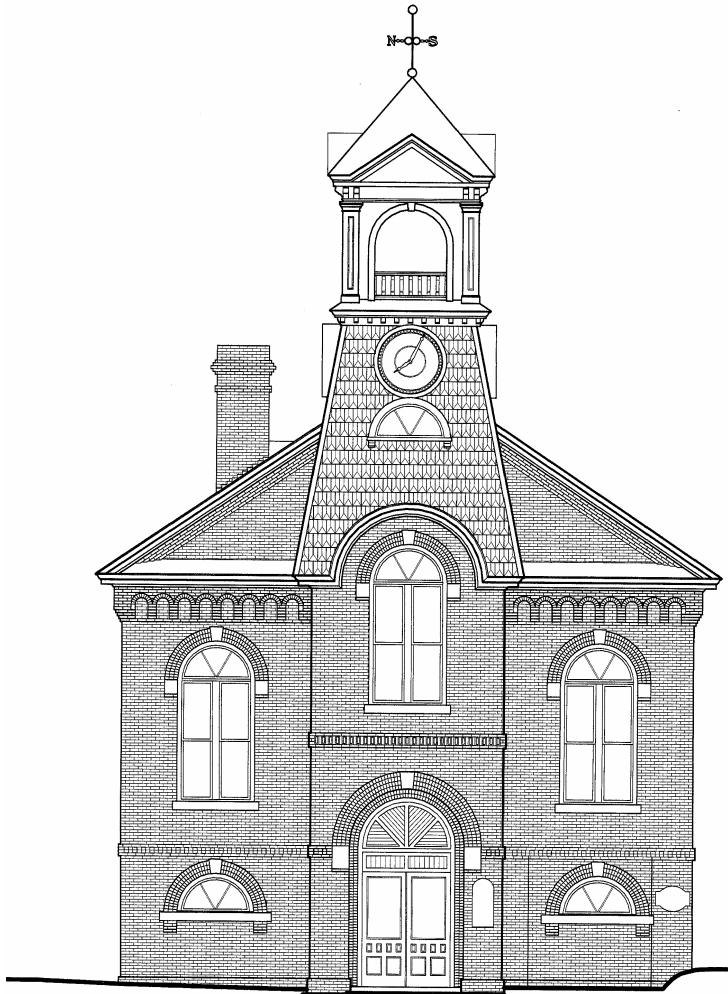


BETHEL TOWN PLAN



TOWN OF BETHEL PLANNING COMMISSION

Davis Dimock, Chair
Peter Dohrn
David Eddy, Jr.
Carla Hodgdon
Joanne Kent
Eric Richardson
Craig Wortman

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Bethel Town Plan

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I INTRODUCTION

A. SHAPING BETHEL'S FUTURE

Bethel has undergone major economic and social changes over the past 45 years. It has moved away from the traditional base of agriculture and forestry to one of service industries and light manufacturing. Bethel's population increased from 1,356 to 1,962 between 1960 and 2000. However there are now more workers residing in Bethel who work outside of town than those who have jobs in town.

Change stimulates the need for the community to examine its current conditions and to evaluate its prospects for the future. Change can be beneficial or it can be detrimental to the long-term welfare of the community. In order to understand the implications of change, the community must understand the problems and opportunities facing it, and identify goals for the future. Bethel has made a deliberate choice to establish a municipal planning program, to provide for orderly development, to balance its natural and built environments, and to retain its rural landscape.

A grounded Town Plan is the foundation for ensuring appropriate development and conservation of the community's resources. Effective town planning will reduce conflicts arising from change.

B. ORGANIZATION OF TOWN PLAN

1. **Table of Contents:** Listing of topics addressed in the Town Plan sections in the order that they appear.
2. **Background:** Narrative with relevant facts and up-date information for each section, which helps give context to the planning process.
3. **Appendices:** Consolidated 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action' for each section appropriate for the ensuing five years:
 - a. **Goals:** Broad-based statements setting forth the long-term objectives of the community;
 - b. **Planning Principles:** Statements and strategies that direct possible courses of action to implement Bethel's goals;
 - c. **Recommendations for Action:** Specific activities Bethel could take to implement the Town Plan goals.

C. GENERAL PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE PLAN

The Bethel Town Plan is an official statement on the growth and development of the Town. The Plan serves as an expression of values and a vision for growth and management for the next five years. It is not intended to be a static or inflexible document. The Planning Commission will periodically review and update this Plan to reflect new conditions and needs. The public has a responsibility to remain involved in implementing this Plan. Under the provisions of the Vermont Planning and Development (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117), this Plan is effective for a period of five years from date of adoption or amendment, unless readopted.

The format of this Plan is intended to include all plan elements as required by law and to be consistent with the general purposes and goals of 24 V.S.A. Section 4302. The Bethel Town Plan is compatible with the approved plans of other municipalities in the region and with the Regional Plan. This compatibility insures a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and policy framework to guide decisions of municipalities, regional planning commissions and state agencies.

The general purposes and intent of this Plan are:

1. To establish land use goals that provide adequate space for needed types of land use, both public and private, in locations that minimize the adverse impact of one land use on another;
2. To facilitate a process that allows for the protection of, and judicious use of, the Town's soils, minerals and stone, forests, agricultural lands, waters, wildlife, and other natural resources;
3. To provide for a healthful distribution of population and structures in the Town taking into consideration traffic congestion; fire, flooding, and other dangers; reduction of noise, air and water pollution; and protection of access to light and air; To facilitate the adequate and economical provision of transportation, water, sewage disposal, schools, parks, and other public requirements in relation to growth and to encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds and economy in the process of development;
4. To provide an energy plan for Bethel which will analyze the Town's energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems, and which will encourage energy conservation; and
5. To conserve the Town's historic sites and districts, which are significant contributors to the Town's essential character and economic vitality. To identify a process for the future preservation of sites and structures and village center that might deserve local, state, or federal designation.

The specific objectives of this Plan are:

1. To protect the rural character of the Town;
2. To continue Bethel village as a town center;
3. To protect and restore existing and future historical resources;
4. To provide safe, healthful and affordable housing for all segments of the population;
5. To prevent the creation of traffic hazards and congestion and aesthetically unpleasing development on Routes 107 and 12 and within the village center; and
6. To promote environmentally sound development practices.

D. HISTORY OF TOWN PLANNING IN BETHEL

Bethel's planning history began in 1948 when a Planning Committee was formed and which produced "A Twenty Year Plan for Bethel." This Plan provided a review of the community's needs and plans for the future, including community services, taxes, education, and economic development.

Bethel established a formal planning program in the early 1970's when the Select Board appointed a Planning Commission. One of first tasks of the Commission was to develop a Town Plan. Following completion of the Plan in 1975, the Planning Commission drafted the first comprehensive zoning regulation that was adopted later that year. This regulation required local approval of land and building development prior to commencing a project. This regulation or amendments to it have been in place since that time. In the late 1980's, the Town adopted subdivision regulations. On October 15, 1996, the Development Review Board (DRB) was created to approve all subdivisions prior to division or sale. In 2005 the *Bethel Zoning Ordinance* and *Bethel Sub-division Regulations* were updated, revised and harmonized with the state's revision of the Vermont land use statute, Chapter 117 of the *Vermont Statutes Annotated*.

In January 2006, the Planning Commission sent a public survey to all registered voters and landowners in Bethel. The intent of the survey was to identify current attitudes regarding land use and development for consideration in this Town Plan up-date. From labels generated by the Town Listers (landowners) and Town Clerk (registered voters), one thousand two hundred and fifty-seven (1,257) surveys with return postaged envelopes enclosed were sent out. Forty-two (42) surveys were returned as 'undeliverable' by the postal service for which current addresses could not be unearthed, resulting in one thousand two hundred and fifteen (1,215) surveys distributed. Five hundred and two (502) returned surveys were available for the final tally- an exceptionally high response rate of just over forty-one per cent (41.1%).

Looking at 'numbers only' for each question, the following sentiments prevailed:

1. Commercial development should be focused in the Village Center.
2. It is important to have the Town Offices located in the Village Center.
3. Bethel's municipal infrastructure should not be extended.
4. More development than current zoning permits should be granted on a piece of property if soils and slope allow.
5. We should not continue to grow without further limits.
6. Bethel should try to attract tourist-related businesses and activities to town.
7. There are areas in Bethel where growth should not occur: critical wildlife habitat, forests & woods, and agricultural land.
8. The town should not pave more dirt roads.
9. Personal, professional and business life is affected by lack of access to wireless telecommunications technology.

Two to five single-spaced pages of comments accompanied each of these first nine questions on the survey. An over-riding sentiment was: 'fix what we already have before expanding.' Comments covered a wide range from opinion to personal experience –and- were not necessarily specific to the question they followed: many related to or overlapped with other questions as well. In general, comments were sincere, thought-provoking, and could undoubtedly assist as a foundation regarding public sentiment and aggregate priorities well beyond the Planning Commission's current task to up-date the Bethel Town Plan.

10. A plethora of suggested uses for the Town Hall as a community / recreation center were submitted. These responses in their entirety were forwarded to the Town Hall committee.

11. 'Very important' (>50% affirmative) desired atmospheres & environs, in descending order to respondents, are: Clean and healthy environment; Condition and maintenance of town roads; Woods and forests; Well-planned development; Wildlife; Farms and fields; Employment opportunities; Small town

atmosphere; School system; Sense of community; The White River and its branches; ;Privacy; Village center; Rural character; Stores and public services; Scenic views.

‘Somewhat important’ desired atmosphere and environs are, again in descending order:
Affordable housing; Zoning and land use; Light pollution; Building regulations.

Only four items were rated as ‘not important’ in double-digits, these same items however, were also in a 38-40% range as ‘somewhat important’: Access to I-89; Available child care; Avail-able housing; Sidewalks and bike paths.

All materials pertinent to this endeavor (breakdown of landowner and voter numbers, tabulation of responses and all comments – as well as returned surveys) are on file at the Bethel Town Office. Copies of response tallies and all comments can be made available to interested parties and have been made available to Town Officials and local organizations (BBA, Rotary). Posting each question with accompanying comments on the Town webpage is being pursued.

Bethel’s Plan expired in August 2006. This Plan replaces that earlier version. It contains all the elements required of a Plan per State law and includes sections pertaining to land use, transportation, natural resources, utilities and facilities, historic and cultural resources, energy, and implementation of the Plan.

II TOWN HISTORY

Consisting of approximately 29,144 acres, the Town of Bethel is situated near the center of the watershed of the White River. The region is characterized by steep craggy hillsides covered with lush deciduous/coniferous forest and transected by narrow valleys.

The settlement of the town in the late 18th Century transformed the virgin forest into a few hundred small farms and two small villages whose locations were rigidly set by topography. The major routes of travel across east central Vermont were restricted to the narrow valleys of the White River and its branches. This fact, together with the location of the best natural water-power sites, fixed the location of both villages. Until about 1835 the east village, then called Kinney’s Mills, was the larger of the pair. Since that time the west village, then called Marsh’s Mills, has been the largest in town. Its location at the junction of two major valleys, one of which leads to a practical route over the Green Mountains to the west, makes it a natural crossroads. The advent of the railroad in 1848 highlighted this situation. Since that time the growth of the west village continued even at times when the population of the town as a whole decreased. By the time of the Civil War, the name Marsh’s Mills had been replaced by “Bethel Village”. Rural localities grew during this early period—Locust Creek, ’Lympus, Lilliesville, Gilead, Camp Brook, and Christian Hill. Their schools and/or churches functioned as social centers but none of these localities contributed significantly to the economic development of the town. The 1840 census records 1,886 citizens in the Town of Bethel.

Between 1840 and the 1880's, Bethel experienced a net population decline. The lure of better farmland and employment opportunities in the West combined with declining soil fertility on hill farms encouraged emigration. Where tillage was the poorest, farms were sometimes abandoned. The decline of small hill farm communities continued well into the 20th century. As this shift occurred, hillsides slowly recovered from open pastures to thick, second growth forestland and some of the more remote roads fell into disuse.

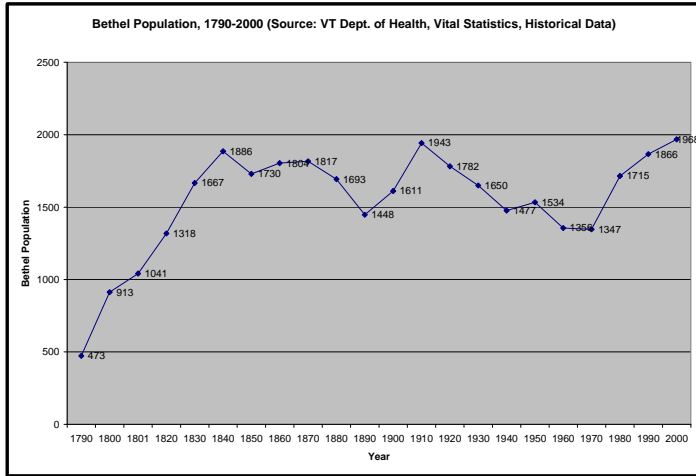
With increased mechanization available toward the end of the 19th century, Bethel Village sustained its "Golden Age" from the late 1880's until the early 1920's and developed an industrial character. The three largest industries of the era—the shoe shop, the tannery and the white granite quarry and cutting sheds—flourished because of the ease of railroad transportation, the availability of local workers and the influx of European immigrants skilled in granite extraction, cutting and sculpting. During this period Bethel proudly enhanced its community with major cultural and civic improvements including the town hall, the first high school and library, electric lighting, new churches, and civic and business organizations. Main street businesses thrived as they supported the many needs of the community. By 1910, the town population grew to 1,953 with nearly 50% of the citizens residing in the Village.

