HANCOCK TOWN PLAN

Adopted
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Prepared By The Hancock Planning Commission

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With Assistance From the
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Town History

Hancock was granted November 7, 1780 and chartered July 31, 1781 by our first governor, Governor Chittenden, to Samuel Wilcox and 129 associates. Hancock grew as Pioneers seeking new land after the Revolutionary War moved into Hancock. In 1791, there were 56 people. The population reached its peak of 472 residents in 1830. After the Civil War, the opening of the west brought on a movement of people westward to better farming lands and opportunities. This affected most of Vermont and Hancock was not immune to the departures. The small farms and mills that made up much of the town were gradually phased out and only the larger farms survived. Today, farms have all but disappeared from Hancock's landscape. Since its peak, the population of Hancock has been slowly rebounding; however, it has never made it back to the population that it once held.

At present, Hancock has been only very lightly touched by the changes that are taking place in the State of Vermont. During the past four decades, Vermont has been a location of choice for many newcomers. At the same time, there has been a natural increase of the population, resulting from more births than deaths. Altogether, Vermont's population grew from 414,000 in 1966 to 608,000 in 2000, to 625,741 in 2010. This increased population has put greater pressures on towns throughout Vermont. While the population of Vermont is growing, the demographics of the population are getting older as well. Likewise, the population of Hancock is becoming older, which presents a particular set of problems.

B. The Need for Planning

At first glance, Hancock is a small, rural town that has remained relatively untouched by the changes that have occurred in surrounding towns. In Hancock, for example, there is not a shortage of affordable housing as you might find in a town like Woodstock. Hancock has not suffered from the stresses that a growing population can put on public utilities and services. But we understand that there are changes happening statewide that will eventually reach our Town. The building of expensive second homes has become commonplace along the Route 100

corridor. Businesses that were once the cornerstone of our town's economy are consolidating their facilities elsewhere and moving out of town. It is clear for us to see that Hancock will not remain immune to change.

Change stimulates the need for the community to examine its current condition and to evaluate its prospects for the future. Change can be beneficial, but in order to ascertain this, people must understand the problems and opportunities facing the community and identify goals for the future. Communities with little or no planning are more likely to experience problems of over development, high property taxes and increased demands for community services. We, like every town, have choices in the way we provide for orderly growth and in the way we balance our natural and built environments.

C. Purpose of this Plan

A well-grounded municipal plan, prepared by the town with the involvement of its citizens, is the foundation for ensuring appropriate development in the future. A municipal plan with a defined set of goals and policies can reduce conflicts that may otherwise arise in connection with development, especially in towns like Hancock that have no zoning bylaws, with the exception of the town's flood hazard zoning bylaw (see Chapter XIV, Section D, Implementation Tools). The primary purpose of this plan is to help our citizens direct the future growth of the town. The Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of Hancock's residents, jobs, economy, schools, roads, housing, natural resources, and land use. This analysis of current conditions in the context of goals for our community, leads to policies and recommendations that can help our community make wise choices in directing the patterns of its future growth.

D. Ongoing Planning

Planning for change is a continual process for the Town and will require the involvement of the Planning Commission and the public to ensure that the goals and policies of the Plan are integrated into the decisions affecting land use, taxation, and public investments in Hancock.

The Hancock Town Plan is not a permanent document on community desires or values. Its life is limited by statute (24 V.S.A., Section 4387). The Planning Commission is responsible for the maintenance and amendment of the Plan. Within the next five years following adoption of the Plan, the Planning Commission will need to evaluate the Plan in light of new conditions and needs. Readoption of an updated Plan will require notice to the townspeople and finally action by the Selectboard.

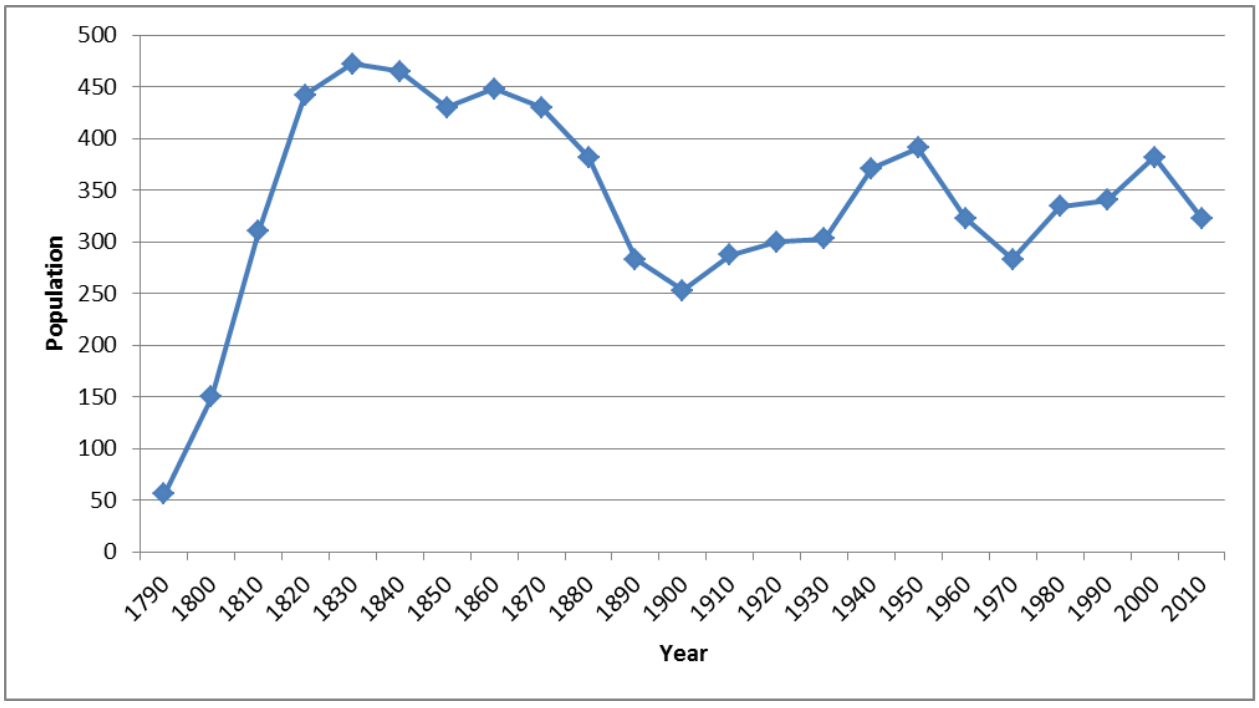
II. POPULATION

A. Population Patterns

Population, when considered in terms of past, present, and future statistics, represents an important factor in the overall development of Hancock. Rapid and unanticipated population increases can create a demand for new and expanded municipal services and can strain the financial ability of a town to provide public services economically. This is especially true in instances where new residents are of public school age and the public schools are at or near capacity. Through wise planning and programming for population change, the services and facilities that a growing population will demand can be delivered more efficiently and equitably.

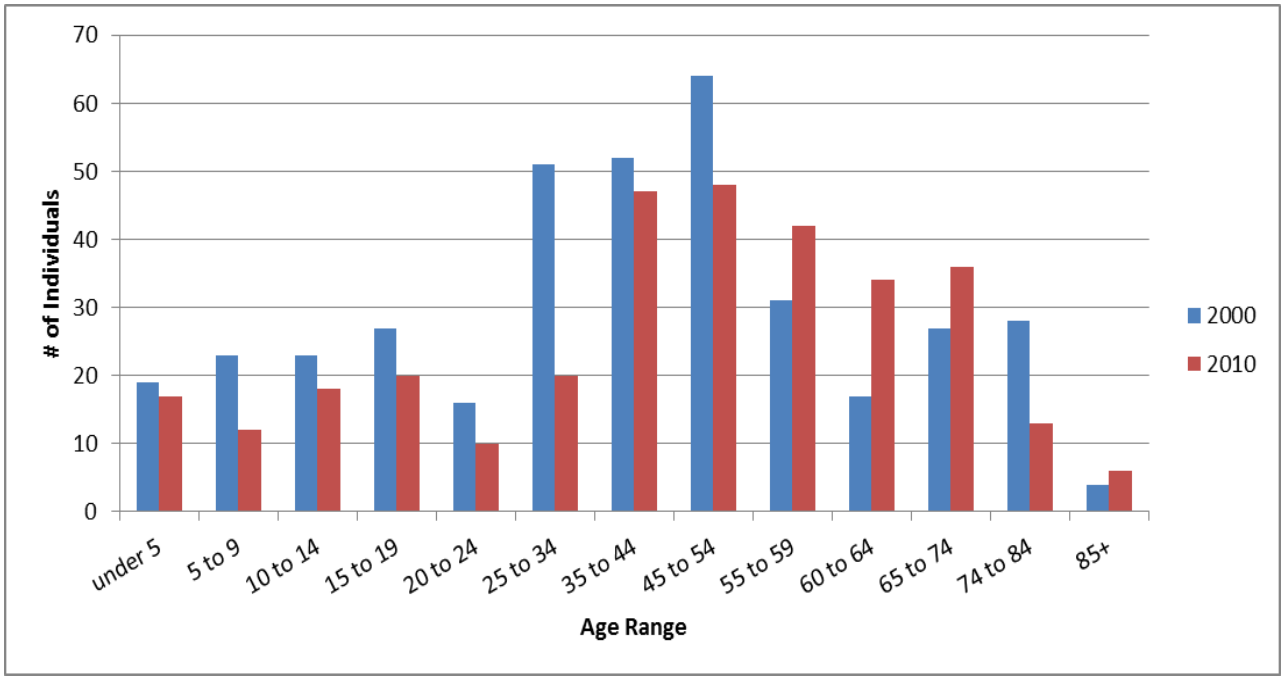
Shown below are population statistics for the Town of Hancock taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the US Census, Hancock's year 2010 population was 323, compared to a population of 382 in 2000, resulting in a decrease in growth rate during the 2000's of 16%.

Figure 1: Population Change, Hancock, VT



Source: Vermont Housing Data v[2]

Figure 2: Hancock Population by Distribution 2000-2010



Source: Vermont Housing Data v[2] & U.S. Census 2010

B. Age of Population

According to the 2010 Census, over one quarter (27.8 %) of the population of Hancock was aged between 45 and 59 years old. The number of individuals in this age range has increased since the 1990 Census and 2000 Census. The 1990 Census reported that 15% of Hancock's population was aged between 45 and 59 years old, and the 2000 Census showed that that age group had grown to become 25% of the town's total population. The median age according to the 2010 Census was 48 years old. As a town, we should look closely at the implications of our aging population. Such changes in the overall age of our residents may have effects on elderly care, the accessibility of town services and access to public facilities.

C. Income of Population

The Vermont Department of Taxes annually publishes *Vermont Tax Statistics* which includes a summary of personal income tax returns filed with the State. In 2011, 181 personal income tax returns were filed from residents in Hancock. Total adjusted personal income reported for Hancock residents was $ 6,759,735 dollars.

For 2010, 50.2% of the income generated in Hancock was by filers earning $40,000 or more, while 33.2% were earning less than $25,000.

III. ECONOMIC BASE

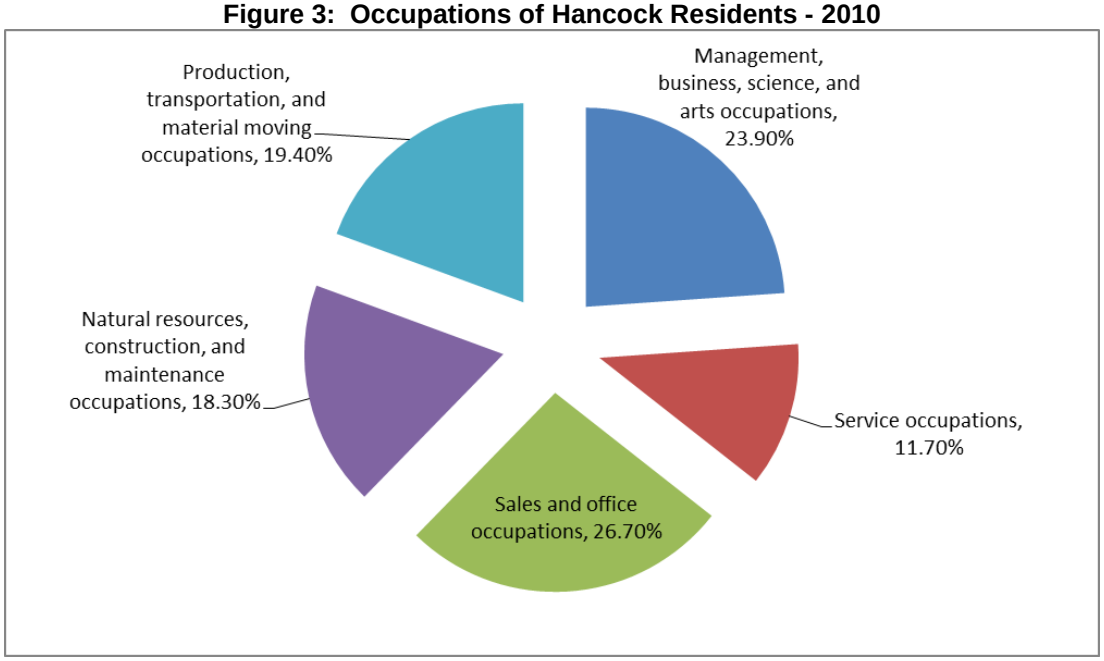
Chesapeake Hardwood Products, Inc., manufactured all varieties of hardwood plywood and was the largest employer in the three valley towns of Hancock, Granville and Rochester until 2003, when the plant was closed. At its peak, the company employed about 170 people, though when it was closed approximately 50 jobs were lost. After Chesapeake closed, the plant resumed operations as Vermont Plywood through Community Development funds that were loaned by the Town, as well as two other loans. The plant was closed again for several reasons in 2007, and was sold in 2008 for reuse in processing of locally-produced marble. Currently, the owner of the old Chesapeake building is using it for storage and leases it out for firewood storage at one end of the building. Vermont Verde Antique rents a space at the other end of the old Chesapeake building.

In Addison County, unemployment was 6.2%, up from 3.8% in May 2008, according to the Vermont Department of Labor. The State unemployment rate in 2010 was 6.4%.

Other smaller businesses include: gas station with auto mechanics, general store, bakery/restaurant/gift shop, Vermont products gift shop, summer camp for girls and boys, used car dealer, general contractors, building supply yard, loggers, small engine repair, plumbing and heating contractors, architects, and bed and breakfast. The Middlebury College Snow Bowl is located in Hancock and other ski areas are located in neighboring Waitsfield and Warren, which provide seasonal employment.

Hancock does not serve as an economic hub for commercial and industrial activity. Residents drive to Randolph, Middlebury, Waitsfield, Rochester, Montpelier and Rutland for banking, medical, professional and related services. In 2010, there were 209 individuals aged 16 and over in the labor force. The chart below breaks out their occupations as reported.

Figure 3: Occupations of Hancock Residents - 2010



Source: US Census 2010

Many of the occupations listed in Figure 3 are not based in town, requiring residents to commute. Hancock residents want to see more jobs brought to their town. There is particular interest in so-called "clean" businesses, such as light manufacturing, software sales, outdoor recreation and Internet commerce.

A. Child Care

The State of Vermont has two classifications of childcare that are regulated, they are:

- Registered Family Child Care Home: A child care program approved only in the provider's residence, which is limited to a small number of children based on specific criteria.

- Licensed Program: A child care program providing care to children in any approved location. The number and ages of children served are based on available approved space and staffing qualifications, as well as play and learning equipment. A Licensed program must be inspected by the Department of Labor and Industry's Fire Safety Inspectors and must obtain a Water and Wastewater Disposal Permit from the Agency of Environmental Conservation. A Licensed program is considered a public building under Vermont Law. Types of licensed programs include: early childhood programs, school-age care, family homes and non-recurring care programs.

