value to the products increases the value of the export, e.g. timber extracted AND milled in Wolcott. Such value-added functions, and the manufacturing sector that performs them, should be encouraged in Wolcott.

Agriculture in Town

Turning around the declining farming sector in Wolcott will be difficult but there are some new small farm products that are beginning to be used in town with some success. There are a few dairy farms left in town, but the future of dairy is uncertain statewide. Local conservation efforts may help sustain the remaining operations into the future but this would need to be explored in detail. Traditional farming products are still being produced in town including Christmas trees, hay, corn and silage, and maple syrup. Some new operations include organic farming, seed production, and specialty products. New and emerging agricultural products like these may become a new avenue for the town to continue to have farming as a part of the landscape. Wolcott should encourage such operations, as well as all types of diversified farming.

The Wastewater Dilemma

One of the primary barriers to increased economic development in Wolcott is the lack of septic capacity in the town's central areas, including Wolcott Village and the School Street area and North Wolcott. There is no municipal sewer service in town and very little potential for dense and/or centralized commercial development. However a sewer feasibility study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott was performed in 2004, and there may be new solutions on the horizon to address the Town's wastewater needs and enable more economic development.

SECTION 5. HISTORIC, SCENIC & ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Wolcott has a history to be proud of, and many structures and sites with connections to the past remain in town. Efforts to inventory and celebrate these windows to the past are underway, but there are even more options for the Town to preserve and catalogue its historic resources.

Likewise Wolcott's scenic beauty is immediately apparent to any visitor, and much more could be done to protect the special areas and vistas in town.

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

Our overall goal of preserving Wolcott's heritage can be achieved by accomplishing four objectives – the recording and preservation of the history of Wolcott; the preservation of historic structures; the conservation of scenic resources; and the preservation of Wolcott's archeological record. By achieving these four objectives, our heritage will be recorded, protected, and available for residents and visitors to learn and understand what makes Wolcott what it is today. The key to achieving these objectives is to create a historical society to implement the goals and policies of this chapter.

GOALS

Overall

- To preserve Wolcott's cultural and natural heritage for current and future generations.

History

- To record and preserve the history of Wolcott.

Historic structures

- To preserve individual buildings, structures, and districts of historical value.

Scenic resources

- To conserve scenic resources without undue burden on property owners.

Archeological resources

- To preserve Wolcott's fragile archeological record.

POLICIES

History

- Applications for grants to compile a history of Wolcott are supported.
- Efforts to protect and preserve items and artifacts of historic significance to Wolcott are supported.

Historic structures

- Development within any designated historic districts must be in character with the surrounding architecture.
- Wolcott encourages the restoration and reuse of historic buildings.

Scenic resources

- The provision of telecommunications services is encouraged in Wolcott. Telecommunications towers and other large obvious structures should be sited to minimize impacts on scenic resources.
- Development around the natural scenic resources identified must be sited and constructed in such a manner as to retain the natural scenic beauty of the areas. Removal of the natural vegetation on the site should be minimized and structures should be screened or hidden from view with species native to and characteristic of the existing shoreland area.

- Development should avoid ridgelines, especially those visible from roadways. Any ridgeline development should be set back from the edge of the hill and a forested buffer remain to protect the view from the valley.

Archeological resources

- Projects occurring in the archeologically sensitive area around Elmore Pond Brook should consider the potential impact of their project on archeological sites during the early stages of development. This will offer the best opportunity to mitigate potential impact.
- If at any point in the development of a parcel an archeological site is discovered, the state archeologist must be given a reasonable opportunity to investigate and suggest a means to mitigate the impact.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

History

- The Town should continue to support the Wolcott Historical Society.
- Wolcott should consider using the old Wolcott Railroad Station and/or a portion of the School Street Center for a historical museum.

Historic structures

- The Town of Wolcott should begin planning to develop an application for Village Center Designation with the Vermont Downtown Program.
- The Town of Wolcott and Wolcott Historical Society should seek Certified Local Government status.
- The Town should pursue Community Development Block Grants to help rehabilitate the School Street Center and Railroad Station and make both fully accessible.
- The Wolcott Historical Society should continue to compile and map a comprehensive listing of historical areas and structures within town.

Scenic resources

- The planning commission should review site plan approval and subdivision guidelines in light of this town plan to ensure the regulations adequately and fairly protect scenic resources.
- Provisions should be included in the zoning and subdivision regulations to protect the Baldwin Brook Falls, Wapanacki Lake and Wolcott Pond. A shoreland zoning district already exists for these areas and should be continued by the Planning Commission in the next revision of the zoning bylaws.
- The planning commission should include tower regulations in any revision of the zoning bylaws to established standards for the construction of telecommunications towers.
- Wolcott should ensure that development around Wolcott Pond is in keeping with the quiet, scenic and pristine nature of the area.

Archeological resources

- Where an archeological site is discovered on an undeveloped property or part of a property, the town supports the purchase of development rights on the effected portion as a means of compensating landowners for the loss of development rights. Purchases of development rights are always on a willing seller basis.
- Wolcott should adopt guidelines within the Wolcott Zoning Bylaws to address development within archeologically sensitive areas.

Overall

- The Planning Commission should review all 'Act 250' applications for its impact on the historic resources of Wolcott. Where the application is determined to not conform to this chapter or any goal or policy, the Planning Commission should participate in the 'Act 250' process in order to ensure the concerns of the town are addressed.

History of Wolcott

Brief History

According to several historic references, the colonial town of Wolcott was chartered in 1781 and named after General Oliver W. Wolcott, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The first settlers, the Taylor and Hubbell families, arrived in 1789.

The original site location of Wolcott was on a major stagecoach route from Montreal to Montpelier. As a result of its location along the Lamoille River, the Town has had many different industries, including copper mining, saw mills, emery stone mining, grist milling and dairy farming. It is interesting to note that one of the largest and most completely stocked country stores in the Northeastern United States was located in Wolcott.

Since the turn of the century, Wolcott has experienced a steady decline in population so that it is now primarily an agricultural and residential community. However, since 1960 we find that Wolcott has been participating in the growth recorded throughout Lamoille County and indeed the entire State.

Historic Record

The Town of Wolcott has a long and varied past, which is responsible for the values and traditions held by residents today. The Wolcott Historical Society is working to ensure that the history behind the town is available for residents, new and old, to enjoy. Pieces of this history exist in regional and state historical records but a singular compiled history of Wolcott has yet to be prepared. While there are grants available from the state to prepare such a work, the Historical Society has yet to pursue any. Society members do have some local historical artifacts in their possession. They are also currently working to compile information on historic structures in town, identify the subjects in historic photos, and locate ancient roads.

Historic Sites & Structures

Identification of Structures and Districts

Both the federal and state governments maintain registers of historic places. These registers list structures and districts of structures that meet objective and subjective historic criteria, and whose listing was petitioned by their property owners and local residents. Typically structures on the registers are more than 50 years old, are associated with significant local events and people, and embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

Most structures and districts on the Vermont Historic Register are there as a result of the Historic Sites and Structures Survey, based upon a survey process begun in 1971 and strengthened by the 1975 Vermont Historic Preservation Act. Most Lamoille County Survey entries are from the early 1980s.

Listing on the National Register involves the town or owner of a single property hiring a historic preservation consultant to prepare the documentation required by the National Park Service, which administers the Register. There are a number of consultants in Vermont who do this work, and towns can apply for Municipal Planning Grants for funding.

Being listed in a register does not place restrictions on a structure's property owner, per se; rather the registers provide benefits for the preservation of historic buildings. Table 5-1 below

elaborates on some of the details and benefits of the two registers.

Table 5-1. The National and Vermont State Historic Registers

	National Historic Register	Vermont Historic Register
Administered by...	National Park Service	Vermont Division for Historic Preservation
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special consideration in permitting and in association with any federally funded project. • Tax credits for rehabilitation projects. • Access to federal grants (when funded). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special consideration in permitting and in association with any state funded project.

Historic Structures in Wolcott

The **Fisher Covered Railroad Bridge** in Wolcott is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, primarily because of the unusual cupola running down its entire length. As of this time, the bridge is the only structure in Wolcott on the National Register.

The **Wolcott School Street Historic District** is listed in Vermont’s Historic Survey and Register and includes the School Street Center, the Wolcott Railroad Station and several residences.

Below is a little of more identified historic structures and sites in Wolcott, as inventoried by the Wolcott Historical Society. The structure numbers correspond to their position in the **Historic Resources Map** at the end of this Plan. This list includes the names of the structures only. Contact the Wolcott Historical Society for more information.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Graves/Gravel House 2. Reed-Taylor House 3. Seth Hubbell Family Cemetery 4. Riverside Schoolhouse 5. Thomas Taylor House 6. West Hill Schoolhouse and Cemetery 7. Homer Miller’s Farm / Holton House 8. North Wolcot Methodist Church 9. North Wolcott School 10. Davenport Cemetery | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. The Old Inn at Stagecoach Road 12. Town Hill School 13. Pierce Cemetery 14. Hampshire Schoolhouse 15. Fisher Bridge 16. The Power Station 17. Fairmount Cemetery 18. Town Hall 19. Methodist-Episcopal Church 20. Congregational Church |
|--|--|

Rehabilitating, Using, and Preserving Wolcott’s Historic Structures

There are two state/federal programs that may be very suitable for Wolcott’s needs surrounding the use and preservation of historic structures.

Wolcott could apply to become a **Certified Local Government** (CLG). CLG status would benefit the town in many ways:

1. The ability to work more closely with state and federal agencies on identifying and registering historic structures in town.

2. Access to matching grants to:
 - a. produce studies and cultural resource inventories,
 - b. determine property eligibility for local and National Register of Historic Places designation,
 - c. perform building reuse and feasibility studies,
 - d. develop design guidelines and conservation ordinances, and
 - e. create publications to educate the public about the benefits of Wolcott's historic resources.
3. Access to technical assistance for all of the above.

In order to achieve CLG status, Wolcott would have to

1. enact a historic preservation ordinance for the designation and protection of historic properties⁷,
2. create a historic preservation commission,
3. maintain in inventory of historic resources in town,
4. ensure the involvement of the public within the process, and
5. successfully apply to the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation.

Another resource to pursue is **Village Center Designation** through the Vermont Downtown Program. Through this program, Wolcott would identify an area in town, such as the area around the School Street Center and the Railroad Station, that contains a relatively dense collection of buildings and that has a significant role in portraying Wolcott's history and character. The Town could then apply to have this area designated as a Village Center and deserving of the associated historic preservation and rehabilitation incentives. Village Center Designation benefits include

1. state and federal tax credits toward the rehabilitation of historic buildings,
2. tax credits for façade improvements,
3. tax credits for code improvements, and
4. priority consideration for Municipal Planning Grant and Community Development Block Grant funds.

Applying for Village Center Designation consists of the following:

1. a resolution of the Wolcott Selectboard in support of the application,
2. proof that the Lamoille County Planning Commission and Lamoille Economic Development Corporation have been notified of the intent to apply,
3. a letter from LCPC confirming Wolcott's Town Plan and planning process, and
4. a map showing the boundaries of the proposed village center.

The idea behind this program is that the best way to preserve historic buildings in a manner that depicts their roots is to keep them in use and maintain their relevancy in today's time. While the Town of Wolcott itself, as a government body, would not be able to apply for the tax credits listed above to rehabilitate the School Street Center or Railroad Station and bring them up to code, Village Center Designation would give the town priority in consideration for CDBG funding for the building work.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries offer a personal link to past residents of Wolcott. For some families in town, these are the final resting places for parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. There is perhaps no stronger connection to our common past than in the cemeteries within Wolcott.

⁷ Sample language available through Vermont Division of Historic Preservation.

There are six cemeteries in the town of Wolcott, all of which are cared for and overseen by the Wolcott Cemetery Commission - an elected 5 member Board. Their sizes and capacities are listed in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2. Sizes and capacities of Wolcott's Cemeteries

Cemetery name	Size	Capacity status
Davenport Cemetery	0.6 acres	Reportedly sold out
Fairmount Cemetery	20 acres	Some space left in the annex.
Hubbell Cemetery (private)	0.25 acres	Number of lots remaining unknown
Pierce Cemetery (private)	0.5 acres	Lots no longer available for sale
Taylor Cemetery	7 acres	Up to 1000 single grave lots
West Hill Cemetery	0.5 acres	Lots no longer available for sale

Source: 1990. *Wolcott Utilities & Facilities Report* by P. Spear for LCPC with update from Wolcott Town Clerk

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources, while valued by residents and visitors alike, are difficult to regulate. Wolcott values its many beautiful vistas, forested hills, and open fields but it would be unfair to deny the right to develop based on how ones property looks from a roadway. In order to balance the rights of property owners with requirements for attractive and safe development, the town adopted site plan approval for all non-residential development proposals. Overall Wolcott's Zoning and Subdivision Regulations make multiple references to scenic values.

The purpose of site plan approval is to ensure quality development rather than to prevent development. Poorly designed projects or ones that are inflexible to Development Review Board recommendations may be denied approval, but the intent is for the standards to be flexible. In developing guidelines, the Planning Commission should strive for standards that will ensure quality, attractive developments. Where possible, proposals should protect open space, retain natural vegetation, screen parking lots from view, be of a pleasant appearance, and other similar requirements.

Subdivision regulations should also reflect these principles. Lot lines should protect open space and scenic ridgelines, as should conserved areas of any planned unit developments. Telecommunication towers are another area of special concern with respect to scenic resources. Towers cannot be barred from town but they can, and should, be regulated to ensure they are sited and constructed appropriately.

While there are abundant scenic areas in town, three natural scenic areas stand out for special consideration – Baldwin Brook Falls, Wapanacki Lake and Wolcott Pond.

Baldwin Brook Falls is located just west of where the brook passes under the North Wolcott Road. The falls are located below a 12-foot dam. Immediately below the dam there is a sheer falls of 50 feet. The aesthetic appeal of these falls was impacted by debris pushed into the gorge during construction of the dirt road. Below the falls is an abrupt gorge about 20 feet wide by 30 feet deep, below which can be found two lower falls of 10 to 15 feet each. This waterfall and gorge is considered to be of statewide significance and deserves special consideration as a scenic resource.

Wapanacki Lake and **Wolcott Pond** are considered scenic as a result of their relatively unspoiled shorelines. In an age of large-scale camp development on nearly every lake and pond in the state, the scenic beauty of our shorelines stands out a resource worthy of protection. While the state and others have protected much of the shorelines of these

water bodies, the remaining shores should be conserved as well. Local regulations have been implemented to help ensure that development is in keeping with the quiet, scenic and pristine nature of these water bodies. This Shorelands zoning district allows development only through conditional use. Other measures could be considered as well, including the purchasing of development rights, to ensure a vegetated buffer area on the shore.

Currently the Vermont Natural Resources Board has issued rules that set a speed limit of 5 miles per hour and prohibited personal watercraft on Wapanacki Lake and Wolcott Pond. In addition internal combustion engines are prohibited outright from Wapanacki Lake.

Archeological Resources

Archeological sites contain a fragile, complex and irreplaceable record of past human activities. Archeological sites differ from historic sites in that the information that exists is buried. For 10,000 years Native American persons focused their activities within river valleys and lake basins. Evidence of prehistoric activities and occupations are contained within soil deposits of a cornfield or woodlot or are buried in a floodplain. Any prehistoric archeological sites constitute an essential link to our past. These sites are often the only source of information for the longest part of human history in Wolcott.

A National Park Service study of archaeologically significant riparian areas was done as part of the Vermont Rivers Study in 1986. The Park Service findings concluded that the entire length of Elmore Pond Brook has an expected moderate-to-high archeological sensitivity. This rating does not necessarily indicate that any archaeologically significant resources have been located near the Elmore Pond Brook; it only denotes that the topography, sun exposure, availability of food and other important natural resources exist in the right combination along this stream way to expect that the area could be archaeologically significant. Unlike the large sites found in Highgate and Swanton, any sites, if they exist, will be small.

SECTION 6. TRANSPORTATION

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

Overall

- To provide a safe and efficient transportation network that utilizes a variety of modes and is maintained in a cost effective manner.

Highways

- The town highway system should be safe and efficient for vehicular and non-vehicular use, as appropriate, and be maintained in a cost-effective manner.

Recreation & Non-vehicular

- Pedestrian and non-vehicular transportation networks should be safe and conveniently located to encourage their use.

Transportation services

- To support efforts to provide regional public transportation services for the general public and special transportation services for those who require assistance.

POLICIES

Highways

- Major roadways, especially Route 15, should have limited road accesses to allow for smooth travel into and out of town.
- New road and driveway accesses must have a suitable sight distance so as to not create blind or hidden driveways.
- Any new or upgraded roads should be constructed to town road standards (once adopted).
- Land use and development activity must not adversely impact traffic safety and the condition of town roads and rights of way.

Recreational & Non-vehicular

- Sidewalks are expected within village areas to allow for safe pedestrian traffic.
- Wolcott supports the effort to develop the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and vastly increase the four-season recreational opportunities available to local residents.

Transportation services

- Wolcott supports efforts to provide transportation services to assist elderly and disabled residents who wish to remain in their homes.
- Carpooling and vanpooling by local commuters to reduce transportation costs and impacts are encouraged.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Highways

- Develop a basic road surface management system (RSMS) inventory for use in scheduling and budgeting needed road repairs, and major improvements to be included in the town's capital budget and program.
- The Town should assess road and bridge conditions as part of the Local Highway Infrastructure Study update every three years to establish maintenance and repair priorities and maintain access to state grant match incentives.
- The Wolcott Selectboard should adopt policies to regulate the acceptance of private roads.
- The Planning Commission should assist the Selectboard in creating and adopting a capital budget for highway expenses.

Recreational & Non-vehicular

- The Town of Wolcott should produce a plan for trail heads, parking and other amenities for

the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail in general and when considering any development that borders or intersects the trail.

Transportation services

- Wolcott should support any regional non-profit organization that provides public transit and related services.
- The Selectboard should continue to appoint a municipal representative to the Lamoille County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to coordinate transportation planning, road maintenance and improvements with adjoining towns, and to ensure that the interests of the town are adequately addressed by the region and state.