Economic markets shifted and by 1922-23, Bethel's leading industries were no longer competitive with larger manufacturing centers. Many of the skilled workers, including recent immigrants, left Bethel in search of work elsewhere. The next 50 years were characterized by only modest employment opportunities in the Village (Fyles & Rice plywood, Bethel Mills, the Creamery and GW Plastics). With the advent of refrigeration and more farm mechanization around WWI, dairy farming and the export of dairy products sustained the agricultural community. Over the next half-century, market forces gradually affected this economic sector until fewer than five dairy farms remained by 1970. The town recorded a low of 1,347 citizens in the 1970 census.

Bethel's population has been increasing over the last 35 years for a variety of reasons: (1) the post-WWII baby boom, (2) the construction of the interstate system and the placement of interstate Exit #3 three miles from the village center, (3) new and expanding major employers and (4) the in-migration of new-to-Vermont residents for recreation, retirement or resettlement. Because of its location and accessibility, the town is growing more so into a "bedroom community" of residents whose work and shopping preferences take them outward in a radius of at least 30 miles. Much of this residential growth has occurred and future growth will continue to occur through the subdivision of remaining large agricultural and forested tracts of land.

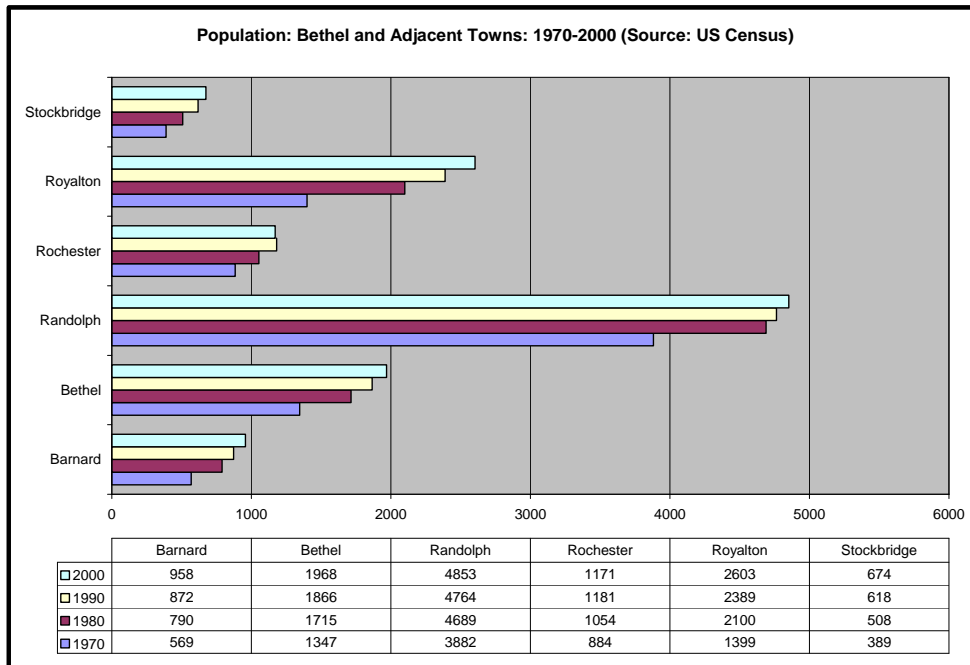
III POPULATION

A. POPULATION PATTERNS



Population growth is an important factor in municipal planning and development. Increases or decreases in population, as well as, the density and overall distribution pattern of resident and non-resident populations, can affect the type of public services and infra-structure that are necessary. Large public investments such as educational facilities, public utilities, and highways can be more effectively planned and built within the context of population characteristics or changes within the town and within the geographic region impacting it.

Population statistics reveal that Bethel’s population in 2000 was 1,968 compared to 1,866 in 1990, a growth rate of 5.4%. Compared to adjacent towns, Bethel experienced one of the slower growth rates, also less than that of either Windsor County or the statewide average.



Although at a lower rate, Bethel’s population marches in tandem with the state as a whole for 1990, 2000 and (estimates for) 2003.

Population: Bethel and Vermont, 1950 – 2000				
<i>(Source: US Census)</i>				
Census Year	Population: Bethel, VT	% Change	Population: Vermont	% Change
1950	1,534	+3.8%	377,747	+5.1%
1960	1,356	-11.6%	389,881	+3.2%
1970	1,347	-0.6%	444,330	+13.9%
1980	1,715	+27.3%	511,456	+15.1%
1990	1,866	+8.8%	562,758	+10.0%
2000	1,968	+5.4%	608,827	+8.1%
2003 (est.)	1,980	+0.6%	619,107	+1.6%

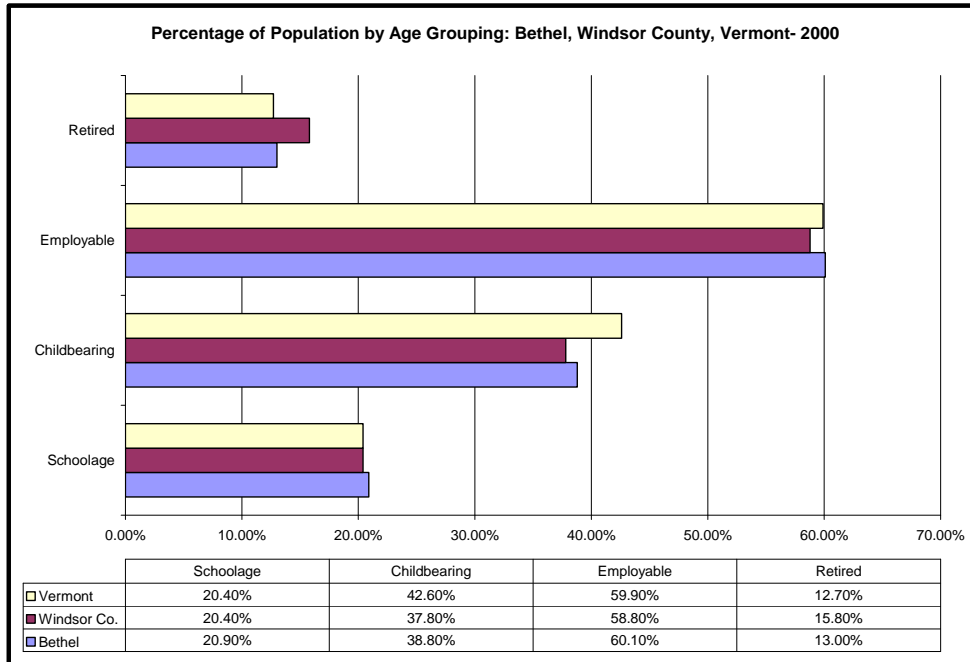
Births and deaths of Town residents, 1999-2002, reveal an overall gain, however, this increase is far smaller than the gain in total population for the same time period. The primary factor influencing population is families moving into Bethel rather than unusual birth or death rates.

Birth/Death Rates versus Total Population, 1999-2002, Bethel VT					
<i>(Source: VT Department of Health, Vital Statistics)</i>					
Year	Bethel Births & Deaths to Town Residents			Bethel Total Population	
	Births	Deaths	Net Diff.	Population	Net Diff.
1999	31	20	+11	1864	
2000	15	13	+2	1968	+104
2001	27	16	+11	1976	+8
2002	19	26	-7	1980	+4
Four Year Difference			+17		+166

The 2000 Census saw Vermont move from the 48th ‘most populous state’ to 49th. Notwithstanding this rank, population density (persons per square mile of land area) continues to increase. This is consistent within Windsor County and Bethel. In Bethel, population density was 37.86 in 1980, 41.19 in 1990, and 43.44 in 2000.

B. AGE OF POPULATION

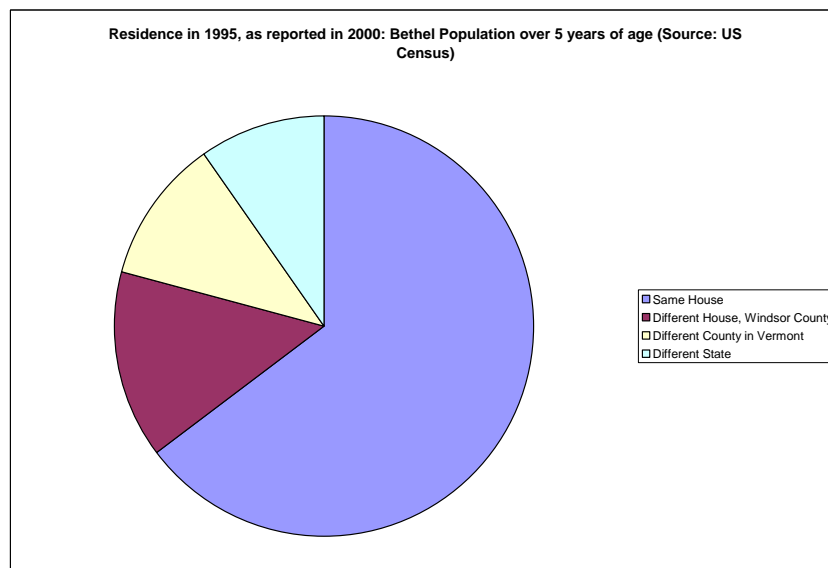
Bethel’s population is not significantly different than other parts of the State. Comparing 2000 census numbers for the percentage of population groups in Bethel to Windsor County and all of Vermont, we have a similar volume of school-aged children and adolescents, a slightly higher percent of workforce-aged adults, and are the median for women of child-bearing age and for the over-sixty-five group.



Between 1990 and 2000, the under-18 age group decreased as a percent of total population. This was consistent for Bethel, Windsor County, and the State, although for Bethel it continues to be a larger overall percentage than for Windsor County or Vermont. Nationally, for the past three decades, older persons have continued to represent an increasing percentage of all age groups. While the 19-64 year group percentage in Bethel continued to grow between 1990 and 2000, there was no change in the over-65 group as a percentage of total population.

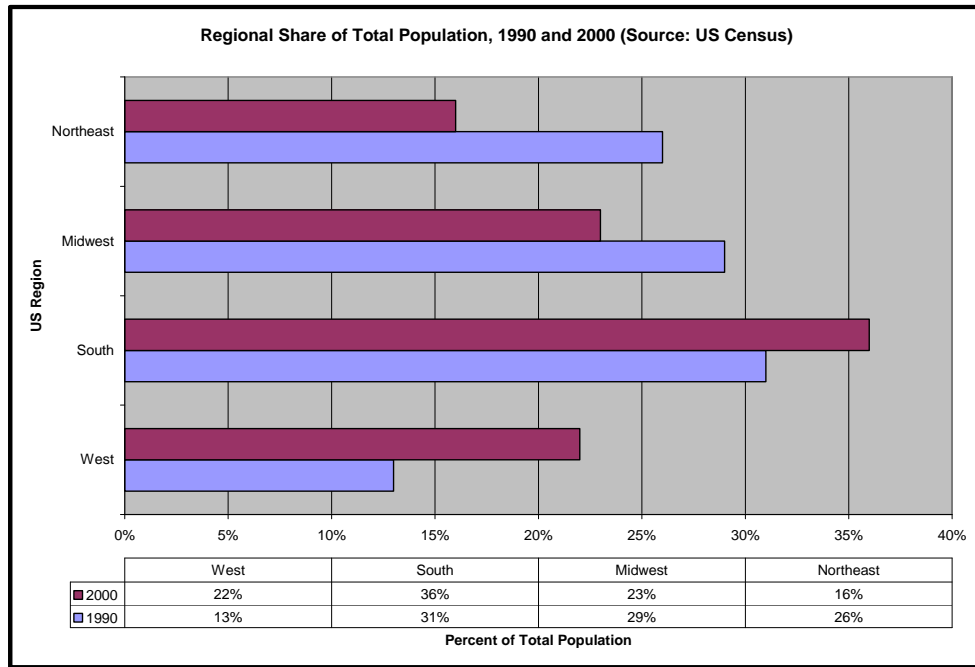
C. HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

At the time of the 2000 census, nearly 65% of Bethel residents over the age of five years had been at the same residence since 1995 and 90% had been residents of Vermont in 1995.



D. FUTURE POPULATION PROJECTIONS

US population patterns indicate that the Northeast had the smallest growth rate (6%) during the 1990's (West- 20%, South- 17%, Midwest- 8%). In conjunction with changing growth rates, regional shares of the total population shifted considerably between 1990 and 2000: the Northeast's proportion moved from 26 to 16%, the South from 31 to 36%, West from 13 to 22%, Midwest from 29 to 23%. (Source: US Census).