Figure 4: Childcare Facilities

Hancock and Surrounding Towns, 2013

Childcare, 2013 Childcare providers, by town.		
	Registered	**Licensed**
Granville	0	0
Hancock	**0**	**0**
Pittsfield	0	0
Ripton	0	3
Rochester	0	2
Waitsfield	2	5
Warren	1	4

Source: VT Bright Futures Childcare System

As of 2013, there are no licensed day care centers or registered day care homes in Hancock, though there are two facilities in nearby Rochester, three in Ripton, seven in Waitsfield, and five in Warren, according to state data. Some residents may currently arrange for care with relatives, or take their children to childcare facilities beyond the borders of Hancock to neighboring towns like Rochester, Waitsfield or Warren. Because Hancock has such a small population of day care aged children, this lack of childcare may not be an area of concern for the community. However, having child care facilities in Hancock would provide families with convenient options for child care.

In order to meet the child care needs of its working families, Hancock supports the private development of child care facilities in Town and may assist providers with seeking funding to develop these facilities.

Goals

1. Increase the availability of locally based jobs while maintaining the rural character of Hancock.
2. Encourage and attract businesses to settle in Hancock by offering incentives, thus increasing the tax base and creating jobs.
3. Reinstate local manufacturing jobs through the sale and re-use of the plywood plant.
4. Expand child care services in Hancock.

Planning Principles

1. It is the policy of the Town to cooperate with neighboring towns, regional planning commissions and economic development groups, to plan for and maintain a balance between the type and number of jobs created and natural population growth in the region.
2. It is the policy of the Town to support the development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services
3. It is the policy of the Town to encourage new business development in appropriate locations where services such as roads, fire protections and power supply are available or planned.
4. It is the policy of the Town to encourage conversion of structures and older buildings to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.
5. Residents are encouraged to conduct an occupation in their homes provided that the nature of the occupation is customary or appropriate in rural residential areas.
6. It is a policy of the Town to support private sector efforts to seek funding to develop child care infrastructure.

Recommendations

1. The town should consider the implications of an aging population and the impact it will have on the services and infrastructure that is in place.
2. The town should actively pursue “clean businesses” that are interested in purchasing property within the designated “Small Enterprise Area” (see Land Use section of this plan).
3. The town should support efforts and encourage studies, plans or Brownfield redevelopment initiatives that will ensure or continue the re-use of the Chesapeake facility.

IV. HOUSING

A. Introduction

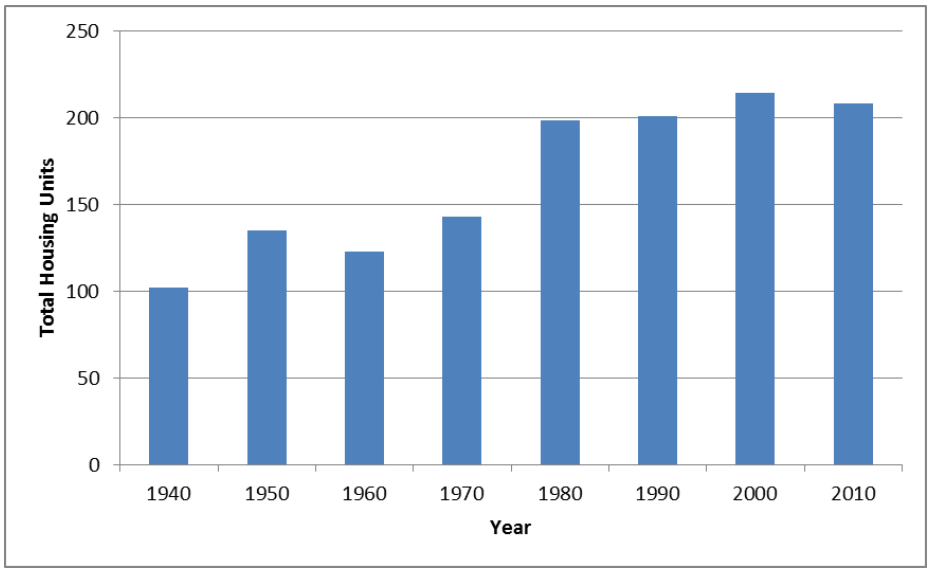
A major function of local housing planning is to meet two community objectives - first, safe and affordable housing for its present and future population and second, suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the community. Growth in housing affects the Town's capacity to provide facilities and services to our town and the character of the area. Housing built without adequate planning for schools, roads, and other public services can overburden the ability of the taxpayers to pay for these services, and also can lower adjacent property values and negatively affect the rural character of the town.

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 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

There were 208 housing units in Hancock in 2010 according to the Census, which represents a slight decrease in the total number of housing units since 2000. In 2000, there were 214 housing units. None of the housing stocks, (the State's, the Region's, or the Town's), grew at the rates experienced in the 1980's.

Figure 5: Total Housing Units (1940-2010)



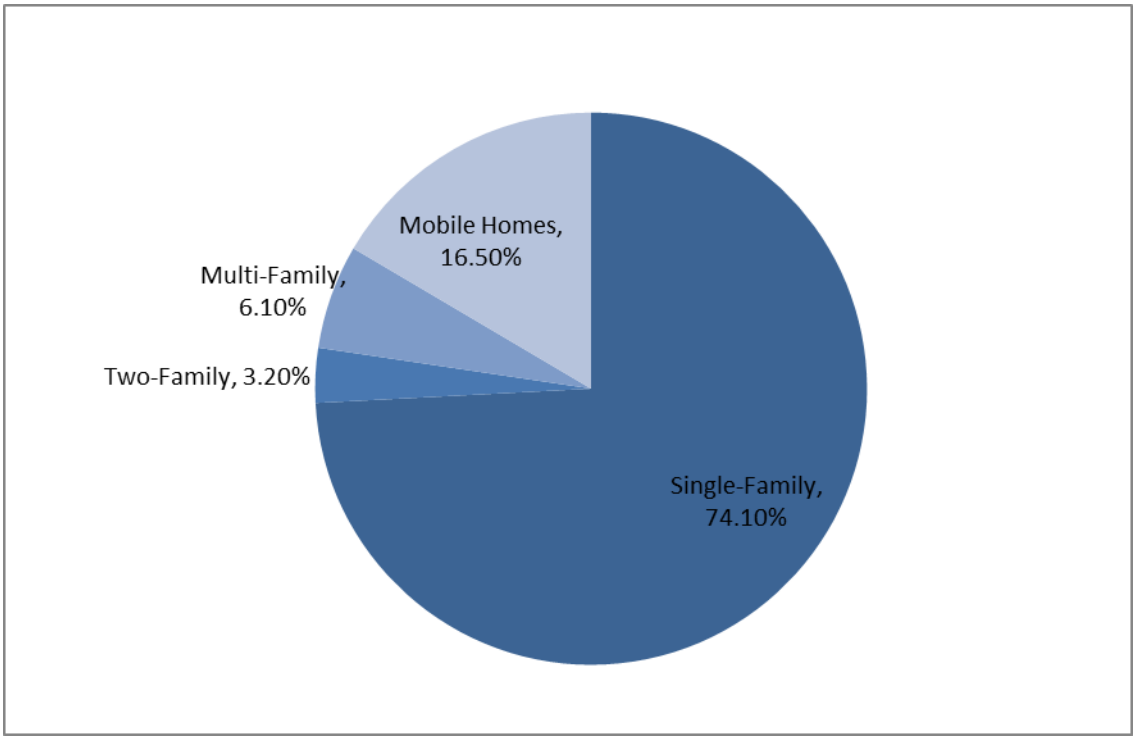
Source: Vermont Housing Data v[2]

C. Type of Housing and Ownership Characteristics

The U.S. Census defines a "housing unit" to include: conventional houses, apartments, mobile homes, and rooms for occupancy. The 2005-2009 Vermont Housing Data v[2] reports that just under three-quarters of the housing units in Hancock were single-family residences (74.1%); the second largest percentage of housing units were mobile homes (16.5%).

The average price of primary residences sold in Hancock was $137,500 in 2010, a decrease from $147,000 in 2007. The average price of a primary residence sold in the County was about $225,000; while state-wide it was approximately $235,000.

Figure 6: Types of Housing Units



Source: Vermont Housing Data v[2] 2005-2009

Of the housing units that were occupied in Hancock in 2010, 78.6% were owner-occupied and 21.4% were renter-occupied. Of the total number of homes in Hancock, approximately 25% were vacant, unoccupied. Over 80% of these vacant units are for seasonal or recreational use, and the remainder were for sale or rent. Using the 2010 Census data, and subtracting the number of vacant units for seasonal/recreational use from the total supply of vacant units, Hancock is left with a 12% vacancy rate. Vacancy rates below 5% are considered to be "functional zeros," the units that are available are usually uninhabited for reasons like sub-standard conditions. Hancock's vacancy rate of 12% reflects the 7 units either for sale or rent.

D. Household Characteristics

Hancock, like many communities in Vermont and the nation, has experienced a trend towards a smaller household size. This trend, coupled with the increase in population generally, results in an increased demand for housing and will also affect the number and type of unit demanded. Several special population/household groups, such as the elderly and female heads of household can be identified as having particular housing needs.

E. Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is defined as that which a household making the county's median income could afford if no more than 30% of its income were spent on housing costs. For homeowners, housing costs include payments for principal and interest on a mortgage, taxes, etc. For renters, housing costs include rent and utilities.

A 2-acre section of the town property, Taylor Meadow, has deed restrictions that reserve it for affordable housing. The town worked with the Addison County Community Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to develop the property into housing that is affordably priced for residents of Hancock and surrounding towns. Five affordably priced units are now located on this property.

Goals

1. To provide the opportunity for Hancock residents to have access to decent and affordable housing.
2. To encourage the retention of existing housing and construction of new housing to meet natural population growth.
3. To encourage the preservation of historic structures in ways that appropriately serve the need for housing.

Planning Principles

1. It is the policy of the town to ensure that the timing and rate of new housing construction or rehabilitation does not exceed the community's ability to provide adequate public facilities (e.g. schools and municipal services).
2. It is the policy of the town to keep housing affordable by planning for:
    - Appropriately sized lots;
    - Accessory apartments; and
    - Clustered developments.
3. To encourage the use of accessory apartments.
4. It is the policy of the town to encourage and direct the location of future housing so as to complement existing or planned employment patterns, travel times, and energy requirements.
5. It is the policy of the town that the location of housing, related amenities and land uses should be planned with due regard to the physical limitations of the site and location to

current or planned public and private services such as roads and commercial/service centers.

6. On July 1, 2007, the State's on-site wastewater & potable water supply system program went into effect, superseding the Town's septic ordinance. Property owners must now obtain a state permit for most repairs, upgrades, and new construction of on-site wastewater treatment and disposal facilities, on-site potable water supplies, and connections to municipal water distribution and wastewater collection systems.

V. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A. Background

In order to promote a healthy and thriving Town, Hancock needs to make sound investments in its community. This investment should not focus solely on the economics of the Town, but also on the *people* that make the Town what it is. Hancock should support the needs of its growing elderly population, the disabled and those who face financial challenges.

B. Community Investments

The Needs of the Elderly and Disabled

According to the 2010 Census, over one quarter (27.8 %) of the population of Hancock was aged between 45 and 59 years old. This represents an increase in individuals in this age range as reported by the 2000 US Census, where 25% of Hancock's total population were between 45 and 59 years old. Such changes in the overall age of the Town's residents may have effects on elderly care, the accessibility of town services and access to public facilities. The Town should study this demographic change more closely.

Job Growth

The closing of the Chesapeake facility resulted in a loss of jobs for Hancock and its surrounding neighbors. The Town should encourage studies, plans or Brownfield redevelopment initiatives that will promote and/or continue the re-use of the Chesapeake facility to reinstate the jobs lost, to welcome the facility's new owner, and to secure the future of this employer in Hancock.

Business Incentives

The loss of Hancock's largest single employer puts pressure on the Town Government to entice new businesses to settle in this area. The Town should consider any incentives that are feasible, financial or otherwise. For example, Hancock is currently levying an inventory tax on businesses located in town. The Town may want to consider altering or removing this tax in an effort to bring more businesses to town.

C. Funding Community Development Initiatives

Because Hancock is not a wealthy town, creative ways to fund the types of investments needed in the community must be found. There are options for a town such as Hancock; one that is worth consideration is the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP). This program, and others like it, offer grant opportunities and low interest loans in an effort to promote initiatives that:

- Principally benefit persons of low and moderate-income households;
- Aid in the prevention and elimination of slums and blight;

- Meet community development needs of a particular urgency;
- Conserve, expand and improve housing;
- Create and retain employment; and
- Improve public facilities and services in support of local government, housing or economic development activities and where there is a threat to public safety.

Clearly, Hancock needs to make the most of such programs. In 2012, a non-profit was created, the Hancock Town Pride Committee, which seeks to beautify the town of Hancock. Efforts from this and other organizations will help contribute to community development, and may lead to further community development initiatives in the future.

Goals

1. Promote investments that encourage improved accessibility and enhance elderly care.
2. Encourage the use of state or federal funds or programs designed to assist with community development projects as noted in this section or elsewhere in this plan.
3. Strengthen and diversify the local economy.

Planning Principles

1. It is the policy of the Town to support initiatives that seek to improve community development, provided that they do not put an undue financial burden on the town.
2. It is the policy of the Town to assist regional organizations, such as the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission, with any community development initiatives that are undertaken within Hancock.

VI. UTILITIES & FACILITIES

A. Town Offices

The Town Clerk's office is located on Route 125 in the center of town. It was built in 1930 and is designed to provide office and record storage space. The original building has been improved by the addition of a vault where records are safely kept. In addition, all town records up to 1985 have been microfilmed and stored by the State.

At present, the office is open part-time and the Selectboard and Planning Commission hold meetings there.

The town office building meets the needs of the town to a degree, but more space is necessary. To meet their needs, the Town of Hancock is considering expanding the town offices into the old school building.

B. Library

The Hancock Library was built in 1920. It is located in the village at the junction of Routes 125 and 100. The library contains about 3,750 volumes owned by the town and additional books are borrowed from the state library system. It is staffed by one librarian and is open three days a week for a total of fourteen hours.

The library is owned and supported by the Town of Hancock. It receives approximately $12,800 yearly from the Town in addition to proceeds from any grants, fundraisers and donations. The non-profit, the Friends of the Hancock Free Public Library, also raises money to support Hancock's public library.

The Hancock Library is very small, and space is at a premium. The building has no basement for additional storage. Due to the limited space, there is no room for a designated children's reading area.

C. Town Hall

The Town Hall is a large, two story wooden structure located on Route 100 just south of the center of Town. Anecdotal records indicate that it was built in the early 1900's. The first floor contains a large meeting hall and a well-equipped kitchen that is used many times throughout the year for fundraising public suppers. In addition, it is used by the Quin-Town Senior Citizens Center, and for town meetings and other public meetings. The second floor is a non-denominational church and is used by the Hancock-Granville Community Church. As of summer 2013, the Town entered into an agreement with the Red Cross to designate the Town Hall as the Emergency Shelter. Both floors of the building meet Vermont State requirements for handicap accessibility. It is an extremely important structure in Hancock and any needed structural repairs should be completed.

A larger, 134-foot by 105-foot, parking lot has recently been built behind the Town Hall to provide parking for events and church services. The area in front of the hall is for handicapped parking only.

D. The Village School Building

The Village School closed its doors in 2009, and left behind an unoccupied building. The structure was built in 1901, and is located near the crossroads of Vermont Routes 100 and 125, just south of the village center. This two story structure is considered to be in good condition, despite its age. The building is handicapped accessible, save the upper level. Before the Village School closed, renovations were completed on the building, including a new kitchen, roof and alteration of the front parking lot to safety accommodate large vehicles (school buses).

Currently, the building is unoccupied and underutilized. The town should consider the re-use of the old Village School building as a way to spur community development in the future.

E. Solid Waste Management

The Town is a member of the White River Solid Waste Alliance. Its goal is to plan for and manage solid waste generated within its member communities in an environmentally sound manner. Presently, seven municipalities are included in the district. Vermont statute requires municipalities and solid waste management districts to adopt a solid waste implementation plan (SWIP) that conforms with the State Solid Waste Management Plan. SWIPs were to be submitted to the State in 2003 and revised every five years thereafter. As of 2013, a newly updated SWIP has not been drafted.

