

WESTFORD TOWN PLAN 2010

**FIRST ADOPTED: JULY 1971
MOST RECENT ADOPTION: MAY 27, 2010**

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* Note: These maps were done in color, 11”x17” format, and are available for review at the Town Office. Digital versions (Adobe PDF) of the maps are also available. The maps can also be viewed on the Town of Westford web site at: www.westfordvt.us

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Forward

The Westford Town Plan is the principal policy statement for the Town of Westford presenting a snapshot of existing conditions and a vision for the future. Specifically addressed in this plan are the following subjects: housing, demographic trends, economic development, natural resources, greenways and trails, transportation, facilities, utilities and services, child care, energy, historic resources and future land use.

The plan is implemented through Westford's various bylaws and ordinances, including the Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations

1.2 Planning Process

The Town of Westford has been involved in comprehensive planning since 1972. With the assistance of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, a municipal plan was developed and adopted which laid the groundwork for developing the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations that provided for orderly growth in our community. Over the years, various amendments to the plan and bylaws have been adopted in order to respond to ever-changing conditions and to manage growth.

The Town of Westford has an appointed Planning Commission, whose duties include preparing the Town Plan, Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Regulations and presenting those draft documents to the Selectboard for approval. The Planning Commission is also charged with carrying out and implementing planning studies. In 2008, the Town appointed a Development Review Board, whose duties include review of subdivision, conditional use, variance and site plan applications and appeals of Administrative Officer decisions. Prior to 2008, the Planning Commission reviewed subdivision and site plan applications and drafted the Town Plan, Zoning Regulations, and Subdivision Regulations. The Zoning Board of Adjustment, now dissolved, reviewed conditional use and variance applications and Administrative Officer appeals. Both the Planning Commission and Development Review Board are staffed by the full-time Planning Coordinator, whose duties include preparing board documents, providing technical assistance, and serving as a liaison between the public, local boards, and regional, state and federal agencies.

Comprehensive planning represents a community's best effort to examine its past and its present and to set a course for the future. The concept of community is important to Westford residents and maintaining it is becoming more challenging in the face of increased change within our region. This plan is a revision of the 2004 Town Plan.

1.3 Vision Statement

Westford will plan for and manage growth while protecting and preserving the rural character, historical sites, natural resources and agricultural land of the Town. We envision a town center with a mix of commercial, residential, and municipal uses designed to promote community interaction and identity. We also envision a sustainable, working landscape in Westford's rural areas that allows low density residential use and low density, small scale commercial use while conserving the Town's essential rural character. Westford will search for innovative ways to achieve higher density growth in the town center, and for ways to preserve open space outside of the town center, while respecting the rights of individual landowners.

In the interest of stabilizing the tax rate and ensuring the most efficient use of community resources, innovative techniques and grants should be used as much as possible to enhance this vision of the town.

1.4 General Goals

Goals for the Town were developed by integrating the results of past and present community surveys and public forums, and the challenges and opportunities facing Westford today. They are the product of extensive dialogue and effort by the citizens of Westford.

1. Preserve Westford's unique rural character and conserve valuable open spaces outside of the Town Center area, while respecting landowner rights and allowing low density development in appropriate areas that do not have critical value to the town in terms of natural resources, aesthetic value, cultural and economic importance.
2. Maintain and improve a strong sense of community to bolster citizen participation, cohesion among residents, and an overall sense of Westford as a unique and valuable place.
3. Protect and encourage agricultural and forestry activities, and recognize the social and economic benefits they contribute to the community.
4. Plan for the development of the Town Center area in such a way that higher density, mixed use development is encouraged and appropriate infrastructure exists, or is planned for, to allow this area to serve as the Town's growth center.
5. Recognize the importance of our historic background and historic structures and encourage the preservation and protection of our historic and cultural resources.
6. Work towards community self-sustainability by reducing the amount of solid waste generated and energy consumed, harnessing alternative energy sources, and fostering the production of agricultural products.
7. Identify and address transportation related problems and increase alternatives to automobile based transportation and public transportation.
8. Continue cooperation and coordination between all segments of Westford's town government to foster a sense of community and implement economic development goals.
9. Provide for the development of small-scale commerce and industry to supply local employment.
10. Encourage a diversity of housing types, including affordable and elderly housing.
11. Ensure that residents are provided with an adequate level of town services and infrastructure and that new growth does not outstrip the town's ability to continue to provide this level of service to existing and future residents.
12. Encourage diverse recreational opportunities for all residents.

13. Encourage the appropriate use and/or conservation of natural resources, natural areas, wildlife corridors, waterways, floodplains, scenic areas, open land, forest land, steep slopes and sensitive areas.
14. Encourage the development, use and conservation of public trails.

1.5 Purpose

1. Provide a framework for planning the future of the Town.
2. Serve as a policy document in the Act 250 process. Any ambiguities in this plan shall be resolved by reference to the Westford Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.
3. Provide a framework from which the Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations can be updated and amended.
4. Serve as a source of data to be used by Town officials, residents and potential residents and businesses in Westford.
5. Recommend studies or other programs to address specific community issues.
6. Serve as the basis for the Capital Budget and Program, the All Hazards Mitigation Plan, and other implementation measures, as needed.

This plan is founded on the assumption that landowners have the right to use their property as they see fit, providing their use does not endanger the health, safety and welfare of other residents of Westford, and providing that the use conforms to all local bylaws and ordinances including the Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, and Health Ordinance.

1.6 Relationship To Plans For Adjacent Towns And The Region

This Plan is generally compatible with both the Chittenden County Regional Plan (2006) as well as Town Plans from the surrounding municipalities.

Chittenden County Regional Plan (2006) – Westford’s Plan embodies the same focus on village growth centers that is emphasized in the Regional Plan. Westford’s Plan seeks to accommodate a limited share of the County’s growth and development; recognizing the Town’s infrastructure limitations, and that the County’s core metro and transition areas will continue to be the primary focus for future development. It also recognizes and seeks to conserve the critical natural resources and open spaces that make Westford an important part of the County’s rural landscape.

Georgia (minor portion of north-west corner) – The Georgia Town Plan identifies one land use area along the border. The Recreational Zoning District encompasses a mountainous area of Town which is generally unsuitable for development due to steep slopes and poor soils. Maintaining land in its natural state for environmental and recreational purposes is the primary goal of this District. The Westford Plan is largely compatible with the Georgia Plan, especially given the low density development, steep slope and natural resource conservation goals described in Westford Town Plan.

Fairfax (majority of northern border) – The Fairfax Town Plan identifies three land use areas along the border. They are the Low Density Residential, Conservation and Shoreland Zoning Districts. The Low Density Residential District encompasses areas suitable for development and located outside of Fairfax’s growth areas. Clustering and Planned Unit Developments are recommended and strip development is discouraged in this District. The Conservation District encompasses sensitive lands which are generally not suited for development. Conservation of significant natural resources is the primary goal within this area. Furthermore, cluster housing and Planned Unit Developments is encouraged in this District. The Shoreland District encompasses significant water bodies and floodplains. This District is generally unsuitable for development. Protection of water resources for recreational, water quality and disaster prevention purposes is the primary goal of this District. The Westford Plan is generally compatible with the Fairfax Plan, especially given water resource conservation and natural resource conservation goals described in Westford Town Plan.

Cambridge (portion of northern border) – Cambridge amended its Town Plan in 2008, but still does not regulate growth and development via zoning. The subdivision regulations were adopted in 2006. Draft zoning regulations and a land use map are under review and consideration for adoption. The draft regulations and land use map identify the area adjacent to Westford as Rural Residential and Agricultural. This zoning designation is generally compatible with Westford’s Plan for this area of the Town. Route 15, a major transportation corridor, runs through the northeast corner of Westford and continues into Cambridge via the shared northern boundary. It should be noted that Westford’s Plan envisions additional uses and potentially medium density development in this area (see Economic Development section) which are also consistent with current uses and development in this area of Cambridge.

Underhill (eastern border) – Underhill identifies the bulk of the border area as Rural Residential, which allows medium density development in suitable areas. The Underhill Town Plan notes that Planned Unit Developments are available to property owners, but does not specifically encourage or require them. Underhill also identifies and seeks to protect streams and wetlands in this area, similar to Westford’s efforts to protect its water resources. The Underhill Plan is generally compatible, although the base density for its rural residential area (3 acres per lot) is substantially greater than Westford’s Agricultural, Forestry and Residential 1 District (approx. 10 acres per lot).

Jericho (minor portion of south eastern border) - Westford shares a small boundary with Jericho along its southeastern corner. The Jericho Town Plan designates this area as Agricultural. The purpose of this area is to provide open land for agriculture, forestry, and rural housing. Planned Unit Developments are encouraged within this area. This designation is largely compatible with Westford’s Plan.

Essex (southern border) – The Essex Town Plan designates areas along Route 128, Pettingill Road, Chapin Road, and Old Stage Road as Agriculture and Residential. Planned Unit Developments are encouraged in this area. The base density for this area is somewhat higher (3 acres per lot) than in Westford’s Agricultural, Forestry and Residential Districts I and II (5-10 acres per lot). Areas within the Browns River and Alder Brook Floodplains are designated as floodplain. As in Westford, development is severely restricted in these areas. The remainder of the border areas with Westford is designated as Conservation. Only low density development (minimum lot size of 10 acres per lot) is permitted in this area. These designations are largely compatible with Westford’s designation of these areas for agricultural and forestry uses with some low density development.

Colchester (minor portion of south-western border) - Colchester identifies the area bordering Westford as Agriculture. It is composed primarily of agricultural lands and low density housing. This is compatible with the land use on the western half of Westford, which is designated as the Agriculture, Forestry and Residential I Zoning District

Milton (western border) – Milton’s eastern border is identified as one of Milton’s main rural areas. It is composed primarily of low density residential with agricultural uses. Soil conditions and topography pose development constraints in much of this area. Milton has designated their boundary area as Forestry/Conservation and Agricultural/Rural Residential Zoning Districts. This is compatible with land use on the western half of Westford, which is designated as the Agriculture, Forestry and Residential I Zoning District.

1.7 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Communications With Adjoining Towns)

Communicate and work in conjunction with adjacent towns to ensure adjoining zoning districts have compatible uses and to determine the effect of increased development and commuter traffic on roads used for regional travel.

Implementation #1 - Create a relationship with adjoining town’s planning commissions and planners.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – PC & PCOOR / **Applicable Sections** - 1

2 POPULATION, HOUSING, AND EXISTING LAND USE

2.1 Policies

It is the policy of the Town of Westford to encourage the availability of a diverse housing stock that is affordable and accessible to a wide range of current and future residents, provide for an expanding population, and plan to accommodate its proportionate share of regional growth.

2.2 Inventory and Discussion

2.2.1 Population

In order to plan for future development, it is important to understand the elements affecting population growth in Westford. Analyses of population and demographic trends can assist the Town in evaluating present and future needs with respect to town services, housing, transportation, employment, etc. Some of the most basic demographic information is discussed below. More comprehensive data can be found on the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) web site (<http://crs.uvm.edu>), which serves as the U.S. Census Bureau's Vermont State Data Center, and is based at the University of Vermont. Census data summaries for municipalities and counties are also available on the Vermont Indicators web site (<http://maps.vcgi.org/indicators>) maintained by the CRS and the Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI).

According to the 2000 United States Census, the 2000 population of Westford was 2,086 persons. There has been steady growth in population over the last 30 years. See Table 1.

**Table 1
Local and Regional Population Trends**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1990-00
Westford	991	1413	1740	2086	19.9
Milton	4495	6829	8404	9479	12.8
Essex	10951	14392	16498	18676	12.9
Jericho	2343	3575	4302	5015	16.6
Underhill	1198	2172	2799	2980	6.5
Chittenden County	99121	115525	131759	146571	11.2
Cambridge		2019	2667	3186	19.5
Fairfax		1805	2486	3765	51.4
Fletcher			941	1179	25.3
Fairfield			1680	1800	7.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

With regard to future growth, Westford's population is expected to increase at an average annual rate of approximately 0.7% from 2010 to 2020. This is slightly less than the growth rate seen from 2000 to 2010. See Table 2.

Table 2
Local and Regional Population Projections

	2000	2010	2020
Westford	2086	2270	2427
Milton	9479	10356	11076
Essex Town	18626	19944	20947
Jericho	5015	5347	5562
Underhill	2980	3104	3183
Chittenden County	146571	157471	165813

Source: forecast prepared for the Vermont Department Aging and Disabilities in 2003

These are estimates of future population and will be subject to external conditions such as the availability of employment in the region and the health of the overall economy in the region, state and nation.

The age distribution of the population is shown below.

Table 3
Age Distribution in Westford

Age Range	# of People	% of Population
0 to 9	304	16
10 to 19	305	16
20 to 29	127	7
30 to 39	352	19
40 to 49	388	21
50 to 59	222	12
60 to 69	90	5
70 & up	64	4

Source: 2000 US Census

A recent U.S. Census Bureau report on population growth in Vermont from 2000 to 2003 showed that the number of children 0-5 years-old in the state is decreasing rapidly in absolute numbers. This “birth dearth” is seen in all of New England. This means the number of children entering the Westford School will likely be decreasing in coming years.

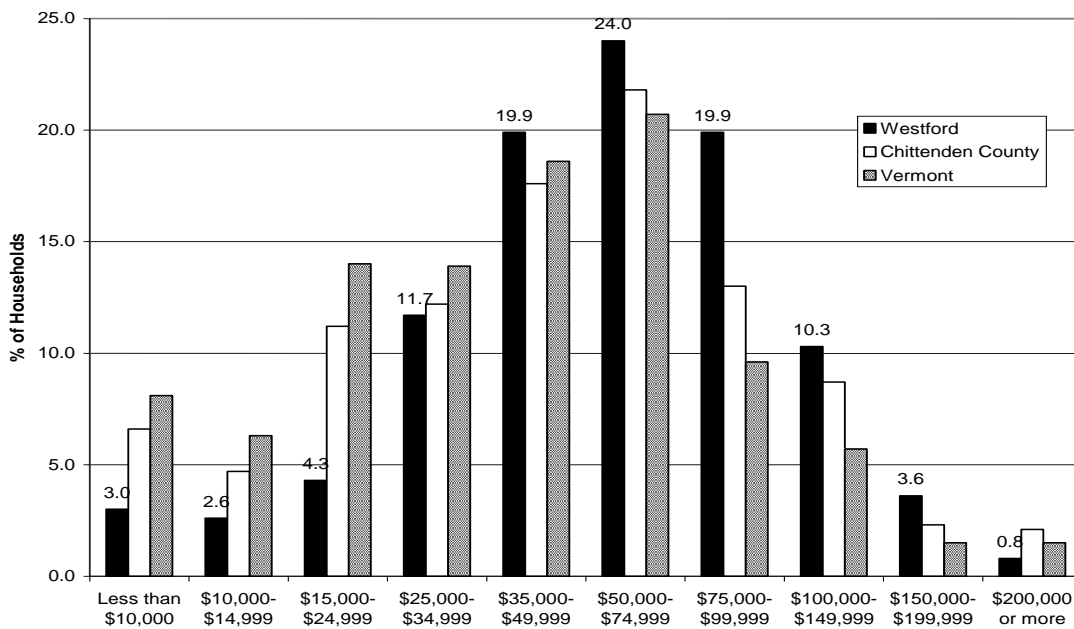
Household income for 1999 is also reported in the 2000 Census data. The following table and figure illustrate median income and income distribution for Westford and the surrounding area.

Table 4
Median Household Income – 1999

Westford	\$61,205
Milton	\$49,379
Colchester	\$51,429
Essex	\$58,441
Jericho	\$65,375
Underhill	\$66,492
Cambridge	\$44,950
Fairfax	\$51,769
Georgia	\$54,156
Fletcher	\$46,146
Fairfield	\$44,219
Chittenden County	\$47,673
Vermont	\$40,856

Source: 2000 Census Data

Figure 1
Household Income Distribution – 1999



Source: 2000 Census Data

2.2.1 Housing

Housing is an essential component of any community. The type, cost, distribution, and location of housing impact the social make up and physical appearance of a community. Housing provides many benefits to a community, such as providing shelter to its residents, creating a customer base for local businesses, and serving as the focal point for family and community life. On the other hand, housing also places demands on public services and, if built or placed inappropriately, can negatively impact natural resources. Planning for housing requires the consideration of many factors, including the type, cost and location of new development.

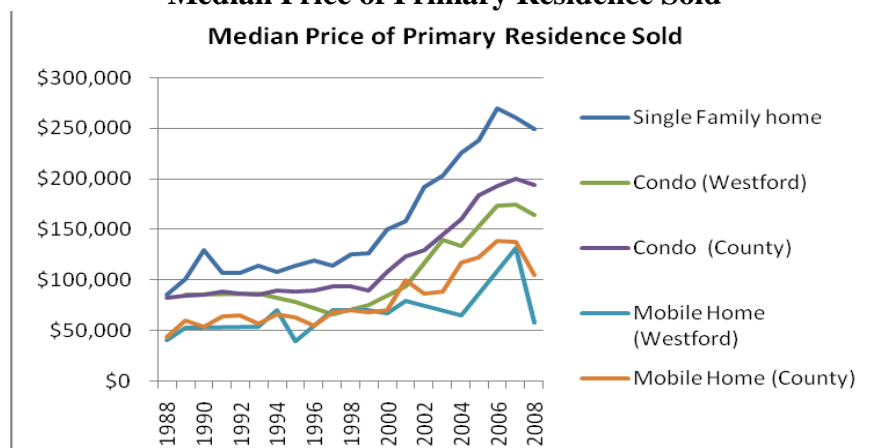
Westford's Existing Housing Stock

Westford's existing housing stock consists primarily of detached, owner occupied units. According to the 2000 United States Census, there are a total of 750 housing units in Westford, 725 of which are occupied. Of the 725 occupied housing units, 657 (90.6%) are owner occupied and 68 (9.4%) units are occupied by renters. Similarly, 711 (94.8%) of existing housing units are detached single family homes or mobile homes, while only 39 (5.2%) are in structures with multiple dwellings. It is likely that these trends have continued since the 2000 Census was taken, as all permits issued for new dwellings since 2000 have been for single family homes.

Housing costs in Westford climbed rapidly since the late 1990's. In 2008, the median sale price for a home was \$238,500 in Westford, \$240,000 in Chittenden County, and \$200,000 statewide. In 2008, the approximate number of home sales totaled 18 in Westford, 1,596 in Chittenden County, and 4,471 statewide. The median price has actually dropped slightly from a high of \$270,000 in 2006, though it is still represents a significant increase in the cost of housing since 1998, when the median sales price was \$125,000.

The median sale price for a home varies widely depending on the type of housing. For example, in 2008, the median sale price for a single family home in Westford, excluding condominiums, was \$250,000. In 2008, one condominium was sold for \$165,000. . Therefore, it is worth considering the county median selling price in Chittenden County, which is slightly higher at \$194,000. In 2008, one mobile home with land was sold in Westford for \$58,000. Again, the county median of \$105,000 may be a more accurate representation of actual costs.