Population increases in both Vermont and Bethel reflect the Northeast's declining growth as compared to the 1990's. It is anticipated that these slower rates will continue in the 21st Century. (Source: US Census and VT Dept. of Health, Vital Statistics, Historical Data).

Net migration (difference between population change and natural increase- births minus deaths) can be expected to increase Bethel's population at less than two per cent growth. (Source: VT Dept. of Health, Vital Statistics).

The fastest growing segment of the Vermont population is the 45-64 year old group. There has been a slight decrease since the 2000 Census in the under-15 population, as well as in the 25-39-age group. (Source: VT Dept. of Health, Vital Statistics).

IV ECONOMY

A. Locations of Economic Activity

Bethel serves as a center of employment for adjacent communities in the Upper White River Valley: including Royalton, Stockbridge, Barnard, and Rochester. Basic retail services are

available, as well as a building materials supplier, banking services, and automobile sales and service.

I-89 and Routes 107 and 12 serve as primary transportation links to Bethel. The village area serves as the primary concentration point for services and retail businesses, however, Routes 107 and 12 have seen considerable development in recent years. Major employers in Bethel are Vermont Castings, a multi-line stove/fireplace manufacturer; GW Plastics, an injection molding manufacturer; Valley Motors, an automobile dealer; the Whitcomb School; Bethel Mills, a building materials supplier; Ultramotive, a container dispensing business; and Silvatech, a manufacturer of specialized sawmill processing equipment.

Economic activity in Bethel has seen moderate growth since the early 1990's: largely manufacturing and service oriented. For major retail, trade, and health care, Bethel residents utilize the Tri-Town Area (White River Junction, Hanover, and Lebanon), Rutland, or the Barre-Montpelier Area, and to a limited extent to Randolph.

B. LABOR FORCE

1. Employment Patterns

The number of Bethel residents in the labor force has risen each year since 2001, however, at a rate somewhat different than that of Windsor County as a whole and of Vermont.

LABOR FORCE: Residents of Bethel, Windsor County and Vermont

[Source: VT Dept. of Employment & Training]

YEAR	BETHEL	WINDSOR CO.	VERMONT
2000	1,100	31,050	333,200
2001	1,090 (-1%)	31,550 (+2%)	339,400 (+2%)
2002	1,160 (+6%)	31,900 (+1%)	348,700 (+3%)
2003	1,180 (+2%)	32,750 (+3%)	350,700 (+0.6%)

The private sector continues as the largest employer for Bethel residents in the labor force: 73.8%. Another 13.8% work for government, and 12.2% are self-employed (Source: U.S. Census 2000).

OCCUPATIONAL TYPES:

BETHEL RESIDENTS IN THE LABOR FORCE 16 YEARS AND OVER

(Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census)

Occupational Type	1990 Census		2000 Census	
	Number	% of labor force	Number	% of labor force
Managerial/Professional	216	23%	353	36.2%
Technical, Sales, Administrative	220	23%	210	21.5%
Production, transportation, and material moving			181	18.5%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance			111	11.4%
Service	177	19%	107	11.0%
Precision Production	166	16%		
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	140	15%		
Farming and Forestry	25	3%	14	1.4%
TOTAL	944	100%	976	100%

When the Bethel labor force is compared with that of adjacent towns and Vermont as a whole, it appears that a lower percentage of females with children under six years are employed, however, a higher percentage of families with children six to seventeen years have all parents working:

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

[Source: Census 2000]

Town	Population 16 years and over- % in the labor force			Own children: % with all parents in family in labor force	
	Total	Female		Under six years	Six to seventeen years
		Total	With own children under 6 years		
Barnard	68.3	62.8	75.6	73.8	80.0
Bethel	66.1	60.5	58.9	61.0	83.8
Randolph	69.0	63.4	54.7	51.2	70.5
Rochester	70.4	62.2	66.0	70.0	92.2
Royalton	64.2	62.0	75.3	79.4	82.6
Stockbridge	66.9	61.5	48.3	36.0	74.5
Vermont	69.3	64.3	70.6	68.1	78.2

2. Unemployment

The number of unemployed Bethel workers seeking jobs was comparable with Windsor County and Vermont during 2000 and 2001. Since then, the number exceeds both:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

[Source: VT Dept. of Employment & Training]

YEAR	BETHEL	WINDSOR CO.	VERMONT
2000	2.4%	2.3%	2.9%
2001	3.0%	2.8%	3.6%
2002	4.1%	3.2%	3.7%
2003	5.7%	3.7%	4.6%
July 2004	5.0%		
July 2005	6.8%		

The 2000 US Census revealed that Bethel is about mid-point regarding civilian labor force unemployment rates when compared with neighboring towns:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

[Source: Census 2000 Summary file 3]

Town	Civilian Labor Force: % Unemployed
Barnard	2.7
Bethel	2.8
Randolph	4.9
Rochester	4.4
Royalton	2.3
Stockbridge	0.0
Vermont	4.2

3. TRAVEL TO WORK

In 2000, approximately 6.9% (69) of Bethel’s employed labor force worked at home. For those who commuted to work:

- 18.4% (164) traveled less than 10 minutes to work;
- 32.3% (287) traveled between 10 and 20 minutes;
- 17.5% (156) traveled between 20 and 30 minutes;
- 26.7% (238) traveled between ½ to 1 hour;
- 5.1% (45) traveled more than one hour.

Comparing employed Bethel residents to their counterparts in adjacent towns, a higher percentage carpool and total commuting time in minutes is in the middle to lower range:

COMMUTING TO WORK

[Source: Census 2000]

Town	Workers 16 years and over			
	% in carpools	% using public transportation	Who do not work at home: mean travel time to work (minutes)	% who work outside county of residence
Barnard	4.6	0.8	25.1	23.3
Bethel	15.5	0.0	23.5	40.3
Randolph	14.9	0.5	21.7	39.2
Rochester	7.6	0.6	22.8	37.0
Royalton	15.3	0.5	25.9	36.0
Stockbridge	11.0	0.0	28.7	53.3
Vermont	11.9	0.7	21.6	21.5

According to Census 2000, the hours commuting to work each year now exceeds the two weeks of vacation time frequently taken by workers over the course of a year.

C. INCOME

1. Average Annual Wage: The average annual wage in 2001 for Bethel’s employed labor force was \$30,685. In general, between 1990 and 2001, the annual average wage in Bethel was greater than that for Windsor County and usually exceeded that for Vermont:

ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGE

[Source: VT Department of Employment & Training]

YEAR	BETHEL	WINDSOR COUNTY	VERMONT
1990	\$19,607	\$19,226	\$20,531
1992	\$21,548	\$21,115	\$22,364
1994	\$22,672	\$22,857	\$22,963

1996	\$25,032	\$23,091	\$24,479
1998	\$26,958	\$24,960	\$26,624
2000	\$30,369	\$27,414	\$28,925
2002	\$30,685	\$29,167	\$31,041

Average annual wages by occupation type cover a wide range: in 2004 (for six occupations measured), from \$26,570 to \$42,014. The annual increase between 1997 and 2000 was far greater than over the following four years:

ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGE BY OCCUPATION TYPE

[Source: VT Department of Employment & Training]

OCCUPATION	1997	2000	2004
Public Administrator	\$33,983	\$33,807	\$42,570
Transportation/Utilities	\$29,448	\$31,755	\$37,135
Manufacturing	\$29,351	\$35,915	\$37,019
Finance/Insurance	\$22,060	\$29,852	\$32,163
Construction	\$24,379	\$28,600	\$28,974
Services	\$21,693	\$25,080	\$26,570

2. Median Family Income: Bethel families rely on two incomes for financial stability, as do other Windsor County and Vermont families:

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE & MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

[Source: Census- Historical data]

YEAR	BETHEL		WINDSOR COUNTY		VERMONT	
	Average Wage	Median Income	Average Wage	Median Income	Average Wage	Median Income
1979		14,806		17,798		17,205
1989	19,214	32,098	18,552	34,691	19,487	34,780
1999	29,418	41,250	25,829	49,002	27,589	48,625

The median family income in Bethel varies greatly depending on household type:

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

[Source: Census 2000]

Subject	Households	Families			Nonfamily Households
		Total	Married-couple family	Female Householder- no husband present	
Number	806	547	447	70	259
Median Income	\$34,141	\$41,250	\$45,813	\$17,083	\$20,688

Notwithstanding the sizeable range in median income, the average Bethel household is nowhere near capacity to purchase their own home at an affordable rate (see 'Housing' section).

3. Poverty Rates: As with median family income, the household type greatly influences whether a Bethel family subsists below, near, or above poverty status:

**POVERTY STATUS OF FAMILIES AND NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDERS
1999 - BETHEL TOWN, WINDSOR COUNTY, VERMONT**

[Source: Census 2000]

Poverty Status	Number		Percent below poverty level
	All income levels	Below poverty level	
Families	547	43	7.9%
With related children under 18 years	255	29	11.4%
With related children under 5 years	98	16	16.3%
Married-couple families	447	21	4.7%
With related children under 18 years	183	9	4.9%
With related children under 5 years	71	7	9.9%
Families with female householder, no husband present	70	19	27.1%
With related children under 18 years	54	17	31.5%
With related children under 5 years	20	9	45.0%
Nonfamily householder	259	61	23.6%
Families below:			
150 percent of poverty level	85 (16%)		
185 percent of poverty level	134 (25%)		

D. CHILD CARE

As many as 115 preschool children in Bethel might need full time child care services (average number of births per year, 1999 through 2002, times five), and up to 150 school age children potentially need before and after school care (average elementary class size times six). Securing accessible and available child care is a concern for many local families with young children. A 2002 report by the VT Agency of Human Services' Planning Division showed a 34% 'met need' for child care in the Stockbridge, Bethel, Rochester, Pittsfield, Granville and Hancock area.

As of January, 2005, there were only four registered child care providers residing in Bethel. Some children in their care reside elsewhere. The Bethel Elementary School offers an After School Program, Monday through Friday, with a cap of 59 school age children: families must have alternate arrangements for any day that school is not in session. There is no 'Before

School Hours' program available. The Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union Early Education Program provides two-days-a-week services for up to 15 children with limited hours (9:00 AM to 2:30 PM). No local business has on-site child care for employees with young children.

Bethel's Zoning Ordinance, revised in February 2005, poses few or no barriers to individuals who wish to provide child care in their homes.

V. HOUSING

A. BACKGROUND

A major function of local housing planning is to meet two community objectives – first, to provide safe and affordable housing for our present and future population and second, to enable a suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the community. Additionally, growth in housing affects the capacity to provide facilities and services.

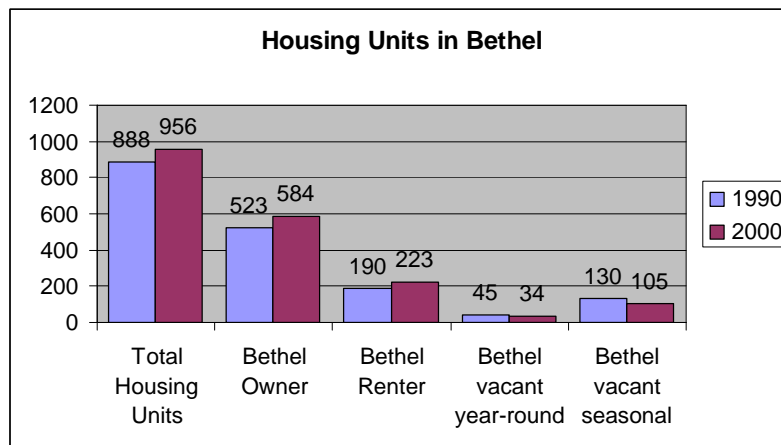
Housing built in the absence of adequate planning for its impact on schools, roads, and other public services can overburden the ability of the taxpayers to pay for these services.

This section discusses the amount, type, location, and affordability of existing housing and the needs for future housing. Other sections of this Plan also include information on housing. The data presented in this section are extracted from two sources – U.S. Census Bureau's Vermont State Data Center and Town Grand List Records (Form 411). Data collected from these sources do not match exactly due to variations in record keeping and classifications. Notwithstanding, they are considered relevant and reliable data sets for analysis.

B. NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS

A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters, or if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Population & Housing, 1990 to 2000 changes in housing units in Bethel were: 8% increase in total housing units, 12% increase in owner occupied, 17% increase in renter occupied, 24% decrease in vacant year-round, 19% decrease in vacant seasonal housing units. The following graph shows the change from 1990:



Surrounding Towns, County, & State Change In Housing Units, 1990 - 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Population & Housing, 2000)

Housing Units	1990	2000	% Change
Stockbridge	488	528	8%
Royalton	1,161	1,281	10%
Rochester	737	768	4%
Randolph	1,830	1,905	4%
Bethel	888	956	8%
Barnard	607	629	4%
Windsor County	29,849	31,621	6%
Vermont	271,214	294,382	9%

C. HOUSING TYPE, OWNERSHIP, and PRICE

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census for Bethel indicated that 693 units or 72% of its housing consisted of single-family homes. This represented the largest component of the Town’s housing stock followed next by 103 mobile homes (11%)

In 2000 there were 584 owner-occupied units and 233 renter occupied units (85% of total housing units), these rates included mobile homes as well as conventional homes. There were 139 vacant units including seasonal and vacation home properties. Comparison to total housing units (956): 61% owner-occupied, 24% renter-occupied, and 15% vacant.