Highway Classification & Function

Vermont's local roads are classified according to their importance and general use. This classification system applies to all town highways, and is used to determine the amount of state highway assistance provided to each community. Class 1 roads are those highways that, while the responsibility of the town to maintain, are extensions of the state highway system and carry a state highway route number. Wolcott currently does not have any Class 1 roads. Class 2 roads serve as important corridors between towns, and consequently carry a large volume of local and regional traffic. North Wolcott Road, which connects Routes 15 and 14, is a Class 2 road. Class 3 roads - such as Big Hollow Road (formerly Golf Rd.) - are secondary town highways passable year-round by standard passenger vehicles. Class 4 roads are dirt roads typically functional for only part of the year for normal traffic. Tamarack Road is a Class 4 road. Table 6-1 illustrates town highway mileage in Wolcott and surrounding communities.

Table 6-1. Town highway mileage by classification

Town	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Total Local Miles	Total State
Wolcott	0.000	10.650	37.960	7.500	56.110	7.023
Elmore	0.000	4.850	21.550	17.800	26.400	7.932
Morristown	2.822	15.410	71.420	10.570	100.222	13.277
Hyde Park	0.000	13.820	49.110	8.620	71.550	9.492

Source: 2007 Town Highway Mileage Summary, VTrans

Traffic

Traffic volumes in Lamoille County have continued to grow steadily. The majority of the traffic increase has occurred on VT Route 15 east of Morrisville and on Route 100 north and south of Morrisville. The increased traffic on Route 15 can be clearly seen in traffic volumes as measured by the state Agency of Transportation.

The state has also tracked traffic volumes on two town-managed roads - the North Wolcott Rd. and the Elmore Pond Road. Both of these local Class 2 roads have shown traffic increases comparable to those on Route 15. These routes have become popular for both car and truck traffic moving between Route 15 and Routes 12 & 14. The Elmore Pond and North Wolcott Road are classified by the state as collector routes, meaning they provide vital local connections between inter-community and inter-county traffic.

Table 6-2. Traffic volume changes in Wolcott

Street Name	Count Location	AADT (yr)	AADT (yr)	AADT (yr)	AADT (yr)	AADT (yr)
VT 15	West of East Hill Road	4700 (04)	4300 (00)	4100 (98)	4200 (94)	2500 (84)
VT 15	Morristown Town Line	6600 (04)	5700 (00)	5200 (98)	5900 (94)	3800 (84)
North Wolcott Rd	North of VT 15	2000 (04)	1600 (00)	1800 (98)		
North Wolcott Rd	South of Sand Hill Road	1500 (99)	1300 (94)	1000 (87)		
North Wolcott Rd	Craftsbury Town Line	1100 (00)				
Elmore Pond Rd	North of Corley Road	530 (04)	490 (00)	460 (99)	390 (94)	230 (87)
T Jader Road	North of VT 12	220 (04)				

Source: VTrans Traffic Count Database, 2006

The results of increased traffic on these roads, however, are the responsibility of the Town of Wolcott and not the State. It has been reported that the increased traffic (especially heavy truck traffic) has created more maintenance problems than the town can afford to keep up with. Numerous residents have complained about the increased traffic and resulting road maintenance problems on the North Wolcott Road. Table 6-2 illustrates the increased traffic volumes on Route 15 and the Elmore Pond and North Wolcott Roads.

Road Maintenance Costs

The 2007-2008 Wolcott town budget allocated \$357,157 for the town highway program, representing 53% of the total town budget, as is typical. The 07-08 highway budget was actually 3% lower than the 06-07 amount but 3% higher than the fiscal year before that. Overall Wolcott's highway budget has grown from \$286,326 in 2001-2002 and \$125,000 in 1993-1994, for example.

The table below illustrates the net local highway budgets in Wolcott and neighboring Lamoille County towns for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. Please note that these figures include state aid spent on roads. As can be seen from Table 6-3, Wolcott has budgeted less than neighboring Lamoille County communities per mile of local road.

Table 6-3. Budgeted Local Highway Expenses per Mile, 2007-2008

Town	Local Road Miles	Fiscal Year Expenditures	\$ /Mile
Wolcott	56.110	\$357,157	\$6,365
Elmore (FY 98 – 99)	44.200	\$311,000	\$7,036
Morristown	100.717	\$1,697,551	\$16,855
Hyde Park	71.550	\$595,400	\$8,321

Source: 2007. Budget Data: Town Annual Reports. Road Mileage: VTrans

One possible way to reduce the local portion of road maintenance costs would be to obtain increased amounts of state aid for maintaining the North Wolcott Road or Elmore Pond Road. In public meetings, some residents have expressed a desire for the state to take over maintenance of the North Wolcott Rd. If increased state aid cannot be obtained, then other methods for reducing costly future repairs should be looked into.

As residential development continues in Wolcott, it is important that the Town develop a written policy toward the maintenance and future construction of Class 4 roads. The Vermont Local Road Program and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns might be sources for model policies. Such a policy would provide clear information to existing and future landowners as to the level of road maintenance service they can expect from the Town. With the information in Table 14, it could be argued that, for each mile of road constructed or class 4 upgraded, another \$6,365 in taxes, on average, will need to be collected in order to maintain it.

Town Infrastructure Study and Highway Standards

In 2004 the Town of Wolcott cooperated with the Lamoille County Planning Commission on an inventory of local highway infrastructure, specifically culverts and bridges. This inventory was designed to serve as an aid to programs for regular maintenance and replacement of town-owned infrastructure. The intent was to better position the town to be able to prioritize those culverts needing maintenance and or replacement. Good culvert maintenance and replacement of properly sized culverts can avoid substantial repair costs associated with washouts from floods and heavy rainstorms.

In 2006 the Town also adopted local highway standards including:

1. standards for construction, improvement, and use of public highways so as to ensure the safety of the traveling public, to minimize the long-term costs to taxpayers, and to mitigate negative impacts on water quality;
2. a process by which highways are to be laid out, altered, classified, reclassified, discontinued, or accepted by the Town;
3. a process by which the public right of way is managed and maintained;
4. standards and a process by which access to the town highways may be granted; and
5. standards and a process by which the town may permit excavation within or under a highway right of way.

Both the infrastructure study and the highway standards have special significance in light of state funding for town highways. As a result of both of these activities, Wolcott enjoys decreased match requirements, for example 10% - rather than 20% - with the Town Highway Structures Program and 20% - rather than 30% - with the Town Highway Class 2 Roadway Program.⁸

However it should be noted that Wolcott's Highway Infrastructure Study needs to be updated every 3 years in order to be considered valid by the Vermont Agency of Transportation to count toward the match incentives. Therefore an update of the 2004 study should be pursued.

Bridges and Culverts

The Highway Infrastructure Study of 2004 inventoried 342 culverts, 40 of which were listed in poor condition or worse. The study also inventoried the 10 bridges in Wolcott, listing the Fort

⁸ Information on state and federal funding sources for town highway programs can be found in the *VTrans Handbook for Local Officials*, available at the VTrans website, www.aot.state.vt.us.

Hill Road Bridge as “poor” and the Willie Mills Road Bridge as “serious.” Since then the Fort Hill Road Bridge has been closed. Because of the high cost of bridge repairs, the Town relies heavily on state aid for such work.

North Wolcott Road Issues

North Wolcott Road has become heavily traveled in recent years. Lamoille County’s 2006 Transportation Plan recognizes the road as significant in the region. It is also identified as a bicycle route. The Town of Wolcott worked with the Lamoille County Planning Commission to conduct a corridor study of North Wolcott Road in 1996. This effort, which has not since been repeated, was meant to determine the needs of the road and identify opportunities designed to meet those needs. Some of the recommendations included the following:

- Reclassification of the North Wolcott Road Corridor to a Class 1 Town Highway
 - This item has yet to occur.
- Resurfacing of North Wolcott Road
 - This action has occurred, but maintenance is a constant need due to high traffic.
- Additional shoulder, drainage, and guardrail improvements
 - These improvements have been performed.
- Enforcement of weight limits
 - This is an ongoing activity.

Since the 1996 study, the following issues have been added as items to be addressed in the future:

- The safety of the intersection of North Wolcott Road and Route 15, in light of insufficient sight lines and increased traffic.
- Bicycle safety along the road, especially with North Wolcott Road being on bike tour maps. Exploration of a bicycle lane is suggested.
- It has been recommended that the Town go beyond advocating for the reclassification of North Wolcott Road as a Class 1 Town Highway and instead pursue the road’s designation as a full State Highway.

Elmore Pond Road Reclassification

In light of the traffic issues raised above, The Lamoille County Planning Commission worked with the Road Foreman in 2000 to upgrade the status of Elmore Pond Road from a Class 2 Town Highway Minor Collector to a Major Collector. By the end of 2000, the Town had received confirmation from VTrans that the request was approved by the Federal Highways Administration and reclassified as Major Collector #0324 in Wolcott. Reclassification as a Major Collector rather than a Minor makes this road a stronger candidate for funds for resurfacing, reconstruction or rehabilitation of both paved and unpaved section. Since most of the Elmore Pond Road is unpaved, it affords the Town the opportunity to receive assistance in paving the road.

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail

The St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad, a 98-mile line between Sheldon Junction and St. Johnsbury, passed through Wolcott along the banks of the Lamoille River. The State of Vermont currently owns the line and previously leased use of the railroad to the Lamoille Valley Railroad Company. Freight service along the line ended in 1989 due to lack of freight to be transported, thus creating a threat to the long-term viability of the railroad.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), in partnership with regional planning commissions, economic development agencies, and chambers of commerce⁹, solicited proposals for redevelopment of the corridor in 2000. The resulting responses included proposals for re-establishment of rail service as well as conversion to a trail. In the end, the Vermont Association of Snow Traveler's proposal to convert the trail to a four-season, multi-use recreation path was viewed as the most viable use of the corridor. VTrans successfully completed the process of "railbanking" the corridor, preserving it for future rail use, while making the state-owned right of way available for interim trail use. VAST was also successful in obtaining a federal earmark in 2005 for engineering and construction of the trail project. The process of assessing the current state of the entire length of the trail is underway. Design and construction will follow. The end result will be an exceptionally long, well-surfaced, accessibly graded recreation trail that Wolcott could use as leverage for local economic development and community wellness.

Rail Service

The closest passenger rail service for Wolcott residents is Amtrak, with stops located in Waterbury and Montpelier. Both of these depots serve Amtrak's "Vermonter" line with a daily run between St. Albans, VT and Washington, DC.

Air

Wolcott residents have access to air transportation service through the Morrisville-Stowe State Airport on Route 100 in Morristown, and through the Burlington International Airport in South Burlington.

Morrisville-Stowe Airport is a general-aviation airport, owned by the State of Vermont, and managed by local fixed base operator, Whitcomb Aviation. Services are limited and are mostly oriented toward private aviators, although some charter service is available. Stowe Soaring operates tourist glider rides in the non-winter months. Since the last Wolcott Town Plan update, Morrisville-Stowe Airport has seen quite a bit of planning activity. Interest in the airport and potential for expansion has resulted in studies regarding the feasibility of runway extensions and other improvements to the facilities and technology available at the airport. These studies are available through the Lamoille County Planning Commission and VTrans. A 10-year Master Plan update for the airport was recently completed. Recommendations were oriented toward minor runway improvements and minor runway extensions, primarily aimed at improving safety for the current fleet of aircraft utilizing the airport, rather than enabling larger aircraft to gain access. Other improvements outlined in the master plan include enhanced parking areas, an increased number of hangars, and navigational technology improvements.

Burlington International Airport has seen an increase in activity over the past few years and now offers a wide array of passenger service including commercial services connecting to various international airport hubs around the country. Charter airline services are also available as are charter helicopter services.

⁹ This multiregional cooperative was referred to as the "Mountain Valley Corridor Consortium"

Recreational and Non-Vehicular Transportation

Snowmobile Trails

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) maintains a network of snowmobile trails on private and public lands across the state. In Wolcott, VAST trails through private lands go from north to south, connecting trails from Elmore and Hyde Park. VAST trails in Wolcott are maintained and groomed by volunteers, and provide an important link in a statewide recreation network.

Catamount Trail

The Catamount Trail is a statewide cross-country skiing trail network. In Wolcott, the trail enters the town from Elmore, crosses Rte. 15 at the Leriche Farm and works its way up toward Zack's Pond and Hyde Park before eventually entering Craftsbury. The Town should work with landowners along the Catamount Trail wherever possible in order to maintain its important role locally and regionally as a recreational resource.

Bicyclists

Most of Wolcott's local roads were designed with only the auto traveler in mind. As cyclists - both individual and organized groups - use these roads, conflicts can arise from lack of space and poor shoulders. Future road projects should be designed to give greater consideration to non-motorized users. LCPC conducted a number of workshops in 1998 as part of an effort to create the Alternative Transportation Plan for the region. As part of this effort, recommended bicycle routes were identified with the help of local cyclists and interest groups. In Wolcott, VT15 was cited as a regional bicycle route. A subsequent region-wide LCPC study of road shoulder widths, found an average shoulder width of 4' with parts paved and others unpaved on this section of highway.

Transit Services

Buses

Wolcott currently has no traditional fixed-route passenger-transit services. The nearest intercity bus access is via Vermont Transit stops in St. Johnsbury and Montpelier.

Taxi

Local taxi service is provided by numerous taxi services that operate out of Hyde Park, Morrisville, and Stowe.

Human Services Transportation

Rural Community Transportation (RCT) is the state-designated public transportation provider for the Lamoille County region¹⁰. RCT provides demand-response transportation for many of the human service agencies throughout Lamoille County. RCT receives grant funding through the state Elderly and Disabled Persons Transportation Program and Medicaid to provide these services. Participating human service agencies include Central Vermont Council on Aging, Out & About Adult Day Center, Lamoille County Mental Health, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Central Vermont Community Action Council. These transportation services are often medical trips including dialysis and cancer treatment patients traveling to treatment centers. RCT provided over 1,000 trips in total to approximately 50 Wolcott residents utilizing various human service agency programs in 2005.¹¹

¹⁰ RCT is also the designated public transit provider for the three-county Northeast Kingdom area

¹¹ 2006 Lamoille County Regional Transportation Plan

Regional Transportation Planning

The Lamoille County Regional Plan contains transportation goals and policies that provide the basis for planning for future transportation needs in Lamoille County. The plan was last revised in 2006 and proposes a vision in which the county's transportation system is safe and accessible to people of all ages and needs. The plan posits the need to increase non-vehicular transportation alternatives and decrease reliance on single-passenger automobile use as well as the need to meld with the aesthetic and recreational nature of the region.

The Transportation Plan lists 6 general strategies to achieve the above vision:

1. Address safety issues;
2. Maintain and manage existing infrastructure;
3. Enhance mobility by providing alternatives;
4. Maintain the Lamoille County aesthetic, environment, and quality of life;
5. Integrate land use planning and transportation planning; and
6. Support regional and local economic vitality.

Obviously the Town of Wolcott would be encouraged to echo these concepts within its own transportation planning.

Transportation Advisory Committee

In July 1992, the Lamoille County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed. The purpose of the TAC is to provide recommendations regarding regional transportation needs and concerns to the Lamoille County Planning Commission Board of Directors and the Vermont Agency of Transportation. The TAC is comprised of appointed representatives from each town in the county, members of the LCPC Board of Directors, and representatives from the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, Lamoille Valley Chamber of Commerce, and each of the public transit agencies operating in the county, if any.

Currently, Town Clerk Linda Martin represents Wolcott on the TAC. Common TAC topics include discussion of grant opportunities, regional prioritization of transportation projects, updates on ongoing regional transportation projects, and various technical presentations intended to keep municipalities up to speed on new programs and technological innovations.

SECTION 7.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UTILITIES, FACILITIES & SERVICES

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

Overall

- To ensure adequate public facilities and services are available to protect and enhance the lives of the residents and visitors of Wolcott.

Public Buildings

- For public buildings and facilities to provide adequate space, function, and location for the needs of public safety and municipal service provision.

Septic and Sewage

- For Wolcott to have the septic/sewer capacity necessary for desired community and economic development.

Electricity & Energy

- To promote energy efficiency, availability, and affordability through conservation, cost effective investment, and sustainable management of locally available renewable energy resources.

Education

- Provide educational services and facilities to meet the needs of Wolcott's children.

Public Safety

- For Wolcott to have well-trained and funded fire, police and rescue services to provide a safe environment in which to work, live, and play.

Recreation facilities

- To maintain and enhance recreational facilities and opportunities.

POLICIES

Electricity & Energy

- Energy efficiency will be included as a factor in municipal construction, purchases and use.
- The Town of Wolcott should use its party status in permitting processes to promote and facilitate the development of renewable energy sources in town when in balance with the other considerations in this plan concerning natural resources, aesthetic character and municipal services.

Telecommunications

- The Town must support and maintain initiatives to bring the availability of high-speed broadband Internet access to town.

Education

- Future residential development in town should be balanced with the capacity of the school district to provide educational services.
- The Town and School District of Wolcott should oppose all local, state and federal education policy mandates that are issued without supporting funding.

Public safety

- Developments in rural areas, with multiple structures and limited access (e.g. slope and length of drives), should install dry hydrant service or another water source.
- Driveways and private roads should not have excessive slope so as to accommodate fire and rescue vehicles.

Recreation Facilities

- Developers of large residential projects should include adequate open space for recreation by the future residents of the project.

Solid Waste

- All projects must provide for adequate removal of solid waste.

Public Lands

- Before any purchase of land to be held by the public, the entity must report the anticipated loss of value from the Grand List.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Telecommunications

- The Wolcott Selectboard and/or Planning Commission should pursue and utilize grant funding and organizational partnerships toward initiatives to plan for and implement the availability of high-speed broadband Internet access in town.

Septic and Sewage

- The Selectboard should continue to pursue wastewater treatment options for the village areas and consider the recommendations of the 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study*¹².

Education

- The Planning Commission should continue to monitor enrollment levels at the school to ensure development does not place an undue burden on educational services.

Public Safety

- Wolcott should continue to support the fire, rescue, and police services on Town Meeting Day. These services have been provided efficiently and effectively in the past and should be expected to continue in that manner in the future.
- Wolcott supports regional efforts to provide improved emergency services intercommunications.
- The Wolcott Planning Commission and Selectboard should consider the recommendations of the Lamoille County Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan when reviewing local land use planning and ordinance development processes.
- Wolcott should explore further law enforcement coverage options and funding schemes.

Libraries

- The Town should continue to support the Town Library when budgets are drafted and approved at Town Meeting.

Public Buildings

Highway / Fire Department Building

The Wolcott Fire and Highway Departments are housed in adjoining structures on School Street. Here is some information on their current condition.

Table 7-1. Wolcott Fire / Highway Building

	Fire Section	Highway Section
Year Built	1975	1987
Square Footage	3,360 total	
Primary uses	Storage: 4 trucks and gear Meetings and training	Storage: 3 dump trucks Repair and maintenance

Source: 2006. *Town of Wolcott Municipal Facilities Assessment* performed by Stephen Bousquet Real Estate, Morrisville, VT.