Figure 2
Median Price of Primary Residence Sold



Source: VT Dept. of Taxes, from VT Housing Data web site, www.housingdata.org

Note: One condominium and one mobile home were sold in 2008.

Housing Affordability

Housing is considered affordable to a given household when no more than 30% of the household's annual income is spent on housing expenses. Housing costs for renters include rent and utilities. Housing costs for home owners include mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance, and association fees (if applicable.) Based on this information, a household would need an income of \$74,571 to afford a median priced single family home, \$49,547 to afford a median priced condo (\$58,061 for median priced condo in county), and \$17,938 for a median priced mobile home (\$31,845 for median priced mobile home in county). Source: Home Mortgage Calculator, www.housingdata.org.

In Chittenden County, the 2008 median income for a family of four is \$70,100 and \$49,070 for individuals. A home costing \$235,000 could be considered affordable for a family of four earning the county median income and a home costing \$163,500 could be considered affordable for an individual earning the county median income. “Affordable housing” refers to housing that is affordable to a household earning 80% of median income or less. 80% of median income for a family of four is \$56,400 and \$39,500 for an individual. The “affordable housing” prices for these demographics are \$188,000 and \$131,500 respectively.

Housing Type

In addition to housing affordability, housing type is an important consideration. For example, as Westford’s population continues to age, some residents may find that they can no longer maintain large amounts of land. Others, such as unmarried individuals and young families wishing to reside in Westford, may not need nor want a large single family home at this stage in their lives. A variety of housing types, including single family homes, condominiums, multifamily housing and elderly housing provide an opportunity for a wider range of people to live within a community, regardless of income. Yet, currently, almost all housing constructed in Westford consists of single family homes. This is in part due to market demand and soil limitations, but also a result of zoning regulations that treat all units of housing the same when calculating density, despite the fact that different types of housing place varying impacts on municipal services and natural resources.

Recent changes to Westford’s Zoning and Subdivision Regulations may expand housing type options in some areas. Based on State Statute, homeowners are allowed to construct “accessory apartments” (frequently referred to as “in-law apartments”) to properties with single family homes. Accessory apartments are a key component of allowing older resident to “age-in-place.” By adding an accessory apartment, homeowners can provide space within their home to parents or adult children, or to supplement income with rental income. Additionally accessory apartments represent an opportunity to create additional housing in Westford without developing valuable natural areas.

Of course, some older residents may find that they wish to remain in town, but do not have the space, desire, or resources to create an accessory dwelling. There is currently no designated elderly housing in Westford. (Elderly housing is defined as housing that is specifically designed and designate for residents 55 years of age or older). Under Westford’s recently adopted 2009 Zoning Regulations, elderly housing located within the Town Common, Town Village, and Town Center Districts is governed by lot coverage rather than minimum lot size. This will allow multiple small units to be located within a single structure or series of structures than would be allowed based on a traditional unit to lot size basis.

Strategies to Encourage Housing Options

The availability of affordable and reasonably priced housing is a problem not confined to Westford; all communities in Chittenden County are grappling with this issue. While the issue is regional in scope, there are several steps Westford can take to expand housing options within Town.

The Town recently amended the Subdivision Regulations to encourage the creation of affordable units by granting affordable housing density bonuses as an incentive. The Town should actively encourage developers to take advantage of this bonus now that it is in place. In doing so, the Town could facilitate partnerships between interested land owners and local affordable housing providers such as Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity and the Champlain Housing Trust.

Affordable housing may also be encouraged through the Town's fee structure by reducing or waiving fees for units of affordable housing.

Another regulatory change to consider is expanding the use of lot coverage when determining density for certain housing types (such as affordable housing or multifamily housing) in specific areas of Town (for example, Town Center area, Plains Road and Rt. 128/Rt 15). This would allow more, smaller units to be built within a footprint similar to that of a single family home.

Furthermore, the goal of allowing commercial space to be mixed with and supported by small residential dwellings in the Town Center supports the goal of encouraging affordable housing. It is also worth considering that in general, smaller dwellings require less energy for heating, air conditioning, and lighting than larger dwellings, making them more affordable. Higher energy efficiency is further captured by multi-family attached dwellings having denser housing and shared common areas, inherently being more energy efficient and affordable than most single-family detached dwellings.

The Town could also facilitate the development of affordable housing by inventorying Town owned properties to determine if any would be appropriate locations for affordable housing. Town owned properties or portions thereof that do not have high value natural resources could be sold or donated to local affordable housing developers for the purpose of creating additional housing. Proceeds from any sales could then be invested to create additional housing, purchase more valuable resource land, improve public infrastructure, or further other objectives of this plan.

Housing Targets

At the regional level, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Housing Targets Task Force has been reviewing housing policy for the entire county.

A report entitled "Recommended Housing Targets" was prepared by the Housing Targets Task Force and endorsed by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) on November 22, 2004. CCRPC requested that each municipality in the county review and respond to these housing targets as part of its Comprehensive Plan re-adoption process.

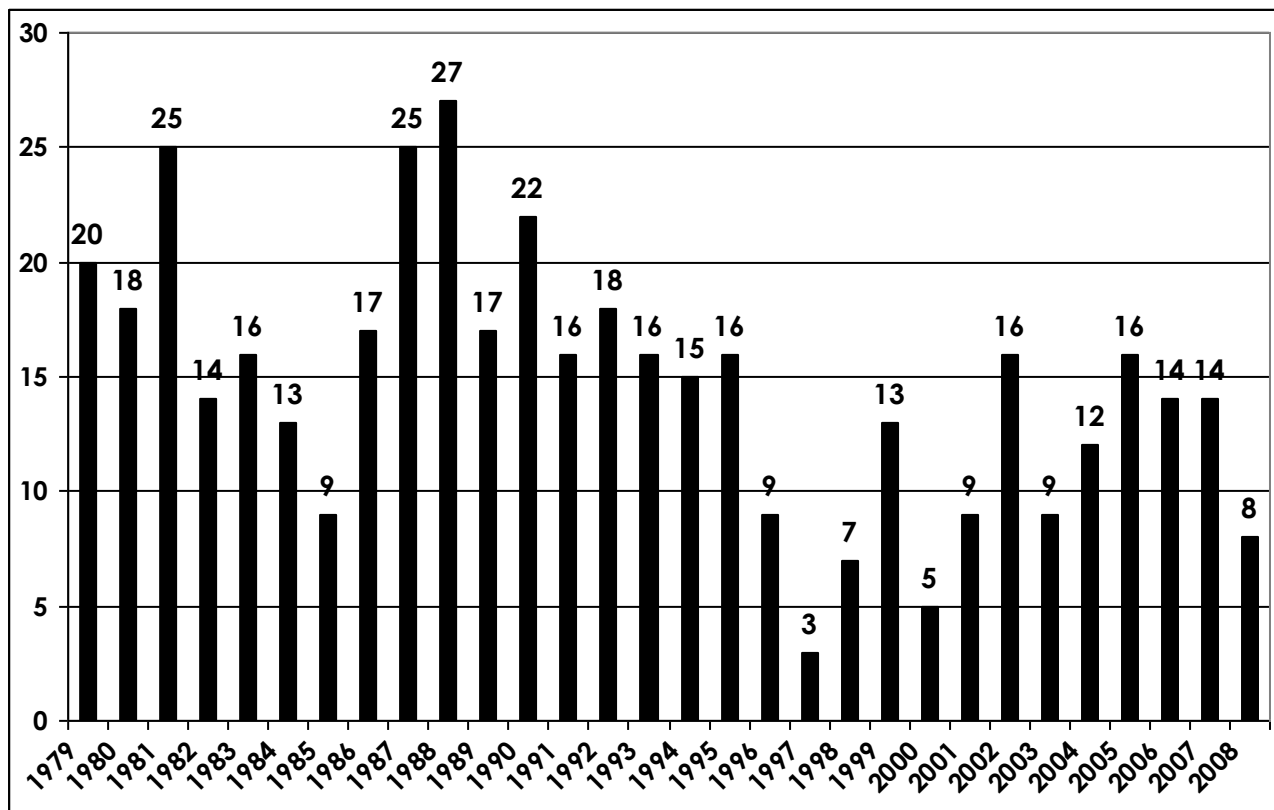
The Task Force report recommends a target of 178 new units to be constructed in Westford between 2000 and 2010, 18 percent of which should be "moderate income" (80-120% of AMI) and 18% of which could be considered affordable (less than 80% of AMI). This represents an annual target of 18 new units per year. Based on Figure 3, below, an average of 12.8 new units per year has been built in Westford per year since 2000. It is worth noting that according to the Town Plan survey 63% of respondents felt that residential development had been "just right."

Meeting the suggested annual housing target would require Westford to accelerate housing development by approximately 40%. This is unlikely due to several factors. Many landowners in Westford have chosen to maintain their property undeveloped. Many of Westford's rural roads are built on antiquated road bases, and cannot support additional development. Soil conditions in Town are largely prohibitive of conventional septic systems. Moreover, many of the open areas in Westford contain valuable natural resources. The high densities needed to achieve the housing targets may be desirable in the Town Center area and perhaps Plains Road. However, such development would likely be predicated on an investment in wastewater and/or other infrastructure.

In general, the Town of Westford supports the CCRPC goals of providing sufficient housing to meet reasonable growth needs and locating such housing in suitable areas. The Town also supports use of housing targets as goals to help guide a community’s planning rather than being used as quotas. The Town does not feel that housing quotas would be an appropriate method for accomplishing regional goals. A more appropriate method for developing proportionate housing within the County to provide towns with the resources necessary to develop the infrastructure to support housing development in appropriate areas and to provide regional transit services that promote affordable commuting options throughout the County to the major economic area located in the greater Burlington area.

Figure 3 shows the number of zoning permits issued for new homes from 1979-2008.

Figure 3
Westford Zoning Permits Issued for Homes*



Source: Town Reports

* Generally new houses and mobile homes; however, may include some replacements

2.2.3 Existing Land Use

Westford is predominantly a rural bedroom community. Most of the adult residents in the work force commute out of town to work. Because there is no sewer or water service in the Town Center area the overall density of the Town is low. There are a total of 25,038 acres of land in Westford and a population of approximately 2,086. This translates to a density of approximately 13 acres per person.

Westford's rural character has been formed primarily as a result of traditional Vermont development patterns, which included a significant agricultural sector and the development of the Town Center. This has resulted in low density residential uses, agricultural uses and an abundance of open land dispersed along existing roadways. Based on the results of the both the 2003 and 2009 community

surveys, the preservation of Westford's rural character is important to residents, particularly open space, farmland and forests.

Specialty agricultural businesses and hobby farms are prevalent throughout Town. The Town plans to foster the development of farming operations and encourage the conservation of land as a means of becoming a more sustainable community. However, small farming operations are not as likely to result in keeping the large amount of land open those larger working farms such as dairy farms typically do. Unfortunately, the trend is towards a gradual reduction in the number of large working farms, in both the region and Westford. Because of this trend, Westford has changed from an agricultural community to more of a rural bedroom community create more of a challenge in meeting the Town's goal of preserving the Town's rural character..

There are no large businesses in Westford although there are numerous small, home based enterprises. It is likely that more of these small businesses will develop in Westford. (See Economic Development Chapter for additional discussion.)

Since 2005, the Town has updated its parcel data annually with the thought that the data will help Town officials better understand the total number, distribution, and arrangement of parcels. In 2008, there were a total of 1066 parcels in Westford, up from 924 in 1992 and 747 in 1985. It is apparent from the data below shown in Table 5 that the potential exists for significant additional subdivision activity in Westford. The following table illustrates parcel breakdown by size, number and total area in Westford.

**Table 5
Parcel Size Distribution, 2008**

Parcel Size Acres	# of Parcels	Total Area	% of Area
0-2.9	325	435	1.8
3-5.9	122	506	2.0
6-10.9	207	1949	7.9
11-25.9	183	2981	12.1
26-50.9	102	3728	15.1
51-100.9	68	4958	20.1
101-200.9	38	5200	21.0
201+	16	4951	20.0
TOTAL	1061	24708	

Excludes rights of way

Parcel Size Acres	# of Parcels	Total Area	% of Area
0-2.9	328	441	1.8
3-5.9	122	506	2.0
6-10.9	207	1949	7.8
11-25.9	183	2981	11.9
26-50.9	103	3763	15.0
51-100.9	68	4958	19.8
101-200.9	38	5200	20.8
201+	17	5243	20.9
TOTAL	1066	25041	

Includes right of ways

Source: CCRPC GIS and Westford Tax Maps

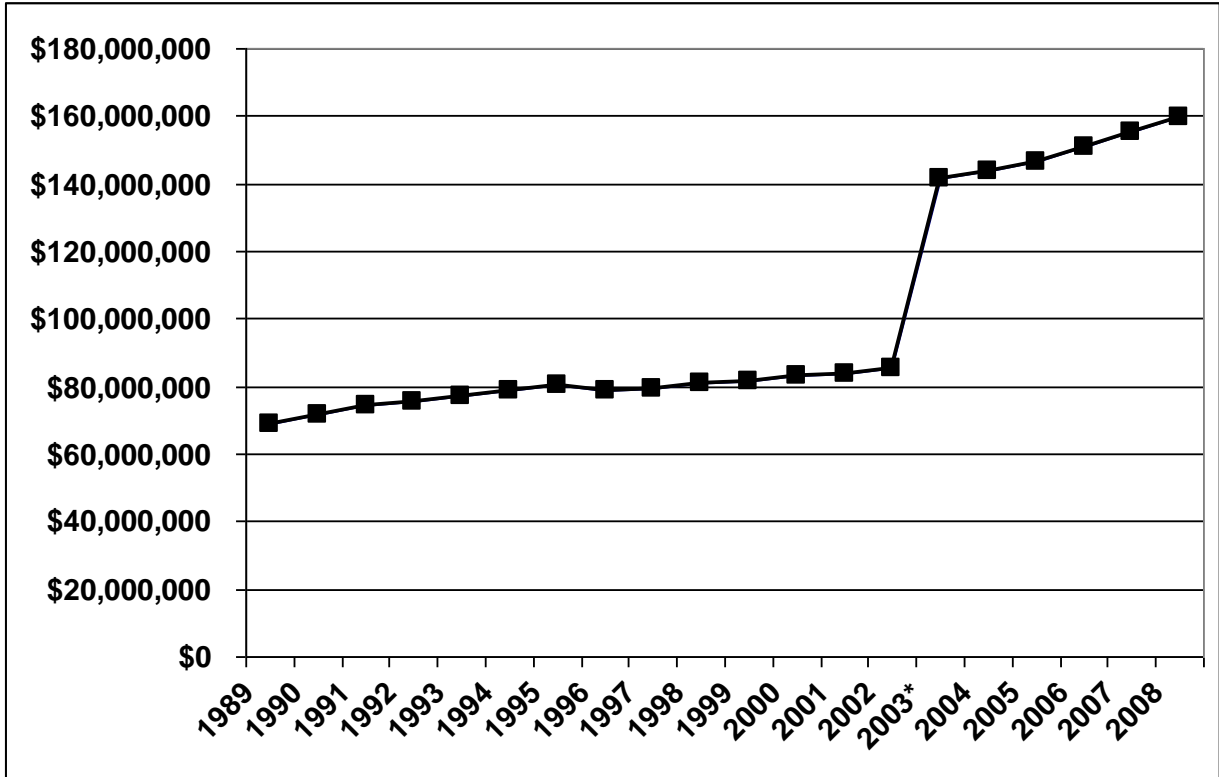
The Town's grand list represents the total listed value of real estate and personal property. Westford's grand list increased 92% from 2000 to 2008 (See Table 6). The large increase since 2000 is due to a town-wide reappraisal conducted in 2003, which brought property valuation much closer to fair market value. Prior to 2003 the last reappraisal was conducted in 1989. See Table 7 for a comparison of equalized grand list values for the last few years.

Table 6
Westford Grand List 1989-2008

Year	Grand List
2000	\$83,111,061
2001	\$83,656,289
2002	\$85,115,268
2003*	\$141,665,226
2004	\$143,494,902
2005	\$146,439,957
2006	\$150,610,182
2007	\$155,075,583
2008	\$159,881,632

Source: Town Report

Figure 4
Westford Grand List 1989-2008



Source: Town Reports

* Large increase in 2003 due to town-wide reappraisal

Westford's equalized education grand list (EEGL) is the state's estimate of the fair market value of the Town's property. The EEGL increased from January 1, 2000 to January 1, 2008 by 119%. This rapid growth reflects the escalation in land and housing prices in the Town and in Vermont as a whole.

Table 7
Equalized Education Grand List Values in Westford

YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
EEGL	960,540	1,037,280	1,075,450	1,197,940	1,332,660	1,447,370	1,659,360	1,833,890	2,107,500

Source: Property Valuation and Review

2.3 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Growth & Services)

Ensure a pattern of residential growth compatible with Westford's rural character, and a rate of growth that does not outstrip the Town's ability to provide necessary services.

Implementation #1 – Without undue impact to the environment and when economically feasible, provide infrastructure in the Town Center area so that higher density development can occur.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR, TCC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 7 &10

Implementation #2 - Give due consideration to innovative water and sewer technology that could enhance development of the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PCOOR, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2 & 3

Implementation #3 - Investigate strategies to allow/encourage property owners to develop shared systems to expand wastewater capacity

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #4 – Continue working toward development of a community wastewater disposal system.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #5 - Consider offering incentives such as density bonuses for the provision of public infrastructure and services, including wastewater, in the Town Center.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 6 & 7

Implementation #6 - Ensure Zoning and Subdivision Regulations allow residents of the Town Center area s to sufficiently use existing wastewater capacity such as by allowing mixed use development.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Objective #2 (Affordable Housing)

Encourage the provision of housing which is affordable to Westford's residents who wish to remain in Westford and to those people who will move to Westford in the future.

Implementation #1 - Work with neighboring towns and the region to promote cooperative efforts to facilitate the development of affordable housing locally and regionally.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – PCOOR, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2

Implementation #2 - Continue to offer density bonuses for the development of affordable housing.
Timeline – n/a / **Responsible Party** – PC, SB & DRB / **Applicable Sections** – 2

Implementation #3 – Investigate with the intent of amending the development fee schedule to support affordable housing.
Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2

Implementation #4 – Identify town owned properties, or parts thereof, that do not have highly valuable natural resources for local affordable housing potential.
Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** – PC / **Applicable Sections** – 2 & 7

Implementation #5 - Identify property owners who may wish to develop elderly housing and connect these property owners with appropriate agencies.
Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** – PC / **Applicable Sections** – 2

Implementation #6 - Support applications to develop affordable housing in neighboring towns through the Act 250 process.
Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – PC, SB & DRB / **Applicable Sections** – 2

Implementation #7 - Evaluate how the Zoning Regulations calculate density for different housing types and consider expanding use of lot coverage when determining housing density for certain types of development, such as affordable housing or multifamily housing, in the Town Center area, Rural Residential area and Agricultural, Forestry & Residential 2 Districts.
The evaluation should take into consideration an area’s character, effects on municipal services and impacts on natural resources.
Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC / **Applicable Sections** – 2 & 10

Objective #3 Growth & Natural Resource Protection

Facilitate the dual objectives of allowing residential development while conserving agricultural lands, open spaces, and critical natural resources.