The Bethel/Royalton landfill serves as the designated disposal site for Hancock. All recyclables, demolition wastes and household hazardous wastes are collected or processed at the same location. The Alliance continues to conduct an educational program.

Waste collection is provided by a number of private firms and paid for by homeowners. Beginning in July 2013, all recycling services will be provided by Casella's, for which Hancock budgeted $6,300. Residents and businesses are also free to transport their own trash or recyclables, or special wastes to their designated facilities.

F. Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment Facilities

The Town of Hancock does not own or operate any public water supply or wastewater disposal systems. All residences and non-residential uses are dependent on individual on-site water supply and disposal facilities. The Town does not plan to engineer or construct either of these facilities in the next five years.

The Chesapeake factory invested in its own water system, which includes drilled wells for drinking water and a spring-fed reservoir for their fire suppression system.

Goals

1. To plan for and finance utilities and municipal facilities to meet the future needs of the citizens of Hancock.

Planning Principles

1. Growth and development should not exceed the capacities of local utilities and municipal facilities.

Recommendations

1. The town should encourage and support efforts to ensure the re-use of the old Village School building.

VII. EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTION

Following the damage wrought by Tropical Storm Irene, a new culture of emergency preparedness has been established in the Town of Hancock. As a result, the Town Hall was designated as a Red Cross Emergency Shelter in the summer of 2013. As part of the agreement with the Red Cross, the Town will also have yearly emergency disaster drills.

A. Fire Protection Services

Fire protection services are provided by the Hancock Fire Department (HFD), a 13 person all-volunteer department that provides twenty-four hour coverage for the Town and surrounding areas. Neighboring community's fire departments are called on in large fires requiring outside resources. The Fire Department participates in informal agreements with the towns of Rochester and Granville for mutual aid services, and has a formal mutual aid agreement with Ripton for the Middlebury Snow Bowl.

Fire Station

Construction of the new fire station, located in Taylor Meadow, began in 2009 and was finalized in 2010. It replaced the old four-bay fire station located further south of the village center on Route 100. There is an 1800 watt generator for back-up power and the building is equipped with sprinklers. The new building also has 1 restroom and a meeting space with an attached kitchen.

Vehicles

The Hancock Fire Department has the following vehicles:

- 2002 Sterling Pumper
- 2003 Sterling Tanker
- 1982 Rescue Van
- 1974 International Tanker
- 1937 Fire Truck, used only in parades, etc.

It is the intent of the HFD to upgrade one tanker.

Although these vehicles are adequate for use on structural fires within town, they are limited in their ability to travel into wilderness areas. Considering that 80-85% of Hancock is part of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF), owned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Hancock Fire Department should have at least one vehicle capable of working deep into the forest. In 2008, the Town wanted to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USFS regarding prevention of and response to wildfires. However, as of 2013, no MOU has been formally adopted between the Town of Hancock and the U.S. Forest Service.

The fire department gets fire suppression water from the White River and connecting streams. The Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force has administered the Dry Hydrant Grant Program

since 1998, providing funds to assist communities with the installation of dry hydrants to improve fire protection in the rural areas of Vermont. Between 1998 and 2005, Hancock received two dry hydrant grants, covering up to 75% of the total cost of the project. In the future, a dry hydrant could be installed on Killooleet Road since the fire pond that has always been used was destroyed by an August 6, 2008 rainstorm. However, as of 2013, a dry hydrant has yet to be installed.

Capabilities

Hancock's fire department is suited to working within the Town of Hancock. They are qualified for rescue. In the event of a wildfire, however, the HFD would be short-handed and under-equipped. In addition to the off-road vehicle mentioned previously, Firemen should receive training in how to handle a forest fire, and the proper personal protective equipment and tools for such an event should be purchased, through grant funds if possible.

Funding

The department is funded by a yearly budget of $8,000 from the town, with occasional capital investments for equipment, such as new vehicles. Any additional expenses are covered through fund-raising and grants.

B. Police Protection Services

The Town of Hancock does not need a full time police force and none is contemplated in the next five years. Vermont State Police patrol the town on a fairly regular basis. There is no set schedule for these patrols. The town does not have a paid constable, but a constable is elected for a one-year term to conduct administrative functions in service to the Selectboard. Residents may call the Vermont State Police for assistance.

C. Emergency Medical Services

Medical emergencies in the Town of Hancock are handled by White River Valley Ambulance, Inc. (WRVA). The WRVA has an EMT and ambulance station in Rochester, and will serve the Route 100 valley and surrounding areas. The previous emergency medical service provider was the Valley Rescue Squad (VRS), who disbanded in the late spring of 2013. The future of the VRS building is uncertain, but it is likely that the building will be sold.

The Fire Department has extraction equipment, and therefore handles any situations that call for it. Porter Hospital in Middlebury is the closest and used by many Hancock residents, while Gifford Medical Center in Randolph is the most used facility. Medivac services are available by the DHART helicopter when necessary. The town has appointed a Public Health Officer that is empowered, along with the Selectboard, to protect public health in town.

Goals

1. To plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of emergency facilities and services to meet the future needs of the citizens of Hancock.

Planning Principles

1. Growth and development should not exceed the capacities of local emergency facilities and services.
2. Provisions for emergency services must be considered in all development.
3. Development must be coordinated with the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Basic Emergency Operations Plan.

VIII. EDUCATION

A. Current Status of Education in Hancock

After serving the Towns of Granville and Hancock since 2004, the Village School in Hancock closed its doors in 2009. The Village School system consisted of two buildings, one in each of the Towns of Granville and Hancock.

Between the years of 2004-2008, student enrollment at the Village School in Hancock hovered between 25 and 33 students. The 2007-2008 school year had the lowest enrollment rate of 25 students. With decreasing enrollment and the knowledge of the leveling off of the childbearing age group (leading to a further decrease in elementary aged children enrollment) the Hancock Village School was closed in 2009.

Even before the Village School closed its doors, the Town of Hancock was tuitioning 7th-12th grade students to nearby schools on a per pupil basis. Most of the students attended school in Rochester, while others travelled to Bethel, Middlebury, Warren or Ripton for their education.

Now, the Town of Hancock is responsible for paying the tuition for all students, grades K-12, to attend nearby schools. As of March 2012, about two-thirds of the students living in the Town of Hancock attended Rochester Elementary, Middle and High Schools. The other third attend Ripton Elementary, Warren Elementary, Waitsfield Elementary, Harwood Union High School, Middlebury Union High School, and the private Bridge School in Middlebury, among others.

Paying each student's tuition to attend nearby schools creates a situation where the Town is required to pay more at the end of the year to cover the under-estimated tuition determined at the beginning of the school year. This "bill-back" expense, which is caused mostly by the underestimated tuition for students attending Rochester schools, may become an ongoing issue for the Town of Hancock's School Budget. A very small percentage of school-aged children in Hancock are homeschooled.

B. Vocational and Technical Education

The Randolph Technical Career Center provides technical career preparation and offers opportunities for academic and social growth to area youth and adults. Located in Randolph, RTCC serves Rochester High School students and offers programs in business, automotive and building trades, computer technology, media and communications, among others.

Goals

1. To provide a safe and secure learning environment where quality educational opportunities are provided to all students.
2. To enable the best opportunity to educate our students at the most equitable cost to the Town's taxpayers.
3. To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities.

Planning Principles

1. Land development that is likely to result in large numbers of school children should be phased or planned as to not place an undue financial burden on the capacity of town to provide educational services.
2. The Town supports development of technical and vocational education programs for adults and students in Hancock.
3. The Town supports community educational workshops, technical and vocational programs, and agricultural education through partnerships between schools, such as the Randolph Technical Career Center, Middlebury Union High School and Rochester High School, and local businesses.

IX. TRANSPORTATION

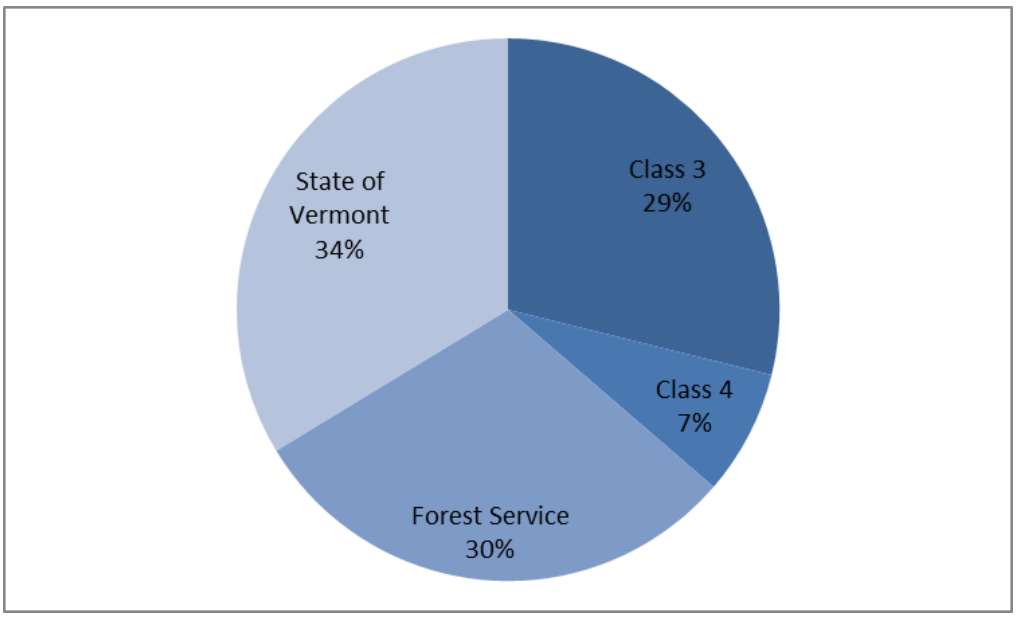
A. Introduction

Hancock's transportation system is principally a system of town roads, with the automobile as the primary means of transport. Hancock has no airports or rail services in town. Local residents and tourists utilize town and state roads for walking and biking, but use in some areas is limited due to a lack of adequate shoulders or bike lanes.

B. Town Roads

According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Town of Hancock owns and maintains 8.4 miles of Class 3 Town Highways and 2.2 miles of Class 4 Town Highways. The State of Vermont controls 9.8 miles of roads (Route 100 & Route 125) within the Town. In addition, the US Forest Service maintains 8.7 miles of roads. Only thirty-six percent (36%) of all highway mileage in Hancock is part of the local road system, which is substantially less than most rural communities. Hancock's mileage is also substantially less than in the average town.

Figure 7: Hancock Roads



Source: Vermont Agency of Transportation

Approximately 12 miles of Hancock's roads have paved surfaces and about 5 miles-are gravel or graded earth-based. Conditions for these local roads range from excellent to fair.

Changes in traffic volumes are dependent on a number of factors, but primarily by the type, size, and location of various land uses. Actions to improve and increase the carrying capacity of a road typically include building new roads and improving existing roads (e.g. resurfacing and

widening). Depending on the extent of the improvements and the method of financing, such actions can be costly and place an undue financial burden on the taxpayers of the town.

To avoid conflicts between the use of highways and future development, the town has established policies to evaluate and control how growth affects town roads. These include concentrating future development into areas where major roads already exist, limiting multiple access drives onto town roads, and working cooperatively with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and neighboring towns to improve regional land use and transportation planning.

The State uses four classifications formulas to distribute financial aid to towns for road repair and maintenance. Classifications are jointly determined by VTrans and the Selectboard. Criteria used for the classifications include traffic volumes, road conditions, and function. State-aid to the Town decreases on a per mile basis from Class 1 to Class 3. No state aid is available for Class 4 roads. Total aid, therefore, depends on the number of miles of road a town has in each class. During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, Hancock received $12,235 from the State for all roads.

Hancock was recently included in the Scenic Route 100 Byway designation which includes towns along Route 100 from Granville down to Stamford near the Massachusetts's border. The Byway designation is used to promote the historical, cultural, archaeological, natural, recreational and scenic resources offered in the towns along Route 100.

C. Town Highway Classifications

Class 1 includes the most heavily traveled town roads and are usually located in densely settled areas. Class 1 are extensions of State Highways and are usually assigned a State number. There are no Class 1 roads in Hancock.

Class 2 includes those major town highways selected as the most important highways in town. Class 2 roads serve the purpose of linking towns and high traffic areas such as village settlements and State Highways. Class 2 roads are generally paved. There are no Class 2 roads in Hancock.

Class 3 includes all town roads not Class 1 or 2 that can be driven under normal conditions all seasons of the year by a standard car. In Hancock, Class 3 roads include all town roads. Class 3 roads amount to a total of 8 miles.

Class 4 highways represent the lowest order of importance to the town. Public use is limited and as such the town receives no financial aid from the State. Approximately 2 miles of Class 4 roads exist in Hancock.

The town is not interested in expending tax dollars in improvements to Class 4 roads. These roads are usually in the poorest state and would require expensive reconstruction to their surfaces, base, drainage and width to bring them to Class 3 standards. Because of the great expense and relatively small public benefit accruing from Class 4 roads, current practice in Hancock is for the Selectboard and Road Commissioner to review necessary upgrades to Class 4 roads and to consider the available funds on a case-by-case basis before making improvements.

D. Transportation Facilities

The town of Hancock does not have a town garage. Currently the Town rents any equipment needed locally. Snow removal is contracted out on a yearly basis. This system suits the town, which has little space or funding to build storage for the types of equipment needed to maintain roads.

E. Pedestrian Facilities

In 2002, the Town hired a consultant to study the pedestrian circulation patterns and related issues within the village area. The primary area for pedestrian activity in Hancock exists between the intersection of Routes 100 and 125 and as far as the mill complex, with the most traffic between the Town Hall/Post Office area and the Town Clerk's office and general store on Route 125. The consultant's study recommends developing intersection crosswalks at Route 100/125, in addition to two that already exist along Route 100. The study also recommends sidewalks in Hancock, as part of a Village Enhancement Plan.

Currently, there are still no sidewalks in Hancock. Pedestrians are forced to walk on the shoulders of the highway routes. The shoulders do not provide adequate space for pedestrian travel. They are used because there is no other alternative, and in winter, snow constrains walking on all but the plowed highway surfaces. Citizens who use the shoulders for walking, including those involved in the study, have found that walking along shoulders under these conditions is uncomfortable and potentially unsafe. This fact discourages pedestrian circulation within the village, particularly for our children.

F. Access Management

Regulatory authority for access management rests with VTrans for state highways, which are 100 and 125 in Hancock, and with the Town Selectboard for town highways.

Access management planning for major land uses or traffic generators means more than merely obtaining a "curb cut" for access to a public road, one driveway at a time. In a broader context, access management is concerned with preserving the function of the highways, including safety, and with preventing congestion and hazardous situations. This type of access management strategy links transportation access with the overall land use patterns recommended in the Plan.

Access management planning by the town and the State can prevent costly repairs to roads and bridges, promote desirable land use patterns, and improve the safety of all residents. Crash data show a direct relationship between curb cuts and accidents: the greater the number of access points onto a highway, the higher the number of accidents. Access management techniques can minimize curb cuts, improve sight distances, and reduce vehicular congestion and conflicts with bicycles and pedestrians.

Currently, Hancock requires that anyone who intends to access a town road must apply for a permit. The purpose of this ordinance is to ensure that the design of a new driveway will not cause damage to the town road or create a public hazard.

G. Public Transportation

The Town of Hancock does not provide any public transportation, but services are offered by Stagecoach, Inc. Stagecoach is a private non-profit organization that provides public transportation services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the general public. Stagecoach offers fixed routes from Hancock to Randolph, West Lebanon, NH and Rutland for shopping and medical appointments. Stagecoach also offers Elderly and Disabled (E & D) service for residents who call and schedule rides and provides any elderly attending the Quin-Town senior center's daily lunch program with transportation. The Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) is another non-profit organization that provides transportation services to Hancock and is dedicated to the planning, development and coordination of a comprehensive service system that supports elders. These E&D services provided through Stagecoach and CVCOA continue to be a growing need. The community should continue to support public transportation in the future, consistent with resident's desire to 'age in place.' There is an Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR) bus from Middlebury that runs in the summer and fall to the top of Middlebury Mountain, which is in the Town of Hancock. However, the bus does not actually access the Village of Hancock. As a result, Hancock residents do not have access to the bus unless they get a ride to the pick-up/drop-off location. For residents interested in carpooling, there is a sizeable Park 'n Ride located behind the Town Hall, with approximately 35 parking spots.