¹² 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott* performed by Stone Environmental, Inc., Montpelier, VT and Forcier, Aldrich & Associates, Essex Jct, VT.

Wolcott Town Office and the Move to the School Street Center

The Wolcott Town Office has many uses, housing the the Town Clerk, Selectboard, Listers, Zoning Administrator and Health Officer and also providing records storage and retrieval.

In 2006, the Town of Wolcott contracted with a local real estate firm to conduct an assessment of the current condition and future feasibility of the Wolcott Town Office (former Route 15 location), the Highway / Fire Department building and the School Street Center.¹³ The study projected facility needs over the next twenty years.

Fortunately the Town of Wolcott accomplished one of the recommendations of the study renovating a portion of the School Street Center and moving the Town Office there in late 2007. The Town now enjoys adequate space for its needs with room to grow.

Sewage and Septic Systems

There is no central public sewage treatment system or facility in Wolcott. All sewage is treated in individual, on-site septic systems. Beginning on July 1, 2007 the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) will have permitting authority over all local wastewater treatment and potable water supply systems. Any complaint or discovery of a failing septic system may be referred to the ANR by the local Health Officer. Owners of failed systems will be instructed by ANR on how to bring their systems back to operating condition.

The Wolcott Village area is believed to have some properties with failed or insufficient septic systems. The Selectboard has expressed an interest in finding an affordable means of providing municipal sewage treatment in this area.

In 2004 a sewer feasibility study was performed for both Wolcott Village and North Wolcott.¹⁴ The study considered the 109 properties in both areas in order to address multiple objectives, including:

- determining whether each parcel can support an onsite wastewater system,
- exploring possibilities for the construction of new onsite or offsite systems,
- identifying potential cluster system sites, and
- analyzing alternative systems.

The results of the study indicated that 23 of the 57 North Wolcott properties would benefit from an offsite wastewater treatment solution and recommended 19 properties for onsite systems. The call for an offsite system was even higher in Wolcott Village, applying to 30 of the 52 properties there. Onsite solutions were suggested for 13 properties.

Properties without recommendations in either area seemed to be exempt from their consideration due to their vacant status. It may be prudent to consider the development potential of these properties and also include them in any wastewater system planning.

The feasibility study also made the point that new onsite solutions have been allowed by the State of Vermont over the decade, and that the approval of new alternatives is always a possibility, given time.

¹³ *Town of Wolcott Municipal Facilities Assessment* performed by Stephen Bousquet Real Estate, Morrisville, VT.

¹⁴ *2004 Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott* performed by Stone Environmental, Inc., Montpelier, VT and Forcier, Aldrich & Associates, Essex Jct, VT.

Water Systems

The Town of Wolcott owns two small water supply systems; one supplying 6 residences on School Street and the other supplying the Town hall, the former Town office, a private residence, and the U.S. Post Office on Route 15. For the vast majority of Wolcott, water is supplied by private wells and springs. Beginning on July 1, 2007 the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) assumed permitting authority over all local wastewater treatment and potable water supply systems.

There is a one-quarter to one-half acre public watershed on Wolcott's border with Elmore owned and managed by the Elmore Water Cooperative as a public water supply for their customers.

Broadband Internet Access

The Internet has become a crucial informational tool in both the private and work lives of Vermonters and Americans in general. Unfortunately Wolcott residents do not have available to them the modern speeds at which one may access the Internet today. While dial-up access over the telephone may have once been the norm, high-speed “broadband” Internet access is now governing the speed and size of online content. Broadband is commonly defined as an Internet connection that is faster than dial-up (i.e. 56 kilobytes per second or more) and can serve data, voice and video services with a single connection. In the United States, broadband speeds average 1.9 megabytes per second¹⁵. Technologies that can serve a broadband connection at home include:

1. Digital subscriber line (DSL) over the telephone line
2. Coaxial (television) cable
3. Fiber optic cable
4. Wireless radio signal
5. Satellite signal.

Unfortunately only broadband via satellite is available in Wolcott, and this technology is not well-accepted within Vermont. The only other option in Wolcott is still dial-up.

However, plans are underway to bring broadband options to town. Power Shift of Stowe, a company that provides Internet connect services, has allied with Wolcott town leaders, the Lamoille County Planning Commission, the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, and others to secure the information and resources necessary to bring a broadband T1 telecommunications line into Wolcott Village, supplying the Town Office initially. Approximately four wireless Internet transmitters could be connected to this T1 line to broadcast broadband signals throughout town to households with the necessary receiver equipment.

A survey to gather user interest in Wolcott has been conducted, and \$53,000 from a Vermont Community Broadband Grant and Help America Vote Act funds has been received. As planning moves forward, Wolcott residents will need to maintain their energy and dedication to see broadband availability come to fruition in town.

In the meantime, there will continue to be a need to track relevant developments that could benefit this project, including:

1. the North Link project, which should bring a major “backbone” telecommunications line

¹⁵ Cheng, Jacqui. 2007. “Communication Workers of America survey: average broadband speed in US is 1.9Mbps.” *ARS Technica*, 05/29/07.

- through Lamoille County;
2. Burlington Telecom, which provides bundled high-speed services in Burlington and may someday be willing to partner with other towns; and
 3. the creation of a new Vermont Telecom Authority to oversee capital funding for rural broadband projects in the state.

Electric Facilities and Energy Use

There are two utilities which provide electrical utility services in the Town of Wolcott. The **Hardwick Electric Department (HED)** provides electric utility service to most of the Town. HED owns and operates the hydroelectric plant on the Lamoille River near the Pottersville section of Wolcott.

Morrisville Water and Light Department provides electric utility services to residents on the west side of Wolcott. They currently own approximately 164 acres of land, popularly known as “Zack Woods,” off of West Hill Road as part of their Green River Reservoir Watershed.

There is one small (about 15-30 kw) privately owned hydroelectric plant in Wolcott powered by waters diverted from Baldwin Brook just above the falls. This project was the result of federal incentives to local energy offered in 1978 during the oil embargo. The current status of this dam is uncertain, but the previous Town Plan stated that the diversion of water to power this plant was small (about 1/3 of the mean stream flow), and was not considered a threat to the diverse plant life found in the gorge below the falls.

Wolcott is completely dependant on outside electric power providers as a source for power production. In a market where this are a limited number of suppliers, Wolcott is potentially vulnerable to increases in the costs of electricity. Local efforts with the power providers to promote increased energy efficiency in existing and new structures are one way to address this potential problem. Public education of energy conservation methods may also be useful.

According to the 2000 Census, Wolcott residents relied on only three primary sources of home heating fuel. 26.8% of residences reported being heated by wood, 51.9% by fuel oil, and 18.6% by bottled gas. These statistics support the continued need for good local forest management and public education of energy conservation methods.

Educational Facilities

Public Schools

Wolcott's kindergarten and elementary school students attend the **Wolcott Elementary School** on School Hill Drive. The pre-kindergarten program resides in Hardwick. The Wolcott Elementary School operates within the jurisdiction of the Wolcott School District in the Orleans Southwest Supervisory District.

Wolcott students in grades 7 – 12 are “tuitioned” out to regional schools of their choice. The high schools that Wolcott's older students typically choose to attend are:

- **Lamoille Union Middle School** (7-8) and **Lamoille Union High School** (9-12) in the town of Hyde Park and within the Lamoille North Supervisory Union;
- **Hazen Union High School** (7-12) in Hardwick or **Craftsbury Academy** (5-12) in Craftsbury Common, both within the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union; or
- **People's Academy** (9-12) in Morrisville or **Stowe Middle and High School** (6-12) in Stowe, both within the Lamoille South Supervisory Union.

Vocational students attend classes at the **Green Mountain Technology & Career Center** located at the Lamoille Union High School in Hyde Park.

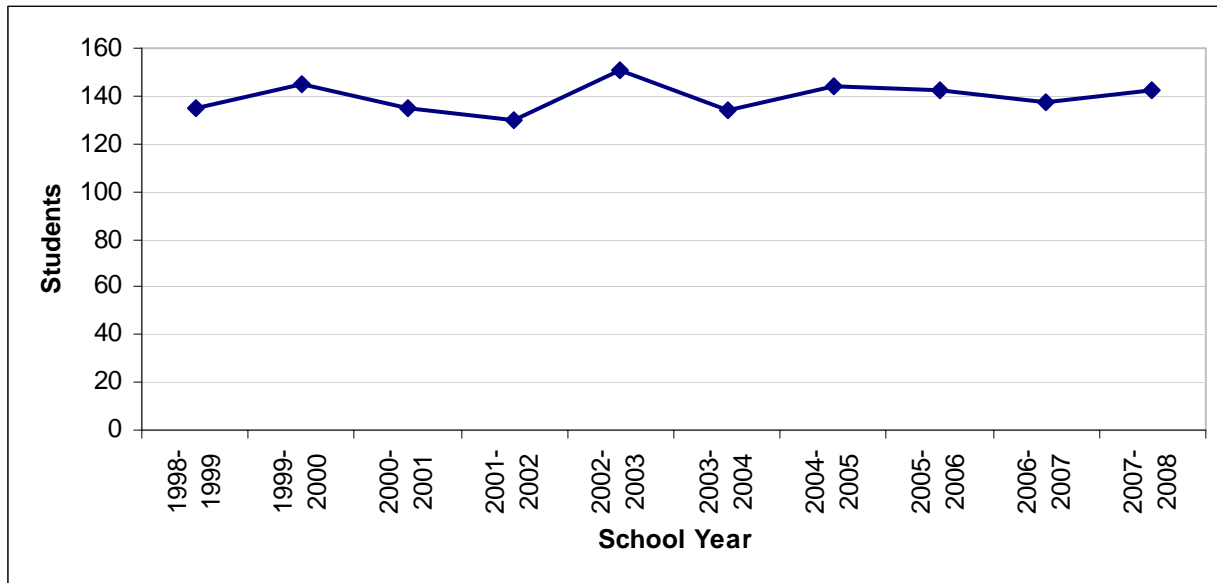
Private School Options

Two schools provide private education in Wolcott:

- The local **Mennonites** also have their own school in the basement of the Wolcott Mennonite Church on Route 15, providing education to members of their community in town.
- **The Center for Northern Studies** is a private nonprofit educational center providing undergraduate and graduate multi-disciplinary education in arctic and sub-arctic regions of the world. In 2003 the Center formally merged with nearby Sterling College in Craftsbury Common and gained accreditation of its education and research programs. The Center enrolls approximately a dozen students each semester.

Figure 7-1 shows that the enrollment at Wolcott Elementary has averaged 139.5 students over the past 10 school years. During this time, the enrollment has been as low as 130 and as high as 151. The latest figure, 142, comes from enrollments going into the 2007-2008 school year.

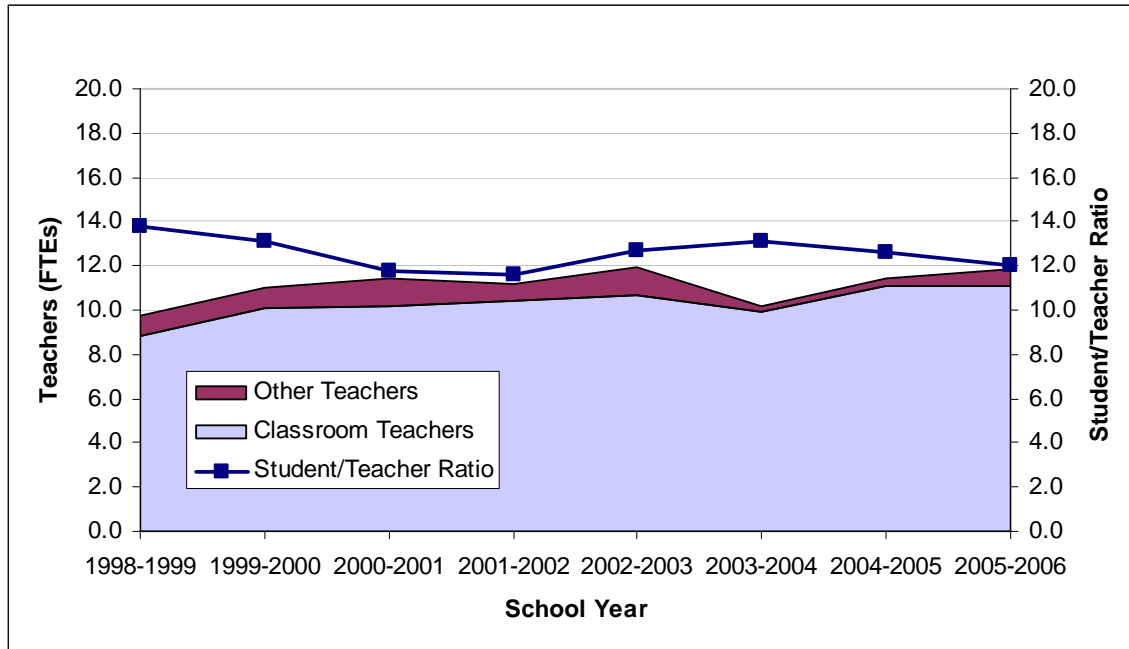
Figure 7-1. Student Enrollment at Wolcott Elementary School (K-6), '98-'99 to '07-'08



Sources:
 '98-'99 to '05-'06: 2007. Vermont Department of Education, Vermont School Report at www.vermontschoolreport.net
 '06-'07 to '07-'08: 2007. Staff of Wolcott Elementary School.

Figure 7-2 depicts the number of full time equivalents (FTEs) of classroom teachers and other teaching staff at Wolcott Elementary, the total of which is used to calculate the school's student/teacher ratio, also shown. Dips in the number of teachers seem to have corresponding peaks in the student/teacher ratio, logically. Over the 8 school years depicted, the average number of teacher FTEs has been 11.1, while the student/teacher ratio has been 12.6. In the 2005-2006 school year, Wolcott Elementary had 11.1 classroom teacher FTEs, 0.8 other teacher FTEs, and a student/teacher ratio of 12.0, just above the Vermont statewide student/teacher ratio of 11.3.

Figure 7-2. Teacher FTEs and Student/Teacher Ratio at Wolcott Elementary School, '98-'99 to '05-'06



Source: 2007. Vermont Department of Education, Vermont School Report, www.vermontschoolreport.net

Current concerns about public education in Wolcott include the adequacy of the Elementary School facilities and the increasing cost to taxpayers of supporting the School District. Over the course of the decade, the number of students attending the elementary school has dropped from a high of 162 students in 1994-95 to 142 students enrolled for the 2007-2008 school year. When the school was built in 1988, the Vermont Dept. of Education determined it to have a capacity of 225 students. With the changing nature and needs of elementary education, the Department recently reassessed the capacity of the school to be 140. When listing the new capacity, the Department analyzed square footage formulas and the Vermont School Quality Standards teacher/student ratios, and also took into consideration the lack of a designated art/music room.¹⁶ Wolcott will need to monitor enrollments to ensure the Elementary School continues to have sufficient space to accommodate growth.

Elementary School staff report that students are generally meeting or exceeding standards in literacy and math. Complete assessment results for all schools in the State are available on the Vermont Department of Education website. Wolcott Elementary has met AYP (adequate yearly progress) each year that the “No Child Left Behind” law has been in effect. The level of quality education provided at the Elementary School will have our children prepared for high school and beyond.

Paying for Public Schooling in Wolcott

Vermont’s statewide education property tax, which was instated in 1997 and has been periodically adjusted since then, has introduced a few different variables into how local tax rates are calculated. There are three basic pieces of information used to calculate a Wolcott property-owner’s education tax rate:

1. Whether the property being taxed is the owner’s primary residence (homestead) or not (non-residential),

¹⁶ Information provided in 2007 by staff of Wolcott Elementary School.

2. How the proposed Wolcott school budget's cost per *equalized*¹⁷ pupil compares to the a target threshold set by the State,
3. What Wolcott's Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) ratio is (i.e. how the values of properties in Wolcott's grant list compare to the entire state, and
4. How a property owner's household income compares to statewide household income figures.

This plan will refrain from explaining the statewide property tax formula in detail. However, generally local per-equalized-pupil spending that is higher than the State's base amount and/or a CLA well below 1.0000 will increase Wolcott's education tax rates, regardless of how large the proposed school budget is and how it compares to previous years. This can make it difficult to compare school tax rates to school needs and performance solely in their own light.

Conversely, if a property owner's household income is lower than certain state thresholds, the homestead tax rate may be reduced through an income sensitivity feature. The income sensitivity provisions included in the statewide education tax rules have likely benefited many local residents, as Wolcott's median income is below that of the county and state.

Table 7-4 below depicts that Wolcott's education tax rates have generally increased over the past few years. The rising school budgets and spending per pupil and the decreasing CLA shown in the next table, 7-5, would all seem to explain Wolcott's rising tax rates.

Table 7-2. Education Tax Rates (per \$100) in Wolcott, FY2005 – FY2007

	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007
Homestead	1.3671	1.3931	1.4506
Non-Residential	1.5763	1.5861	1.7039

Source: 2007. Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review

Table 7-3. Education Tax Variables in Wolcott, FY2005 – FY2008

	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008
School Budget	\$2,602,642	\$2,862,698	\$2,927,136	\$3,135,364
Equalized Pupils	276.32	284.50	281.08	271.17
Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$8,650	\$9,069	\$9,459	\$10,424
...as % of State Target	127.210%	130.016%	129.044%	134.747%
CLA (as ratio)	0.9790	0.9520	0.8451	0.7462

Source: FY2006 Annual Report of the Town of Wolcott, Vermont

Public Safety

Police

There are three levels of police coverage in Wolcott: the Town's elected Constable, the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department and the Vermont State Police.

A trained and certified **constable** has the same authority as any police officer in the State of Vermont within the jurisdiction of Wolcott; however, constables do have the authority to

¹⁷ The number of equalized pupils in Wolcott, as set by the State, will differ from the total enrollment, due to calculations that count certain types of students at more than 100%.

pursue a violator into a neighboring community. It is unknown whether the current constable has these certifications.

