Stockbridge
Town Plan

2025

FINAL

SELECTBOARD ADOPTION: JANUARY 2, 2025

Written with assistance from the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission

Stockbridge Planning Commission

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction

Founded in 1761, the Town of Stockbridge today is a stable, safe and thriving rural community. The past several years have brought new opportunities, as well as new challenges, to the Town. Over the last twelve years the Town has experienced modest population growth and has added to and improved its housing stock. In addition, Stockbridge witnessed the expansion of broadband access to nearly all areas of town, facilitating new employment and remote work opportunities for current and prospective residents. The Stockbridge Planning Commission has attempted to capture the eight-year vision for the future of Stockbridge in this document. Through the process of drafting this plan, the Planning Commission has invited public input to finalize Stockbridge's vision for the future.

Figure 1: Stockbridge Town Office

A. Vision Statement

The townspeople of Stockbridge envision a community where people respect and care for each other as well as the land and its natural beauty. A community of homes and families, small businesses and farms, linked by an appreciation of the importance of working together for a better tomorrow.

B. Town Setting

The Town of Stockbridge is located in the northwestern portion of Windsor County, Vermont. It comprises an area of approximately 28,300 acres, or 45.41 square miles. Stockbridge is bordered by six towns: Barnard to the east, Bridgewater and Killington to the south, Bethel and Rochester to the north, and Pittsfield to the west. Unlike many neighboring towns, Stockbridge does not have a town center. Residents generally work in other communities, choosing Stockbridge for its location, natural beauty, housing, or educational opportunities.

Geographically, Stockbridge is located in the region known as the Intermountain Valleys and Foothills of the Green Mountains. This area is characterized by mountainous terrain, narrow

valleys, and a few peaks above 2,500 feet. In the case of Stockbridge, the typically narrow valleys are bisected by the White and Tweed Rivers and Fletcher, Stony Brook, and Lilliesville Brook.

C. Town History

The Town of Stockbridge received its Royal Charter on July 21, 1761, from Benning Wentworth, Governor of the province of New Hampshire. Thirty-one Proprietors Shares were issued to William Dodge and his associates. The first settlement in Stockbridge was not begun until 1784 when John Durkee established his family at what is now the junction of the Tweed and White Rivers.

Settlers in this area found Stockbridge to be an extremely beautiful township, richly endowed with fertile soils, virgin trees, and pure waters. As was the case throughout New England, the very tallest and straightest of pine trees in the Town were to be reserved for use as masts on the ships of England's Royal Navy. The maximum population of Stockbridge of 1,327 was reached in 1850.

In 1786, Elias Keyes established a grist mill and later a sawmill at "The Narrows," later known as Gaysville, so named for its founders Daniel and Jeremiah Gay. Gaysville flourished as a manufacturing center, powered by the waters of the White River. A button shop, sawmills, grist mills, schools, churches, several general stores, a woolen mill, snowshoe shop, and many homes were at one time located at Gaysville. Stockbridge Village was also a major manufacturing center boasting of two stores, a school, a sawmill, a church, and a tannery. The White River Valley Railroad, known locally as "the Peavine," was established in 1900 and served both freight and passenger trade throughout the valley.

The town of Stockbridge has also been blessed by the foresight of many of its earlier residents, who have over the last 100 plus years donated funds to the town for the betterment of it's residents. These funds are administered byt the Town Trustees and are held in trust for future residents. They support charities, scholarships and other programs, and these funds represents a significant asset for a town the size of Stockbridge.

Perhaps no other event shaped the Town of Stockbridge as did the flood of November 3, 1927. The waters ripped through the valleys of Stockbridge, taking with them bridges, dams, sawmills, homes, factories, businesses, and the railroad. The book Floodtide of 1927 reports some thirty buildings gone, with many more rendered useless in Gaysville alone. Barrows Mill at Stockbridge Village, at the time the largest industry in Town, was also destroyed.

Due to the devastation of the 1927 flood, and a changing economy, the Town of Stockbridge and the hamlet of Gaysville were never rebuilt to their former glory. The whistle of the Peavine no longer resounds throughout the valley. Today, Stockbridge is a community with hills and valleys. It is richly endowed with fertile soils, beautiful landscapes, productive forestlands, and abundant water resources.

D. Why Have a Plan? – Purpose

A municipal plan is intended to act as a vision for the community. A community imagines what the future should be, and then starts putting these ideas into action. Communities with little or no planning are more likely to experience problems of over-development, and increased demands for community services. Their lack of local control leaves them subject to decisions made at the state level or by private interests that might not accurately reflect their vision. Stockbridge, like every town, has choices in the way it provides for orderly growth and in the way it balances growth with natural and built environments. Planning is done to meet the needs of the people who are here now in the face of change and for future generations.

The Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of Stockbridge's demographics, land use, jobs, economy, town infrastructure and services, health, housing, natural resources, and energy. This analysis of current conditions in the context of goals for our community, leads to policies and recommendations that can help our community make wise choices and provide direction for the patterns of its future growth.

Here are some specific reasons to have a Town Plan:

- **Guide for local regulations** - State statute requires that all land use regulations (zoning, subdivision, etc.) must be consistent with the goals of the local plan. The municipal plan functions as the framework under which these regulations operate.
- **A guide for community investments** - Information in the plan can be used for developing the recommendations contained in a capital budget and program, for establishing a community development program, and for providing direction to the Selectboard for such things as community services, emergency services, recreation and municipal facility development to name a few. It also serves to guide the decisions made by the Zoning Board of Adjustment when permits come before them.
- **Support for grant applications and planning studies** - Many of the state-run grant programs available to Stockbridge consider whether or not the town has stated a need for its grant request. Studies are often called for within a plan, and the funding for such projects can come from state sources as well.
- **A guide for future development** - The District Environmental Commission considers Town Plans during an Act 250 hearing under Criterion 10. The Plan should clearly define what is and is not appropriate in terms of development within the community.

E. Defining Rural Character

The District Environmental Commission will often look to a Town Plan for guidance regarding the of "rural character" of a town. Too often this concept is poorly defined and/or too vague to be useful in a legal proceeding under Act 250. Therefore, for the purposes of this document, the Planning Commission defines what residents view as the "rural character" of Stockbridge as follows:

Stockbridge is a small, quiet, rural residential community that is geographically positioned to appeal to residents and vacation home-owners alike. Stockbridge commutable distance to

other major employment centers (e.g., Rutland, Montpelier, and Killington) as well as to the Vermont Interstate system make it a good location for residents who work out of town. Likewise, its proximity to the ski areas of Killington and Pico make it an appealing vacation spot. Development, which is primarily residential in nature, is generally clustered around roads. Most town roads are gravel roads that are more appropriate for the types of traffic common to residential, recreational, and agricultural development rather than large-scale commercial development.

The community is a mix of woods, open-spaces and valley floor, all of which create an aesthetically pleasing natural environment. The White and Tweed Rivers each create an area of open valley floors that are rich in soil quality as well as open, scenic beauty. The southeast corner of Stockbridge is part of the Chateauguay-No-Town area, and much of the landscape remains wild and sparsely populated.

Development within Stockbridge remains sparsely organized, blending in with the landscape in such a fashion that it does not negatively impact the scenic quality of the community.

F. Purposes and Overarching Goals of the Plan

It is the intent and purpose of this Plan to encourage the appropriate use of all lands in the Town of Stockbridge in such a manner as will promote the public health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience, sustainability, self-sufficiency, economy and general welfare of the town. It is also the purpose of this plan to encourage a sense of community.

It is hoped that both existing and future residents, landowners, elected officials, and business people will find this plan useful when making decisions affecting land use in the Town of Stockbridge. Furthermore, this Plan shall further the following goals:

1. To protect the rural character of Stockbridge as defined by our Town Plan while providing for economic growth aligned with rural Vermont.
2. To foster a greater sense of community.
3. To promote development of Stockbridge in such a way as will protect and enhance residential areas, allow the town to grow and attract new residents, prevent undue concentrations of population, buildings, traffic, congestion, or loss of peace, quiet, and privacy.
4. To protect and enhance the scenic and recreational amenities of the Town of Stockbridge.
5. To protect steep slopes, soils, forests, water and other natural resources, and to provide open space and wildlife corridors for wildlife habitat.
6. To protect agricultural and forest lands, so as to maintain and enhance their productive capabilities.
7. To promote development within the Town of Stockbridge consistent with the ability of the Town to provide services.
8. To prevent the development of land clearly incapable of supporting, from a physical standpoint, the type or intensity of land use being proposed.

9. To maintain and enhance the freedom, rights, privileges, and responsibilities of all citizens of Stockbridge.

II. Demographics

A. Introduction

The demographic nature of a town tells a great deal about who the town is and what trends define its direction. To get a real-time snapshot of the town, it is important to have the most up-to-date data available. Much of the content in this chapter has been taken from the 2020 US Census or the American Community Survey. In other instances, state data was used.

B. Population

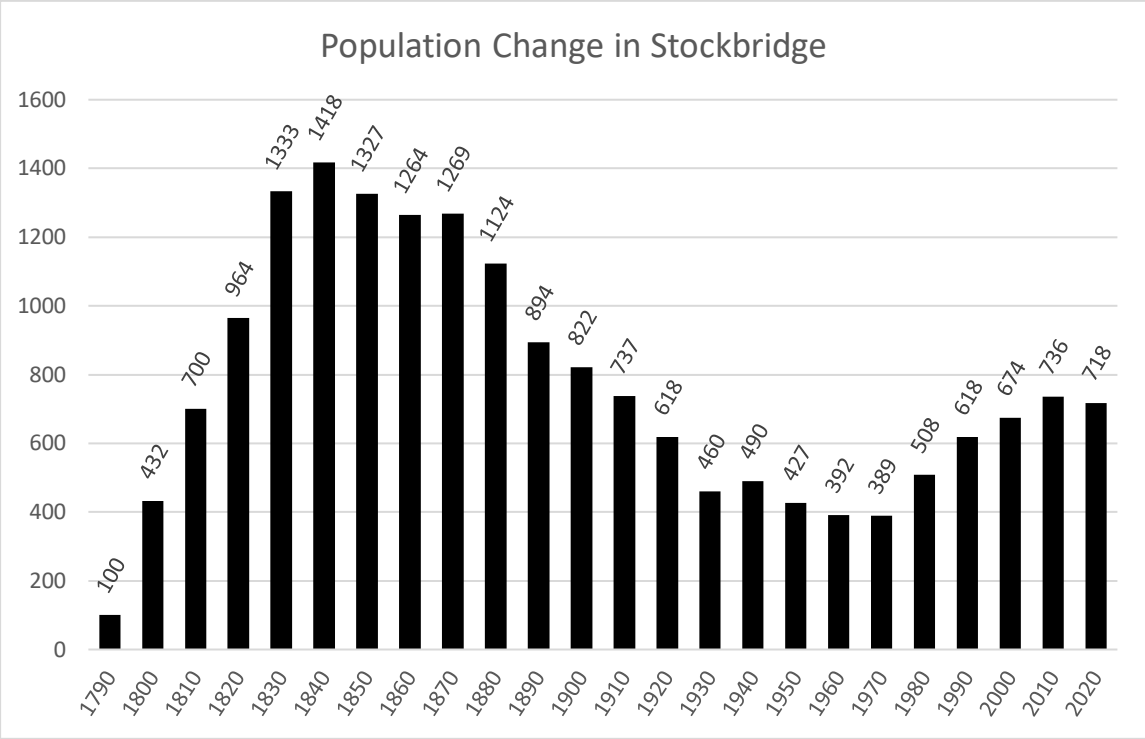

Figure 2: Stockbridge Population Changes 1790 – 2020 (Source: U.S. Census)

Population, when considered in terms of past, present, and future growth patterns and trends, comprises an important factor in the development of Stockbridge. Rapid or unanticipated growth can create a demand for new and expanded municipal services straining the financial ability of the Town to provide public services economically or equability. This is particularly true when new residents are of school age and schools are at or near capacity. Accordingly, it is in the public interest to monitor population changes and to direct these changes in a manner that does not burden the Town's ability to provide services. Outlined below are some basic population statistics for the Town of Stockbridge compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the data in Figure 4, Stockbridge's year 2020 population numbered 718 compared to a population of 736 in 2010, resulting in a decrease in population of just over 2%. During the same ten-year period, only two out of six of Stockbridge's neighboring communities gained population: Barnard and Killington. Windsor County overall reflected a slight increase in population.

Stockbridge's population change over time is reflective of many communities in Vermont. During the mid to late 1800s, many Vermont towns reached their peak population. A mass exodus as citizens moved south caused a steep drop that finally stopped during the 1970s. Throughout the 1980s and up to 2000, most communities experienced a steady influx of new residents. However, since 2000, many communities have been experiencing flat growth or population decline, pointing to the challenge of limited housing supply and economic opportunity confronting many towns. Given the current housing conditions and high housing turnover in Stockbridge, it is difficult to conclude whether there has been any significant change in total population for the Town.

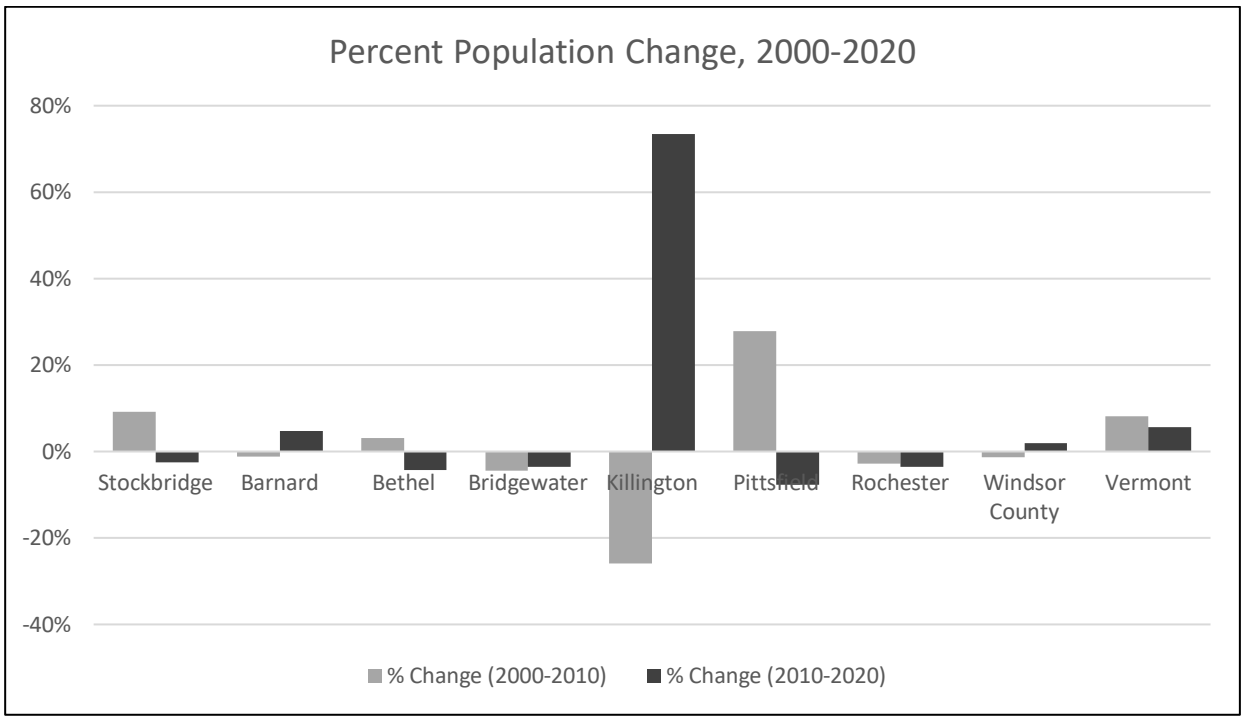

Figure 3: Percent Population Change in Stockbridge and other Towns (Source: US 2020 Census)

C. Age of Population

In general, the age of Stockbridge's population is similar to that of Vermont as a whole, with much of our population over the age of 35. From 2010 to 2020, there have been noticeable changes in the age of Stockbridge's population. Stockbridge saw its population aged 60 and over increase to 25% of the total population. At the same time, the population nearing retirement (50-59 years) increased to 20%. Significantly, the population under 5 years of age declined from 11% to 4% between 2010 and 2020. The loss of young adults (generally between the ages of 25-35) has been a growing concern throughout Vermont. Just under 7% of the respondents to the 2022 Town Plan Survey were young adults (25-34 years). The out-migration of young adults raises concerns on both economic and social levels. Without a talented and well-educated pool of young workers, there are worries that the state will find it increasingly difficult to attract and retain well-paid jobs, which in turn can have serious repercussions for the state's capacity to raise tax revenues and pay for essential services. Young adults who leave their rural communities often do so because communities lack the resources commonly sought

after by people of their age group, such as: reliable high speed internet access; clear cell phone reception; employment opportunities; affordable housing; and opportunities for social interaction with others of their age group.

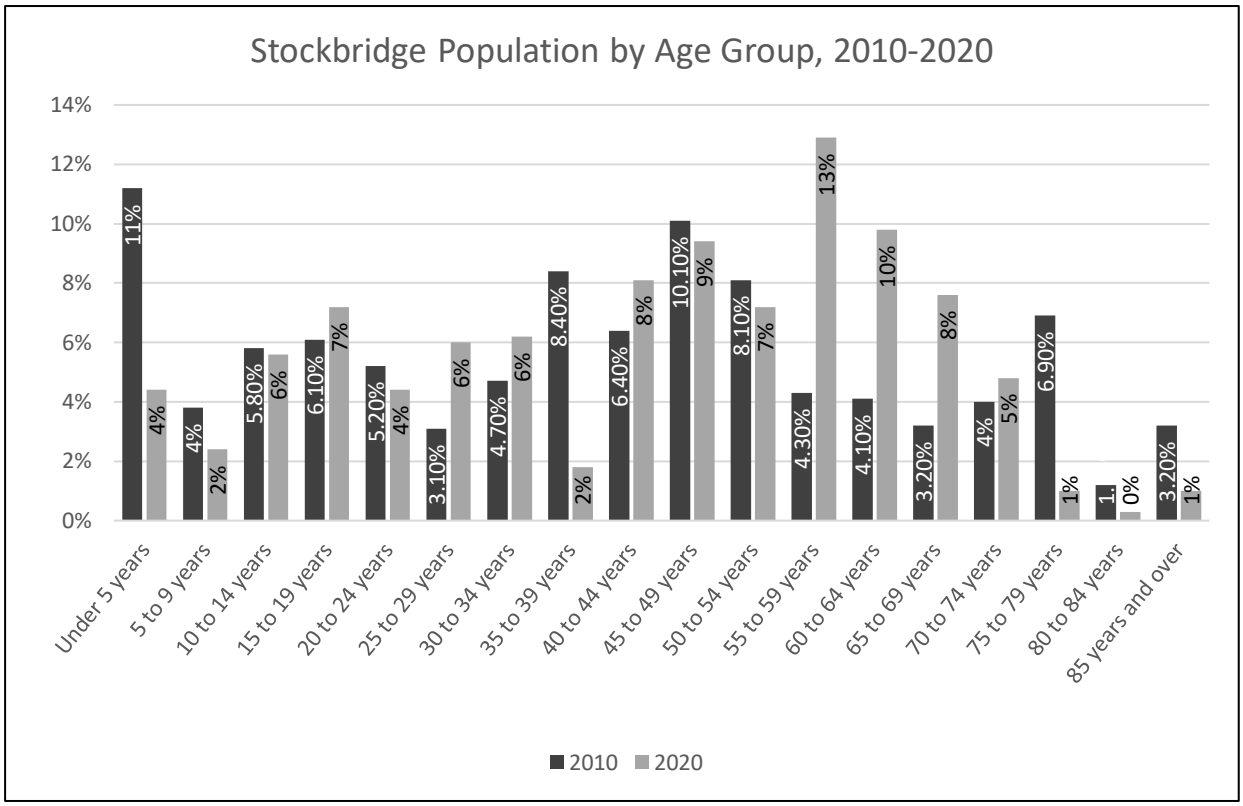

Figure 4: Stockbridge Population by Age Group, 2010-2020 (Source: American Community Survey, Table S0101)

According to the Department of Economic Development's (DED) 2007 Report "Growing Vermont's next Generation Workforce," the primary reason for leaving Vermont was to find better paying jobs. Those young adults who choose to return or relocate to Vermont have indicated that their primary motivation for moving to Vermont is the lifestyle associated with the working landscape. Outdoor recreation, agriculture and the importance of community often encourage these citizens to return.

Another trend that mirrors statewide trends, Stockbridge has an aging population. In 2020, 25% of the population was over 60 years of age, which is lower than Windsor County (32%), but higher than the State of Vermont (14.6%). Vermont also has the lowest birth rate in the nation (8.7 births per 1,000 of population, compared with 11.56 for the U.S) which, when coupled with in-migration of residents over 55, results in an aging population that will need services that are not readily available in a town like Stockbridge.

The numbers are reflected in the 2022 Town Plan Survey results, which indicate that over 50% of respondents were at or above the age of 55. Furthermore, 63% of respondents have a household size of 1-2 persons. An aging demographic and smaller household size is reflective

of population shifts across the state. If current trends continue, we will need to begin considering the need for services and residential options that can serve the aging population.

A final important consideration for the next several decades is the potential impact of climate change, and whether this will result in climate migration and an influx of new residents into the area. Stockbridge will need to plan for the possible arrival of climate refugees, and how this could impact the workforce, housing, services, and infrastructure.

III. Land Use

A. Background

In terms of planning, one of the most complex discussions is about how land should be used in the future in accordance with the community's vision. How a town uses its land and plans for future land development can affect a wide range of issues including the town's character, economic base, and its ability to provide services adequately and at a reasonable price. In order to ensure that the impacts of future development in Stockbridge does not have unintended consequences, the town's growth must be managed to reflect the vision of this Plan.

This section discusses historic, current, and future land use patterns and provides goals, policies and recommendations for future implementation. V.S.A. Title 24, §4411(a) authorizes towns to implement the plan through land use regulations, such as zoning, subdivision and site plan review, provided that those regulations are in conformance with this plan and §4302 of Title 24, which addresses the state's planning goals. In 2004, the state legislature passed Act 115 to define more clearly "conformance with the plan". It states that:

> *"A municipality may regulate land development in conformance with its adopted municipal plan and for the purposes set forth in section 4302 of this title to govern the use of land and the placement, spacing, and size of structures and other factors specified in the bylaws related to public health, safety, or welfare." [§4411(a)]*

The Plan is designed to be used by Stockbridge's decision makers to guide growth to the most appropriate locations and to make any necessary expansion of municipal infrastructure or services manageable and cost-effective. The citizens of Stockbridge have both a need and a right to review and assess proposed development, and to regulate new development to ensure appropriate location and that too rapid expansion of Stockbridge does not unreasonably and adversely affect the rural scenic quality of the town or its ability to pay for the services that increased development requires.

It is the intent of this Plan to provide for the maintenance of the high quality of life in Stockbridge by protecting the rural, scenic quality of the town through the appropriate use of land for residential, agricultural/forestry, small business and recreational use. Future development within Stockbridge should be guided by and related to the existing settlement patterns and the citizens' desires to maintain the rural scenic quality of the town, as well as by natural environmental constraints, and the ability of the taxpayers and the land to support the proposed growth.

B. Historic Land Use

To consider how and where a community can and should encourage development, it is valuable to look to the past. In many instances, there are lessons to be learned from the way land was used and where the community most often congregated.

In the 1800s, Stockbridge had two strong villages: Stockbridge Common-on the western side of Stockbridge, near Route 100, and Gaysville-on the eastern side of Stockbridge, near Route 107. They were vital community centers that served as the central places in which citizens could meet and use the services offered by local businesses.

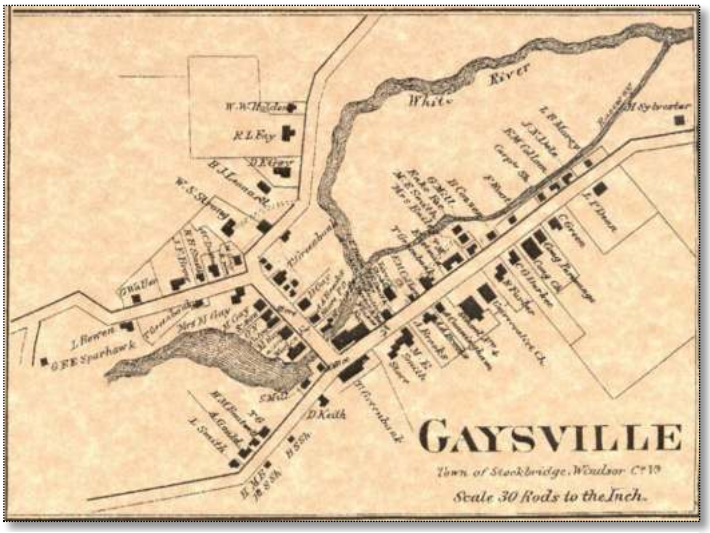

Figure 5: Gaysville circa 1869 (Source: Beers Atlas 1869)

At one point in time, Gaysville was home to such businesses as a general store, blacksmith, lumberyard, dry goods and drug store, woolen mill, flannel mill, homeopathic physician and surgeon, harness maker and a grist mill. Stockbridge Common, while smaller than Gaysville, had a dry goods and grocery, blacksmith, woolen mill and hotel. Both villages were home to public and civic facilities such as post offices, churches and meeting houses. Much of this prosperity was due to the presence of the Peavine railroad which connected Rochester to Bethel and passed through, or near, both of Stockbridge's villages.

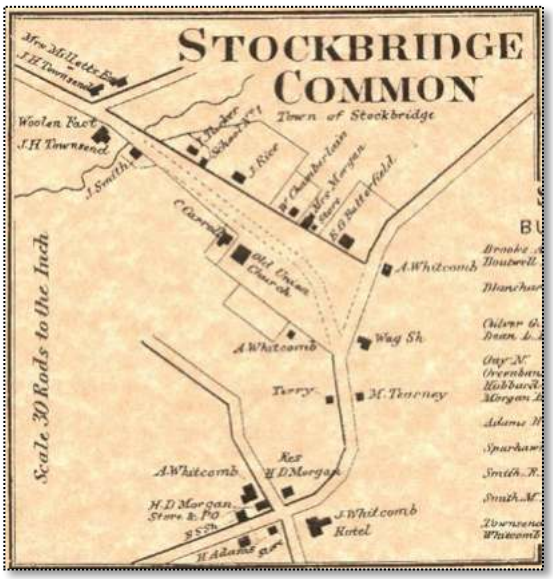

Figure 6: Stockbridge Common circa 1869 (Source: Beers Atlas 1869)

As with much of Vermont, farming and forestry used to be the primary jobs held by citizens in Stockbridge. Most homes were connected in some form or another to agriculture, either through full-time farming or in the form of smaller endeavors that fed the families who lived there.

Vermont suffered what is commonly referred to as "The Great Flood of '27." The severe flooding and damaging winds devastated central Vermont, including Stockbridge. As can be seen on the following page, the damage suffered in Gaysville was dramatic. The Mill, a church, railroad station, and many other businesses and homes were swept away by the raging White River. A large section of low, river bottom land where the losses were most severe was completely eroded away. The resulting damage was so substantial that Gaysville never fully recovered from it.