Grand List Reports filed annually with the Vermont Department of Taxes (Form 411) provide valuable information regarding ownership characteristics in addition to valuations. Year-round, vacation, and mobile homes valuations are represented in the table below:

Valuations of Residential Property, Bethel – 2005 (2005 Form 411)

Housing Type	Listed Value	Percent of Total
Residential (Year Round)	68.9 m	86%
Vacation Homes	6.9 m	9%

Farms	1.5 m	2%
Mobile Homes	3.1 m	4%

Farms and residential properties combined represented eighty-eight percent (88%) of the total Grand List values according to the 2005 report. These valuations, however, are inclusive of the acreage of the entire parcels on which the properties are located.

HOUSING PRICES

[Source: From Vermont Housing Data]

AVERAGE PRICE OF PRIMARY RESIDENCES SOLD

Year	Bethel	Windsor County	Vermont	Year	Bethel	Windsor County	Vermont
2000	\$96,553	\$129,754	\$126,605	2000	\$147,500	\$234,927	\$175,940
2001	\$92,496	\$139,081	\$138,592	2001	\$118,900	\$268,297	\$180,573
2002	\$120,173	\$164,401	\$154,347	2002	\$129,150	\$275,071	\$204,217
2003	\$100,098	\$177,965	\$166,358	2003	\$75,998	\$289,458	\$232,204
2004	\$153,681	\$187,067	\$183,236	2004	\$184,813	\$429,041	\$275,460

D. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing is ‘affordable’ if a household making an area’s median income is paying no more than 30 percent of its income on housing. Housing costs for homeowners are: principal on mortgage payments, interest, property taxes, and insurance. Housing costs for renters are rent and utilities.

In 2004 the median purchase price for a home in Vermont rose to \$165,000; this would require an annual income over \$62,000. The median household income in Vermont is just over \$43,000 (In 1999 Bethel’s was \$34,141). Based on Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) calculations, this income would purchase only a \$114,600 home.

A salary of \$27,914 (\$13.32 per hour) is required to afford the \$698 average Fair Market Rent for a modest, two-bedroom apartment. The median gross monthly rent (rent plus utilities and fuel) for Bethel in 2000 was \$492.

The Directory of Affordable Rental Housing (DoARH) lists only two subsidized rental housing facilities in Bethel: Depot 1 Apartments with 15 units and Depot II Apartments with 10 units.

E. Emerging Housing Trends in Windsor County

Compared to area towns, property values and sales activity in Bethel are typical, excepting Barnard and Pomfret, which have substantially higher values in both the year-round and second-home market.

A study of Windsor County housing supply and demand is relevant to Bethel’s future planning for housing. According to the *Windsor County 2005 Housing Needs Assessment*:

Renter Households

- Low-income Windsor County residents struggle with a high priced market with few rental housing options.
- Households earning \$37,047 per year (80% of the estimated 2005 county median household income) can afford to pay about \$926 monthly for rent (including utilities.)
- It is estimated there are 4,632 low-income households in Windsor County and only 2,400 units available, creating a shortage of 2,231 affordable rental units in 2005.
- Subsidized housing built by Windsor County's affordable housing developers provides for about 24% of low-income renter households in 2005.

Owner Households

- By 2010 in Windsor County there will be a need for an additional 813 owner-occupied homes to meet the expected demand of 18,453 households.
- A gap between incomes needed to purchase a home and purchase prices is expected to increase by about \$80,000 between 2000 and 2010.
- The increases in median incomes during this time will not keep pace with the significant purchase price escalation.

Source: Gent Communications analysis of data from Census (2000) and Claritas (2005, 2010)

[See Appendices A, B & C for 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action,' respectively, specific to Housing and other sections of this Town Plan.]

VI. PUBLIC UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

A. BACKGROUND

One of the primary goals of this Plan is to avoid the ill effects of scattered development and to preserve the rural landscape. Another is to promote Bethel village as the town center with a densely settled area for residential, civic, service, and commercial uses. The availability, timing, and location of public investments throughout the Town directly affect future land use patterns. An area with a full complement of public services, such as water supply, sewage disposal, roads, electric service, and similar utilities or services will attract private investment benefiting the entire community. Conversely, inadequate or poorly planned capital investments will lead to a land use pattern that is contrary to the goals of this Plan and at levels uneconomic to the long-term well being of the Town.

The following sections consist of an inventory and analysis of the principal utilities and facilities serving the Town.

B. HIGHWAYS

The Town of Bethel Highway Department presently has the necessary equipment to adequately maintain town highways and bridges: .892 miles of Class I road, 11.15 of Class II, and 56.98 miles of Class III, for a total of 69.022 miles. Major equipment includes three 7-yard dump trucks with plows, one 1-ton truck, two road graders, one Case backhoe, and one front-end loader. All equipment is presently in good condition. The Town annually appropriates monies to an Equipment Replacement Fund which is used to replace older equipment. Currently, \$60,000 is placed into this fund annually. The Town Garage, located just outside of the village on Sand Hill Road, houses the equipment and is adequate for current needs. A separate salt storage shed is located on this site as well. In recent years, the Town has replaced its fuel storage tanks so as to be in compliance with State underground tank storage tank laws. While these facilities are adequate for the present level of service, an increase in town highway maintenance duties would more than likely require additional equipment and workers.

C. EMERGENCY SERVICES

1. Fire Protection - The Town is served by a single volunteer fire department that responds to fires and other emergencies in Bethel and neighboring towns. Neighboring communities' departments are called in on large fires requiring outside resources. The Bethel Fire Department is located in a new station house on Pleasant Street (VT 12) near the school. This space should be sufficient for the foreseeable future. Water pressure and the location of hydrants throughout town are adequate.

The Fire Department is adequately staffed by volunteers. Its emergency vehicles consist of a 2001 E-1 Pumper, a 1981 Dodge van for equipment, a 1976 Tanker, a 1973 Maxim Pumper, and a 1954 General Pumper. They have a mini-pumper that is jointly used with the Barnard Fire Department. The Department has developed a five-year capital budget that addresses the need to up-grade equipment.

2. Law Enforcement -The Town of Bethel does not need a full time police force, and none is contemplated for the next five years. Currently, appointed constables provide limited police security and traffic control services when needed. All other police functions are performed by the Windsor County Sheriff or Vermont State Police, Troop "E" which is located off Route 107 immediately south of the Bethel/Royalton Town Line in Royalton.

3. Emergency Medical Services - Medical emergencies are handled well by the White River Valley Ambulance, Inc. located in Bethel. They have three ambulances and a rescue truck with extraction equipment, a snowmobile and rescue sled, and an ATV. The closest hospital is Gifford Medical Center, located in Randolph. Medivac services are available by the DHART helicopter.

4. Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Response - The Town has just completed a Rapid Response Plan (RRP) that covers the procedures for Bethel's response to a disaster. In brief, the Select Board will formally declare a state of emergency in the event of a disaster that the Select Board feels is beyond the ability of town forces to cope with. This declaration will be faxed to Vermont Emergency Management and a local emergency operation Bethel Town Plan – Adopted August 28, 2006

center will be set up in the Town Office. The Town Office is equipped with backup power so that it can function during an emergency. Delbert Cloud, the Town Manager, is the Town's Emergency Management Coordinator and would be assisted by several people who have been identified in the RRP in coordinating the Town's response to a disaster.

In the event that emergency shelters are needed, the Town has identified the High School, and the St. Anthony's Parish Catholic Church for such use. Neither of these currently have backup power and this is needed for these sites to properly function during an emergency. There is also a need for a shelter on the easterly side of town and should be identified a.s.a.p. In order to avoid disasters as much as possible, the Town should continue to develop an all-hazards plan which will also address mitigation and education needs.

D. MUNICIPAL OFFICES

The Town Offices are located in the former Creamery Building on South Main Street in the village. Space in the building is used for the Town Clerk, Town Manager, and other town officers. A small conference room is available for meetings. This facility is inadequate for present needs. The building is too small to house all town governmental functions. Off-street parking and meeting space are both very limited. The building is not in compliance with the requirements of the American Disabilities Act and other public building requirements. The Town has initiated engineering studies to determine whether the Creamery can be brought into ADA compliance as well as have its mechanical and electrical systems upgraded so that the building could be used on an interim basis until funding is found for a permanent solution.

E. PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Bethel Public Library (1892), located on Main Street, is owned and operated by the Bethel Library Association. The Association is administered by a Board of Trustees. The Association is a non-profit corporation and receives funding from private foundations and individuals. In addition, the Town appropriates funds in order for the Library to be a public library and to enable the Association to receive grants and other benefits. The Library employs a librarian and offers several programs for the community. The Library presently serves the immediate needs of the community. It, however, does not meet the Principles and Minimum Standards for VT Public Library Service.

F. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC LANDS

1. Pleasant Street Recreation Park - The Town of Bethel owns and maintains a community recreational facility on Pleasant Street with the village. This facility is situated on an eleven-acre parcel acquired by the Town in 1972. The facility consisted of an asphalt-lined swimming pool, approximately 350 feet in circumference, one tennis court, and restrooms. In 1974, the pool was improved with the addition of a bathhouse and a modern filtration system.

Further improvements were made in 1978. The old tennis courts were removed and replaced with two new courts. The parking area was expanded with space for approximately thirty cars, improvements made to the access road, and new grass provided for a recreational area. Approximately four acres of the parcel are dedicated for the facility and improvements. The remainder or approximately seven acres are located on a heavily wooded slope to the rear of the parcel. These lands are open for hiking and picnicking.

2. Church Street Common - The Town owns a small park on the south side of Church Street in the village. This one-and-one-quarter acre lot serves as a "town common". Improvements

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consist of benches, a water fountain, night lighting, and a band shell erected in 1986. This "Common" is used for summer concerts organized by the Bethel Council on the Arts and for other open-air gatherings.

3. Peavine Park - This 3.5 acre Park is located at the confluence of the Third Branch and Main Branch of the White River. Facilities include a riverside picnic area, a small gazebo, and parking. Peavine Park is open to the public and is frequently used by civic organizations for events. Water and electricity are available on site. Direct access to the river is provided at two locations. The Bethel Business Association has been active in developing and maintaining the Park. A well building for the Town's water supply is also located at the Park.

4. River Street Bridge Access - Directly opposite Peavine Park and across the River is a 1.8 acre parcel owned by the Town of Bethel. Access to this parcel is from River Street on the westerly end of the Bridge. This site fronts on the River and is used as a place for fishing and canoe access.

5. Municipal Forests: In addition to the above recreational facilities, the Town owns three municipal forests. These are a 230-acre tract in the Camp Brook area, a 160-acre parcel near Lilliesville, and a 70-acre tract east of Bethel Village. These forests are frequently used by the public for hiking, hunting, and similar uses. The Town periodically conducts timber harvesting in consultation with the Windsor County Forester.

G. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Towns of Bethel and Royalton have jointly owned and operated a solid waste facility off Waterman Road in Royalton since 1970. Situated on a 22-acre parcel, it served as a landfill until closed in 1993 and capped in accordance with State closure and monitoring standards.

In 1993, the two towns designed and constructed a new facility for this site which is in operation today. This consists of a recycling building and a sheltered transfer station for receiving and loading residual wastes. In conjunction with neighboring towns comprising the White River Solid Waste Alliance, Bethel/Royalton hosts a household hazardous waste program twice yearly and other special collection events as necessary. The Town of Bethel does not provide curbside pickup. Collection services are handled by the private sector.

Biosolids generated at the wastewater treatment facility are land applied for reuse as an agricultural soil supplement. Land owned by the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife is presently utilized by contract, and there is considerable site life remaining for future years. Septage is handled by private waste haulers, and also is land applied in state-certified locations within the towns and nearby.

Current solid waste management facilities are adequate for the immediate needs of the community.

H. WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The Town owns and operates a wastewater treatment plant with a collection system. This system became operational in 1988 and is overseen by a certified plant operator employed

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by the Town. The system consists of a secondary level treatment plant employing oxidation canals and ultra-violet disinfection systems. The plant is complemented by four pumping stations located along the collection system. The service area for the system is within the built-up area of the village and immediately adjoining residential areas except the westerly side of the main branch of the White River (River Street).

Design capacity of the plant is 115,000 gallons per day. As of August, 2005 reserve capacity of the plant was approximately 50,410 gallons per day. Bethel's wastewater treatment facilities are managed by the Board of Sewer Commissioners (Select Board) who have the responsibility of allocating sewer reserves on a case-by case basis. Reserve capacity allocation priorities and principals are set forth in the Wastewater Reserve Capacity Allocation Ordinance adopted by the Commissioners in November, 1990. The Town of Bethel wastewater treatment facilities are adequate for the current and planned needs of the community. No major capital expansions or extensions of the system are planned.