The **Lamoille County Sheriff** is elected to his/her position by Lamoille County voters, and the Sheriff's Department provides enforcement of all applicable laws, emergency dispatching services and back-up in emergency situations as requested. A minimum level of "life-and-death situation" service is provided to all ten towns in Lamoille County.¹⁸ Additional road patrol service is provided to Wolcott on a contractual basis for twenty-four hour police protection, response to emergency, fire and rescue calls, and to serve in the legal process. Wolcott has been entering into such contracts as a joint agreement with the towns of Johnson and Hyde Park, so in reality the 24-hour coverage applies to the tri-town area, not just Wolcott. This arrangement does not go without local scrutiny. For example, at Wolcott's 2007 Town Meeting, voters rejected the Town's portion of the contract with the Sheriff's Department. Town voters overturned that vote and approved the contract at a special meeting on 5/15/07. At the time, Wolcott was set to support 19% of the tri-town contract, based on population. However current Sheriff Roger Marcoux stated that his department had been spending 20-21% of its contract resources in Wolcott in recent years.¹⁹

The **Vermont State Police** provide a third level of police protection & support for Wolcott residents. The State Police provide emergency and back-up coverage as requested by the Sheriff's Department, criminal laboratory services, and the services of officers who are trained in special areas (i.e. homicide, arson or drug enforcement).

Rescue Services

Rescue services in Wolcott are provided by **Hardwick Emergency Rescue Squad Inc.**, a non-profit volunteer ambulance service that provides response emergency transport and medical care en route to the hospital. Hardwick Rescue serves the following communities: Wolcott, Hardwick, Craftsbury, Greensboro, Stannard and Woodbury. They also cover portions of East Calais, Elmore, Walden and West Wheelock.

Hardwick Rescue is funded with municipal support, through service fees and by public donations. Each municipality's percentage of the Hardwick Rescue budget is determined by using a comparative ranking of the five-year average number of calls to each town. Wolcott's 2006 share of \$2,860 to Hardwick Rescue represented 14.3% of municipal funding and 0.2% of overall revenues. The proposed 2007 Wolcott share of \$3,475 represented 13.9% of Hardwick Rescue's municipal funding and 0.3% of total revenues.

Morristown Rescue took over coverage of Tjader road and Richard Woolcutt Road in 2002. This should improve response times to the southwest corner of town.

Fire

The **Wolcott Fire Department** is a volunteer private nonprofit corporation funded by town appropriations, donations and the Department's fundraising efforts. The fire station is located with the Town Garage on School Street, providing storage for fire equipment and vehicles, as well as offices and physical plant space. Fires in Wolcott are reported using the 911 system through the County Sheriff's Office.

¹⁸ Current Lamoille County Sheriff Roger Marcoux has stated that his department will assist any town in a life-and-death situation, regardless of any formal agreements – from "Wolcott Voters Approve All" by Amy Kolb Noyes, *News & Citizen*, 05/17/07.

¹⁹ from "Wolcott Voters Approve All" by Amy Kolb Noyes, *News & Citizen*, 05/17/07.

The Fire Department provides fire and rescue coverage for Wolcott and Elmore through a special mutual coverage relationship with the Elmore Fire Department. This agreement has worked well in the past to provide an adequate number of volunteers to respond to calls in both communities - especially during the workday when there can be a shortage of available volunteers.

The Wolcott Fire Department also participates in two mutual aid associations - the Lamoille County Mutual Aid Association, Inc. and Capital Mutual Aid to the east of Wolcott.

According to the report in the 2006 Wolcott Town Report, the Fire Department responded to 46 calls that year, only one less call than in 2005. Fourteen of the calls were for vehicular accidents with injuries, and the same number of calls was made for structure, chimney or brush fires. The 2007 appropriation request submitted to the Town of \$38,300 was the same amount appropriated in 2006. \$10,000 of that figure is slated for the equipment fund. As the population of Wolcott continues to grow, the demand on Department services can be expected to grow as well.

Also in the 2006 Town Report, the Fire Department celebrated their involvement in the Dry Hydrant Grant Program and the new placement of a dry hydrant behind the Wolcott General Store. Wolcott has received two grants from the Dry Hydrant Program, which is funded by the State of Vermont and U.S. Forest Service and administered by the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force and the Northern Vermont and George D. Aiken Resource Conservation and Development Councils. Dry hydrants link to lakes and ponds and allow for fire-fighting water supplies in towns without municipal water systems.

One growing concern in the town is the adequacy of local roads and private driveways for emergency services vehicles. The popularity of building homes on deep lots with narrow winding driveways can create a safety hazard, especially if Department trucks are unable to reach residences and maneuver around each other to coordinate fire-fighting incidents.

Emergency Management and Planning

The Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) has completed a Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan (DMP) for the county and its ten towns. This plan contains an appendix specific to Wolcott with background information, a hazard inventory and mitigation strategies. The goals of the plan are to:

1. provide the technical support for, and aid in the development of implementation protection mechanisms at the local level that will serve to avoid land use investments that would be, over time, endangered by, incompatible or in conflict with fluvial adjustment and erosion processes, and landslides;
2. encourage hazard mitigation planning as a part of the Local Planning Process; and
3. endorse and support the implementation of the Lamoille County Hazard Mitigation goals.

The DMP shows that Wolcott is no stranger to natural disasters. It discusses the past four natural disasters for which the Town received FEMA public assistance funding:

- ✓ August 1995 – record-setting rains caused flooding in excess of the 500-year scale.
- ✓ July 1997 – heavy rains caused flash flooding and the destruction of public and private property.
- ✓ July 1998 – torrential rains fell with similar effects to the July 1997 flooding.
- ✓ September 1999 – a storm spawned heavy rains, high winds and flooding over several days.

Obviously the type of hazard with the greatest potential in Wolcott is flooding, primarily due to its positioning along the Lamoille River and its tributaries. Floods and flash floods are listed separately in the top two positions of an inventory of 21 potential hazards that could occur in

Wolcott along with vulnerability and damage assessments. Next on the list are power failures and winter/ice storms. Dam failures also appear farther down on the list. The DMP calculates the amount of potential flood loss in Wolcott at \$6,239,600.

The DMP then makes a list of 21 hazard mitigation recommendations for Wolcott, including:

- ✓ integrating additional mitigation measures in local land use planning and ordinance development processes;
- ✓ using the DMP for Hazard Identification and Mapping, include public partners;
- ✓ enhancing public education and outreach regarding the National Flood Insurance Program;
- ✓ continuing community support of and participation in the Lamoille County Emergency Response Team (CERT);
- ✓ Adding emergency generators to the Emergency Operations Center and emergency shelter; and
- ✓ increasing the quantity of emergency equipment such as pumps, generators and drinking water storage systems to mitigate the risks to the community during flooding events.

In Case of Disaster...

Two important emergency plans have been completed for Wolcott to organize and coordinate responses to disasters in town:

The **Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)** describes the basic mechanisms and structures by which the Town of Wolcott will respond to potential and/or actual emergency situations. To facilitate effective response operations, the EOP incorporates a functional approach that groups the types of assistance to be provided into Functional Areas (FAs) and specifies the various different primary and secondary agency responsibilities within each FA. The primary purpose of the EOP is to initiate, coordinate, and sustain an effective local response to disasters and emergency situations. Secondary to this is to make each organization and department aware of its responsibility in all-hazard emergency operations. This plan, upon being implemented by Wolcott, provides the basis for coordinating protective actions prior to, during, and after any type of disaster.

The **Rapid Response Plan (RRP)** is a product of the EOP effort. The RRP consists of a collection of different contact lists, procedural checklists that organize the information on functional areas of disaster response, the agencies responsible and how to contact them. They are meant to be filled out, followed and kept on hand in the case of a disaster.

Library Facilities

The **Glee Merritt Kelley Community Library** is designed to serve both the Town and the school. The library is supported by Town appropriations, facilities and monetary support through the school district, grants and other fundraising. A librarian runs the library under the direction of a five member elected Board of Trustees.

The **Center of Northern Studies** has library facilities available to the Wolcott residents by appointment. The school's library contains approximately 2,000 volumes and also has a large periodical section. The Center is located in the Bear Swamp area of Town Hill Road. The Center formally merged with Sterling College of Craftsbury Common in December, 2003, and has gained accreditation of its program options in education and research on all aspects of the

far North.

Solid Waste Facilities

Wolcott is a member of the **Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District (LRSWMD)**, a municipal district formed to serve the towns of Lamoille County as well as Craftsbury and Worcester. In its 2006 Solid Waste Implementation Plan, LRSWMD states that it has an annual budget of approximately \$900,000. Three quarters of the LRSWMD revenue is generated through operation of drop-off stations. The balance is generated through a surcharge on all waste collected and transported to a waste disposal site from the LRSWMD.

According to the LRSWMD website in 2007, towns in the district generate about 23,141 tons of waste annually. This translates into one ton per person each year. As required by state law, the LRSWMD has devised a plan for the management and disposal of all types of solid waste generated in its member communities. Solid waste from Wolcott is currently brought to the town Transfer Station on Gulf Road. From there, waste is hauled to the Northeast Waste Systems landfill in Coventry. Recyclables, tires and scrap metal are also collected at the Wolcott Transfer Station and transported to the Chittendon Solid Waste District Material Recovery Facility, where they are processed for sale.

The Wolcott Transfer Station collects revenues from receipts in order to offset operating expenses. In FY 2007, the Transfer Station collected more than \$35,000 in receipts and had an ending balance of roughly \$1,800. The Transfer Station budget for FY 2008 is \$35,590.

The following information from the LRSWMD 2006 Solid Waste Implementation Plan addresses future waste capacity:

The District currently has a long-term transportation and disposal contract (5 years) with Casella for loose waste collected at some of the local drop-offs. That loose waste is currently being shipped to Northeast Waste Systems (a Casella subsidiary) landfill in Coventry, VT, which has permitted capacity for 2.5 years of service to LRSWMD. Compacted waste from the Stowe Transfer Station is currently shipped to the WSI Landfill in Moretown, VT, which is getting near full to capacity. The District has had discussions with WSI and Casella management about their long-term capacity plans for their respective landfills. WSI and Casella are seeking permits to expand the landfills and extend their life for another 18-20 years. If those contracts are canceled or expansion plans fail, the LRSWMD will seek arrangements to send compacted waste to other landfills like the Mt. Carbury Landfill in Berlin, NH. Other Districts such as Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District, Northwest Solid Waste District and Chittenden Solid Waste District have plans to construct landfills in their region.

In addition to waste management, LRSWMD strives to educate the public about waste-related issues, including recycling, hazardous waste, computer disposal, and illegal disposal methods. With education, outreach, planning and public participation, LRSWMD is addressing goals in 3 primary areas:

1. waste reduction,
2. reuse of goods, and
3. increasing the recycling rate for all materials.

Public Lands

The table below describes the various lands within the Town of Wolcott which are owned by the State of Vermont. Wolcott also owns approximately 81.7 acres of land including old landfills, purchased flood properties, recreational fields, cemeteries, and the town hall, town clerks

office, town garage / fire station, and old railroad station.

Table 7-4. State owned land in Wolcott

Department or office	Location	Acreage	Use
Dept of Fish & Wildlife	South of Rte 15, adjacent to Fisher Bridge	~1.2 acres	Roadside park w/ picnic tables & lavatory
Dept of Fish & Wildlife	Miller Open Land, Rte 15	~4.9 acres	
Dept of Fish & Wildlife	Wolcott Pond Fishing Access	~24.1 acres	Fishing access
Dept of Fish & Wildlife	Elmore Rd & Lamoille River	~24.4 acres	Streambank conserve/ fishing access
Dept of Fish & Wildlife	Harris Parcel	~22 acres	
Dept of Fish & Wildlife	E. Hill Wildlife Mgt Area	~233 acres	Wildlife management
Dept of Water Res.	Wolcott Pond Access Site	~17 acres	Recreation
Dept of Water Res.	Wolcott Pond	~179 acres	Rec. & wildlife habitat
University of Vermont	Wolcott Research Forest – off of East Hill Road	~130 acres	Tree species research

SECTION 8. HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health and wellness, as a singular concept, is defined as the state of optimal well-being, not simply the absence of illness, but and improved quality of life resulting from enhanced physical, mental, and spiritual health.

This section of the Wolcott Town Plan is new in 2008. The purpose is to lay out a vision and mission for the health and wellness of the residents of Wolcott. It incorporates objectives and targets while outlining strategies to achieve a healthy community. It also identifies potential partners who will be key to achieving our vision and goals.

Understanding that the root of health and wellness is self-responsibility on the part of Wolcott's residents, this Town Plan can only serve as a guide to local initiatives and land use decisions to facilitate a continuing journey of wellness. The information and goals in this section are intended to help the Town achieve a healthier environment and community for its residents.

As previously discussed in the population and growth section of this plan, Wolcott's population continues to grow, and with that comes factors that affect the quality of life residents have come to expect. As the town grows, it is important for its residents to be able to access livable wage jobs and educational and recreational resources as a means to increase wellness.

Identifying information on the health and wellness of the residents of town is problematic as the State and other agencies collect information on a county as a whole. However this information can be used to get a snap shot of the general health of the resident of town. Unfortunately there is a dearth of town level data to be able to track many relevant issues at a local level. This need must be addressed.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

Overall

- To provide ample opportunities for the health and wellness of Wolcott residents.
- To have the local data necessary to provide a baseline for measuring health and wellness in Wolcott.

Recreation facilities

- To maintain and enhance recreational facilities and opportunities.

Land Use

- To encourage more physical activity through public land use plans and policies

POLICIES

Recreation Facilities

- Wolcott should do its part locally to make the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail a rural trail facility that will provide opportunities for all users to enjoy nature and the scenic Vermont landscape to its fullest.

Land Use Review

- Developers of large residential projects should include adequate open space and pedestrian amenities for recreation by the future residents of the project.

Nutrition

- The availability and affordability of locally grown foods to lower income residents should be increased.

Transportation

- All public roads in Wolcott should provide for safe walking and biking.

Natural Areas & Resources

- Natural, scenic and recreational areas should be protected, so that they may be maintained as destinations for hiking, biking and other physical activities.
- Public access to hunting and fishing and other outdoor recreation activities should be ensured.

Education

- Wolcott's school children should be provided with ample nutrition and information pertinent to healthy living.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Overall

- Wolcott should develop a health and wellness committee of local residents that reports to the Panning Commission.
- Wolcott should work in partnership with other agencies to begin measuring more local health and wellness indicators.

Recreation Facilities

- Wolcott, either alone or in partnership with other organizations, should develop a comprehensive plan for amenities, facilities and aesthetics for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail in town.
- The Town should pursue grant funding for the development of the North Wolcott Recreation Park.
- The Town should create a Recreation Task Force to address various recreation issues in town, assist the development of recreational facilities, and support and coordinate the efforts of groups like the Wolcott Athletic Association and Wolcott Recreation Park Committee.

Education

- Wolcott Elementary School should develop a school wellness policy for both students and teachers.
- Wolcott should provide health and wellness education to townspeople as a chapter in the annual Town Report.

Housing

- Wolcott should pursue partnerships with other organizations to ensure the provision of affordable housing that shelters and supports all residents, especially children, the elderly and those possessing disabilities.

Health & Wellness Issues

If the health and wellness of individuals and families were to be imagined as a puzzle, then a several essential pieces can be identified:

- ✓ Secure shelter;
- ✓ Access to safe and nutritious foods;
- ✓ Opportunities for mental and physical activity;
- ✓ Financial security;
- ✓ Proper care, supervision and stimulation for children, the elderly and similarly "dependent" groups;
- ✓ Adequate education for adults and children alike; and
- ✓ Minimization of unhealthy personal activities.

Measuring Health & Wellness – Few Local Indicators

Unfortunately it is not hard to find indicators of health and wellness challenges and failures, either locally in Wolcott or across the region. For instance, the poverty data in this Plan's Economic Development section shows that the poverty rates for children and families increased between Census 1990 and Census 2000. Poverty is a significant indirect challenge to health and wellness, since individuals and families without financial security tend to be subject to worries and stresses that divert their attention away from their well-being. There is also the issue of healthy food costs to consider.

Also vexing is the fact that the poverty data above is one of the only pieces of data relevant to health and wellness that can be found at a local scale currently. Most other indicators are collected at a county or regional level only. However the reality of this dilemma is that many of these problems benefit from regional solutions pursued by regional partners, not necessarily requiring local data.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission included a section on health and wellness in their regional plan for the first time in 2006. The regional plan references the work of People in Partnership (PIP), a coalition of concerned citizens and health, education, and human services professionals who work together to improve conditions of social well-being in the Lamoille Valley. The result of this collaborative effort is the Lamoille Valley Outcomes Report Card. PIP will be using the Report Card as a baseline to take annual social wellness "measurements" to monitor progress in addressing social issues. As issues come and go, grow and evolve, the annual Report Card will be adjusted accordingly to track these trends.

The indicators that PIP identified for the Report Card were the following:

- Low Birth Weight
- Child Care
- Dental Care for Children on Medicaid
- Helping Youth Maintain a Healthy Weight
- Youth Tobacco Use
- Youth Marijuana Use
- Number of Moves in Foster Care
- Diabetes-related Deaths
- Adult Tobacco Use
- Housing and Homelessness
- Home Care Options for Elders and People with Disabilities

The Lamoille County Regional Plan focused on 4 of these indicators in 2006:

1. **Child Care** - The demand for quality child care is increasing while the number of registered and licensed child care slots has diminished significantly. Child care capacity is down 9% in the past four years.
2. **Helping Youth Maintain a Healthy Weight** - Between 1999 and 2003, the number of children ages 8 to 12 at risk for becoming overweight increased between 2% and 7%. 35%-40% of children in this age group are spending three or more hours each day watching television or using computers and video games.
3. **Housing and Homelessness** - Service providers report that the number of homeless individuals and families is increasing. Affordable house stock does not meet current demand, and 49% of low income renters pay more than 30% of their incomes for rent, placing those people at risk of homelessness. A state data collection system implemented this year will provide better data about homelessness in our region.
4. **Home Care Options for Elders and People with Disabilities** - Lamoille County has not met the

state goal of keeping 40% of elders in their homes since the implementation of the Medicaid Waiver program. Recent data show that this trend has improved. In the spring of 2005, all available slots were filled and there was a waiting list. A new funding mechanism was introduced in 2005 and will provide more Vermonters with access to home care.

Other Local Indicators

Measuring and tracking health and wellness in Wolcott will necessitate the local measurement of the indicators identified by PIP above. It would also be beneficial to be able to track the following additional opportunities and outcomes locally:

- Miles of road in Wolcott with shoulders adequate for biking and walking;
- Number of Wolcott residents who bike or walk to work, compared to vehicular commuting;
- Miles of sidewalk in Wolcott;
- Number of local connections and accesses to the developing Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and use by local residents;
- Use of local recreational facilities by child and adult residents;
- Number of health workshops and screenings held in town; and
- Types of food offered at Wolcott Elementary School.