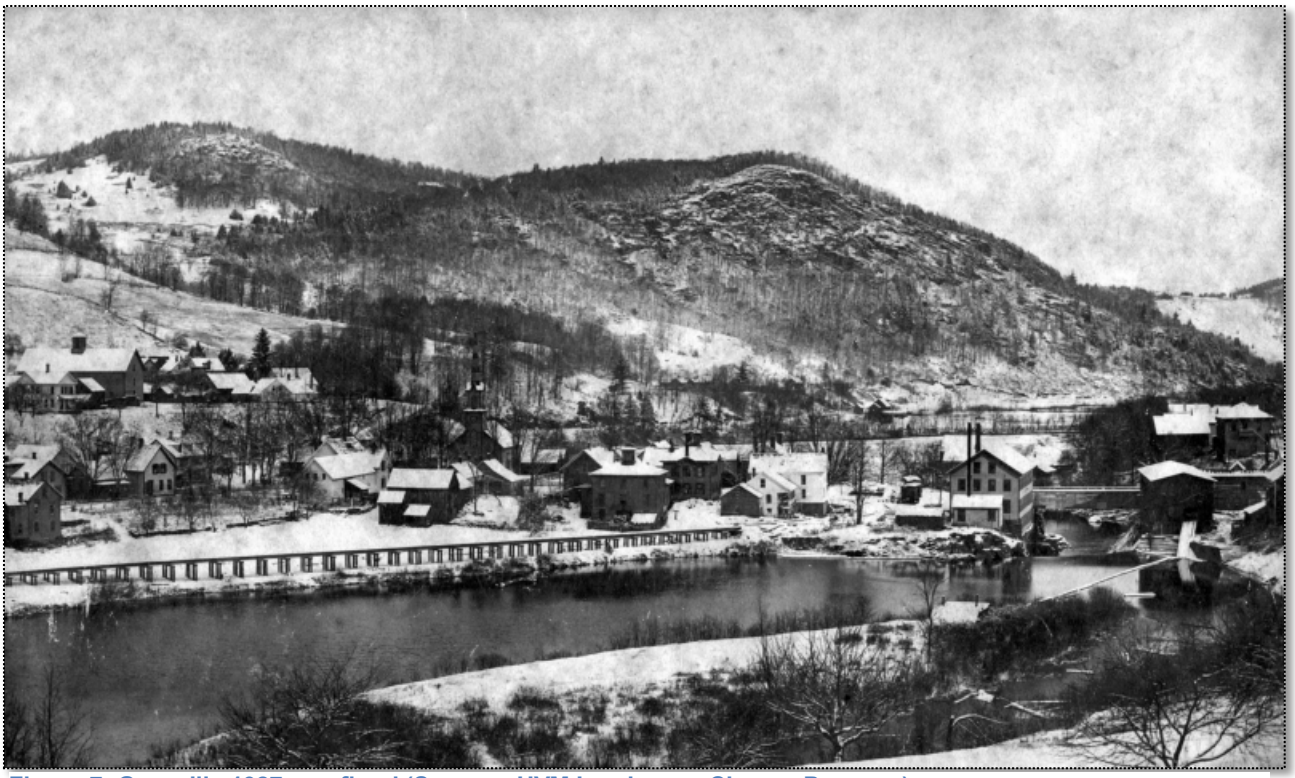

Figure 7: Gaysville 1927, pre flood (Source: UVM Landscape Change Program)

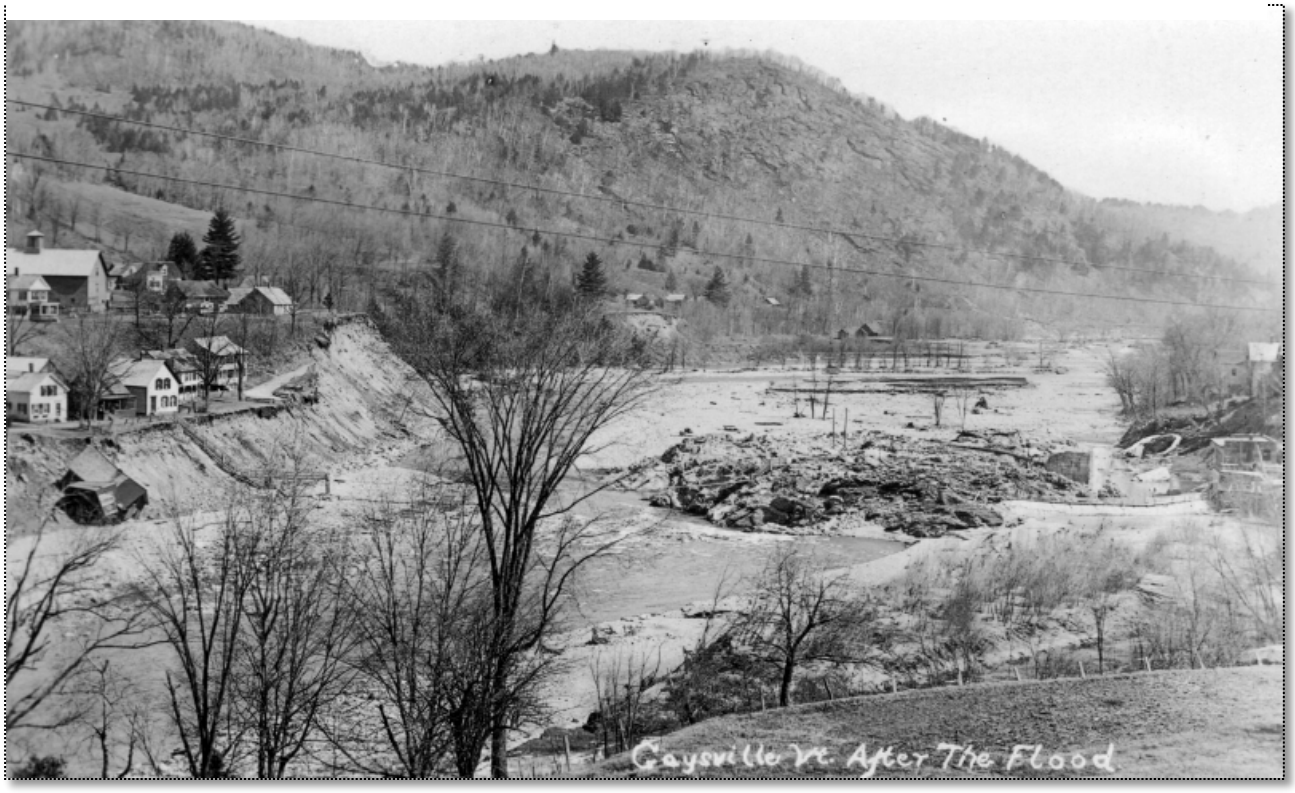

Figure 8: Gaysville 1927, post flood (Source: UVM Landscape Change Program)

The inherent risks of developing land located adjacent to the White and Tweed Rivers were made clear during the Flood of 1927 and subsequently overtime in Stockbridge.

In the 1960s, Vermont Route 107 was built, running through Stockbridge. To accommodate the width of the road, several essential businesses were torn down (including John Chedal's General store – pictured right), further eroding the economic viability of Gaysville.

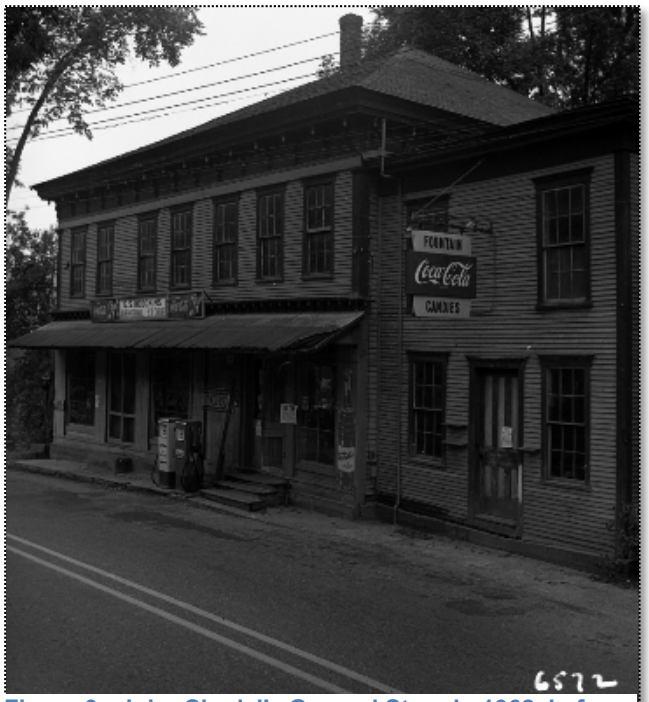

Figure 9: John Chedal's General Store in 1962, before Route 107 was built. (Source: UVM Landscape Change Project)

C. Current Land Use

Present day Stockbridge is much different from Stockbridge of the 1800s and early 1900s. The primary form of development is residential, and most residents work outside of the community.

Commercial land uses once centered within and around these community centers are now scattered primarily along State Highway Routes 100 and 107. Home occupations are the more prevalent type of commercial activity in Stockbridge.

Residential uses, although still sparsely scattered along road and highways, are no longer primarily associated with farming and other agricultural uses. Rather, new residential uses have been located according to aesthetic values, suitability for subsurface sewage disposal and access to public roads.

Where once most households were part of an active farming operation, there are today few active farms in Stockbridge. This is a trend being experienced throughout Vermont, New England and the nation. Another trend in Vermont is the resurgence of small-scale backyard animal husbandry and some residential lots can be found to include some sheep, beef cattle, horses or dairy cows. While agriculture may no longer play a major role in the economy of Stockbridge, the value of agricultural and other open lands extends beyond dollar production figures.

Stockbridge's most valuable asset is its natural landscape. Stockbridge has a substantial amount of preserved land, including 4400 acres of public lands (Les Newell Wildlife Management Area and Green Mountain National Forest) and roughly 2000 acres of private conservation easements. The hills, valleys and open river-bottom lands make Stockbridge a pleasing place to live and a destination for those who seek outdoor recreational opportunities.

D. Future Land Use

When surveyed in 2022, 86% of the respondents indicated that the Town's major strength was its people and rural setting. Residents seek a balance between the rural, primarily residential landscape that exists in Stockbridge today, and the vision of a Stockbridge that offers the potential for local employment as well as commercial businesses that take advantage of the natural landscape. Survey results also indicate that residents have a desire to support the development of local venues for artists, authors, craftsmen, and other artisans, as well as protecting the large tracts of forest and finding ways to increase the use of solar power in Town.

The State of Vermont has established planning goals which seek to maintain the current pattern of development common to Vermont, densely populated village and urban centers surrounded by open countryside. State law clearly discourages the types of development most commonly associated with strip development and sprawl, the reason being that many of these uses can be harmful to existing villages. For a community such as Stockbridge that has no active village center, meeting the goal of centralizing development can be somewhat challenging.

The future land use section of a town plan is intended to act as a guide for future development within a town, and to aid local planners in the process of implementing the plan through regulatory tools. Future land use areas are not necessarily required to mimic the historic character of land use, but instead should reflect Stockbridge's vision of the future, even if the proposed land use settlement pattern suggested differs from the present pattern.

The Stockbridge Planning Commission collected input from members of the community and have used this guidance to create a framework through which the citizen's vision can be implemented. This vision includes changes to land use areas that support the goals of the community while remaining consistent with state law. The following land use areas are established for the purposes of implementing Stockbridge's vision:

i. Village/Hamlet Areas

Stockbridge's historic villages (Gaysville and Stockbridge Common) were once thriving villages with a traditional mix of uses. However, each has become primarily residential in nature, and neither is geographically central to the community. The Planning Commission, seeking to create a central location for civic and commercial uses in addition to Gaysville and Stockbridge Common, has proposed the creation of a new hamlet area around the Stockbridge Central School.

The school remains the location where community gatherings most frequently occur, and the topography of this location is such that it could accept a light mix of appropriately scaled uses, including commercial development. The pattern of development around the Stockbridge Central School is primarily residential in nature, with a few businesses which are supported primarily by local residents. The Planning Commission has identified this location as a more appropriate location for additional commercial development (including retail) provided that any such development is appropriately scaled.

To try to meet the intent of state planning goals while acknowledging residents' desires for a town center with additional commercial development, Stockbridge's Villages and Hamlet areas are organized in a fashion that is not likely to encourage strip development, and measures will be put in place that encourage appropriate development in keeping with Stockbridge's rural character.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To maintain the rural character of the Town.
2. To concentrate commercial development in existing village areas and prevent strip development along highways.
3. To protect against light pollution.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. Commercial establishments that are formulaic in nature (chain stores) will be subject to strict zoning criteria, including signage, lighting, impact on local businesses, and land use requirement. While not specifically banned in Stockbridge, such developments should be subject to greater zoning and Planning Commission scrutiny to ensure they enhance vs detract from the rural character of the town and it's economic development.
2. To prohibit the pattern of development most associated with sprawl, which is to allow primary commercial development in a strip along main roads. As an alternative, commercial development areas will be located in small, clustered areas.

Gaysville Village Area

The purpose of the Gaysville Village Area is to provide an area where a mix of residential and commercial (including primary retail) development can be located. The types of uses in this area should be wide-ranging, but appropriate in terms of scale and impact on the surrounding area-which is generally residential in nature. Businesses that serve the immediate area and residents located in other parts of Stockbridge would be suitable. Higher density development (as small as ½ acre) is encouraged in this area, but it is recognized that there are constraints with regard to the availability of groundwater and septic suitability that might make dense development difficult. Because Gaysville is historically significant to the community, any development proposed for this area would need to be designed so as to blend in with the surrounding structures.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. Any development in the Gaysville Village Area should reflect existing settlement patterns, land capability, and the availability of utilities for expansion.
2. Any development should be designed to reflect the historic character of Gaysville.
3. Primary retail and services, tourist businesses, lodging, and public facilities, at a scale and design appropriate to the existing characteristics, are encouraged.
4. Conversion of existing structures and older buildings, especially those of historic merit, are encouraged to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.

5. Efforts should be directed to ensure that any new development is reasonably complementary and compatible to the configuration of existing buildings, streetscape, and respects traditional scales, proportions, and shapes of the surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Encourage single, two, and multiple-family housing.
7. To pursue Village Center Designation, as appropriate.

Stockbridge Common Area

While Stockbridge Common was also a hub of economic development in the past, what it represents today is primarily a center of historic value. It is the intent of this Plan to allow for a limited mix of uses within this area, provided that such uses clearly fit with the historic character of the area. It is possible that Stockbridge Common Area could support historically designed professional offices or a general store as it has in the past, but only if such operations are designed in a manner that is sensitive to the historic character of the area. Density in this area should be consistent with existing densities, generally no smaller than one acre.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. Any development shall be designed to maintain and enhance the character of the Stockbridge Common Area and will be scaled and designed to complement existing buildings
2. Any development in the area designed to reflect existing settlement patterns, land capability, and the availability of utilities for expansion.
3. Primary retail and services, tourist businesses, lodging, and public facilities, at a small scale and design appropriate to the historic characteristics of the Stockbridge Common Area, are encouraged.
4. Conversion of existing structures and older buildings, especially those of historic merit, are encouraged to enable new and more economical uses of property and to avoid obsolescence.
5. Efforts should be directed to ensure that any new development is reasonably complementary and compatible to the configuration of existing buildings, streetscape, and respects traditional scales, proportions, and shapes of the surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Encourage single, two, and multiple-family housing.
7. To pursue Village Center Designation, as appropriate.

Stockbridge School Hamlet Area

The Stockbridge School Hamlet Area is located around the Stockbridge Central School and along Route 107 where several businesses have historically been located. The purpose of this land use area is to continue to support the current pattern of development by providing a small, clustered location where a mix of residential, civic, and commercial uses that include properly scaled primary retail can interact with existing businesses and/or a civic center (the school) in a manner that encourages mixed-use growth. Density in these areas should be no smaller than one-acre.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. Residential, civic, and commercial uses that include properly scaled primary retail are appropriate in this area.
2. New commercial development within the Mixed-Use Commercial Area should be designed in such a fashion that it:
    - Creates a compact project which utilizes land efficiently;
    - Reduces the visual and environmental (runoff) impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots and integrating landscaping;
    - Provides pedestrian and vehicular links between projects;
    - Incorporates green space and screening between the project and the street, including use of large trees; and
    - Includes simple signage that effectively communicates the desired message.
3. Appropriate access management techniques, including shared access points, shall be incorporated into all commercial developments in an effort to ensure traffic safety and to minimize the number of curb cuts.

ii. Economic Development Area

Mixed-Use Light Industrial Area

The Mixed Use Light Industrial Area is intended to provide an appropriate location for mixed-use development with a focus on job-producing light industrial establishments. While residential and small-scale commercial (including secondary retail) are also allowed, light industrial, manufacturing, and commercial establishments such as professional offices and other facilities are intended to be the dominant type of use. The location of this land use area along Route 107 and within a mile of the Route 107/Route 100 intersect, allows it to take advantage of direct access to a main highway, while directing these more intensive uses away from smaller municipal roads. Density in these areas should be no smaller than one-acre.

Secondary vs. Primary Retail

A primary retail establishment is a business whose primary purpose is the sale of goods. *Examples include (but are not limited to) a grocery store, a pharmacy, a flower shop, etc.*

A secondary retail establishment is a small portion of a business whose primary purpose does not involve the sale of goods. *Examples include (but are not limited to) a furniture manufacturer who has a small retail shop on site, a veterinarian's office that sells dog food, a brewery with a restaurant and beer sales, etc.*

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That new commercial development within the Mixed-Use Light Industrial Area should be designed in such a fashion that it:
    - Creates a compact project which utilizes land efficiently;
    - Reduces the impact of parking areas by breaking up lots into smaller lots and integrating landscaping;
    - Provides pedestrian and vehicular links between projects;

- Utilizes screening between the project and the street to reduce visual impacts and to diminish other impacts such as noise, including use of large trees; and
- Includes signage that effectively communicates the desired message and is consistent with the best practices set out by the State of Vermont to avoid light pollution.
  That appropriate access management techniques, including shared access points, shall be incorporated into all commercial developments in an effort to ensure traffic safety and to minimize the number of curb cuts.

2. That primary retail establishments shall be located only in Stockbridge's Village and Hamlet areas and not within this land use area.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. That clear standards (possibly including performance standards) with regard to the types and sizes of appropriate light industrial and commercial development and access management should be developed for conditional use review.

iii. Rural Areas

The majority of land in Stockbridge remains distinctly rural in nature. Most of these lands are forested, and in some cases, are relatively untouched by development. They are one of the key elements that makes Stockbridge appealing to its residents. It is in the rural areas of Stockbridge that most residents choose to locate their homes. In 2022, residents surveyed indicated strong support for protecting the town's rural character. The Plan seeks to strike a balance between residential development and the desire to protect and maintain the natural and scenic character of Stockbridge.

Rural Residential Area

The Rural Residential Area is intended to be the primary location for residential development, as it is well served by the municipal road system and the topography is such that it allows for adequate septic suitability. Development that is encouraged in this area is intended to be done in a way that is sensitive to, and guided by, the physical landscape. All development should be compatible with the rural and natural character of Stockbridge. Housing should be single-family or two-family dwellings. Multi-family dwellings are permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Commercial development in this area should be very small-scale and of the nature most commonly associated with home businesses or home enterprises where a landowner uses a portion of the home or property to conduct business. Retail development in this area is appropriate only if it is secondary to a primary use, such as a woodworker who sells furniture from their shop or an eye doctor who sells glasses in addition to conducting eye exams. Development that is recreational, agricultural or forestry related is encouraged.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. Projects should align with the rural setting and note conflict with existing rural land uses.
2. Residential, recreational, agricultural, and forestry uses are the primary and dominant land uses in the Rural Residential District.
3. Primary retail enterprises or service centers which draw principally on regional market shares, including factory outlets, fast food establishments, and shopping malls, are inappropriate in the Rural Residential District. Secondary retail is acceptable provided the primary use is compatible with the area.
4. The establishment and operation of small entrepreneurial enterprises are consistent with the general purpose of this area. Such uses are encouraged provided that their size, type, appearance, and setting do not significantly or unnecessarily detract from rural character. These enterprises should not cause an undue burden on the ability of the town to provide services, such as highways and fire protection.
5. New land development should be planned and sited so as to promote the continued use of agricultural and forestry for their intended uses. This can be accomplished by siting residential and other non-agricultural uses on the least productive soils for agriculture or forestry. In addition, the layout of building lots should be designed to conserve crop and pastureland and managed woodlands.
6. Residents are free to conduct an occupation in their homes provided that the nature of the occupation is appropriate in rural residential areas.
7. To encourage the use of planned residential development or the cluster development where intensive settlement is balanced by compensating land for open space. It is a means of providing an environment more amenable to the land use goals of this Plan.

It is a recommendation of the Town:

1. To review the zoning bylaws and land use regulations to accommodate changes in housing and technology.

Upland Conservation Area

The Upland Conservation Area is primarily remote forestland, particularly in the No-Town, Stony Brook, and Fletcher Brook areas of town. This area has historically been very rural or in a wild state. Human settlement in the area is very sparse, public access very limited, particularly on a year-round basis, and public utilities (electric and telephone) nearly non-existent. Land parcel sizes range from small to very large parcels with several owners being timber or land holding companies.

Much of this area contains valuable natural habitats that are critical to conservation and management of wildlife populations, particularly black bear habitats. Research conducted by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife indicate this area, as well as neighboring areas, support relatively high densities of cub-producing females considered critical habitats necessary to bear survival. The long-term stability of Vermont's bear population depends on these areas for feeding and vital as travel areas for bears.

The purpose of the Upland Conservation Area is to protect and preserve areas which are ecologically important or fragile; to enhance and maintain Stockbridge's highest priority interior forest blocks and habitat connectivity blocks; and to maintain the visual quality of the mountainside. To achieve this purpose the primary use in this area should be low density residential, camps, recreational and other uses which will not have a negative impact on the existing natural resources including undeveloped land, water resources, wildlife habitat, commercially productive forestland, and recreational and scenic areas.

Multi-use recreational activities are highly prevalent in this area and are strongly supported by this Plan. This area receives region-wide recognition as a quality recreational area and is used by hikers, sportsman, cross country skiers, bikers, and snowmobilers. Commercial activities that are recreational in nature are not only appropriate in this area, but are encouraged. Other commercial activities should be limited to agriculture and forestry and other uses that fit well with the natural character of the area.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That land above 2,000' elevation should be maintained in a natural wild state; development is strongly discouraged.
2. That Forest Service (FS) acquisition and management of lands as part of the Green Mountain National Forest above 2,000 feet is encouraged only upon approval by the town.
3. To encourage outdoor recreation and forestry uses, provided these uses do not unduly impact other significant resources of the site.
4. That permanent uses such as dwellings and other similar uses should be discouraged.
5. That any use deemed appropriate to high elevations should be sensitive to severe soil limitations to avoid erosion and slow vegetative recovery.
6. That large scale or large tract land developments or subdivision are not appropriate in areas where steep slopes, wet, or shallow soils are predominant, unless it can be demonstrated that such developments or subdivisions will not be unduly detrimental to the environment. Where this can be adequately proven, density of settlement should be relatively low. Outdoor recreational, forestry, and agricultural uses are examples of the preferred uses for critical areas, subject to overcoming site limitations.
7. Where permitted, that land development or subdivision should be planned to minimize reduction of the resource value of such areas for forestry by providing reasonable population densities, use of cluster development, and new community planning designed to economize on the costs of roads, utilities, and land usage.
8. In areas exhibiting significant wildlife habitats, that planning for land development or subdivision should be sensitive to the economic, social, cultural, recreational, or other benefits to the public of the habitat. Where loss to the public of the resource is imminent by a development or subdivision, all feasible and reasonable means to prevent significant loss or imperilment of the resource should be employed.
9. That commercial development that is not associated with a home enterprise, recreational, agriculture or forestry businesses is not appropriate in this area.

10. That long term protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors is encouraged in the Upland Conservation Area.

iii. Flood Hazard Area

Flood Hazard Areas include some lands adjacent to the Tweed and White Rivers, as well as their tributaries, which are subject to periodic flooding. Floodplains and Fluvial Erosion Hazard Areas are unsuitable for development because of the high potential for loss of life and property as well as the limited ability of septic systems to perform adequately during periods of high water. For more specific information about the function of Floodplains, see Chapter X, Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources.

It is the purpose of this land use area to:

1. Avoid and minimize 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 related inundation and erosion;
2. Ensure that the selection, design, creation, and use of development in hazard areas is safe and accomplished in a manner that is consistent with public wellbeing, does not impair stream equilibrium, flood plain services, or the stream corridor;
3. Manage all flood hazard areas designated pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Chapter 32 § 753, the municipal hazard mitigation plan; and make the Town of Stockbridge, its citizens, and businesses eligible for federal flood insurance, federal disaster recovery funds, and hazard mitigation funds as may be available; and
4. Protect the environmental and recreational value of Stockbridge's rivers and streams.

As of the date this Plan was adopted, Stockbridge's Flood Hazard Regulations have been designed to meet the minimum standards (for more information, see Chapter X, Natural Resources) set by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Types of Floodplain Regulation

There are a wide range of options in terms of levels of regulation that can be applied within the Floodplain, and the community will have to engage in a discussion about how strict limitations should be. Regulation options can include:

Prohibition – The community can opt to prohibit all new development within the floodplain. This is the most effective way to ensure the continued public safety of community members. Existing homes, while subject to potential flooding, do not have their potential risk increased by the addition of more development in the floodplain. Towns can opt to prohibit all development, or just certain types (such as residential or commercial). Towns can opt to prohibit all development including expansion of existing structures. They can opt to prohibit or allow accessory structures.

Increased Requirements – Towns can continue to allow development within the floodplain (provided this development does not violate the minimum NFIP requirements), but require additional measures to develop in the floodplain. This would include having developments elevate structures to a greater height than one foot above base flood elevation (the minimum required by the NFIP), to design structures in such a fashion that they allow water to flow through lower levels and to more stringently secure structures in place.

Additional Flood Protection Areas – Towns can utilize newer river data that has mapped the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area (also called the River Corridor Area) to identify areas that are at risk from potential flood hazards but are not within the mapped floodplain. This data can be used to create buffers that keep new development outside of potential erosion zones.

Current Zoning Bylaws do not allow new development within the floodway, but does allow development within the 100-year floodplain, where allowed uses require a conditional use permit. Uses currently allowed with a conditional use permit include single and multi-family residences, utilities, public buildings, quarries and home industries to name a few.

Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission has determined that approximately 43 structures (including 38 houses and 4 businesses) have been identified as being located within the mapped flood hazard areas. The Chalet Village of Stockbridge includes 21 of the homes located within the floodplain. The severe damages and complete loss of homes caused by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 highlighted the need for Stockbridge to reevaluate the requirements of the Flood Hazard Area, both in terms of uses allowed and in terms of the area designated as Flood Hazard Area.

The best and most appropriate uses within the Flood Hazard Area are those which are recreational and agricultural in nature. Minimizing development within these areas will help protect both public and private investments as well as the natural and scenic quality of Stockbridge's rivers.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To protect the citizens of Stockbridge and the quality of our rivers as natural and recreational resources by using sound planning practices within designated Flood Hazard Areas.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That agriculture, recreational, open space, and alternative energy uses are the preferred uses in floodplains.
2. That new development within the 100-year floodplain is highly discouraged with the exception of properly designed outbuildings and renovations that meet the requirements for Flood Hazard regulation as stipulated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. That the Planning Commission should regularly review the Flood Hazard section of the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to ensure that it remains up-to-date with the requirements of FEMA and the NFIP.
2. That the Planning Commission should examine additional protections for the Flood Hazard Area, and areas outside the FHA that are prone to flooding or flood damage.
3. That any revisions to the zoning bylaws should be reviewed to ensure they do not violate the Flood Hazard Area designation.

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Statistics

The Vermont Department of Taxes annually publishes Vermont Tax Statistics, which includes a summary of personal income tax returns filed with the State. In 2020, three hundred and fifty-nine (359) income tax returns were filed in Stockbridge. Total adjusted gross personal income reported for Stockbridge residents was $25,556,981.