The closest airports offering regularly scheduled service are in Rutland, VT and Lebanon, NH both about an hour drive from Hancock. Burlington International Airport is about one and a half hours north. Many travelers use the Manchester, NH airport, as an alternative to driving to Logan International Airport in Boston, which is located about 3 hours away.

Goals

1. To maintain a transportation system that is safe, efficient and complements the other goals and policies of this Plan.
2. To ensure that future development does not unnecessarily or unreasonably endanger the public investment in town and regional transportation systems or facilities, including highways, bikeways, trails and rail
3. To support local, regional and statewide efforts to provide transportation systems that meet the needs of all population segments and not just those who use automobiles.
4. To minimize transportation energy consumption.
5. To provide pedestrians with safe areas to travel within the Hancock village.

Planning Principles

1. Prior to a final decision to proceed with a major capital transportation project, policy makers should first analyze the project against reasonable alternatives. In examining the alternatives, investigation should focus on the environmental, energy, social and investment costs and the extent to which each meets the goals and policies of this Plan.
2. It is in the public interest to maintain the town's current highways, bridges, and related facilities, as necessary to ensure the current level of service.
3. The town as written in V.S.A. Title 19 Section 310 does not maintain Class IV Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. The policy of the Selectboard is that before

the town would consider adopting a new road or upgrading an existing highway, the abutting property owners shall be responsible for the cost of improving and/or building the road to town specifications. Final decision regarding the nature of the improvement rests with the Selectboard.

4. Given the interest in and benefits from biking, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and similar outdoor recreational activities, the town should, as an alternative to complete discontinuance of a highway, give full consideration to preserving Class 4 roads for recreational use by downgrading their status to a legal trail and thus retaining the public's interest in them.
5. An integral scenic element of the rural countryside is the network of back roads comprising the town's highway system. These byways are both visually and economically important to the town. If improvements are needed to accommodate increased traffic, it is important to consider the relationship of the road to the surrounding features of the landscape.
6. Strip development is not supported as a land use pattern. Such development occurs in a linear path along a right-of-way which often restricts visual and physical access to interior lands.
7. It is the policy of the town to minimize curb cuts to insure the proper function and performance of a town highway.
8. It is the policy of the town that the design of access roads and related facilities provide for proper alignment of new or relocated driveways along a roadway.
9. Because of the nature of traffic patterns and the speed at which they travel, traffic-calming enhancements are a priority for the town through the village along both Routes 100 and 125.
10. It is a policy of the Town to encourage ride sharing for commuters to neighboring employment areas.
11. It is a policy of the Town to support transportation of the Elderly & Disabled.
12. It is a policy of the Town to support access management initiatives to preserve the safe flow of traffic.

X. CURRENT AND FUTURE LAND USE

Introduction

Hancock has the unique distinction of having 85% of its land in the federally owned Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). The rest of the land that is privately owned largely borders Routes 100 and 125. The lack of developable land in Hancock makes land use a very important issue.

This section of the Plan describes the types and patterns of Hancock's current land use and discusses how the land should be used in the future. As more and more people discover the pleasures of living in Central Vermont, Hancock's rural character will be threatened. Although population in Hancock has remained relatively level in the past two decades (approx. 350 people), there is a noticeable northward growth in population statewide. The Town believes it is inevitable that in the future population pressures will begin to affect Hancock. These changes and the limitations created by the location of the GMNF in Hancock underscore the need to identify and develop effective growth and land use development policies that will serve the long-term interests of our community and maintain Hancock as a small rural Vermont town.

A. Overall Land Use Goals

As the Town looks at the use of our land in Hancock, a land use pattern that complements the existing settlement pattern of the Hancock village area, surrounding low-density rural and agricultural areas, and large open spaces and forests needs to be considered. This type of land use pattern is considered to be attractive, desired, and understood by the residents of Hancock. This is the style and character of land use that the community-at-large wishes to promote in the future.

Goals:

1. To maintain an identity for Hancock as a distinct community.
2. To retain clear evidence of the community's history while giving consideration for future needs.
3. To respect the community's identity and share qualities of scale and form with existing development.
4. To be adaptable to change which inevitably must occur if the community is to be vital.
5. To not deprive a landowner from realizing a reasonable and customary return from his or her land.
6. To balance the rights of landowners against the overall vision for the town.

B. Current Land Use

The Town of Hancock is a small, rural town with a population of under 400. Because of the dominance of the GMNF, most development has occurred near the Town’s two major roads – Route 100 and 125. Areas that are privately owned include the village center, residential and agricultural land, public recreational areas, and industrial site and the White River flood plain

and agricultural terraces make up the level land along Route 100. Some level land occurs along the Hancock Branch, but most of the town is hilly and wooded.

The Village Center is the focal point of the community, where its residents can conduct their civic, economic, and social interaction. It is the variety of uses currently existing that promotes the Village Center as the center for Hancock. These types of uses provide for the pleasant experience of visiting with a neighbor at the stores, the Post Office, the Town Office, and the Town Hall. Although there are houses in the village, most residents live in houses located just beyond the village, off of Routes 100 & 125. In addition to residences, small businesses, such as Hancock Building Supply (which is now owned by Bethel Mills) and Deering's Service Center are located outside of the village as well. Until it closed, Chesapeake Hardwood Products operated out of the largest building in town and was the only "industrial" business. Of Hancock's approximate 24,000 acres, 20,000 is owned and operated as part of the GMNF. There is some logging within the Hancock portion of the GMNF, but it has been on a limited basis in the past decade. Four-season recreational opportunities exist for both tourists and residents within the Forest including: camping, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, hunting, horseback riding, fishing and cross-country skiing.

C. Proposed Land Use

The Town Plan recognizes that not all land is equally suited for all types and intensities of development. It is the basic premise of this Plan that future land uses be sensitive to the physical limitations of a site and that in planning for the development of a parcel, more than market value of property be recognized. Accordingly, separate geographical areas have been defined in this section and the physical boundaries of each are defined (for planning purposes, only) on a proposed Land Use Map. For each area below, the purpose is stated and policies are offered in terms of the compatible types of development, intensity of use, and the conservation of natural resources. See Chapter XI, Section B for information about development in flood hazard areas and flood plains.

Furthermore, while it is recognized that existing use of land and structures may not be entirely consistent with these proposals, it is the goal of this Plan that all future land development be in conformance with these policies.

D. Village Center

Background and Purpose

Many towns in Vermont no longer have functional villages due to changes in highways, establishment of competing commercial centers or poorly conceived community planning. Our town cannot consider itself immune to these types of influences. It is a fundamental premise of the Plan to make every reasonable effort to ensure the continued use and enjoyment of the Village Center as a dynamic community center.

The Town of Hancock has been fortunate to receive state grant funding to study pedestrian traffic throughout town. One of the findings of this study indicated a need for safer foot travel within the village and recommended the installation of sidewalks and additional crosswalks.

Currently, residents wishing to walk in the village must travel on the inadequate shoulders of Route 100 to get to the Town Hall, Post Office or the Village School. The study notes, "The high speeds and volume of traffic (despite speed limit signs and the settled nature of the village area) warrant a safer walking environment". Pedestrian safety is a concern to residents. In 2002, the Town built a paved path that extends from the Town Hall to the Village School in an effort to make traveling safer for Hancock residents and visitors, but they still have to cross Route 100 to reach the rest of the village.

In meetings with residents to discuss possible uses for town owned property, it was determined that there is a strong desire for a town green in the village area. In the summer of 2012, the town of Hancock Selectboard decided to allow trees to be planted along Route 100 frontage of the Taylor Meadow property, the first phase of a project aimed at creating a town green on the Taylor Meadow property. Eventually, there will be a bandstand constructed on the property. The Taylor Meadow property is located next to Route 100 about 1200 feet from the town center, but there is no formal access to it. Its use should be considered when making any pedestrian enhancements within the village.

Goals

1. It is a goal of the town to provide pedestrians with safe access to village services.

2. It is a goal of the town to maintain a viable village center through good planning and development.

Planning Principles

1. The density of development in this area should reflect existing settlement patterns, land capability, and the availability of utilities for expansion.

2. Shops and services, tourist businesses, lodging and public facilities, at a scale and design appropriate to the existing characteristics, are encouraged.

3. Pedestrian access to local services and facilities should be supported and invested in whenever possible.

4. Conversion of structures and older buildings of historic merit is encouraged to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.

5. Where new development is being planned, efforts should be directed to ensure that such development is reasonably complementary and compatible to the configuration of existing buildings and streetscape, and respects traditional scales, proportions, and shapes of the surrounding neighborhoods.

6. Single, two, and multiple family housing at medium to high densities is encouraged.

7. Major public investments, such as improvements to Routes 100 and 125, should be encouraged and endorsed only on finding that they will not unreasonably or unnecessarily jeopardize or endanger the character of the Village Center. Planners are encouraged,

prior to the commencement of plans, to consult with the town and affected property owners regarding these types of activities.

8. The Plan supports pedestrian enhancements that will promote safety, provided that they do not put an undo financial burden on the town.

E. Rural Residential Area

Background and Purpose

Lands outside of the Village Center Area are predominately part of the Green Mountain National Forest. Historically, much of this outlying area was associated with agricultural in the valley and forestry uses on the steeper slopes.

Similar to the Village Center Area, future development will depend heavily on the availability of land to support on-site wastewater disposal systems and private water supply systems. Despite these technical limitations, as demand for new building sites increases, new technologies for innovative systems will emerge, making rural land once considered undevelopable desirable for residential subdivision.

Areas relatively free from site limitations (such as poor soils, steep slopes, and high elevations) have been utilized more for residential and agricultural uses. The less desirable areas have remained as or reverted back to forests. Land adjacent to town and state highways has been subjected to more active land use changes due to the relative ease of access. The more remote areas, being those distant from the town's primary services and main roads, have developed more slowly due to the relatively higher cost of development (e.g. power, telephone and driveways).

We believe that favorable conditions for construction of buildings and wastewater disposal facilities should not be the sole determinant for development in Rural Residential Areas. New development needs to occur at a reasonable rate of growth so as not to unduly burden the ability of the Town to provide services. Special or unique resources, including critical wildlife habitats (e.g. deer wintering areas), historic sites, archeological sites and wetlands should be evaluated and planned for when developing projects in the Rural Residential Area.

Goal

1. To ensure that the development of housing does not adversely affect the rural character of our town.

Planning Principles

1. Maintenance of a rural living environment is the primary goal for the Rural Residential Area. Projects which adversely affect the rural setting and conflict with existing rural land uses should not be located in this area.

2. Residential and agricultural uses are to be the primary and dominant land uses in the Rural Residential Area. Commercial or industrial projects are considered less desirable in

this area.

3. The establishment and operation of small entrepreneurial enterprises are consistent with the general purpose of this area provided that their size, type, appearance, and setting do not significantly or unnecessarily detract from rural character. These enterprises should not cause an undue burden on the ability of the town to provide services, such as highways and fire protection.

4. Residents are free to conduct an occupation in their homes provided that the nature of the occupation is customary or appropriate in rural residential areas.

5. The use of planned residential development or the cluster development concept, where intensive settlement is balanced by compensating land for open space, is encouraged. It is a means of providing an environment more amenable to the land use goals of this Plan.

F. Small Enterprise Area

Background and Purpose

To provide opportunities for business expansion and relocation in an area close to the village and adjacent to a major highway, a Small Enterprise Area should be established within the town property known as Taylor Meadow. Although deed restrictions exist on a portion of the parcel, there are approximately 7+ acres of this property that are unrestricted and therefore very valuable to the town. Through designation of this area for business, it is our intention that small enterprises will benefit from favorable access and higher traffic volumes afforded by Route 100.

Soil and slope conditions in this area are excellent. Conditions are favorable for on-site sewage disposal and water supply.

The Small Business Enterprise Area is dedicated primarily for commercial use, but not without some limitations. This area is central to the community and is scenic. Given its high visibility and immediate proximity to the White River, a well-recognized recreational resource, future development needs to be sensitive to the preservation of its many scenic qualities. Commercial development must be designed to promote traffic and pedestrian safety, and to provide an attractive and convenient place for residents to conduct business and seek employment.

Because Taylor Meadow represents the only developable town owned property, the Town utilized a portion of the acreage for a new fire station.

Goals

1. It is the goal of the town to encourage “clean” businesses to locate within Hancock, provided that they do not adversely affect community health, quality of life or the rural character of the town.

2. It is the goal of the town to provide its citizens with the opportunity for local employment.

Planning Principles

1. Business uses are intended to be the dominant uses in this area. Residential uses are to be considered secondary. Given that the principal land use objective is that the area be intensively developed for businesses purposes, future residential development is not encouraged to locate here.

2. Recommended design considerations for planning new projects include:
    - A compact and densely developed project which utilizes land efficiently;
    - Reducing the impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots, placing them to the rear and integrating landscaping;
    - Providing pedestrian and vehicular links between projects;
    - Green space between the project and the street, including use of large trees;
    - Signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being garish;
    - Plant trees to partially screen and reduce the apparent scale of buildings and storage areas behind existing residential development; and
    - Underground utilities.

3. The creation of curb cuts to access new development must be minimized to reduce traffic congestion, and safety problems.

4. Consideration should be given to offering incentives to encourage business development in our town. These incentives might include:
    - Removal of the inventory tax; and
    - Town land sold to developers at a reduced rate

G. Hancock Industrial Area

Background and Purpose

The Town recognizes that business and industry offer potential benefits to the town including tax revenue and local jobs. The Town also recognizes that businesses can create fiscal and environmental costs that outweigh potential benefits. Such costs might include the creation of safety or health risks to residents, or the need to create, maintain, or repair town infrastructure used by the businesses. It is the policy of the Town of Hancock to limit business and industry to uses that would not adversely affect the quality of life, the rural residential nature of the Town, or the unique character and historic nature of the village area.

The area designated as industrial runs from the southernmost point of the parcel that was occupied by Chesapeake Hardwood Products, Inc. to the Hancock Post Office. This area offers

access to Route 100, proximity to the Village and to infrastructure that was installed by Chesapeake (industrial water supply, sprinkler system and three phase power).

Since Chesapeake has closed their Hancock manufacturing plant, the only industrial facility in town, our town will need to take steps to attract interested parties to the designated industrial area.

Goal

1. It is a goal of the town to attract industry to the area designated as Industrial, provided that they do not adversely affect community health, quality of life or the rural character of the town.

Planning Principles

1. The Town of Hancock acknowledges the need for industry as source of jobs and taxes for its citizens, but not at the expense of community health, quality of life or the rural character of the town.

2. The preferred uses for the Hancock Industrial Area include small-scale light to heavy manufacturing or assembly, truck-based transfer/distribution, service businesses and corporate offices. Any businesses should be classified as clean and non-polluting. Businesses that are considered inappropriate include: hazardous or toxic material production, storage or transfer, or any other types of business that are not considered clean, safe or non-polluting, including noise pollution.

3. Guidelines to be utilized in keeping this Area attractive and compatible with its surroundings are:
    - Minimize exposed equipment;
    - Organize buildings and outside use areas compactly and efficiently;
    - Plant trees to partially screen and reduce the apparent scale of buildings and storage areas;
    - Screen storage or parking areas, through fences or the buildings themselves; and
    - Use lighting types and levels consistent with surrounding areas and minimize glare;

H. Recreation Area

This area contains the two privately owned recreational facilitates in the Town of Hancock, and town property known as Taylor Meadow. Middlebury College Snow Bowl and Camp Killooleet have been classified recreational because of their use as commercial recreational areas designed to serve the needs of both residents and non-residents for organized forms of outdoor recreation.