Health & Wellness Infrastructure and Services

Recreation Infrastructure

Wolcott is home to a growing number of recreational activities for its residents.

The **Wolcott Athletic Field** is on School Street across from the Town Garage and Fire Station. The field is between 8 and 10 acres in size, and has two baseball/softball diamonds and a soccer field. The field is managed and maintained by the Wolcott Athletic Association, a private nonprofit group that sponsors baseball and softball programs for Wolcott. Field maintenance requires the help of volunteers, along with the availability of Town equipment. In 2006, the Association served 55 boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 12. The Association is funded by a town appropriation, dues, fundraisers, concessions and other donations. The Athletic Association was appropriated \$2,000 from the Town of Wolcott in both 2006 and 2007.

The **North Wolcott Recreation Park** consists of land on North Wolcott Road that was purchased by the Town with FEMA funds after severe flooding damaged the private homes there. Wolcott Recreation Park Committee has been formed and charged with developing the park. The park currently contains a baseball field, and future plans include a walking path, soccer field, and picnic areas. In 2006 the Park Committee brought in \$700 from fundraisers and ball field team dues, as well as a \$1,000 appropriation from the Town. In 2007 the Town of Wolcott appropriated another \$1,000 to the park. These revenues are normally expended with maintenance and amenities for the park. Grant funds will most likely be needed to fully develop the park.

The **Wolcott Elementary School field** has both a baseball/softball diamond and a soccer field. These fields were once available for public use outside school hours, but their status is questionable at this point, due to issues with neighboring land-owners.

The **Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT)** is a year-round multi-use recreation path/trail slowly developing along the right-of-way of the original St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Rail Road

Company established June 30, 1916 and most recently managed as the Lamoille Valley Rail Road Company (LVRR). The trail will be 92 miles in length and traverses an east-west route from St. Johnsbury to Swanton.

The ultimate responsibility for the conversion of the old rail bed, into a year-round multi-use recreation path/trail and its management, will be born by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), which holds a lease for the trail from the State of Vermont. The VAST Board of Directors has established the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee (the LVRTC) that will be charged with the day-to-day conversion and management activities of the project. Part of the VAST/LVRTC charge is to manage the LVRT for non-motorized uses, as well as motorized uses, currently limited to snow-mobiling in the winter.

Health Facilities

The primary health care facility serving Wolcott and Lamoille County is **Copley Hospital** in Morristown. Copley operates as the emergency care center for local emergency services, and provides in-patient, outpatient, long-term care, and birthing center services. Copley functions as part of the larger Vermont health care system, with the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont (MCHV) in Burlington acting as the major tertiary referral hospital.

The **Hardwick Area Health Center** is a regional medical center which serves the communities of Walden, Woodbury, Wolcott, Craftsbury, Greensboro, Hardwick, and Stannard. Staff at the Center include family practitioners, internists, and nurse practitioners. The Center provides a wide array of medical services, with the exception of obstetrics. The Center is a component of the non-profit Northern Counties Health Care organization, and provides its services on a sliding scale based on need and ability to pay.

Wolcott residents must all travel outside of the community for medical services due to lack of doctors or dentists practicing in town.

Community Partners

Health and Wellness services, information and assistance in Wolcott are provided by a number of different agencies. Some are private commercial enterprises, a few are private not-for-profit organizations and others are governmental agencies.

Likely partners for health and wellness initiatives in Wolcott include:

- 4-H Program
- Building Bright Futures
- Community, Recreation, Exercise and Wellness (CREW)
- Copley Hospital
- Fit and Healthy Council of Lamoille Valley
- Food Shelf
- Hardwick Area Community Collation
- Johnson State College
- Lamoille Area Cancer Network
- Lamoille Area Recreation Center (LARC)
- Lamoille Home Health and Hospices
- Lamoille Valley Tobacco Taskforce
- People in Partnership
- RSVP Bone Builders
- Salvation Farms

- Vermont Department of Health Morrisville District Office

Furthering Health & Wellness in Wolcott

While land use planning and regulation and other local initiatives normally cannot force the accomplishment of many community goals, much can be done to remove barriers and increase opportunities for desired behaviors. Such is the case with health and wellness in Wolcott. Identified below are several suggestions, plans, and recommendations conducive to the health and wellness to Wolcott residents.

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail

The Town of Wolcott sees the LVRT for the unprecedented recreational resource that it could be. The trail will also facilitate various economic development and transportation benefits, embodied in increased tourism, local consumer activity, job creation, and new and healthier commuting avenues to Morrystown, Hardwick and the towns beyond.

The Town of Wolcott should plan to do its part locally to provide a rural trail facility that will provide an environment so all users can enjoy nature and the scenic Vermont landscape to its fullest. The development of local trail amenities may be necessary. There are also at least three bridges on the trail in Wolcott that would need to be replaced or converted. Thus this Town Plan makes the following recommendations:

- By focusing the Town's facilities along school street along with zoning regulating geared to the development of a village center. The town hopes this will become a catalyst for future growth and highlight the LVRT crossing.
- The School Street Center should be developed as the Town's primary trailhead parking and picnic area. It should include facilities comprised of composting toilets, informational resources, appropriate lighting, access to potable water, playground equipment and more. There should be a sidewalk connection between the LVRT and the Town's school and library.
- Development of the Fisher Bridge parking and picnic area should be kept to a minimum so as to not undermine the aesthetic and historical significance of the area. It is recommended that development be limited to a parking area with a composting toilet, informational resources and appropriate lighting.
- Park benches, and provisions for wheelchair/stroller accessibility should be made at the two parking areas identified above as well as any other pertinent area along the LVRT in Wolcott.
- Bicycling connections should be made between the LVRT and other popular biking routes in Town.
- Wolcott should collaborate with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee, VAST and others in securing the funds and resources necessary to accomplish the necessary bridge work along the trail.

School Activities

Much should be done to maintain and enhance the education and nutritional programs at Wolcott Elementary School that encourage health and wellness among children:

- Ample recreation and physical activity opportunities,
- Education in healthy habits, and
- Access to healthy, locally produced food.

The Role of Businesses

Businesses in Wolcott should do their part to provide healthy worksites, which could include the following:

- Drafting a wellness plan for the business and its employees,
- Providing health and wellness informational resources,
- Holding health workshops and screenings,
- Providing healthy snacks, and
- Rewarding walking or biking to work.

Land Use Decisions

There is much potential for land use planning and regulation to increase opportunities for health and wellness in Wolcott. Recommendations include:

- The protection of natural, scenic and recreational areas, so that they may be maintained as destinations for hiking, biking and other physical activities;
- Providing public access to hunting and fishing and other outdoor recreation activities;
- Ensuring that roads have adequate shoulders for recreational biking and walking; and
- Encouraging sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities in new developments.

SECTION 9. LAND RESOURCES

Wolcott's land based resources, including productive soils and local sand and gravel deposits, represent truly unique, irreplaceable resources because of their physical properties, limited extent, and economic importance to the community. Productive agricultural and forestry lands also contribute significantly to the town's rural and scenic character, and traditional way of life, which still sustains the local economy.

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

Overall

- To protect and enhance Wolcott's land resources, including productive farm and forestland and available earth resources, in order to maintain an adequate land base to sustain farming and forestry operations and to secure needed supplies of sand and gravel for the benefit of existing and future generations.

Earth Resources

- To use Wolcott's mineral and earth resources conservatively for the benefit of existing and future generations.

Soil Resources

- To conserve and enhance the soils in Wolcott, especially prime and state significant soils, for present and future use.

POLICIES

Earth Resources

- Earth resources (primarily sand and gravel) should be identified and conserved until needed and reasonably developed in the public interest.
- Development that is proposed near or over important earth resources should account for the potential loss of that resource.
- Extraction and related processing operations will be permitted only when it has been demonstrated that there will be no undue adverse impacts on the town or its residents. Potential conflicts between current land use and proposed extraction operations will be minimized. Strict standards for the operation, maintenance, and restoration or extraction sites may be established as appropriate based on the unique conditions of the area affected. The full restoration of extraction sites will be ensured through the submission and local approval of site restoration plans and the provision of adequate surety to guarantee the completion of the restoration plan at the operator's expense.

Soil Resources

- All development within the town must be pursued with strict regard to the capability of the soils to support it.
- Development on slopes should ensure the protection of soils through measures equivalent to Accepted Agricultural Practices and Best Management Practices for agriculture and/or the Acceptable Management Practices for forestry. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is also a source for recommended soil practices.
- Development within agricultural areas will be sited to avoid taking agricultural soils permanently out of production. Non-agricultural structures should not be placed in open fields and meadows; such structures and related infrastructure will be set back from field edges and follow tree lines where feasible to minimize disturbance and visual impacts, and to maximize open productive space.

Open and Undeveloped Land Resources

- Further fragmentation of productive agricultural and forestland is to be avoided; continued access to productive forest and farmland will be ensured.
- Development should be clustered or otherwise situated in order to preserve contiguous tracts of undeveloped land.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Earth Resources

- The Planning Commission should review and, if necessary, update the zoning provisions regulating earth extraction operations to ensure the bylaws achieve the goals of this section and provide the owner of the site with a clear set of guidelines to follow.
- Within the next five years, repeat the gravel study of 1989 to determine if further action is necessary to protect gravel resources.
- The Town of Wolcott should ensure that it holds ownership of, or purchase rights to, sufficient gravel resources to provide for the town's needs in the future.

Soil Resources

- Encourage forestland owners to continue to work with the Lamoille County Forester in the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation.
- Encourage farm and forestland owners to participate in the "Current Use" program.
- The Wolcott Development Review Board should direct interested landowners to the information and resources on Accepted Agricultural Practices and Best Management Practices at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture and information on Acceptable Management Practices at the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation.
- The town should support the efforts of organizations in the purchase of development rights and other conservation methods provided the land protected meets the objectives of this plan. Where possible, the planning commission should review proposed purchases and comment based on the goals of this plan.
- Wolcott should consider forming a Conservation Commission in the future to purchase and hold development right of farms and forestland within the town.

Geography

The Town of Wolcott lies in east central Lamoille County. The town is comprised of 25,920 acres covering approximately 40.5 square miles. The Wolcott landscape is dominated by its rolling hills and flowing streams, with the Lamoille River crossing the southern portion of town. Elevations in Wolcott range from approximately 1,876 feet above sea level at the Ledges in the northwest corner of town, to a low of about 670 feet along the Lamoille River near the border with Morristown.

Geology

Bedrock and surface material

With the exception of a very small portion of the south west corner of town, Wolcott's bedrock is classified as 'imbedded phyllites, schists, and quartzites.' The southwest corner lacks the quartz found in the rest of town and is classified as 'imbedded, gray to green, phyllites and schists.' At the border with Elmore, just north of Lake Elmore, is a small area of undifferentiated greenstones and amphibolites with local pillowed lavas or pillowed structures.

Contained within the bedrock materials can be found metallic minerals although not in high quantity or quality - the most common of these being copper. Highly variable concentrations of

copper bearing ore (pyrrhotite and chalcopyrite) have been located in the rocks of the Stowe formation on Toothacher Hill. Wolcott does not appear to have the non-metallic minerals, such as asbestos and talc, which are found in Eden, Johnson, Hyde Park, Lowell and other towns to the west.

The surface materials are primarily glacial till with some 'sands and gravels' and 'stream alluvium' close to the Lamoille River and Wild Branch. Pockets of glacial kame terraces are also present beneath North Wolcott and north of Route 15 at the border with Hardwick and west of the village of Wolcott. Along Tamarack Brook is a large area of peat and muck, which is associated with swampy, poorly drained areas.

(Information from: Wright, Frank M. *Geology for Environmental Planning in the Johnson-Hardwick Region, Vermont*. 1974. Vermont Geological Survey. Water Resources Department. Montpelier, Vermont.)

Extraction of earth resources

Lamoille County is one of the most gravel rich areas of the state. It is also one of the fastest growing. Gravel is a non-renewable resource and is therefore important to plan for its wise use. Areas which are likely to be gravel rich should be identified and noted so that the resource can be extracted as needed in the future. (Gravel Resources in Wolcott, pg. 59A)

Wolcott does not own its own gravel pit. However the Town has exclusive purchase rights to a gravel pit within the community as a condition of the pit's permit.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission completed a study in 1989 that identified existing gravel pits and areas of likely gravel deposits. The following is from that report:

"Wolcott is gravel rich, meaning it has the capabilities of supplying mass quantities of high grade gravel. Adjacent municipalities and municipalities further in distance which have gravel shortages may be looking towards Wolcott as a main source in the future. (In 1989, Wolcott had 12% of the active gravel pits in Lamoille County.) There are a number of active and inactive pits in Wolcott which eventually will be reclaimed.Emphasis must be made on the reclamation process. It is in a stage right now where it will be important to oversee the extraction process so that stripping the soil of its nutrients does not occur. Gravel deposits in North Wolcott could be used for roads in the general vicinity along with the use of the main sources from Route 15. East Hill Road contains three small deposits which may be desirable for the town to reserve for local use. Upper Cross Road has small residential areas which might conflict with gravel extraction but this should be confirmed for use in the future."

Sand and gravel are important local resources and are needed for road repair and construction. Gravel deposits are also important areas for recharging groundwater supplies. Earth resource extraction and/or processing activities have a high potential for becoming a substantial nuisance in the area where such activities are located. There is a potential for problems in the any of the following areas:

- Noise, dust and air pollution or radiation;
- Surface and groundwater pollution, siltation or radiation;
- Storage and disposal of waste materials, both solid and liquid;
- Increased stormwater runoff, erosion and sedimentation;
- Spoiling of the landscape and limited utility for subsequent uses of the site;
- Decreased highway safety and increased municipal costs due to increased traffic and accelerated deterioration of highways and bridges attributed to the transportation

- activities generated by the earth resource operations; and
- Reduced property values because of primary or secondary impacts of the proposed earth resource operations. All these factors, single and together, may act to substantially depreciate land values in the immediate vicinity of such activities and the town in general.

While earth resource extraction comes with risks, many of these resources are needed by residents for roads and building material, or for sale as a marketable resource. Of concern is that each of these resources is finite and once depleted cannot be replaced. Additionally, development near or over the resource may, in effect, make extraction impossible in the future. Therefore any construction over an earth resource should account for the potential loss of that resource. The state has estimated that 31% of all sand and gravel deposits in Vermont are now inaccessible due to state regulations including water supply protection, critical wildlife habitat, conserved lands, and other factors. (Aggregate Resources of Vermont, VT Geological Survey 1993). Current developments over deposits have further limited the availability of the resource.

The town therefore has two responsibilities. First, Wolcott needs to be vigilant in its regulation of earth resource extraction operations to prevent the creation of a nuisance. And second, the town needs to protect the resource to ensure its availability for future residents.

The locations of likely gravel deposits are shown on the **Land Resources Map** at the end of this Plan. However, there has been no update to the 1989 gravel study cited above. The possibility of the Morrisville Alternate Truck Route and other regional transportation projects that could facilitate more truck traffic into Wolcott from nearby towns with land resource needs are good reasons for Wolcott to update the inventory of land resources in town and plan for prudent development.

Soils

The soil structure attributes in Wolcott provide both opportunities and limitations to construction and agriculture. Depending on the physical and natural processes that formed the soils, they may have differing depth, composition, texture and layering. Soils also vary in how easily they absorb water and in their load-bearing capacity. Soils that pose limits to development are often characterized by excessive slope, shallow depth to bedrock, high seasonal water, instability or high erosion potential. Soils also have qualities that make them productive for timber and agricultural products. The three main soil associations found in Wolcott are outlined below.

Adams/Colton/Duxbury

This soil can be found level to steep and is excessively and well-drained sandy soils. It is the main source of sand and gravel. Steeper areas are usually woodland while less steep areas are used for crops and home sites. These soils are found along the Lamoille River, Elmore Branch and northern section of the Wild Branch.

Lyman/Tunbridge

This soil association can be deep in the level areas to shallow on steeper regions. The soil is described as being well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soil. It can be used for farming on the lower slopes but development is limited by depth to bedrock on slopes. It is found in the foothills and steeper slopes on the west side of the Wild Branch, Pottersville area, and eastern corner of town.

Berkshire/Marlow/Peru

This soil association is, again, deep in level areas and shallow on steeper slopes. This soil is

also described as being well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soil. It can be used for cropping and trees but the pan and slope limit the developability. It is also suitable for wildlife habitat, recreation and woodland. These soils can be found in the southeast uplands and the region between Wild Branch and Wolcott Pond.

Development limitations are shown on the **Soil Limitations** map. This map highlights areas with steep slopes (over 30% slope), shallow depth to bedrock, high water tables, instability and high erosion potential. This map is not intended to infer that development is not possible on a site in these highlighted areas. It should be interpreted that development in these areas may need special construction, careful siting, or be of a limited extent or scale. Each property will be examined individually for limitations based on the characteristics above.

Soils may also present opportunities due to their characteristics. Prime agricultural and forestry soils as well as sand and gravel sites are shown on the **Land Resources Map**. These are the valuable and non-renewable soil resources that need to be protected for use in agriculture and forestry. Vermont soils are identified by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in its publication *Farmland Classification Systems for Vermont Soils* (June 2006 edition). NRCS acknowledges those soils with agricultural values of 1 through 7 as demonstrating the characteristics needed for various agricultural uses. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture soil identification guidelines that were released on 04/30/07 advocates planning for the conservation of areas where there remain significant undeveloped primary agricultural soils (classes 1 through 7) and especially where there are minimally twenty contiguous acres of agricultural value classes 1, 2 or 3 soils.

Use and Conservation of Soil Resources

Soil provides the medium and nutrients for plant growth, and crops grow best where these conditions are ideal. Prime and statewide significant soils have been classified based on these and other criteria. Whether the crop is hay, corn, or trees, the best use for that soil resource is agriculture or forestry. As a limited resource, management and conservation are the keys to long-term sustainability. Agricultural and forestry as a land use will be discussed more extensively in the land use chapter of this plan.

An examination of the location of the farms with respect to the location of prime agricultural soils resources is important to keeping the best soils in farming and not development. Similarly, parcel and soils data can be studied to determine if forestry soils are located on large blocks of land indicating that the woodland is being managed or could be managed for timber.

Agricultural Practices

Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAPs) are designed to ensure soil conservation, and all farms are required to meet these standards. The Planning Commission would recommend that farmers use Best Management Practices (BMPs) where technically and economically feasible. BMPs are not required but offer better protection of the soil resource and will protect other resources as well including water. Information on AAPs and BMPs is readily available through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.