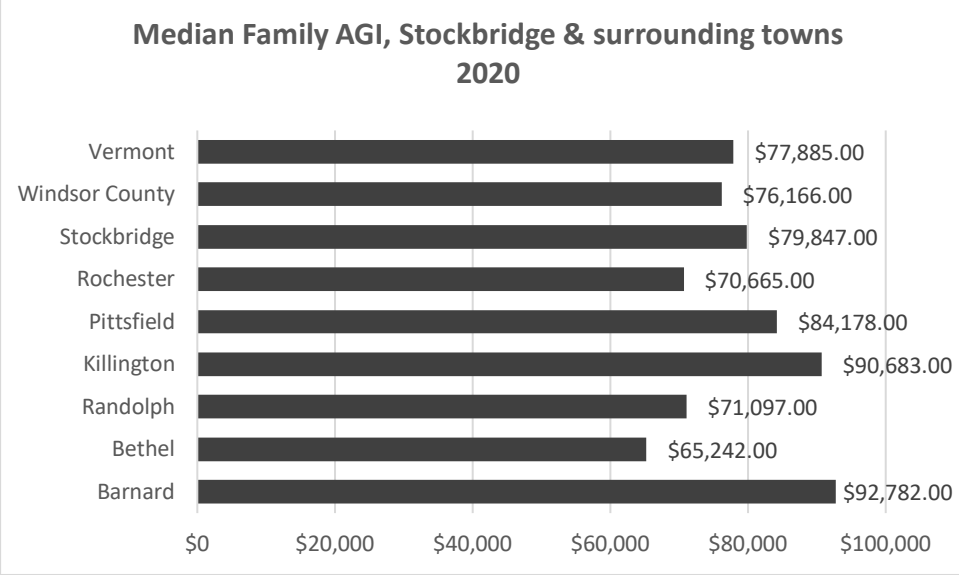

Figure 10: Median Adjusted Gross Income (Source: VT Dept. of Taxes)

According to the Vermont Department of Taxes, Stockbridge's median adjusted gross income per family in 2010 was $52,628. In 2020, the median adjusted gross income for a family had risen to $79,847, an increase of just over 50%. The percentage of growth since 2010 of Stockbridge's median family income was substantially higher than the 35% increase that occurred during the same period statewide.

B. Stockbridge's Economy

Due to the damage of the 1927 Flood, Stockbridge's two village centers are small and lack key essential services. Residents utilize neighboring communities as the location for many services, including banking, professional, and health services. Stockbridge is a rural residential community of which most workers are employed outside of the community. A village center has the advantages of encouraging economic development and providing a center for community activities. Creating village centers is possible over time through well thought out planning and willingness for businesses to locate here.

The community continues to do what it can to support the development of small business enterprises within the Town that employ area residents. Most commercial development in Stockbridge is of a scale that is appropriate in the rural countryside, and is consistent with this Plan. In particular, the Community supports the development of home-based businesses that fit with the rural character. Likewise, the development of businesses that are based on recreation is important. Through sensible planning and good land use regulations these enterprises are located throughout Stockbridge. The Town recognizes that improvements to communication infrastructure such as universal broadband and wireless coverage would allow current and future residents to work remotely. The Town would continue to support the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to allow for the growth of this activity.

The community will continue to encourage the development of small businesses as long as they do not negatively impact the rural character of Stockbridge and are at a size and scale that live harmoniously with surrounding homes and other businesses. Businesses in town should not put an undue burden on community services, in particular roads. Commercial development (e.g. primary retail) that is consistent with "strip development" or "sprawl" (see sidebar on page 34) is not consistent with the character of the community. Additionally, commercial development that requires trucking and freight handling should only locate on roads which can effectively handle the size of vehicle needed, and should not have an adverse impact on the rural nature of the community. This Plan supports a Mixed Use/Light Industrial Area along Route 107, making it a suitable location for this type of development (See Chapter IV Future Land Use, p. 26).

Sprawl - Dispersed auto-dependent development occurring outside of compact urban and village centers, along highways, and in rural countryside. Sprawl is typically characterized by:

- excessive land consumption;
- low densities in comparison with older centers;
- lack of choice in ways to travel;
- fragmented open space, wide gaps between development and a scattered appearance;
- lack of choice in housing types and prices;
- separation of uses into distinct areas;
- repetitive one-story development;
- commercial buildings surrounded by acres of parking;
- lack of public spaces and community centers.

C. Employment Characteristics

Population, employment characteristics, and housing trends are critical factors when planning for economic development. As previously noted, Stockbridge has no center of commerce, and therefore a majority of residents commute outside of town for employment. Stockbridge does not contain the self-sufficient employment center of Gaysville that it had during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Even though the advances of the technological age of computers, automobiles, telecommunications and other conveniences have allowed for some residents to work from their homes, many Stockbridge residents commute to surrounding communities.

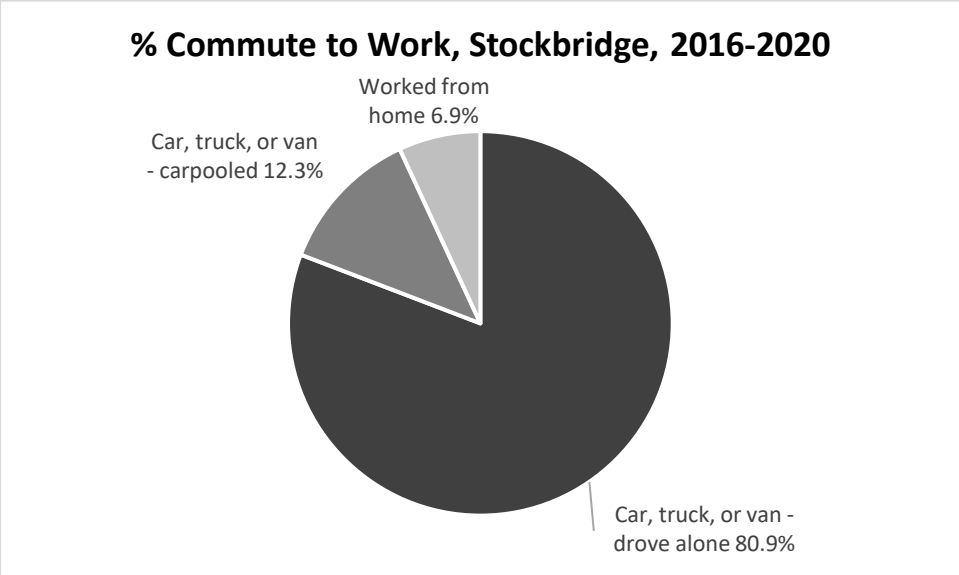

Figure 11: Percent of Residents who Commute to Work, Stockbridge (Source: ACS 2020)

The number of Stockbridge residents commuting to work alone (81%) mirrors that statistic at the County level. A slightly higher percentage of Stockbridge residents carpool (12% vs. 10%) and less work at home (7% compared to 8% in Windsor County). While the ACS data indicates that most residents who commute, do so alone, the survey results from the 2022 Town Plan Survey indicate that over half the respondents either have a home occupation, or work remotely. The expansion of internet and wireless options undoubtedly contribute to the ability of residents to work remotely in Town.

Figure 12 indicates that 44% of Stockbridge residents are employed in management, business, science, art, or service occupations. These rates are comparable with the overall rates for Windsor County across all occupations.

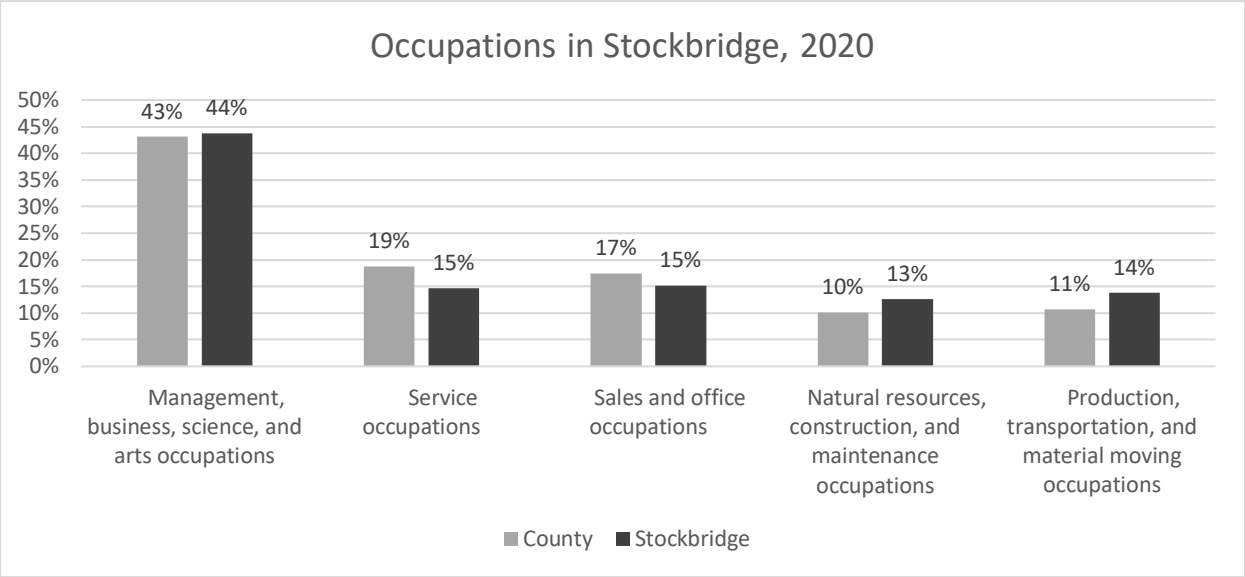

Figure 12: Occupations in Stockbridge (Source: ACS 2020)

D. Regional Employment and Economic Development

Stockbridge operates in a regional economy. Cooperation and coordination among neighboring employment center communities is essential to secure the proper balance between population, employment, and housing. As the regional economy changes, natural work force needs in Stockbridge (job entries versus job attrition rates) can more than likely be accommodated in the Upper Valley.

E. Villages

Currently, the two historic villages in Stockbridge -- Stockbridge Common and Gaysville -- contain a mix of housing, commercial businesses, places of worship, and historic houses and sites. Stockbridge is served by 2 post offices, one in Gaysville village and one near the intersection of Routes 100 and 107. Gaysville is home to the Gaysville Community Church, White River Park, the Belcher Library, The Stockbridge Historical Society, the Cobble House event venue, and the former village store.

Stockbridge Common is the site of historic Stockbridge Meeting House, Maplewood Cemetery, and Ted Green Ford, one of the oldest Ford dealerships in continuous operation in the country. It is also home to numerous historic buildings, including the schoolhouse and former hotel.

Sustainable development (defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs), would be promoted by the revitalization of our villages through the State of Vermont's Village Center Designation (VCD) program with the Vermont agency of Commerce and Economic development.

Once enrolled in the Village Center Designation program, these areas would receive priority consideration for state grants, training and technical assistance; tax credits for interior and exterior improvements; tax credits for faced work; and tax credits for code improvements. In addition, the villages would receive priority consideration for a range of State grants, from ACCD, VTrans and ANR, including municipal planning grants, state historic preservation grants, community development grants, VTrans Bike/Pedestrian grants among others. Lastly, VCD would allow for Neighborhood Development Area Eligibility, withing ¼ mile of each designated village center. These would provide exemptions from Act 250 for Priority House Projects, exempt housing units sold from the land gains tax, and make the projects eligible for reduced state fees.

F. Future Economic Development

Future economic investment in Stockbridge can have a significant economic impact on the community. Discussion and coordination regarding future land use development options should be encouraged between the community and economic development interests. For the larger and more complex projects, review and analysis of proposed developments should measure community-wide impacts on the financial capacity of government to service the economic

development and likely mitigation measures to accommodate such growth in the most equitable manner.

Stockbridge has implemented new zoning districts to accommodate mixed use and light industrial development near existing community centers. It is hoped that these new districts provide suitable location for attracting diverse and sustainable businesses which contribute to the small-town quality of life.

While changes in land use regulation may provide a foundation for new business development, other benefits such as easy access to outdoor recreation or school choice may do more to draw new businesses to Stockbridge. To be sure, it is essential not to create an impediment to commercial development, but land use regulations that protect the character of the area while allowing appropriate types of commercial development will help maintain the community's quality of life.

When residents were asked whether the Town "should proactively develop a plan to attract new residents and businesses," the response was mixed. About 43% of respondents supported this idea, while 31% were neutral and 20% opposed the idea. Further discussion will need to take place on what the Town's role should be in drawing in new residents and businesses.

G. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To attract diverse and sustainable businesses in Stockbridge which contribute to the small-town quality of life.
2. To nurture a strong and diverse regional economy that provides sustainable employment opportunities for residents while maintaining environmental standards.
3. To strengthen and maintain the town's agricultural and forest economies and to ensure continuance of small-town village and rural character.
4. To strengthen small businesses, such as home occupations, artistic and recreational activities.
5. To encourage the growth of remote work utilizing the Town's technological and communications infrastructure.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To maintain for reasonable zoning standards enabling home occupations and home businesses to be developed or to continue.
2. To support the development of local enterprises that create markets for locally produced goods and services.
3. To encourage new business development in locations where services such as roads, fire protection and power supply are available or planned.
4. To support creation of regional economies that do not place unreasonable financial burdens on the taxpayers of Stockbridge.

5. To support development of primary retail businesses located in designated Village Center or Hamlet areas.
6. To prohibit development that has the effect of creating sprawl.
7. To cooperate with neighboring towns, regional planning commissions and economic development groups to plan for and maintain a balance between the type and number of jobs created and natural population growth in the area.
8. To continue to encourage the expansion and development of resilient and sustainable communications infrastructure.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. To pursue Village Center Designation (VCD) for Stockbridge Common and Gaysville hamlet areas.

V. Recreation

A. Background

The Town of Stockbridge provides recreational facilities through the Stockbridge Central School and the White River Park at Stockbridge Vermont. Facilities include a playground and sports field. There are a wide number of additional recreation opportunities throughout the community.

Of note are the numerous swimming holes to be found along the White and Tweed Rivers. These spectacular spots are major summer recreation sites, attracting people from throughout the region. Access to these swimming holes is available through private and public locations. Should these accesses be threatened, a major loss to Stockbridge and its residents would result. The stretches to the White River passing through Stockbridge also attract people from throughout the region for tubing, rafting, boating, and fishing.

Several parcels damaged by Tropical Storm Irene were purchased by the Town through a Federal Emergency Management Agency's buyout program. These parcels are permanently preserved as public recreational areas, allowing additional access to the Tweed and White Rivers. Future river access areas and Town "green" spaces will result from the FEMA Buyout Program (see "FEMA" section). River access is a major concern in order that residents of Stockbridge and other areas might enjoy the benefits of this Federal program.

Recreation and the Stockbridge Economy

Outdoor recreation is a key element of Vermont's economy, generating roughly $2.8 billion a year in retail sales and services throughout the state.[1] Recreation-seeking tourists spend money. In "a National Survey of the Vermont Visitor," the University of Vermont business school determined that visiting hunters and fishermen spend more than $2000 per trip. Hikers and campers spend $440 per trip.

Stockbridge is home to roughly 4,400 acres of publicly conserved lands. The Les Newell Wildlife Management Area and the Green Mountain National Forest both offer the potential for recreational opportunities including fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, etc. The Appalachian Trail also runs through Stockbridge, exposing the town to regional, national and international hikers. Some of the more rural areas, such as the Chateauguay No-Town Area, have limited trail access, but there is interest in expanding the existing system to allow for more use.

In addition to hiking, hunting and other recreation, Stockbridge has a network of trails that are utilized by All-Terrain Vehicles. This system is maintained by the Quad-runners, a local chapter of Vermont All-Terrain Vehicle Sportsman's Association. During the winter, additional trails are utilized by snowmobilers. These trails are maintained by VAST, the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers.

[1] *Vermont Tourism 2017 Benchmark Report.*

These recreational pursuits have the potential to provide Stockbridge with a market that helps feed the local economic system. Additionally, Stockbridge's water resources include the Tweed and White rivers, both of which offer excellent opportunities for recreation.

With broad support in Town for recreational opportunities, the Town converted the former White River Campground to the "White River Park at Stockbridge, Vermont." This Park provides residents with opportunities to enjoy the White River as it is accessible for persons of all ages and abilities. Land use in a community influences local recreation. Stockbridge should continue to maintain a pattern of low-density development in the more rural areas of Town, allowing for retention of open land and reducing the possibility of having large land areas broken up for development. This Plan specifically encourages outdoor recreation as a valuable commercial use in Stockbridge and seeks to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike.

B. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To maintain, enhance and expand recreational opportunities in Stockbridge.
2. To make outdoor recreation a strong part of Stockbridge's local niche and economy.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To encourage the development of outdoor recreational businesses in Stockbridge.
2. To encourage land use patterns that maintain and enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. To explore options to encourage public access to local campgrounds.
2. To request State improvements for parking area signage along Route 107 that allow access to the river.
3. To continue to support permitted recreational events.
4. To work to ensure that development of the town's website includes a major focus on Stockbridge's recreational opportunities and assets.
5. To work with the National Forest Service to improve signage and visibility of the Stony Brook trailhead of the Appalachian Trail.
6. To continue to encourage and support the development of the White River Park at Stockbridge Vermont by seeking additional grants and funding.
7. To investigate a more integrated recreation plan combining town recreational resources within a single document.

VI. Utilities and Facilities

The provision of services and maintenance of facilities is one of the key roles of any municipal government. The cost of services and public facility maintenance can represent a substantial amount of a municipality's yearly budget (not including transportation, which is generally the largest portion). When asked whether the Town does a good job of balancing services and costs, just under half of respondents to the 2022 Town Plan Survey either agreed or strongly agreed, while 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the remainder were neutral.

A. Capital Budgeting and Planning

State statute enables communities to create a Capital Budget Plan for the purposes of planning and investing in long-range capital planning. Although most communities have some form of capital account where they save money, many do not have an adequate capital budget plan. A capital budget outlines the capital projects that are planned to be undertaken in the coming fiscal years over a five-to-ten-year period. It includes estimated costs and a proposed method of financing those costs. Also outlined is an indication of priority of need and the order in which these investments will be made. Capital budget plans should be consistent with the Town Plan and include an analysis of the impact of the capital investments on municipal operating costs.

When planning for routine major facilities investments, such as roof replacements, foundation repairs, etc., it is important to also consider making energy efficiency improvements at the same time. Making improvements for energy efficiency during renovation activities is normally more cost effective than completing the projects independently.

The town of Stockbridge has a full-scale capital budget plan to help guide investments in community infrastructure and equipment. The Planning Commission has the authority to make recommendations as part of its role under V.S.A. Title 24, §4430 to the Selectboard with regard to what capital investments should be considered annually. Below is the current capital plan.

Figure 13: Capital Plan

All Capital Costs	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Inflows											
Highway Vehicles Reserve Fund Starting Balance	$174,000	$149,000	$111,500	$174,000	$111,000	$168,000	$94,500	$121,000	$17,000	$1,000	$13,000
Highway Vehicle Reserve Fund Appropriation	$95,000	$95,000	$95,000	$95,000	$115,000	$115,000	$115,000	$115,000	$115,000	$115,000	$115,000
Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund Starting Balance	$175,018	$185,018	$195,018	$205,018	$215,018	$225,018	$235,018	$245,018	$255,018	$265,018	$275,018
Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund Appropriation	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Annual Paving Appropriation	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000
Highway Vehicle Trade-In Value	$40,000										
Fire Vehicle Trade-In Value											
Grant Funding - Town Office		$15,000									
ARPA Funds - Town Office	$14,000										
VTrans Town Highway Class 2 Grant											
VTrans Town Highway Structures Grant											
VTrans Town Highway Emergency Grant											
FEMA Grants											
ARPA Funding - Gaysville Bridge			$5,625,000								
(additional funding transferred from General Fund, if needed)									$12,000		
Total Inflows	$533,018	$479,018	$6,061,518	$509,018	$476,018	$543,018	$479,518	$516,018	$434,018	$416,018	$438,018
Outflows											
Replacement Ford F550	$160,000								$56,500	$16,500	$16,500
Replacement Grader								$130,500	$30,500	$30,500	$30,500
Replacement Tandem		$132,500	$32,500	$32,500	$32,500	$32,500	$32,500	$32,500			
Replacement Dump Truck 4x4						$130,500	$30,500	$30,500	$30,500	$30,500	$30,500
Replacement Backhoe/Loader				$125,500	$25,500	$25,500	$25,500	$25,500	$25,500	$25,500	
Replacement Mini Pumper											
Replacement Pumper/Tanker											
Town Office Heating/AC Pump		$15,000									
Town Office New Generator	$14,000										
Yearly .5 Mile Paved Road and Parking Lot Resurfacing Projects	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000	$45,000
Gaysville Bridge Construction			$5,625,000								
Gaysville Bridge Engineering and ROW Costs - 10% Local Contribution			$33,800	$33,800							
Mount Hunger RD Egress Rebuilding		$50,000									
Mount Hunger RD Egress Engineering Costs	$10,000										
Stony Brook RD & Davis Hill RD Drain Replacement											
Blackmer BLVD Erosion Remediation											
Total Outflows	$229,000	$242,500	$5,736,300	$236,800	$103,000	$233,500	$133,500	$264,000	$188,000	$148,000	$122,500
Ending Balance Going Forward	$304,018	$236,518	$325,218	$272,218	$373,018	$309,518	$346,018	$252,018	$246,018	$268,018	$315,518

B. Town Buildings

Stockbridge Town Office

The Stockbridge Town Office is located on Route 100 in Stockbridge adjacent to the U.S. Post Office. The building was built in 2003 and represents a substantial improvement over the previous location which shared space in the Town Garage. The new building is attractive and conveniently located, and contains both adequate office and meeting space and sufficient vault storage space to meet the town's needs for the foreseeable future.

However, the Town Office is located immediately adjacent to a portion of the Tweed River Flood Hazard Area. Although not in the mapped floodplain, the building was inundated during Tropical Storm Irene, forcing a complete renovation of the building.

Given the potential for a severe flood hazard event to damage the Stockbridge Town Office, the Town has considered seeking an alternative location for the Town Office. However, barriers include identification of a location and adequate funds to relocate/build.

Town Garage

The Stockbridge Highway Department shares space with the Stockbridge Volunteer Fire Department in a building located on Blackmer Boulevard. Although available space was increased when the Town Office moved into its new building on Route 107, the square footage of the building remains inadequate for the storage needs of the Town Garage. Additionally, the location (.53 acres) does not allow for the exterior storage of materials and equipment commonly needed by a Highway Department. It is hoped that at some point in the future, opportunities will present themselves which will allow for the size of the parcel to increase, thus allowing for the expansion of the facility.

An energy audit was conducted on the Town Garage in 2010. The most significant energy saving opportunities identified were replacing the boiler, improving the insulation and airtightness of the ceiling, and replacing the outdoor lighting. The total estimate for implementing all suggested upgrades could be as much as $52,000. Improving the ceiling is not a simple solution and on its own would not be cost effective, but the cost effectiveness would increase if the work was timed with replacement of the roof membrane. At this time, there is no plan to implement the suggested improvements.

C. Privately Owned Community Buildings

Belcher Public Library

The Belcher Library is located in Gaysville on Route 107 near the Gaysville Community Church. According to “A Pictorial History of Stockbridge Gaysville, 1761-1976,” the Library together with a sum of money was bequeathed to the village of Gaysville by Mr. William C. Belcher in 1896. First located across from the present-day library adjoining the Chedel General Store, it was relocated when Mrs. Laura Gay bequeathed the family home to the library. Around 1944, the books were moved into their new quarters and it has been used as a library ever since.

The Library is run by an independent Board of Trustees and staffed by volunteer librarians. Traditionally, the library has received an annual contribution from the town. The Library is owned by a private trust.

To supplement its estimated collection of 3,000 volumes, the Library uses the services of the Midstate Regional Library in Berlin, VT, including the inter-library loan program. Besides books and magazines, the Library has a varied section of videos, audiobooks, DVDs, and CDs as well as public computer and internet access.

The Library’s community support role includes workshops, use as public meeting space, “meet the author” events, and various children’s programs including Valentine, Easter Egg, and Christmas Cookie parties. Volunteers also have read aloud at local day care centers and the Stockbridge Central School.

Perkins House

Margaret Perkins left her house to the Stockbridge Historical Society in her will, conditional upon the Society taking up residence there. The Society is in the process of re-developing the house as a museum, ~~and~~ its main office, and gathering center.

D. Municipal Services

Public Sewer/Public Water

At present, there are no municipally owned public water or sewage disposal systems in Stockbridge. It is not anticipated that any such systems will be constructed or proposed during the eight-year life of this Plan.

While recognizing that such facilities would permit greater densities and concentrations of development, the Planning Commission does not recommend investment of the capital required for these services at this time.

Solid Waste Management

Consistent with VT Act 148, the Universal Recycling Law which requires municipalities to charge for the collection of waste by volume or weight by July 1, 2015, property owners now contract directly with a hauler for the disposal of their solid wastes. Prior to this time solid waste collection was contracted by the Town and financed through property taxes.

For information on municipal services such as fire, police, and rescue see Chapter VII, Health and Emergency Services. For information relating to Stockbridge's Education System, see Chapter XII, Education.

E. Cemeteries

There are nine cemeteries located in Stockbridge: Abbott, Bartlett, Hagar, Maplewood, South Hill, Stratton, Sylvester, Watkins, and Durkee (now washed away). Maintenance and management of these cemeteries is overseen by the Cemetery Commission elected by the town at Town Meeting. The Cemetery Commission continues to keep the cemetery facilities in good repair.

F. Communication Facilities

When surveyed in 2022, 90% of respondents indicated that they felt that universal cell phone and high-speed internet were important to the community.

Telephone

Telephone service in Stockbridge is provided both by traditional landlines from Consolidated Communications, and VOIP via EC Fiber.

Internet

Stockbridge is a member of East Central Vermont Community Fiber (EC Fiber), which provides high-speed fiber-optic internet to the Town. As of Fall 2021, EC Fiber had 264 customers of the 404 primary residential properties in Town.

Residents also access the internet via: landline, DSL, cable, satellite, and cellular internet.

There are still areas within Town that lack sufficient internet access. The Town continues discussions with EC Fiber around improving last mile coverage internet access to remaining residents and supports extending Last Mile coverage to reach 100% buildout.

Municipal Web Site

Many communities in Vermont have created municipal web sites to provide information to their citizens. These sites often include events calendars and, in some cases, local business directories. With the help of a state grant Stockbridge now has a municipal web site.

Online and Remote Meeting Access

Advances in communication technology have allowed for town meetings to be held both in-person and virtually. Providing remote access to meetings can facilitate involvement of residents that may not otherwise attend an in-person meeting. With nearly 100% of the Town covered by high-speed internet, most residents now have the opportunity to participate in municipal meetings.

Cellular Communications

There is a cell tower located in Stockbridge. Stockbridge has a cell tower ordinance that guides the design of any towers; however, any cellular provider who is creating a network of cell towers is exempt from local land use regulations under V.S.A Title 30, Chapter 5, §248a. While these facilities are exempt from local regulations, due consideration to the municipal plan is supposed to occur as part of the permitting process.

G. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To provide public services and public facilities that meet the needs of the community without creating an undue burden on taxpayers.
2. To increase and improve transparency and frequency of communication with town residents on critical issues using new digital technology.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To provide residents with safe, effective, responsive, and affordable municipal infrastructure, facilities, and services consistent with other town goals.
2. To encourage and work with other public and private utility or service providers to do the same.

3. To ensure the Town's participation in the Public Service Board's review of new and expanded telecommunications facilities to guarantee the goals and policies of this plan are considered in future development.
4. To effectively plan for future investments and upkeep of community facilities so as to avoid overburdening taxpayers due to unexpected capital costs.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. The Selectboard should continue to work with the Planning Commission to maintain a Capital Budget and Program to guide future investments in infrastructure.
2. The Selectboard should continue to support universal cellular coverage in Town.
3. The Selectboard continue to support universal internet coverage within Stockbridge, such as the East Central Vermont Fiber Project.
4. The Town should continue to improve its municipal website to: improve communication; enhance emergency preparedness; provide residents with access to municipal data; and educate visitors and residents to local events and opportunities.
5. To investigate the creation of email directories and lists or other digital communication. methods to better reach residents, including seeking grants to fund these developments.
6. The Town should prioritize cost-effective strategies to facilitate compliance with state solid waste regulations and requirements.

VII. Health and Emergency Services

A. Health Care Facilities

Health care facilities are essential in the prevention, treatment, and management of illness, and in the preservation of mental and physical well-being. Rural locations such as Stockbridge are served by small facilities that can assist residents with general health care needs but are not equipped to provide complex acute care services that require specialized services and equipment.

The lower population density of Vermont's rural countryside and the larger the area over which the population is distributed can make providing adequate health care more difficult, particularly for the elderly who may not be able to drive themselves to major health care facilities. Likewise in rural areas, emergency care for severe trauma or major acute illnesses such as stroke and heart attack may take longer to arrive than in more populated locations, risking potential loss of life or severe long-term disabilities.