Implementation #1 - In rural areas, develop Zoning and Subdivision Regulations that creates residential developments which are in keeping with Westford’s rural character by clustering development on the least sensitive portions of a property and away from steep slopes, agricultural soils and critical habitat areas.
Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 4 & 10

Implementation #2 - In the Town Common, Town Village, and Town Center Districts, encourage higher density mixed use and residential development which contribute to the goals for these areas.
Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3 & 10

3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Westford to accommodate home occupations, home businesses and small scale commercial uses that benefit residents; provide local employment, encourage businesses that are compatible with the environment and in keeping with the tranquil rural character of our Town.

3.2 Discussion

Westford is a rural bedroom community where the majority of its employed residents commute to work in the greater Burlington area and surrounding Chittenden County. The primary commercial base in Westford is composed of a diverse mix of home occupations and home businesses where residents conduct business of varying intensities from their home, or from an accessory structure on their property.

Second in popularity is a diverse mix of agricultural operations including equine, dairy, poultry and produce. Finally, there are a few small scale commerce and industry type businesses throughout our Town primarily located on Route 15 and Route 128.

In general the economic conditions experienced by businesses in Chittenden County, and to a lesser extent the State of Vermont, directly affect the economic well being of the majority of Westford's residents.

According to the 2009 community survey, Westford residents are near evenly split between promoting and not promoting commercial development. The ability of Westford to successfully promote, or attract, commercial development is limited.

Westford roads are primarily gravel and are weight restricted during the spring. There is no 3 phase power available, and high speed internet access and telecommunication services are still limited in certain areas.

Westford residents do agree that our Town Center area would benefit from certain types of small scale commercial development, creating a more vibrant and desirable town center. While home businesses and agriculture are more widely suited to our town, commercial development in the forms of commerce and industry are best suited along Route 128 and Route 15 in the Agricultural, Forestry & Residential II, Town Common and Town Village Zoning Districts.

It should be noted that the Westford Elementary School is a highly regarded facility in the community and improves the economic strength of our town. The National Association of Realtors estimates that 17% of home buying decisions are based upon the local school's reputation and that home buyers pay a higher premium in areas with schools that have a great reputation.

3.3 Goals

1. Provide for home occupations and home businesses. Home occupations are allowed as a matter of right under Vermont State Statutes and considered integral to Westford's economic base. Our Zoning Regulations allow for the permitting of new home occupations and home businesses while protecting neighbors from unreasonable impact. New Westford Zoning Regulations should be created to allow these businesses the option to grow larger and continue to remain in Town provided that they do so in a manner that is not disruptive to the neighborhood, and is conducive to our tranquil rural character. Westford should continue to encourage the development of high speed internet and telecommunications services to all Westford residents, so that everyone has the ability to conduct business from their home with up to date communications capability.
2. Provide for and protect the viability of agriculture and agricultural lands. Westford has available agricultural lands, and the potential to grow a diverse agricultural economic base, including agricultural related tourism. Our close proximity to the greater Burlington area provides us with a large consumer market for locally grown meats, produce, and other agricultural products. It is for this future economic potential that Westford shall act to protect its open agricultural lands from the effects of development. Westford will investigate incentives and shall create more zoning flexibility to facilitate the growth of agricultural land use to accommodate the planning needs of existing agriculture businesses. Furthermore, Westford is supportive of appropriate agricultural operations and agriculture related businesses and will investigate the encouragement of new agricultural operations and agriculture related businesses.
3. Strive to support existing businesses and employers located within the Town. Allow for existing businesses to grow in Westford while providing adequate protection for our environment and neighbors.

3.4 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Support of Local Business)

Support existing and foster the development of local businesses that serve the community, provide employment to residents, and are in keeping with the Town's rural character.

Implementation #1 - Continue to provide for and enhance the Zoning Regulations to encourage economic development in Westford that allows residents to engage in home occupations and home businesses while protecting neighbors from any adverse effect caused by these businesses.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #2 – Investigate and develop Zoning Regulations which allow existing Westford businesses to expand, and/or to diversify, without having to relocate, if the business will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the rural character of the area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #3 – Update and refine the definitions for commercial business in the Zoning Regulations, with a focus to be placed on home occupations and home businesses.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #4 – Investigate and develop Zoning Regulations unique to the Town Center area to better accommodate small scale commerce.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 8, 9 & 10

Implementation #5 - Investigate increased use of pre-existing lots in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #6 - Prohibit big-box or large-scale commercial development which is not in keeping with Westford's tranquil rural character.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #7 - Facilitate high speed internet, improved telecommunications, and telecommuting by supporting aesthetically acceptable telecommunication infrastructure.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3 & 8

Implementation #8 - Review current Zoning Regulations on signs and amend them, as necessary, to allow adequate visibility while remaining compatible with Westford's rural character.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #9 – Give due consideration to innovative water and sewer technology that could enhance development in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #10 – Continue working toward development of a community wastewater disposal system.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #11 - Investigate strategies to allow/encourage property owners to develop shared systems to expand wastewater capacity.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #12 – Investigate with the intent of creating design standards for commercial development in the Town Center area to ensure that new commercial construction is sited and designed in ways that reasonably fit within the context of its immediate surroundings and are in keeping with Westford's tranquil rural character.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3 & 10

Implementation #13 - Investigate increased use of pre-existing lots in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Objective #2 (Commercial Use of Natural Resources)

Preserve and enhance resident's ability to sustainably use Westford's natural resources for commercial purposes such as agriculture and silviculture.

Implementation #1 – Steer development from prime agricultural to marginal soils with Subdivision and Zoning Regulations that allow the DRB to guide developers to site residential development on the least productive portion of a productive agricultural parcel and to encourage smaller lots which meet overall density requirements while leaving the most productive soils available for agricultural use.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** – PC, CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3 & 4

Implementation #2 – Provide flexible Zoning Regulations for agricultural operations/businesses so they may expand into agriculture related production or services in order to help maintain their viability.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #3 – Continue to provide tax incentives for agricultural businesses in Westford and investigate the creation of further incentives.

Timeline – 2014 / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

Implementation #4 – Promote the right to farm by requiring residential development on agricultural land or abutting agricultural land to implement nuisance language into parcel deeds which protects agricultural operations/business from complaints related to activities commonly performed by the agricultural businesses.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3

4 NATURAL RESOURCES AND NATURAL FEATURES

4.1 Policy

It is a policy of the Town of Westford to maintain the rural character of the Town by supporting appropriate residential and commercial growth and conserving significant natural resources, significant natural features and critical natural resources. Conservation of these resources is fundamental to the preservation of the Town's rural character.

4.2 Definition and Discussion

4.2.1 Introduction

Westford contains significant natural resources and features that distinguish it from several of the neighboring towns. Towns to the south and west have seen more growth as a result of different planning strategies over the years, and thus have more limited natural resources. Wilder areas to the north stretching beyond the Canadian border, and to the east, continuing to the spine of the Green Mountains, are more rural with larger areas of open space and smaller population densities. Most of Westford is heavily forested with wooded swamps, ponds, rivers, streams, marshes and beaver flowages interspersed throughout the forests, meadows, and agricultural land. There is a wide array of habitats which makes Westford home to many of the species of plants and animals native to the northern hardwood forest.

In rapidly urbanizing Chittenden County, Westford serves as an important natural area that is both a home to many species of flora and fauna, and serves as a wildlife corridor to habitat in more remote, largely contiguous, open space to the north and east. These unfragmented forests, along with agriculture and silviculture, are at the core of the rural character of our state and our town. Westford is located on the border between largely undeveloped natural resources and the sprawl of Vermont's largest city.

4.2.2 Definitions

The following definitions apply to the terms used in this chapter and are not necessarily applicable to other chapters.

Conserve

- To avoid significant undue or adverse impact to natural resources.

Critical Natural Resources

- Natural resources critical to the survival of a species of plant or wildlife that is recognized at the state or federal level as rare, threatened or endangered.
- Natural resources critical to the rural character and community of Westford.
- Natural resources essential for the health and survival of Westford citizens; such as clean air, clean drinking water and healthy food.
- These resources include, but are not limited to unfragmented forests, wildlife corridors, active and historic agriculture, water resources, and silviculture areas.

Fragmented Forest

- Forested areas which are interspersed with development. Development has the effect of isolating partially forested areas by creating barriers to species movements. Fragmentation is defined by the state by including 300 feet buffers along state highways and 100 feet buffers along class 3 roads. This definition counts no forest fragmentation for class 4, and forest roads and trails.

Natural Resources

- Land and water, flora and fauna, habitat and wildlife corridors.

Open space

- An area of undeveloped land that is valuable for natural processes and wildlife, for agricultural purposes and sylvan production, for active and passive recreation, and/or for providing other public benefit.

Designated Open Space

- PUD classified open space and conserved lands which provide continual protection of valued natural resources and natural processes and wildlife, agricultural purposes and sylvan production, active and passive recreation, and/or providing other public benefits. In cases of PUD open space the use must be approved by the Development Review Board based on the resources present.

Rural character

- The intersection of natural resources, open space, agriculture, silviculture, low population density and sense of small town community.

Silviculture

- The cultivation of forests; forestry.

Stewardship

- Careful use and conservation of land and natural resources to retain value and ecological function for future generations.

Wildlife Corridors

- Active or historic land or riparian routes connecting larger habitat areas that allows wildlife to range from maternity to feeding to wintering areas. Refer to Map 10 (Unfragmented Forest & Wildlife Movement).

Unfragmented Forest

- Forest habitat connected in large areas. Refer to Map 10 (Unfragmented Forest & Wildlife Movement).

4.2.3 Critical Natural Resources

The following natural resources are critical for maintaining our town's rural character and for conserving species and habitats of Westford:

- 1) Unfragmented forest
- 2) Agriculture and Silviculture areas
- 3) Wildlife Corridors
- 4) Water Resources

Please refer to Map 10 (Unfragmented Forest & Wildlife Movement) to see where these four critical natural resources exist in Westford.

4.3 Inventory

4.3.1 Unfragmented Forest

Unfragmented forest habitat is an area of forested land with little or no human development or roads. There may be various age classes of forest cover and various habitats such as wetlands and meadows which are all part of the overall contiguous habitat complex. There is no minimum number of acres that define an unfragmented forest, but more important is to consider the overall configuration and connections to other unfragmented areas. Connecting lands, or wildlife corridors, are required to ensure that various habitats can be accessed by species that require resources in different parts of the forest that may be located small or large distances from each other. The configuration of unfragmented areas is also important because a high degree of forest edge may make the overall area less suitable to some species than a similar unfragmented area with a regular shape and fewer edges.

When development occurs within unfragmented forest, the size and configuration of the formerly unfragmented area changes, more forest edge is created, and critical habitat may be destroyed. More development in the area can create the effect of irregularly shaped unfragmented forest. Given the significant risk of continued fragmentation of forest habitat due to development, it is beneficial to conserve large areas to maintain forest habitat and connections to other habitat outside of Westford's borders.

There is a significant portion of unfragmented forest within the borders of Westford. Large clusters of open space representing over 7000 acres are located on the eastern half of the town and range from the north to the south town borders. There are also tracts of over 2500 acres near the western town border, and a few additional pockets of several hundred acres of unfragmented forest throughout town. Some unfragmented areas continue into the neighboring towns of Fairfax, Cambridge, Underhill, Jericho, Colchester, and Milton, and connectivity to the greater regional landscape should be taken into consideration in any conservation efforts.

4.3.2 Agriculture and Silviculture

There are several agricultural and silvicultural businesses in Westford, including maple syrup producers, fruit and vegetable growers, dairy farms, beef, horse and poultry operations. Many Westford residents have small hobby farms, made possible by Westford's rural setting and limited agricultural landscape.

Westford considers the various active and historic farms and farm land (fields and pasture) to be an essential part of our rural character. However, as the state slowly moves toward a service,

commercial, and light industrial economy, more of the local agriculture and silviculture operations and associated land have begun to disappear. Some farming operations may be abandoned while others may be sold for non-agricultural uses or development.

Today, Westford is not primarily supported by an agriculture-based economy, but there remains significant agricultural activity. Further, there is strong support for new agriculture endeavors which bring locally harvested products to the tables of Westford citizens.

4.3.3 Wildlife Corridors

Wildlife corridors link larger habitat areas together within a landscape, allowing movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants. Riparian habitat along streams and rivers and strips of forest cover between developed areas are potential wildlife corridors.

Connecting habitat is important for both wide ranging species like deer, black bears, and bobcats, and for species of plants that rely on animal dispersion for propagation. Some species roam vast areas on a daily or weekly basis, while others move more seasonally, as is the case with deer moving to and from wintering areas in Fairfax, Cambridge, Underhill, Jericho, Essex, Colchester and Milton. Wildlife corridor access to nearby unfragmented forest also ensures genetic diversity in the populations of species that inhabit our town, ensuring a healthier forest and healthier wildlife.

Westford has a general east-west corridor in the southern half of the town, and north-south corridors in the eastern and western sides of town. Many natural wildlife corridors have been cut off or reduced in size as a result of development and this often results in more human-animal interactions, especially on roads. The largest potential for wildlife road crossings can be identified by the Map 10 (Unfragmented Forest & Wildlife Movement)). The eastern side of town has a large unfragmented forest area which facilitates wildlife movement primarily north and south. However east-west movement is hindered by up to five roads in town. One of those roads is VT Route 128, which sees both higher traffic and higher speeds than local roads. Considering the inherent risk to wildlife and citizens of Westford, it is important to accommodate safe wildlife corridors, especially where natural corridors have been dissected by roads and development.

4.3.4 Water Resources

Westford has established a Water Resources Overlay District (WRO) in the Zoning Regulations. The purpose of the Water Resources Overlay District is to ensure the quality and character of Westford's water related resources, including wetlands, rivers, streams, natural ponds and wellhead protection areas. The WROD helps maintain Westford's rural character through the conservation of natural resources. It also allows for permitted uses of those resources, as appropriate, for preservation, recreation, education, and human consumption, as well as serving to protect the public health by ensuring clean water and by minimizing the adverse impacts of development on Westford's water related resources and adjacent lands. Furthermore, the Town is working with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and Agency of Natural Resources to map fluvial erosion hazard areas to further protect natural systems and public health, safety and welfare.

The Water Resources Overlay District is superimposed on all underlying zoning districts (See Map 5 - Water Resources, Wetlands & Floodplains). All lands to which the Overlay District applies must meet the requirements of the underlying zoning districts and the Water Resources Overlay District. Where there is a conflict between the underlying zoning district and the Overlay District, the more restrictive shall apply.

4.4 Habitat

Unfragmented forest is a critical natural resource because large conserved areas will often contain many of the community level elements that support native plants and animal species.

4.4.1 Natural Communities

A natural community is an interacting assemblage of plants and animals, the environment and processes that affect them. Westford contains several natural communities recognized by Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, including Northern Hardwood Forest (found across Westford and the entire State of Vermont), Mountainview Bog, Hidden Swamp, Brookside Shrub Swamp and Westford Swamp (partly in Essex). For example, Westford Swamp is of special botanical significance because of its large population of the rare Massachusetts fern (*Thelypteris simulata*). And Brookside Shrub Swamp is an unusual example of a tamarack-alder swamp.

Map 3 (Natural Features) shows the location of these natural communities.

4.4.2 Wetlands

Wetlands, many of them forested and/or marshy, are scattered throughout town. Refer to Map 5 (Water Resources, Wetlands & Floodplains).

Wetlands are defined by state statute and are important elements of the landscape because of the functions they perform such as surface and ground water quality maintenance, floodwater storage, fish and wildlife habitat, erosion control, threatened and endangered species habitat, open space, aesthetics, recreation and education. Most wetlands in Westford are shown on the National Wetland Inventory maps, but other smaller wetlands may not appear on these maps. To conserve wetlands and other critical natural resources, Westford has established a Water Resources Overlay District in the Zoning Regulations. This technique is used to conserve special features of the landscape that are not located within an easily definable geographical area. Development is allowed to occur as specified in the underlying zone, except that when a wetland is located on a parcel proposed for development, certain conditions apply, the most common being the establishment of a buffer zone around the wetland, within which most activities that entail construction are prohibited. On most sites, development can simply be moved away or upland from the wetland. The overlay district establishes permitted and conditional uses just like other zones in the regulations.

The determination of whether or not a regulated wetland exists and delineating its boundaries are tasks which must be performed by specialists; the Wetlands Office at the Agency of Natural Resources has a small staff to assist Towns in this regard. To determine the presence of wetlands initially, Zoning Regulations shall require that all applications for development contain information regarding hydric soils, vegetation and hydrology and that they reference the National Wetland Inventory maps, if appropriate. This will help the Development Review Board to determine if wetlands are present or not. Depending on the size of the wetland affected and the nature of the proposed activity, State and Federal agencies may become involved in the permitting process.

4.4.3 Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are ecosystems comprised of streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and floodplains that form a complex and interrelated hydrological system. These ecosystems extend up and down streams and along lakeshores, and include all land that is directly affected by surface water. (Verry et al., 2000) . Riparian areas contain unique ecosystems and are generally high in biological diversity. Riparian and aquatic environments are often addressed together due to interdependence upon each other.

Conserving riparian areas is important to:

- Preserve water quality and aquatic habitat.
- Provide terrestrial wildlife habitat for species that depend on riparian environments.
- Support significant natural communities.
- Maintain wildlife corridors.

4.4.4 Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are small wetlands characterized by lack of vegetation and standing water for a portion of the year. These pools typically occur in small depressions or over a relatively impermeable substrate layer, but may be found in some forested swamps as well.

Vernal pools are essential habitat for many amphibian populations including several species of salamanders and frogs. In addition they support a host of other species as well, including fairy shrimp, fingernail clams, snails, eastern newts, green frogs, American toads, spring peepers, and a diverse collection of aquatic insects. These species in turn support the overall community as a food source for birds, mammals, and reptiles that inhabit the area.

4.5 Geological History and Features

Westford's landscape can best be described as Vermont hill country. Rounded hills, generally ranging from 1000-1200 feet in elevation, are scattered throughout the town. Stewart Hill, elevation 1600 feet, is the highest hill in Westford. The north-flowing Browns River is the major water feature in town, feeding into the Lamoille River that drains into Lake Champlain. The Browns River and its tributaries drain almost the entire town. Unlike other areas of Vermont, the stream valleys in Westford and adjacent Essex are relatively broad with gentle gradients.