Bio-solids resulting from the facility are managed according to the Town's permit issued by the State. It is the practice of the Select Board to manage the treatment and disposal of bio-solids using the best available technology.

In addition to the municipal sewage system noted above which serves primarily the village area of the Town, privately owned on-site, underground septic systems cover the remaining areas. Bethel has a Town Health Regulation which regulates the design and location of these systems and requires a permit prior to construction of any disposal facility. All facilities must be designed and approved by a certified Site Technician or Professional Engineer. In addition, State Subdivision Regulations require that new lots demonstrate compliance with these regulations and that permits be granted prior to construction or creation of a lot.

I. WATER SUPPLY

The Bethel village area is served by a municipally owned water supply system. This system was privately operated until 1948 when it was acquired by the Town. Groundwater serves as the source of supply for the community from two gravel packed wells. They have a combined yield of 420 gallons per minute and 604,000 gallons per day. Water is stored in two 250,000 gallon reservoirs. One is located east of the village and was constructed in 1957: this was mostly recently rehabilitated in 1999, with a new structural dome installed. Another, constructed in 1988, is a two-celled unit and is located on a hill near Valley Motors and G-W Plastics. This construction project included installation of new water mains connecting the reservoir to the well located across the road from the school.

In 1982, water recharge areas surrounding the two gravel packed wells were mapped by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. These are referred to as Aquifer Protection Areas or underground regions determined to encompass water recharge or primary sources of groundwater to the wells. The Bethel Planning Commission and Town officials have developed a Source Protection Plan for the water supply system. Such a plan is required by the State Water Supply Rules and consists of an inventory and assessment of potential sources or threatening activities in the recharge area and a plan for minimizing existing or future sources of contamination. This Plan has been submitted to the State and adopted by the Town as its official protection plan. It was most recently up-dated in 2005. Land use activities

within the Protection Areas are carefully evaluated and controlled to minimize the potential threat to our water supply. A map delineating the aquifers is included as part of this Plan.

The water distribution system serves the village center and areas adjoining the village. Portions of the distribution system are old and inadequate for the current and prospective water supply requirements within the service area. In 1999, the Town upgraded approximately 3600 feet of distribution line to an eight-inch diameter ductile iron pipe along Church Street and north along Route 12 to the Fire Station. Other sections of the distribution system do need replacement, the most urgent need being the mechanically jointed cast iron main serving the immediate downtown area. Many of the historic downtown structures have not had sprinkler systems installed, and future rehabilitation efforts will need appropriately sized and accessible mains.

Total average daily use is estimated at 285,000 gallons per day. Approximately 315 Households are connected to the system and use 175,000 gallons per day or 62% of the total flow. The remainder is industrial or commercial users. A meter was installed for well #2 in year 2000, and a meter was installed in well #1 in 2005, thus making it possible for the usage to be monitored much more accurately.

Water supply in areas not served by the municipal water system is from individual wells or springs.

J. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Providing quality education to Bethel's children is a fundamental community goal. A successful school system depends on up-to-date facilities, dynamic administrators and teachers, involved parents and a challenging curriculum.. Planning considerations on the type and extent of future growth have implications on the current and future ability of Bethel's schools to provide quality services.

The Bethel School District covers Kindergarten through 12th grades. The schools are situated on a 38 acre parcel, one half mile northwest of the village center. One building houses both the elementary school and the high school. The elementary school and the high school are physically separated within the building, but share the use of common facilities, including the gymnasium, cafeteria, and music room.

Whitcomb High School was constructed in 1958. In 1972, two science rooms and library/media center were added, increasing the total floor area of the high school to 30,000 square feet. The high school houses fifteen classrooms, including an art room and computer labs. The portion of the school building used for the Bethel Elementary School (grades K-6) was constructed in 1971. This brick structure is 25,000 square feet in area, houses ten classrooms, and a large resources area which includes a library and a music room.

In 1995 due to significant deterioration to the physical structure of the school, the town approved funding for a facilities study by an architectural firm. This study identified numerous deficiencies in the school facilities and made numerous recommendations. The school board used this facility study to prioritize projects designed to improve the school's physical facilities. These projects included:

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- Putting a new roof on all school buildings,
- Replacing the underground fuel storage tank,
- Replacing the air-exchange systems,
- Replacing floor tiles, ceiling tiles, and carpeting,
- Installing a new communication system,
- Replacing the electrical system in the high school,
- Building a storage building behind the school,
- Increasing energy efficiency with new doors and windows,
- Making fire and safety improvements per instructions from the Vermont Department of Labor and Industry,
- Repainting the interior and exterior of the school, and
- Renovating the gymnasium with a wooden floor and new bleachers.

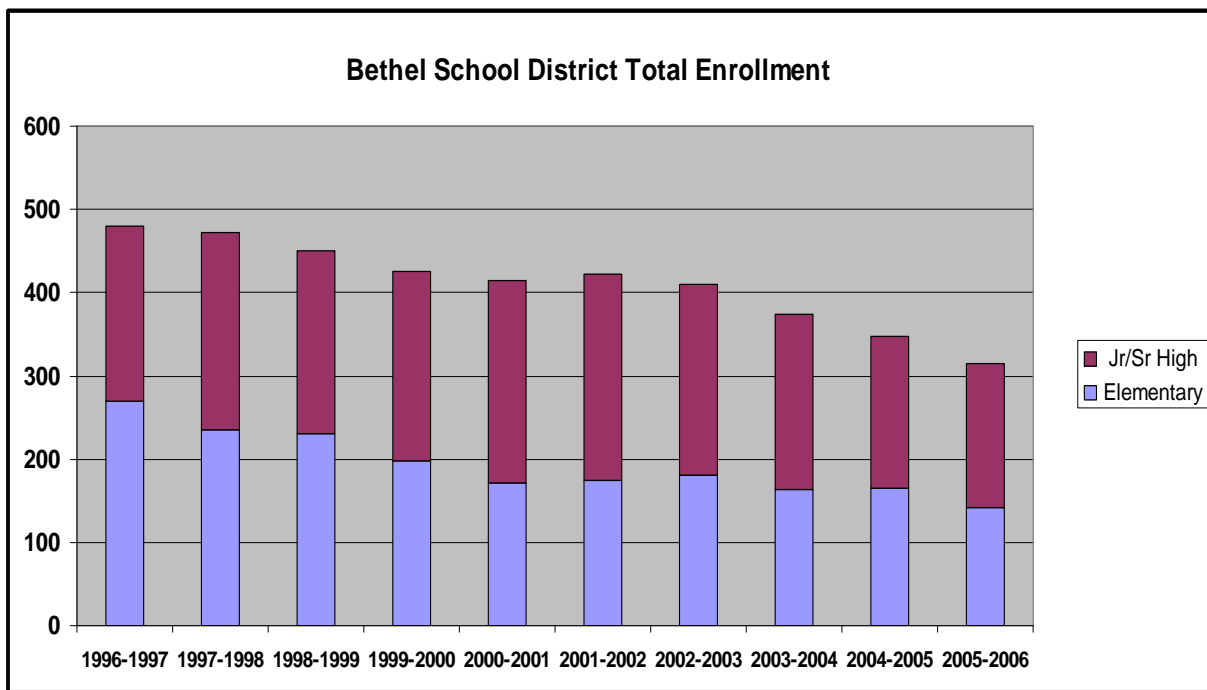
Presently, the school facilities are meeting the needs of the community. The challenge facing the school district is declining enrollments in the elementary school and the high school. These declines are documented on the following charts and graphs. These declines have also caused Bethel to engage Royalton and other neighboring communities to discuss the possibility of consolidating part or all of some school districts.

Bethel School District Total Enrollment:

School Year	Bethel Elementary	Whitcomb Jr/Sr High	Total School
1996-1997	269	211	480
1997-1998	235	237	472
1998-1999	231	220	451
1999-2000	198	227	425
2000-2001	171	243	414
2001-2002	175	248	423
2002-2003	180	230	410
2003-2004	164	210	374
2004-2005	165	183	348
2005-2006	142	173	315
Difference '96-'06	-127	-38	-165
% Change '96-'06	-47%	-18%	-34%

Projections

2006-2007	155	140	295
Difference '96-'07	-114	-71	-185
% Change '96-'07	-42%	-34%	-39%



K. CEMETERIES

The Town owns and maintains five public cemeteries. These are the Cherry Hill Cemetery on Christian Hill, the East Bethel Cemetery on Route 14, Fairview Cemetery off Route 12, Gilead Cemetery, and Lympus Cemetery. Lots are available in the Cherry Hill and Fairview Cemeteries. Expansion of the other cemeteries is limited. The Town annually appropriates funds for maintenance, including mowing and trimming. The cemeteries are overseen by the Select Board. There are no immediate plans for major improvements to these cemeteries. To make certain information is not held only in the minds of a very few individuals, a better record-keeping/management system needs to be developed. The Select Board is discussing potential acquisition of land for additional cemetery space, and this effort must be followed through to completion.

L. OTHER FACILITIES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates the White River National Fish Hatchery on the White River westerly of the village area off Route 107. This facility has been located here since the 1970's and is open to the public at various times during the year. Additionally, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources owns and maintains Ansel Pond, located at the intersection of Christian Hill Road and Sanders Road. There are no immediate plans for expansion of either of these facilities.

[See Appendices A, B & C for 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action,' respectively, specific to Public Utilities & Facilities and other sections of this Town Plan.]

VII. TRANSPORTATION

A. LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

Bethel's land use pattern over the past four or five decades, similar to the rest of Vermont, has been a steady trend of dispersal into low-density rural areas. This has resulted in a separation by longer and longer distances of where we live, shop, and work. Many residents work and conduct much of their business outside of Bethel in nearby towns. The result of this trend has major implications on our transportation needs and opportunities.

If the pattern of low density dispersed growth continues, Bethel will become increasingly dependent on automobile travel and transportation will become more costly. Also, other trends might occur including:

- school bus transportation could increase;
- rural road maintenance costs could increase at a rate faster than increased tax revenues;
- residential development could consume important agricultural and forest land;
- air pollution will increase; and
- roadside scenery could deteriorate as new driveways and structures line back roads and state highways.

Bethel's land use planning can positively impact transportation planning priorities and costs. Bethel can advocate for high-density growth in or near existing growth centers (i.e. Bethel Village). By identifying centers that have good potential for dense development, numerous land uses can be concentrated together and be in walking distance from one another. Dependency on the automobile can be reduced. Additionally, development policies and zoning laws can create more incentives for cluster housing on smaller lots, reducing transportation costs.

B. CURRENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

1. State and Local Highways: The State uses four classification formulas to distribute financial aid to towns for road repair and maintenance. These classifications are determined jointly by the Agency of Transportation and the Select Board. Criteria used for the classifications include traffic volumes, road condition, and function. State aid to the Town is distributed on a per mile basis, decreasing from Class 1 to Class 3. No State aid is available for Class 4 roads.

Class 1 roads are the most heavily traveled town roads and are extensions of state highways. For Bethel, this includes Main Street, Church Street, and a portion of Pleasant Street in the village, totaling 0.89 miles. Class 2 roads are the major town highways and oftentimes serve to link towns and high traffic areas such as village settlements and state highways. For Bethel, there are 11.15 miles of Class 2 roads. These are: Camp Brook Road (6.16 miles), Factory Hill-Randolph Center Road (0.56 miles), North Road (0.89 miles) and Peavine Boulevard (3.54 miles).

Class 3 roads include all town roads not Class 1 or 2 that can be driven under normal conditions all seasons of the year. They represent the “typical back road”. Class 3 roads amount to a total of 56.98 miles.

The Town, as written in 19 V.S.A. Section 310, is not obligated to maintain Class 4 Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. Class 4 roads represent the lowest order of importance to the Town. These roads are not generally maintained by the Town nor plowed in the winter. Some Class 4 roads are legal trails available mainly for pedestrians and recreational access.

2. Rail Facilities: Bethel is traversed by the New England Central Railroad (NECR) which goes from New London, Connecticut, through White River Junction to East Alburg, VT. The NECR line serves both freight and Amtrak passenger traffic. The nearest passenger station is in Randolph. The NECR has approximately four (4) miles of single track within the Town’s boundaries with two customer tracks. There are four trains per day through Bethel: AM southbound freight, AM southbound Amtrak, PM northbound Freight and PM northbound Amtrak. Within 2-3 years NECR plan to add another daily northbound and southbound freight train.

New England Central’s (NECR) major business is in pulp/paper and lumber. The NECR delivers lumber to Bethel Mills and feed ingredients to Green Mountain Mills.

As highways become more congested, diesel fuel costs increase, and limitations are placed on trucker’s hours of service, rail could become a stronger part of Bethel’s and Vermont’s transportation infrastructure.

3. Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities: As stated in Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Transportation Plan (2003), increasing the use of bicycling and walking is vital to developing a multimodal transportation system. This linking of various modes of transportation improves social and community livability, and enhances opportunities for exercise and recreation. In Bethel, the average percent of residents who bike or walk to work is 4.2 (2000 Census). Pedestrian transportation occurs mainly in the village, where people are able to park in one location and visit several businesses within the downtown area, or walk from their residence.