Although there are no town-based health care services in Stockbridge. Local and regional health care services are available, including the Gifford Medical Center (Randolph) and smaller health centers in Bethel. Large-scale community hospitals are in Rutland and Berlin, VT. A tertiary care facility is in Lebanon, NH.

B. Fire Protection Services

Stockbridge is served by the Stockbridge Volunteer Fire Department. Funding of the Department is provided by the Town and by department fund raising activities. Stockbridge has a mutual aid agreement with the towns of Pittsfield and Bethel whereby assistance is provided in the event of a serious fire.

The Stockbridge Fire Department is operated exclusively by volunteers. There is always a need for additional volunteers to serve as firefighters, to help raise money, and to help care for the equipment. Because a vast majority of Stockbridge's residents work outside of the community, and because of the added challenge of the many State and Federal requirements for training, it can be challenging to find volunteers and maintain their training credentials.

C. Police Protection Services

A first and second constable may be elected annually at Town Meeting. The Vermont State Police, located in Royalton, respond to emergencies in Stockbridge, such as traffic accidents, breaches of the peace or other criminal rather than civil emergencies along state highways.

The Windsor County Sheriff’s Department, located in Woodstock, will provide radar surveillance and prearranged security service on a contract basis.

D. Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical services in Stockbridge are provided by White River Valley Ambulance, Inc. (WRVA). WRVA is a not-for-profit emergency ambulance and rescue service composed of paid full-time, part-time and volunteer staff. Emergency medical service is provided to a geographical area encompassing 280 square miles and approximately 10,000 residents. In addition to Stockbridge, WRVA covers Barnard, Bethel, Braintree, Brookfield, Granville, East Granville, Randolph, and Rochester. The Town of Stockbridge pays WRVA for its services. It should be noted that those who use the ambulance will be charged for WRVA's service on an individual basis in addition to the fees paid by the Town.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Advanced Response Team (DHART)

The Dartmouth-Hitchcock Advanced Response Team is based in Lebanon, NH at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. DHART crews provide air medical transportation services to the medical communities of Northern New England. In addition, DHART flight crews respond to public safety agency requests for medical evacuation of trauma patients from scenes of injury, and will transport to the closest Trauma Center in the region's five states. Operating 24 hours a day and seven days a week, DHART Crews transport adult, pediatric and neonatal patients to ANY appropriate medical facility in New England.

E. Emergency Management

The impact of unpredictable natural and human-caused events to the region can be reduced through proper emergency management. Emergency management is generally broken down into four areas: preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Planning for emergencies is essential at the municipal level and should focus on all four of the areas outlined above.

The Town maintains an Emergency Management Director (EMD) who oversees and coordinates local and regional emergency services to ensure the town is prepared in the event of an emergency. The EMD to oversees the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and updates the Local Emergency Management Plan, which occurs annually. The Stockbridge Central School and Stockbridge Meeting House have been designated as emergency shelters.

Local Emergency Management Plan

Stockbridge is required by the State of Vermont to have a Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP). This plan supplies a list of contacts to use during an emergency as well as information on shelters, vulnerable sites, and which town officials might play which roles during a disaster.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Disaster mitigation covers actions done to reduce the effects of a disaster. For Stockbridge, the most prevalent hazard is flooding, with a variety of other hazards. All hazards have been reviewed in the Town's Mitigation Plan. There are many ways that the town can reduce damages, and since a disaster does not always result in state or federal assistance, the town

should take sensible steps that can reduce disaster costs, damage to property and loss of life. The Town recently updated its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2021.

Emergency Access

Any new property development in Stockbridge should be designed as to allow safe access for emergency services. Poorly designed driveways that are too steep or too narrow can limit access, particularly in the winter, and may represent a safety hazard for the emergency responder. The Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws contain provisions to ensure that land development shall be designed to ensure adequate provision of facilities necessary for emergency services.

In new subdivisions, the design of such drives or similar facilities shall be done in consultation with the Stockbridge Fire Department. On future major subdivisions, the Zoning Board of Adjustment may require the provision of storage ponds and dry hydrants necessary for adequate fire protection.

F. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To strengthen and maintain strong emergency management capabilities.
2. To ensure the protection and safety of the citizens of Stockbridge against crime and violations of law.
3. To provide access to high quality medical care to all Stockbridge residents.

It is the Health Care policy of the Town:

1. To support and encourage the development of local health care facilities and counseling services to help residents obtain health care as close to home as possible.
2. To support programs that improve medical services for Stockbridge residents.
3. To support the development of assisted living or other facilities or services dedicated to supporting the elderly in Stockbridge.
4. To support efforts to provide residents with access to high quality physical and mental health care through local providers.

It is the Emergency Management policy of the Town:

1. To maintain or improve (if necessary) response times for emergency services.
2. That road and driveway access to proposed developments for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles be evaluated as part of the permit review process.
3. To maintain its relationship with local ambulance service providers.
4. That the Selectboard maintain an up-to-date Emergency Management Plan.
5. To make its emergency management capabilities/preparedness, responsiveness, recovery, and hazard mitigation an ongoing priority.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. The Selectboard review and update the Local Emergency Management Plan and its overall emergency management capabilities on a yearly basis.
2. The Selectboard should continue to maintain the 5-year Hazard Mitigation Plan with assistance from the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission

VIII. Housing

A. Background

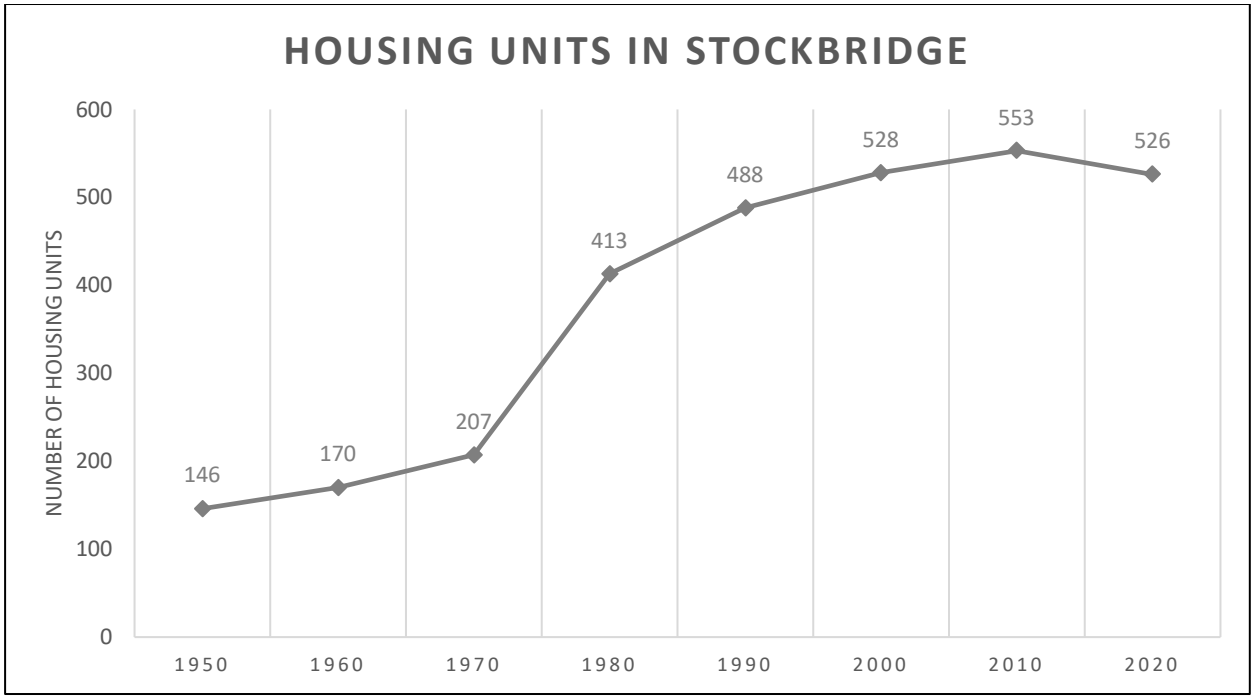

Figure 14: Housing Units in Stockbridge (Source: US Census)

A key element in the character of the Town is its housing - the quality, availability, and affordability of places for residents to live and a means for non-residents to enjoy the Town's and region's many assets. The availability of housing can also influence the rate and direction of business and commercial growth.

B. Housing Profile

According to the U.S. 2020 Census, there were 526 housing units in Stockbridge (see Figure 14). In 2010, there were 553 housing units. This amounted to a decrease of 27 units or 4.9% over the ten-year period. A housing unit, as defined by the U.S. Census, includes houses, apartments, mobile homes, and rooms for occupancy. According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate (2020), the majority of Stockbridge's homes are owner-occupied with only an estimated 13% renter-occupied, and approximately 35% (US Census) are used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use (second homes).

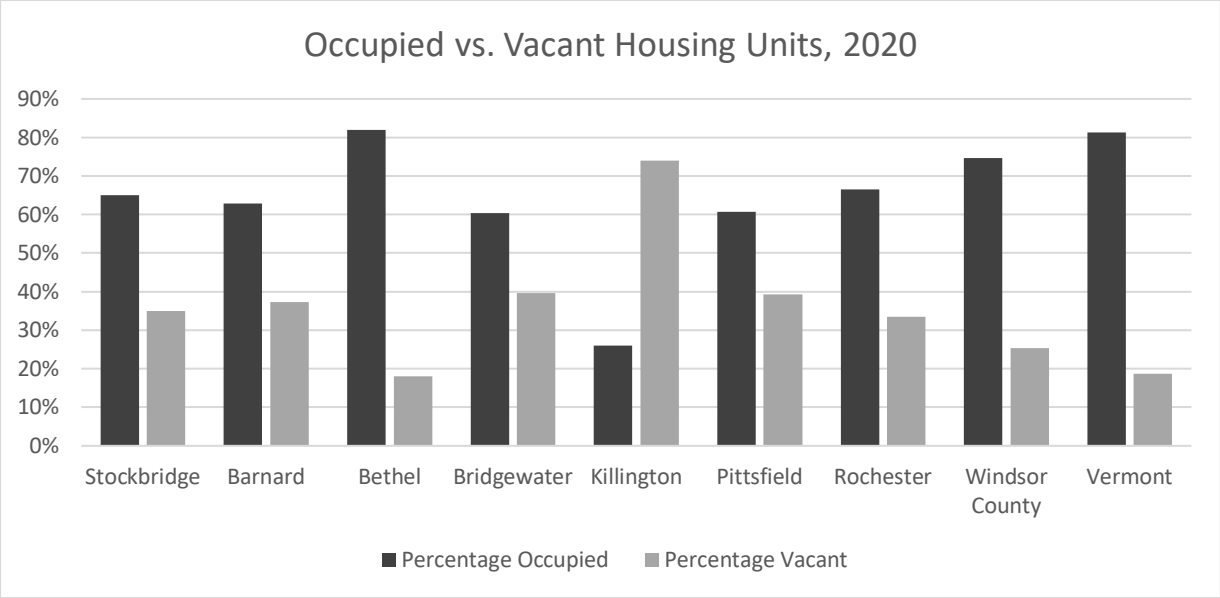

Figure 15: Occupied vs. Vacant Housing Units (Source: US Census, 2020)

The percentage of second homes (35%) in Stockbridge is comparable to its immediate neighbors (Barnard, Pittsfield and Bridgewater), but higher than Windsor County or the State of Vermont as a whole. This is primarily due to the community's proximity to the ski resort community of Killington. Killington is clearly a prime location for vacation homes with 74% of their total stock used for seasonal, occasional or recreational use. When a town has a large number of homes that are not occupied year-round, it can have unforeseen impacts on town services. For example, communities which have volunteer fire department depend on full-time residents to staff its fire department and a lack of full-time residents can make acquiring staff difficult because the pool of candidates is reduced.

Short-term and holiday rentals are another important consideration for the Town. While these rentals can provide an important source of income for local stores and recreational, tourism, and other services, they can also put added pressure on the local housing market for full-time residents, which can exacerbate local and regional employment shortages and high housing costs. The 2022 Town Plan Survey indicated that respondents had mixed feelings about short term and vacation rentals. 47% of respondents supported the idea that "short term and holiday rentals contribute to the economic well-being of the town", while 28% were neutral and 23% disagreed. Further discussion will need to take place on the role of short term and vacation rentals in Town, how and whether they should be regulated, and the impact this housing has on the local housing market and economy.

Rental Housing

Only an estimated 13% of Stockbridge's housing stock in 2020 were rentals (American Community Survey (ACS), 2016-2020), which is a smaller percentage than nearly all of the surrounding communities. The housing market statewide is tight with few unoccupied rental units (only a fraction of Stockbridge's rental housing units are unoccupied) continues to drive up rental costs. In 2010, the US Agency of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculated the

fair market rent for a modest two-bedroom apartment in Windsor County at $843 per month; in 2020 that cost had risen nearly 21% to $1,018 per month. To afford a two-bedroom apartment at this rate, in 2020 a renter would have needed a household income of roughly $41,000 annually.

The low percentage of homes that were unoccupied (for sale or for rent) indicate that in 2020 Stockbridge was experiencing a shortage of available housing stock. Anything below 5% is functionally considered a zero. This low percentage of available housing stock is very consistent from town to town throughout Vermont.

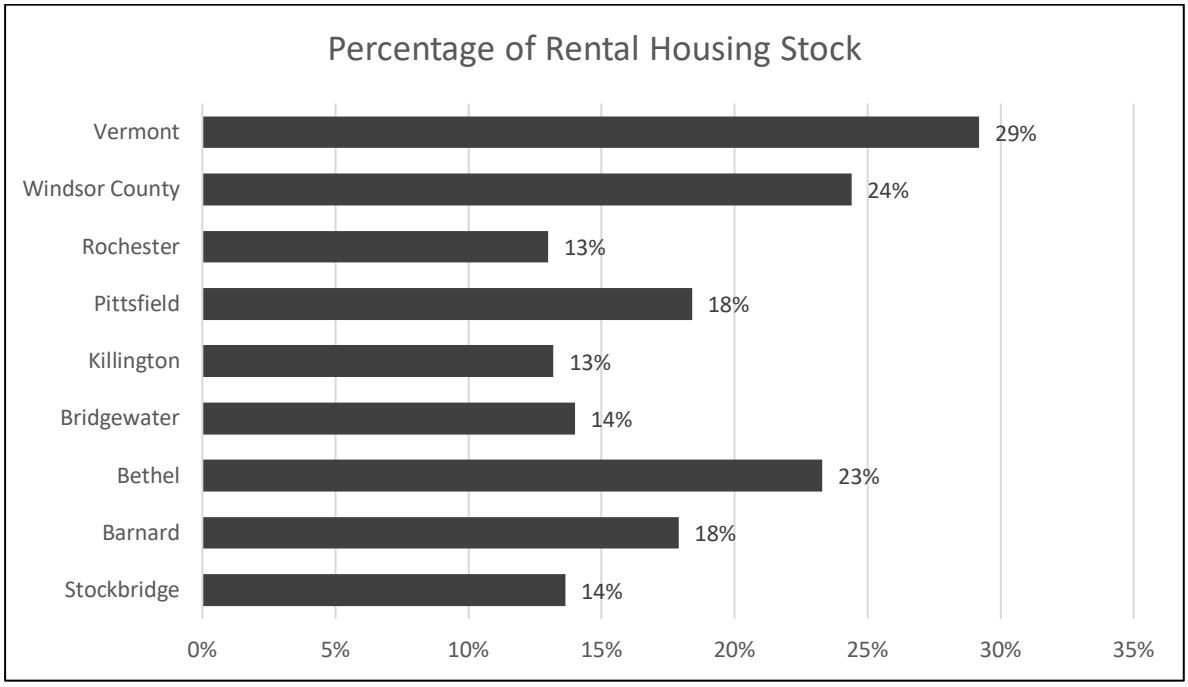

Figure 16: Percentage of Rental Housing Stock (American Community Survey, 2020)

Affordable Housing

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

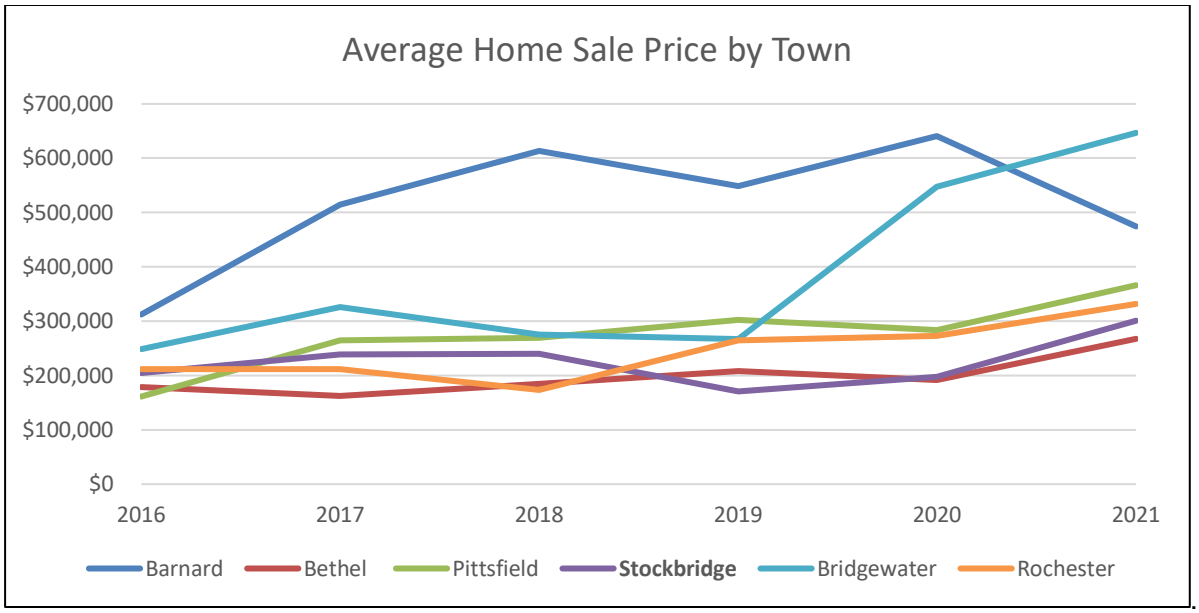

Figure 17: Housing Sales (Source: New England Real Estate Network)

The lack of consistent available housing data makes it challenging to track trends in housing values over time. Figure 19 indicates that, while housing sales for many towns remained flat since 2016, between 2020 and 2021 sale prices increased significantly for nearby towns in the region. Since 2011, Stockbridge has seen a 50% increase in average sale price. This is reflective of the broader housing availability challenges towns are experiencing throughout the state. According to the Vermont Department of Taxes, the median purchase price of a primary home on less than six acres in Stockbridge in 2021 reached $275,000. A household would need an annual income of $79,000 as well as $25,000 in cash (for closing costs and a 5% down payment) to purchase a home at that price. This is more than Stockbridge's median family income of $68,000 (ACS 2020). It should be noted that the housing market has changed substantially over the past decade. Housing has historically been more affordable in Stockbridge than in surrounding towns, but this is starting to change. The global pandemic, a tight housing market, and little new housing construction since the 2008 housing crash have pushed up the cost of housing significantly.

Stockbridge, like many communities, has experienced a trend toward fewer home occupants. This trend is unlikely to be reversed. The trend results in an increase demand for housing. The elderly, single households and other special populations are oftentimes in need of special types of housing including that which is affordable and readily accessible.

Another barrier to affordable housing is the age of homes in Stockbridge. Current data indicates that 55.2% of owned homes and 67.3% of rental homes in Vermont were built prior to 1979. Homes built prior to 1979 often are less energy-efficient and require more maintenance and upkeep costs. Furthermore, lead paint was often used on older homes, which can be costly to remediate and can have negative health impacts.

When it comes to affordable housing, the opinion of residents appears to be mixed. 47% of respondents to the 2022 Town Plan Survey supported "building additional housing in

Stockbridge", while about 25% of respondents did not support building additional housing. However, when asked whether finding new ways to add residential space to existing properties is important, a comparable number (51%) supported this statement while only 11% opposed. Finally, 75% of respondents support finding ways to make housing more affordable for existing residents, with only 6% disagreeing with this statement. These numbers indicate on the whole, residents see housing affordability as very important, and are marginally more inclined to support increased housing units within existing property over the development of new housing units, which is where disagreement appears most acute.

While most respondents (59%) to the survey feel as though housing is affordable, nearly 20% of respondents do not, indicating the need for more discussion on actions the Town can take to improve and maintain affordability for current and future residents.

Several options for increasing affordable housing availability in Stockbridge could be through the incorporation of more flexible processes surrounding multifamily dwellings and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), both of which are allowed uses in Stockbridge. Multifamily housing usually consists of three or more housing units located on a single building lot. These units can be in the form of triplexes, quads, cottage courts, co-housing, or apartment buildings. Multi-family housing can serve to increase the number of available units as well as provide units of varying sizes, which can lower overall housing costs and allow for more diverse housing options for individuals and small families.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are another potential avenue for affordable housing. The State of Vermont requires that municipalities allow ADUs wherever single-family dwellings are permitted, provided there is sufficient space, and all parking and septic requirements are met. ADUs can facilitate aging in place by giving elderly homeowners the option to downsize when they wish while also providing an additional source of income. ADUs can also serve as a form of entry-level housing for young adults and families looking to move to the area for work but unable to afford the cost of purchasing a home.

A third option for affordable housing is mobile and manufactured homes. Manufactured and mobile homes are much less expensive than traditional stick-built homes. They can serve as an affordable starter home for young families or as an attractive down-sizing option for seniors. Mobile home parks are currently allowed within the Rural Residential district of the zoning ordinance, and are subject to conditional use approval. Statutorily, manufactured homes and mobile homes are treated no differently from single-family dwellings, and they may only be regulated on the same terms and conditions as conventional housing.

Another option, and one that is of particular interest to the Stockbridge Planning Commission, is to explore the potential for tiny homes. Smaller dwellings, such as tiny homes, can provide easy-to-maintain, affordable living quarters for older residents, while tiny homes built in a cluster can help provide an important sense of community. Young families may also see a tiny house as a great starter home.

Senior Housing

Section B of Chapter 1 discussed Stockbridge's trend toward an aging population. The Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) are beginning to retire, and the oldest will be 84 in 2030. This shift in demographics will put added pressure on an already tight housing market. Expanding health care costs may leave seniors with even less money to spend on housing.

As the seniors (citizens aged 65 or older) become less comfortable with the tasks involved in managing their own home, they often seek to downsize, or turn to some sort of elderly housing. If health is an issue and some form of constant care is required, seniors will need to enter a nursing home or a residential care facility. Park House (Rochester), Morgan Orchards (Randolph), and Vista Senior (Killington) are the nearest facilities.

Within Vermont there are several types of residential care facilities which are subject to State regulation, including nursing homes and residential care facilities. Nursing homes provide nursing care and related services for people who need nursing, medical, rehabilitation, or other special services. They are licensed by the state and may be certified to participate in the Medicaid and/or Medicare programs. Certain nursing homes may also meet specific standards for sub-acute care or dementia care. Residential care homes are state licensed group living arrangements designed to meet the needs of people who cannot live independently and usually do not require the type of care provided in a nursing home. When needed, help is provided with daily activities such as eating, walking, toileting, bathing, and dressing. Residential care homes may provide nursing home level of care to residents under certain conditions. Daily rates at residential care homes are usually less than rates at nursing homes.

In the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's issue paper "Housing and the Needs of Vermont's Aging Population", it is acknowledged that more seniors today want to "age in place," which means choosing to remain at home or in a supportive living community as they grow older without having to move each time their needs increase. Considering the lack of availability of nursing homes in Stockbridge and Vermont as a whole, this may be the optimal way to address elderly housing in the future. Having the right housing includes the ability to stay active and engaged in community life, which is a great benefit not only to the individual, but to the community as a whole.

There are numerous innovative housing options to consider that both increase housing options for seniors and expand the range of housing types available to residents in town. Access to co-housing, home-share, cottage courts, and accessory dwelling units can all be facilitated at the town level. The Planning Commission notes that the nature of housing and housing needs are constantly changing, and that new forms of housing should be explored as housing and housing needs evolve.

Several municipalities have benefited from planned retirement communities which provide for older persons. Innovative land use policies and controls to direct special needs are encouraged. Such land usages are best located in close proximity to existing hamlet and village centers where basic services are available and not in rural areas.

C. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To encourage safe and affordable shelter for present and future populations.
2. To continue to promote sufficient affordable primary housing by revitalization of existing or construction of new housing.
3. To encourage innovative planning, design and construction of primary housing which minimizes the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of housing.
4. To encourage innovative planning, design, and construction to keep pace with evolving housing formats and needs, e.g. cohousing, multigenerational dwellings, ADU's, tiny homes, seasonal camps, etc.
5. To have a density and distribution of housing throughout the Town that allows for the continued maintenance of the working landscape.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To allow for growth of housing for all income levels and at a rate consistent with the community's ability to provide services in a fiscally sound manner and consistent with the other goals and policies expressed in this Plan.
2. To prioritize preservation and improvement of housing already in existence.
3. To encourage the development of affordable housing options in all areas of town open to residential development. The Town and private developers are encouraged to work together to provide housing that meets the needs of the residents within the community. Large individual developments are discouraged.
4. To ensure projects are sensitive to the predominant characteristics of a site.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. Community leaders should work with state housing agencies, non-profit organizations, and lending institutions to encourage the availability of loan or grant funds for Stockbridge residents to acquire or improve their primary homes.
2. To encourage exploration of additional housing opportunities while protecting our Town's rural character.
3. Planning Commission should review the bylaws to ensure consistency with this plan.

IX. Natural, Scenic, and Cultural Resources

A. Background

The rural landscape is of the utmost importance to the Stockbridge community, both for its utility and its scenic value. Stockbridge residents value open, working lands that are hospitable to both recreation and outdoor work. It is essential to the community that this landscape be protected as it is the fundamental reason why residents choose to live in Stockbridge. Residents want to maintain the quality of their landscape for the future, to protect the natural world they value, while allowing the land to be worked sustainably and harmoniously.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To protect the natural, scenic, and historic character of Stockbridge.
2. To maintain the quality of the landscape for the future and to protect natural resources while allowing the land to be worked safely and harmoniously.
3. To enhance and maintain Stockbridge's outdoor environment for both active and passive recreational uses including hiking, fishing, boating, camping, hunting, music and the arts.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To protect the natural, scenic, and historic character of Stockbridge's working landscape.

B. Water Resources

Water resources include aquifers (the supply of fresh water beneath the ground) and surface waters (rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes). Maintaining these resources, including sustainable yields of quality water, is necessary for the citizens of Stockbridge.

Understanding existing water resources is a challenge due to limits on available data. Stockbridge has no mapped groundwater information and the process for obtaining this data is complex, including using geographic data and technologies to map groundwater situations and use patterns, analyzing well data provided to the state by well drillers, and site-specific analysis.

The health of Stockbridge's surface waters is essential to maintaining quality groundwater, as well as an important element for outdoor recreation and natural beauty. Vermont law declares that the lakes and ponds of the state and the lands lying underneath them are held in trust by the state for the benefit of all Vermonters. The state, as trustee, cannot sell or give away these public resources to individuals or corporations for purely private purposes. A permitting program for large groundwater withdrawals was implemented by the state in 2011. Those seeking permits will have to show that their withdrawals will not have an adverse impact on water resources. They must also show that their withdrawals must be consistent with local and Regional Plans.

There are several state and federal programs that help fund stream-management projects, such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP provides funds to farmers for the purpose of preserving lands once used for agriculture, with the goal of introducing and

encouraging plant life to prevent erosion and provide habitat. Stream instability can lead to excessive flooding and other types of damage due to increased flow velocity.

Riparian buffers are strips of bankside vegetation along waterways that provide a transition zone between water and land use. Construction or development along shorelines, or removal or disruption of vegetation within these areas can create increased water pollution, higher water temperatures, destabilization of banks, higher soil erosion rates and loss of fish or wildlife habitats.