Westford shares similar bedrock geology with many other Vermont towns, especially those located in the northern Green Mountains and adjacent foothills. Non-calcareous schists and graywackes are the dominant bedrock types. A small arm of the Champlain Valley's limestone belt reaches into Westford just east of Bowman corners. Underlain by quartzites and dolomite bedrock, this limey area encompasses Bald Hill and the hill immediately south.

4.6 Other Natural Resources

Westford is fortunate to have an abundance of open space and natural resources. While some of these resources, such as drinking water and soils for proper waste disposal, are necessary for the well being and health of Westford's citizens, others, such as timber, scenic views and farmlands, are important because they help define the rural character for which Westford is known.

4.6.1 Groundwater

Adequate and pure groundwater supplies are essential to most communities in Vermont. This is particularly true in Westford where virtually all water is taken from groundwater sources. The areas where water most easily percolates through the soils are called recharge areas, because they help to recharge the groundwater supply. These areas are characterized by exposed bedrock and soils with large particles (loamy soils). Recharge areas are susceptible to groundwater contamination and uses in these areas shall be carefully considered. For instance, underground storage tanks and landfills shall be prohibited from these areas. In Westford, some gravel recharge areas are located generally in the north-central area, between the Huntley and Cambridge Roads, and along the lower section of the Browns River. With that said, recharge areas for individual wells can only be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Vermont has designated water sources which serve 10 or more connections or 25 or more year round residents as source water or well head protection areas (WHPA's). Incompatible uses shall be prohibited within the boundaries of source water protection areas.

Care must be taken to ensure that growth and development does not cause groundwater contamination of both individual private wells and public water supplies, which could endanger the health and safety of present and future Westford residents. The proper siting of development, with particular regard to the quality and location of waste disposal systems will help ensure that the quality of Westford's groundwater remains high.

4.6.2 Sand and Gravel Deposits

Sand and gravel deposits are valuable natural resources because they provide material used for local road maintenance, sanding and for commercial construction uses. A surficial material map (not included in the Plan) prepared by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission shows that Westford has an abundance of sand and gravel deposits, some of which are between Pettingill Road and Route 128 corridor. The north-central section of the Town along Plains Road also has significant deposits and other significant quantities exist in the western half of Westford. A 1973 report by John Mullen concluded that almost 7% of the Town is underlain with sand and gravel.

Gravel pits shall be considered as conditional uses in the permit process. Conditions shall be attached which consider neighbors and natural resources, and a plan shall be agreed upon for the re-vegetation of the site.

4.6.3 Soils

The soils of Westford are typical of Vermont hill country. Glacial till covers most of the hills in town, separated only by the river corridor in approximate geographic middle of Town. The soils produced from the till are loamy in texture, often rocky and moderately well-drained to excessively well-drained. Except for the limey area west of Bowman Corners, these till soils tend to be acidic. The valleys, particularly those with elevations of 500 feet or less, have heavy soils derived from lake bottom sediments laid down by glacial Lake Champlain.

Soil characteristics are important considerations when undertaking any activity or construction. Before construction is contemplated, the Farm Service Agency soil surveys should be checked to determine the general soil types present and site specific conditions should be investigated.

4.6.4 Topography

Westford's ponds, hillsides, woodlands, streams, wetlands and scenic views are important elements of the quality of life for residents, other property owners, and visitors. Some of the topography is characterized by steep slopes which require special consideration with respect to planning and development. The nature of the soils on steep slopes in the Town is such that the land is exceptionally vulnerable to erosion and associated problems. Therefore, in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare of individual landowners, owners of abutting property, and to preserve the character of the natural resources and natural features that make Westford unique, this section is intended to guide the use of steeply sloping land within Town.

Development on or through areas with steep slopes poses a unique set of challenges:

- To avoid undue or adverse impact to streams, ponds and groundwater from the consequences of construction, erosion, storm-water runoff, of effluent from improperly sited or designed sewage disposal systems.
- To preserve the natural topography, drainage patterns, vegetative cover, scenic views and wildlife habitat.
- To protect property from damage caused by erosion and landslide damage.
- To protect unique natural areas.
- To provide reasonable access to properties for fire, public safety, or other emergency crews.

Westford's topography poses some development constraints with regard to the ability to construct buildings and associated infrastructure on steep slopes. On-site waste disposal systems require relatively flat or rolling areas to function properly. Slopes greater than 15% are generally unsuitable for waste disposal systems. In addition, many of the soils found in steep slopes are unsuitable for waste disposal. Refer to Map 3 (Natural Features) and Map 4 (Soil On-Site Septic Capability).

For these purposes, all areas within the Town with Steep Slopes with a grade 25% or greater shall not be developed for roads, driveways, structures, utilities, or wastewater disposal systems. Refer to Map 3 (Natural Features). Note that Map 3 (Natural Features) does not depict all Steep Slopes in Town and unmapped Steep Slopes are regulated under the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

The following Table 8, Soil Slope Summary, illustrates Westford's topography:

Table 8
Soil Slope Summary

% slope	Acres	% of Town area
0-5	3904	15.6
5-15	6897	27.5
15-25	9913	39.6
25+	4324	17.3
TOTAL	25,038	100.0

Source: CCRPC Geographic Information System

4.6.5 Surface Waters

Surface waters include any body of water that exists throughout the year on the land surface; these typically include rivers, streams, ponds and lakes. They are important as a source of drinking water for humans and wildlife, recreation, flood control, and for aesthetic value. The Browns River is the water feature that dominates Westford, traversing the Town from south to north. There are many smaller streams in Town, most of which empty into the Browns River or one of the many wetlands in Westford. There are several small ponds in Westford, but there is no official public access to any of these ponds. However there is public access to the Browns River near the Town Common for fire department use.

Potential threats to surface waters include: pollution from failed septic systems; siltation and erosion from construction, logging, sand and gravel operations, agricultural lands, gravel/dirt roads; and pollution from agricultural and residential run-off.

4.6.6 Visual Resources

While a detailed inventory of Westford's scenic resources has not been conducted it is obvious that there are many exceptional views. Spectacular views of Mt. Mansfield are visible on the east side of Woods Hollow Road. Along Rt. 128 there are views of the Browns River valley floor and the open spaces which characterize this area. Sweeping views of open spaces appear along the north side of the Cambridge Road. The beautiful scenery in Westford contributes to both the quality of life and the rural character that resident's value. Ridgelines in particular have been called out as key natural resources by the town in the 2009 community survey. Ridgelines require further definition by the town to determine what qualifies as a ridgeline. Ridgelines can be defined in a number of ways, including:

- Elevation changes relative to another location in town,
- Line of site references from a particular point or points, or
- Elevations greater than some threshold.

However it is defined, the town will propose Zoning Regulations that conserve ridgelines from most types of development in order to preserve Westford's rural character. Wind energy development should be taken into consideration when developing policy, taking into account that most wind energy projects need to be sited on higher elevations such as ridgelines. Whenever possible, development shall be sited in such a way as to preserve those views which are important to Westford residents. This can usually be easily accomplished if the Development Review Board and the landowner cooperate to devise an acceptable site plan.

4.6.7 Floodplains

Floodplains are those areas adjacent to rivers that are likely to experience flooding during heavy rainfall. Floodplains are a natural part of most water systems which shall not be developed due to the inherent risk to life and property. Floodplains are mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). On January 1, 2010, Westford was accepted into the Regular National Flood Insurance Program.

4.7 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Critical Natural Resources)

Conserve and provide stewardship of parcels which contain, or are part of, critical natural resources.

Implementation #1 - Engage land owners in an open dialog to discuss various methods of land management and conservation. Conservation options include *designated open space*, conservation easements, and a variety of other public and private mechanisms.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #2 - Westford's Conservation Fund should be cultivated so that it can play a more active role in conserving critical natural resources.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #3 - Advocate for conservation of land in Westford at the state and institution level (Vermont Land Trust) due to the crucial role Westford plays as a boundary town to more rural areas of Franklin and Lamoille Counties and more open space to the North and East.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –PC, DRB, CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #4 - The Westford Conservation Commission Stewardship Program should be cultivated to provide services and resource connections to land owners to support conserved land, town *designated open space* and sustainable land use practices.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 7

Implementation #5 – The Water Resource Overlay District will continue to protect water resources from development with an undisturbed buffer area of natural vegetation.

Timeline – n/a / **Responsible Party** –PC, CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 10

Implementation #6 – Gather data on significant and critical natural resources, prioritize/value the resources inventoried and create Zoning and Subdivision Regulations which sufficiently protect the resources.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –PC, CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Objective #2 (Natural Areas & Natural Features)

Conserve and provide stewardship for smaller natural areas and natural features.

Implementation #1 - Rural towns like Westford include many smaller parcels which can benefit from responsible forest management and wildlife practices by the land owner. Encourage and educate residents on good management practices on the small parcel level.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #2 – Identify and investigate with the intent of creating regulations which preserve significant scenic resources and vistas in Westford while allowing appropriate uses of renewable energy source development.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #3 – Identify ridgelines and limit ridgeline development to appropriate uses of renewable energy resources development.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –4

Implementation #4 - Investigate and pursue the creation of and public access to natural areas.

Timeline – 2013 / **Responsible Party** –CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 5 & 7

Implementation #5 - The Zoning and Subdivision Regulations shall severely limit the development on and re-contouring of steep slopes.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –4 &10

Implementation #6– Investigate with the intent of developing Zoning and Subdivision Regulations which create a forestry district with a minimum lot size requirement greater than currently allowed and/or additional planning standards.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6, 7 & 10

Objective #3 (“Green” Development)

Incursion of development into natural resources and natural features should take place under environmentally responsible and sustainable design and methods. Green practices shall be encouraged throughout the development cycle.

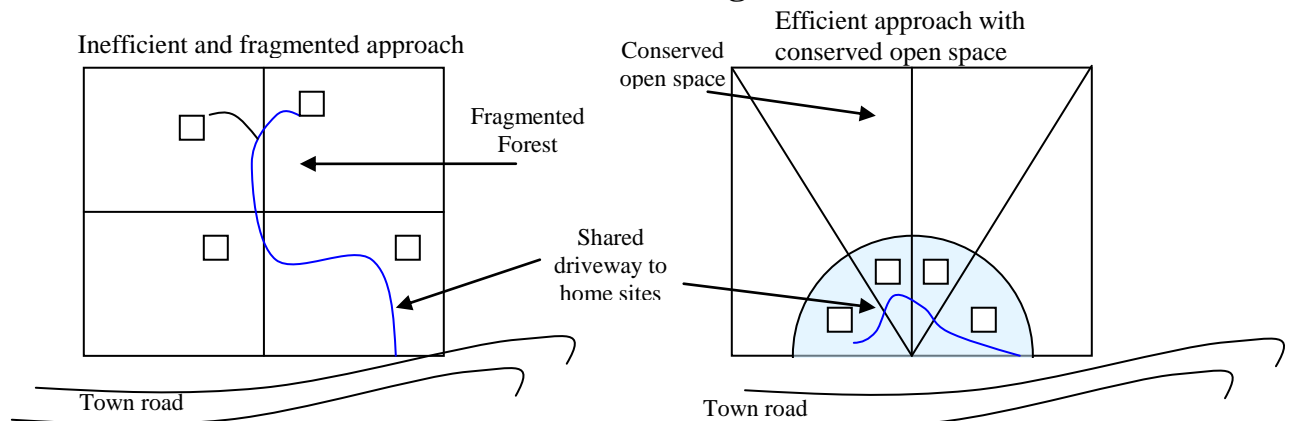
Implementation #1 –Development should be clustered to minimize the impact to natural resources. This clustering should occur both on individual parcels when subdividing and across multiple parcels such that development is proximate to other development rather than interspersed throughout critical natural resources.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2 & 4

Implementation #2 – Investigate with the intent of creating Zoning and Subdivision Regulations which minimize the infrastructure required to support each new parcel by clustering development near existing roads. See the example in Figure 5 below.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Figure 5
Subdivision Strategies



The figure on the left shows subdivision with home sites evenly dispersed throughout the original parcel.
The figure on the right illustrates an alternate subdivision strategy which maximizes use of existing town resources, clusters development in the circular area, and minimizes the impact to natural resources located throughout the original larger parcel area.

Implementation #3 – Develop Zoning and Subdivision Regulations for natural areas that result in a significant portion of each subdivided parcel remaining in a condition similar to what it was prior to parcelization.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #4 – Explore regulations to discourage development on prime agricultural soils by developing regulations that allow the DRB to guide developers to site residential development on the least productive portion of a productive agricultural parcel and to encourage smaller lots which meet overall density requirements while leaving the most productive soils available for agricultural use.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** – PC, CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3 & 4

Implementation #5 – Investigate and gather data on significant and critical resources to allow the Town to create conditional use standards for single lot development that has the potential to impact these resources.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Objective #4 (Conservation Commission)

The Westford Conservation Commission should partner with citizens to create a vibrant, sustainable environment where land uses, including agriculture, silviculture, recreation and development, coexist in harmony with natural resources.

Implementation #1 – Provide an advisory environmental review for development within critical natural resources at the request of the Planning Coordinator. The Conservation Commission will designate a representative to provide the review and participate in relevant meetings.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #2 – Cooperate with the Selectboard, Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Road Committee or other municipal or private organizations on matters affecting the local environment or the natural resources of Westford.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #3 – Prepare, collect, publish, advertise and distribute books, maps and other documents regarding environmental issues.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #4 – Maintain communication with environmental organizations both inside and outside of Vermont.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Implementation #5 – Educate residents on local natural resources and conservation needs.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4

Objective #5 (Public Trails)

Promote use, maintenance, and expansion of trails and public access to Westford’s natural resources.

Implementation #1 – Maintain Westford’s public trail system.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #2 – Pursue new trail development with land owners.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC, DRB & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #3– Pursue an interconnected network of public trails and greenways.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #4– Pursue ancient roads rights of way which could be used as town trails.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –ARC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 6

Implementation #5– Pursue active community involvement in trail related recreation and maintenance.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #6– Require prudent public trail management with respect to vehicle access, especially during wet seasons, while respecting land owner access rights.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

5 TRANSPORTATION

5.1 Policies

It is the policy of the Town to provide for and maintain safe roads for vehicular and non-vehicular transportation as is reasonably prudent, and to pursue energy and resource efficient transportation options for Westford residents.

1. The Town is committed to maintaining safe and adequate roadways for its residents.
2. Gravel roads should be maintained rather than paved unless paving a road is studied and (a) proven to be economically beneficial and (b) resultant traffic use does not unduly affect the adjoining properties with regard to safety and traffic volume and (c) fossil fuel use due to studied changes in traffic volume is a net reduction and (d) does not negatively impact pedestrian safety.
3. The Town shall ensure necessary road and driveway standards for emergency vehicle access to all residential housing and businesses.
4. The Town will strive to increase the safety of non-vehicular modes of transportation on town roads and trails.
5. The Town should do all that is within its power to seek upgrades and continued maintenance by the State for Routes 128 and 15.
6. The Town will strive to keep abreast of developments in regional transportation planning as well as seek local measures to increase transportation options for Westford residents.
7. The Town shall encourage modes and strategies of transportation that reduce fossil fuel consumption, if economically justified.

5.2 Inventory and Discussion

5.2.1 Roads

Westford is served primarily by a network of gravel secondary roads. The Town's most heavily traveled roads run north to south, following the overall topography of the Town. These are traversed by a network of east-west connections. Paved sections of road maintained by the Town include a short section at the northern end of Old Stage Road, a short section at the western end of Cambridge Road and the Milton-Westford Road. Numerous private roads adjoin town roads and serve individual housing developments. In addition, the Town holds rights-of-way to several roads which are not currently used by vehicles.

The most heavily traveled roads in Westford are State Routes 128 and 15. Route 128 runs north-south through the middle of Westford, and passes through the town center. Route 15 runs north-south through a small portion of the northeast corner of the town. Both highways are maintained entirely by the State of Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Several of Westford's roads act as major corridors for through travel to and from locations outside of town. State Route 128 is trucking corridor and a commuter corridor connecting towns north and south of Westford. State Route 15 is a trucking and commuter corridor used on the eastern section of

town. The Westford-Milton Road provides access to State Route 7 and State Route 128 and 104 to the north.

These corridors connect Westford residents as well as non-residents to major hubs in the State. While they offer many benefits such as efficient travel and commerce, they also contribute to higher traffic volume, more safety concerns, more noise and increased road wear and maintenance.

Westford does not have any Class 1 town highways. There are 12.48 miles of Class 2 town roads, 26.86 miles of Class 3 town roads and 1.71 miles of Class 4 town roads. There are 39.34 miles of town highway and 9.37 miles of State road (Route 128 & Route 15) in Westford for a total of 48.71 miles of traveled roads. There are also 4.16 miles of legal trails.

In Vermont, classes of roads are defined as follows:

Class 1 - Forms an extension of a State highway route and carries a State highway route number.

Class 2 - Serves as a connecting highway between towns or places with more than normal amounts of traffic. Cambridge Road and the Milton-Westford Road are examples of this town road class.

Class 3 - Highways other than Class 1 or 2, which are negotiable under normal conditions during all seasons by standard pleasure cars. Old #11, Plains Road and Manley Road are examples.

Class 4 - Highways other than Class 1, 2, or 3, which are typically not maintained for vehicular travel.

These highways frequently function as trails; however, they are distinct from legally designated Town trails. The Town owns the right of way over a number of legal trails in addition to the Town road/highway system. Many of these trails follow old Town roads, and thereby connect current roads across areas not currently used by vehicles.

5.2.2 Road Committee

In 1998, the Westford Selectboard appointed a road committee following the very rainy and long mud season in the spring of 1998. The focus and mission of that road committee was "... to identify existing road maintenance policies and procedures and to make recommendations to the Selectboard for improving the Westford road maintenance program . . ." (1999 Westford Road Plan, pg. 2).

In 2003, the Selectboard reformed a road committee to update the 1999 road plan for the next 5 years. The 2003 Road plan, currently in effect, is due for update.

The focus of the Road Committee is to;

- 1) Review and update the 1999 Road Plan, as necessary.
- 2) Identify highway problems and new construction projects to be completed during the next five years, with consideration given to transportation hazards and mitigation actions identified in the All Hazards Mitigation Plan;
- 3) Make recommendations for budget items to be considered by the Selectboard for inclusion in the town budget;
- 4) Make recommendations regarding road repair/maintenance standards as well as other general road related policies.

The Town will continue to support the creation and operation of a road committee. The issues include:

- 1) Road maintenance
- 2) Speed control;
- 3) Roadside ditching;
- 4) Paving;
- 5) Impact fees; and
- 6) Communication with the community.

5.2.3 Transportation Options

School transportation:

At present k-8 students have school bus service to and from the Westford School for daily attendance and specific school events such as field trips and athletic events. High School students do not have direct school bus options to or from the high school of their choosing. The most commonly attended high schools of Westford students are:

1. Bellows Free Academy, approximately 4.3 miles from town center
2. Essex High School, approximately 11.5 miles from town center
3. Mount Mansfield Union, approximately 15.7 miles from town center.
4. Burlington area High Schools (Rice Memorial, Burlington, South Burlington), approximately 20 miles

Students and their parents must provide their own transportation services which generally consists of daily trips for every student.