It should be possible to walk safely within Bethel Village. Sidewalks should be planned within the villages or new growth centers. This could mean setting aside rights-of-way for sidewalks for construction in the future when warranted.

4. Scenic Roads: Bethel has numerous scenic roads which exhibit special qualities worth preserving such as stone walls and majestic trees. Bethel residents and visitors enjoy their country roads; therefore, it is in the interest of Bethel to prudently evaluate the relationship between road improvements and the potential loss of scenery. The public should have an opportunity to discuss proposed changes with the Agency of Transportation or the Town, as appropriate.

5. Public Transportation: Public transit service alternatives are needed by people without access to a car or the ability to drive. Public transportation, as an alternative to the car, is limited in Bethel and the immediate area. Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc. (STSI) offers both a local fixed route and human services transportation to Bethel residents. Vermont

Transit Lines provides inter-city services with destinations to all major cities and towns throughout the Northeast with the nearest stop in White River Junction.

Residential and commercial land use development patterns that concentrate growth within or close by the village can help make public transit alternatives more feasible and useful in the future.

Ride-sharing informally occurs, as evidenced by the high usage of nearby park and ride lots and other parking areas. A statewide study of park and ride users indicates that people like the ride-share concept, especially for commuters working jobs in the Upper Valley Area.

C. HIGHWAY PROJECTS

1. Camp Brook Road: Summer 2002 resurfacing of Camp Brook Road was completed with the following improvements:

- Rehabilitation of the lower section of the road, improvement of the road base drainage systems, and addition of guardrails.
- Maintained existing alignment, without widening, to keep the road aesthetically as close as possible to what was there.

The average number of vehicles per day on Camp Brook Road is 1,200 (2002 AADT- average annual daily traffic, VTrans)

2. Church Street Bridge: The old bridge over the Third Branch of the White River has been deteriorating for years. Federal and state money will pay most of the cost of construction, the town's share is 5%. The project began in August 2004 with construction of a temporary bridge; expected completion November 2006.

3. River Street Bridge: In 1997, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, in cooperation with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, initiated a study to prepare an Environmental Assessment of Alternative Strategies for improving the Vermont Route 12/107 crossing over the White River in Bethel Village. This project involved establishment of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of local and area officials. The PAC recommended building a new wider, safer, and stronger steel truss bridge in place of the existing bridge, widening the approaches to the bridge and other improvements. Currently, the project is a low priority for the VAOT; therefore, construction plans are unknown.

4. Route 107 – Vermont Route 107 is a primary state route across central Vermont linking I-89 to Route 4. It has been identified as an alternative to U.S. Route 4 for Vermont's east/west highway. However, no formal designation has taken place by the VAOT due in part to concerns expressed by residents along the Route 100 and Route 107 corridors. There is much evidence that Vermont inadequately enforces truck safety laws. Therefore, U.S. Route 4 remains designated as part of the National Highway System (NHS) and Route 100/107 is classed as a road of lesser importance. The Town does not support formal designation of Routes 100/107 as an east/west truck route across Vermont. The State of Vermont has no further plans for improvements or reconstruction of Route 107 at this time.

5. Access Management: One concern growing statewide is access management – limiting access on key corridors to preserve capacity. Access management planning can forestall or

prevent costly upgrading or replacement of roads and bridges and promote a more desirable and efficient land use pattern complementing the goals and planning principles set forth in this Plan. Through the control of the location and number of curb cuts on Bethel's major roads (Routes 12, 14, and 107), traffic flow can be better managed and major improvements, such as turning lanes, avoided. The greater the number of access points onto a highway, the higher the number of accidents. By combining access points, sharing parking, and constructing interior road systems between uses, congestion can be reduced and function of these roads maintained.

Regulatory authority for access management rests with the VAOT for state roads and the Selectboard for town highways. The law (19 V.S.A. Section 1111) provides, in addition to a reasonable safe access test, that compliance be found with the Town Plan and local regulations related to land use. Therefore, use of this Plan in determining the appropriateness of new access onto a highway should be employed.

[See Appendices A, B & C for 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action,' respectively, specific to Transportation and other sections of this Town Plan.]

VIII. ENERGY

A. BACKGROUND

A large segment of Bethel's residential, commercial, and municipal buildings are heated with fuel oil and kerosene (66.7% - 2000 Census). Many residential homes are heated extensively with wood or use wood as a back-up (16.9% - 2000 Census). Propane use has increased in recent years. Currently there are no plans to bring natural gas pipelines into this part of the state.

The Town lies within the service area of Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) which supplies electrical power to all sections of town. At present, the Town receives its power from a substation located in Royalton. A new 12 kv line has been constructed parallel to Route 12 north of the town center. Eventually, this will connect into the Pleasant Street Randolph substation. Two benefits will be derived from this. Line serviceability will be greatly enhanced and a second source of power will be available to the Town in times of power outages.

CVPS presently has a good mix of power sources – hydro, nuclear, fossil (purchased – Merrimack Power Company) and purchases from sources such as New York Power Authority, Hydro Quebec and other sources within the New England Power grid. Within the Town, Bethel Mills owns a hydro-power plant whose power is purchased by CVPS. There are concerns on the state level as to how Vermont will replace power from Hydro Quebec and Vermont Yankee – about 70% of Vermont's current energy portfolio – when both sources go off-line within the next 15 years.

In the past, the Town has received grant monies for energy conservation for low-income housing. This involved insulating and weatherizing homes. The school complex has an ongoing program for conserving energy. The Town garage utilizes used oil from its vehicles as a fuel for heating. Energy conservation programs are ongoing by the CVPS. One program

encourages the use of energy efficient light bulbs by issuing discount coupons. Another program promotes the use of more efficient heating and cooling systems. There is also a residential new construction program that promotes the inclusion of energy efficient systems that will insure long-term energy savings.

[See Appendices A, B & C for ‘Goals,’ ‘Planning Principles,’ and ‘Recommendations for Action,’ respectively, specific to Energy and other sections of this Town Plan.]

IX. LAND USE

A. INTRODUCTION

Bethel’s rural character is strongly influenced by its pattern of land development, building design, its relationship to the landscape, and the sense of community that comes from people living and working here.

This section of the Plan describes Bethel’s current land use and sets a framework on how land should be utilized in the future. The White River Valley is experiencing growth. This has resulted in new and expanded job opportunities, more income, and increased social and cultural diversity. Overall, the results have been positive and have benefited the Town. In spite of this, these changes and others underscore the need to identify and to develop effective growth and land use principles that will serve the long-term future interests of the community.

B. OVERALL LAND USE GOALS

In formulating a future land use pattern, consideration needs to be given to the existing settlement pattern, maintenance of the Village Center, the surrounding low density rural and agricultural areas, and its large open spaces and forests.

Accordingly, the following are recognized as key factors for determining future land use:

- land topography, soils, water, and other natural resources characteristics;
- relative ease of access to roads and other transportation facilities;
- availability to public services, including water and sewer facilities;
- desirability of avoiding land use conflicts; and
- the needs of the citizens of Bethel.

The overall land use goals for Bethel are listed below:

1. Encourage the full use of existing or designated growth centers or areas;
2. Promote the economic viability and revitalization of the village center;
3. Conserve the natural environment by judicious use of natural resources;
4. Protect the character of rural areas and their natural resources by avoiding scattered development and incompatible land uses;
5. Channel public investments into existing or planned settlement areas to avoid
6. Protect wetlands and aquifers from incompatible development.

C. PROPOSED LAND USE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

For the purposes of this Plan, seven “areas” are identified. These areas have certain characteristics that identify them within the Town. These areas are:

1. Bethel Village District
 - Village Residential Area
 - Village Business Area
 - Village Commercial Area
 - Village Industrial Area;
2. East Bethel Rural Village District;
3. Highway District;
4. Medium Residential District;
5. Rural Residential District
6. Resource Conservation District and
7. Flood Hazard District.

1. Bethel Village District : Bethel Village historically has been considered to be that area of Bethel serviced by town water or sewer, or both. This area is recognized as the focal point of the community, and as the place for civic, economic, and social interaction. It is a relatively densely settled area with numerous historic buildings, including churches, schools, a library, and residences. Four sub-areas are identified within the Village Area. These are Village Residential, Business, Commercial, and Industrial.

Given that there are geographical limitations to the Village District and that historically these limitations have been an impediment to any major physical changes in the character of the Village, the focus of the Town Plan should be geared to maintaining what currently exists and enhancing the same.

2. East Bethel Rural Village District: This District is more densely settled and consists of a small concentration of mixed uses along Route 14. The Rural Village District is not served by municipal water or sewer, thus smaller lot sizes must be carefully planned. Historic properties and buildings are located in the District.

3. Highway District: This area lies adjacent to the Village District and along primary roads, including portions of Route 107 and Route 12 south and north of Bethel Village. The Highway District lacks town water and sewer services.

4. Medium Residential and Rural Residential Districts: Land outside of the Bethel Village District, East Bethel Rural Village District, and Highway District is predominantly rural. Historically, much of this outlying area was associated with agricultural and forestry uses. With the decline of the number of farms, many of the fields and pastures have reverted back to woodland or been developed for residential use, primarily single family homes on moderate to large lots.

Favorable conditions for the construction of buildings and wastewater disposal facilities should not be the sole determinant for development in the Medium Residential and Rural Residential Districts. Impacts on forestry and agricultural resources, critical wildlife habitats, historic sites, scenic resources and other features need to be evaluated and planned for when developing projects in these districts.

5. Resource Conservation District: This District consists of special areas in need of special protection due to their fragile nature, irreplaceable value, unique and important ecological functions. The Resource Conservation areas are predominantly forested, and lack direct access to year-round public roads and basic public utilities (electricity and telephone). The Resource Conservation areas represent one or more of the following characteristics:

- steep slopes in excess of 25% grade;
- soils which are predominantly wet or shallow;
- wetlands;
- water recharge areas to primary or public water supplies;
- critical wildlife habitats or endangered species;
- irreplaceable or locally recognized recreational or scenic amenities; or
- large tracts of land with relatively high potential for commercial forestry.

6. Flood Hazard District

The Flood Hazard District consists of a relatively narrow strip of land bordering the banks of the White River, the First Branch, and their associated tributaries. These areas are low-lying areas that flood during times of high water. They are important for retaining water that might cause damage or destruction elsewhere. Flood Hazard Districts often contain the best agricultural lands because of thick glacial deposits, minimum slope, and proximity to surface water. Floodways represent those areas immediately adjacent to the stream channel and carry the bulk of the water during a flood. These areas during a flood present the greatest risk to property and life during periods of high water.

[See Appendices A, B & C for ‘Goals,’ ‘Planning Principles,’ and ‘Recommendations for Action,’ respectively, specific to Land Use and other sections of this Town Plan.]

X. NATURAL RESOURCES

A. BACKGROUND:

Bethel’s forested, farmed, and open land resources as well as its water and wildlife resources are key elements in defining rural character. The quality and quantity of Bethel’s natural resources and the character of place they create are primary ingredients in maintaining our health and economic welfare.

It is the fundamental goal of this Plan to sustain and enhance the integrity and diversity of the natural resource system within Bethel. Therefore it is the policy of the Town to develop and implement practices that conserve natural resources and to insure that future land use activities are not detrimental to the environment.

B. GROUNDWATER

Groundwater from wells is the primary water source in Bethel. Therefore, protective and preventative measures to ensure the quality and sustainability of this resource are critical. The quality of Bethel’s groundwater is generally excellent. However, there is a risk for groundwater contamination from a variety of sources including hazardous waste sites, failing septic systems, old industrial sites, industrial floor drains, agricultural practices, road salt, leaking underground

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fuel tanks. Bethel has created an Aquifer Recharge Overlay District to assure protection of its water supply.

C. SURFACE WATER

The White River and its tributaries are the major surface water bodies in Bethel. High water quality attracts users of the River and thus provides a source of income for many town residents and businesses. The White River is classified by the State as a Class B water. Class B waters are managed for aesthetic values; recreation; public water supply with treatment; high quality habitat for biota, fish and wildlife; and agricultural uses. A portion of the White River downstream of the village area is designated as a Class B “Waste Management Zone” by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources to enable treated wastewater from the Bethel Sewer Plant to be lawfully discharged into the this section of the River. Within this Zone water conditions must not create a health hazard, constitute a barrier to the passage of fish, or interfere with any existing use of the River.

A resource for Bethel and its citizens is the White River Partnership whose mission is to help local communities balance the long-term cultural, economic and environmental health of the White River watershed through active citizen participation, including monitoring the river.

Now that wastewater treatment facilities have been constructed to treat point pollution sources non-point pollution sources represent the remaining primary pollution sources in the White River. Sources of non-point pollution are agricultural runoff, streambank erosion, removal of riparian vegetation, upstream impoundments, land development, and highway runoff. Future land use decisions should evaluate the probable water quality impacts associated with each development proposal and should be consistent with the water standards promulgated by the State of Vermont.