Forestry Practices

Foresters have a similar set of practices to follow in order to conserve soil resources. The Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for forestry in Vermont were first stipulated when the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation developed the 1987 guide titled "Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Operations in Vermont."

Occasionally also referred to as “Best Management Practices,” the AMPs are intended to prevent mud, petroleum products, and woody debris from getting into streams, ponds, lakes, and rivers. AMPs also help maintain natural water temperatures by requiring that trees be left along streams and water bodies. They are scientifically proven methods for loggers and landowners to follow for maintaining water quality and minimizing erosion.²⁰ While AMPs are voluntary, they have the force of law: a violation occurs when there is a discharge to state waters and the AMPs are not in place. Any foresters in Wolcott interested in obtaining more information or assistance on the AMPs at their sites should contact the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation AMP Program.

Note on Applicability

It should be noted that, typically, local land use regulations on development do not apply to agricultural operations following the AAPs and BMPs and forestry or silvicultural operations following the AMPs, except for possible allowances to require setbacks, etc.

Methods of Land Resource Protection

Land resources need to be protected from two sources of loss: development on or near the resource and mismanagement of the resource. The best way to protect land resources from development is to ensure the working landscape is economically feasible and provides the landowner with a stable income. There are three tools that help make the agricultural use more economically feasible: Current Use Assessment, Purchase of Development Rights, and land use regulations.

**Vermont's Agricultural and Managed Forest Land Use Value Program
AKA “Current Use” Program**

The “Current Use” program has continued to be quite popular among Wolcott property owners. The program was designed to keep property taxes from making the ownership of undeveloped land unaffordable. The Current Use Program includes a Land Use Change Tax as a disincentive to develop land. The tax is 20 percent of the fair market value of a property, or, in the case of the sale of part of a property, a pro rata share of the fair market value of the entire property.

Table 9-1. Current Use Taxation Enrollment, 1992, 2000, 2006

Year	Total Parcels	Total Enrolled Acres	Total Municipal Taxes Saved	Total State Education Taxes Saved (HS+NR)	Total Taxes Saved
1992	65	7,082			
2000	85	8,672			
2006	98	10,173	\$40,591	\$81,884	\$122,475

Source: 2007, Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review.

In 1993, over 30% of land acreage in Wolcott was enrolled in this program. During 1990 and 1991, only two properties in Wolcott dropped out of this program. Of the forestland parcels enrolled in the program in 1993, it was estimated that over 75% of them were under active

²⁰ VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation, AMP Program - <http://www.vtfpr.org/watershed/ampprog.cfm>, retrieved 05/22/07

management for timber production.

By 2006, the number of parcels and the number of acres in current use had increased. While the numbers are no longer broken down into forest and agriculture acres, it is expected that the majority of the land remains in forest management.

Purchase of Development Rights

The most well known group involved in the purchase of development rights is the **Vermont Land Trust**. In a purchase of development rights, the right of the property owner to develop or subdivide a parcel is bought by another party. The amount paid depends on the value of the potential development. In this way the farmer or forester receives extra money they need while still retaining the farm or forest. In addition, the property now has a lower appraised value resulting in lower property taxes. The obvious problem with purchase of development rights is the cost. In order to protect a large amount of land, one needs a huge sum of money. Also, the landowner must want to sell the rights - all purchases are willing buyer/willing seller.

Wolcott may want to consider forming a **Conservation Commission** to purchase development rights on their own. In that way the town would own the development rights instead of a non-profit organization. The money to purchase properties or development rights can come from grants and funding institutions around the state.

A new development would be the recent incorporation of the **Northern Rivers Land Trust** (NRLT), which includes the towns of Wolcott, Craftsbury, Elmore, Greensboro, Hardwick and Woodbury. The NRLT intends to purchase conservation easements to protect land from development as well as to acquire land for the development of clustered, affordable housing.

Land Use Regulations

Zoning and subdivision regulations are less effective in regulating development of important land resource parcels, but are also far less expensive. These types of regulations can guide development to ensure certain goals are accomplished. One valuable tool is Planned Unit Developments where developable lots are clustered to protect open space or other objectives. This type of flexible zoning tool allows the same number of developable lots as traditional subdivisions except that it also keeps the fields open and forests unfragmented.

SECTION 10. WATER RESOURCES

Water resources take on a variety of forms and functions. They provide rivers and lakes upon which to boat, fish and swim; groundwater to drink; and wetlands to store floodwaters and filter natural and man-made contaminants. Water resources provide numerous habitats for a variety of aquatic and riparian plant and animal communities, and support numerous economic activities such as fishing and boating.

Water resources also unfortunately end up serving as repositories for pollutants from runoff and leaking storage tanks including pesticides, herbicides, sediments, landfills, septic systems and underground storage tanks. These contaminants kill fish and plants, destroy existing and potential drinking water supplies and preclude recreational activities.

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

Water is easier and cheaper to keep clean than it is to clean up once spoiled. With some exceptions, Wolcott's water resources are generally clean. Our ponds and wetlands are some of the best protected in the state. By establishing and enforcing setbacks and buffers, stormwater management techniques, septic regulations, flood hazard bylaws, and wellhead and shoreline protection regulations, Wolcott will be protecting this valuable resource. While the list appears long, the regulations are, in many ways, common sense and easy to apply to projects. The efforts of all of our residents are important to maintain the quality for drinking, swimming, fishing, canoeing, and wildlife.

GOALS

Overall

- For Wolcott's water resources, including its lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, wetlands, groundwater, and associated habitats, to be preserved and, where degraded, improved in order to ensure water quality for drinking, recreation, and the environment.

Rivers and Streams

- To ensure that Wolcott's rivers and streams contain clean water, a healthy riparian habitat and stable stream banks.

Lakes and Ponds

- To maintain the overall health of our lakes and ponds for recreation and environmental purposes.

Wetlands

- To preserve and protect wetlands from pollution, filling, and any other uses or activities that will result in their degradation or a reduction in its capacity to provide wildlife habitat, flood control and water storage.

Flood and Erosion Hazard Areas

- To protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of Wolcott by limiting development in floodways to agriculture, recreation, and open space only.

Groundwater

- To maintain the quality and quantity of local groundwater supplies.

Water Quality

- To maintain and, where degraded, improve the water quality across the town.

POLICIES

Rivers and Streams

- All rivers and streams must be identified on and integrated into site plans and subdivision

plats. Development within or proximate to designated rivers and streams will take place in such a way as to avoid crossing the stream and to protect and maintain a natural vegetative buffer.

- All bridges and culverts should be built to standards recommended by the Better Backroads program of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' *Clean and Clear* initiative to ensure minimal impacts on rivers and streams.
- Development near Baldwin Brook Falls should not have a negative impact on the scenic and recreational qualities of this significant stream feature.

Lakes and Ponds

- Densities of residential development and, in particular, septic fields for those homes, are a prime contributor to lake and pond pollution. Controls on density are required in order to protect water quality.
- A naturally vegetated buffer around the lakeshores would protect the water quality from contaminants as well as protecting the scenic values of the areas.
- A management plan for large lakes and ponds should be developed to determine boating, swimming, fishing and other recreational activities to ensure that ecological and recreational goals are met for the areas.

Wetlands

- Wetlands must be identified on and integrated into site plans and subdivision plats.
- All wetlands are required to have at least a 50-foot buffer. No filling or draining of wetlands is permitted.

Flood and Erosion Hazard Areas

- No development should occur within a flood hazard area except in strict conformance with the flood hazard zoning bylaws.
- Likewise, no development should occur in fluvial erosion hazard areas.
- Agriculture, recreation fields, parks, and open space are all appropriate uses of flood or erosion hazard areas.

Groundwater

- Withdrawal of groundwater should not exceed the recharge rate over a reasonable period of time.
- No form of land waste disposal or storage of possible contaminants should be permitted in high water table and ground water recharge areas.

Water Quality

- All construction where soil is to be disturbed is required to provide adequate erosion control so that no soil moves off site or into surface waters or wetlands.
- Agriculture and forestry must abide by Accepted Agricultural Practices and Acceptable Management Practices. Where an activity may have a negative impact on water quality, Best Management Practices are recommended.
- Total impervious surfaces on developed sites should be less than 10% of the site. If this is not possible, other stormwater management tools should be used to mitigate the impacts.
- Where appropriate, stormwater technologies and techniques should be used to prevent runoff from directly entering any surface water.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Rivers and Streams

- Wolcott supports local and county conservation agencies whose goal is protection of the rivers and streams in the areas.
- Wolcott should establish public accesses to rivers and streams for recreation including swimming, fishing and boating.

Lakes and Ponds

- An ordinance to require local approval of dams and other artificial water impoundments below 500,000 cubic feet should be explored.
- Shoreline zoning regulations have been adopted for areas within 500 feet of Wolcott Pond, Wapanaki Lake, and Zack Woods Pond. The Planning Commission should review and, if

necessary, update the zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the findings in this chapter.

- Public education and signage should be placed at all boat accesses and public shoreland to notify the public of Eurasian Milfoil and how to protect the lake.

Wetlands

- The planning commission should consider acquiring funds to have a wetland inventory of the town conducted.

Flood and Erosion Hazard Areas

- The town should consider purchasing properties or development rights of properties within flood hazard areas to permanently prevent development in those areas.
- The planning commission should consider creating a plan for flood and erosion hazard areas to address recreational opportunities, flood hazard protection, and the potential for implementation of water quality measures.

Groundwater

- The Planning Commission should identify potential threats to groundwater supplies.
- The Town should study whether there is a need to adopt additional Wellhead Protection Area zones into the zoning bylaws and restrict uses that present a risk of contamination to public groundwater sources.
- The Town should adopt setback rules for private wells to match standard State well buffer regulations and prevent buffer encroachments upon neighboring properties.

Water Quality

- The town should support the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District in their efforts to ensure that all homeowners understand the importance of the proper disposal of household hazardous waste. The pick up of such materials should be cheap and easy in order to encourage compliance.
- Wolcott should proceed with the recommendations of the 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott*.

Rivers and Streams

Wolcott is fortunate to have abundant riparian resources. Its numerous brooks, streams and rivers helped shape the local landscape and the historic mill economy on the Lamoille River.

The Lamoille River flows from southeast to northwest across the southern part of Wolcott for about 8 miles. The Lamoille originates at Horse Pond in Greensboro and flows into Lake Champlain at Milton. Along its route to Lake Champlain, the Lamoille assimilates water from a number of wastewater treatment plants while also providing numerous public recreation opportunities and scenic vistas.

Most of the rivers and streams in Wolcott contribute to the Lamoille Drainage Basin. The five largest tributaries in Wolcott are the Green River, the Wild Branch, and Wolcott Pond Brook from the north; and the Elmore Pond Brook and Elmore Branch from the south. Smaller tributaries to the Lamoille include Jones Brook and Currier Brook from the north. Wolcott provides the headwaters for Millard, Keeler, and Tucker Brooks, all of which enter the Lamoille River in Hardwick.

The Wild Branch is fed by numerous smaller streams including Baldwin, Bruce, Clark and Tamarack Brooks. The northeast corner of Wolcott also provides the headwaters for Cass Brook, which is part of the Black River Drainage Basin to the north of Town.

Wolcott should establish public accesses to rivers and streams for recreation including swimming, fishing and boating.

Riparian Habitats

Plant life such as trees, shrubs, grasses and herbs along stream banks and river corridors serve to provide both food and shelter for a great many wildlife species. According to a 1986 study of Vermont's rivers, several of Vermont's wildlife groups are highly dependant on riparian areas for their habitat needs. The following Wolcott rivers and streams were noted as important habitat for water dependant species (information from *Vermont Rivers Study*, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, 1986.):

<u>Waterway</u>	<u>Species</u>
• Lamoille River	Waterfowl & deer
• Green River	Moose and Deer
• Jones Brook	Deer
• Wild Branch	Deer

Significant River Feature: Baldwin Brook Falls

Baldwin Brook crosses the North Wolcott Road just south of North Wolcott. Baldwin Brook is a mountain stream, mostly four to eight feet wide, with very clean water. Its headwaters are two small ponds just below the Green River Reservoir. The falls are located below a 12-foot dam. Immediately below the dam there is a sheer falls of 50 feet. Below the falls is an abrupt gorge about 20 feet wide by 30 feet deep, below which can be found two lower falls of 10 to 15 feet each.

In statewide comparison, this waterfall and gorge site is the only one in Lamoille County considered to be above average in botanical content. Fifty foot sheer falls are very rare in Vermont, either in big or small streams, and consequently, these falls are considered to be of state significance. A 1991 report for the Lamoille County Planning Commission titled *Waterfalls, Cascades and Gorges of Lamoille County, Vermont* recommended that this site receive special mention in the Wolcott Municipal Plan as a special hydrological feature worthy of protection.

Lakes and Ponds

Wolcott is fortunate to have numerous lakes and ponds throughout the town that support both public and private recreation opportunities and important plant and animal habitats.

Wapanacki Lake, located near the Hardwick town line, has a surface area of about 21 acres, a maximum depth of 23 feet, and a drainage basin area of approximately 285 acres. Present uses of the lake include both warm and cold water fishing and swimming. Wapanacki is Wolcott's only artificial lake, and its entire shoreline is currently owned by the Girl Scouts of America.

Wolcott Pond, off of East Hill Road, is about 68 acres in size, has a maximum depth of 23 feet, and is supported by a 920 acre drainage area. A natural lake with artificial height control, Wolcott Pond is popular for warm water fishing and boating. A large part of Wolcott Pond's shoreline is protected by Vt. Fish and Wildlife Department ownership and management as a public access site. Wolcott Pond is also the home to a nesting pair of Common Loons and a number of endangered terrestrial and aquatic plant species.

Use of Wolcott pond is governed by the rules of the Vermont Water Resources Board, including a 5 mph speed limit on motor boats and a prohibition of personal watercraft. Enforcement of these rules is in the realm of the Vermont State Police and State Game Wardens. The Town of Wolcott urges all pond users to abide by the State's rules, in order to ensure a safe, pristine and relatively quiet pond area.

Local regulations have been implemented to help ensure that development along the shores of

Wapanacki Lake and Wolcott Pond is in keeping with the quiet, scenic and pristine nature of these water bodies. This Shorelands zoning district allows development only through conditional use. Other measures could be considered as well, including purchase of development rights to ensure a vegetated buffer area on the shore.

Numerous other named and un-named ponds exist in town under private ownership. These ponds range in size for less than an acre to about 9 acres (Perch Pond). Currently state law requires water impoundments of 500,000 cubic feet or more to be approved by an engineer.²¹ In light of damage from storms, flooding and dam and culvert failure over the past decade, it may be prudent for Wolcott to pursue a local regulation that requires engineer review of even smaller impoundments. There are model ordinances and existing regulations in other towns that may be used as examples for Wolcott.

Wetlands

The term wetland is used to refer to areas that are inundated with water either seasonally or year-round. They are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, bogs, fens or other such names. Wetlands share three basic characteristics:

1. The presence of water at or near the ground surface.
2. The presence of water dependant plants occurring on site; and
3. Common types of soil that have formed as a result of the presence of water.

Wetlands serve a number of important functions, including stormwater retention, erosion control, ground water recharge and wildlife habitat. The largest wetland area in Wolcott is Bear Swamp on Tamarack Brook. This 200-acre area is currently owned by the Center for Northern Studies.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has mapped wetlands, and each town has a set of National Wetlands Inventory Maps. These maps were made using aerial photos. They are useful for assessing the general character of a particular area, but are not accurate enough to determine the nature of a particular property without a site visit.

Vermont's wetland regulations are based upon the National Wetlands Inventory. They designate all of the wetlands identified by the inventory in Wolcott as Class II, and require at least a 50-foot vegetated buffer between the wetland and any adjacent land development.

Flood Hazard Areas

Floodplains are land areas adjacent to waterbodies, primarily rivers, that are subject to seasonal or periodic flooding. These areas store runoff during heavy rains and spring thaws, thus slowing the velocity of water flowing downstream. Gradual releases of stormwater minimize erosion, streambank scouring and downstream flooding. Floodplains also provide important recreational, agricultural, aesthetic, drainage, and wildlife functions. The continuation of each of these functions requires consideration of the watercourses and their associated shorelines when designing for construction in their vicinity.

Floodplains are considered unsuitable for development for several reasons:

- ✓ potential danger to life and property,
- ✓ loss of flood water storage,
- ✓ effects on channel capacity and down stream communities, and

²¹ 10 V.S.A. § 1082

- ✓ improper functioning of subsurface sewage disposal systems when there are high water tables.

However, floodplain areas are usually prime agricultural land due to the highly productive nature of the soils, and can serve as recreation sites such as parks and ballfields.

Other flood hazards result from flashflood situations in particular along steeper stream sections. Clearing of vegetation cover and constructing impervious surfaces, like roofs and parking lots, increases storm runoff particularly in higher elevations. To prevent flash flood situations, developments cannot increase the volume or velocity of streams. Channeling and straightening streams increases stream velocity and increases the risk of flash floods. Many times roads and driveways up steep hills create perfect conditions for flash floods because they are designed to rapidly drain water from the surface and send it downhill in a straight steep ditch. The Better Backroads Program of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' *Clean and Clear* initiative has road standards to avoid erosion and flashfloods resulting from road design and construction. Wolcott should continue to ensure that its own public road and private driveway standards are in line with the Better Backroads standards.

Flood hazard areas in Wolcott are associated with the entire length of the Lamoille River, Wild Branch, Green River, Elmore Branch, Bear Swamp, and Wolcott Pond, and portions of Baldwin Brook and Wolcott Pond Brook. The flood hazard areas are shown on the maps associated with this plan and are based on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps which can be found in the Town Clerk's office. Wolcott has also adopted flood hazard area zoning which regulates the use and construction of structures in the flood hazard areas.

The Town of Wolcott should develop a detailed plan for the flood hazard areas in town – especially along the Lamoille River. Through this plan, Wolcott could determine appropriate uses for the hazard areas including locations for recreational facilities, open space, and agriculture. The purpose of the plan would be to generate public and private benefit from otherwise-restricted areas and protect the public from loss of property and life. Additionally, this flood hazard area plan could address buffers for the river and other water quality solutions.