Commuter transportation

At present no formal park and ride facility exists in Westford, and no town supported carpooling exists. A parking lot on the south east corner of the town common is used frequently as an unofficial park and ride lot. However, no commuter busses stop within town.

The 2009 community survey indicated that a majority of respondents would support some carpooling and van pooling given the number of commuters who travel to and from downtown Burlington and IBM in Essex.

Currently, most State commuter lots are maintained and operated by the State Agency of Transportation. Potential sites suitable for a commuter lot in Westford should be investigated. As Westford's population and traffic volume increase, a park and ride facility should become increasingly attractive to Town residents.

Seniors Transportation

Seniors in Westford are generally long-time residents of Westford who choose to remain in their homes, close to their family members and friends that reside in and/or close to Westford. Services that are generally associated with health care (i.e., doctors, pharmacies) are not available in Town and thus residents must travel out of town to obtain such services. Seniors have few transportation options. No public transportation is available to allow seniors independent travel to or from service providers.

Public Transportation

Historically, the Chittenden County Transit Authority (CCTA) has concluded that bus services to and from Westford is not feasible. However, Efforts to develop innovative commuter service to add “on demand” services, ride share programs, and expand the overall service area in Essex and in the region in general, should be supported by Westford. Westford should remain in contact with the CCTA and consider participating in this growing regional organization if services to town residents can be provided at a reasonable cost.

5.3 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Existing Roadway Maintenance)

Maintain and upgrade the existing road network to the level necessary for operation in an economically sound way.

Implementation #1 - Appoint a Road Committee whose duties include developing and recommending multi-year road management plans, in which paving, maintenance, road reconstruction standards and development impacts are considered.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #2 - Fully evaluate the potential cost of any unusually large project (e.g., road base reconstruction, bridge repairs, paving, etc.), and seek appropriate State and Federal funds to help offset the impact to Westford taxpayers.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #3 - Pursue replacement of undersized and problem public culverts.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #4 - Add transportation capital improvements to the town's capital budget.

Timeline – Annually / **Responsible Party** – SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Objective #2 (Speed Enforcement)

Reduce speeding and increase pedestrian safety on state and town roadways.

Implementation #1 – Examine and, where feasible, implement a variety of speed control techniques to ensure the safety of Westford residents on Westford’s multi-use (e.g., vehicular, pedestrian, equestrian, biking) road network.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #2 - Continue and, where feasible, enhance the Town’s commitment to speed enforcement via whatever alternative is most effective.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #3 - Address pedestrian/recreational use to the extent possible, and consider related traffic calming measures to increase safety (enforcement, stop signs, road marking, etc.).

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Objective #3 (Paving)

Should the Town consider paving in the future the following statements should be considered to determine whether paving will result in a cost efficient level of maintenance for the Town. Future economic development impacts should be considered in cost analysis.

Implementation #1 - Carefully consider all future paving projects by soliciting community input early in the process, and by providing the community with more information on the pros and cons of paving.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #2 - Conduct long-term cost/benefit analyses.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #3 - Ensure that proper road base and drainage infrastructure is in place prior to paving.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Objective #4 (Growth & New Roadways)

Provide a safe transportation system which is appropriate to the Town's present and expected growth and which provides suitable access to all parts of the community and safe passage for vehicles and pedestrians alike.

Implementation #1 - Investigate and, if desirable, implement road impact fees to maintain an adequate level of service and ensure new development pays a fair share of costs associated with increased road use resulting from new development.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** – SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #2 - Update and enforce specific road construction standards, to ensure that new road construction will be adequate for emergency vehicle access and its intended use.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #3 - Develop, with the intent of adopting, Zoning and Subdivision Regulations for residential and commercial development to restrict the number of access permits allowed along the Route 128 corridor, Milton/Westford Road and the paved portion of Old Stage Road and develop more stringent requirements for screening, using berms and vegetation, to help preserve the rural character of these portions of Westford.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – HWY, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** - 5

Objective #5 (Alternative Transportation Options)

Encourage innovative transportation options such as greenways, an interconnected system of pedestrian paths and trails for walking, biking and recreation, the development of a park and ride facility (also known as a commuter lot) in Westford and the eventual provision of public transportation service via the Chittenden County Transportation Authority.

Implementation #1 - Investigate and pursue ways in which pedestrian access to the Town Common and surrounding buildings (especially the Town Office, Library, Market, Meeting House and Post Office) can be made safer and easier.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –TCC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 5, 7 & 10

Implementation #2 – Investigate ways to make roads safer for all forms of travel including horses, biking, walking and plan for creation of a multi-use transportation system.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #3 - Work with surrounding communities, the CCRPC and other related organizations to integrate Westford into regional greenways and trails system.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 6

Objective #6 (Reduction of Vehicular Use)

Reduce vehicular use in innovative ways.

Implementation #1 - Work with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to determine possible locations for a park and ride facility.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –MPO REP, HWY, RDC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #2 – Develop, with the intent of adopting, Zoning Regulations which encourage home businesses as a way to minimize commuting and its impact on the roads.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5 & 8

Implementation #3 - Investigate bussing/transportation for high school students.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –SCHB & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #4 – Investigate alternative and public transportation options such as ways to bring residents interested in carpooling together, promoting use of public trails and developing an Essex Park and Ride with express CCTA busing to large employment centers.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –RDC, MPO REP & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 5, 6 & 7

Implementation #5 - Investigate increased use of pre-existing lots in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Objective #7 (Regional Transportation)

The Town shall actively work with the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to coordinate on local projects as well as projects that may affect the use of Westford's roads as a corridor of travel.

Implementation #1 – The Town shall keep communications with the above mentioned groups open to ensure Westford is kept informed on transportation issues which could affect Westford.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY, RPC REP, MPO REP & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

Implementation #2 - The Town will work with the above groups to upgrade Vermont Route 128, especially in the area just south of the ledges, to ensure a safe roadway.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY, MPO REP & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5

6 GREEN WAYS AND TRAILS

6.1 Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Westford to sustain the existing public trail system and promote its expansion for use by the public for recreational purposes and as an alternative to more common transportation options.

6.2 Discussion

The popularity of greenways and recreational trails is growing in Vermont. These are corridors on which motorized travel is restricted and recreational uses, such as walking, skiing, horseback riding, running and bicycling are encouraged. The most important issue would be to provide a measure of safety and security for the traffic that would use these lanes, particularly for children riding bicycles or walking.

Recreational trails are often located along river corridors, on Class 4 roads, Town trails, private trails, and abandoned logging and farm roads. In cases where private property is involved, recreation or conservation easements must be arranged with the owners.

Westford currently has several public trails in town as indicated in Map 7 (Community Facilities, Utilities & Conserved Lands). Previous county-level greenways plans suggested that a conservation greenway run along the entire length of the Browns River and connect with Essex to the south. An initial project along these lines would be to establish a greenway or recreation path extending from the elementary school to the Town Center area, along the Browns River. Recent interest in “ancient roads” has raised the possibility of rediscovering old roads and possibly converting them to trails. Furthermore, the Conservation Commission is developing a potential trail system map depicting future trail connections. Town boards should work with land owners with the goal of creating a town-wide public trail system.

Communities in which greenways have been implemented (e.g., Burlington & Stowe Bike Paths) have had positive experiences and find that these community amenities attract local residents and visitors alike. After initial skepticism, adjacent property owners report that greenways are a pleasant amenity and a desirable selling point when their homes are being sold.

6.3 Objectives & Implementation:

Objective #1 (Public Trails, Greenways & Natural Areas)

Foster the development of public trails, greenways and access to natural areas.

Implementation #1 – Sustain Westford’s public trail system.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #2 – Pursue new trail development with land owners.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC, DRB & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #3– Pursue an interconnected network of public trails and greenways.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 5, 6 & 7

Implementation #4– Pursue ancient roads rights of way which could be used as town trails.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –ARC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 6

Implementation #5 - Pursue active community involvement in trail related recreation and maintenance.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #6 - Require prudent public trail management with respect to vehicle access, especially during wet seasons, while respecting land owner access rights.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #7 - Investigate and pursue the creation of and public access to natural areas.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, , & 7

Implementation #8 - Investigate with the intent of creating PUD density bonuses in conjunction with the donation of public space.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 7

Implementation #9 - Update the proposed public trail plan.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 &7

Implementation #10– Investigate with the intent of developing Zoning and Subdivision Regulations which create a forestry district with a minimum lot size requirement greater than currently allowed and/or additional planning standards on lands in the area of town trails.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 10

Implementation #11 - Work with surrounding communities, the CCRPC and other related organizations to integrate Westford into regional greenways and trails system.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 6

Implementation #12 – Investigate whether to require trail easements as a condition of subdivision, where appropriate.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 6

7 FACILITIES, UTILITIES AND SERVICES

7.1 Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Westford, in the interest of stabilizing the tax rate; ensuring the most efficient use of tax revenue, staff time and energy; to plan for community facilities, services and capital expenses. The Town will strive to provide adequate services to all Town residents and to direct future growth to ensure that services to existing residents are not compromised or their quality reduced. New growth should pay its proportionate share of the cost of providing Town services and facilities.

7.2 Inventory and Discussion

7.2.1 Cemeteries

There are 7 cemeteries in Westford: Cook Yard, Richardson, Osgood Hill, Plains, Cloverdale, Brookside and Pleasant View. See Map 7 (Community Facilities, Utilities, Conserved Land) for locations. Two of these, Brookside and Pleasant View, currently have their own associations to manage their care and upkeep. At some point, upkeep of these cemeteries may be Town managed. The other five cemeteries are under the management of the Westford Cemetery Commissioners. Under Vermont State Law, towns are responsible for cemetery upkeep.

Cook Yard, near the intersection of Cambridge Road and Covey Road, is a very small lot overgrown with brush and trees and has only three markers visible. A future project of the Historical Society and Cemetery Commission is to clear the brush and overgrowth. No additional use is contemplated.

Richardson Cemetery, located on Covey Road near the intersection of Birch Hill (Old Number 11), contains 20 graves. Burials date from 1805 to 1881. Thanks to the Friends of Richardson Cemetery, the cemetery has been restored and continues to be maintained. All plots have been sold and no additional use is contemplated.

Osgood Hill Cemetery has 195 graves and very limited space for future burials, although the cemetery is still in use and is in good physical condition.

Cloverdale Cemetery is located in the eastern part of Westford between Underhill and Cambridge on Route 15. Approximately 220 graves dating from 1805 to the present can still be found. There is limited space for future burials; however, there is no parking available, making use of this cemetery dangerous.

Plains Cemetery is located on Plains Road and contains 250 graves, from 1815 to the present. There is a small area remaining for future burials.

Brookside Cemetery, located on Maple Tree Lane, is one of the oldest and largest cemeteries in Westford, with burials dating from 1800 to the present. There are approximately 675 graves and a large area exists for future burials.

Pleasant View Cemetery is located on Route 128, north of Westford Village. This is also a spacious cemetery with about 460 graves and approximately 200 plots available for future burials.

7.2.2 Fire Department

The Westford Volunteer Fire Department was founded in 1982 and is an all-volunteer force with 23 members and is housed in a portion of the Town garage building. The department maintains a fleet of vehicles and a variety of highly specialized firefighting equipment. The department maintains formal arrangements with other local fire departments to provide mutual aid as necessary. The Westford Fire Department is a duly constituted non-profit corporation which provides services to the Town on an annual fee- for-service basis. The fire department is supported by the Selectboard's budget and by private fundraisers and donations.

Increased growth in Westford has necessitated fire department coordination with the Planning Commission to ensure adequate water supplies and road widths in new developments, to allow passage of heavy equipment, and adequate access to dwellings and structures for the easy provision of emergency services.

7.2.3 Library

The Westford Public Library was established in 1895 and currently occupies the original Town Hall built in 1844. It has been at its present location since 1974. The building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The library staff, trustees, and volunteers have worked to adapt the building for library activities. In 1995, the building was brought into Americans for Disability (ADA) code with an entrance ramp and an accessible bathroom with hot water. During 2002-2005 the slate roof, furnace, carpeting, electrical wiring and fixtures, shelving and furniture have been replaced. In 2008, the Trustees began to insulate and re-side the building. The front of the building is complete and the remainder will be renovated as monies become available.

The Library provides access to materials, reference services, and programs to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the Westford community. The Library serves as a common area for the community to meet and discuss issues, providing information and resources for personal growth and development opportunities, and promotes cultural awareness and understanding.

The Librarian and the Board of Trustees continue to work on providing for the evolving needs of the community. The current long-range plan will guide the operations of the Library through 2012. During that time the Library will continue to improve services and access to electronic information, and electronically automate the collection. The Librarian will continue to build the collection to provide for general information and lifelong learning opportunities for community members of all ages.

Currently, access to the library suffers due to inadequate parking and more importantly a lack of pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalk, etc.). These issues create safety hazards for patrons, especially in the winter and mud season. The Town Center Committee has been working with the Board of Trustees, Librarian, Selectboard and Town Staff to address these problems and will continue to do so. The Committee will continue to seek funding to construct a small parking lot on the west side of the library building.

7.2.4 Police Services

Police service in Westford is provided by the Vermont State Police, who serve Westford as part of a tri-town "outpost" which also includes Jericho and Underhill, and the Chittenden County Sheriffs Department, which serves the town in the spring, summer and fall.

In 2008, the voters granted the Selectboard the ability to appoint, rather than elect, a Town Constable, whose duties would be restricted to limited forms of local law enforcement. This position is currently vacant.

7.2.5 Post Office

The Westford Post Office was moved from the Town Center area to a location north on Route 128 in 1988. The location of the Post Office outside of the Town Center area has detracted from the sense of community that was once felt when the Post Office was located around the Common, and residents could walk from there to the library, Town Clerk's Offices or Westford Market. People do walk to the Post Office along the narrow and dangerous section of Route 128 connecting it and the Common. Although the Post Office adequately meets the postal needs of Westford's residents, the Town would be better served if it were relocated back to the Common. In the mean time, better pedestrian links from the Town Center area are needed.

7.2.6 Town Common

The Town Common has long been a focal point for the Westford community since the early 1800's. Early in its history, the Common was crisscrossed by roads and paths connecting a variety of businesses and residences. For some time it served the community as a large, contiguous green space. Unfortunately, poor drainage hampered how it could be used and made tree planting difficult. All of this changed in the mid 1990's thanks to generous donations by Henrik Kruse. Thanks to Mr. Kruse's donations and efforts, extensive drainage was installed in 1994, and a permanent post and beam pavilion was constructed in the center of the Common in 1995. These efforts resulted in a completely revitalized Common with tree, shrub, and flower plantings, benches, a small play structure, and a level area used for an outdoor skating rink in the winter.

The Common is the hub of the Town Center area. It is surrounded by multiple residential, commercial, and municipal uses, including: Town Office, Town Library, Brick Meeting House, Westford Market, and the United Church of Westford. It is used for a wide variety of community events and activities including: outdoor skating, seasonal farmer's market, July 4th celebration, summer concerts and ice cream socials, recreation department activities and programs, outdoor summer library programs, general recreation space for all ages. Public amenities and public facilities should be located in the Town Common District.

7.2.7 Recreation

Recreational opportunities abound in Westford, especially outdoor activities that take advantage of Westford's abundant natural resources. Snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, and road walking/running are popular activities in town. The network of Town roads (particularly dirt roads) and trails contribute greatly to these recreational activities, and as such serve the community for far more than just transportation. The Westford School is also the location of an extensive trail network currently maintained by the Conservation Commission in cooperation with School staff. Organized recreational activities are also available, and help contribute to Westford's positive sense of community. The Selectboard created a volunteer Recreation Committee in 1997, and appointed a part-time Recreation Coordinator to help the Committee facilitate organized recreational activities, and better utilize both Town and school facilities. Together, the Recreation Committee and Coordinator help provide numerous activities for kids and adults alike in every season. Adult activities include yoga, volleyball, as well as the annual broomball tournament on the Town ice rink and co-sponsorship with the Town Library of the summer concert series on the Town Common. Regular sports programs for kids include: fall soccer, winter

basketball, after-school cross-country skiing, spring lacrosse and t-ball, summer soccer & lacrosse. Additional enrichment programs for children change over time and frequently include arts programs, tennis, gymnastics, and summer camps. School sponsored sports programs generally are focused on children in the 7th grade or higher, which makes the Town-sponsored recreation programs all the more important for families of younger children. These organized recreation programs offer children and adults a way to be active in their own lives and in the community, and help build lasting connections with other residents throughout Westford.

Most organized recreation activities happen either at the Westford School or on/around the Town Common. The Town Common underwent extensive work to drain and landscape the land to provide a usable area for a variety of recreation uses for Westford residents, including the summer concert series, the winter broomball tournament mentioned above, and many other events. Indoor events around the Town Common are typically held in the Brick Meeting House (a community space owned by the United Church of Westford and leased to the Brick Meeting House Society for community use) thanks to cooperation between the Recreation Committee and the Brick Meeting House Society. The Westford School is the location of the Town's recreational fields. There are two soccer/lacrosse fields, a baseball field, a softball field, and a tennis court with basketball hoops. The school property also includes 2 playground areas with swings and structures suitable children of all ages. The aforementioned trail system located at the school is well marked and is used by the community throughout the year. The Recreation Committee supported the purchase of grooming equipment, and thanks to volunteer efforts, the school trails are groomed for cross-country skiing in the winter months.

Currently, no Town taxes are spent on recreation in Westford outside of maintaining the lawn on the Common and the upkeep of the recreational fields. The Recreation Department is funded through program fees and fundraising.

7.2.8 Emergency Response Services

Call 911 for EMS, fire and police assistance

Westford has no local EMS service. In order to provide our residents with the fastest possible EMS response, the Town of Westford has contracted with two primary EMS service providers: Fairfax Rescue and Essex Rescue. Fairfax Rescue is the primary responding ambulance service in the northern half of Westford and Essex Rescue provides primary response in the southern half of town. The town is divided as follows for EMS E911 purposes:

Town of Westford (North End - Including Route 15 Corridor)

From the intersection of Old Stage Rd and Rogers Rd North (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Woods Hollow Rd & Orchard Lane North (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Brookside Rd & Chase Ln North (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Route 128 & Maple Ridge Ln North (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Osgood Hill Rd & Stony Ridge North (And Associated Roads), and Route 15 Corridor of Westford shall be the following response:

Primary Ambulance:
Fairfax

Backup Ambulance:
Essex

Town of Westford (South End)

From the intersection of Old Stage Rd and Rogers Rd South (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Woods Hollow Rd & Orchard Lane South (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Brookside Rd & Chase Ln South (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Route 128 & Maple Ridge Ln South (And Associated Roads), Intersection of Osgood Hill Rd & Stony Ridge South (And Associated Roads) shall be the following response:

*Primary Ambulance:
Essex*

*Backup Ambulance:
Fairfax*

Vermont EMS rules mandate transport to the nearest hospital and in the majority of cases in Westford that will be to Burlington. If a patient makes a specific request to go to a certain hospital, the transporting EMS service is required to make the request on the patient's behalf but the final decision is made by the EMS service's hospital medical director. Essex Rescue's medical direction is affiliated with FAHC in Burlington. Fairfax Rescue's medical direction is affiliated with the Northwestern Medical Center in St. Albans.