The Plan continues to support current policy which maintains that no structures shall be allowed within 35 feet of the top of the bank of designated permanent streams, except those that by their nature must be located near streams (hydro facilities, for example). No ground disturbance should be allowed within 35 feet, except for bridge or culvert construction, or bank stabilization necessary for hazard mitigation purposes. Damages from Tropical Storm Irene have indicated a need for larger stream buffers, particularly in areas outside of the Flood Hazard Area.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of non-polluted surface and sub-surface water resources.
2. To allow use of groundwater resources by new development in such a manner to protect the public right to adequate quality and quantity of the resource.
3. To consider surface water and groundwater impacts and effects related to proposed or existing uses of land.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That land use activities which potentially threaten groundwater quality are carefully reviewed and monitored to prevent undue loss of groundwater quality.
    - Maintenance or enhancement of water resources for recreation, fisheries, necessary wildlife habitats and quality aesthetics.
2. To ensure on-site sewage disposal facilities meet state requirements.
3. That preservation of the natural state of streams should be encouraged through:
    - Protection of adjacent wetlands and natural areas; and
    - Maintenance of existing stream bank and buffer vegetation including trees, together with wildlife habitat.
4. That development in Stockbridge only if it does not cause any significant environmental degradation and does not result in the pollution of ground or surface waters or cause unreasonable reductions in supply.
5. That all proposed development for appropriate location away from brooks, streams, tributaries and well head recharge areas and for adequate protection of the recharge environment of these resources.
6. That all large water withdrawals in the regional area that have a potential to affect the private water sources of Stockbridge residents be subject to environmental review in accordance with State planning and water regulations.

7. That any newly permitted commercial water withdrawal facility permitted in Stockbridge provide some level of remuneration to the community in return for utilizing a public asset.

C. Wetlands

Wetlands are ecologically fragile areas and how these lands are managed have a direct bearing on the quality and quantity of water resources. The Vermont Water Resources Board estimates that wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the surface area of Vermont. In addition to being Vermont's most productive ecosystem, wetlands serve a wide variety of functions beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the general public, including the following:

- Retaining storm water run-off, reducing flood peaks and thereby reducing flooding;
- Improving surface water quality through storage of organic materials, chemical decomposition and filtration of sediments and other matter from surface water;
- Providing spawning, feeding and general habitat for fish;
- Providing habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife and rare, threatened, or endangered plants; and
- Contributing to the open space character and the overall beauty of the rural landscape.

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

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

For Stockbridge, as well as the State, the most significant wetlands have been mapped and are included as part of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These wetlands have been delineated on USGS topographic maps, and by reference are made a part of this Plan (see Map 5, Natural Resources). Other smaller wetlands often do not show on these maps, so a field determination by a qualified biologist is needed for most activities that involve state permits. There are approximately 139 acres of mapped wetlands in Stockbridge.

In those towns such as Stockbridge, that have zoning or subdivision regulations, final approvals cannot be granted for projects involving wetlands unless the Agency of Natural Resources has first had an opportunity to evaluate the effect of the project on the wetland [24 V.S.A., Section

4409]. It is important to note that future investigations of wetlands within Stockbridge may result in additional areas being determined as significant or important for conservation. Setback requirements for wetlands vary as required by ANR staff, but communities are allowed to set more stringent requirements. Some communities have opted to create a standardized buffer around wetlands of up to 100 feet.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. Identify and encourage land use development practices that avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on significant wetlands.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To abide and adhere to state wetlands regulations.
2. That structural development or intensive land uses shall not be located in mapped wetlands or within buffer zones to significant wetlands.
3. To plan for development adjacent to mapped wetlands so as not to result in undue disturbance to wetland areas or their function. Mitigating measures to protect the function of a wetland are an acceptable measure.
4. That no development is to be located in or allowed to fill in or alter any mapped wetland area.

D. Flood Plains

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

Floodplains, lands adjacent to watercourses (rivers, streams, and brooks), are periodically inundated by heavy rains or during spring thaws. They are porous and can absorb considerable water before reaching flood stage. Floodplains make excellent agricultural land but are poorly suited for development, both because of their propensity for flooding and because of their proximity to watercourses, which creates the potential for pollution. Approximately 811 acres in Stockbridge are within the floodplain area, which is 3% of the total land in the community.

Vermont has experienced more than fifteen statewide and regional floods since 1973. All but one of these were declared federal disasters, and economic losses were significant. Damage was not limited to designated floodplains, but often occurred along unstable river systems and steep streams, and in areas where stream debris was excessive. In some cases, recovery costs to the Town of Stockbridge alone amounted to several million dollars per flooding event. Public interest dictates that every reasonable attempt should be made to avoid or reduce such exposure to flood damage.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

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

FEMA has prepared a Flood Hazard Boundary Map for the Town of Stockbridge, which includes flood hazard areas for the Main Stem of the White River and for major streams and ponds. This map is on file at the Town Office and at the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission. The Flood Hazard Area is indicated in Map #2, Future Land Use. If in doubt when developing, contact the Stockbridge Zoning Administrator.

FEMA also administers the National Flood Insurance Program, which provides flood hazard insurance at subsidized rates for property owners in affected areas. In order to qualify for federal insurance, towns must adopt and retain a by-law to control land development within these areas. Minimum standards must be included and approved by FEMA. Coverage is only available to landowners in town if a town elects to participate in the program. The Town of Stockbridge incorporates Flood Hazard regulations as part of its Zoning Bylaws, and is recognized as a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission has determined that approximately 43 structures (including 38 houses and 4 businesses) have been identified as being located within the mapped flood hazard areas. 21 of the homes identified as within the floodplain are located in Chalet Village in Stockbridge, which was devastated by Tropical Storm Irene. Mortgage lending institutions require as a prerequisite to financing that flood insurance be purchased on property subject to flooding. Because of the potential for severe damage to public health and safety, Stockbridge strongly discourages development of new primary structures in the FEMA Floodplain and requires development, if built, to meet FEMA flood proofing requirements. Other structures, such as accessory structures, are allowed but only if they are properly flood-proofed and do not raise the existing flood level more than one foot.

Fluvial Erosion Hazards

Much flood damage in Vermont is associated with stream channel instability, also known as the fluvial erosion hazard (FEH), as opposed to inundation related losses. This is a reflection of Vermont’s natural geography and its man-made landscape consisting of steep, relatively narrow valleys with agricultural land uses, highway infrastructure, private residences and commercial properties located in close proximity to stream channels. River channels that are undergoing an adjustment process as a result of historic channel management activities or floodplain encroachments oftentimes respond catastrophically during large storm events.

Historically, landowners and local government have relied on the standards and the flood hazard boundary maps provided by FEMA though the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to determine areas within river corridors susceptible to flood damage. The maps are also used to delineate the allowable (floodway) limits of river corridor encroachments and human land use investments. However, the NFIP maps address only inundation issues by applying a water surface elevation-based standard. For this reason, the NFIP maps are often inadequate as an indicator of flood hazards, especially erosion. The NFIP standards do not recognize the danger present in unstable channels which may be undergoing a physical adjustment process. The stream bed may be eroding or it may be actively aggrading due to erosion occurring upstream.

The NFIP standards often allow for significant encroachment within floodplain areas and river corridors that may prevent the stream from ever reestablishing its stability. Special mapping and geomorphic assessments can identify FEH areas along rivers, more comprehensively defining high-hazard areas. The Main Stem of the White River and the Tweed River have mapped fluvial erosion hazard (also called River Corridor Area) data. This area is not subject to specific regulatory conditions in the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws, but the Planning Commission may adopt new language that protects development against fluvial erosion hazards.

Severe Flooding Events

In 2011, Vermont was struck by Tropical Storm Irene, which inundated the region with heavy rains and severe flooding. Regional damage was severe enough to warrant a federal disaster declaration. In Stockbridge, significant impacts were felt throughout Town (See Appendix B.) \

Surprisingly, a significant portion of the impact of Irene's damage was not in the area mapped by FEMA as flood plain or fluvial erosion hazard areas. Instead, the flood waters did substantial damage along nearly every brook in Stockbridge, in some instances completely destroying entire stretches of town road. Stream valleys are common locations for rural roads, and as such, much of the damage that occurred in Stockbridge was to roads. Inundation and flood damage caused along the Tweed and White Rivers was also quite severe.

The impact of Irene on Stockbridge has brought to light the need to consider more substantial and stringent regulation on development within the Flood Hazard Area. The devastation caused by Irene within the Flood Hazard Area (FHA) and outside the FHA in fluvial erosion hazard areas has made it clear that development in these areas carries high risk. When surveyed by the Planning Commission in 2012, 72% of the responses indicated that current regulations should not allow new development in Flood Hazard Areas.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To enhance and maintain use of flood hazard areas as open space, greenways, recreation, pastureland, agricultural land, and renewable energy facilities.
2. To ensure no net loss of flood storage capacity in an effort to minimize potential negative impacts such as the loss of life and property, disruption of commerce, and demand for extraordinary public services and expenditures that result from flood damage.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That the preferred uses for flood hazard areas shall be for open space, greenways, recreation, pastureland, agricultural land, and renewable energy facilities.
2. That any land use activity (filling, or removal of earth or rock) within flood hazard areas which would result in the net loss of flood storage, increased or diverted flood levels, or increased risk to adjacent areas shall be prohibited.
3. That utilities or facilities serving existing development (e.g. water lines, electrical service, waste disposal systems, roads, and bridges) may be located within these areas only when off-site options are not feasible and provided that these utilities or facilities meet the flood proofing requirements in Stockbridge's Zoning Bylaws.
4. To maintain its membership in the National Flood Insurance Program.
5. To recognize that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at-risk of erosion during floods.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. To maintain the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to ensure that it meets the standards required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency so that Stockbridge may continue to participate in the NFIP.
2. To continue to work with elected representatives to work with FEMA to create and maintain maps that reflect as accurately as possible the flood hazard areas to assist in appropriate land use decisions.

E. Flora, Fauna, and Natural Communities

In Stockbridge, there are a broad range of communities that exist in the older forests, early successional forests, open fields and valley floors. The breadth and diversity of wildlife and plant communities indicate a healthy, thriving ecosystem. Yet, natural communities are affected by the surrounding environment. Plants respond to soil structure and chemistry, hydrology, and climate. The effects of unmanaged development can have a negative impact on plant communities, which in turn will harm the overall ecosystem in the area affected. Good management practices, such as requiring developers to locate their projects in less sensitive areas, maintain buffer areas and protect against silt runoff from excavating, are a few of the ways that natural communities can be maintained.

Stockbridge's fields, forests, wetlands, and streams provide habitat to a diversity of flora and fauna. Although nearly all undeveloped land in the town provides habitat for these plants and animals, there are some areas which provide critical habitat that should remain intact. These areas include wetlands, vernal pools, high priority forest blocks and habitat connectors, and deer-wintering areas and ecotone (the edge transition zone between two cover types, such as field and forest). Development or logging in or adjacent to these areas should consider wildlife implications during the planning process. Wildlife is one of the primary attractions to the area and provides many citizens of Stockbridge with direct and indirect livelihoods from sports, tourism and direct harvest of wildlife. Wintering areas are an important habitat requirement for deer during the critical winter months when snow depth and climate are limiting factors to survival. Typically, these areas consist of mature softwood stands, at low elevations or along stream beds, which provide cover and limit snow depths. Southerly facing slopes are also

beneficial due to good sun exposure and may be utilized in areas of limited softwood cover. More specific factors, such as percent canopy closure, species of softwoods, and stand age, also figure into the quality of the wintering area. Stockbridge has in excess of 2644 acres (9% of Stockbridge's total acreage) of deer wintering yards.

Wildlife management requires management of human activities around animals as much as management of animals around human activities. Managing for specific species is not as desirable as managing for the entire ecosystem supporting the species. Parochial wildlife management programs usually manage for one species at the expense of others, while a more ecological approach is to ensure healthy habitat for all components of the ecosystem. The Vermont Non-Game and Natural Heritage Program has identified several sites in Stockbridge that are habitats for rare, threatened or endangered species. Large tracts of forest land, caves, floodways, floodplains, and cliffs are natural communities for many habitats.

There comes a point where a species cannot use seemingly adequate habitat because of adjacent development. While certain strategies may lessen the impact on habitat, planners and developers should keep in mind that almost every development will affect the ecological balance. It should be noted, however, that high density or intensive land uses are more likely to have a negative impact on the quality of wildlife habitats.

Forest Fragmentation

Healthy forests provide a significant number of benefits such as a clean water supply, clean air, mitigation against climate change, wildlife habitat, and economic benefits such as tourism, recreation, and the wood products industry. Healthy forests can be adversely affected by habitat and forest fragmentation: the breaking up of large, contiguous forested areas into smaller pieces of forest. For natural communities and wildlife habitat, the continued dividing of land with naturally occurring vegetation and ecological processes into smaller and smaller areas creates barriers that limit species' movement and interrupt ecological processes. Since the 1980s, Vermont has experienced "parcelization," which is the result of larger tracts of land being divided into smaller ownerships or land holdings. The more individuals that own smaller parcels of forest, the more likely that the land will ultimately be developed with infrastructure (such as roads and utilities) and buildings. The 2015 Vermont Forest Fragmentation Report identifies the following causes for this trend:

- Escalating land prices;
- Increased property taxes;
- Conveyance of land from aging landowners; and
- Exurbanization (the trend of moving out of urban areas into rural areas).

Forests provide habitat to a diverse population of wildlife, which are negatively impacted when forested land is fragmented through development. Forest fragmentation affects water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife populations, and the biological health and diversity of the forest itself. When many small habitat losses occur over time, the combined effect may be as dramatic as one large loss. Forest fragmentation can disrupt animal travel corridors, increase flooding, promote the invasion of exotic vegetation, expose forest interiors, and create conflicts between

people and wildlife. Habitat loss reduces the number of many wildlife species and totally eliminates others.

To help mitigate the effects of human population growth and land consumption, many scientists and conservationists urge governments to establish protected corridors, which connect patches of important wildlife habitat. The Vermont Conservation by Design project has ranked lands on a landscape scale for their importance as forest blocks and wildlife habitat corridors. These corridors, if planned correctly, allow wildlife to move between habitats and allow individual animals to move between groups, helping to restore or maintain genetic diversity that is essential both to the long-term viability of populations and to the restoration of functional ecosystems. Because of its generally low density and the percentage of preserved forestland (Green Mountain National Forest) in town, Stockbridge maintains a substantial amount of good quality wildlife habitat.

When asked in the Town Plan Survey, respondents indicated very strong support (83%) that "maintaining and growing our protected forests is important." Many large forested tracts throughout town are protected. As of 2021, Stockbridge had 15,949 acres of forestland enrolled in the Current Use Appraisal Program. Forest management plans required for enrollment of forest land in the Current Use Program are obliged to be updated every 10 years, and well-crafted management plans can play a large role in ensuring vital wildlife habitat and corridor connectivity.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To sustain the natural diversity of flora and fauna found in Stockbridge.
2. To maintain or improve the natural diversity, populations, and migratory routes of native fish.
3. To encourage sport and subsistence hunting and fishing in accordance with seasons and bag limits determined by the State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That native wildlife populations and natural diversity should be sustained and enhanced, especially for endangered and threatened species.
2. That long-term protection of critical habitats through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives be encouraged.
3. To protect deer wintering areas from development and other uses that adversely impact these areas.
4. That development, other than isolated houses and camps, should be designed to preserve continuous areas of wildlife habitat whenever possible. Fragmentation of habitat is discouraged. Efforts should be made to maintain connecting links between such areas.
5. That preference shall be given to development that utilizes existing roads and whenever possible preserve existing agricultural use.
6. To encourage long-term protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors in the Upland Conservation Area.

F. Invasive Species

Invasive non-native species are a growing problem throughout Vermont. Invasive plants are defined as exotic species that typically spread from disturbed areas into natural communities, but many of these species are also impacting yards, agricultural fields, and working forests. In Stockbridge, the spread of invasives is negatively impacting the rural character of the town; reducing native plant populations and consequently affecting wildlife populations; creating economic impacts by dominating other plants in agricultural fields; inhibiting reproduction of trees in sugarbush areas and other forests; destroying the scenic quality of roadsides; reducing property values; and potentially posing health risks. At the present time, the greatest threats are posed by wild chervil (fields, roadsides, and recently logged areas), Japanese knotweed (streams, rivers, roadsides, and yards), and Japanese barberry (forests), but there are increasing threats throughout the region from garlic mustard, giant hogweed, and other invasives.

Some of these invasives, especially wild chervil and knotweed, have proliferated to such an extent that eradication from many sites is impossible, but there are still portions of the town that have not been infested. Diligence is necessary from town residents and employees to prevent the further spread of these species, and the introduction of new species that could pose more serious threats. For example, giant hogweed has been identified from several towns in Central Vermont. This Federally listed noxious weed produces a sap that, in combination with moisture and sunlight, can cause severe skin and eye irritation, painful blistering, permanent scarring and blindness.

One of the more common ways in which invasive species spread to new locations is when seeds or root segments are transported on vehicles, especially construction and logging machinery, mowers, etc. Best management practices have been identified for reducing the accidental spread of invasives including avoiding using fill from invaded sites, washing of equipment before leaving infected sites, stabilization of disturbed sites, timing of mowing, etc.

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To reduce the impact of invasive species on agricultural native ecosystems.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That new occurrences of invasive species should be controlled to prevent further infestations.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. That Town employees and contractors should become familiar with the best management practices to prevent the accidental spread of invasives.
2. That the Town should time roadside mowing to minimize and reduce the spread of invasive species.

G. Mineral Resources

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

It is the goal of the Town:

To support extraction and processing of mineral resources only where such activities are appropriately sited (taking into account aesthetics and compatibility with this Plan), managed and the public interest is clearly benefited. Any support shall be balanced against the need to maintain the rural character valued by the citizens of Stockbridge.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To consider pollution, noise, and vehicle traffic as part of the decision-making process when reviewing proposed gravel extraction projects.

2. That existing and proposed mineral extraction and processing facilities shall be planned, constructed, and managed, so as to:

    - Not adversely impact existing or planned uses within the vicinity of the project site;
    - Not significantly interfere with the function and safety of existing road systems serving the project site;
    - Minimize any adverse effects on water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, viewsheds and adjacent land uses;
    - Reclaim and re-vegetate sites following extraction;
    - Minimize noise impacts on adjacent uses including residential areas; and
    - Maintain the rural character of the Town.

H. Significant Natural and Historic Areas

While Stockbridge residents would agree that the entirety of the community is significant for its beauty and its rural landscape, some notable and unique areas in the Town include:

- Stockbridge Common – The Stockbridge Common has a wealth of historic structures including the Union Meeting House, the Green, the Morgan House, the Common School, and the Old Stockbridge Hotel (known as the tractor shed) – all of which are privately owned. This area represents a substantial amount of Stockbridge’s past and should be sustained.

- Union Meeting House – The Union Meeting House is one of the first community buildings in the town of Stockbridge, constructed some time before 1828. It has

been substantially renovated, most recently under the guidance of the Stockbridge Meeting House Society.

- Luce Farm – Located on Music Mountain, this 300-year old farm has a substantial amount of open land which is visually significant to the community.
- The Belcher Library – The Belcher Library is one of Stockbridge's most architecturally significant buildings with its substantial front columns. The building was sold to the library in 1913.
- Gaysville Community Church – Formerly the Gaysville Congregational Church, it is located next to the Belcher Library, this church was built in 1864. The church steeple was recently replaced. The Church has a working bell in the bell tower.
- Chateauguay No Town Area - In 1997, the towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Stockbridge and Killington formed a group of town representatives and created a conservation plan, in voluntary cooperation with landowners, for the 60,000+ acre Chateauguay No Town (CNT) Area. This area represents a substantial area of wild, natural lands and should be preserved.
- South Hill – The view from the height of South Hill is judged as spectacular by many in the community.
- White River Park at Stockbridge Vermont is one of the largest parks in the watershed of the White River and provides walking paths and river access.
- Margaret Perkins House in Gaysville is a prime example of mid-19th century architecture and is now the home of the Stockbridge Historical Society.

In the 2022 Town Plan Survey, nearly 69% of respondents supported or strongly supported the statement that Stockbridge should emphasize the historic sites within the Town. Further discussion will need to take place over how this translates into action.

I. Conservation Commission

Vermont statute enables communities to create a Conservation Commission (CC), a volunteer board that focuses specifically on the natural, scenic and cultural resources within a community. A CC may conduct inventories of natural resources, recommend the purchase of or the receipt of gifts of land to the Selectboard, assist the planning commission with natural resource planning and maintain a conservation fund.

The CC, at the discretion of the town, can manage a fund which is to be used to assist with the purchase or conservation of property with the intention of protecting natural resources and implementing the town plan. Any use of such a fund requires support from the Selectboard.

Stockbridge does not have a Conservation Commission at this time.

J. Land Protection Strategies

Methods of protecting significant lands are varied. In general, there are two ways to encourage the preservation of culturally and naturally significant areas: regulatory and voluntary. Voluntary methods include:

- Preserving land by placing restrictions on its use, through such tools as conservation easements or mutual covenants.
- Transferring land to a conservation organization (such as the Vermont Land Trust) through donation.
- Selling or donating land with conditions attached, like deed restrictions or conditional transfers.

Stockbridge could become an active participant in land conservation through the creation of a conservation fund. This fund, which is generally funded on a yearly basis, would contain funds that a Conservation Commission could use to purchase land outright, or assist a land conservation organization with the purchase of a conservation easement. It is safe to assume that there will never be sufficient funding for land protection strategies to acquire conservation easements or ownership for all of the unprotected identified areas of value.

Regulatory methods use zoning and/or subdivision rules to regulate the location, density and design of development within selected areas to minimize harmful impacts while allowing for a reasonable level of development. Regulatory methods include:

- **Overlay Districts** - The creation of overlay districts is the most common method of regulating specific areas for the purpose of protecting cultural or natural resources. Overlay districts can be used to exclude development on or to impose resource protection or conservation standards within overlay areas. These districts can be used to protect many types of resources.

- **Resource Protection Districts** - protect resource and open space areas or resource-based uses such as farming, forestry, recreation from incompatible development.

- **Large Lot Zoning** - Large lot zoning refers to the designation of a very large minimum lot size within certain zoning districts to accommodate resource-based uses, such as farming or forestry, or to require a pattern of very scattered, low-density development to limit, for example, impervious surfaces and protect surface and groundwater quality.

- **Fixed Area & Sliding Scale** - Fixed area and sliding scale zoning are two zoning techniques (typically applied in association with subdivision regulations) that are used to differentiate allowed densities of development from district lot size requirements.

- **Conservation (Open Space) Subdivision Design** - Conservation or open space subdivision design is a subdivision design process wherein subdivisions are intentionally designed to protect rural character and open space.

Each of these methods has its own set of benefits and pitfalls and all of them should be thoroughly evaluated before they are implemented. However, there are many examples of successful regulatory land protection strategies in Vermont. The key to success is to ensure that the community as a whole supports the regulations.

K. Goals, Polices and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To identify, preserve and protect those natural, cultural, and historic resources that are unique to Stockbridge and make it special.
2. To allow for compatible development without sacrificing important cultural and natural resources.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To ensure careful review of all development projects to minimize the impact on Stockbridge's natural and cultural resources.
2. To protect unique resources through careful planning.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. That the Selectboard should consider creating a Conservation Commission to assist the Selectboard with ongoing efforts to care for and expand public uses of town plans.

X. Agriculture and Forestry

A. Background

Agriculture and forestry define the character of Vermont and comprise major industries in the Region. The shape/character of Vermont agriculture and forestry is due to pressures both inside and outside the state. This poses difficult challenges, not just for landowners, but for all who desire a rural lifestyle and working landscape. Our agriculture and forestry sectors will continue to erode unless federal, state, and local policymakers, citizens, and the farming and forestry community confront the economic problems facing the industry and seize the opportunities to address the current challenges present. Jobs will be lost to other pursuits and the Town will lose much of its rural character.

B. Farm and Forest Land Issues

Land and Taxation

A statewide economic restructuring or a shift away from agriculture to the service and tourism industries has placed economic pressure on farm owners. The higher cost of owning land makes it difficult to rationalize conventional farming. This coupled with a need for house lots or development land in general, has prompted landowners to place their land on the market for these purposes.

Although historically the Town's roads have been used for logging, they could sustain significant damage in a short time if misused. Because road maintenance is a major cost factor for town residents, continued oversight and control of use during mud season is needed.

Current Use Taxation

For farmland and forestland conservation to be successful, the pressures posed by the market value approach to taxation must be solved for both the landowner and municipality. One means to address this issue has been the Vermont Current Use Program administered by the State which sets the valuations on farm and forest land based on their productivity values rather than their development values.

The Current Use Program was established in 1980 with the primary objectives to keep Vermont's agricultural and forest land in production, to help preserve these lands and to achieve greater equity in property taxation. While there have been legislative changes in the Program, particularly in 1996 when the State turned the Program over to towns to finance, the overall philosophy remains largely unchanged. Statewide, enrollments and the number of parcels enrolled has increased steadily over the past few years and withdrawals from the Program limited, despite an inability for the State to fully fund the towns for loss of tax revenues.

In 2021, a total of 69 parcels comprising 15,949 acres of farm and forest land were enrolled under the Program. This amounted to nearly 25 square miles or just over 50% of the total area of 46.17 square miles in Stockbridge.

Historic Decline in Farms

During the early to mid-1900s, Stockbridge had many more farms than it has today. During the early to mid-1900s it was common for the farms to be operated by multiple generations of a family, but in the '70s and '80s younger generations became less interested in farming. By the 1980s many of the farmers who followed in their parents footsteps had reached their later years of life, making farming a challenge physically. This, coupled with the lack of a successor to take over the farm also led to the closing of some farms.

Farms of the early to mid-1900s were generally diversified in nature, having a wide range of products which were sold at a broad number of markets locally and in New England. In the 1950s and 1960s, trends in agriculture began to move from this diversified model to one where farms specialized primarily in a single product -- dairy. This reliance on a single product put farmers at the mercy of national milk markets, which were notoriously unstable. The primary reason for farm closures, particularly during the 1980s, was due to instability of milk prices. However, several key moments in agricultural history have also negatively impacted farming in Stockbridge. Other issues included:

- Government mandate that all farms have bulk tanks and parlor floors;
- Consolidation of farms; and
- Impacts of mechanization.

C. Agricultural Trends

An analysis of the United States Census of Agriculture data between 2012 and 2017 (2017 being the most recent period of data collected) shows that farming in Vermont is slowly shifting away from the larger scale farm that developed as a result of trends toward consolidation. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of farms in Vermont decreased by 7.2%. The average size of farms increased slightly from171 acres to 175 acres between censuses. However, while the number of farms declined, the number of small farms – those between 1-9 acres, increased by over 40%, indicating that small scale farming is on the rise. This is most likely due to the fact that 33% of Vermont's farms in 2017 were considered "hobby farms" – farms that sell under $2,500 in agricultural products per year. While the number of small-scale farms continue to grow, these farms only produce slightly less than 3% of Vermont's agricultural income.

For census purposes, a farm is defined as "a place from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year."

D. Forestry Trends

Three primary trends have affected the Region's forestland and its productivity. First, forests and farms are being increasingly "parcelized" or subdivided into small lots which threaten the economic viability of forestry. Windsor County in 1989 ranked second in the State in the amount of land being subdivided and sold. Development pressure in the Region has been relaxed since the early 1990s, but the economy is predicted to rebound and the trend of land moving out of forest use to other uses will continue, particularly in those areas where access

and development suitability are not severe. Funding of the Current Use Program has been identified by the Northern Forest Lands Council as vital to landowners keeping their patience, not over harvesting the forests or opting for liquidation cutting of tracts. By allowing land to be assessed on the basis of current use, family landowners are able to realize a more reasonable return on investment for long-term timber management.

Forest products continue to be a significant share of the Region's manufacturing sector, although the way statistics are kept makes it hard to quantify. Overall, according to the Vermont Department of Employment and Training, jobs in the lumber and wood products industries have increased statewide.

A major long-term issue for the Vermont forest products industry is how to keep it from drifting into the position of selling wood as a raw material without benefiting from the higher paying jobs that come from value added wood products.

E. Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use Regulation

Land use regulation has a definite impact on farming and forestry. For example, a zoning ordinance that allows for large tracts of land to be sold for residential purposes could conceivably help protect open space, but that open space might no longer be available for agricultural use without considerable forethought and design. The same ordinance calling for much smaller lot sizes (such as one acre) would, over time, lead to an incremental decrease in the amount of useable forest or farmland.