D. WETLANDS

The State of Vermont defines wetlands as areas inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support significant vegetation or aquatic life that depend on saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. The State regulates land use activities affecting Class 1 and Class 2 Wetlands in order to protect their values and functions and to ensure that there is no net loss of these. Class 1 and 2 Wetlands have been mapped by the State of Vermont and maps are available from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources or the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. Wetlands of all sizes are vital components in maintaining ecological integrity. The benefits of wetlands include flood and storm water storage, sediment reduction, maintenance of surface and ground water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, and bird watching.

E. WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Bethel’s forests, fields, marshes, streams, riverbanks, and ponds are homes for a variety of animals, insects and plants. There are areas in Bethel which provide critical habitats for certain animals, including white tailed deer, birds, black bear, and bobcat. Every new development in town results in an incremental loss or change to wildlife habitats. Sensitive land use planning can lessen or mitigate the impact on wildlife habitats. For example, housing development or excessive logging can have detrimental effects on deer wintering areas. If an area proposed for development encompasses a deeryard, utilizing certain planning strategies can lessen the

impact on the area. Should the entire area be winter cover, clustering of homes within an area of the project site will still enable deer to retain most of their habitat. State biologists are available to work with landowners and developers interested in planning projects in ways that reduce the impact on critical wildlife habitats, rare and endangered species, and other critical natural communities.

F. AIR QUALITY

Clean air is a fundamental component of good health and a clean environment. Most air pollution comes from sources outside our region. However, within the town, large developments and fossil fuel combustion such as automobiles, diesel and 2-cycle engines and wood burning can cause air pollution. Efforts to lessen such pollution should be encouraged.

G. MINERAL RESOURCES

Maintenance of sustainable quantities of gravel, sand, rock, and other minerals are essential to development as well as for state and local highways. It is in the interest of Bethel to enable the utilization of these resources when such uses do not unduly threaten or significantly inhibit or conflict with other existing land uses or are not in conflict with other stated goals or planning principles in this Plan.

Issues incidental to mineral extraction include creation of excessive dust and noise, increased truck traffic through residential neighborhoods, surface and groundwater contamination, degradation of the site or wildlife habitat, loss of scenic character in the immediate area, and undue deterioration on state and town roads.

[See Appendices A, B & C for ‘Goals,’ ‘Planning Principles,’ and ‘Recommendations for Action,’ respectively, specific to Natural Resources and other sections of this Town Plan.]

XI. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

A rural setting is valued by most people whether they work the land directly or not. The community’s welfare ultimately depends on the land. Our forest and agricultural lands contribute significantly to Vermont’s attractiveness to tourists, hunters, fisherpersons, hikers and campers, and they contribute indirectly to the economy by protecting our watersheds and our health. Land has been used for farming and forestry in Bethel since the town was first settled and the two have always been in flux. Most of Bethel’s 29,144 acres are forested, while 100 years ago a comparable amount of land was open and used for farming and grazing.

There are presently five dairy farms in Bethel, although they tend to work more acres than previously when there were more dairy farms. Farming has diversified with many small and part time agricultural operations growing things like lamb, beef, vegetables, maple syrup, herbs, flowers, nursery plants, and Christmas trees. Increasingly small processing operations are adding value to local agricultural and forest products, thus greatly increasing the amount of money that can be realized from these products and increasing local – and locally controlled – employment opportunities. Examples of value-adding processes include cordwood or furniture-making operations and cheese-making. Interest in locally grown high quality foods is

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increasing and is something that can benefit everyone in Bethel. As fossil fuels become more expensive growing foods closer to home will provide cost, as well as health, savings.

The viability of forestry is threatened by several state-wide trends. Land parcels are increasingly being subdivided into smaller lots. This trend has been most evident in areas close to Vermont’s major towns and cities, and spreads particularly where development suitability and road access is good. Another factor affecting the long-term sustainability of forestry is the relatively high level of taxation on land, compared to the low rate of return on the investment. Additionally, Federal and State estate tax laws can put family landowners into financial straits where they need to subdivide or develop farm or forestland in order to pay estate taxes.

Vermont’s Current Use Appraisal Program began in 1980 and has eased the tax burden on some of Bethel’s farm and timber landowners. Participation in the program has increased, although actual tax benefits have decreased over the years. The following chart compares 1994 and 2005 Current Use statistics for Bethel.

Year	# parcels enrolled	Total acres Enrolled	Acres in Agriculture	% in Agriculture	Acres in Forestry	% in Forestry
1994	85	9,250 a.	1,250 a.	14%	8,000 a.	86%
2005	125	12,087 a.	1,306 a.	10.8%	10,746 a. (+35 a. in non-productive forest)	88.9%

Forestry is a significant part of the area’s economy, providing jobs for the lumber and wood products industries. Agriculture continues to employ area residents, providing food products, keeping local money in the local economy, providing open space and scenic views, and continuing a land use tradition characteristic of Bethel.

Both forestry and farming are long-term economies which demand patient and long-term approaches to land use. Local planning can help to sustain agriculture and forestry. The goals can be to conserve these resources over a long period of time and also to work to reduce the overall tax burdens facing open space property owners.

[See Appendices A, B & C for ‘Goals,’ ‘Planning Principles,’ and ‘Recommendations for Action,’ respectively, for Agriculture & Forestry and other sections of this Town Plan.]

XII. Historic and Scenic Resources

The purpose of this section is to identify the importance of Bethel’s special amenities, being its historic, cultural, and archeological resources and to establish goals and objectives and recommend actions to conserve these unique resources.

Change is the fundamental element of time and history. After a long period of relative stability, the Upper Valley, including Bethel, has commenced to grow both in scale and the pace of development. The effects of this growth have been a gradual, yet noticeable, reshaping of the natural and manmade landscape of the Town and surrounding communities. Most development

resulting from the change has adapted well to our historical and cultural landscapes, our lifestyles, and community values. Generally, the old and the new have been complementary.

In spite of the successes of the past, change has great potential to degrade and destroy our heritage unless cherished landscape patterns and community values are given proper consideration. Many of these losses are preventable or can be mitigated. The Planning Commission acknowledges the strong desire of Bethel's citizens to conserve their landscape.

One of our most important resources and assets is our Town Hall. This attractive 1892 brick building is the visual focal point of the historic downtown. It is the icon of the Town of Bethel, appearing on official town stationary and chosen by outsiders when they characterize Bethel. Preserving and re-using it will stimulate economic vitality, strengthen our Village Center Designation and improve the fabric of community life.

In 2005, it was decided that the Town Hall would not be retrofitted for Town Offices, but rather serve its historical function as a gathering place and community center. The Select Board made this decision after a public presentation by architecture students from Vermont Technical College and much citizen input. An engineer and a fundraiser have been engaged by the Town and approximately \$50,000 is currently in the Town Hall Restoration Fund to advance this important historical, cultural and economic restoration project and Town priority.

The landscape of the Town is an economic asset. Tourists come to the White River Valley and spend money here because they are attracted to its scenery and the values and qualities of rural life. These economic benefits can be preserved by establishing design guidelines to insure that new development will complement our historic, scenic, and cultural resources.

Bethel is rich in historic character as evidenced by the many structures built in the early days and later into the 1800's that remain intact. In recognition of this architectural history, a National Historic Register District was created in the 1970's.

The Bethel Village Historic District covers the business center of Bethel Village on Main Street together with adjacent residential areas extending along South Main, North Main, and Church Streets. The major part of the historic district is aligned on a single north-south axis, Main Street, which curves along the easterly side of the Third Branch of the White River.

[See Appendices A, B & C for 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action,' respectively, specific for Historic & Scenic Resources and other sections of this Town Plan.]

APPENDIX A

CONSOLIDATED GOALS

[Goals: Broad-based statements setting forth the long-term objectives of the community.]

V. HOUSING

1. To provide the opportunity for Bethel residents to have access to decent and affordable housing.
2. To encourage the retention of existing housing and construction of new housing.
3. To encourage the preservation of historic structures in ways that serve housing needs.

VI. PUBLIC UTILITIES & FACILITIES

1. To encourage that public investments in governmental facilities, services, and lands be located within the designated village center and other growth areas.
2. To promote effective, efficient, public services, including schools, highways, recreational facilities, and municipal buildings.
3. To ensure that any expansion, development or new construction of utilities or facilities does not impose an unreasonable burden on municipal resources or services.
4. To support innovative sources of public facility spending to supplement traditional resources.

VII. TRANSPORTATION

1. To promote a transportation system that is safe and efficient.
2. To coordinate land use and transportation planning initiatives.

VIII. ENERGY

1. To promote a pattern of settlement and land use that uses energy efficiently.
2. To encourage the design and construction of buildings and structures which are energy efficient.
3. To encourage the development of local renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydro power.
4. To increase public awareness of energy conservation practices.

IX. LAND USE:

1. Promote continued use and rehabilitation of existing structures.
2. Promote the efforts of revitalization and the 'Village Center Designation.'
3. Promote growth in established areas of housing, as density permits, allowing for residential, agricultural, and forestry uses to be the primary and dominant land use in Medium Residential and Rural Residential Districts.
4. Manage development, in the Resource Conservation District, in a manner as to minimize any impact on significant or critical wildlife habitats and wetlands.

X. NATURAL RESOURCES:

1. To encourage protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater in Bethel.
2. To evaluate potential groundwater impacts associated with development and to regulate land use activities in accordance with acceptable management practices.

3. To maintain or improve surface water quality and quantity for the purposes of recreation, and aquatic habitat within the watershed of the White River.
4. To support the on-going designation of Class B “Waste Management Zone” for the main stem of the River for the disposal and treatment of effluent from Bethel’s wastewater treatment facilities.
5. To support ongoing monitoring and educational programs for improvement of surface water quality throughout the community and to participate in activities which are intended to maintain or improve water quality.
6. Support the White River Partnership.
7. To encourage the conservation of all wetland areas.
8. To verify locations of Class 1 and 2 wetlands and to map the locations of Class 3 wetlands.
9. To avoid development or land uses with adverse impacts to wetlands.
10. To maintain or enhance the natural diversity and population of wildlife by maintaining critical habitats, large blocks of forest and wildlife corridors.
11. To promote an environment where rare and endangered species can exist.
12. To encourage the reduction of air pollution.
13. To enable appropriate utilization of mineral resources.
14. To accommodate the extraction and processing of mineral resources where such activities are appropriately managed.

XI. AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY:

1. To encourage the conservation and careful and sustainable use agricultural and forestry resources in the Town, to maintain their environmental integrity, and to protect their natural features and the ecological processes that they support.
2. To protect rural agricultural resources from unplanned or poorly designed land development.
3. To support planning and taxation principles which sustain agriculture and forestry land, and their associated value-adding industries.
4. To promote agriculture and forestry in those areas of Bethel where they are the predominant land uses and where soils, site conditions, and other factors enable them to remain sustainable and economically viable.

XII. HISTORIC & SCENIC RESOURCES:

1. To preserve and enhance historic buildings and sites where there is a clear public interest. The Town Hall is a priority focus at this time.
2. To promote sensitive economic development in historic areas such as in Bethel village and East Bethel.
3. To set forth design guidelines to be used by those involved in the review and preparation of development proposals as a means of ensuring the conservation of historic, scenic, and cultural resources.

APPENDIX B

CONSOLIDATED PLANNING PRINCIPLES

[Planning Principles: Statements and strategies that direct possible courses of action to implement Bethel's goals.]

V. HOUSING

1. The timing and rate of new housing construction or rehabilitation should not exceed the community's ability to provide adequate public facilities.
2. The Town should help to keep housing affordable by planning for appropriately sized lots, accessory apartments, and clustered developments.
3. The provision of housing for special needs populations, such as the elderly and physically handicapped, is encouraged.
4. The location of future housing should complement existing or planned employment patterns, travel times, and energy requirements.
5. Affordable housing should not be directed exclusively into selected areas.
6. Developers and town officials are encouraged to work toward strategies that promote mixed income housing.

VI. PUBLIC UTILITIES & FACILITIES

1. Major public investments in schools, libraries, sewage treatment works, and water facilities should be located within existing or planned settlement areas identified in this Plan and designed to complement the recommended future land use patterns expressed in this Plan.
2. Upgrade and improve the existing water supply systems and wastewater treatment facilities when such proposals enhance the viability of the Village to function as the community center.
3. Land development within public wellhead protection areas should be prohibited when it would pose a threat to potable water supplies.
4. Public investments in highways, water and wastewater treatment systems which prompt sprawl, strip development, or scattered development inconsistent with this Plan are discouraged.
5. Water conservation measures and programs to reduce the water demand, thereby extending the useful life and efficiency of water and sewer facilities are encouraged.

VII. TRANSPORTATION

1. The Town should maintain existing highways, bridges, and related facilities as necessary to ensure the current level of service.
2. The Town should retain Class 4 roads.
3. If improvements to Class 3 roads are needed to accommodate increased traffic or utilities such as electric or telephone lines, the relationship of these improvements to the contributing features of immediate landscape should be evaluated. These improvements should be designed to be compatible with the setting and enhance aesthetic quality, whenever practical.
4. Any plan for changes to Routes 12, 14, and 107 should not unduly compromise the historic, scenic, rural, and cultural characteristics of these routes. Economic development objectives or new growth, creating increased demand for upgrading of these routes need to be balanced with the preservation of Bethel's downtown, other built-up areas or planned expansion areas.