There are two fire departments providing primary emergency response through Westford's E911 system. The Westford Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) is the primary service provider for fire/rescue response throughout Westford, with the exception of the Route 15 corridor section of town and associated side roads. The Underhill Jericho Fire Department (UJFD) is the primary service provider for fire/rescue response in Westford's Route 15 corridor area. Two primary fire/rescue service providers have been established in order to deliver the fastest possible emergency service response time. The WVFD has to travel a long distance along Route 104 through Fairfax and Cambridge to reach the Route 15 corridor of town. The UJFD station is logistically much closer to this area of town and can therefore respond to 911 calls much more quickly there.

The Town of Westford contracts with two service providers for police services: the Vermont State Police (VSP) and the Chittenden County Sheriff. VSP provides primary E911 police response for the town of Westford.

7.2.9 Emergency Planning & Preparedness

The Town has appointed an Emergency Management Director. Furthermore, the Town has adopted a resolution designating the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the basis for incident management. NIMS compliance standardizes the Town's incident management with state and national procedures; it also makes the Town eligible for certain state and federal disaster mitigation grant funds. The Town has started preparing an Emergency Operations Plan, which is NIMS requirement. NIMS training is available through the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. The Westford School has been designated as the Town's public shelter. The school has an identified capacity of 400 persons. The school currently does not have an emergency generator that would provide power to support emergency shelter services. In the event of an emergency requiring sheltering of residents, the Town would request American Red Cross to open and staff the shelter.

7.2.10 Road Department

Westford Town roads are maintained by a road crew consisting of three full-time employees and supervised by the Selectboard. They are responsible for maintaining all town roads using equipment located at the town garage on Cambridge Road.

The Selectboard appoints a Town Road Committee whose duty is to develop, and amend as necessary, the 5-Year Town Road Plan. The Town Road Plan guides future maintenance, upgrades and replacement of priority Town roads, bridges and culverts.

7.2.11 Schools

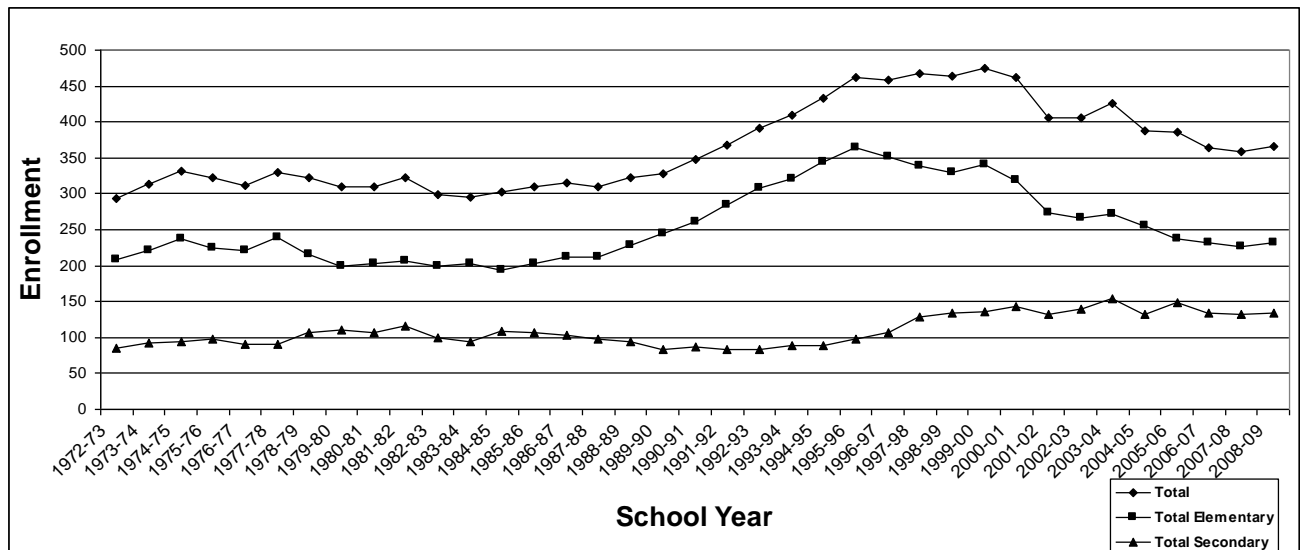
An elected board of five Westford citizens governs the Westford school system. It is part of the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union, which is headquartered in Essex Junction. A thorough report of the school department and the District's activities and finances is produced each year and presented to the Town School District prior to and during the annual Town School District meeting.

The Westford elementary school provides education to students from pre-school through the eighth grade and is staffed by 18 full-time teachers, 6 part-time teachers and a principal. They are backed by 15 support personnel, a combination of full and part-time.

The elementary school is housed within a single building located on 78 acres of land on Brookside Road. Refer to Map 7 (Community Facilities, Utilities & Conserved Lands). The building was originally built in 1968 and enlarged in 1973, 1986 and 1993. Both students and non-students heavily utilize the athletic facilities that surround the school. Facilities are available for tennis, basketball, football/soccer and baseball. The school grounds house one of Westford's well maintained playgrounds. The equipment is used by pre-school and school aged children, both during and outside of regular school hours. Pre-school children also use the Town Common during school hours.

Westford has no high school. By state law, the Town pays tuition for students to attend the public high school of their choice. Figure 6 shows enrollment trends from 1972 to 2009.

Figure 6
Westford School Enrollment – 1972/73 – 2008/09



Source: Town Reports

The school system also owns 20 acres of undeveloped land near the southwest corner of Old Stage Road and the Milton-Westford Road.

The Town makes an extraordinary effort each year to meet the needs of Westford children by funding the town's education costs. For school year 2008-09, the town approved a school budget of \$5,116,203 for 375.59 equalized pupils. That was a spending level of \$11,279 per pupil. Westford's education spending per pupil was nearly 3% below the average for the State of Vermont that year.

In the near term future, the projection is that the number of young children in the state will be decreasing. The most recent population estimate for the State of Vermont (for the years 2005 to 2008) shows that the number of young children has decreased in the state. In the last three years the number of children aged 5 to 13 decreased by 3.6%. We believe a similar trend has occurred in Westford as evidenced by the dramatic decline in enrollment in the Town's elementary school, which fell from 364 in 1995 to 232 in 2008-09.

7.2.12 Child Care

The Town of Westford considers all of its citizens to be equally important components of the overall community and its future. This includes our children, working individuals, homemakers, retirees, and the elderly. As of the 2000 Census, Westford had 155 children under the age of 6, approximately 65% (100) of which had all parents in the labor force. Similarly, Westford had 248 children between the ages of 6-12, approximately 65-81% (161-200) of which had all parents in the labor force. As of May of 2009, data from the Child Care Resource of Chittenden County indicated that Westford has 3 family or home-based child care programs with a total of 26 slots. Of these 26 slots, 2 are for infants, 8 are for preschoolers, and 16 are for school-aged children. A total of 12 families are using home-based child care in Westford, 92% (11) of which are Westford families. Currently 17 of the 18 children enrolled in home-based care are from Westford. There are no center-based care operations, and there is no school-based after-school program aside from sports and other traditional extra-curricular activities.

Due to a decrease in the youth population in Westford, and Vermont as a whole, the number of children needing day care will decrease dramatically. However, the Town has proactively taken steps to allow the provision of day care. The Westford Zoning Regulations allow "nursery school or day care centers" in the Town Common District as a permitted use. Since the Town Center area is the growth center of the Town all uses except telecommunication towers permitted in the Town Common District. "Nursery school and day care centers" are a conditional use in all districts of the town, except the Town Common, Water Resources Overlay and Flood Hazard Overlay Districts. We believe this is a sufficiently liberal policy of the town to allow for the adequate supply of child care facilities to develop as needed in the Town. We also believe that in some districts it is reasonable and necessary to require conditional use approval; to protect those districts from the potential adverse impacts of such centers (such as traffic, parking, etc.). Refer to Map 7 (Community Facilities, Utilities & Conserved Lands).

7.2.13 Solid Waste Disposal

Westford is a member of the Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD). CSWD is the regional authority responsible for the oversight and regulation of solid waste generated by its members pursuant to the District's Charter which was enacted by the Vermont legislature on March 3, 1987. Its authority and responsibilities are described in the District's current Solid Waste Management Plan. CSWD's solid waste management system is based on the following hierarchical priorities: 1) reduction of the toxicity of the waste stream, 2) reduction of the volume of the waste stream, 3) reuse, 4) recycling and composting, and 5) disposal. Membership in CSWD satisfies the municipal solid waste planning requirements of 24 V.S.A., 2202a.

Under contract with a private hauler to provide curb side pickup, Westford residents' trash is disposed of at an approved facility according to the ordinances and regulations of CSWD. Household trash is collected weekly, and recyclables are picked up bimonthly. Household hazardous waste can be delivered to a permanent hazardous waste facility in South Burlington or at the “Rover”, a mobile collection facility, which sets up in each of the district’s member municipalities at least once a year from April to October. Items such as batteries, cell phones, fluorescent light tubes, motor oil and filters, small propane tanks and scrap metal are accepted at most of the Drop off centers (DOCs) located throughout the county.

7.2.14 Wastewater Disposal

In 2007 and 2008, the Town conducted a study of wastewater in the Town Center Area. The first step of this study analyzed existing septic systems in the Town Center. This included a survey to area residents, research into existing permits, as well as GIS analysis of the area. The study found that many properties, particularly those directly around the Town Common, had significant limitations to new or expanded septic systems. A search of permit files found that, despite these limitations, some property owners had been able to legally construct septic systems. The study did not analyze whether new technologies such as pretreatment systems could be used in these areas, since such an analysis would require onsite investigation and was beyond the scope of the study. This is important since many of the properties directly around the common are limited by high water tables and area restrictions, and in some cases, pretreatment technologies can address both. Even so, the study confirmed that there are significant constraints to expanding wastewater capacity, particularly on properties in the New Town Common and Village Districts.

The study identified several areas that could support a community system serving the Town Center, or conversely, a large private development. Most of these areas were located on the periphery of the Town Center. The study estimated that the costs of developing a community system on these sites would be prohibitive without extensive aid from an outside source.

The study also noted that there are several properties located closer to the Common that could potentially support small shared systems. If septic systems were built on these systems could help existing residents replace failed systems, or allow a limited amount of new development. Similarly, some of the limitations identified in the first phase of the study could be addressed by facilitating easements to allow expansion of existing systems.

One finding of the study that is especially important to planning purposes is that many commercial and institutional uses require significantly less septic capacity than a single family home. For example, an office or store with 9 employees requires a third of the wastewater capacity required to serve a 3-bedroom single-family home. This finding supports the Town Plan’s vision of a vibrant Town Center with a mix of homes, civic institutions, and small, community-based businesses.

7.2.15 Town Government

The Town is governed by a three member Selectboard, elected for 3 years terms. Other positions include Library Trustees (5), elected for 5 year terms; Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Listers (3), Auditors (3), Cemetery Commissioners (3), all elected for 3-year terms; and 5 School Board Members, elected 2 and 3-year mixed terms. Officials elected yearly include the Town Agent, Tax Collector, Grand Juror, and the Moderator. Justices of the Peace (7) are elected for 2-year terms. Appointed positions include the following: Assistant Town Clerk, Town Planning Coordinator, Road Foreman, Road Crew, Dog Warden, Inspector of Wood and Lumber, Fence Viewers (3), Town Service Officer, Land Agent, Chemical Coordinator, Zoning Administrator, Fire Chief, Emergency

Program Manager, Energy Committee (9), Planning Commissioners (5), Development Review Board Members (7), Conservation Commissioners (9), Town Common Committee Members (3), Town Center Committee Members (4), Recreation Committee Members (5), Recreation Department Coordinator and Librarian.

The Health Officer and Fire Warden are appointed by the State of Vermont upon Selectboard recommendation.

The Town offices are located in the Town Center, opposite the Common.

The primary challenge facing Town government, with regard to its continued efficient operation, is the increased difficulty in finding qualified volunteers to carry out various duties. Furthermore, training of Town employees is important to ensure that their skill levels are consistent with accepted standards.

The Town Clerk's Office in Westford has become responsible for informing residents of local news through the Westford Newsletter and Town website. The Newsletter and website provide residents with news about recycling, planning and zoning, students, school and Town events, and local government issues. The Newsletter is published monthly, and mailed to all Westford households with a registered voter. The website is updated on a regular basis.

7.2.16 Town & School Owned Property

There are a total of 10 parcels owned by the Town, totaling approximately 127.3 acres (shown on Map 7, Community Facilities, Utilities, Conserved Land). The Town also owns 5 major structures, including: Town Office, Library, Town Common Pavilion, Covered Bridge, Town Garage. The school owns 1 parcel exclusively and 1 parcel jointly with the Town, both parcels totaling approximately 97.1 acres. Table 9 provides details on these parcels. All of these buildings and real estate, in addition to the Town right of ways, constitute very real community assets and represent a significant investment. Some parcels are less important than others, but all deserve some level of planning so as to be of good use or value to the community. None of the existing Town lands are developed specifically for recreational use by Westford residents.

**Table 9
Town & School Property**

Ownership	Description	Parcel #	Acreage
Town	Garage	06CM004	14
Town	Office/Library/ Common	05VL001	3.5
Town	Knights Pythias/Old Garage Site	05TW050	1.3
Town	Fiege Lot (Milton-Westford Rd)	01MW005	31.9
Town	Martel Lot (Milton-Westford Rd)	01ME003	14.9
Town	Martel Lot (landlocked)	05HD010	40
Town	Cloverdale Lot	07FT030	0.34
Town	Old Dump Site (Huntley Rd)	02HU037	1
Town	Jackson Lot (Brookside Rd)	05BS009	20.3
Town	Berthiaume Lot (Route 15)	07DF005	0.06
School	School Site	05BS009	77.6
School & Town	Milton-Westford Rd	01OC002	19.5

Source: 2009 Draft Capital Budget

7.3 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Infrastructure Use & Expansion)

Expand Westford's role in providing infrastructure so that higher density development can occur in the Town Center area.

Implementation #1 – Continue working toward development of a community wastewater disposal system.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #2 - Educate Westford residents on proper maintenance of septic systems and recent changes to state statutes regulating sewage disposal.

Timeline – Annually / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR / **Applicable Sections** – 7 &10

Implementation #3 - Ensure Zoning and Subdivision Regulations allow residents of the Town Center area to sufficiently use existing wastewater capacity such as by allowing mixed use development.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #4 - Investigate strategies to allow/encourage property owners to develop shared systems to expand wastewater capacity.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #5 - Investigate and pursue ways in which pedestrian access to the Town Common and surrounding buildings (especially the Town Library and Post Office) can be made safer and easier.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – HWY, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5 & 7

Implementation #6 - Make further aesthetic, safety, parking and traffic-calming improvements to the Town Center area, if economically feasible.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – HWY, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5 & 7

Implementation #7 - Investigate with the intent of creating PUD density bonuses in lieu of granting public spaces and/ or infrastructure to the Town.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –6 & 7

Objective #2 (Community Life)

Utilize the Town Common as the focal point of community life in Westford.

Implementation #1 - Continue pursuing ways to bring community events to the Town Center area. Support efforts of Town officials and community organizations to develop and enhance use of the Common and its associated public and private (e.g., Red Brick Meeting House, United Church) community facilities.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – TCOMM, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #2 - Investigate ways to encourage small scale commercial development in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #3 - Investigate increased use of pre-existing lots in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #4 – Locate all public amenities and facilities, such as the Town Office, Public Library, Post Office, Meeting House, in the Town Common District

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** 7 & 10

Objective #3 (Public/Private Open Spaces)

Encourage the conservation, and possible Town purchase, of land so that parks and recreation areas can be created in the future.

Implementation #1 - Maintain an inventory of *designated open space* (see Section 4 for definition) and encourage the stewardship and proper use of said lands.

Timeline – Annually / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR & CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 7

Implementation #2 - Investigate and pursue the creation of a public trail system.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8

Implementation #4 - Investigate and pursue the creation of and public access to natural areas.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 7

Implementation #5 - The Westford Conservation Commission Stewardship Program should be cultivated to provide services and resource connections to land owners to support conserved land, town *designated open space* (see Section 4 for definition) and sustainable land use practices.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 7

Objective #4 (Town Owned Lands)

Manage town owned lands to ensure they benefit Westford citizens.

Implementation #1 - Evaluate all Town-owned land for present and possible future uses.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –PC, EC, CC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 4, 7 & 8

Implementation #2 - Develop a natural resource management plan for Town-owned properties, some of the goals of which would be to identify desirable parcels to be developed for recreation purposes and identify significant natural resources, and identify economic and renewable energy resources.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 7

Implementation #3 - Identify Town owned properties, or portions thereof, that do not have high value natural resources for local affordable housing, renewable energy resource potential, and economic development potential.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** – EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 7 & 8

Implementation #4 - Actively manage Town-owned properties, where appropriate.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC, CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –7

Objective #5 (Roadways)

Improve the quality of Town roadways.

Implementation #1 - Appoint an active Town Road Committee to update the 2003 Town Road Plan.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #2 - Investigate cost effective road maintenance and repair options and prioritize problem areas.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #3 - Investigate alternative/public transportation options for residents.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #4 - Investigate and, if desirable, implement road impact fees to maintain an adequate level of service and ensure new development pays a fair share of costs associated with road use resulting from new development.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Objective #6 (Law Enforcement)

Strive to make Westford a safer place to live and work.

Implementation #1 - Address residents’ police protection and speed enforcement concerns by investigating a variety of methods and techniques to prevent crime and speeding throughout Town.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – SB / **Applicable Sections** –7

Objective #7 (Schools)

Provide high quality education for our children, strive to ensure that Westford's schools meet or exceed state standards for educational facilities, and encourage use of the school property for the benefit and enjoyment of the community.

Implementation #1 - Investigate alternative/public transportation options for high school students.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –SCHB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

Implementation #2 – The Schoolboard and Town Selectboard will work together to utilize and encourage use of the school property for the benefit and enjoyment of the community.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –SCHB & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 7

Objective #8 (Child Care)

Provide high quality child care for our children.

Implementation #1 – Investigate the provision of continuing to provide quality after-school programs.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –REC, LIB & SCHB / **Applicable Sections** –7

Objective #9 (Waste Reduction)

Reduce Westford waste production.