If agricultural uses are to be preserved, we need to protect them. V.S.A. Title 12, Chapter 195, Section 5753 is intended to protect farmers against nuisance lawsuits. It states that:

Agricultural activities shall be entitled to a rebuttable presumption that the activity does not constitute a nuisance if the agricultural activity meets all of the following conditions:

a) It is conducted in conformity with federal, state, and local laws and regulations (including accepted agricultural practices);
b) It is consistent with good agricultural practices;
c) It is established prior to surrounding nonagricultural activities; and
d) It has not significantly changed since the commencement of the prior surrounding nonagricultural activity.

However, there have been circumstances where the state statute has not offered enough protection.

While the value of agriculture and silviculture are recognized in Stockbridge and much of Vermont, both activities do have the potential to cause harm to the environment. Overuse of fertilizer in areas immediately adjacent to water bodies creates runoff that can increase the amount of phosphorous in the water to environmentally harmful levels. Likewise, clear cutting without any regard for topography and runoff can cause damage in the form of landslides and groundwater contamination. The state has established Accepted Management Practices for

agriculture and silviculture which, if followed, should protect the environment while allowing for the continued growth of the agricultural and silvicultural product industries.

F. Sustaining Agriculture, Silviculture and Forestry

Planning policy and implementation efforts should be directed at sustaining agriculture and forestry pursuits and not just conservation of the resource. This is not only because it is the best way to keep the land open, but also because agriculture and forestry are critical industries in the Town and Region.

Just as there is a variety of interests, there are a variety of tools than can be used to conserve the working landscape. Some are directed primarily at sustaining agriculture, others forestry, some are regulatory in nature, others are compensatory, and others voluntary. It is in the public interest to encourage conservation groups, landowners, local officials, and policymakers to utilize all of these tools. The most obvious tool continues to be the Current Use Program (see section B of this chapter).

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are a common method used to ensure that the working landscape gets preserved. The Vermont Land Trust (VLT), Vermont's largest non-profit conservation organization, has conserved more than 590 parcels of land in agricultural use throughout the state, totaling 145,109 acres. Most land purchased with the intent of applying a conservation easement to it is funded, at least in part, by some form of grant funding from federal, state or private sources.

Benefits include:

- Easements are flexible; they can be written to achieve specific goals of the town involved.
- They are perpetual, and restrictions put on the conserved lands will remain in force even when the property is sold to a new party.
- They conserve scenic beauty, protect environmentally sensitive areas and sustain the viability of working landscape.
- Eased property remains on the tax rolls.

Education

Locally the Stockbridge Central School is involved with the Farm to School Program, which links the school with local farms who generate food for the schools as well as provide educational opportunities for the school children.

G. Farming, Forestry, and the Economy

Despite the declining number of large commercial farms, farming represents a strong economic potential. In 2017, USDA data indicated the estimated agricultural revenue in Vermont to be $780 million per year.

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

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

Providing adequate food access and food security is important to the Town of Stockbridge, with over 80% of respondents to the Town Planning Survey agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that they "value locally sourced, community supported food available for everyone." This support translated into action in 2021, when Town residents started a community-centered local meals project called Stockbridge Free Community Meals to Go. With seed funding from Stockbridge Trustees of Public Funds, this project seeks to make locally-sourced food accessible for all members of the community. The project brings in local chefs and farms, and is supported by donations from members of the community. In the last three months of 2021, 1,088 containers of food were distributed. This project increases recognition for the work of local farms and chefs, while providing a space for all residents to have access to fresh, local food.

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

H. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To encourage the economic growth of agricultural and forest operations at a scale that is appropriate for Stockbridge.
2. To encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the town's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features.
3. To protect the Region's rural agricultural character, scenic landscape, and recreational resources.
4. To preserve recreational and scenic access by ensuring that at the completion of logging projects, all roads are restored to their previous condition or better.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That, where contiguous areas of high value farming or forestry exist, or have significant potential to exist, fragmentation of these areas into uses other than those incidental to agriculture or forestry should be discouraged.
2. That, where high value agricultural and forested land are identified, clustered or peripheral development is especially encouraged to protect such resources and prevent fragmentation and sprawling settlement patterns.
3. That contiguous forest and significant agricultural areas should remain largely in non-intensive uses unless no reasonable alternative exists to provide essential residential, commercial and industrial activities for the Town's inhabitants.
4. That the construction of utilities, roads or other physical modifications should skirt tracts of productive agricultural land rather than divide them.
5. That farmers, loggers, and foresters should use State of Vermont Accepted Management Practices (AMP) and are encouraged to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) in their operations and to minimize point and non-point source pollution.
6. To support the development of value-added farm and forestry products in Stockbridge.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. To establish a Conservation Commission to promote a better understanding of the farming and forestry practices, and natural resource management in general.
2. That, if established, the Conservation Commission should seek out representatives of these industries, conservation organizations, public schools, and the tourism and recreation industries to sponsor continuing educational opportunities to the public.

XI. Transportation

Land use, energy, and transportation are related. Land use, both within and outside Stockbridge's borders, drives the need for improvements to the transportation system. As a given land use can have very different impacts on the transportation system depending on how it is sited and designed, our local land use goals must consider the necessary transportation facilities required to accommodate any desired growth. Thus, land use and transportation are both linked to the Town's economic well-being. Poorly planned land use patterns increase transportation costs and also the tax rate, whereas well planned development can add to the tax base of the town, providing additional funds for the transportation system.

A. Town Highways

Highway classifications determine the amount of state aid available to assist with repair and maintenance. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Selectboard determine road classes. Criteria include traffic volume, road condition and function. Class two highways are the major connectors linking villages with each other and with state highways, and they receive a higher rate of State aid than Class 3 highways.

Miles of Town Roads in Stockbridge	
Class 1	0
Class 2	5.1
Class 3	33.4
Class 4	25.
Total Town Roads	**63.5**

Figure 18: Miles of roads in Stockbridge

Only eight percent (8%) of Stockbridge's roads are Class 2 (e.g. Blackmer Blvd., River Road and Bridge St.). Class 3 highways are other town roads that are maintained in a manner enabling them to be driven under normal conditions in all seasons by a standard car. The majority (52%) of Stockbridge's roads are Class 3. Forty percent (40%) of Stockbridge's highways are Class 4, which is substantial compared to most communities where Class 4 roads make up less than 10% of their total roads. Class 4 highways are generally in poor condition and are limited in maintenance due to their relative low level of use or seasonal nature. No state aid is available for work on Class 4 highways. While not suited for regular traffic, these roads do represent a valuable asset for the town from a recreation standpoint. Such town-owned corridors will help ensure that there will continue to be a place to enjoy snowmobiling, ATV, cross country skiing, walking, hunting, horseback riding and other outdoor recreation.

Apart from education costs, public roads have been and will continue to be Stockbridge's largest town asset requiring significant financial investments paid through municipal taxes. Transportation funding sources come from numerous combinations of the local tax base, state and federal gas tax receipts, state and federal allocations and registration fees. The most significant funding resource comes from the federal transportation bill which passes through the State of Vermont and is distributed to towns by the Agency of Transportation. The federal and state government pays a percentage of project costs and the community pays the remainder. This funding applies only to Class 1-3 roads. Maintenance of Class 4 roads is funded exclusively by the community. The Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission has compared programs throughout the region and recommends a program of early intervention

using preventative maintenance, because such a program has proven to be 75-85% less costly than larger reconstruction work after significant deterioration has occurred. Such a program should be a part of an adopted Capital Budget and Program.

Priority transportation projects for Stockbridge include replacement of the Gaysville Bridge and erosion mitigation for Blackmer Boulevard. An initial scoping study has been undertaken for Blackmer Boulevard, which is a high priority project for the Town given the challenges with erosion that this transportation route currently faces. A full scoping study has been undertaken for the Gaysville Bridge. Based on its current condition and the scoping study, the Town advocates that the bridge be replaced.

B. Town Culverts and Bridges

Proper and timely road and drainage systems maintenance can help protect these systems from most severe weather events. Maintaining a reliable and up-to-date inventory of existing culverts and structures, coupled with a short- and long-range plan for replacement and upsizing is essential. Replacing deficient culverts and bridges also helps protect water quality – installing appropriately scaled and designed structures that can handle flood events, stormwater runoff, promote fish passage, and minimize the discharge of road sediment. These upgraded culverts and bridges, operating in greater harmony with the natural environment, will also be less likely to fail during storm events. The most recent culvert inventory for the Town was undertaken in partnership with Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission in 2021. Of the 619 culverts in Stockbridge, 87% were rated as “good” or “excellent” condition and 12% were in “fair” or “poor” condition. Only 1% (six culverts) were rated as “critical”.

C. State Highways

Vermont Route 107 is a primary state route across central Vermont linking I-89 to Routes 14 and Route 4. U.S. Route 4 is a major east-west highway and the Route 107/100 is a road of lesser importance and status than Route 4. Route 107 was widened and flattened in the 1960s, leading to the removal of several structures including an architecturally significant general store in Gaysville.

State/Federal Roads in Stockbridge	
Route 100	5.0
Route 107	6.7
Total State Roads	**11.8**

Figure 19: Miles of State roads in Stockbridge (*Source: VTrans*)

According to the 2022 Town Survey 67% of the respondents indicated that they would oppose any efforts to increase truck traffic along Route 107, this is comparable to respondents’ views (70%) from the 2012 survey. Stockbridge does not encourage any efforts to expand the width of Route 107 (except to accommodate bicycle traffic). This type of highway expansion can lead to increased speed and greater traffic and would negatively impact the Central School Hamlet Area and Gaysville Village. Not only does the Town oppose efforts to expand the width of Route 107, the Town is actively working to reduce speeds on the state highways throughout Town.

D. Class 4 & Trails

Class 4 roads and trails primarily offer access to Town and conservation resources and provide unique insights into an agrarian landscape long abandoned. Many Class 4 roads have been incorporated into the natural landscape whereby very little development has occurred along these roads. Trails are used exclusively for recreational purposes and are not intended for vehicle access (other than for approved ATV use), therefore they are not maintained except for some culvert and bridge work to ensure access for emergency vehicles. The Town also does not plow these roads during the winter. Public utility services or other municipal infrastructure that typically accompany roads are nearly nonexistent. These roads are important scenic travel corridors for hikers, bicyclists, approved ATV use, and provide limited access to hunting and conservation lands.

Stockbridge currently has one publicly owned trail. The White River Park, which recently received a trail grant from the state, has the Town's first publicly owned trail. The park covers approximately 19 acres.

E. Development Review Road Standards

The Town currently uses highway rules and regulations based on state standards that were adopted by the Selectboard in June of 2019. This policy details road construction standards and policies for road classifications, right-of-way, access, road acceptance, and numerous other construction and maintenance related activities. The responsibility of ordinance implementation rests with the Selectboard and the Stockbridge Road crew.

Insofar as guidelines for zoning review can contribute to this process, the following planning considerations should continue or be expanded upon in future policy updates:

- Emergency management services will have guaranteed safe access to all development.
- Roads should be designed with multi-modal transportation safety (pedestrian, bicycle, etc.) in mind.
- Since local and state road construction follows State of Vermont design standards, private roads should be constructed to those standards, thereby minimizing changes if the road is accepted by the Town at a later date.
- Road design and construction should adhere to the relevant Town Plan goals and objectives - land use, natural resources and transportation elements.
- All roads will reflect a context-sensitive design that preserves and enhances the adjacent land uses and transportation system.
- Private road and driveway standards should be adopted to ensure stormwater is not discharged onto public highways or drainage systems.
- The development of private roads shall be approved by the Selectboard after review of the proposed road by the Town's road supervisor and a designated representative of the Fire Department.

Major transportation projects often place a greater emphasis on contemporary engineering design standards. However, in some instances, the design and engineering of our roadways

and bridges fail to consider the Town's unique historical and natural landscapes. The design of a transportation project should account for a road being historic, scenic, pleasant to drive, or respectful to the people and businesses living alongside it. While engineering sufficiency criteria are important factors for road and bridge improvements, compatibility with existing and future development patterns also are important considerations.

F. Access Management

According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) definition, access management is a process that provides or manages access to land development while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system in terms of safety, capacity needs, and speed. Access management is an important process to provide reasonable accessibility to adjacent land uses while maintaining a safe and efficient flow of traffic. Transportation professionals have established that a single, well-designed access to a public highway presents few concerns for the traveling public. However, if access has been poorly designed and/or its frequency increases, the road's health declines proportionally. The result can be increased traffic congestion, crash rates, and road maintenance obligations to handle surface water improperly channeled to the road surface or shoulders. Ironically, these factors eventually compromise access to all land uses along the affected roadway. In many instances, towns are forced into costly highway expansion projects.

The Town recognizes the value of access management and can implement access management strategies through its planning and public works related ordinances and policies. The following are some of these strategies for all public and private transportation and development projects impacting local and state public roads as well as private roads:

- Utilize State of Vermont design standards for all temporary and permanent access, to include emphasis on drainage, sight distance, and access for emergency services;
- Encourage use of shared driveways and/or permitting access that may result in a future shared driveway;
- Require the review of access for existing development whenever a change of use, or other application process is brought before the Town;
- Encourage commercial properties to use existing development nodes in order to preserve or create road segments with few accesses, unless additional replacement access better meets access management goals;
- When practical, approve subdivisions with private and public road designs that allow shared access with other adjacent subdivisions and/or have the private rights-of-way reserved so an access may be built to connect to existing and future development;
- Encourage permanent landscaping and roadside enhancements to visually define access points and contribute to the roadway's aesthetic character;
- Use sight-distance standards based on the actual travel speeds and not the posted speed limits. If no such data exists or is not current, then the Town will work with the Regional Planning Commission to obtain the appropriate data.

G. Other Modes of Travel

Bicycles and Pedestrians

Bicycling and walking are extremely energy-efficient, use no fossil fuels directly, and bring health benefits. Many residents bike walk or run on town roads in Stockbridge. The rural nature of most of Stockbridge's roads makes bike/pedestrian travel reasonably safe. Routes 100 and 107 are considered a prime location for cycling due to the scenic nature of the valley; however, high traffic columns, limited shoulders, and blind curves makes some areas along Routes 100 and 107 less safe.

Additional recreational opportunities can be found using trails maintained by VAST and VASA (see Chapter V).

Public Transportation

Transit services reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, provide transportation at a fraction of what driving a car for the same trip would be, and improve community health. Stockbridge, like most Vermont towns, has limited public transportation. Tri-Valley Transit (formerly Stagecoach, Inc) is the nearest public transit provider. They have regular transportation to West Lebanon, NH and Montpelier, VT. However, the nearest access points for Tri-Valley Transit connections are in Bethel and Randolph. Tri-Valley Transit does offer limited public transportation in the form of special requests for individuals who need transportation for medical reasons. Stockbridge residents can take advantage of Tri-Valley's "Ticket to Ride" Program which helps pay a substantial percentage of the cost of rides for senior citizens (60+) and persons with disabilities when there is not available transportation in the household or the person requesting the trips is unable to drive on the day of the trip. Ticket to Ride is available for a broad array of destinations, such as medical services, shopping, errands, and social purposes.

Given that Stockbridge's elderly population is growing, the need for an affordable source of public transportation that can bring the elderly to major medical facilities like Dartmouth Hitchcock and larger commercial centers for day-to-day shopping needs is important.

Stockbridge also has a Park and Ride, which is located at the intersection of Route 100 and Route 107. The Tri-Valley Transit 89er South line stops at the Stockbridge Park and Ride upon request. For other stops, please see the Tri-Valley Transit Website.

While Stockbridge has limited access to public transit, there is virtually no access to transportation via apps such as Lyft and Uber.

Rail Facilities

While there are no rail facilities within Stockbridge, residents can access two Amtrak Service lines that runs through nearby Randolph and Rutland.

Air Travel

Stockbridge residents have access to two small public airports within a 1-hour drive: Rutland Airport and the Lebanon Municipal Airport in New Hampshire. Burlington International Airport is a 1.5 hour drive from Stockbridge. There is no direct access via public transportation to these airports, although Tri-Valley Transit buses do connect residents with Lebanon.

Pollution Reduction

The State's Comprehensive Energy Plan calls for the wholesale electrification of the private car fleet to reduce energy use and to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. Electric vehicles (EVs) hold the promise to store electric power and help manage power demands on the grid. To further the use of EVs, public charging stations will have to become widespread. The town has discussed working with Green Mountain Power to install EV charging stations at the town Park and Ride on routes 100 and 107, and potentially to install EV charging stations at the Town Office as well.

Through carpooling and ridesharing, Park and Rides can also offer an alternative way to reduce energy use and improve commuter efficiency.

H. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To provide and maintain a safe, energy efficient and well-maintained transportation network, in a cost-effective manner, integrating all modes of travel (auto, pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit) and meeting the needs of the public in a manner consistent with the other goals, policies and recommendations of this Town Plan.
2. To maintain the rural and scenic character of the back roads and byways thereby protecting the rural scenic quality of the town whenever possible.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To maintain the existing road system, while discouraging the expansion or addition of new roads.
2. To consider public input prior to a decision to substantially change the maintenance level, surface treatment, or class of a town road.
3. That when determining which roads to pave, the Town will evaluate traffic volume and maintenance costs against other factors, such as the up-front cost of paving and base improvements that may be necessary to support a paved surface and the potential quality-of-life impacts to residents.
4. That, when addressing road improvements on Class 3 roads, particularly roads that are prone to flood or erosion damage during hazard events, the Town will replace undersized culverts and bridges with appropriately sized infrastructure whenever financially feasible.
5. To integrate land use and transportation planning by encouraging concentrated growth in areas served by an adequate highway system, utilizing land use regulations and

appropriate highway access management techniques to control the impacts of development on the transportation system, and making transportation improvements in areas where growth is desired.

6. To encourage access management techniques that limit the number of access points during new development along highways to reduce driver confusion and traffic congestion and to minimize conflicts between through and local (turning) traffic via provisions on further subdivision in new access permits.
7. To cooperate with other communities in the region through the TRORC and its Transportation Advisory Committee to ensure that the region's transportation system is developed in a well-coordinated manner that recognizes and balances the needs and desires of each community.
8. To consider the relationship of a road to surrounding features of the landscape when planning improvements needed to safely accommodate increasing traffic.
9. To combine widening of roadways to accommodate safe use by bicyclists with traffic calming measures and enforcement of speed limits to ensure that traffic speeds do not increase.
10. To retain Class 4 roads and other public rights-of-way as public resources.
11. To require development on private roads to adhere to town design standards and access standards and to provide safe year-round access for town services, particularly fire and rescue.
12. To discourage any effort by the State to add additional lanes of vehicular traffic, increase the amount of through traffic or to increase the speed limit on either Route 100 or Route 107 should be vigorously opposed. However, efforts to improve Route 100 and Route 107 should be supported, provided such efforts do not exacerbate the bike/pedestrian safety or widen existing vehicular travel lanes. The Town encourages VTrans to reduce vehicle lane size to accommodate bicycle traffic.
13. To maintain a reliable and up-to-date inventory of existing culverts and structures, coupled with a short- and long-range plan for replacement and upsizing.
14. To actively participate in any process or project which would result in significant changes to Route 100 or Route 107.
15. To actively encourage public, private, and commercial EV charging facilities within the Town of Stockbridge.
16. To support infrastructure improvements that may accomodate pedestrian traffic in Stockbridge.
17. To encourage transitioning town vehicles to low or no-emission power trains as financially and practically feasible.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. To develop a town highway capital plan and schedule that will guide maintenance and road infrastructure investments in the future.
2. To further enhance current and future highway equipment, materials, maintenance, and storage opportunities, the town should seek to expand the town garage site area, if and when it is available, and consider the benefits of extending the site’s covered storage.

3. To continue participation in the Regional Transportation Advisory Commission as well as the TRORC Road Foreman's meeting program.
4. That the Selectboard should acquire simple-to-use rural road maintenance software for maintaining roads and drainage systems.
5. To establish EV charging stations where feasible in publicly-owned facilities in the Town of Stockbridge.
6. That the Planning Commission should review the zoning bylaws to ensure no conflict exists between installation of EV charging stations and existing land use requirements.

XII. Education

Two books document Stockbridge's history and provide information about the town's public school record—A Pictorial History of Stockbridge Gaysville, 1761 – 1976 (edited by Ramona Blackmer, Barbara Green, and Gloria Taylor), and Stockbridge, Vermont Revisited, 1761 – 2007 (compiled and edited by Barbara Green and Barbara Vellturo). Pictures of former students and teachers, school buildings and related documents demonstrate a long-term pride, interest, and devotion to our young scholars and their education. Most of the historical information that follows comes from these two sources.

In 1827, the Vermont Legislature adopted a uniform method of instruction in "orthography, reading, writing, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, history of the U.S. and good behavior," but the push for public education goes back to at least 1792. At one time the town had as many as 17 school districts and considerable attention was spent determining the district boundaries and whether schools should be added, expanded, or consolidated.

Whether to build or improve our schools could be controversial. In 1894, for example, recorded on a piece of timber taken from the Stockbridge Common school was the following opinion— "…the school house building [was]…opposed by the wealthiest men in the District… [but] favored by all the poor people of the District… the old school house a mere reck unfit to keep cattle or hogs in…"

Gradually the number of VT district schools shrank; our local upper school was not replaced after burning down in 1975. The Stockbridge Central School was constructed in 1956 consolidating enrollments from the Gaysville, Stockbridge, and Ranney District Schools.

Five of the town's biggest district school buildings exist today (but are used for private uses) — on Stockbridge Common, Ranney Rd., Lyons Hill Rd., Stony Brook Rd, and the former Paine Academy across from the Stockbridge Town Office on Route 100.

In 1900 the Vermont Legislature made having a High School a local option "in which students may be fitted for college." The town's Superintendent at the time, W.H. Hill, recommended building the town's High School in Gaysville. "By so doing, instead of paying tuition in other towns we would be building up our own town and school system and furnishing higher education for our young people and keeping up with the 20th century advance."

Reflecting the town's population swings, our school enrollments have increased and decreased over time. In 1812 there were 169 "scholars" with a town population around 900. The town's population increased to a maximum of 1,418 in 1840 but when it decreased back down to 894 in the 1890s, the school population was again at 169. According to the 2020 US census, the 2020 town population was 718 and the 2020 PK – 12 enrollment was 117. The student enrollment in 2010 was 112.

Today our town has one elementary school—the Stockbridge Central School (PK - 6th grade) while student in grades 7 – 12 are tuitioned to other schools with costs paid, in part, by Town taxpayers. Students generally attend schools in Bethel, Randolph, Rutland, Woodstock, Royalton and Sharon.

A. School Organization

Stockbridge is a member of the White River Valley Supervisory Union and the Rochester - Stockbridge Unified District (RSUD.) Local educational leadership is provided by a six-member RSUD school board, with three members elected by each town. The RSUD School Directors are responsible for educational policy and oversight of the Stockbridge Central School and the Rochester Elementary School. Board meetings are held in person and via Zoom on the first Monday evening of each month, alternatively at each school campus. The Annual School Meeting is held on the first Tuesday of May.

B. School Enrollment

In the 1970s, the school was known as the Stockbridge-Pittsfield School for enrolling students from Stockbridge and Pittsfield. Stockbridge's enrollment in 2023 was 47, including three tuition students from Pittsfield. Its recent enrollment peak of 58 was in 2018. (See Figure 20.) Stockbridge's decline in Elementary enrollment is mirrored throughout much of the state of Vermont.

School Year	Enrollment
2023	47
2022	42
2021	33
2020	41
2019	50
2018	58
2017	47
2016	48
2015	53

Figure 20: Student Enrollment, Stockbridge Central School (Source: VT Education Dashboard)

C. School Support

As noted in the introduction to this Chapter, Stockbridge residents have devoted considerable time, energy, and resources to maintain their local schools "for the advancement of the rising generation" (G.B. Fish, 1905 Superintendent's Report, Stockbridge, Vermont Revisited, page 170). While no longer maintaining a system of 17 district schools, our Central School is important to those who live here as evidenced by the 2022 Survey. Seventy-four percent (74%) of those responding to the Survey agreed with the statement "Having a local school strengthens our community" (including 39% who strongly agreed). On the other hand, 17 percent were neutral and 8% disagreed, including 3% who strongly disagreed.

D. School Choice

"Tuitioning students to schools outside of their home community has been practiced for over 140 years, according to School Choice in Vermont. Both Stockbridge and Rochester tuition their students for grades 7-12. In 2023, Stockbridge tuitioned 36 students.

One benefit of School Choice is the opportunity it affords for parents to place their children in the school(s) best suited to meet their individual educational and family needs. School Choice also appears to be advantageous with regard to assuring our students the best opportunity for

receiving a quality education. Under current town policy, parents can take into consideration the level of academic standards of a specific school when deciding where to send their children for secondary education.

E. Home Schooling

A number of households in town home school their children for some or all of their K – 12 education.

F. Secondary Education

Because Stockbridge does not have a secondary school, students in grades 7-12 are tuitioned to other schools in the region. Students generally attend schools at Woodstock, Sharon, Randolph, Rutland, Bethel, Royalton, and Rutland.

G. Childcare

An inventory of registered childcare facilities reveals that Stockbridge has a limited amount of childcare available to the community. The State of Vermont has two classifications of childcare that are regulated, they are:

	Licensed Provider	Registere Home
Bethel	2	1
Barnard	2	0
Killington	2	0
Pittsfield	0	0
Stockbridge	1	1

Figure 21: Childcare Facilities Stockbridge & Surrounding Area (Source: VT Bright Futures)

- **Registered Family Childcare Home**: A childcare program approved only in the provider's residence, which is limited to a small number of children based on specific criteria.
- **Licensed Program**: A childcare program providing care to children in any approved location. The number and ages of children served are based on available approved space and staffing qualifications, as well as play and learning equipment. A Licensed Program must be inspected by the Department of Public Safety Inspectors and must obtain a Water and Wastewater Disposal Permit from the Department of Environmental Conservation. A Licensed Program is considered a public building under Vermont Law. Types of licensed programs include early childhood programs, school-age care, family homes, and non-recurring care programs.

There are currently only two registered childcare services in Stockbridge. Most residents currently arrange for care with relatives, or take their children to childcare facilities beyond the borders of Stockbridge to neighboring towns like Bethel or to locations close to where they work.

H. Adult Education

Stockbridge has limited opportunity for adult education in town, but does provide scholarships for trade and college education for Stockbridge high school graduates from funds held by the Trustees of the town. To be eligible, a student must have been a resident of Stockbridge upon

high graduation. Most adults take advantage of the opportunities that are available in Randolph and other neighboring towns. These include:

- **Vermont State University (VSU)** - Vermont State University is located in Randolph Center. VTC is part of the Vermont State College system and offers full and part time educational opportunities that range from computer technology to agriculture to health services. Attendees may choose a two-year program that leads to an associate's degree, a four-year program that leads to a bachelor's degree, or the college's one-year program that leads to a Practical Nursing certificate.
- **Randolph Technical Career Center (RTCC**) – Located in Randolph village, the RTCC is part of Randolph Union High School. RTCC offers adult education courses that range from the traditional tech center focuses of mechanical and woodworking, to computer technology, small business management, bookkeeping as well as arts, crafts, and languages. RTCC's adult education classes are open to all for a fee.
- **Bethel University** – Since 2014, Bethel University has provided people of all ages with a platform to share knowledge through informal, community-taught, and tuition-free courses during the month of March each year.

Additional opportunities are available in Rutland, VT and Hanover, NH as well.

I. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To provide the opportunities and environment, including our area's unique educational resources to enable our students to investigate, master and apply the knowledge, skills, values and behaviors necessary for lifelong learning and meaningful participation in a global society.
2. To strengthen our student's educational achievement and social and emotional wellness; foster Stockbridge's sense of community; attract young families; and maintain homeowner property values.
3. To provide high-quality educational opportunities for our students as cost-effectively as possible.
4. To encourage the creation of local, affordable childcare facilities that meet the needs of Stockbridge residents.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To support family-friendly policies and programs.
2. To support the continuance of Stockbridge Central School.
3. To support a policy that allows parents to choose where they send their children to middle and high school.
4. To support the development of additional local childcare facilities, as needed, and may assist with seeking funding to develop these facilities.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. That the School Board should continue to make capital planning, maintenance, and funding a priority.