In 2000, The Vermont Land Trust deeded three parcels of property to the town; each of these properties has potential recreational uses.

Taylor Meadow

The recreational portion of Taylor Meadow includes an 8-acre parcel that abuts the White River. Deed restrictions on this parcel state that it is to be used for "public outdoor recreation, open space, agricultural, and educational purposes in perpetuity". After years of anticipating what could be done with Taylor Meadow, the Town of Hancock secured a grant, with the help of the non-profit Hancock Town Pride Committee, to turn Taylor Meadow into a town green. The beginning steps of this work began in the summer of 2013, with the Selectboard agreeing to allow for the first phase of the project to go through.

Goal

1. It is the goal of the town to provide residents with clean, safe, public locations for recreation.

Planning Principles

1. Recreational or educational uses should be the primary or dominant uses of these areas.

2. The town will support investment in the infrastructure associated with recreation, provided that it does not put an undue burden on the town financially.

3. Recreation enhancement projects that adversely affect the rural setting and conflict with existing rural land uses should not be considered.

4. It is the policy of the town to continue to work to preserve recreational opportunities and an open space system which will reinforce Hancock's attractiveness as a community.

I. Transportation and Land Use Planning

Vermont planning law provides a mechanism to address the inherent problems posed by transportation in relation to land use. Public investment priorities for state and town roads can be managed to minimize land use impacts that are not in accord with policies set forth in this plan. The Town of Hancock is rural, with a compact village, whose residents value and cherish its small-town appeal. The Town has no public transportation.

Goals

1. Support land use policies and development projects which complement existing transportation investments;

2. Only projects of a size and scale which do not materially interfere with the function, safety, and efficiency of town and state highways should be permitted;

3. Increases in traffic should not create unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions; developments which generate considerable round-trip truck travel should be limited.

4. Developments which would increase traffic through the village merit special scrutiny.

XI. NATURAL RESOURCES

A. Wetlands

Background

Wetlands are ecologically fragile areas and their management has a direct bearing on the quality and quantity of water resources.

The Vermont Water Resources Board estimates that wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the surface area of Vermont. In addition to being Vermont's most productive ecosystem, wetlands serve a wide variety of functions beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the general public, including the following:

1. Retaining storm water run-off, reducing flood peaks and thereby reducing flooding;

2. Improving surface water quality through storage of organic materials, chemical decomposition and filtration of sediments and other matter from surface water;

3. Providing spawning, feeding and general habitat for fish;

4. Providing habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife and rare, threatened or endangered plants; and

5. Contributing to the open space character and the overall beauty of the rural landscape.

In 1986, Vermont adopted legislation for the protection and management of wetlands (10 V.S.A., Chapter 37). Determination of whether a wetland merits protection is based on an evaluation of the extent to which it serves the general functions outlined in items 1-5 above.

Under the Rules, if land development can be expected to impact a protected wetland, such activity cannot commence unless the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources first grants a Conditional Use Determination (CUD). A CUD will be granted when it is determined that the proposed use will not have an undue adverse impact on the function of the wetland. In many cases, such approvals are granted with conditions to mitigate impacts and to more readily serve the purposes of wetlands protection.

For Hancock, as well as the State, the most significant wetlands have been mapped and are included as part of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These wetlands have been delineated on USGS topographic maps, and by reference are made a part of this Plan. Other smaller wetlands often do not show on these maps, so a field determination by a qualified biologist is needed for most activities that involve state permits.

In those towns that have zoning or subdivision regulations, final approvals cannot be granted for projects involving wetlands unless the Agency of Natural Resources first has had an opportunity to evaluate the effect of the project on the wetland (24 V.S.A., Section 4409). It is important to note that future investigations of wetlands within Hancock may result in additional areas being determined as significant or important for conservation.

Goals

1. To identify and protect significant wetlands and the values and functions which they serve and to minimize loss of such wetlands.

2. To identify and encourage land use development practices that avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on significant wetlands.

Planning Principles

1. Structural development or intensive land uses are discouraged from locating in significant wetlands or within buffer zones to significant wetlands.

2. Developments adjacent to wetlands should be planned so as not to result in undue disturbance to wetland areas or their function. Mitigating measures to protect the function of a wetland are an acceptable measure.

B. Flood Hazard Areas and Floodplains

Background

Floods are inevitable and uncontrollable natural events which occur sporadically and affect lands adjacent to watercourses (flood plains). It is therefore in the public interest to plan to mitigate flood damages, and to implement land use strategies which will protect these areas and minimize the risks to public health, safety, and property.

Floodplains are periodically inundated by heavy rains or during spring thaws. They are porous and can absorb considerable water before reaching flood stage. Floodplains make excellent agricultural land but are poorly suited for development, both because of their propensity for flooding and because of their proximity to watercourses, which creates the potential for pollution.

Vermont has experienced at least 13 statewide and regional floods since 1972 that were declared federal disasters, and economic losses were significant. Damage was not limited to designated floodplains, but often occurred along unstable river systems and steep streams. In some cases, recovery costs to the public sector alone amounted to several million dollars per flooding event. Public interest dictates that every reasonable attempt should be made to avoid or reduce exposure to flood damage.

National Flood Insurance Program

Under the provisions of the National Flood Insurance Act (1968), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has conducted a series of evaluations and hydrologic engineering studies to determine the limits of flood hazard areas along streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds expected to be inundated during the 100-year base flood, meaning that the flood level has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The calculations do not take into account the impact of ice dams or debris, and may, therefore, actually underestimate the areas which are subject to flooding damage.

FEMA has prepared a Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) for the Town of Hancock, which includes flood hazard areas for the White River and for major streams and ponds. This map is on file at the Town Office.

FEMA also administers the National Flood Insurance Program, which provides flood hazard insurance for property owners in affected areas. In order to qualify for federal insurance, towns must adopt and retain a by-law to control land development within these areas. Minimum standards must be included and approved by FEMA.

Hancock Flood Hazard Zoning

The Town of Hancock adopted a permanent Flood Hazard Bylaw in 1991, and it was amended in 2013. Hancock is recognized as a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program. Flood insurance coverage is available to any landowner in town as long as the Town continues to participate. Pursuant to the Bylaw, permits from the town are required prior to any substantial improvement to an existing structure, or to any new construction in the designated floodplain. In granting approval, the Town must find that the proposal meets or exceeds minimum development standards for flood hazard areas. There are currently 22 flood insurance policies in effect in the Town of Hancock.

Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission has determined that approximately twenty buildings in Hancock are presently located within the mapped flood hazard areas. Mortgage lending institutions now require, as a prerequisite to financing, that flood insurance be purchased on property subject to flooding.

The town believes that it is a realistic goal to re-evaluate the present Flood Hazard Bylaw and to develop new provisions prohibiting construction of permanent buildings or structures within the flood hazard areas. By amending the Bylaw to reflect this general principle, flood losses will be reduced, the natural functions of the watercourses will be protected, and costly flood recovery programs will be minimized. For further information on zoning bylaws, see Chapter XIV, Section D.

Goals

1. To enhance and maintain wise use of flood hazard areas as open space, greenways, non-commercial recreation and/or agricultural land.

2. To ensure no net loss of flood storage capacity in order to minimize the loss of life and property, disruption of commerce, and demand for extraordinary public services and

expenditures which result from flood damage.

3. To retain the town's eligibility for and participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.

4. To maintain maps which reflect as accurately as possible the flood hazard areas, to assist in appropriate land use decisions.

5. To recognize that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at risk of erosion during floods.

Planning Principles

1. It is the policy of the town that the preferred uses for flood hazard areas shall be for open space, greenbelts, and non-commercial recreational or agricultural uses.

2. Any land use activity (filling, or removal of earth or rock) within flood hazard areas which would result in net loss of flood storage or increased or diverted flood levels or increased risk to adjacent or other riparian areas shall be prohibited.

3. Utilities or facilities serving existing development (e.g. water lines, electrical service, waste disposal systems, roads, and bridges) may be located within these areas only when off-site options are not feasible and provided that their placement is deemed to be relatively protected from flooding damage.

4. Flood hazard regulations should be extended to areas identified as at risk to flood erosion.

C. Water Resources

Background

Hancock's water resources include aquifers (groundwater) and surface waters. Sustainable yields of quality water is necessary for the lives and livelihood of citizens of Hancock. The high value associated with the White River has an economic benefit to the residents and businesses in Hancock.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, in cooperation with federal and other state agencies, has evaluated aquifer recharge areas serving systems involving 10 or more connections or 25 or more people. These recharge areas are acknowledged and are recognized as important for protection. Land developments that are potential threats to water quality and significant aquifers are discouraged from locating in these areas. The aquifer recharge area maps are on file with the State of Vermont and can also be found online in the ANR Natural Resources Atlas.

In recent years, underground fuel storage tanks have been identified as major threats to water quality. Studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have shown that the average fuel tank is likely to leak within 15 years from installation. To lessen the risk of contamination, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has promulgated rules to monitor

underground tanks with a capacity of 1,100 gallons or more. Tanks in excess of this capacity must be registered with the town. In addition, replacement of underground tanks are subject to rigid standards.

Goals

1. To maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of drinking quality groundwater resources.

2. To allow use of groundwater resources by new development in such a manner to protect the public right to adequate quality and quantity of the resource.

3. To consider surface water and groundwater impacts and effects related to proposed or existing uses of land.

4. To maintain or improve surface water quality and quantity.

Planning Principles

1. Water withdrawal from underground sources should ensure that existing groundwater users are not adversely affected.

2. Aquifers and surface waters should not be significantly depleted and water should be properly allocated between actual and potential uses.

3. Land use activities which potentially threaten groundwater quality should be carefully reviewed and monitored to prevent undue loss of quality to groundwater.

4. Maintenance or enhancement of water resources for recreation, fisheries, necessary wildlife habitats and quality aesthetics are high priorities. Water resource policy and practices should protect these uses.

5. Efforts to abate pollution in the White River and its tributaries are encouraged and supported by the town. Priorities for abatement should include direct discharges, failing or inadequate on-site sewage disposal systems, and non-point source run-off of chemicals and other pollutants.

6. Given the public's interest in the use and enjoyment of the White River for recreation and fishing and relevant goals and policies expressed in this plan, establishment of waste management discharge zones (B3) in Hancock by the Agency of Natural Resources is inconsistent with this section.

7. The location, sizing and density of on-site sewage disposal facilities should be determined by the capacity of the soil, the natural limitations of the site, and underlying substrata conditions, such as depth to bedrock and seasonal high water tables.

8. Preservation of the natural state of streams should be encouraged by:

    - Protection of adjacent wetlands and natural areas;

- Protection of natural scenic qualities; and
- Maintenance of existing stream bank and buffer vegetation including trees, together with wildlife habitat.

D. Riparian Buffers

Background

Riparian buffers are strips of trees, shrubs, or vegetative grasses along the banks of rivers or streams that provide a transition zone between water and land use. Buffers are also complex ecosystems that provide wildlife habitat, filter polluted runoff, and improve the stream communities which they shelter.

This section of the plan addresses concerns caused by construction or development along shorelines, or removal or disruption of vegetation within these areas. These concerns include increased runoff of pollutants, higher water temperatures, destabilization of banks, higher soil erosion rates, loss of fish or wildlife habitats, and loss of recreational opportunities and property.

It is the purpose of this plan to provide guidance for the town, private landowners, and other entities in the planning and regulation of development. In the implementation of this section of the plan, the town seeks to incorporate and utilize these principles to preserve, restore, and manage streamside resources.

Benefits of Riparian Buffers

1. Buffers maintain shading along streams, which ensures cooler water temperatures. Cool water retains more oxygen than warm water; higher dissolved oxygen levels result in a healthier and biologically diverse river ecosystem.

2. Buffers improve wastewater assimilative capacity; the higher oxygen levels of cool water increase the water's capacity to assimilate potential sources of pollution, resulting in better water quality.

3. A vegetated buffer with plant trunks and stems, leaf litter, and uneven ground topography slows overland runoff. This permits the buffer to filter out sediments, nutrients, pathogens, and toxins and break them down so that they can be incorporated into plants, soil, and microorganisms before reaching surface water.

4. Buffers maintain stable, well-vegetated shorelines, decreasing erosion by holding soils in place. Streams and rivers naturally meander, eroding banks and depositing soils on opposite sides of their channels. Buffer vegetation helps to stabilize the banks.

5. Buffers improve habitats for fish and other aquatic life forms, providing insects for food and overhanging vegetation for protective cover and water cooling.

6. Buffers also provide habitat for wildlife species which are part of the food web between riverine plants and animals. Diverse and productive communities of amphibians, reptiles,

waterfowl, raptors, birds, and mammals thrive in well-vegetated buffers.

7. Buffers preserve riparian archeological and historic sites. Land along major streams and rivers, including the White River, served as sites for hunting and fishing camps and villages for Native Americans and early settlers. In stabilizing stream banks, buffers protect these sites from being eroded away or subjected to other physical disturbances.

8. Buffers enhance recreational and aesthetic qualities along rivers and streams. Vegetative buffers contribute positively to a river environment with clear water, free of noxious plant growth and pollutants, and attractive to swimmers, fishermen, boaters and hikers. Natural streamside vegetation also provides visual contrast and screening.

9. Buffers are also a protection from flood hazards. It is well documented that riparian areas are high-risk locations for development, even at elevations above flood level. Public and private investments in roads, bridges, and real estate are at risk of damage or destruction when stream dynamics are not considered. Maintenance of vegetated buffers preserves the natural functions of rivers and streams without conflicting land uses.

Goals

1. To develop planning principles for the maintenance and enhancement of streamside resources consistent with the purposes and benefits stated above.

2. To apply these principles in consideration and evaluation of riparian land use.

Planning Principles

1. Riparian buffers be provided or maintained, of sufficient width to sustain a healthy growth of woody vegetation and to develop an effective duff layer on the water's edge. In some cases, if banks are unstable or waters more active, the width of the buffer should be greater.

2. Cutting of trees and other vegetation for views, vegetation management, recreational access, and silvicultural purposes should be limited and should include plans which ensure that trees are allowed to regenerate, stumps are left with root zones intact, and a duff layer and tree canopy are maintained.

3. Streamsides, including riprapped areas, should be vegetated with native shrubs, trees, and grasses. For stream bank stabilization, re-vegetation should cover as much of the vertical profile as is practicable. Riprap and similar retaining structures should be used only to cover the lower portion of the profile, and only when bioengineering techniques may not adequately prevent significant loss of land and/or property.

4. Human access points to the White River and its tributaries should be managed in such a manner as to prevent soil erosion, loss of vegetative cover, and unnecessary disruption of riparian habitats. Foot access paths should not be excessively wide, or steep (greater than 15% slope), and frequency of use should be controlled.

E. Wildlife Resources

Background

Wildlife is one of the primary attractions to the area and provides many citizens of Hancock with direct and indirect livelihoods from sports, tourism and direct harvest of wildlife.

Wildlife management requires management of human activities around animals as much as management of animals around human activities. Managing for specific species is not as desirable as managing for the entire ecosystem supporting the species

Nearly all open space provides habitat for game and non-game species. There are, however, some areas in Hancock which provide critical habitat that should remain intact. These areas include wetlands, deer wintering areas, bear mast stands, and edge (the transition zone between two cover types, such as field and forest). Development or logging in or adjacent to these areas should consider wildlife implications during the planning process.

Wintering areas are an important habitat requirement for deer during the critical winter months when snow depth and climate are limiting factors to survival. Typically these areas consist of mature softwood stands, at low elevations or along stream beds, which provide cover and limit snow depths. Southerly facing slopes are also beneficial due to good sun exposure and may be utilized even in areas of limited softwood cover. More specific factors, such as percent canopy closure, species of softwoods, and stand age, also figure into the quality of the wintering area.

Goals

1. To maintain or enhance the natural diversity and population of wildlife, including natural predators in proper balance.