Implementation #1 - Support waste reduction and recycling efforts and provide residents with educational materials on waste reduction methods.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 7 & 8

Objective #10 (Maintenance)

The Town will maintain the cemeteries located in Westford.

Implementation #1 - Restore the Cook Cemetery, when economically feasible, and maintain all Town-owned cemeteries at an acceptable level.

Timeline – 2013 / **Responsible Party** –CEM & SB / **Applicable Sections** –7

Implementation #2 – Explore the potential for the Town to assume cemetery management and maintenance responsibilities.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CEM & SB / **Applicable Sections** –7

Objective #11 (Preparedness)

The Town will continual strive to keep the community safe, informed and prepared for potential disaster.

Implementation #1 - Update and annually review the Town Fire Ordinance to ensure public safety.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –FWARD & SB / **Applicable Sections** –7

Implementation #2 - Adopt an Emergency Operations Plan, consistent with National Incident Management System, to ensure Town preparedness in cases of disaster. Annually update the Emergency Operations Plan contact list. Provide key emergency operations with National Incident Management System training. Continue ongoing coordination of Town and school emergency plans.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –EMERC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 7

Implementation #3 - Investigate the availability of grant funds to purchase a generator for the school, which serves as the Town’s emergency disaster center.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –SCHB & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 7

Implementation #4 – Investigate and, if desirable, implement fire impact fees to maintain an adequate level of service and ensure new development pays a fair share of costs associated with increased fire response services resulting from new development.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –FD & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 7

Implementation #5 - Adopt a Capital Budget and Program and update the Capital Budget and Program on an annual basis to ensure the responsible use of tax funds through fiscal planning and use of the most up-to-date information available.

Timeline – 2010 & Update Annually / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5 & 7

8 ENERGY

8.1 Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Westford encourage the use of alternative energy resources; reduce dependency on fossil fuels; increase energy efficiency and conservation; and reduce municipal energy costs through energy efficiency, conservation and a full evaluation purchasing practices.

8.2 Purpose

Westford's energy use follows the conventional patterns of energy use. Most energy sources are fossil fuel based for heating and transportation, except for the use of wood for supplemental heat. Electricity is provided through the state-wide electric utility grid with a current majority of the power supplied by either imported energy from Hydro-Quebec or an in-state nuclear station, Vermont Yankee in Vernon, Vermont. Vermont Yankee is not owned by a Vermont based company but does employ many Vermonters. However, the future mix of power sources are uncertain as contracts for both sources are up for renewal within the next 1 to 3 years and Vermont Yankee's state license is up for renewal in 2012 and it is uncertain if the plant will become relicensed to run an additional 20 years beyond its intended 40 year life expectancy. Additionally, there is currently no long-term option for disposal of nuclear waste anywhere in the United States or adequate funding for long-term storage and clean up of the site.

Fossil fuel based energy use is costly from an economic and environmental perspective, as well as impeding state energy independence. Fossil fuels are purchased from out of state sources, and fossil fuel prices have become extremely volatile putting a financial burden on the citizens of the town for their heating and commuting requirements.

The environmental impact of fossil fuel use has been well documented, and includes carbon emissions that contribute to global warming and other pollutants such as particulates. Drilling, mining, and importing of fossil fuels into our region also have substantial environmental impacts.

State energy independence is compromised due to the fact that all fossil fuel energy is imported from out of state and alternative fuel sources (non-fossil fuel) are currently not readily available in the open market.

Electric supply

As stated above, the electric supply is largely from Hydro Quebec and Vermont Yankee. Retail electric prices have steadily increased but Vermont currently has the lowest electric costs of all the New England states. However, due to the fact that new contracts for the state's electric supply sources have to be made within 1-3 years, all estimates of retail electric costs are projected to substantially increased.

Environmentally, the existing portfolio of electric supply has a low carbon impact because of the primary sources of hydroelectric dams or nuclear fuel. However, these sources may not be the prevailing sources after 2012 and Vermont's electric supply portfolio may include a higher ratio of fossil fuel based supplies. In addition, the safety and environmental impact of nuclear power can reasonably be argued with most agreeing that nuclear waste is a large problem without a currently acceptable solution.

For all the reasons stated above, it is the policy of the Town of Westford to reduce our economic and environmental impact of energy use and to increase our energy independence. Westford shall

encourage the affordability and sustainability of living, working and doing business in Westford and to continually strive to reduce Westford's impact on the local, regional, and global environment. A large portion of our electric and heating consumption can be reduced by as much as 25 - 30% through conservation.

The Town will encourage employ conservation and energy efficiency practices, use and development of renewable energy resources, and reduction of fossil fuel use including for transportation, town maintenance and town infrastructure. It will also encourage and facilitate citizens of Westford to reduce their carbon footprint through educational programs and other Town sponsored programs including providing financial incentives and/or informational resources.

8.3 Inventory and Discussion

Westford, located within commuting distance to the main employment and business center of Burlington and to a lesser degree Essex, is largely a bedroom community with a large commuter population.

The Town has retained much of its rural character which lends itself to be potentially more self-sufficient through agriculture and forestry to provide food, shelter and fuel. However, as discussed in Section 3 (Economic Development) and Section 4 (Natural Resources and Natural Features) of this Plan, the amount of land in active agriculture and forestry continues to decline and development pressure increases the risk of losing viable land to residential housing. Although the Town has a Town Center area, most products for consumption are obtained outside of town which requires substantial energy resources for travel to and from markets and heating fuels are transported into town.

The Town aspires to have a vibrant Town Center area where trading of local goods and services could provide for it's citizens in a sustainably responsible manner; reducing energy used by residents to obtain goods and services from elsewhere, as well as reducing the inherent energy costs associated with produce and materials that come largely from outside of the state and even the country.

Westford is served by two electric utilities, in order of customer base, Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) and Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS). Currently, only single-phase power is available within the Town. The closest three-phase power lines are located north of town in the Town of Fairfax, approximately 0.5 miles from the border of Westford, and 3 miles from the Town Center area.

The electric efficiency utility, Efficiency Vermont, by direction of the Public Service Board has enhanced service goals for Westford and surrounding Essex and Colchester due to electric transmission constraints within the region.

Westford is not serviced by natural gas although it is available in some bordering towns such as Fairfax, Essex, Georgia, and Jericho. Vermont Gas Systems currently does not have plans for expansion into Westford due to the low density of housing and few commercial and retail businesses. Due to the lack of natural gas service, Westford matches the majority of the State for its heating fuel sources of oil, propane, kerosene, and wood.

The Town's and School's municipally owned buildings and infrastructure and their primary fuel sources are listed below:

- 1) Westford Elementary School - wood chips, oil, electric & use all of fuels listed for domestic hot water (dhw)
- 2) Town Garage & Fire Department – oil & electric for dhw
- 3) Town Trucks & Equipment – gasoline & diesel fuel.
- 4) Town Office - oil, electric for dhw & central air conditioning
- 5) Public Library – oil & electric for dhw
- 6) United States Post Office – oil, electric & oil for dhw.

Although the Post Office is a leased federal building, Westford citizens pay federal taxes to maintain the building that is heated with oil. The post office was once located at the town green but is now located outside of the Village center on Route 128, and is mostly accessed by motorized vehicles using fossil fuels. Walking or biking to the Post Office is dangerous due to the high traffic volume on Route 128.

Other public oriented building

Brick Meeting House – oil & propane
United Church of Westford - kerosene

The Town maintains records of fuel use as part of standard financial records but does not proactively track or manage energy use. Historically, energy efficiency and weatherization have been considered on a first cost basis and not a life cycle cost basis for the municipally owned buildings.

In 2009, the Town was awarded a Climate Action Grant to upgrade the Town Office building to reduce its energy use and therefore its carbon emissions. The Westford Library and the United Church of Westford also applied, but did not get awarded the same grant.

Privately owned Buildings (residential and commercial)

Although the State law has residential and commercial energy codes, the Town has provided only cursory support of the codes. For example, since 1997, the state residential code requires a filing of a self-certifying “Residential Building Energy Standards” certificate with the Town Clerk. Very few of the many residences built since 1997 in Westford have filed a certificate with the town.

The Town Office personnel hand out State supplied Energy Code Handbooks and materials. In 2008, the Town sponsored a workshop funded by the Agency of Natural Resources, “Button-Up Vermont”, largely in response to the highly volatile increase of heating fuel prices during the summer of 2008.

No large scale renewable energy systems exist in Westford. Westford's renewable energy resources are largely developed. Some residential scale renewable systems do exist but they are few. Large scale renewable systems have a potential restriction within town due to a lack of three phase distribution supply lines. It should be noted that the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Funds is conducting a state-wide renewable energy resource inventory that will be complete in early 2010.

In the spring of 2009, the Town appointed a 9-member Energy Committee.

Transportation

Westford's largest economic and environmental energy-use impact is due to transportation. A large majority of Westford's residents commute to places of business and trade outside of Town using fossil fuel (gasoline and diesel). Transportation is covered in the Transportation section of this Plan. Energy issues related to transportation are within the scope of that section.

8.4 Objectives & Implementation

Objective #1 (Municipal Energy Planning)

Strive to reduce the economic and environmental energy costs of the municipally owned or funded buildings, equipment, and infrastructure through planning and record keeping.

Implementation #1 - Track and monitor heating and electrical energy use and correlated carbon emissions of all municipally funded buildings within 3 months of passage of this Town Plan.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #2 - Include in all annual town reports heating and electrical use in quantity, costs and correlated carbon emissions of all municipally funded buildings in tabular and graphic form and including data beginning with FY 2006. The data should show all previous years beginning with FY2006 and at least 10 years cumulative data after FY2016.

Timeline – Annually / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #3 - Strive to be transparent in sharing energy use data of municipally funded buildings, infrastructure and vehicles to all the citizens of town for the purpose of education, costs, or carbon reduction and efforts.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #4 - Audit, to the extent possible, and rank according to highest energy costs (economic and environmental) for the operations and maintenance for municipally owned buildings, infrastructure, and vehicles. The audit should include investigating incidental uses such as private transportation for work, school student attendance and extracurricular activities, and grounds keeping.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #5 - Benchmark energy costs (economic and environmental) of all municipally funded buildings, facilities, and vehicles within 6 months of passage of this Town Plan.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #6 - Develop energy cost (economic and environmental) reduction goals for all municipally funded buildings, facilities, and vehicles within 12 months of passage of this Town Plan and annually revise the goals.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Objective #2 (Municipal Energy Reduction)

Ensure affordable and sustainable operation of buildings, equipment and infrastructure.

Implementation #1 - Evaluate all street, parking, and safety lights within the scope of this objective for their necessity and efficiency and compliance with the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA). Pursue the removal of unnecessary lights and evaluate upgrading the efficiency of necessary lights.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #2 - Energy costs should be a consideration in the purchase and operation of Town infrastructure including building appliances.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #3 - A life cycle cost analysis of these buildings and appliances should be conducted, and investments in increased efficiency should be made based upon this analysis and economic feasibility.

Timeline – As Needed / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #4 – Pursue the resources to make investments that offers a positive net simple payback with highest priority given to projects with a net simple payback of two years or less.

Timeline – As Needed / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB/ **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #5 - Any investment that offers an internal rate of return of 20 % should be presented to the Selectboard for consideration.

Timeline – As Needed / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB/ **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #6 – Pursue the resources to make energy related investments that offer a positive net present value.

Timeline – As Needed / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #7 - Renewable energy based systems should be included in the options considered for all proposed, existing or new buildings and equipment and a life cycle cost analysis will be conducted. At a minimum, solar orientation for passive heat gain and solar supplied domestic hot water should be evaluated.

Timeline – As Needed / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #8 - The Town’s Energy Committee should have an opportunity to review proposals and make recommendations for any work to be conducted on publically owned buildings that require a local land use permit.

Timeline – As Needed / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #9 - Explore with the intent of developing minimum energy and sustainability standards for construction of publically owned buildings (i.e. U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, LEED)

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Objective #3 (Public & Private Renewable Energy)

Increase the private and public use of renewable energy.

Implementation #1 - Apply for energy reduction or renewable energy grant on an annual basis if available.

Timeline – Annually / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #2 - Encourage use of wind, solar, hydro, bio-mass including agricultural products or byproducts, and all other renewable energy sources appropriate in size and scope within the town districts.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #3 - Explore, document, and map Westford's potential energy resources including solar, wind and wood biomass.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #4 - Explore and develop local biomass resources such as wood or agricultural products (cord wood, wood chips, pellets, grasses, corn, manure, etc).

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #5 - Encourage electric net-metering

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Objective #4 (Private Development)

The Town shall consider energy reduction and encourage renewable energy resources in the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

Implementation #1 - Develop recommendations, in collaboration with the Conservation Commission, for the Planning Commission and Selectboard to define and clarify what renewable energy systems in size and scope are appropriate within town districts.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #2 - Investigate with the intent of developing means of protection of renewable resources of installed or planned renewable energy systems through the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. At a minimum, solar orientation for passive heat gain and solar supplied domestic hot water should be considered.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #3 - Consider developing safety, maintenance and decommissioning requirements of all hydro-powered and wind powered systems for the purposes of safety, noise, wildlife protection and aesthetics (see telecommunication tower requirements).

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #4 - Consider adopting safety, maintenance, and decommissioning requirements of commercial photovoltaic systems.

Implementation Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #5 - Utilize land use planning techniques, such as the planned unit development concept, home businesses, and transit oriented design to promote energy efficient development patterns and site designs.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #6 - Actively consider energy efficiency in all future transportation planning, by encouraging ridesharing and public transportation.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** – EC, MPO REP, RPC REP, RDC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 5, 7 & 8

Implementation #7 - The Town's Energy Committee shall have an opportunity to review proposals and make recommendations for specified types of development that comes before the Development Review Board.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #8 - Support the State Energy Codes (Act 20) and require that all new residential and commercial construction meets or exceeds the current State Energy Code Certificates of occupancy shall be provisionally granted for a grace period of 60 days and will be permanent only upon filing of the State's Energy Code Certificate, known as the Residential Building Energy Standards Certificate (RBES) with the Town Clerk.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 8

Implementation #9 - Encourage local commerce, especially if it potentially results in lower energy costs locally and globally.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7, 5 & 8

Implementation #10 - Support home based businesses through: Zoning Regulations, tax policy and infrastructure, especially communications including phone and internet access.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –EC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 1, 2, 3, 7, 5, 8 & 10

Implementation #11 - Support waste reduction and recycling efforts and provide residents with educational materials on waste reduction methods.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –EC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 7 & 8

Implementation #12 - Explore energy costs and carbon reduction benefits of upgraded utility services (electric 3 phase power and natural gas utility expansion) by the end of 2010 and pursue upgrades.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** –8

Objective #5 (Town Owned Land)

Actively manage town owned property for its ability to provide renewable energy and carbon reduction, where feasible.

Implementation #1 - Inventory all town owned land and evaluate its potential with regard to renewable energy, especially bio-mass (wood) and carbon sequestration.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –EC / **Applicable Sections** –7 & 8

Objective & Implementation #6 (Energy Committee)

The Energy Committee will continuously seek means to reduce energy costs (economic and environmental) through-out the town by:

- Assisting the Planning Commission in the development of energy related regulations.
- Providing assistance and/or information to town boards (Selectboard, Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Town Center Committee, etc).
- Providing educational opportunities for citizens in energy conservation, renewable energy, environmental sustainability and global warming.
- Being a general information resource and advocate for the citizens of the Town of Westford.
- Completing energy inventories.
- Conducting energy studies and projects as directed by the Selectboard.
- Supporting State energy codes.
- Researching and taking advantage of state, federal and non-profit sources of energy related funding.
- Providing information to the public regarding energy issues as well as state, federal and non-profit assistance programs.
- Implementing energy efficiency and conservation programs.
- Participating in regional and state energy planning.

Timeline – On-going / Responsible Party –EC / Applicable Sections –8

9 HISTORIC RESOURCES

9.1 Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Westford to consider the effect of new development on historic resources early in the planning process so that impacts can be identified and assessed. Most historic resources are privately owned, but because of their important community function, their preservation should be encouraged.

9.2 Inventory and Discussion

9.2.1 Introduction

Westford's historical resources provide tangible links between past and present. The Town's historical resources range from evidence of earliest human settlement in the prehistoric period to mill sites abandoned in the early twentieth century. Many of Westford's residences and other structures, including barns, churches, library and covered bridge are historic (over 50 years old, and often much older). Much of the landscape can be considered historic: field patterns, stone walls, woodlots, sugar maple stands and roads are the reminders of past residents and their activities.

Some evidence of the Town's heritage is familiar and easy to recognize, such as the Town Common, the covered bridge, cemeteries, and agricultural fields. Equally important historic resources are less familiar; including Native American camp sites along the Browns River which are thousands of years old, extensive sawmill remains next to Roger's Brook and old farmsteads.

9.2.2 Westford's Past

Westford was granted as a town on June 8, 1763 to Henry Franklin and 64 associates in a charter from King George III signed by Gov. Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire. The town as granted covered 36 square miles (23,040 acres). The first settlers did not arrive until the 1780's. By 1791, the Town's population was only 63. The first Town meeting was held on March 25, 1793, during which the Town was organized.

The Browns River flowing north through town afforded good mill privileges to the early nineteenth century residents. The first sawmill was started by Elisha Baker in 1795. Soon after, Joshua Stanton built a forge and gristmill, which attracted settlers to the village center. The population in 1810 was 1,107 and by 1850 it had increased to 1,458. In the late 1800's, the village had two stores, three blacksmith shops, a cabinet and wheelwright shop, one sawmill, a gristmill, a cider mill, a cheese box factory, a tannery, a school, and two doctors. The population in 1880 was 1,133.

Westford has always been an agricultural town. In an 1881 gazetteer listing of some 311 households, only 64 did not list farming as an occupation. Brookside was a thriving neighborhood at one time. From 1893 to 1910, it had its own post office. A variety of industries were located there, including two sawmills, a cider mill, a boot and shoemaker, a cheese box factory and the Union Cheese Factory Co., which was organized in 1865. The Cloverdale section in the eastern part of Town developed around Westford's only rail stop. The railway ran until 1938. This area was mainly agricultural, although a dealer in marble, a manufacturer of tombstones, and a creamery were located here.

In the early 1900's, with its industries diminishing, the Town was left primarily a farming and logging community. By 1950, as agriculture became less profitable, the Town experienced a substantial decline in population. In the 1960's, the population expanded and residential development increased. The Town, however, retained its rural character. The influx of people in the 1980's, most of whom

commute to work elsewhere, raised the 1960 population of 680 to 1,740 in 1990. In 1990, there were only seven working farms left.