XIII. Energy

A. Background

Concern about the sustainability of our nation's dependence on oil produced in foreign countries has grown greatly since the oil crisis of the mid-1970s. As prices of oil-related fuels continue to rise, everyday activities such as home heating and travel by car become increasingly burdensome for the average Stockbridge resident.

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

Theories such as the Hubbert Peak Theory (a.k.a. Peak Oil), suggest that at some point – perhaps sooner than later – the worldwide consumption of oil will outpace the existing supply. Although new technologies may enable energy providers to extract oil from locations that were previously impossible to reach, there is most likely a finite amount of oil, which means that Stockbridge, like the rest of the world, should prepare for a much less oil-dependent future. This can be done by shifting toward an energy base that is mostly electric, the use of wood for heat, and through transportation and land use practices and policies that reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and increase efficiency. Planning for local, renewable energy options can ensure a constant supply of energy for the Town, and will be in step with State and regional energy policies, enabling the Town to receive Determination of Energy Compliance (DEC). Plans that receive a DEC give the Town a stronger voice in Section 248 energy permitting processes.

B. Vermont's Energy Future

Vermont strongly supports reducing its reliance on fossil fuels and securing energy independence for the state by improving the energy efficiency of residential, business, and government buildings, and utilizing in-state renewable energy resources. The 2022 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) addresses the major factors to our energy use by addressing the state's energy future for electricity, thermal energy transportation and land use. To highlight the state's commitment to efficiency, the State set a long-term goal of obtaining 90% of Vermont's energy demand from renewable resources by 2050. To achieve this goal, Vermont's towns will need to be proactive in reducing local fossil fuel use and transitioning to both statewide and local production of renewable energy via solar, small-scale hydroelectric, small-scale wind, and emphasis on shifting our transportation sector to electric power.

"Energy" as used in this Plan and in the state's Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) is not the same as electricity. It includes all forms of energy used by people. This is commonly broken

down into four sectors: commercial (this involves running machinery, cooling, heating and lighting), residential (mainly cooling, heating and lighting), industrial (process energy such as smelting or concrete production), and transportation (mainly gasoline and diesel).

C. Energy Needs

In referring to energy, this plan is not only talking about electricity; wood, gas, oil, and other sources are all forms of energy. To compare energy across source types, this Plan will use the MMBtu (million British thermal units) and kWh (kilowatt hours). (For reference, 1 MMBtu converts to 293 kWh.) Of all the ways that energy is consumed in Stockbridge, transportation and heating are by far the most energy-demanding, and this pattern is indicative of the state as a whole (see the above chart). Overall, total energy use in Stockbridge is estimated at 88,000 MMBtus per year, with 19,000 MMBtus (21.5%) for electricity, 39,000 MMBtus (44.3%) for transportation, and 30,000 MMBtus (34.1%) for heating. As one can see, electricity is now a small part of our overall energy use and is not our primary energy source at point of use.

As seen above, Stockbridge uses about 88,000 MMBtus of energy now. However, these needs can be reduced by using energy better. To lessen overall energy needs and shift to renewables, the biggest change will be how the transportation and thermal sectors are powered. For transportation, this shift will occur primarily in the form of electric vehicles, which are vastly more efficient than gasoline-powered vehicles.

Currently, there are approximately 536 vehicles in Stockbridge. It is not known how many EVs are in town, but if the town were to have the same percentage of EVs as the State as a whole (1%), then there are likely 5-6 electric vehicles present in town. Intermediate LEAP targets have 50 electric vehicles in town by 2025, and approximately 350 by 2035. This equates to a ten-fold increase over the next three years and seven-fold increase in the following ten years in EV ownership.

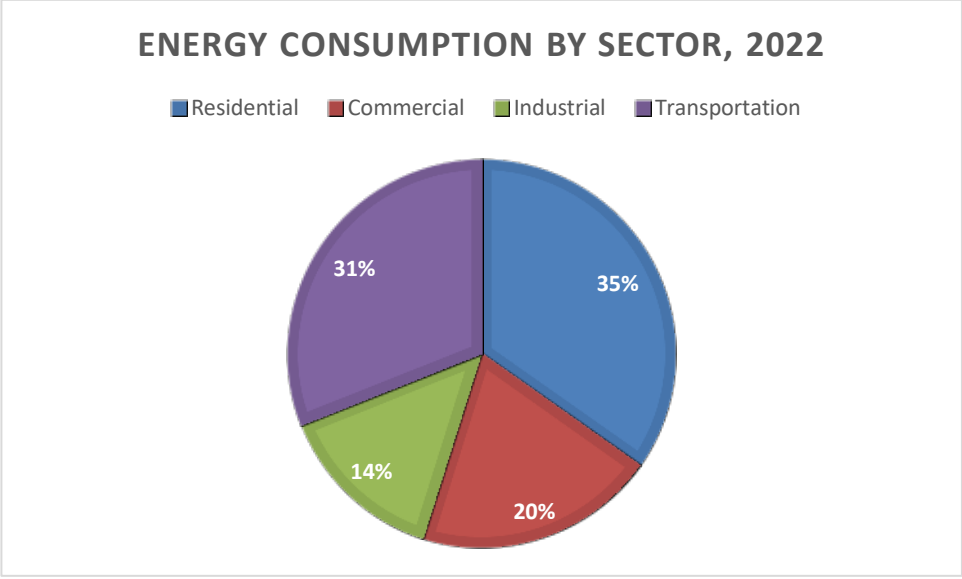

Figure 22: Energy Consumption by Sector for Vermont, 2022

For heating needs, Stockbridge will have to move in the direction of electric heat pumps if it is to reach the goal of nearly 50% renewable thermal energy use by 2025. The LEAP model does not rely on wood as an increasing source of residential thermal energy, however, increases in efficiency and building insulation will help to offset an increased demand for wood heating sources.

The LEAP model also assumes that households and businesses are improving their energy efficiency through weatherization to need less heat and cooling. The LEAP goal is to have one third of households weatherized by 2025, and 100% of households weatherized by 2050. Significant improvements in thermal energy efficiency for buildings is one of the ways in which total energy use is expected to drop.

D. Current Energy Sources

Fossil Fuels

Stockbridge, like most other towns in Vermont, depends primarily on fossil fuels for heating and transportation. As shown in the table above, fossil fuels account for more than 50% of all energy consumed in Vermont, most of which is used in transportation. Nearly 50% of the oil consumed in the U.S. is imported. Vermont's economic system is so closely tied to the availability of fossil fuels that modest price increases can lead to inflation, a slowdown in economic growth, and monetary instability. This can have unanticipated adverse impacts at the municipal and residential level. For example, increasing fuel prices make it more expensive for a town government to provide traditional public services and maintain existing facilities. Additionally, rising prices can also make it difficult for residents to heat their homes and put enough food on the table (the price and availability of food is usually influenced by fuel prices).

But these consequences of intensive fossil fuel use are only part of the story. The combustion of fossil fuels has been determined to be the largest contributor of atmospheric "greenhouse gases" (primarily carbon dioxide). There is near consensus in the scientific community that continued accumulation of greenhouse gases within the earth's atmosphere will lead to a warming of the atmosphere, or "greenhouse effect." Such warming can cause severe coastal flooding and unpredictable climate shifts, threatening the viability of the earth's most significant urban and agricultural centers. Vermont has experienced an increase in the number of severe weather events. In 2011, there were four federally declared disaster events, breaking the record for the most events in a single year. If, indeed, climate instability and climate change are linked, then it is essential that we decrease our reliance on fossil fuels in an attempt to reverse or at least halt future damage to our atmosphere.

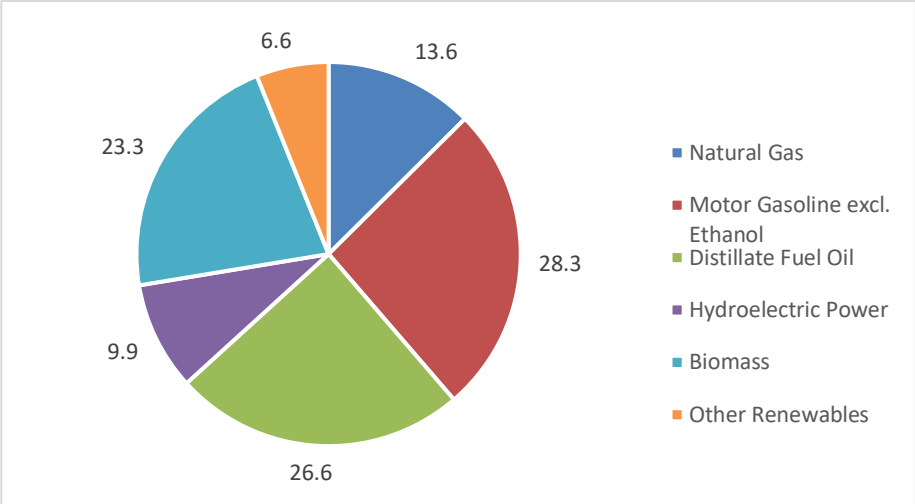

Figure 23: Vermont Primary Energy Consumption Estimates, 2020 (Trillion BTU)

Nuclear Energy

A properly maintained nuclear power facility can, to some extent,

represent a cleaner form of energy production than fossil fuels. However, the mining, processing and disposal of nuclear materials continues to raise questions regarding the viability of nuclear energy; nuclear generated electricity produces various long-lived radioactive wastes which are highly toxic and require extraordinary precautions for safe storage. Existing technology does not assure safe disposal. The industry has not completely resolved safety issues regarding the decommissioning of nuclear power plants.

Renewable Energy

A substantial amount of the power used statewide comes from renewable sources when compared to other states. Although the majority of Vermont's renewable energy is generated through Hydro-Quebec (see below), some hydroelectric power is generated in Vermont. Additional sources of renewable energy include several utility owned commercial-scale wind and landfill methane projects. Many residences in Vermont also utilize wood for heating.

E. Renewable Energy Resources

Stockbridge has 339MW of ground-mounted solar potential based on the town energy data compiled by the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission. Of this potential, Stockbridge would need only about 2-3 MW of solar to meet its 2050 Renewable Generation Target.[2] This translates into 20-30 acres, or 0.1% of the town's total land area. Assuming solar panel efficiency continues to improve, the total acreage needed will likely decrease as well. Furthermore, this number does not take into account homes or businesses that opt to install rooftop solar, which can further reduce the total acreage needed.

F. Energy Scarcity and Costs

There are few scarcities of energy foreseen in the 8-year life of this plan. Our electrical providers have plenty of power supply resources either under contract or available to purchase at this time. Total energy demand is likely to shrink modestly in the near term as population is not expected to grow much and efficiency is constantly improving. There should be ample amounts of heating and transportation fuels for the life of this plan, but we must encourage a shift away from fossil fuels to meet our goals. Wood is a plentiful local source of heating fuel, and many more cords could be sustainable harvested than are being cut now. Plenty of sun and wind are available if we decide to use them.

That is not to say that plentiful energy will be cheap. Fossil fuels have varied widely in price over the last several years, and the overall trend is for dwindling supplies. Also, whether it is carbon pricing or other methods, fossil fuels will have to increase in cost to disincentivize their use. The cost of energy is not an issue for some families, but is still an issue for many, and will be less of an issue for all if targets for better insulating buildings, switching to EVs, and using heat pumps and advanced wood heat systems are met. An EV has much less maintenance costs, as they

[2] Municipal Template – Energy Data compiled by the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission https://www.trorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Stockbridge_Energy.pdf

have no engine or exhaust system, and the cost of electricity to power a car comes out to the equivalent of about $1.50 per gallon (in today's value), much less than current gasoline prices.

For many, the cost barriers are not the daily or monthly energy costs but implementing these changes to the buildings and vehicles we have now that use our energy. There are rebates and programs available that are income-based, and even for those that have too much income to qualify over time these investments will pay off, but they still require getting financing or having considerable savings on hand.

One area where there is energy scarcity is in the switch to renewable energy. Installing EV charging stations can require more energy than is available, and this can limit residents in switching to electric vehicles from conventional fossil fuel-powered cars. Many locations in Stockbridge lack access to three-phase power, and the grid in general was not designed for the heavy energy needs of electric vehicles. Making the switch to renewable energy will require strengthening the power grid.

G. Energy Problems

The energy problems are historically not due to supply, as energy has historically been relatively abundant and cheap. Mainly, the energy problems stem from the environmental costs that have been externalized for a very long time. These problems are now becoming apparent in the form of greenhouse gases and the heat they are trapping on Earth. It is clear that the window for rectifying this issue is extremely short, and that a shift to renewable sources of energy across all forms of energy use is imperative.

Consistency within the grid is also a problem in Stockbridge. Often the power will fluctuate, which is due to Stockbridge being located far from the sources of electric energy.

H. Renewable Energy Resources

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

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

When surveyed in 2022, 69% of residents who responded indicated that they support alternative energy generation. Furthermore, nearly 75% of respondents indicated they would support using more solar power in town. Of the 75%, 52% strongly support this statement, while only 11% disagree or strongly disagree. As a result, Stockbridge is highly supportive of

residential scale alternative energy generation, whether for single family homes or small groups of homes.

The types of renewable energy found in Vermont are:

Solar Energy

Solar energy has potential for providing clean, reliable, and safe energy, even in Vermont's climate. Most areas in Vermont have the potential for some solar energy production, at least at the residential scale. In Stockbridge, if all potential opportunities to develop solar energy production were taken advantage of, the town could generate roughly 415,596 MWh of power annually, which is roughly 92-fold of what is needed to reach the 2050 target need range of 4,132-5,050. Solar systems are no longer utilized exclusively by “off-grid” buildings. The advent of net-metering allows buildings to be connected to the grid while utilizing renewable energy. Systems that are net-metered are overseen by the Public Service Board and are exempt from local permitting. There are no large (i.e. capacity of 150 kW) group net metered solar arrays in Stockbridge. There are currently 19 small (i.e. capacities of under 15 kW) net metered solar arrays in Town with a total capacity of approximately 136 kW.

Passive Heating and Lighting – Good building and site design are essential to taking advantage of the sun’s energy through passive methods.

Water Heating – Solar water heating is the most common form of residential-scale solar use in Vermont.

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

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

Wind Energy

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

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

There are multiple levels of potential wind energy generation, ranging from Class 1 (10-11 mph) to Class 7 (19-25 mph). Stockbridge's topography and distance from the windier areas of the state, makes it a poor location for wind energy generation, even on the residential level. Based on an analysis of these potential areas for wind development, the community does not have to be concerned with the development of commercial-scale wind energy in town.

Biomass & Biogas Energy Generation

The term 'biomass' refers to biologically-based feed stocks (that is, food or vegetable wastes, grass, wood, methane, algae, and more). Biomass can be converted into an energy source to fuel vehicles (e.g. biodiesel), heat homes, or generate electricity. According to the 2011 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, those using wood for primary heating consumed about 5.4 cords in 2007–2008, while those households using wood as a supplementary source used 2.25 cords. In that same year, Vermont households burned about 20,155 tons of wood pellets, with primary-heat-source consumers burning 3.8 tons and supplementary-heat-source consumers burning 1.2 tons for the season. There are no biomass energy generation facilities in Stockbridge.

Commercial biomass energy generation facilities should be located close to available biofuels to reduce transportation impacts and costs. A biomass power plant would require a great deal of space to accommodate the various stages of collection and conversion of the mass into fuel before burning it to produce electricity. Water can also pose a problem as biomass facilities require large quantities to handle the recycling process of waste materials. Materials would have to be transported to and from the facility, so truck traffic should be a consideration in selecting a site. Additionally, before a biomass energy generation facility could be located in Stockbridge, developers should prove that their proposed project will not negatively impact the rural character of the community or the local road system.

Biofuels

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

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

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

Agriculture

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

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

Hydropower

Many locations in Vermont, including Stockbridge, once depended on hydropower to grind grain, run mills and supply electricity to homes. But, with the onset of centralized power, most of these small-scale power generation facilities have been replaced by massive hydro facilities such as Hydro Quebec. Gaysville's hydropower station was destroyed in the 1927 flood.

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

There are no sites in Stockbridge that are considered "in-service" (meaning that the site is not actively producing power, but has the basic infrastructure to do so).

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

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

I. Permitting and Siting Considerations

Energy generation in Vermont is subject to multiple permitting requirements, most of which are limited to state level permitting. On the municipal level, state statute protects residential renewable energy generation systems from regulations that will completely prohibit their development.

Section 248

Distributed power generation facilities, such as hydropower dams, fossil fuel plants as well as wind power or solar systems that are part of the public power generation system, are subject to review and approval by the Vermont Public Service Board (30 VSA §248). Under this law, prior to the construction of a generation facility, the Board must issue a Certificate of Public Good. A Section 248 review addresses environmental, economic, and social impacts associated with a particular project, similar to Act 250. In making its determination, the Board must give due consideration to the recommendations of municipal and regional planning commissions and their respective plans. Accordingly, it is appropriate that this Plan address these land uses and provide guidance to town officials, regulators, and utilities.

Section 248

Section 248 of Title 30 requires companies to obtain approval from the Board before beginning site preparation or construction of electric transmission facilities, electric generation facilities and certain gas pipelines within Vermont. Section 248 also requires Board approval for some long-term contracts for purchasing power from outside Vermont and for some investments in transmission and generation facilities outside Vermont.

Development under Section 248 is exempt from local zoning regulations.

For all commercial-scale energy generation facilities, the following policies shall be considered:

Preferred Locations: New generation and transmission facilities shall be cited in locations that reinforce Stockbridge's traditional patterns of growth, of compact village centers surrounded by a rural countryside, including farm and forest land. The Town also supports renewable energy generation on top of existing buildings, on landfills, on brownfields outside of the village center, on reclaimed quarries or gravel pits, Superfund sites, or on sites that were previously covered by structures or impervious cover. The town, by joint letter of the Planning Commission and Selectboard, may designate a site as preferred if it is not visible in the growing season from town or state highways, is not actively agriculture, and is not part of a priority or high priority forest block or habitat connector.

1. **Prohibited Locations**: Because of their distinctive natural, historic or scenic value, energy facility development shall be excluded from the following areas:

    - Floodways shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (except as required for hydro facilities).
    - Fluvial erosion hazard areas shown on Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area maps (except as required for hydro facilities).

- Wetlands as indicated on Vermont State Wetlands Inventory maps or identified through site analysis.
- Rare, threatened or endangered species habitat or communities.

2. **Significant Areas**: All new generation, transmission, and distribution facilities shall be sited and designed to avoid or, if no other reasonable alternative exists, to otherwise minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to the following:

   - Historic districts, landmarks, sites and structures listed, or eligible for listing, on state or national registers.
   - Public parks and recreation areas, including state and municipal parks, forests and trail networks.
   - Municipally designated scenic roads and viewsheds.
   - Special flood hazard areas identified by National Flood Insurance Program maps (except as required for hydro facilities)
   - Public and private drinking water supplies, including mapped source protection areas.
   - Primary agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.
   - Necessary wildlife habitat identified by the state or through analysis, including core habitat areas, migration and travel corridors.

3. **Natural Resource Protection**: New generation and transmission facilities must be sited to avoid the fragmentation of, and undue adverse impacts to the town's working landscape, including large tracts of undeveloped forestland and core forest habitat areas, open farmland, and primary agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service.

4. **Protection of Wildlife**: Designers must gather information about natural and wildlife habitats that exist in the project area and take measures to avoid any undue adverse impact on the resource. Consideration shall be given to the effects of the project on: natural communities, wildlife residing in the area and their migratory routes; the impacts of human activities at or near habitat areas; and any loss of vegetative cover or food sources for critical habitats.

5. **Site Selection**: Site selection should not be limited to generation facilities alone; other elements of the facility need to be considered as well. These include access roads, site clearing, onsite power lines, substations, lighting, and off-site power lines. Development of these elements shall be done in such a way as to minimize any negative impacts. Unnecessary site clearing and highly visible roadways can have greater visual impacts than the energy generation facility itself. In planning for facilities, designers should take steps to mitigate their impact on natural, scenic and historic resources and improve the harmony with their surroundings.

New generation and transmission facilities should be sited in locations that reinforce Stockbridge's traditional patterns of growth, of compact village centers surrounded by a rural countryside, including farm and forest land.

J. Residential Energy Efficiency

There are several ways that the Town of Stockbridge can meet its local energy demand, first by lowering that demand, and then by working to meet the remaining need with local, untapped energy resources.

Decreasing Energy Use by Changing Behavior

Raising awareness to replace wasteful energy behaviors with energy saving ones can reduce the strain on existing energy resources, and help residents and businesses save money, making the town a more affordable place to live with a higher quality of life.

Decreasing Energy Use by Implementing Energy Efficiency

For those necessary or desired services that require energy, we can apply the principles of energy efficiency to ensure that we use less energy to provide the same level and quality of service. Examples include:

- Insulating with high R-value (or heat flow resistance) material;
- Using high-efficiency windows;
- Installing energy efficient appliances like refrigerators, freezers, front loading washing machines, gas heated clothes driers and heating systems without blowers;
- Using high-efficiency lighting;
- Using gas and/or solar hot water heaters;
- Siting buildings to make use of existing wind blocks and natural cooling patterns derived from the landscape's topography; and
- Siting buildings with maximum southern exposure to capture passive solar energy.

New residential development in the State of Vermont is required to comply with Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES). Commercial development is subject to similar code regulations. Some examples of the types of development the RBES applies to include:

- Detached one- and two-family dwellings;
- Multi-family and other residential buildings three stories or fewer in height;
- Additions, alterations, renovations and repairs; and
- Factory-built modular homes (not including mobile homes).

To comply with the RBES, a home, as built, must meet all the Basic Requirements and the Performance Requirements for one of several possible compliance methods. If the home meets the technical requirements of the RBES, a Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards Certificate must be completed, filed with the Town Clerk, and posted in the home. If a home required by law to meet the RBES does not comply, a homeowner may seek damages in court against the builder.

K. Municipal Role in Energy Efficiency

Although communities are unlikely to have an impact on energy consumption at the global level, they do have an impact at the local level given their demand for and use of energy. The relationship between a municipality and its energy use creates opportunities to have an impact on local energy use reduction.

Form an Energy Committee

Stockbridge does not have an energy committee, but Vermont towns are statutorily enabled to create one. An energy committee (EC) is a volunteer group that is formed for the purpose of establishing and implementing the town's energy goals; the group can act independently or can be formally appointed by the Selectboard. The work that can be done by an EC includes conducting energy audits on municipal buildings, tracking energy use for these buildings, providing outreach to homeowners on energy efficiency and renewable energy generation and working with the Planning Commission on the Energy Plan. Most importantly, an active EC can help the town and residents save money while saving energy.

Auditing Municipally Owned Buildings

Many towns in Vermont own buildings that are old and inefficient in many respects. For instance, older buildings often have insufficient insulation, wasteful heating and cooling systems, and out-of-date lighting. These kinds of infrastructure problems result in higher energy use with the resulting cost passed onto taxpayers.

Municipal officials should consider conducting audits on additional town buildings to determine what improvements are necessary, and which projects would have the highest cost-benefit ratio in terms of energy and financial savings.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

Vermont enacted legislation in May 2009 (Act 45) that authorizes local governments to create Clean Energy Assessment districts. Once created, municipalities can offer financing to property owners for renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects. Eligible projects include the installation of solar water and space heating, photovoltaic panels (PV), and biomass heating, small wind, and micro-hydroelectric systems. Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing effectively allows property owners to borrow money to pay for energy improvements. The amount borrowed is typically repaid via a special assessment on the property over a period of up to 20 years; if the property owner wishes to sell the parcel before fully repaying the obligation, then the obligation is transferred to the new property owner at the time of sale.

While many communities have voted to establish PACE districts, the mechanism for funding the PACE program at the state level has not yet been created.

Capital Budget Planning

Given the potential expense of energy efficiency improvements, it is essential to wisely budget town funding to cover these costs. State statute enables communities to create a Capital

Budget and Program (Program) for the purposes of planning and investing in long-range capital planning. Although most communities have some form of capital account where they save money, many do not have a true Capital Budget and Program. A capital budget outlines the capital projects that are to be undertaken in the coming fiscal years over a five-year period. It includes estimated costs and a proposed method of financing those costs. Also outlined in the Program is an indication of priority of need and the order in which these investments will be made. Any Capital Budget and Program must be consistent with the Town Plan and should include an analysis of what effect capital investments might have on the operating costs of the community.

When planning for routine major facility investments, such as roof replacements, foundation repairs, etc., it is important to consider making energy efficiency improvements simultaneously. The cost to replace or renovate a community facility will only be slightly higher if energy efficiency improvements are done at the same time, rather than on their own.

At present, the town of Stockbridge does not have an adopted Capital Budget and Program to help guide investments in community infrastructure and equipment. The Planning Commission may make recommendations to the Selectboard with regard to what capital investments should be considered annually. Stockbridge is in the process of developing a Capital Budget Program.

Policy Making for Change

In addition to reducing the energy use related to facilities, Stockbridge can implement policies that lower energy use by town staff or encourage greater energy efficiency. Examples include:

Energy Efficient Purchasing Policy – A policy of this nature would require energy efficiency to be considered when purchasing or planning for other town investments. For example, purchasing Energy Star rated equipment is a well-documented way to increase energy efficiency. Devices carrying the Energy Star logo, such as computer products and peripherals, kitchen appliances, buildings and other products, generally use 20%–30% less energy than required by federal standards.

Staff Policies - Towns can also implement policies that are designed to reduce wasteful energy practices. For example, the Town of Stockbridge could create a policy requiring that town vehicles (such as dump trucks and other road maintenance equipment) not idle for more than a set period of time. Idling is an expensive waste of fuel, and a policy such as this could lead to substantial savings in money spent on fuel by the town.

Through policy making, local government can set a clear example for townspeople and encourage sustainable behavior that will ultimately result in both energy and financial savings. Please see Section O (below) for the goals, policies, and recommendations.

L. Energy and Land Use Policy

The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. Chapter 117) does not allow communities to impose land use regulations that prohibit or has the effect of prohibiting the installation of solar collectors or other renewable energy devices. However,

statute does enable Vermont's municipalities to adopt regulatory bylaws (such as zoning and subdivision ordinances) to implement the energy provisions contained in their town plan.

Zoning Bylaws control the type and density of development. It is important to acknowledge connection between land use, transportation and energy and seek to create zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations that encourage energy efficiency and conservation. Encouraging higher density and diverse uses in and around existing built-up areas can lead to more compact settlement patterns, thereby minimizing travel requirements. At the same time, Zoning Bylaws must be flexible enough to recognize and allow for the emergence of technological advancements which encourage decreased energy consumption, such as increased use of solar and wind power.

Stockbridge's Zoning Bylaws contain provisions for planned unit developments (PUDs). PUDs are a grouping of mixed use or residential structures, pre-planned and developed on a single parcel of land. The setback frontage and density requirements of the zoning district may be varied, to allow creative and energy efficient design (i.e. east-west orientation of roads to encourage southern exposure of structures, solar access protection, use of land forms or vegetation for wind breaks, and attached structures), and to encourage the construction of energy efficient buildings.

Subdivision regulations are one of the most effective tools for encouraging energy efficiency and conservation. Subdivision regulations, like PUDs, involve town review (through the PC and ZBA) in the design process. Because subdivision regulations govern the creation of new building lots, as well as the provision of access and other facilities and services to those lots, a community can impose requirements that a developer site their building to maximize solar gain. Likewise, subdivision can require that landscaping be utilized to reduce thermal loss.

M. Energy and Transportation Policy

It is important that our community recognizes the clear connection between land use patterns, transportation, and energy use. Most communities encourage the development of residences in rural areas, and these are in fact coveted locations to develop because of the aesthetics that make Vermont special. However, this rural development requires most of our population to drive to reach schools, work, and services.

Because transportation is such a substantial portion of local energy use, it is in the interest of the community to encourage any new developments that are proposed in Stockbridge to locate adjacent to existing roads. In particular, dense residential developments should be located within or adjacent to existing village centers or within designated growth areas. Commercial development that requires trucking and freight handling should only locate on roads which can effectively handle the size of vehicle needed.