Fluvial Erosion Hazards

Recently, efforts have begun to study the erosion hazards, as well as the flooding hazards, that Wolcott's rivers and streams present. Fluvial erosion is a danger akin to flooding, as banks and soil can become undermined gradually or even quite quickly, and potentially damage life and property. Fluvial Erosion Hazard studies typically study the path and tendencies of stream to designate areas that will be subject to erosion dangers over time. These erosion areas may or may not match the flood hazard areas that have been mapped for so long now. These erosion hazard areas should be protected from development in Wolcott.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission and Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation have been carrying out these fluvial erosion hazard studies throughout the county. So far studies have been completed on the Main Branch and Elmore branch of the Lamoille River in Wolcott. This year should see the completion of the Wild Branch and the initial phases of the Elmore Pond Brook study.

Groundwater Resources

Groundwater is the source for over 90% of the drinking water for rural communities in Vermont. It is replenished through rain and surface waters which percolate through the soil.

Any activity that introduces contaminants directly into the ground (such as underground storage tanks, septic disposal fields, and agricultural activities) can affect groundwater quality. Since surface waters may also travel underground, surface water quality may affect groundwater quality as well.

Since all water in Wolcott is provided through private wells, it is important to protect the quality of well water through appropriate separation between wellheads and septic disposal fields.

According to the Vermont Geological Survey, the lands adjacent to the Lamoille River, Baldwin Brook, the Wild Branch and the Elmore Branch have soil and geological characteristics that provide the best potential for groundwater.

Groundwater recharge areas are where soils and bedrock geology are such that surface water and ground water can easily percolate down to the natural water table. State land capability maps from 1972 indicate that areas of Wolcott with high groundwater potential may also be important groundwater recharge areas. Lands near The Ledges, Bear Swamp, Beaver Meadow and Jones Brook may also be important aquifer recharge areas.

Public groundwater sources in Vermont are assigned Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPAs) around them. WHPA's are defined as the surface and subsurface area surrounding a water-body or well field supplying water for a public water system. The state Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is responsible for the Vermont Wellhead Protection Program. A public water supply is defined as one serving ten or more connections or 25 or more people. There is one WHPA in the south end of Wolcott on the Pond Road for the protection of the Elmore Water Coop well.

Without detailed information about the direction of groundwater flow in Wolcott and surrounding communities, it is vital that all groundwater recharge areas town-wide be protected from activities that could contaminate the drinking water supply of residences.

Water Quality

Vermont's waters are classified by the State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) according to a system which establishes whether or not their current state impairs their use for

1. aesthetics,
2. aquatic life support,
3. agricultural water supply
4. contact (swimming) or secondary contact (fishing, boating) recreation,
5. fish consumption, and
6. drinking water supply.

The VT DEC identifies surface waters with impaired uses, the source(s) of the impairment(s), and whether or not the water body is being managed for Total Maximum Daily Load (TDML) of certain pollutants.

In 2006, no waters in Wolcott had been identified as impaired and in need of TDML. However the following two river bodies had been identified as in need of further assessment²² with possible impaired uses:

²² Included in Part C of State of Vermont 2006 List of Priority Surface Waters Outside the Scope of Clean Water Act Section 303(d).

1. Lamoille River, between Lake Lamoille in Morrisville and Hardwick Lake.
 - a. Possible pollutants: sediment, nutrients, e. coli bacteria.
 - b. Possible uses impaired: swimming, aquatic life support, aesthetics.
 - c. Specific problems: bank instability, agricultural run-off.

2. Wild Branch of the Lamoille River.
 - a. Possible pollutants: sediment.
 - b. Possible uses impaired: boating/fishing, aquatic life support, aesthetics.
 - c. Specific problems: loss of floodplain, bank erosion, etc.

These two stretches of river will likely be listed as impaired in 2007.

The stretch of the Lamoille River from Lake Lamoille to Hardwick Lake was also cited in 2006 by VT DEC as water suffering from complications brought on by flow regulation²³. Specifically attributed to Wolcott Dam were a poor and fluctuating water flow, erosion, and fish passage problems, which impacted aquatic life support, fishing and boating, and aesthetics.

Elmore Pond Brook is also cited for flow regulation problems stemming from the dam at Lake Elmore. This situation impacted ALL uses according to the VT DEC in 2006.

Stormwater and Agricultural Run-off

Two issues have been in the press over the past few years with regards to water quality – agricultural runoff and stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as roads, parking lots and roofs. Both of these sources of pollution impact our streams and rivers although agricultural runoff may be more important a factor in Wolcott.

The Department of Agriculture has produced ‘accepted’ and ‘best’ management practices for farms and silvicultural operations. Where farms are believed to be having an impact on water quality, BMPs and other measure can be used to help prevent the runoff from entering the streams. The Planning Commission will assist landowners who are looking to adopt management practices that prevent agricultural runoff. There are many organizations in Lamoille County willing to contribute supplies and expertise to resolve water quality issues if the interest exists.

Stormwater runoff is not as significant a problem in Wolcott as it is in some communities because we lack large commercial centers and the associated parking lots. New changes in state regulation are requiring tighter regulation of this issue. The Stormwater Section of Vermont’s Department of Environmental Conservation has a webpage on the Agency of Natural Resources site linking to multiple sources of information on storm water regulation, treatment and management, including *The Vermont Stormwater Management Manual*.

Some relatively minor additions to local zoning regulations can go a long way to keep Wolcott out of harm’s way. For instance, requiring parking areas to be set back from streams and wetlands; keeping total impervious areas below 10% of the lot area; and requiring landscaping to retain runoff on the grounds as opposed to channeling water into streams. Many developed properties do not meet these standards, but all new development should. Addressing the stormwater issue at the outset of development is far easier than trying to go back and retrofit old developments as is being proposed in other communities.

²³ Included in Part F, *ibid*.

SECTION 11.

FRAGILE/NATURAL AREAS & WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Wolcott's natural areas, which include wetlands, shore lands, uplands, and wildlife habitat, are designated by this plan for conservation. Protection of these resources provides opportunities for hunting and fishing as well as educational and recreational activities. The same implementation opportunities are available for these areas as for the land resources areas determined in Section 9. For the most critical and sensitive habitats, purchase of the properties would be the most equitable. For other areas, land use regulations to cluster development away from critical habitats would be sufficient.

Goals, Policies, & Recommendations of this Section

GOALS

Overall

- To protect and maintain in healthy condition natural areas, fragile areas, and areas with significant ecological value including wetlands, uplands, and critical plant and animal habitats.

Fragile/Natural Areas

- To ensure fragile and natural areas are protected and preserved.

Wildlife Resources

- To maintain the native diversity of wildlife throughout Wolcott through the protection of critical habitats.

POLICIES

Fragile/Natural Areas

- Wolcott supports the acquisition of natural and fragile areas by local or state conservation agencies whose goal is protection of the areas.
- Fragile and natural areas must be identified on and integrated into site plans and subdivision plats. Development within or proximate to designated natural areas will take place in such a way as to preserve their value for education, science, research, aesthetics, and recreation.

Wildlife Resources

- Deer wintering areas should be protected from development and other uses that threaten the ability of the habitat to support the species. Commercial, residential, and industrial development should not occur in these areas. Development should be permitted adjacent to deer wintering areas only if it is demonstrated, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, that the integrity of the area for deer habitat will be preserved.
- Subdivisions and other development should avoid fragmenting habitat. Core habitat areas and interconnecting links (e.g. wetland areas, riparian zones, travel corridors) are to be preserved. Planned Unit Development provides this capability.
- Rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats will be protected and preserved through appropriate conservation techniques. Where appropriate, a buffer strip should be designed and maintained to ensure protection.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Fragile/Natural Areas

- The Planning Commission should conduct a study to determine how much of the fragile habitats and natural areas are protected and determine what gaps exist in the conservation effort.
- The town should consider pursuing funding and partnerships to protect the remaining

parcels around Bear Swamp to ensure the long-term protection of this natural area.

Wildlife Resources

- The Planning Commission should review and, if necessary, update the zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the findings in this chapter.
- Wolcott should consider forming a conservation commission for the purposes of gathering and inventorying information on the fragile and natural areas in Wolcott and contributing to their protection through advocacy and consultation.
- As a result of living in Wolcott, many landowners have an ethic to be good stewards of the land. The Planning Commission recognizes that more can be accomplished by educating, advising, and assisting landowners with their natural and wildlife resource concerns than could be accomplished through regulations. The Planning Commission will support and provide guidance to any property owner with questions or concerns about their natural resources.

Fragile & Natural Areas

In 1976, the State of Vermont created an inventory of significant natural areas throughout the state. While natural area designation did not provide a site with any additional protection from development, it did act as a tool for increasing local knowledge of Vermont's important natural heritage. Many of the sites nominated to this list were included in the State Fragile Areas Registry. Unfortunately a call to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation confirmed that the Registry is no longer actively maintained. The following sites were included in the former Natural Areas Inventory.

Wolcott Pond

Approximately 68 acres in size, the pond and its watershed are almost entirely undeveloped. Conditions around the pond have remained unchanged for years, aside from the development of a state access area at the western end. A number of rare or unusual species of plants have been found in and around the pond, including *Rhododendron prinophyllum* "Roseshell Azaleas," which are very rare this far north. The pond has also been frequented by common loons. Increasing recreational use of Wolcott Pond, especially by motorized boats, may threaten this important loon habitat.

Bear Swamp

Bear Swamp, 300 acres and almost two miles long, contains large stands of typical boreal forest, balsam fir, black and red spruce, and northern larch. The under story of the swamp contains northern flora such as Labrador tea, blueberry, bunchberry and over 50 species of ferns and fern allies. Bear Swamp provides important habitat for a wide variety of breeding birds. Snowshoe hares, fisher, and otter are also found in the swamp. The swamp has been undisturbed for a long time and currently supports near-climax vegetation. Much of the area is presently owned by the Center for Northern Studies at Sterling College, and appears to be safe from development pressures indefinitely. Some portions of the swamp remain in private ownership and should be protected to ensure the entire natural area remains safe from development or mismanagement.

North Wolcott Bog

The North Wolcott Bog is a 2-acre sphagnum quaking bog with unique plant communities considered to be of statewide significance. The bog is under private ownership, and could be threatened in the future by development pressure on adjacent uplands.

Wolcott Copper Mine

This abandoned mining site near Jones Brook was identified as a significant natural area because of the manmade rock outcrops on site, which are of statewide geologic significance. The site is currently under private ownership, with no protection provided. Recently a road or driveway has been constructed on the property in close proximity to the mine, and may pose a future threat to its value as a local historic and geological resource.

University of Vermont Wolcott Research Forest

The University of Vermont owns 130 acres of forest accessible from the northernmost bend of East Hill Road. This forest was used for research on Christmas trees from 1965 to 1976. Since then, the focus of research has been shifted to various other forms of research on the tree species within the forest. Approximately 35 acres of the property, once open meadows, now exhibit small plantations of Christmas tree species and a few hardwoods. The old pasture, about five acres, has been left to regenerate naturally with balsam fir, white spruce, and other woody species. The remaining 90 acres is cut-over balsam fir and white spruce stands with some low-value hardwoods.

Critical Wildlife Habitat in Wolcott

Deer Wintering Areas

Vermont's deer require specific winter habitat to survive the seasonally severe weather and heavy snowfall. Winter deeryards provide two features important to whitetail deer survival: shelter and food. Statewide, between 6% and 8% of Vermont's forestland is suitable for winter deer range under average winter conditions. Wintering areas do not change significantly between years and can be used by generations of deer over several decades if appropriate habitat conditions are maintained.

Bear Habitat

Bears require large areas of uninterrupted forestland for breeding. They also require travel corridors to move from one part of their habitat to another, especially as forested areas may be subdivided and developed. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife prepared a map of black bear habitat in 1989 to indicate general areas of bear habitat. According to this map, Wolcott has bear habitat along its northern border. However, Wolcott's bear habitat may be marginal at best due to the lack of high quality beech stands. If there is enough interest among forestry parcel owners in the north part of town, beech stands could be managed and improved to increase the quality of black bear habitat in town.

Rare & Endangered Species Habitat

Rare plants and animals are important for a variety of reasons. Some are indicators of unusual habitats or of colder (or warmer) climates in Vermont's distant past. Some serve as indicators of environmental quality. Some species may provide compounds for medicines or agricultural or industrial products. Finally, some are attractive and add beauty to the natural landscape. Many uncommon species will disappear if not recognized and given some form of local protection.

Fisheries

According to the 1986 Vermont Rivers Study, brown, brook and rainbow trout are all present in Wolcott in the Lamoille River, Green River, Elmore Branch and Elmore Pond Brook. State water quality records show that Wolcott Pond and Wapanacki Lake support both cold and warm water fishing.

East Hill Wildlife Management Area

The East Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located adjacent to Wolcott Pond. The WMA

is approximately 962 acres in size, however only 452 of those acres are owned by the State of Vermont in fee simple (total ownership). The State of Vermont owns hunting rights only for the remaining 706 acres. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department manages 256 acres to the southeast of Wolcott Pond and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation manages approximately 196 acres south and east of Wolcott Pond. The Wolcott Pond Access Area, managed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, is associated with the WMA and provides access to Wolcott Pond for fishing opportunities. Access to the WMA is from Route 15 and East Hill Road east of the Village of Wolcott. Developed parking lots exist on (Oral) Marsh Road before the intersection of Simmons Road, as well as at the Wolcott Pond boating access area.

Wolcott Critical Habitat Map

The VT Non-game and Natural Heritage Program, in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, has an ongoing program of identifying and mapping special natural features of significance in each town. These maps show the approximate boundaries of known deer wintering areas and known locations of rare plants, animals, significant wildlife communities or state natural/fragile areas.

The **Critical Habitat Map** for Wolcott identifies 6 known critical habitat areas in town, as well as winter deer range boundaries which encompass about 1/3 of the town. It is important to note that the deer range boundaries are approximate only and subject to future changes. The location of critical habitats is shown in an intentionally inexact fashion for the protection of those habitats.

SECTION 12. LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

This Town Plan has identified some of the challenges and strengths of life in Wolcott as well as identified priorities and potential solutions. The plan's role in actually addressing priorities and bringing solutions and improvements to fruition, however, is very limited. The plan becomes an advocacy document, upon which further actions and rules should be based. That for which a plan such as this advocates normally falls into two categories:

1. Initiatives, projects, committees and partnerships, through which priorities can be addressed and solutions can be developed.
2. Specific ways of guiding the use of land in Wolcott, normally through regulations, incentives and information.

This section deals with the latter advocacy category. What follows is an assessment of how land is being used in Wolcott, what may or may not be working, and what land-use changes could be made to *minimize barriers* and *create opportunities* to address particular priorities and allow for certain solutions and improvements. In the end, land-use guidance cannot actually create fair and affordable housing, economic development, healthier lifestyles, or any of the other initiatives posited by this plan, but it can be used to minimize barriers and create opportunities. The rest is up to the residents and property-owners of Wolcott.

Goals, Policies, and Recommendations of this Section

Local land use is perhaps the most basic, crucial and often the most controversial issue faced by local communities. The Primary Goal of this town plan addressed the need for providing guidelines for the development of Wolcott in the best interest of its residents while also noting the importance of private property rights to the residents of town. This has required the planning commission to walk a careful line in make the recommendations in this land use plan.

GOAL

- For development and growth in Wolcott to occur in a reasonable and sustainable manner so as to protect the natural resource base, use services efficiently, and to preserve Wolcott's rural character and historic settlement patterns.

The Town has developed the following policies in order to guide development in a manner consistent with the overall goals and objectives of this plan. The policies were drafted in the effort to preserve landowner's property right as much as possible while guarding against unsafe, unhealthy, or costly forms of development.

POLICIES

- The siting and clustering of development are encouraged in order to replicate traditional patterns of development, to protect rural and scenic character, and to maintain contiguous tracts of resources and open land.
- The Flood Hazard district is intended to protect life and property within federally designated flood hazard areas. New construction is not permitted within these areas and existing buildings should be flood proofed as prescribed by the bylaws.
- Higher density residential developments should be located closer to major roadways and existing villages to improve emergency service response.
- Mixed-use developments are encouraged to allow commercial, business, and residential uses to be located near each other.

- Where possible, vegetative buffers should be maintained along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail as the Route 15 Corridor and other areas continue to develop.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- The Planning Commission should assist the Selectboard in pursuing funding for municipal services for the village districts, including the recommendations of the 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study*²⁴. The goals and objectives associated with these areas of town will not be possible without these services.
- The Planning Commission should amend the bylaws to reflect the new land use districts as presented in this chapter and on the proposed land use map.
- The Planning Commission should research and propose regulations for the siting of telecommunications towers. These regulations should be included within the zoning bylaws when they are amended.
- The Planning Commission should review all ‘Act 250’ applications for their compliance with this land use plan. Where the application is determined to not conform to this chapter or any goal or policy, the Planning Commission should participate in the ‘Act 250’ process in order to ensure the concerns of the town are addressed.

Assessment of Existing Land Use

Wolcott is still a rural community, but we are feeling the pressures of growth both within our borders and in surrounding communities. Economic development in communities such as Morristown, Stowe and Hardwick have helped make Wolcott a popular "bedroom community." With the increase in the number of residences over the years has come an increased demand on town services such as education and road maintenance.

The analysis below demonstrates that Wolcott has become increasingly dependent on residential properties to support town services. Unfortunately, residential properties tend to use as much or more in services than they pay in taxes.²⁵ It will be important for the Planning Commission and Selectboard to identify ways to encourage an increase in commercial and industrial development.