2. To restore stable populations of endangered or threatened wildlife in appropriate habitat areas.

3. To maintain or improve the natural diversity, population, and migratory routes of fish.

4. To allow sport and subsistence hunting of ecologically sound intensities to provide continued success of the species.

Planning Principles

1. Wildlife populations and natural diversity should be maintained or enhanced.

2. Long-term protection of major habitats through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives is encouraged.

3. It is the policy of the town to protect deer wintering areas from developments and other uses that adversely impact the resources.

F. Mineral Resources

Background

The use and management of Hancock's earth and mineral resources are matters of public good. Maintenance of sustainable quantities of gravel, sand, crushed rock, and other materials are essential for the development industry as well as state and local highways. In spite of this, public and private interests are oftentimes in conflict over utilization of the resource. It is in the interest of the Hancock business owners and residents to enable utilization of these resources when such uses do not significantly inhibit or conflict with other existing or planned land uses, or are in conflict with other stated goals in this plan.

Goals

1. To enable appropriate utilization of mineral resources.

2. To encourage extraction and processing of the resource where such activities are appropriately managed and the public interest is clearly benefited thereby.

Planning Principles

1. Existing and proposed mineral extraction and processing facilities should be planned, constructed, and managed:
    - So as not to adversely impact existing or planned uses within the vicinity of the project site;
    - To not significantly interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site; and
    - To minimize any adverse effects on water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, and adjacent land uses.
    - To reclaim and re-vegetate sites after their useful life.

G. Scenic Resources

Because 85% of the Town of Hancock is Green Mountain National Forest, scenic resources abound in Hancock. Vermont Scenic Route 125 cuts through the Green Mountain National Forest and is very attractive, especially during the fall's few weeks of peak color. Texas Falls, located in the Green Mountain National Forest, is a popular scenic attraction for tourists and residents alike. The north-south running Vermont Route 100 also provides scenic vistas of the foothills of the Green Mountains and the valley. The section of Route 100 that passes through Hancock is part of the Vermont Route 100 Scenic Byway, which recognizes the corridor for its scenic, historic and cultural resources.

Goals

1. To protect and preserve the scenic resources of the Town of Hancock.

Planning Principles

1. Hancock residents should be educated about the ways scenic resources can be protected and preserved.
2. The Town should foster a partnership with Green Mountain National Forest for the conservation of land.

XII. ENERGY

A. Background

Practical energy planning and implementation results in positive environmental and economic returns to the community and energy providers. Conservation of energy lessens the demand for expensive new sources. Utilities are able to postpone capital investments necessary to provide for additional capacity. This has benefits for residents, businesses, and ratepayers.

While it is recognized that energy supply and demand are directed largely by economic forces at the state, federal, and international levels, the manner in which the town plans for future growth can have an impact on energy. For example, a highly dispersed and unplanned pattern of land use can waste both land and energy resources. By planning the location of jobs, public services and housing in close proximity to growth centers, the consumption of fuel and need for additional roads can be reduced. The siting and design of buildings and the selection of energy systems can influence the efficiency and conservation of energy.

B. Energy Demands

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the major fuels consumed in Vermont are oil (50%), electric (4.4%), wood (14.2%), natural gas (15%) and LP gas (14.7%). Per capita energy consumption for residential and transportation purposes is about the same as in the northeast. About 76% of all energy used is for these purposes. Almost 80% of residential energy is dedicated to space heating and domestic hot water. State energy officials estimate that simple conservation measures incorporated in new housing can result in a 20% to 30% reduction of energy usage. Home heating for the elderly is a concern in Hancock, as fuel costs have more than doubled in recent years. State weatherization and fuel assistance for those in need is critically important.

About half of all energy used in Vermont is for transportation. Over 50% of this is for residential users who drive private cars. Public transportation in Hancock is nearly non-existent and as a result there are few alternatives, if any, to the automobile.

C. Renewable Energy Resources

For the municipality, individual or small group of homeowners, the key to sustainable energy production will be renewable sources of energy. The term “renewable energy” refers to the production of electricity and fuels from energy sources that are naturally and continually replenished, such as wind, solar power, geothermal (using the earth’s heat to create power), hydropower, and various forms of biomass (trees, crops, manure, etc.).

Although initial set-up costs for renewable energy generation systems can be high, these systems can save users money over the long term, and they reduce the consumption of carbon-based fuels, which helps to protect our environment and reduce our reliance on centralized energy. In Vermont, some of these energy sources are more readily available than others and some are more cost effective for the individual energy producer.

The 2010 Census reports that 25.8 % of Hancock's households use wood as a fuel source for heating (compared to 10.4% in 2000), 59% use fuel oil, and 11.3% use LP gas (compared to 34.4% in 2000). The Vermont Department of Public Service estimates that the average household burns between 3 to 4 cords of wood each year during the heating season. Given that the total number of homes in Hancock heating with wood was 48, it is estimated that between 144 and 192 cords of wood were burned in 2010. Between the years of 2000 and 2010, the number of cords burned in Hancock homes increased from 48 to 64.

Increased reliance on wood as a heating source can minimize demand for expensive alternative sources. There is a potential side effect to this, however, as significant use of wood could contribute to increased air pollution. Modern catalytic converters installed in wood burning stoves could be a partial solution.

The types of renewable energy found in Vermont are:

Solar Energy

Solar energy has potential for providing clean, reliable, and safe energy, even in Vermont's climate. Most areas in Vermont have the potential for some solar energy production, at least at the residential scale. In Hancock, if all potential opportunities to develop solar energy production were taken advantage of, the region could generate roughly 321,950 kWh of power.

Passive Heating and Lighting – Good building and site design are essential to taking advantage of the sun's energy through passive methods. Hancock could encourage use of solar in this fashion by drafting language for zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations that require the appropriate placement of buildings, landscaping and building design.

Water Heating – Solar water heating is the most common form of residential-scale solar use in Vermont. Solar systems are not regulated at the state level and are subject to local regulations. State statute forbids the creation of land use regulations that prohibit renewable energy generation.

Electricity Generation – Decreasing costs of equipment have made solar electric generation systems more prevalent. Solar systems are no longer utilized exclusively by "off-grid" buildings. The advent of net-metering allows buildings to be connected to the grid while utilizing renewable energy. Systems that are net-metered are overseen by the Public Service Board and are not required to get a local permit.

There are 0 commercial-scale solar electricity generation facilities in Hancock. Because of the nature of solar arrays, they are in some ways more desirable than wind towers. This is primarily due to the fact that they do not need to be located on high ground and are therefore less visually prominent. In addition, these facilities can be located in areas that are less rural in nature, requiring fewer access roads and reducing adverse impacts on wild lands.

If not properly sited, large solar facilities can impact soil and water resources, as well as wildlife habitat and corridors. Considerations must also be given to public safety. Because photovoltaic

collectors are reflective, they have the potential to create harsh and blinding lights that could be a hazard to nearby buildings or road traffic. Commercial solar facilities should be developed so as to avoid negative impacts on the rural character of the area in which they are proposed to be located. Developers should make all possible efforts to minimize damage to important natural areas as identified in the Natural Resources section of this Plan. Additionally, such facilities should be located as close to existing roads as possible to avoid creating an increased need for town services, such as road maintenance.

There is at least one private residential property that has installed solar panels in Hancock, and there may be other properties using solar. These properties are not generation facilities, and only producing electricity for their own benefit.

Wind Energy

Power generated from wind is done through a wind turbine, which is installed on top of a tall tower, where it collects and converts wind into electricity. Towers for home use are generally 80-100 feet in height and are far less obtrusive than larger, commercial "wind farms" that have become a subject of great debate throughout Vermont.

Similar to solar, wind energy is an intermittent resource and its generation fluctuates in response to environmental conditions. The amount of energy produced by a specific wind tower can depend greatly on location, height of the tower and proximity to other obstructions. Nevertheless, most modern wind turbines (when properly sited) are able to generate electricity 95% of the time.

There are multiple levels of potential wind energy generation, ranging from Class 1 (10-11 mph) to Class 7 (19-25 mph). There are 0 wind energy generation sites in Hancock.

Biomass & Biogas Energy Generation

The term 'biomass' refers to biologically-based feedstocks (that is, algae, food or vegetable wastes, grass, wood, methane, and more). Biomass can be converted into an energy source to fuel vehicles (e.g. biodiesel), heat homes, or even generate electricity. According to the 2011 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, those using wood for primary heating consumed about 5.4 cords in 2007–2008, while those using wood as a supplementary source used 2.25 cords. In that same year, Vermont households burned about 20,155 tons of wood pellets, with primary-heat-source consumers burning 3.8 tons and supplementary-heat-source consumers burning 1.2 tons for the season. There are 0 biomass energy generation facilities in Hancock.

Commercial biomass energy generation facilities should be located close to available biofuels to reduce transportation impacts and costs. A biomass power plant would require a great deal of space to accommodate the various stages of collection and conversion of the mass into fuel before burning it to produce electricity. Water can also pose a problem as biomass facilities require large quantities to handle the recycling process of waste materials. Materials would have to be transported to and from the facility, so truck traffic should be a consideration in selecting a site. Additionally, before a biomass energy generation facility is located in Hancock, developers

should prove that their proposed project will not negatively impact the rural character of the community or the local road system.

Biofuels

In addition to using biomass for heating, the use of biofuels, particularly biodiesel, is becoming an increasingly popular option for municipalities attempting to cut costs and reduce the environmental impacts associated with vehicle emissions.

According to the Vermont BioFuels Association, biodiesel is a clean burning alternative fuel, produced from domestic, renewable resources such as soybeans, sunflowers, canola, waste cooking oil, or animal fats. Biodiesel contains no petroleum, but it can be blended at any level with petroleum diesel to create a biodiesel blend which can be used in colder weather. It can be used in compression-ignition (diesel) engines or oil-fired boilers or furnaces with little or no modifications.

Growing biomass to use in biofuels may be a viable way to encourage farming in Hancock as well; however, balance should be sought between growing for energy demands and for human and animal consumption. There are 0 biofuel facilities in Hancock.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector has the potential to become a net generator of energy by growing crops that can be used for biofuel, by contributing cow manure to the process of methane digestion (also known as 'Cow Power'), or by using fields for the location of large-scale wind power (cows can graze up to the base of wind turbines).

Cow Power is especially popular in Vermont; however, it requires a significant upfront financial investment and is generally only effective when utilized by a large scale farm. One of the key advantages of methane digestion is that it reduces the amount of methane released into the environment. However, large-scale cow farms can also have adverse impacts on the environment, which should be carefully considered when weighing the benefits and drawbacks of setting up a methane digestion system in this community. There are 0 large scale cow farms in the Town of Hancock.

Hydropower

Many locations in Vermont once depended on hydropower to grind grain, run mills and even supply electricity to homes. But, with the onset of centralized power, most of these small-scale power generation facilities have been replaced by massive hydro facilities such as Hydro Quebec.

There are two main forms of hydropower: run-of-river which uses the natural flow of water to generate power and facilities that store water behind an impoundment. Run-of-river systems rely on seasonal rainfall and runoff to produce power, resulting in periods of low production. Impounding water behind a dam allows for control of the water flow, resulting in consistent electric production.

Hydroelectric development necessitates balancing priorities. While the benefits of generating electricity from local renewable resources are evident, they are not without associated costs. The power output from a given stream must be moderated by environmental considerations. A minimum stream flow that is adequate to support aquatic life needs to be maintained and impoundments need to be designed with water quality, land use, and recreation considerations in mind.

Hydropower generating facilities are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and stringent federal water quality standards. As a result, the regulatory process for hydro facilities is extensive and time consuming. Further, streams are public trust resources and the potential impacts of hydro projects warrant significant consideration. Any hydropower development proposed in Hancock shall not result in an undue adverse impact to riverine ecosystems and water quality. There are 0 existing hydropower sites in Hancock.

Goals

1. To encourage a pattern of settlement and land use that uses energy efficiently.

2. To promote the design and construction of buildings and structures that are energy efficient and postpone the need for costly sources of energy.

3. To encourage the development of local renewable energy sources and to reduce dependence on outside foreign energy sources.

4. To increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices through educational efforts.

Planning Principles

1. Major public investments, such as schools, public recreational areas, and municipal facilities need to be situated within or in close proximity to the village of Hancock;
2. The rehabilitation or the development of new buildings and equipment should use proven design principles and practices with the lowest life cycle costs;
    a. Where land development or subdivisions are proposed, design plans should work towards the goal of locating structures and buildings on the site which reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation and protective wind barriers. Use of the cluster planning concept, where buildings are concentrated in one area of a site with a complementing off-set of open space, is an approach that encourages energy conservation and efficiency; and
    b. Visual effects of electrical generation, transmission, and distribution facilities should be minimized whenever feasible.

3. Where generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas are proposed, such facilities or areas should be encouraged only when they complement the

recommended land use patterns set forth in this plan.

4. To promote alternatives to the automobile, the acquisition of land or rights to land by the Town or other qualified entities for the future development of bikeways and footpaths is encouraged in the village areas or other areas of concentrated settlement.

5. To reduce the demand for commuter transportation facilities and energy, the development of broadband services, energy efficient home occupations and small-scale home business is encouraged.

6. To promote energy efficient commuting, the community supports state and regional transportation programs serving Hancock.

Future Actions

7. The Town should be fully involved with the current revision of the Green Mountain National Forest plan. Such involvement could enable the town to directly utilize some of the resources available within the GMNF.

8. The Town should consider enacting development ordinances with provisions that encourage energy conservation and concentrate development in the best locations (e.g., grant density bonuses to projects that employ advanced energy design and efficiency).

XIII. RECREATION

Prior to 2013, the Town of Hancock provided no formal, town-owned, recreation facilities or services. In 2013, a grant was secured to help turn Taylor Meadow into a town green. The Hancock Selectboard agreed to allow sugar maples to be planted along the Route 100 frontage of the property, as the first phase of project. Additional plantings will likely follow in the future, and eventually a bandstand will be built to accommodate outdoor performances. The transformation of Taylor Meadow to the official town green will encourage outdoor and recreational activities in Hancock.

Approximately 85% of the land in Hancock is part of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). The number of recreational opportunities provided by the GMNF are numerous and varied. Green Mountain National Forest offers the potential for recreational opportunities including fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, etc. Eight wilderness areas in GMNF enable individuals to engage in primitive and wilderness-dependent recreational activities. There are also two National Recreation Areas in GMNF. Of note is a popular waterfall destination in GMNF called Texas Falls, which is listed on the Vermont Fragile Areas Registry.

Swimming holes are major summer recreation sites, attracting people from throughout the region. There is one swimming hole found along the White River, at the Hancock Overlook just off Vermont Route 100, and there are likely more in Hancock.

The stretches to the White River passing through Hancock also attract people from throughout the region for tubing, rafting, boating and fishing. Access to the river is a major concern in order that residents of Hancock and other areas might enjoy the benefits of this Federal program.

Whitewater boating also takes place on the Hancock Branch, from its confluence with the Robbins Branch to the White River. The Hancock Branch is hydrologically distinguished by being the smallest stream in the state known to be used as a whitewater run. It is a Class II run with some Class III spots, lots of rocks and current.

Recreation and the Hancock Economy

Outdoor recreation is a key element of Vermont's economy, generating roughly $2.5 billion a year in retail sales and services throughout the state. Recreation seeking tourists spend money. In "a National Survey of the Vermont Visitor", the University of Vermont business school determined that visiting hunters and fishermen spend more than $2000 per trip. Hikers and campers spend $440 per trip.

The Outdoor Industry Foundation reports that Vermont's population are regular participants in outdoor recreation as well. These include:

- Wildlife viewing: 54%

- Hiking: 33%
- Biking: 29%
- Skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing: 25%
- Camping: 21%
- Fishing: 18%
- Hunting: 14%

The recreational opportunities available to the residents in Hancock and visitors have the potential to provide Hancock with a niche market that helps feed the local economic system. Additionally, Hancock's water resources include the White Rivers and many smaller streams including the Hancock Branch, Howe Brook, and Bingo Brook offer excellent opportunities for recreation.