N. Energy Assurance Planning

The dramatic rise in fuel costs over the last decade has brought concerns about the stability of our national energy system to the forefront. Dependence on foreign fuels puts the nation in a

position of weakness, unable to control prices and maintain fuel supplies. This lack of control highlights the fragility of our dependence on foreign fuel, particularly petroleum. This lack of control is especially apparent in Vermont because the state has no crude oil reserves or refining capacity.

If the cost of petroleum was to rise precipitously (for example, double in price), Stockbridge might find it challenging to maintain public services, such as regular road maintenance or the school bus. To continue providing the same quantity and quality of services, taxes would have to be raised. This, coupled with the impact of oil prices on the private sector, could result in significant economic hardship for residents.

Stockbridge should engage in comprehensive, integrated energy assurance planning that is designed to mitigate and enable timely response to the consequences of energy supply disruption, whether this disruption is the result of physical scarcity, high prices, or a severe weather event (for example, in 2011, Tropical Storm Irene cut off access to fuel supplies in many communities including Stockbridge). One way to prepare for an energy supply disruption is by including an element that specifically addresses this issue in our town's Municipal Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan should include a clear set of non-mandatory and mandatory fuel conservation measures along with a clear indication of what circumstances would trigger the implementation of the various measures. For instance, if an acute shortage arises, Stockbridge should be prepared to ensure that any available fuel will be distributed based on priority rankings (for example, fuel might go first toward emergency response, next to health care providers, etc.).

O. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To ensure the long-term availability of safe, reliable, and affordable energy supplies, to increase energy efficiency, and to promote the development of renewable energy resources and facilities in the Town of Stockbridge.
2. To reduce energy costs, the community's reliance on fossil fuels and foreign oil supplies, and greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.
3. To identify and limit the adverse impacts of energy development and use on public health, safety and welfare, the town's historic and planned pattern of development, environmentally sensitive areas, and our most highly valued natural, cultural and scenic resources, consistent with related development, resource protection and land conservation policies included elsewhere in this plan.
4. To encourage a continued pattern of settlement and land use that is energy efficient.
5. To promote the construction of energy efficient residential and commercial buildings and increase awareness and use of energy conservation practices through educational outreach to the public.
6. To increase public transportation opportunities throughout the community, including park-and-ride access, bus service, biking paths, and sidewalks.
7. To promote greater use of existing public transportation services by community members.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. That town officials will actively support partnerships, strategies, and state and federal legislation that will ensure the affordable, reliable, and sustainable production and delivery of electrical power to the region, in conformance with regional and municipal goals and objectives.
2. That town officials will participate in the Public Service Board's review of new and expanded generation and transmission facilities to ensure that local energy, resource conservation and development objectives are identified and considered in future utility development.
3. That any commercial energy generation facility proposed in Stockbridge must be developed as to avoid negative impacts on the rural character of the surrounding area. Developers should make all possible efforts to minimize damage to important natural areas as identified in the Natural Resource section of this Town Plan. Additionally, such facilities should be located as close to existing roads as possible to avoid any increase in the services provided by the town.
4. That developments that are proposed under Act 250 must include measures to reduce energy consumption through site and building design, materials selection and the use of energy-efficient lighting, heating, venting and air conditioning systems.
5. To support the development and use of renewable energy resources – including but not limited to wind, solar, biomass, micro hydro and cogeneration – at a scale that is sustainable, that enhances energy system capacity and security, that promotes cleaner, more affordable energy technologies, that increases the energy options available locally, and that avoids undue adverse impacts of energy development on the local community and environment.
6. That town officials will cooperate with state, regional and local agencies, emergency service providers, regional suppliers and municipalities to develop local emergency contingency plans that ensure access to critical energy supplies and measures to reduce nonessential energy consumption in the event of an abrupt energy shortage.
7. That the Stockbridge Selectboard should discuss the PACE program at a future meeting and decide whether the program should be placed on the ballot for Town Meeting.
8. That town officials will support efforts to educate homeowners about what resources are available to them for energy efficiency improvements.
9. That the rehabilitation or the development of new buildings and equipment should use proven design principles and practices with the lowest lifecycle costs (cost of owning, operating, maintaining, and disposing of a building or a building system over a period of time).
10. Where land development or subdivisions are proposed, that design plans should reflect sound energy conservation principles, such as solar and slope orientation, the use of protective wind barriers, and cluster development (citing buildings close to each other to maintain open space on the remaining parcel).
11. That visual effects of electrical generation, transmission, and distribution facilities shall be minimized whenever feasible.

12. That generation, transmission, and distribution facilities or service areas shall be encouraged only when they complement the recommended land use patterns set forth in this plan.
13. That new significant public investments (including schools, public recreational areas, municipal facilities, and major commercial or residential developments) should be located within or in close proximity to the village or hamlet areas and shall utilize existing roads whenever possible.
14. To encourage the extension of broadband services to all residences, and support energy efficient, small-scale home businesses.
15. To promote energy efficient travel by residents.
16. To support the continuation and expansion of public transportation options in Stockbridge.
17. To support the continuation of the transition of municipal facilities to renewable energy sources as replacements are needed and funding permits.

It is the recommendation of the Town:

1. That the Stockbridge Selectboard should appoint a volunteer Energy Coordinator or volunteer Committee to develop an Energy Action Plan as a supplement to the Town Plan, to recommend actions that the town and community should take to conserve energy, increase energy efficiency, promote local energy production from renewable resources, and to reduce energy use.
2. That town officials and volunteers should work to increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices, energy-efficient products and efficiency and weatherization programs through educational efforts aimed at local residents and businesses.
3. That the Town should evaluate municipal or community-based renewable energy generation, to include municipal biomass heating systems, and the installation of individual or group net metered generation facilities on town buildings and property to serve town facilities. Sources of funding for municipal power generation may include third-party financing, municipal funds, bonds, grants, and available government incentive programs.
4. That the Energy Committee or volunteer energy coordinator, if appointed, should identify areas in town that are appropriate for commercial renewable energy production.
5. That the Town should implement energy efficiency measures for existing and future facilities as opportunities arise, and incorporate priority efficiency improvements (e.g., facility retrofits, renovations, and equipment upgrades) in the town's capital budget and program.

XIV. Relationship to Other Plans

A. Relationship to Municipal Plans

The Municipal Plan focuses primarily on development and policy within the community's boundaries. However, it is important to recognize that how a community grows and changes can be directly impacted by development that takes place outside of the community. For example, many places had large and vibrant villages that were negatively impacted by the location of the railroad in outside areas.

To analyze the potential for outside impacts on Stockbridge, the Planning Commission has reviewed the Municipal Plans and, if available, the land use regulations of surrounding towns for consistency with this Plan. These communities include:

- **Barnard** – The Town of Barnard has had an adopted plan since 1971, which has been revised regularly, as well as a Unified Bylaw (zoning and subdivision) that was adopted in 2012. The pattern of development promoted by the Barnard Town Plan along Stockbridge's border is very similar to the diffuse pattern outlined in the Land Use chapter of this plan. Uses encouraged in Barnard are likewise similar. There are no potential conflicts between these plans.

- **Bethel** – Bethel has had a municipal plan and zoning for decades. Their current plan was adopted in 2020 and their Unified Zoning Bylaws was adopted in 2021. Much of the land that abuts Stockbridge in Bethel is of a scale and density that is similar to Stockbridge – primarily rural residential in nature. However, along Route 107, Bethel currently has an area that allows an extensive range of commercial activities, which is not consistent with how Stockbridge treats much of 107. Bethel is the primary operator of the White River Alliance, which manages the Bethel/Royalton landfill where Stockbridge's trash is taken. Stockbridge will need to work with Bethel and the Alliance in the future to address any changes in statewide solid waste policy.

- **Bridgewater** – The Town of Bridgewater has only a municipal plan, which was revised in 2018. However, there is a limited amount of land area between Bridgewater and Stockbridge which meets and that area is part of the Les Newell Wildlife Management Area and is preserved. There are no concerns regarding compatibility with Bridgewater's land use patterns.

- **Killington** – Killington has also maintained a lengthy history of local planning, primarily due to the constant development pressures from Killington and Pico Ski areas. Much of the land in Killington that is adjacent to Stockbridge has been designated as Forest Reserve and effectively mirror's Stockbridge's land use patterns in these locations.

- **Pittsfield** – The Town of Pittsfield is Stockbridge's immediate neighbor to the East, with the communities sharing access to Route 100. Pittsfield has a Town Plan which is updated every eight years as is required by law, but they do not have zoning or subdivision regulations – only Flood Hazard Regulations. Pittsfield's approach to land

use density and type along Stockbridge's border is similar to Stockbridge – disperse development that is primarily residential in nature.

- **Rochester** – The Town of Rochester has had a Town Plan, Zoning and Subdivision Regulations since the 1970s. Stockbridge and Rochester share access to Route 100, one of Vermont's most scenic roads. Areas of these communities which are adjacent to each other have similar types, featuring disperse development that is primarily residential in nature.

B. Relationship to the Regional Plan

Stockbridge is within the Two Rivers - Ottauquechee Regional Commission. It is one of thirty (30) municipalities that comprise the Region. The Region covers northern Windsor County, most of Orange County and the Towns of Pittsfield, Hancock, and Granville. The Commission was chartered in 1970 by the acts of its constituent towns. All towns are members of the Commission, and town representatives govern its affairs. One of the Regional Commission's primary purposes is to provide technical services to town officials and to undertake a regional planning program. As is the case in many areas of the State, the extent of local planning throughout the region is varied. Some municipalities are more active than others. Thus, the level of services to each town changes with time.

The Regional Commission updated its Regional Plan in July, 2020. It will remain in effect for a period of eight years. This Plan was developed to reflect the general planning goals and policies expressed in the local plans. It is an official policy statement on growth and development of the Region. The Regional Plan contains several hundred policies to guide future public and private development in the Region. Policies for land use settlement are identified. These areas are: Town Centers, Village Settlement Areas, Hamlet Areas, Rural Area, and Conservation and Resource Areas. Delineation of each land use area is mapped or charted.

Stockbridge has not modified its future land use map for this update of the Town Plan. Forest block policy language has been added to the Upland Conservation Land Use Area to align the Plan with state and regional land use goals. No conflicts are anticipated between the Stockbridge Town Plan and the Regional Plan.

C. Goals, Policies and Recommendations

It is the goal of the Town:

1. To work with neighboring towns and the region to encourage sustainable land use and environmental policy that benefits the citizens of Stockbridge.

It is the policy of the Town:

1. To continue communication and cooperation between Stockbridge and its neighboring towns.

2. To continue participation in the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission.
3. To exchange planning information and development data with neighboring communities.
4. To support and encourage the Select Board to seek opportunities to share resources with neighboring towns. This can include energy coordinators, grant writers, shared town clerk, shared equipment etc.

XV. Town Plan Implementation

Title 24, Chapter 117, §4382(7) requires a Town Plan to contain a "recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan". While Title 24 does not require communities implement any of the policies or recommendations in its municipal plan, it is important to recognize that to meet the vision of the Plan, it must be implemented wherever possible.

Implementation can be approached in multiple ways some regulatory and some non-regulatory, they include (but are not limited to) the following:

Regulatory	Non-Regulatory
Zoning & Subdivision Bylaws	Design a Capital Budget & Program
Strengthening Town Plan language to clearly influence Act 250 proceedings (use of direct language, such as "shall")	Advisory Committees (i.e. Conservation Commissions or Energy Committees)
Official Map	Education/Outreach on important issues
Access Permits - Town Highways Only (Selectboard)	Purchase or acceptance of development rights
Flood Regulations & National Flood Insurance Program	Follow-up on recommendations for action in Plan

A. Regulatory Implementation

Regulation of land use and development through rules adopted by the Town is one possible method of Plan implementation. Well-recognized and utilized means include, but are not limited to, Zoning Bylaws and subdivision regulations. Examples of potential implementation tools include:

Zoning Bylaws

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

- Uses of land,
- Placement of buildings on lots,
- Relationship of buildings to open space, and
- Provision of parking, signs, landscaping, and open space.

Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws establish districts or zones that have a different set of uses, densities, and other standards for development. Zoning districts must be reasonably consistent with the Town Plan, and it is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to implement changes to the Zoning Bylaws that are proposed in this Plan. As an alternative to conventional methods, Stockbridge may opt to implement a set of measurable performance standards for specific uses as opposed to dividing the Town into districts. This technique, referred to as

"performance zoning," is designed to be more flexible and to recognize the specific conditions of each site proposed for development.

Subdivision Regulations

Stockbridge has had subdivision regulations since the 1970s. These regulations are administered by the Planning Commission. Subdivision regulations govern the division of parcels of land, the creation of roads, and other public improvements. Furthermore, subdivision regulations ensure that land development reflects land capability and that critical open spaces and resources are protected from poor design or layout. It is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to implement any changes to subdivision regulations that are proposed in this Plan.

Flood Hazard Bylaws

Under Vermont law [24 V.S.A., Section 4412], the Town of Stockbridge regulates the use of land in a defined flood hazard area adjacent to streams and ponds. The Stockbridge Flood Hazard Bylaws have been established to ensure that design and construction activities within the limits of the 100-Year Flood Plain minimize potential for flood damage and maintain use of agricultural land in flood-prone areas. As noted in the Natural Resources section of this Plan, property owners are eligible for federal flood insurance on buildings and structures at relatively low federally subsidized premium rates. However, such insurance cannot be obtained for properties in Stockbridge unless the Town has in effect a Flood Hazard Bylaw. At present, as previous noted, Stockbridge has Flood Hazard Bylaws. Flooding and its impacts, particularly related to Tropical Storm Irene is discussed throughout this document. The strengthening of Stockbridge's Flood Hazard Bylaws has been recommended. It is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to implement any changes to Flood Hazard Bylaws that are proposed in this Plan.

Act 250

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

Prior to these any activities being commenced, a permit must first be granted by the District Environmental Commission. In determining whether to grant a permit, the Commission shall evaluate the project in relation to ten specific review criteria.

These criteria relate to the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed project on the community and region. Parties to Act 250 proceedings include Stockbridge, through the Planning Commission and Selectboard, the State, and the Regional Commission. One criterion that needs to be addressed is whether the project conforms with the Stockbridge Town Plan. If a project were determined not to be in conformance with the plan, the District Environmental

Commission would have a basis to deny a permit. As such, Act 250 reviews can take into consideration protection of those types of resources considered important to the well-being of the community. Accordingly, it is in the interest of the Town to evaluate Act 250 projects affecting Stockbridge and to offer testimony, as appropriate.

For a Town Plan to be given serious weight under Act 250, the Plan must contain specific and unambiguous language. If a community is serious that a policy be recognized by the District Environmental Commission during Act 250 review, it must use firm language such as “shall” or “must” instead of “should” or “could”. The Planning Commission has been selective about where strong language is used in policy throughout this document, as it is important to recognize that the Town Plan have some flexibility. In instances where flexibility was not wanted, the Planning Commission wrote policy with appropriately strong language.

Highway Ordinances

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

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

B. Non-Regulatory Implementation

Capital Budget Plan

The creation of a capital budget plan has been discussed in several chapters of this Plan. A capital budget plan is a financing approach that benefits the town greatly in the selection, prioritization, timing and costing of capital projects. Under the capital budget, a project is selected (e.g. bridge refurbishment), a funding source determined (e.g. general taxes, and general obligation bonds) and a priority year given for each activity. Collectively these capital projects make clear when public facilities will be placed to accommodate projected growth.

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

Advisory Committees

State statute authorizes a community, by vote of the Selectboard, to create advisory committees. These committees can have differing roles, some provide advice to the Planning

Commission or Development Review Board regarding development (for example, a historic review committee as part of a design review district), but more often advisory committees are created to focus on a specific topic in the Plan. The most common advisory committees are the Conservation Commission and the Energy Committee. These groups (outlined in the Natural Resources and Energy chapters respectively) can assist the Selectboard and/or Planning Commission with the creation of policy, but they can also act as the primary source of outreach and education relating to their primary focus point. Stockbridge does not presently have any advisory committees. The Planning Commission has identified roles a Conservation Commission or Energy Committee could take if they were created by the Selectboard.

Coordination of Private Actions

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

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

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

Conservation Activities

Conservation programs are an effective means of securing protection of valuable farm and forestland or significant natural resources. Techniques available involve voluntary direct work between non-profit conservation organizations and affected landowners such as donation of conservation easements, bargain sales of land, and limited development schemes.

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

Vermont Community Development Program

Since the mid-1970s, the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) has made grant funds available to towns for community projects. Historically, the major focus of the program

has been on housing rehabilitation and affordable housing projects benefiting low and moderate-income families, but the program also offers funding for municipal infrastructure investments.

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

Vermont Local Roads

The Vermont Local Roads program offers technical assistance to communities which focuses on transportation infrastructure and maintenance.

C. Responsibility for Implementation

To ensure that the policies of this Plan are implemented, it is essential to identify what municipal panel, organization or citizen is most suited to act on them. Throughout this Plan, the Planning Commission has identified recommendations for action and indicated who should be responsible for them. Generally, responsibility for implementation of the Plan falls to either the Planning Commission (in the case of implementing changes to land use regulations) or the Selectboard (in the case of implementing municipal policy). However, advisory committees as well as other community organizations could also have responsibilities for implementation.

The Planning Commission should also keep track of progress made toward implementing the goals, policies and recommendations of this Plan. This information will be useful to identify areas where additional effort needs to be applied to achieve implementation. It can also be used to describe how successful the community has been at implementation in the next iteration of this Plan, and to guide future policy.

To track the progress of implementation, the Planning Commission has included a chart that identifies the policy or recommendation, the responsible party, and the progress. See Appendix A.

Appendix A: Implementation Chart

Implementation Plan - Stockbridge Town Plan 2024		
Topic	**Policy/Recommendation**	**Responsibility Timeframe**
Land Use	Examine additional protections for the Flood Hazard Area, and areas outside the FHA that are prone to flooding or flood damage.	Responsibility: Planning Commission (PC) Timeframe: 9 months
	Review any revisions to the zoning bylaws to ensure they do not violate the Flood Hazard Area designation.	Responsibility: PC Timeframe: 2 years
	Regularly review the Flood Hazard section of the Stockbridge Zoning Bylaws to ensure that it remains up-to-date with the requirements of FEMA and the NFIP.	Responsibility: PC Timeframe: 1 year
Economic Develop-ment	Pursue Village Center Designation for Stockbridge Common and Gaysville hamlet areas.	Responsibility: PC Timeframe: 1 year
Recreation	Work to ensure that development of a municipal web site includes a major focus on Stockbridge's recreational opportunities and assets.	Responsibility: Selectboard (SB) Timeframe: 1 year
	Explore options to encourage public access to local campgrounds.	Responsibility: SB/PC Timeframe: 1 year
	Request State improvements for parking signage along Route 107 that allow access to the river.	Responsibility: State Timeframe: 1 year
	Continue to support permitted recreational events.	Responsibility: PC Timeframe: Ongoing
	Continue to encourage and support the development of the White River Park at Stockbridge Vermont by seeking additional grants and funding.	Responsibility: SB/PC Timeframe: Ongoing
	Investigate a more integrated recreation plan combining town recreational resources within a single document.	Responsibility: PC/SB Timeframe: Ongoing
	Work with the National Forest Service to improve signage and visibility of the Stony Brook trailhead of the Appalachian Trail.	Responsibility: Conservation Commission (CC, If formed) Timeframe:
Utilities/Facilities	Continue to support universal cellular coverage in Town.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Ongoing
	Continue to work with the Planning Commission to maintain a Capital Budget and Program to guide future investments in infrastructure.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: 2024
	Continue to support universal internet coverage within Stockbridge, such as the East Central Vermont Fiber Project.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Ongoing

Implementation Plan - Stockbridge Town Plan 2024		
Topic	**Policy/Recommendation**	**Responsibility Timeframe**
	Investigate the creation of email directories and lists or other digital communication methods to better reach residents, including seeking grants to fund these developments.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Ongoing
	Continue to improve its municipal web site to improve communication, enhance emergency preparedness, provide residents with access to municipal data, and educate visitors and residents to local events and opportunities.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: 2 years
	Prioritize cost-effective strategies to facilitate compliance with state solid waste regulations and requirements.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe:
Health & EM Services	Review and update the Local Emergency Management Plan on a yearly basis.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Yearly
	Continue to maintain the 5-year Hazard Mitigation Plan with assistance from the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: As needed
Housing	Community leaders should work with state housing agencies, non-profit organizations, and lending institutions to encourage availability of loan or grant funds for Stockbridge residents to acquire or improve their primary homes.	Responsibility: SB/PC Timeframe: Ongoing
	Encourage exploration of additional housing opportunities while protecting our Town's rural character.	Responsibility: PC/ZBA Timeframe: 1 year
	Should review the bylaws to ensure consistency with this plan.	Responsibility: PC Timeframe: 1 year
Transportation	Acquire simple-to-use rural road maintenance software for maintaining roads and drainage systems.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: 5 years
	Develop a town highway Capital Plan and schedule that will guide maintenance and road infrastructure investments in the future.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Next 5 Years
	Establish EV charging stations where feasible in publicly-owned facilities in the Town of Stockbridge.	Responsibility: PC/SB Timeframe: 1 year
	Enhance current and future highway equipment, materials, maintenance and storage needs, the town should seek to expand the town garage site area, if space is available; and consider the benefits of extending the site's covered storage.	Responsibility: SB/PC Timeframe: 5 years
	Continue participation in the Regional Transportation Advisory Commission as well as the TRORC Road Foreman's meeting program.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Ongoing
	Review the zoning bylaws to ensure no conflict exists between installation of EV charging stations and existing land use requirements.	Responsibility: PC Timeframe: 1 Year

Implementation Plan - Stockbridge Town Plan 2024		
Topic	**Policy/Recommendation**	**Responsibility Timeframe**
Education	Support family-friendly policies and programs.	Responsibility: SB Timeframe: Ongoing
Energy	Appoint a volunteer Energy Coordinator or volunteer Committee to develop an Energy Action Plan as a supplement to the Town Plan, to recommend actions that the town and community should take to conserve energy, increase energy efficiency, promote local energy production from renewable resources, and to reduce energy use.	Responsibility: Energy Coordinator (EC) /SB Timeframe: 5 years
	Work to increase public awareness and use of energy conservation practices, energy-efficient products and efficiency and weatherization programs through educational efforts aimed at local residents and businesses.	Responsibility: Energy Coordinator /SB Timeframe: Ongoing
	Evaluate municipal or community-based renewable energy generation, to include municipal biomass heating systems, and the installation of individual or group net metered generation facilities on town buildings and property to serve town facilities.	Responsibility: Energy Coordinator/SB Timeframe: 5 years
	Identify areas in town that may be appropriate for commercial renewable energy production.	Responsibility: EC Timeframe: 5 years
	Implement energy efficiency measures for existing and future facilities as opportunities arise, and incorporate priority efficiency improvements (e.g., facility retrofits, renovations, and equipment upgrades) in the town's capital budget and program.	Responsibility: SB/EC Timeframe: 5 years

Appendix B: Tropical Storm Irene: A Historic Event

On August 28, 2011, the State of Vermont found itself in the path of Tropical Storm Irene. The storm caused power outages statewide for approximately 50,000 households and widespread flooding that resulted in six deaths. Record amounts of rain fell in a short amount of time resulting in catastrophic flooding across the state. Rainfall totals were between 4 and 7 inches with some locally higher amounts up to 10 inches concentrated during a 6 to 8-hour period. The Otter Creek reached an historic crest (nearly 4 feet over the previous record in 1938) and the Mad, Winooski and White Rivers were very close to records established in 1927. Those main stem rivers were fed by many smaller tributaries that caused damaging flash flooding throughout the central and southern parts of the state.

More than 1,500 Vermont families were displaced and the transportation and public infrastructure was decimated. Of Vermont's 251 towns and cities, 223 towns were impacted by Irene causing household damage, infrastructure damage or both. Forty-five (45) municipalities were considered severely impacted. Hundreds of state and local roads were closed for an extended period of time completely isolating numerous towns and limiting access to many others. This resulted in state and National Guard missions to deliver emergency supplies by ground and air. The flooding also caused the first-ever evacuation of the State Emergency Operations Center due to access challenges and the impact to the buildings and support mechanism in the state office complex in Waterbury.

Some of the most severe damage from Irene took place in and around Stockbridge and its neighboring communities of Pittsfield, Bethel, Rochester and Killington. By the morning of August 29th, the town of Stockbridge found itself isolated geographically and technologically. Electrical services to the community had been broken. Telephone and cellular communications were predominantly down. Highways leading out of Stockbridge (Route 100 and Route 107) were all so severely damaged that no one that could get in or out by vehicle.

Figure B1: Route 100-N during Irene (Source: D. Brown)

When municipal officials left their homes to determine how much damage had been done, they found that nearly every road in Stockbridge had suffered damage and many of them were impassable. Irene had washed out dozens of culverts, destroyed town bridges and turned stretches of brook-side roads into unrecognizable gravel wastelands. Worse, it was clear that the many brooks that feed into the Tweed and White River in Stockbridge had become raging torrents and had damaged more than 40 homes and businesses. Some homes were completely flooded or washed away. In the floodplain along the Tweed River, Chalet Village was inundated. The strength of the floodwaters in Chalet Village was so strong that homes were knocked off their foundations.

Figure B2: Fletcher Brook Road during Irene (Source: D. Bown)

Figure B3: Stony Brook Road after Irene (Source: D. Brown)

By August 30th, efforts to reconnect parts of the community began in earnest. But, the task was daunting, and work was slow. Access to neighboring towns was available only by ATV. Members of the community rallied and depended on each other. In Gaysville, the postmaster hiked through the village collecting outgoing mail and delivering it outside the community. Residents with heavy equipment began repairing or cutting detours around damaged roads. Some residents took turns driving from home to home to make sure elderly residents were safe and to deliver messages.

The town office and post office were both flooded, eliminating what was a regular location where residents could meet. Under Selectboard direction, community members gathered in two primary locations to receive updates and emergency supplies. The Selectboard hosted meetings at the Central School as well as the Stockbridge Town Common. Holding meetings in

two locations presented challenges to sharing consistent information and to connecting the community as a whole.

Route 107 remained impassible for weeks after Irene passed through Stockbridge, causing residents substantial difficulties. Travel to work that once took 10 minutes took hours due to the slow rate of speed on the back roads used to connect Stockbridge to other communities. The State of Vermont began the massive task of repairing the devastated road utilizing National Guard troops from multiple states to aid in the efforts by providing massive trucking and logistical support. The railway system that runs through Bethel, once repaired, provided transport for aggregate material that was used to restore the road. Weeks after Irene, Route 107 became barely passable. In December of 2011, it was opened officially.

FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for providing aide to communities and their residents following federally declared disasters. In response to Tropical Storm Irene, the Selectboard worked with FEMA to fund municipal infrastructure repairs, such as roads and bridges. Municipality desires to improve, and not just repair, damaged infrastructure however, met resistance due to strict FEMA regulations. Such regulations and restrictions often prevented the Town from constructing improved infrastructure that would mitigate future storm damages.

Due to the widespread damage to all of Stockbridge's roads, many of which were obliterated, the total amount of funds spent repairing town property (including roads, bridges and culverts) is estimated at approximately $5 million as of March, 2012.

For businesses and private citizens, working with FEMA was noted to be a more challenging and slower process. Businesses are not eligible for FEMA relief funding and instead were directed to take advantage of low-interest loans through the Small Business Association. The burden of new or additional debt to a business can make reopening after a disaster difficult. Residences were eligible for the Individual Assistance through FEMA, but the maximum amount of assistance per home is $30,000. If a resident's home is destroyed, the cost to replace it is likely to be substantially more than $30,000.

Under certain circumstances, some properties were eligible for a FEMA buyout through the State of Vermont. The purpose of this program is to remove structures that have, or are likely to be, severely damaged by flooding again. These properties, if purchased through this program, become Town property in perpetuity and all infrastructure is to be demolished and never rebuilt. The buyout amount is generally 75% of the value of the building, but the building must be 95% damaged. There were nineteen homes in Stockbridge bought out through this program.