The Town's first school districts were established in 1797. Eventually 12 were organized. Within each district, parents shared, according to the number of children they had in school, in providing "boarding around" for the teacher and a quota of wood for the school stove. In the 1880-81 annual report, superintendent Macomber noted "...but when we consider that a good school in each district contributes largely to the support of virtue, morality and civil liberty, the sacrifice seems none too great". This comment was made with respect to the year's school expense of nearly \$3,000. By 1951, three school districts were left: in the village, Brookside, and Cloverdale. By the 1960's, the village school was serving nearly all the children in Town. In 1965, the present Westford Elementary School was built and dedicated to Carl S. Paige, in recognition of his outstanding service to Westford, including the offices of road commissioner, town representative, and over a quarter of a century as a School Director. Only one of the old one-room school houses still stands, and it has been converted to a residence. The village school was razed in 1971, and the new Town office building was built on the spot in 1973.

Westford's library was started in 1895/96. First located in the lower level of the old Town hall (the present library building), the library started with 117 books. In 1919, the library and its 3,000 volumes were housed in a small building which had been built about 1885. This small building was moved twice, serving as a post office between the "hotel" and the bridge and as a store at the upper end of the Common. It was heated by a woodstove, which was also used by the librarian, Irene Allen, to treat the children to toasted marshmallows. In 1973 funds to renovate the old Town hall were approved and the library moved back into the building where it began.

The Baptist, Congregational and Methodist churches were organized between 1798 and 1821. Each group had a building in the village. By 1919 the congregations were united. Services now are held in the Congregational Church. The Baptist Church is used for church and community functions. The Methodist Church was moved north and converted into a barn in the 1920s; the barn was demolished in the 1990's.

In the spring of 1921, Clark B. Paige and Eugene Domingue, with the help of 34 interested townspeople, brought electricity to Town. Electric lines were not installed in the more remote parts of town until 1935, when the Rural Electrification Administration encouraged expansion of electric utilities.

Two and one-half acres for the Common were given to the town by the estate of Elizabeth Camp in 1819. Extensive tree planting on the Common was undertaken in the late 1800's. The only surviving trees from this effort are those on the level below the Congregational Church. At one time there was a bandstand on the Common which was moved from one end to the other several times. In the late 1800's various networks of roads crossed the common connecting the various businesses and residences.

Picturesque landscapes remain throughout the community. Many roads provide historic and contemporary views of farming and rural living. Most of the roads we use today are the original ones laid out by the early townspeople. Cambridge Road came into existence in the late 1820's when the Vermont Supreme Court appointed a committee to survey a market road from Burlington to Derby. Only a few small roads disappeared between 1857 and 1869. In the 1970's roads in the eastern part of Town that hadn't been used for 40-50 years were formally eliminated. Cloverdale is now accessible

only by main roads through adjacent towns. The middle section connecting Covey and Osgood Hill Roads was designated as a trail in the early 1970's. Route 128 was first hard-surfaced in the 1940's. Eighteen neighborhood roads (i.e. private roads) have been established since the 2004.

9.3 Objectives & Implementation

Objective & Implementation #1 (Historical Society)

The Westford Historical Society will lead the community in protecting the Town's historical and cultural resources and will undertake the following endeavors:

- Protect, preserve, maintain and restore historic structures and sites.
- Educate residents on the historical aspects of the Town.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –HS / **Applicable Sections** –9

Objective #2 (Cultural & Historical Resource Protection)

Maintain the historic character of the Town Common and its surrounding structures.

Implementation #1 - Complete a comprehensive inventory and documentation of all of Westford's historical and cultural resources.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** –HS / **Applicable Sections** –9

Implementation #2 - Work with land owners to identify any historic resources which may be affected by permit applications.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR, ZA, PC, DRB & SB / **Applicable Sections** –9

Implementation #3 - Encourage the restoration and reuse of historical structures and investigate implementation of the adaptive reuse method of preserving historic structures.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –9

Implementation #4 - Develop protection strategies, including design review, architectural design standards, education and a historic resources committee. New buildings in and surrounding the Town Center area should be designed so they are complementary to existing historic structures. Furthermore, the Town shall investigate with the intent of developing commercial construction and reconstruction architectural standards for structures located within the Town Common & Town Village areas.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –3, 9 & 10

Implementation #5 - Buildings and sites owned by the Town should be placed on the State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –HS, LIB & SB / **Applicable Sections** –9

10 FUTURE LAND USE

10.1 Policy

It is a policy of the Town of Westford to provide a variety of land uses in Westford, including residential, commercial, light industrial, home occupations/businesses, forestry, agriculture, conservation and governmental uses. These and other uses are allowed in those areas of Westford in which they are historically, aesthetically, environmentally and economically appropriate.

10.2 Inventory and Discussion

Land use area categories were introduced in Westford in the early 1970's in the Westford Town Plan. The Town was divided into four categories: Rural/Agricultural, Conservation, Flood Plain and Open Space. In 1975, the Flood Plain classification was dropped. In 1980, the Plan was revised and major changes in land use areas were made. A residential area was designated for residential growth in the northwest corner of Town, a large part of the Conservation District was changed to the Forestry District, the Flood Plain area was reintroduced as the Wetland District, and the Town Center District appeared. The remainder of the Town was reclassified as the Agricultural, Forestry and Residential District. In 1982, a second area in the north central section of the Town was designated for residential growth. In 1987, the lands surrounding the four paved roads in Town that were classified as Agricultural, Forestry and Residential were added to a new land use area called Agricultural, Forestry, Residential 2 District. This was in response to a citizen's survey calling for greater development along the paved roads.

An examination of recent housing construction in Westford provides a picture of how the land classifications in Westford have affected patterns of residential development. The Rural Residential District has seen the most intense development in the entire town. This is a reflection of the relatively low minimum lot size in the area, and the presence of soils easily suited for septic systems.

In 2009, the Town re-districted the Town Center District into three new zoning districts each with a specific set of zoning regulations and standards. This was undertaken in the hopes that the new regulations would foster residential and commercial development around the Town Common area while maintaining the historic Village character.

Housing development overall in the town has been considerably slower in the last two decades than in the 1980s. However, the cumulative effect of this development is to gradually change the nature of Westford from a rural community to one exhibiting some of the qualities of suburban communities.

Over the years, Westford residents have made it clear to the Planning Commission that the town is slowly losing some of its rural character. Residents have requested that the Planning Commission take the necessary planning steps to continue to allow new residential and commercial development, but that it is channeled in such a manner as to preserve Westford's rural character.

Commercial growth has been very limited in Westford. Small businesses are scattered throughout the entire town at random and are generally linked with residential uses.

In light of this history of town planning, the following sections describe land use areas and steps to be taken to implement this plan. These have evolved from discussion among the Planning Commission and the responses from the 2009 community survey.

10.3 Objectives & Implementation – General

Objective #1 (Natural, Cultural & Historical Resources)

Westford shall encourage the preservation of rural, historical and cultural resources which give the Town its identity.

Implementation #1 - The major goal of the 2009 Town Plan is the preservation of the rural character of Westford. Innovative development techniques (e.g. planned unit developments) are required in order to support a pattern of development that maintains the rural character of the town.

Timeline – 2010--2014 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –All

Implementation #2 - The Town shall encourage the preservation and continued use of historical structures.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –HS, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –9 &10

Objective #2 (Steep Slopes)

The Town shall prohibit the development and disturbance of lands unsuitable for development.

Implementation #1 - The Zoning and Subdivision Regulations shall severely limit the development on and re-contouring of steep slopes.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –4 &10

10.4 Town Center Areas

Westford's Town Center area occupies the same general geographic location as the historic Village of Westford, and as such it is the primary location of cultural activities, public and governmental buildings. This area is intended to have the highest density and the widest variety of uses in Town. In 1995, the Town Center was increased based on the desire to reinvigorate the Town Center. However, it has become apparent that the historic center will not see significant re-development until new methods of water treatment and sewage disposal are developed. Due to a host of reasons, not the least of which is cost and the lack of State and Federal funding, it is unlikely that a centralized system could be developed in the near future. However, the Town has been investigating the feasibility of fostering the development of community wastewater systems within the Town Center area, which could be an innovative solution to the Town Center area's wastewater needs.

In 2009, the Town re-districted the Town Center area into three districts (Town Common District, Town Village District & Town Center District). The Town Common District is an area immediately surrounding the Common. The minimum lot size was reduced to ½ acre from 1 acre. This district is the Town's high density, high traffic, residential and commercial area. The Town Village District is the area immediately surrounding the Town Common District. The minimum lot size was reduced to ½ acre from 1 acre. This district is the Town's high density, low traffic, residential and commercial area. The Town Center District encompasses the outer reaches of the former Town Center District. This area continues to have a minimum lot size of 1 acre. However, the uses have been reduced to being residential in nature. The newly formed districts should result in increased small scale commercial development in the Town Center area while protecting the historic village character. The Planning Commission will continue to follow any trends that occur in the re-development of small community centers. In the event that services, such as sewer and water, are available in the Town Center area uses, density and the boundary lines should be adjusted accordingly.

10.5 Objectives & Implementation – Town Center

Objective #1 (Town Center Infrastructure)

Expand Westford's role in providing infrastructure so that higher density development can occur in the Town Center area.

Implementation #1 – Continue working toward development of a community wastewater disposal system to serve the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #2 - Educate Westford residents on proper maintenance of septic systems and recent changes to state statutes regulating sewage disposal.

Timeline – Annually / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR / **Applicable Sections** – 7 &10

Implementation #3 – Without undue impact to the environment and when economically feasible, provide infrastructure in the Town Center area so that higher density development can occur, when environmentally and economically feasible.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR, TCC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 7 &10

Implementation #4 - Give due consideration to innovative water & sewer technology that could enhance development of the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PCOOR, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 2, 3 & 10

Implementation #5 - Ensure the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations allow residents of the Town Center area to make good use of existing wastewater capacity such as by allowing mixed use development.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #6 - Investigate strategies to allow/encourage property owners to develop shared systems to expand wastewater capacity

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7 & 10

Implementation #7 - Investigate and pursue ways in which pedestrian access to the Town Common and surrounding buildings (especially the Town Library and Post Office) can be made safer and easier.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – HWY, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5 & 7

Implementation #8 - Make further aesthetic, safety, parking and traffic-calming improvements to the Town Center area, where economically feasible.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – HWY, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5 & 7

Objective #2 (Community Life & The Common)

Utilize the Town Common as the focal point of community life in Westford.

Implementation #1 - Continue pursuing ways to bring community events to the Town Center area. Support efforts of Town officials and community organizations to develop and enhance use of the Common and its associated public and private (e.g., Red Brick Meeting House, United Church) community facilities.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – TCOMM, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #2 – Investigate and develop Zoning and Subdivision Regulations which encourage small scale commercial development in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #3 - Investigate increased use of pre-existing lots in the Town Center area.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #4 - Encourage recreational opportunities, such as fishing, river access, walking, etc., that would enhance the public use and enjoyment of this area, and recognize the importance of the Browns River as an under-utilized amenity.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** – CC, TCC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 10

Implementation #5 – Locate all public amenities and facilities, such as the Town Office, Public Library, Post Office, Meeting House, in the Town Common District

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** 7 & 10

Objective #3 (Encourage Re-Development)

Encourage appropriate development intensity in the Town Center area that is great enough to reinforce its traditional Town Center functions and character, while not degrading the social and physical environment.

Implementation #1 - Investigate with the intent of developing architectural standards for commercial and industrial development in the Town Center area to ensure the historical character of the Village is maintained, and encourage the preservation and continued use of historical structures in the Village.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** – PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 7, 8 & 10

Implementation #2 - Encourage the restoration and reuse of historical structures and investigate implementation of the adaptive reuse method of preserving historic structures.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –9 & 10

Implementation #3 - Obtain Village Center designation from the State Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PCOOR & SB / **Applicable Sections** –10

10.6 Rural Residential Area

The primary purpose of the Rural Residential area, located northeast of the Town Center area surrounding the Plains Road, is to provide for residential development. The density in this area is 3 acres per dwelling units. However, Planned Unit Developments are required to facilitate the conservation of Westford’s rural character while allowing landowners the ability to develop their property. This feature enables the Development Review Board to exercise flexibility when reviewing development proposals so important rural aspects (e.g., agricultural, forestry, open space, critical natural resources, etc.) can be conserved. This district is extremely close to being “built-out”, or unable to sustain further subdivision.

10.7 Agricultural, Forestry and Residential Areas

The Agriculture, Forestry and Residential Areas (AFR) comprise the largest portion of the Town. The land is characterized by sections with good potential for agriculture and forestry along waterways and highways and also sections having severe limitations to the use of on-site septic systems and development because of hilly terrain, lack of access and poor soils. Currently this area is divided into two distinct zones (AFRI & AFRII). Density in the AFRII district (along existing paved roads) is 1 dwelling per 5 acres, and density in the AFRI district is 1 dwelling per 10 acres. Although paved roads make development “easier”, we must consider the rural landscape to which these roads provide access. The majority of the AFRII district is comprised of lands along Route 128, the primary travel corridor for many residents.

10.8 Objectives & Implementation – AFR Area

Objective #1 (Natural Resource Protection)

Protect critical and non-critical resources while allowing property owners to develop their property.

Implementation #1 - Modify the existing Zoning Regulations to incorporate the concepts described in the Natural Resources and Natural Features section for the AFR area.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 10

Objective #2 (Access & Commercial Development)

Focus commercial development along paved roads.

Implementation #1 - Focus small scale commerce and small scale industry along VT Route 128 and VT Route 15.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10

10.9 Water Resources Overlay Area

Wetlands, rivers, streams, ponds and source water protection areas are susceptible to the effects of construction, development and other incompatible uses. Silt from construction can clog streams and rivers, killing fish and wildlife. Leaking septic systems and underground fuel storage tanks can easily pollute wetlands, rivers, streams, ponds and public water supplies (those which are served by source water protection areas). The public health is served by the protection of these necessary resources, therefore, the pollution and degradation of Westford's water resources is to be avoided. Because these water resources are easily polluted and because they are not located in one geographic area of Westford, the overlay concept will provide the protection needed.

The Water Resources Overlay Area will apply to the above listed areas and will supersede underlying zoning provisions if conflict between district standards exists. Flexibility in siting uses will be required by the Development Review Board and landowners to implement the Water Resources Overlay Area. The boundaries of the Water Resources Overlay Area do not appear on the Current Zoning map (Map 8) due to the complexity of the district. However, the district is depicted on Map 5 (Water Resources, Wetlands & Floodplains). See the Zoning Regulations for the current definition and extent of the Water Resources Overlay Area.

10.10 Objectives & Implementation – Water Resources Overlay Area

Objective #1 (Water Resources)

Ensure that the quality and character of Westford's important water-related resources are protected, including wetlands, rivers, streams, ponds and source water protection areas and protect the public health by minimizing the adverse impacts of development on Westford's water related resources and adjacent lands.

Implementation #1 - The Zoning Regulations shall continue to incorporate the Water Resources Overlay area provisions.

Timeline – n/a / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 10

Implementation #2 - Update the Water Resource Overlay area, as needed and as better information becomes available, while preserving the overall intent and features covered as discussed above.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4 & 10

Implementation #3 - Cooperate with local, regional, and State watershed groups on stream assessments, water quality monitoring, stream and wetland restoration projects, etc.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** – PCOOR, CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –10

Implementation #4 - Investigate the possibility and impact of allowing renewable energy infrastructure within the Overlay District.

Timeline – 2011/ **Responsible Party** – EC / **Applicable Sections** – 8& 10

Implementation #5 - Adopt fluvial erosion hazard maps and associated regulations, when available.

Timeline – 2010 / **Responsible Party** –SB / **Applicable Sections** –10

Implementation #6 - Utilize the Bridge and Culvert Inventory to identify problem areas/infrastructure, investigate and pursue upgrades to problem bridges and culverts, and inform property owners of problem bridges and culverts as information and time become available. The Town shall not be held liable for damage caused by privately owned infrastructure.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –RDC, HWY & SB / **Applicable Sections** –5, 7 & 10

Implementation #7 - Promote the re-vegetation of shores and stream banks.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –CC / **Applicable Sections** –10

10.11 Flood Hazard Overlay Area

State and Federally mapped Flood Hazard Overlay areas are unsuitable for development due to the certainty of flooding. Therefore, to protect public health, safety and welfare, development in this area shall be severely limited. The purposes of this area include:

- (a) To prevent the loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, the impairment of the tax base, and the extraordinary public expenditures and demands on public services that result from flooding and other flood related hazards;
- (b) To ensure that the design and construction of development minimizes the potential for flood loss or damage to life and property;
- (c) To manage all Flood Hazard areas;
- (d) To make the State, municipality, and residents eligible for federal flood insurance and other federal disaster recovery and hazard mitigation funds;
- (e) To encourage maintenance of Flood Hazard areas for open space uses and/or useable open space that complements the use and development of adjacent areas, as provided for in this Plan;

The Flood Hazard Overlay area will supersede underlying zoning provisions if conflict between district standards exists. Flexibility in siting uses will be required by the Development Review Board and landowners to implement the Flood Hazard Overlay area. The boundaries of the Flood Hazard Overlay Area do not appear on the Current Zoning map (Map 8) due to the complexity of the district. However, the district is depicted on Water Resources, Wetlands & Floodplains (Map 5).

10.12 Objectives & Implementation – Flood Hazard Overlay Area

Objective #1 (Flood Hazards)

Strive to ensure public and private property, and human life is protected to the fullest extent from the effects and dangers of flooding.

Implementation #1 - Pursue enrollment in the Community Rating System (CRS) 1 year after enrollment in the NFIP.

Timeline – 2011 / **Responsible Party** – PCOOR & SB / **Applicable Sections** –7 &10

Implementation #2 - Amend the Zoning Regulations when appropriate and as additional information becomes available.

Timeline – On-going / **Responsible Party** –PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** –10

10.13 Forestry Area

The Forestry (F) is proposed as one or more future land use district(s). The land under investigation is comprised of Steep Slopes, mountain tops and ridges, woodlands and water resources. Due to severe development limitations, such as lack of access and/or safe access, poor soils, erosion and stormwater concerns, and Steep Slopes, this area is in a largely undisturbed and natural condition. The proposed district is characterized as containing land with potential for forestry, recreational and education opportunities; significant natural communities; rare, threatened, and endangered species; deer wintering habitat; unfragmented wildlife habitat; and public trails. The purpose of this area is to conserve significant natural communities and wildlife habitat, limit development where the land is not conducive to development, and preserve the undeveloped corridors bordering public trails in so far as possible. Refer to Maps 3 (Natural Features) and 10 (Unfragmented Habitat & Wildlife Movement)

10.14 Objectives & Implementation – Forestry Area

Ensure undeveloped, productive forest lands are conserved for future generations, significant natural communities are conserved to the fullest extent, scenic resources are preserved, flora and fauna are conserved so as to preserve healthy and sustainable natural functions locally and regionally, and to maintain undeveloped natural corridors along public trails.

Objective #1 (Develop Forestry Area)

Implementation #1 - Investigate with the intent of developing one or more Forestry District(s) with a minimum lot size requirement greater than currently allowed and/or additional planning standards.

Timeline – 2012 / **Responsible Party** –CC, PC & SB / **Applicable Sections** – 4, 6 & 10