The way land is used in the community has an influence on recreation. Hancock should continue to maintain a pattern of development in the more rural areas of town that is low density, allowing for larger amounts of open land and reducing the possibility of having large land areas broken up for development. This Plan specifically encourages outdoor recreation as a valuable commercial use in Hancock and seeks to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike.

Goals

1. To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities in Hancock.

2. To make outdoor recreation a strong part of the Hancock local economy.

Planning Principles

1. It is the policy of the town to encourage the development of outdoor recreational businesses in Hancock.

2. It is the policy of the town to encourage patterns of land use that maintain and enhance the opportunity for outdoor recreation.

XIV. AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY

Agriculture and forestry define the character of Vermont and comprise major industries in the Region. Over time, changes in these industries have led to instability. The shape of Vermont agriculture and forestry are changing and the pressures for change come from both inside and outside the state. These changes pose difficult challenges, not just for landowners, but for all who desire a rural lifestyle and working landscape. And yet, opportunities for new and innovative farm and forestry businesses are on the rise. How we maintain the working landscape and support the agriculture and forest industries will have a long term impact on our landscape and our local economy.

A. Agricultural Trends

An analysis of the United States Census of Agriculture data between 2002 and 2007 (2007 being the most recent period of data collected) shows that farming in Vermont is slowly shifting away from the larger scale farm that developed as a result of trends toward consolidation. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms in Vermont increased by 6%. The average size of farms decreased from 189 acres to 177 acres between agricultural censuses. This is most likely due to the fact that 37% of Vermont's farms in 2007 were considered "hobby farms" – farms that sell under $2,500 in agricultural products per year. While the number of "hobby farms" continues to grow, these farms only produce slightly less than 3% of Vermont's agricultural income.

Despite this decrease in farm size, over the past 10 years a growing movement in sustainable agriculture—involving increased local food production and consumption, value-added processing, and diversified farms—has taken off. In 2009, the State of Vermont created legislation which created the Farm to Plate Investment program, part of which included the creation of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan.

In 2007, USDA data indicated the estimated agricultural revenue in Vermont to be $673 million per year. Vermont's major agricultural and food product output totaled $2.7 billion in 2007, the latest year of the Census of Agriculture.

In Hancock, agriculture makes up a very small portion of the town's economy, mostly due to the fact that 85% of town lands are part of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). Some residents have large gardens, and hay is grown to supply small hobby farms with food for livestock. However, the rocky soil and mountainous terrain make it difficult for any agricultural endeavor to take root in the Town of Hancock.

B. Forestry Trends

Three primary trends have affected the Region's forestland and its productivity. First, forests and farms are being increasingly "parceled" or subdivided into small lots which threaten the economic viability of forestry. Development pressure in the Region has been relaxed since the early 1990's, but the economy is predicted to rebound and the trend of land moving out of forest use to other uses will continue, particularly in those areas where access and development suitability are not severe.

Funding of the Current Use Program has been identified by the Northern Forest Lands Council as vital to landowners keeping their patience, not over harvesting the forests or opting for liquidation cutting of tracts. High taxes contribute to a low rate of return on timber sales, and have prompted some conversion to non-forest uses. Second, markets for timber and wood have been responsive to a glut of some products affecting prices, at least in the short run. While the number of mills in the region has declined, there has been a move to new markets, one being an export demand for hardwood logs and another being a demand for pulpwood and other specialty types.

For a state mostly known for hardwood, the demand for pulp has led to better managed forests because it is generally the lower grades or poorer cuts that are being used. Third, federal and state estate and inheritance tax laws have placed family landowners into financial situations, creating the need to subdivide or develop forest land in order to cover taxes. Current tax law bases estate values on the market value of land rather than at use value. By allowing land to be assessed on the basis of current use, family landowners are able to realize a more reasonable return on investment for long-term timber management.

Forest products continue to be a significant share of the region's manufacturing sector. In Hancock, only 4% of residents are employed in the agriculture or forestry sectors. Because much of the town's land is part of Green Mountain National Forest, there is an abundance of trees, but not necessarily a large market for timber production.

Overall, according to the Vermont Department of Employment and Training, jobs in the lumber and wood products industries have increased statewide. In looking at the Vermont forest products industry, it is worth noting that the industry, like agriculture, has virtually no impact in setting trends as it is a relatively small national producer. A major long-term issue for the Vermont forest products industry is how to keep it from drifting into the position of selling wood as a raw material without benefiting from the higher paying jobs that come from value added wood products.

Approximately 85% of the land in the Town of Hancock is part of the Green Mountain National Forest. The GMNF, like many National Forests is managed for both watershed protection purposes and ecosystem integrity, but also recreation and timber and forest products. The Green Mountain National Forest Plan, which expires in 2021, allows up to 19.7 million board feet of timber production in the first decade of plan implementation (2006-2016). However, timber production in the GMNF is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, not the Town of Hancock. The GMNF Plan does not specify where and when timber production will occur. The control of the majority of a town's land by another entity is a somewhat unique situation in the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission region.

C. Sustaining Agriculture and Forestry

Planning policy and implementation efforts should be directed at sustaining agriculture and forestry pursuits and not just conservation of the resource. Just as there is a variety of interests, there is a variety of tools than can be used to conserve these resources. Some are directed primarily at sustaining agriculture, others forestry, some are regulatory in nature, others are

compensatory, and others voluntary. It is in the public interest to encourage conservation groups, landowners, local officials, and policymakers to utilize all of these tools.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are a common method used to ensure that the working landscape gets preserved. Most land purchased with the intent of applying a conservation easement to it is funded, at least in part, by some form of grant funding from either state or private sources.

The use of conservation easements has both pros and cons for municipalities, they include:

Pros

- Easements are flexible; they can be written to achieve specific goals of the landowner or other group(s) involved.
- They are perpetual, and restrictions put on the conserved lands will remain in force even when the property is sold to a new party.
- They conserve scenic beauty and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Conserved property remains on the tax rolls.

Cons

- Establishing an easement involves up-front costs, such as paying for legal counsel, biological analysis, etc.
- There are long-term expenses involved with monitoring the easement.
- The easement holder is responsible for ensuring that the restrictions placed on the easement are followed.
- Lack of clarity of allowable uses of the property.

The Hancock Planning Commission acknowledges that conservation easements are one potential solution to preserving the working landscape. The Planning Commission recommends that both the landowner and town consider all options thoroughly before committing to the conservation easement process.

D. Farming, Forestry and the Economy

In addition to preserving Hancock's working landscape and maintaining the community's aesthetic beauty, farming and forestry can have an economic impact. Vermont is within easy reach of millions of people in cities like Boston and New York City. Rising fuel prices have led to an increased interest in food and energy security. Additionally, Vermonters are increasingly seeking locally-sourced, sustainably-produced farm and forest products. Vermont is a national leader in innovative education programs based on local food, agriculture and healthy eating. It is also widely recognized for its strong network of land trusts and other nonprofits that are models for conserving farm and forest lands.

There is already a growing mix of emerging entrepreneurs and long-time land-based businesses that are constantly evolving to stay competitive. They're producing biofuels, artisan cheese, specialty wood products, produce, breads and other value-added items.

For Hancock, it is important to encourage the growth of both forestry and agricultural industries within the community. These enterprises will continue to sustain the natural character of the town while adding the potential for jobs and unique and creative attractions that will bring people into the community for recreation and education. If tourists come to Hancock to visit a new organic farm or specialty wood or forest product producer, they will need a place to stay for the night; they will buy dinner at local restaurants, adding additional capital to the local economy.

Goals

1. Encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the town's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features.

2. Protect the Region's rural agricultural character, scenic landscape, and recreational resources.

3. Preserve recreational and scenic access by ensuring that at the completion of logging projects all roads are restored to their previous condition.

4. To encourage the economic growth of agricultural and forest operations at a scale that is appropriate for Hancock.

Planning Principles

1. Where contiguous areas of high value farming or forestry exist, or have significant potential to exist, fragmentation of these areas into uses other than those incidental to agriculture or forestry should be discouraged.

2. Where high value agricultural and forested land are identified, clustered or peripheral development is especially encouraged to protect such resources and prevent fragmentation and sprawling settlement patterns.

3. Farmers, loggers, and foresters should use Accepted Management Practices (AMP) and are encouraged to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) in their operations and to minimize point and non-point source pollution.

4. Contiguous forest and significant agricultural areas should remain largely in non-intensive uses unless no reasonable alternative exists to provide essential residential, commercial and industrial activities for the Town’s inhabitants.

5. The State of Vermont’s current use program is a good way to offset the tax burden that the landowner may encounter when trying to conserve land.

XV. FLOOD RESILIENCE

A. Background

The town of Hancock, much like the rest of Vermont, is no stranger to significant and damaging flooding. The Hancock Branch of the White River flows through the village center of Hancock, and the mainstem of the upper White River flows along the Vermont Route 100 valley floor. Hancock village has been hit with severe flooding at least twice in the last decade. Some of the worst flooding occurred in 2008 and again in 2011 when Tropical Storm Irene moved through Vermont and the region. Much of the flooding during those two events was concentrated in Hancock's village center, at the intersection of Routes 100 and 125, where the town's utilities and facilities and some businesses are located. However, other flooding occurred north and south of the village, and west of the Village on Vermont Route 125.

Very heavy rain on the morning of August 6, 2008 caused significant flood damage to the Camp Killooleet property and emptied the camp's man-made lake. During the August 2008 flooding, the village center of Hancock was particularly hard hit. The Hancock Branch flowed through several structures and flooded Vermont Route 100, ultimately closing the road. Route 125 road infrastructure and properties along Route 125 were also damaged.

Perhaps the worst flooding in Vermont and across the region since the Flood of 1927 occurred on August 28, 2011 as the result of Tropical Storm Irene. Approximately 4-5" of rain fell in the area, on ground that was already saturated, causing extensive flash flooding. Due to the flooding damage to the north, west and south, Hancock was one of the thirteen towns isolated after floodwaters dissipated. Several roads, bridges and properties were severely damaged, including the VT 100 bridge over the Hancock Branch very near to the intersection of Routes 100 and 125, and the Fassett Hill bridge on Route 125.

B. Flood Hazard & Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas in Hancock

Some lands adjacent to the White River as well as its tributaries are subject to periodic flooding. This is to be expected as flooding on the order of every few years is natural in a functioning floodplain. Floodplains and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas (those areas where lateral erosion is more of the threat than inundation) are thus unsuitable for development because of the high loss potential for life and property as well as the limited ability of septic systems to perform adequately during periods of high water. For more specific information about the function of Floodplains, see Chapter XI, Natural Resources.

The town of Hancock is vulnerable to flooding, especially the village center, as well as areas along Bettis Road and Bettis Autoland, VT 125, Texas Falls, Churchville Road and smaller side roads. The potential for flooding in Hancock is magnified by its mountainous terrain, which increases the velocity of runoff. Narrow valleys then channel water and transform small streams into raging bodies of water.

The Hancock Branch of the White River flows through the middle of the village center, which is located at the intersection of Vermont Routes 100 and 125. Paralleling Route 125 and passing underneath Route 100, the Hancock Branch presents a significant hazard to Hancock. The Route 100 bridge in the village center was damaged during the flooding of 2008. During the flooding caused by Tropical Storm Irene, the same bridge was damaged when the floodwaters ran around the bridge ends. As the Route 125/Route 100 intersection is the approximate center of Hancock village, the repeated damage of the Route 100 bridge and surrounding road infrastructure represents a major vulnerability of the Town of Hancock to flooding.

Areas along Vermont Scenic Route 125 are also considered to be flood hazard areas in Hancock. Camp Killooleet, a summer camp for children aged 9-14, is located along Route 125, and received significant property damage to their maintenance buildings, various bridges and dam that created a man-made lake as a result of the 2008 flooding. Other properties along Route 125 are also often damaged by flooding, including residences and bridges and roads. Photographs of the flooding in 2008 demonstrate the severity of flooding along Route 125; a home adjacent to Route 125 was flooded, various sections of the road were heavily damaged , and a bridge was completely cut off by flood waters, requiring residents to be evacuated. Lastly, Texas Falls Road, located off Route 125, is an access road to the popular Texas Brook waterfall, and is another flood hazard area. This road is owned and maintained by the U.S. Forest Service and located in the Green Mountain National Forest. The remoteness and lack of alternative routes along the Route 125 corridor between Hancock and Middlebury create situations where residents can easily be cut off from emergencies services and humanitarian aid from the west.

Other locations in Hancock present flood hazard risks as well. One example is Churchville Road, located south of the village center and off of Route 100. Just east of the intersection of Churchville Road and Route 100, Churchville Road crosses the White River. Because Churchville Road is the only access to Route 100 on the east side of the White River, the bridge spanning the river is critical to accessing Route 100. If the bridge were compromised, residents would have a lengthy drive to evacuate the area or to even find access to another major road. This bridge was rebuilt after a 1998 flood.

Located just off Churchville Road is Bettis Road. Bettis Road, also located south of the village center of Hancock, is often flooded due to its location adjacent to the White River. For the majority of its length, Bettis Road closely parallels the White River. Therefore, a modest rise in the water level of the White River may lead to flooding of Bettis Road and create the potential for the properties located on Bettis Road to also be flooded.

Lastly, the area that includes the Bettis Autoland & Salvage Yard and other properties is located in a flood hazard area. If flooded, these properties may present additional hazards to the town of Hancock and towns downstream. These hazards include, chemical, oil and gas water pollution and potential for vehicles, vehicle parts and other materials to be swept downstream, damaging properties in Hancock of other towns.

Though outside of Hancock, Route 100 also floods north of town in the Granville Gulf area and south of town in Stockbridge, creating breaks in the ability to drive into town during emergencies.

C. Promoting Flood Resilience in Hancock

Flood Hazard Regulation
Hancock's adopted Flood Hazard Bylaw sets the minimum development standards allowed by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Considering the potential for severe flooding in Hancock's Village Center, it is sensible to consider alternative approaches to Flood Hazard Regulation. Additionally, State Statute requires that all communities have policies and strategies that protect Flood Hazard areas.

Any updates to the Hancock Flood Hazard Bylaw that were more restrictive than they are now would apply only to new development – existing development would be grandfathered and could continue to operate within the area, until it suffers major damage or is substantially improved, at which point it has to come into compliance with flood regulations. Potential strategies to protect the Flood Hazard area **could** cover a wide range of options, including:

- **Prohibition on New Development** – While most planners would suggest that a complete prohibition on new development within the floodplain is the best way to avoid future damages and potential loss of life from extreme events, this is an unlikely approach in Hancock. With a majority of Hancock's Village Center Area located within the floodplain, such a prohibition could have a profoundly negative impact on Hancock. A prohibition within the floodway, however, is a good idea and is essentially mandated by the NFIP.

  Also important to consider is exactly what the definition of "new development" will include. The Planning Commission could include adding smaller additions and minor renovations to existing structures over a certain size. This is not a commonly used methodology in most communities as it impacts grandfathered uses and can be challenging to implement. Some additions and any redevelopment over 50% of a structure's value must be done according to NFIP standards, though.

- **Prohibition of Specific Types of Development –** An alternative to an outright prohibition on development is to identify specific types of development that should be kept from developing within the floodplain. In some communities, new residential and commercial development has been prohibited from developing in the floodplain. In others, only residential has been prohibited. Decisions on which types of uses to prohibit are generally made with substantial citizen input with considerations for what will most substantially reduce risks to lives and property.

- **Increasing Standards** – Communities can choose to increase the requirements for new developments in the floodplain while still allowing all or most forms of development. Increased standards could include a requirement that structures be elevated higher than the minimum standards required by the NFIP. Going one foot above the base flood elevation is a common standard in the region, but going even further and requiring two feet of "freeboard" can result in major reductions to flood insurance premiums. Such standards could also include more specific requirements for tying down structures,,

elevating utilities so that flood are less damaging, making structures more capable of allowing floodwaters to pass through them (such as using piers instead of fill to elevate).

- **Create River Corridor Protection Area** - Some communities have created an area that extends beyond the mapped flood hazard areas. Often this River Corridor Protection Area uses fluvial erosion hazard data as part of its basis, but can also include simple setbacks from rivers in all parts of the community as a way to deter development in areas that may erode in the event of severe flooding.