VIII. ENERGY

1. New generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas should be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this Plan.
2. Design plans for development or subdivisions should work towards the goal of locating structures and buildings on the site to reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation and protective wind barriers.

IX. LAND USE:

1. The Town should:
 - continue to support growth where it can adequately provide services and maintain them;
 - support residential and business use in older and under-utilized buildings;
 - encourage development and access along the edges of active farmland and open fields;
 - encourage passive outdoor recreation and forestry uses as the foremost use of the Resource Conservation District provided that these uses do not unduly harm significant resources on the site;
 - discourage large scale or large tract development or subdivisions in areas where steep slopes, wet, or shallow soils are predominant;
 - discourage development, other than forestry, above 2,000 feet in elevation;
 - encourage development of trails for recreational activities;
 - discourage any new development within 100 years floodplain;
 - encourage the continued recreational and agricultural use of the Flood Hazard District.
2. The Town Municipal Offices and any other governmental offices should be within the Village.
3. If new development is proposed, the Town should prohibit any that is not compatible with the character of the Village.
4. Encourage development to be clustered to minimize building driveways, roads, curb cuts, and sprawl.

X. NATURAL RESOURCES:

1. Major water withdrawals should be evaluated to ensure that aquifers are not significantly depleted and that water is allocated equitably between users.
2. Land use activities, which have a relatively high risk or threat to groundwater quality, must be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they are located, designed, and maintained in a manner that minimizes their impact on groundwater quality.
3. All new, expanded, or altered sewage disposal systems shall be evaluated using technical standards and permitting requirements promulgated by the State and Town.
4. Class One groundwater resources will be permanently protected from incompatible land uses including subsurface waste disposal systems, underground storage tanks, toxic wastes, and similar hazards. Class One groundwater consists of the areas identified in the Town's Source Protection Plan (SPP) for its public water supply system and other areas identified as suitable for a public water supply by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Uses deemed acceptable within Class One areas are winter outdoor recreational activities, low density pasturing of livestock, forestry, and similar passive uses with limited human activity.
5. Water based recreation, fisheries, and aquatic habitat are high public priorities for conservation.

6. The Town supports efforts to limit and abate pollution adversely impacting water quality in the rivers, streams, and ponds in Bethel: such as agricultural runoff, sedimentation and erosion resulting from construction, pavement runoff, improper road maintenance, logging, and recreational vehicles.
7. Vegetated riparian buffer strips should be maintained along rivers and streams to filter runoff, stabilize banks and otherwise protect and maintain water quality and aquatic habitat.
8. Upland watersheds should be mostly maintained in forest or passive recreational use to ensure high water quality within streams and the White River.
9. The creation of intermittent or diverted stream flows will be allowed only upon finding that these actions do not adversely impact aquatic communities, and stream functions.
10. Development will be prohibited within Class 1 and 2 wetlands and an undisturbed buffer strip of vegetated cover maintained around the delineated edge of the wetland to prevent direct discharges into these wetlands. The width of the buffer strip should be determined using the standards and practices developed by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.
11. Development should be designed and sited to preserve contiguous areas of critical wildlife habitat, such as productive bear habitat and deer wintering areas, and to maintain connecting links between such blocks.
12. Large contiguous tracts of forest should be managed so as to maintain a diversity of ages and species of trees necessary for shelter and food supply for deer, black bear, and other mammals as well as birds.
13. Evaluate new commercial and industrial projects to insure that Bethel's air quality is not degraded.

XI. AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY:

1. Construction of utilities, driveways or roads should skirt tracts of productive agricultural land rather than to divide them.
2. Resources for land owners to identify options and priorities for land conservation include private non-profit conservation organizations such as land trusts. .

XII. HISTORIC & SCENIC RESOURCES:

1. Future development within or adjacent to historic buildings or sites of recognized significance should be permitted when the design of the project:
 - fits the context of the dominant character of the immediate area.
 - does not significantly diminish the distinguishing qualities of the buildings or sites
 - does not unnecessarily remove recognized or documented historic buildings, structures, or sites.
2. Public improvements such as bridge replacement or rehabilitation, street widening, roadway reconstruction, signage, utility distribution systems, and outdoor lighting should be designed to avoid unnecessary degradation of historic places or sites. Such public investments should be planned in consultation with local and state officials, including the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, to ensure consistency with its planning objectives and programs.
3. An integral scenic element of the Bethel's countryside is the extensive network of roads. These roads, particularly Class 3 town roads, are characterized by relatively narrow roadways of diverse and contrasting features in close proximity to the road itself. These features combined provide a unique visual experience and an awareness of the landscape. With some exception for arterial roads, it is goal of the community to retain these special features. Improvements to roads of high scenic value should be undertaken with consideration of the special scenic qualities inherent to the roadway and roadway fringe. Substantial modifications or off-alignment options that unnecessarily destroy the special characteristics of such roadways

are not consistent with the Plan. Use of design standards appropriate to the functional classification of the road is encouraged.

4. Archeological resources in town should be maintained as key components of our heritage.

5. As a means of maintaining our scenery, the following design elements should generally be employed in planning for development, and especially for areas immediately adjacent to Route 107 and Route 12:

- design buildings or structures so that they are reasonably compatible with the traditional patterns, scale, size, bulk, and form of existing building or structures;
- locate buildings and structures away from highly visible ridgelines to a lower backdrop on a hillside;
- break up large parking areas into smaller lots with ample landscaping or screening from off-site views, and locate the project on less scenic areas of the site.
- place street trees which act as buffers between traffic arteries and internal drives;
- layout the project site to allow for coordinated future use of the entire parcel;
- employ screening plans for visually objectionable features on the site; and
- minimize curb cuts onto public highways and promote the use of access drives.

6. Outdoor lighting should be designed to minimize glare, incorporate light shields, and to not directly light beyond the boundaries of the area to be illuminated or onto adjacent properties.

Excessively high lighting levels in rural or very low residential areas are discouraged. Project planners should give due consideration to the guidelines set forth in the “*Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities*” published by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1996) and available at the Bethel Town Office.

APPENDIX C

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

[Recommendations for Action: Specific activities Bethel could take to implement the Town Plan goals.]

V. HOUSING

1. Affordable elderly and family housing is needed. The Town, in cooperation with housing development and housing non-profit groups, should continue to evaluate the extent of need and the options available to address this need.
2. New information on housing studies that becomes available should be reviewed by the Planning Commission to see if revisions to the Plan are necessary.

VI. PUBLIC UTILITIES & FACILITIES

1. The Town and School District are encouraged to continue their efforts on capital improvement plans, budgets, and the school consolidation study. Periodic consultation with the Planning Commission on the land use implications of major capital investments is recommended.
2. The Town should continue to support efforts to promote and enhance Bethel's downtown as the center for community services, commerce, and governmental services.
3. Relocate the Bethel Town Offices to a site that provides sufficient space for the long-term governmental needs of the community.
4. Make Bethel's disaster planning more public.
5. Develop a recordkeeping management system for Town cemeteries.
6. To establish an emergency shelter on the east side of the White River.

VII. TRANSPORTATION

1. Continue participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Program through the Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission and the Transit Advisory Committee
2. Participate, along with neighboring communities in the White River Valley, in the long-range planning for possible changes to Routes 100 and 107.
3. Invest in appropriate improvements to parking, pedestrian, and transit facilities.
4. Support development of a Park & Ride at Exit 3 off I-89.
5. Encourage speed and traffic law enforcement.

VIII. ENERGY

Construction or renovation of buildings, such as the Town Offices or the Town Hall, should include the priorities of energy conservation and efficiency.

IX. LAND USE:

1. Continue the 'Village Center Designation' and efforts to restore the Town Hall.
2. Work with other governmental agencies to promote the upgrading of underutilized buildings within the Village, to provide suitable and affordable housing for its citizens.
3. The Town should do a 'Build Out' study of the current zoning districts to determine their capacity.
4. The Town should look at the current zoning districts to see if the boundaries can be adjusted if soils and slopes allow.

X. NATURAL RESOURCES:

1. The Town shall continue the Bethel Source Protection Plan to limit or prohibit land use activities that unduly threaten groundwater.
2. The Planning Commission or Conservation Commission, in cooperation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, and other resource agencies, should identify and map significant aquifer protection areas in Bethel. New or revised plan policies should be developed as necessary to protect and monitor land use development activities on these resources.
3. The Planning Commission, as part of its next revision of the Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations, should evaluate the adequacy of these regulations to enhance, identify, and protect wetlands. Where necessary, revisions to these bylaws should be developed.
4. In cooperation with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and other conservation agencies or organizations, the Town should consider undertaking a more detail inventory and maps of wildlife and critical habitats as well as rare and endangered species.
5. Revisions to zoning regulations and use of land conservation techniques to address development options should be considered following the inventory.

XI. AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY:

1. Key farm and forestlands in Bethel should be inventoried and evaluated.
2. Local land use planning activities and programs affecting and promoting agriculture and forestry should use USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) method as a way to objectively evaluate land for conservation.
3. Explore ways the Town can promote sustainable farming and forestry and value-added industries and activities to strengthen our local economy.

XII. HISTORIC & SCENIC RESOURCES:

1. To enable a more complete understanding and evaluation of scenic resources, the Planning Commission or Conservation Commission (if one is formed) should inventory and analyze scenic resource areas throughout the Town. This effort should be done in consultation with the townspeople. Following completion, this section of the Plan should be reviewed and perhaps amended.
2. The Planning Commission should consider incorporating a lighting section into the Bethel Zoning Regulations to cover outdoor lighting installations.
3. The Planning Commission should continue to support efforts to promote downtown Bethel as the center for economic and civic activity. Efforts should continue to strengthen the viability of the village as the town center through work with business owners, Bethel Business Association, local officials, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission and other organizations.

APPENDIX D

Town Maps:

49a. Current Land Use.

49b. Future Land Use – Base Districts.

49c. Future Land Use – Overlay Districts.

49d. Transportation.

49e. Town Facilities.

APPENDIX E

Are you a Bethel resident? Yes___ No___

Are you a Bethel land owner? Yes___ No___

Bethel Planning Survey – JANUARY 2006

This survey is to gather input for the revision of the **Bethel Town Plan**, which should help us plan our future over the next five years. We'd really like your ideas. The survey is mostly in 'yes/no' format, but we would like your specific comments as well.

Please complete and return this survey by February 1st, 2006. Thanks.

1. Should commercial development be focused:

a. in the Village center? Yes___ No___

b. along Route 12 toward Randolph? Yes___ No___

c. along Route 107 toward Rutland? Yes___ No___

d. other locations? _____

Comments:

2. Is it important to have the Town Offices located in the Village Center? Yes___ No___

If no, where should they be located?

Comments:

3. Should Bethel's municipal infrastructure be extended? (water, sewer lines, sidewalks, etc.)

Yes___ No___

If yes, where?

Comments:

4. Should more development than current zoning permits be granted on a piece of property if soils and slopes allow?

Yes___ No___

Comments:

5. Should we continue to grow without further limits? Yes___ No___

Comments:

6. Should Bethel try to attract tourist-related businesses and activities to town? Yes___ No___

Comments:

7. Are there areas in Bethel where growth should not occur? Yes___ No___

If yes, what kind of land would you like to see conserved? (Check all that apply.)

€ Agricultural

€ Scenic views

€ Forests & Woods

€ Recreational

€ Ridgelines

€ Critical wildlife habitat

€ Other _____

Comments:

8. Should the Town pave more dirt roads? Yes___ No___

If yes, which roads should be paved? _____

Comments:

9. The Bethel Zoning Ordinance allows for construction of wireless telecommunication towers. Is your personal, professional or business life affected by lack of these services at the present time? Yes___

No___

Comments:

10. **The Bethel Town Hall will be restored as a Community/Recreation Center. What activities would you like to see take place at the Town Hall?**

11. **'Planning' can involve a wide variety of activities – some concrete things to do or not to do, as well as effort(s) aimed at creating a desired atmosphere or environ. Please review the following items and –for each– indicate your rating of whether the item is VERY important, SOMEWHAT important, or NOT Important for Bethel's future.**

Desired Atmosphere or Environ	VERY Important	SOMEWHAT Important	NOT Important
'Small town' atmosphere			
Scenic views			
Employment opportunities			
Village Center			
Available Housing			
Access to I-89			
Zoning & Land Use			
School System			
Stores & Public Services			
Sense of 'Community'			
Clean & Healthy Environment			
Well-planned Development			
Sidewalks & Bike Paths			
Building Regulations			
'Rural Character'			
Available Child Care			
Condition & Maintenance of Town Roads			
Affordable Housing			
The White River & branches			
Farms and fields			
Woods and forests			
Wildlife			
Light Pollution			
Privacy			

Thanks so much for your time. Your thoughts and comments about what Bethel should focus on over the next five years are greatly appreciated.

Please complete and return this survey by February 1st, 2006. THANKS.

Bethel Planning Commission: Davis Dimock, Peter Dohrn, Dave Eddy, Carla Hodgdon, Joanne Kent, Eric Richardson, Craig Wortman (Chair).