Figure 12-1 below shows the vast majority of parcels in Wolcott’s grand list are year-round residences. The town’s 2006 grand list contained 594 year round residential parcels, up from 537 five years ago. The number of farm and forestland parcels has decreased from 181 to 125 parcels since 1992. These parcels, in contrast to residential, have historically always paid more in property taxes than they demand in services.²⁶

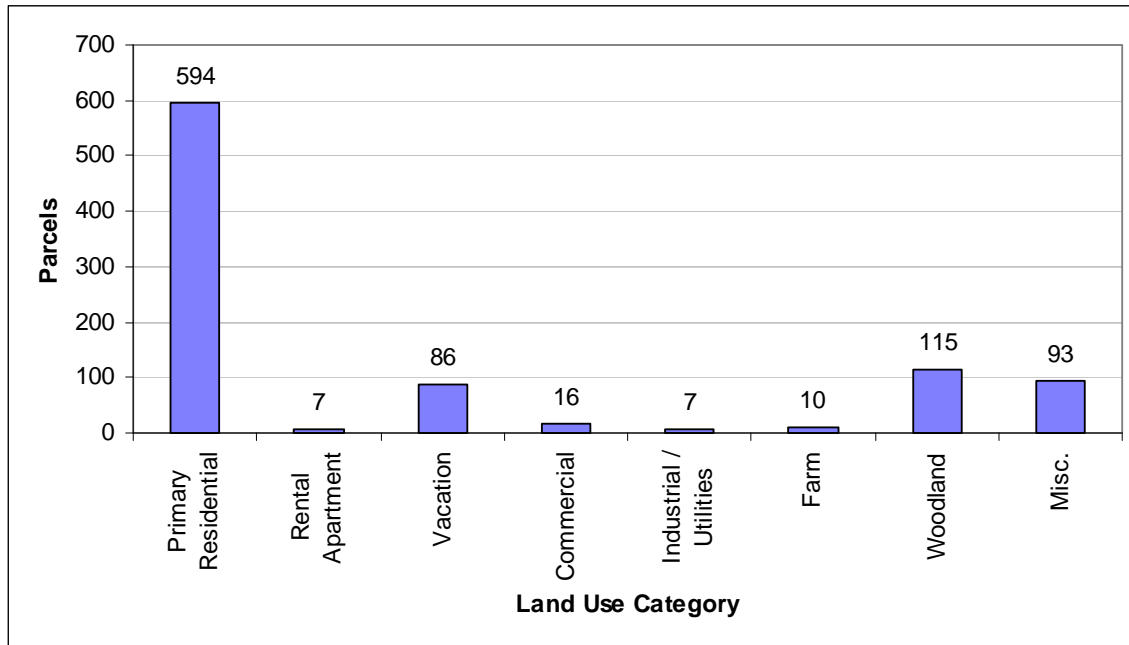
In 2001, the equalized total value of all properties in Wolcott’s grand list was \$66,801,349. Five years later, that number had increased to over \$108,087,246. Figure 12-2 shows that the assessed value was made up primarily by year-round residential properties (77%).

²⁴ 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott* performed by Stone Environmental, Inc., Montpelier, VT and Forcier, Aldrich & Associates, Essex Jct, VT.

²⁵ 2006. Lamoille County Planning Commission. *Cost of Community Services Study for Cambridge, Vermont.*

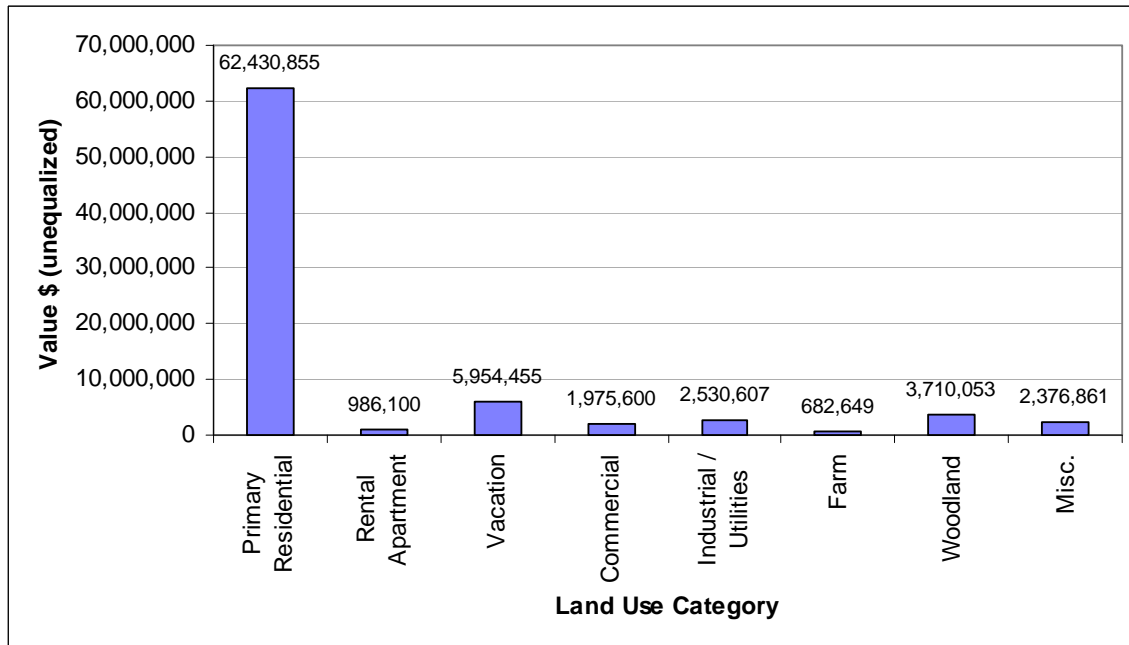
²⁶ Ibid.

Figure 12-1. Number of Parcels in Wolcott Grand List by Land Use Category, 2006



Source: 2007, Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review

Figure 12-2. Total Value of Parcels in Wolcott Grand List by Land Use Category, 2006.



Source: 2007, Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation and Review

General land use patterns

Evaluating general land use trends prior to 1993 is a difficult task. While accurate figures are available showing changes in the number parcels on the Grand List, the changes in acreage are much harder to evaluate. Wolcott's official size is 25,920 acres, but the Grand list has shown

the total assessed size of the town ranging anywhere between 22,867 acres in 1988 to 23,456 acres in 1992. Once tax maps have been digitized, the Town will have a much more accurate information baseline against which future land use changes can be measured.

It seems clear that Wolcott has become a popular place to build a home. What remains unclear is what the future of non-residential land uses in town may be through the foreseeable future. As home development continues, the natural aspects of Wolcott that have helped shape its popularity (scenic views, open fields, continuous forests, recreational amenities) may be threatened.

The current land use pattern can probably best be described as scattered development with some clusters of development in areas such as the village areas of North Wolcott and Wolcott Village. The industrial and commercial properties are appropriately located along Route 15 in order to take advantage of the access to this transportation corridor. As time goes on, there may be pressure for the linear corridor of Route 15 to develop in a sprawled manner.

Future Land Use

One could consider there to be eight different classes of land use – residential, commercial, industrial, business and professional office, agricultural, institutional, recreational (parks), and other services. All of these land use types would be appropriate in some areas of Wolcott. This section of the plan will attempt to classify the town into various districts based upon existing use, capacities, concerns and pressures identified in earlier chapters.

Within each district different controls can be used to regulate how lots are created, what uses are allowed, and how development is sited and designed. These controls take the form of minimum lot sizes, road frontage requirements, setbacks, slope restrictions, soil management rules, and more and are the components of zoning and subdivision regulations, which are discussed below.

Future Land Use Districts

Drawing from earlier goals and guiding principles in this plan, the Wolcott Planning Commission identified 6 general districts. These districts exist in the current zoning bylaws, re-adopted one year prior to this plan (see the **Future Land Use Map**). The proposed districts are:

- Village Areas - The village areas of Wolcott Village and North Wolcott have been the center of social, commercial, and governmental functions since the town's founding. These are areas where the town's highest residential densities are expected along with services to support the small commercial and service industry businesses expected in village settings. Hopefully future developments in wastewater treatment options will enable even higher densities than are currently allowed.
- Shorelands - The Shorelands District consists of all lands within 500 feet of the normal mean watermark around all lakes, ponds or impoundments in Wolcott exceeding 20 acres. This includes Wolcott Pond, Wapanaki Lake, and Zack Woods Pond. The goal of delineating these areas is to protect the sensitive shorelines of the large lakes in Wolcott.
- Flood Hazard Areas – This district shall consist of all lands in Wolcott identified as areas of special flood hazard on FEMA flood insurance maps and further delineated in the Flood Insurance Study covering the town. It is the purpose of this district to minimize and prevent loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, the

impairment of the tax base, and the extraordinary public expenditures and demands on public services that result from flooding.

- Wellhead Protection Area – This district includes those portions of the Town that are within the public water supply source protection areas serving the Elmore Water Cooperative. In order to protect the Elmore Water Cooperative’s public water supply, this district will restrict land uses that might impact surface or ground water quality.
- Route 15 Corridor - The Route 15 corridor is established to achieve two objectives: to maintain a safe, efficient travel corridor and to encourage commercial and industrial development in areas with the best highway access and exposure to travelers. As the only state route through town, the only sure source of 3-phase power and the likely corridor for advanced telecommunications infrastructure in town, Route 15 is seen as the area where commercial and industrial growth should be concentrated, as it has been in the past. The linear nature of the corridor is conducive to sprawl and unmanageable access creation. The Wolcott zoning regulations have attempted to stem these risks by lengthening route 15 road frontage requirements to 600 feet with a 100 foot frontage along secondary roads. The flood plains along the corridor are seen as a very limiting factor for overdevelopment in this district.
- Rural Residential - This area includes the balance of the town. Growth is allowed to occur in this district in a similar manner to how it has been over the past 30 years, including low to medium density residential, small and home businesses and industries, and farming and forestry.

Timing and Intensity of Growth

Future development in Wolcott should be timed so that the demands placed on community services are not overburdened. The Town has a responsibility to its taxpayers and residents to continue to provide the highest level of service while keeping costs under control. Future development - both residential and non-residential - should be encouraged in a manner that is sensitive to this responsibility.

Implementing the Land Use Plan

The two most common land use planning tools used in Vermont are zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations. Both of these are effective tools to implement the goals and objectives of the land use plan.

Zoning has four purposes as defined in State statutes:

1. to regulate the uses of land;
2. to regulate the dimensions, construction, repair, and removal of structures;
3. to establish dimensions of land, areas, yards and distances; and
4. to set densities of population and intensity of use.

Wolcott’s current **Zoning** consists of 4 standard districts and 2 overlay districts (flood hazard and wellhead protection). These areas reflect current land use patterns and other factors that affect development. For the time being any changes made to Wolcott’s zoning in an effort to implement aspects of this plan will most likely occur within one of the existing zones. For instance, higher densities could be allowed in the village zones as soon those areas’ wastewater treatment capacities are enhanced. Likewise a change of 3+ family structures from conditional to permitted use could occur in the village and/or Route 15 corridor districts.

Subdivision regulations apply to the creation of new lots. The size, shape, location, and

density of building lots will determine the pattern of development. Many times, towns use zoning bylaws to control growth when subdivision regulations would be more effective. When residents talk about sprawl and loss of agricultural land to development, they are discussing subdivision issues. One commonly discussed solution is clustering of houses to protect open space. To cluster housing, though, the developer must first cluster the lots. Also, the designation of minimum lot sizes (a common topic of debate in planning commission meetings) is a subdivision issue. Having a 2 acre minimum lot size or 5 acre or 10, or whether new lots need 75, 150 or 250 feet of road frontage, are all determined when lots are subject to subdivision regulations.

In short, zoning regulates what someone can build or how they can use their property, while subdivision regulations control the division of that property into two or more lots. It becomes important then to determine which tool is correct to accomplish a goal. For some districts, such as the flood hazard district, the regulation of the use of the lot is most critical to achieving the goal. In other districts, such as the rural residential district, subdivision regulations are more important. As a general rule, zoning is more important to achieving goals in dense or urban areas while subdivision regulations are more important to accomplishing goals in rural or less dense areas. Wolcott requires the use of both.

In light of this updated Town Plan, the Wolcott Planning Commission should review the current zoning and subdivision regulations to determine if they should be amended.

SECTION 13. IMPLEMENTING THIS PLAN

There are several ways that a town can implement a town plan. A few of these include:

- Zoning and subdivision regulations
- Impact fees
- A program to purchase of development rights
- Tax policies
- Individual projects and studies
- Education and outreach
- Action by citizen groups
- Capital budgeting
- Assorted other ordinances such as road policies.

Wolcott currently has zoning and subdivision regulations. This plan has called for exploration or potential changes to policies and rules in the regulations, but no broad-based revisions to the zoning or subdivision regulations are being suggested at this time.

Review of Town Roles

There are four local entities in the Town of Wolcott with primary roles in the regulation of land use and implementation of this plan overall: the Planning Commission, Selectboard, Development Review Board and Zoning Administrator. Each board or position has duties subscribed to it by State law in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117. The statutory text may be revised from time to time, but the basic roles remain:

The **Planning Commission** is charged with drafting the Town Plan and land use rules, including zoning and subdivision regulations. This is considered a “quasi-legislative” role. Once the Planning Commission has approved of its work in drafting plans and regulations, they are submitted to the Selectboard for final adoption. The Planning Commission can also pursue its own non-regulatory initiatives and activities, such as applying for village center designation or planning grants or drafting a capital budget, with the blessings of the Selectboard.

The **Selectboard** executes the legislative functions of the Town of Wolcott, including final adoption of the Town Plan, capital budget or any regulations drafted by the Planning Commission. The Selectboard may also put these tools to a full town vote. The Selectboard also appoints the members of the Planning Commission and Development Review Board and hires the Zoning Administrator.

The **Zoning Administrator (ZA)** is the recipient for all applications for regulated land uses and development in Wolcott. The ZA directly reviews any applications for proposed uses that are permitted by Wolcott’s subdivision and zoning regulations, refers to the Development Review Board any applications that require their consideration (e.g. conditional use), and denies any proposed uses that are in outright violation of the regulations.

The **Development Review Board (DRB)** has the final say on regulated land use and development rulings in Wolcott. The DRB considers all applications for uses covered by conditional use rules, requiring site plan approval or consisting of PUDs. The DRB also hears appeals of Zoning Administrator decisions and makes final rulings.

In a “nutshell,” it can be said that the Planning Commission makes plans and land use and development regulations, the Selectboard adopts them, and the Zoning Administrator and Development Review Board carry out the regulations. However there is more to it than that, and, given time and energy, each party can find many other ways to implement Wolcott’s vision for the future. It is not necessary or feasible for this plan to elaborate on them all.

There are other players as well. Many groups can form to guide their own initiatives, like the Wolcott Historical Society, the Northern Rivers Land Trust, recreational groups and more. There is also the **Lamoille County Planning Commission**, which develops a Regional Plan for to advise the planning activities of all Lamoille County towns, provides other technical assistance when needed, and issues regional approval of Town Plans, making towns eligible for different grant funding sources and other possibilities.

Finally and most importantly, there are the **Residents, Voters and Property Owners of Wolcott**, themselves, who make the most crucial decisions of all: how to use and develop their land, whether to follow the Town’s regulations, who to vote to the Selectboard, and where to invest their time, energy and resources to make their vision of Wolcott come alive. Without their actions and support, this Town Plan is nothing but ink on paper.

Recommended Actions for Implementation of the Town Plan

Each section of this Town Plan begins by listing various actions and recommendations pertinent to the subject material. These recommendations are reinforced by stated goals, policies and the background information presented in the sections. There are roles for the Wolcott Selectboard, Planning Commission and other groups to undertake, and all Town board and commission members are urged to read through them. The introductory section, however, lists 7 *top* priorities to accomplish over the next 5 years. The roles for these top action items are listed in the box below.

Top Action Items

Over the next five years the Wolcott Selectboard, Planning Commission and other groups are **strongly** recommended to take action to implement the following:

Selectboard

The Selectboard should...

1. Pursue a public-private partnership with other organizations or companies to ensure access to high-speed broadband Internet services for all Wolcott residents.
2. Facilitate the Planning Commission’s efforts to apply for Village Center Designation for Wolcott Village through the Vermont Downtown Program.
3. Direct the Wolcott Road Foreman to update Wolcott’s Highway Infrastructure (bridge and culvert) Study.
4. Consider the recommendations of the 2004 sewer feasibility study²⁷ for Wolcott Village and North Wolcott and pursue the planning and funding necessary to implement agreed-upon improvements and services, including but not limited to municipal treatment or multi-parcel septic facilities.
5. Pursue funding for an updated study on the location and extractability of gravel, sand and other land resources in Wolcott.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission should...

²⁷ 2004 *Sewer Feasibility Study for the Villages of Wolcott & North Wolcott* performed by Stone Environmental, Inc., Montpelier, VT and Forcier, Aldrich & Associates, Essex Jct, VT.

1. Take the lead on an application to earn Village Center Designation for Wolcott Village through the Vermont Downtown Program.
2. Either alone or in partnership with other organizations, develop a comprehensive plan for amenities, facilities and aesthetics for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail in town.
3. Explore ways to locally ensure the safety of private water impoundments below the state regulation threshold of 500,000 cubic feet, including but not limited to revisions to Wolcott's zoning regulations.

Wolcott Historical Society

The Historical Society should...

1. Assist the Wolcott Planning Commission in the Wolcott Village Center Designation Application.

How the Plan Relates to the Regional Plan and Adjacent Municipalities

Elmore: Two main roads travel from Elmore to Wolcott. The areas along these roads are rural residential. Both towns have zoning and treat development in a similar manner: 2-acre rural residential zoning.

Morristown: Wolcott connects to Morristown via Route 15, the most important roadway in Wolcott. Traffic is a major concern and will have effects on both communities. Morristown has similar zoning with areas south of Route 15 zoned 2 acre Rural Residential and areas north of Route 15 as a Rural Residential with Agricultural Use and Special Industrial District (2-acre residential and 5- acre industrial).

Hyde Park: The border between Hyde Park and Wolcott is fairly remote and crossed by a road only a few times. Hyde Park has zoned this area Rural Residential 5 with 5-acre lot minimum. No conflict is anticipated with Wolcott's 2-acre minimum along this border.

Craftsbury: Many commuters from Craftsbury travel the North Wolcott Road to reach employment opportunities to the south. Wolcott will need to monitor trends in commuter traffic to determine if problems develop.

Greensboro: Wolcott shares a very small border with Greensboro and no roads connect the two towns.

Hardwick: Like Morristown, Hardwick is an important neighbor, joined to Wolcott by Route 15. Hardwick offers employment and retail opportunities although not at the scale of Morristown. Traffic along Route 15 will continue to be important to the two towns. Both have higher-density corridor-type zoning along Route 15. Hardwick's Rural Residential zoning district allows slightly lower densities than Wolcott's (3 acres vs. 2), but this is not seen as a major conflict.

Regional Plan: The Lamoille County Regional Plan is based on the principle of local control. Nothing in the 2008 Wolcott Town Plan is expected to be in direct conflict with the regional plan or will have a negative effect on any future implementation of the regional land use plan. The Wolcott Planning Commission is willing to work with Lamoille County Planning Commission to address any concerns they may have.

Planning Maps

The following maps, which proceed after this page in the order given below, are meant as tools to help visualize many aspects of this Town Plan. When viewing or downloading this Town Plan electronically, the maps might be included in a separate file.

Historic Resources Map

Transportation Map

Utilities & Facilities Map

Land Resources Map

Agricultural Value Map

Soil Limitations Map

Water Resources Map

Critical Habitat Map

Future Land Use Map