Future revisions to the Hancock Flood Hazard Bylaw will require input from the community regarding the level of regulation they believe is necessary to protect citizens and their buildings from severe flood hazard events. Provided that all parts of the Flood Hazard Bylaw meet the minimum requirements of the NFIP, communities have a broad range of flexibility in which to regulate the flood hazard area. For example, a community could prohibit commercial development in the floodplain everywhere except a village, because in some communities such a restriction would be damaging to the village center.

Goals

1. To protect the citizens, property and economy of Hancock and the quality of their rivers as natural and recreational resources by using sound planning practices within designated Flood Hazard Areas and beyond.

Planning Principles, Policies and Strategies

1. Only agriculture, recreational and open space uses should be allowed in floodplains outside of the village center.
2. New development within the town's 100-year floodplain is discouraged, excluding properly designed outbuildings and renovations that meet the requirements for Flood Hazard regulation as stipulated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
3. Ensure that any new development allowed creates "no adverse impact" through design and mitigation measures.
4. Reduce impervious cover that leads to flash flooding, and increase retention and infiltration of rain.
5. Lessen the conflict between roads and streams by moving the roads when possible, abandoning redundant bridges, or upsizing water crossings.
6. Adopting road and bridge standards to the 50 or 100 year storm level.
7. Work with Granville and the US Forest Service to address flooding on a watershed basis.

8. Reconnect floodplains and streams through berm removal or intentional lowering of streambanks.

9. Promote emergency planning for flood response.

Recommendations

1. The Planning Commission should strengthen Hancock's Flood Hazard Bylaws to mitigate risks to public safety, critical infrastructure, historic structures and municipal investments from inundation and erosion.

2. The Planning Commission or Selectboard should work with VTrans on improving the flood capabilities of state-owned infrastructure or town infrastructure.

3. Work with Hancock's Emergency Coordinator and Selectboard to continue to develop emergency preparedness procedures.

XVI. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Hancock is bounded by four towns. The four principal adjacent towns are Rochester, Goshen, Granville and Ripton. All have municipal plans in effect.

Those nearby towns along the Route 100 corridor (Pittsfield, Stockbridge, Rochester, Granville) all have expressed the intent of their town plans that Route 100's scenic value be preserved and that widening of the road be vigorously opposed; that the river ways and flood plain be protected; that compatible commercial development be clustered in the higher-density village areas; and that each town's rural character be preserved. Our plan is in agreement and compatible with these goals, and Hancock plans to cooperate with adjoining towns to promote development that preserves our shared rural character.

Hancock shares numerous activities and services with surrounding towns, including school services, rescue squad, fire protection and a residential community care program. The town is also a member of the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC). The town also has an obvious interest in the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). Because it owns a large portion of all property in town the GMNF has potential to significantly impact Hancock, so communication among all of the agencies and services is encouraged to insure compatibility of development along town borders and with larger planning efforts.

Recommendations:

1. To encourage continued communication and cooperation between Hancock and it's neighboring towns;

2. To continue participation in regional bodies, such as TRORC, The White River Partnership and the GMNF; and

3. To exchange planning information and development data with neighboring communities.

XVII. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Putting the Plan Into Action

The character of Hancock, its people, and landscape has been created over the years through the individual and collective decisions of its citizens and public officials. The efficiency, attractiveness, and well-being of the community is determined, in part, by the ability of the town to plan for its needs and to find a mechanism to put planning goals into action.

Previous elements of this Plan have been centered on existing conditions, probable trends and policy development which, when combined, represent a vision for the kind of town Hancock desires for the future. One thing is certain - the community will change. The opportunity is that citizens and town officials together can direct this change consistent with their desires, using a variety of mechanisms.

The following sections describe the tools and techniques desirable to implement the Hancock Town Plan.

B. Adoption of the Plan

Adoption of the Hancock Town Plan by the Selectboard, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A., Chapter 117), is the first step in putting this Plan into action. Through its adoption, the town accepts the principles and policies as set forth in this Plan as in the public interest and as a guide for the future growth and development decision affecting Hancock.

C. Ongoing Planning

Planning for change is a continual process for the town and will require the involvement of the Planning Commission and the public to ensure that the goals and policies of the Plan are integrated into the decisions affecting land use, taxation, and public investments in Hancock.

The Hancock Town Plan is not a permanent document on community desires or values. Its life is limited by statute (24 V.S.A., Section 4387). The Planning Commission is responsible for the maintenance and amendment of the plan. Within the next five years following adoption of the plan, the Planning Commission will need to evaluate the plan in light of new conditions and needs. Readoption of an updated plan will require notice to the townspeople and finally action by the Selectboard.

At any time following adoption of the plan, the Selectboard may request the Regional Commission to approve the Plan or amendments to a plan. Before approving a plan, the Regional Commission shall find that the plan meets four basic tests [24 V.S.A., Section 4350(b)].

Under Criterion 10 of Act 250, any proposed project must conform to all duly adopted local and regional plans. This criterion seeks to ensure that new development respects the wishes of Vermont citizens about the future of their town and region. Approval of this Plan provides improved legal standing for the town to influence Act 250 decisions.

D. Implementation Tools

Vermont law enables the town to implement the adopted Hancock Town Plan through a variety of ways. Regulation of land use and development through rules adopted by the voters is one method. Because these regulations are susceptible to legal challenge and must clearly benefit the public, discretion must be used. Well-recognized and utilized means include zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations.

Zoning Bylaws - Zoning bylaws are a commonly used method for guiding development at the local level. Zoning may regulate:

- Uses of land
- The placement of buildings on lots
- The relationship of buildings to open space, and
- The provision of parking, signs, landscaping and open space

Zoning generally involves partitioning the town into districts or zones that have a different set of uses, densities, and other standards for development. Zoning districts must be reasonably consistent with the Town Plan. As an alternative to conventional methods, the town may opt to implement a set of measurable performance standards for specific uses as opposed to dividing the Town into districts. This technique, referred to as "performance zoning", is designed to be more flexible and to recognize the specific conditions of each site proposed for development.

Given that zoning bylaws are oftentimes controversial and difficult to administer, the town should give due consideration to this implementation technique prior to taking the time necessary to develop a proposal for the Hancock voters.

Subdivision Regulations - The town does not currently have subdivision regulations. These regulations, if adopted, would be administered by the Planning Commission. Such regulations govern the division of parcels of land and the creation of roads and other public improvements. Furthermore, subdivision regulations can ensure that land development reflects land capability, that critical open spaces and resources are protected from poor design or layout.

Flood Hazard Bylaws - Under Vermont law (24 V.S.A., Section 4412), the Town of Hancock may regulate the use of land in a defined flood hazard area adjacent to streams and ponds. These bylaws can be established to ensure that design and construction activities within the limits of the 100 Year Flood Plain are designed so as to minimize potential for flood damage and to maintain use of agricultural land in flood-prone areas. As noted in the Natural Resources section of this Plan, property owners are eligible for federal flood insurance on buildings and

structures at relatively low federally subsidized premium rates. A Flood Hazard Bylaw was adopted in July 1991 by the Selectboard regulating development in flood hazard areas. This bylaw should be periodically updated to make sure that it adequately protects the floodplain from unwise development.

Sewage Ordinance - In addition to zoning, subdivision, and flood hazard bylaws, the Town may, through its Selectboard, adopt an ordinance to track installation of on-site sewage systems permitted by the State. This ordinance would act as a backup to the state's new septic regulations.

Highway Ordinances - The town has in effect a Highway Ordinance setting forth the standards and conditions for the maintenance, improvement, discontinuance, laying out and acceptance of Town highways. In addition, the ordinance includes provisions related to the reclassification of town highways (Classes 2, 3 and 4).

Lastly, the town does have, through its Selectboard, the ability to regulate private access to municipal roads through the issuance of "curb cut" permits to landowners. "Curb cuts" are places where a private driveway or road connects to a town highway. In granting a cut onto town roads, the Selectboard can give consideration to safety issues such as adequacy of sight distance and proximity to intersections as well as conformance with this plan. It is necessary to obtain a state curb cut permit for access onto state highways.

Capital Budget – A capital budget and program is a financing approach that benefits the town greatly in the selection, prioritization and costing of capital projects. Under the capital budget, a project is selected (i.e. bridge refurbishment), a funding source determined (i.e. general taxes, and general obligation bond) and priority year given for each activity (i.e. construction in 2004). Collectively these capital projects make clear when public facilities will be placed to accommodate projected growth. When used in conjunction with the Town Plan and local bylaws, it can be a powerful mechanism for limiting the rate of growth in accordance with the fiscal capacity of taxpayers and other funding sources.

In addition, it is noted that under Vermont's Act 250 law, in granting a Land Use Permit for a major development or subdivision, the District Environmental Commission must first find that the project is in conformance with the town's capital budget. [See 10 V.S.A., Section 6086(a)(10).] Accordingly, this mechanism gives the town an indirect method of implementing its policies and priorities as set forth in the plan.

While both the town and school district have an informal system of capital programming, it is recommended that a Capital Budget Committee be established to work with the Select Board and School Directors in the development of a list of capital needs and expenditures and to formally present a Capital Budget and Program for adoption.

Vermont Community Development Program - Since the mid-1970's, the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) has made grant funds available to towns for community projects. Historically, the major focus of the program has been on housing rehabilitation and affordable housing projects benefiting low and moderate-income families.

The town should investigate the Vermont Community Development Program and its potential to assist the community in addressing its housing needs. The Regional Commission and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development are resources available to assist.

Act 250 - Since 1970, Vermont has had in place a statewide review system for major developments and subdivisions of land. Exactly what constitutes a "development" or "subdivision" is subject to a rather large and involved set of definitions. However, generally, commercial and industrial projects on more than one acre of land; construction of 10 or more units of housing; subdivision of land into 6 or more lots; construction of a telecommunication tower over 20 feet in height; and development over 2,500 feet in elevation qualifies.

Prior to these activities being commenced, a permit must first be granted by the District Environmental Commission. In determining whether or not to grant a permit, the Commission shall evaluate the project in relation to ten specific review criteria.

These criteria relate to the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed project on the community and region. Parties to Act 250 proceedings include the town, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, the State, and the Regional Commission. One criterion that needs to be addressed is whether the project is in conformance with the Hancock Town Plan. If a project were determined not to be in conformance with the plan, the District Environmental Commission would have a basis to deny a permit. As such, Act 250 reviews can take into consideration protection of those types of resources considered important to the well-being of the community. Accordingly, it is in the interest of the town to evaluate Act 250 projects affecting Hancock and to offer testimony, as appropriate.

Coordination of Private Actions - Citizens and private enterprise have a vested interest in the well being of the town. The actions of the private sector being the construction of homes and businesses, land conservation, and the use of land for recreation and agriculture should relate positively to the goals and policies as set forth in this Plan.

It is in the interest of the town, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, to develop a cooperative relationship with private investment activities that may have a significant impact on the community values and policies set forth in the plan. By working together in a cooperative venture early in the process of planning for a project, an adversarial relationship can be avoided.

Contacts that should be maintained include:

- Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation
- Vermont Land Trust and Upper Valley Land Trust
- Twin State Housing Trust
- Owners of significant properties of high resource or development value, and
- Major employers in Hancock

Conservation Activities - Conservation programs are an effective means of securing protection of valuable farm and forestland or significant natural resources. The community-wide

survey conducted as part of this Plan update requested public input regarding the appropriateness of private conservation efforts. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Techniques available involve voluntary direct work between non-profit conservation organizations and affected landowners such as donation of conservation easements, bargain-sales of land, and limited development schemes.

The land trust movement has grown immensely during the past twenty years, particularly in Vermont. Land trusts offer viable means of bringing together the needs of property owners with the community interests. The Vermont Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy are particularly well-recognized organizations. Several organizations are also involved in water quality protection. It is the intent of this plan to implement its policies through coordination and the involvement of these organizations and others dedicated to public purposes.

E. Guidelines for Growth

The following guidelines are intended to help town officials, residents and developers work together to plan and design developments consistent with the goals and policies of this plan. These guidelines are suggested ways to implement the plan. They are not mandatory and are not intended to be strictly adhered to in every case. They are offered to give landowners and officials a common, but flexible framework for preparing plans and making decisions.

Siting New Development - New development should be sited to:

1. Be compatible with the historic settlement pattern;

2. Maintain functional integrity of wildlife habitat;

3. Be cost efficient for municipal services; and

4. Conserve the agricultural potential of primary agricultural soils by:
    - Keeping primary agricultural soils available for agricultural production unless the only economically viable use of the land would be from incompatible uses;
    - And utilizing creative planning and design to minimize the reduction of agricultural potential.

Designing New Development - Landowners should design and phase new development, particularly large residential development to:

1. Avoid overloading public facilities and services;

2. Protect and promote the harmonious balance between buildings and useful, well-defined open space, and a human-scaled character of structures and settlements;

3. Be compatible with desired habitat conditions, public outdoor recreation;

4. Take advantage of opportunities to enhance and/or restore habitats by establishing native vegetative diversity or provide other wildlife benefits;

5. Mitigate the effects of proposed actions on identified archeological sites;

6. Be compatible with the qualities that make historic areas, structures or sites significant;

7. Protect the community trail system from activities which would unduly compromise desired trail experiences and uses; and

8. Incorporate the following visual elements:
   - Unobtrusive heights of buildings;
   - Vegetative screening;
   - Preservation of native vegetation;
   - Unobtrusive location of utilities; and
   - Minimal alterations to topography.

Public Facilities and Services - Major new developments should pay a proportionate fair share of the increased cost of providing public facilities or services to the development.

Roads - New roads, private or public, should be designed and constructed to:

- Minimize impacts to large woodlands and wildlife corridors (if roads and trails are desired, locate them along the outer edge of the areas and limit trail use to low-impact activities compatible with the habitat objectives);
- Meet town road standards; and
- Minimize impacts on desired habitat conditions, water quality and other ecological functions.

Landowners requesting upgrades of Class 4 roads to Class 3 should pay the costs of the necessary improvements. (19 V.S.A., Section 711).

New private development roads should remain the responsibility of the residents.
If stream crossings are necessary for new development, efforts should be made to minimize their impacts on aquatic life.

Water and Sewer Systems - Prospective developers should demonstrate the ability to provide an adequate supply of potable water for their developments without impairing the quality or quantity of existing water supplies.

Developers should protect the quality and yield of groundwater by limiting land use activities within recharge areas.

Vegetation Management - Timber harvesting should be consistent with the Vermont Forest, Parks and Recreation's Acceptable Management Practices.

Deer wintering areas should be managed according to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife's *Management Guide for Deer Wintering Areas in Vermont*, (1990).

When managing timber along streams designated as important wildlife corridors, avoid harvesting trees within 100 feet of a stream.

Energy - New development should reduce energy used for transportation by:

- Minimizing unnecessary lengths and widths of new roads in order to reduce energy used for trips, materials, construction, and maintenance;
- Laying out new roads to allow clustering of structures, unit orientation for optimum solar gain, and location of structures in wind shadows;
- Locating development to facilitate creation of public and pooled transportation and promote pedestrian access to activities and facilities within and among settlements;
- Using local materials and labor in construction to reduce transportation energy costs; and
- Providing appropriate opportunities for jobs, retail goods and services within villages and neighborhoods in order to reduce the need for travel.

Involvement with the Regional Economy - Ideally, a new or expanding business affecting Hancock should:

- Create community pride and have a positive effect on the community's image;
- Strengthen and preserve the community's assets, particularly those identified in the Town Plan as important;
- Provide fiscal revenues that exceed direct and indirect costs;
- Invest in the community (e.g., sponsor groups and activities, allow community use of land and buildings, build affordable housing, provide day care);
- Help keep money circulating in the community (e.g., be owned by local residents; hire local people; use local resources or products; provide services or products presently obtained from outside community);
- Produce products or services that meet community needs and will benefit the community;
- Add value to a local renewable resource or product (e.g., dairy, cheese factory, furniture manufacturer);
- Be committed to reducing negative environmental impacts; and
- Minimize traffic impacts.