

CHARTERED BY  
NEW HAMPSHIRE  
AUGUST 20, 1761

*Town  
of  
Weathersfield, Vermont*

CHARTERED BY  
NEW YORK  
APRIL 8, 1772

Website: <http://www.weathersfield.org>



*Town Plan*

*Adopted July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004*

*Amended September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005*

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**Proposed Amendments**

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**Weathersfield Conservation Commission**

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<http://www.weathersfield.org>

Thanks to the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission,  
Weathersfield Conservation Commission, and community members  
for their work on this plan.



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### INTRODUCTION

#### I. Historical Background

Town planning is not a new function for the Town of Weathersfield. During the last 235 years there have been many times when conditions beyond the control of local government have made it necessary for voters to study the problems involved and take corrective action.

The eleven men who attended the first Weathersfield Town Meeting at the home of Gershom Tuttle in 1772 were not Vermonters. They were subjects of a British king and residents of Cumberland County, New York. The men of Weathersfield maintained their loyalty to the Province of New York through the violent times when the Green Mountain Boys were taking drastic action against all New Yorkers; and when Tom Chittenden, the Allens, and the Fays were fomenting interest in an independent state. Under the leadership of Hilkiah Grout, the Town refused to send delegates to the organizing conventions at Dorset and Westminster and even to the Constitutional Convention at Windsor in 1777. Weathersfield sent letters to these conventions that expressed their New York sentiments in firm and defiant language.

But when the formation of the State of Vermont became a fact, the men of Weathersfield recognized the times had changed and that they were in an untenable position. They studied the facts and held a meeting at which the Town of Weathersfield was reorganized under Vermont law, and they elected a representative to the first General Assembly. Hilkiah Grout was a dissenter to the last. He lost his position as Captain of the Militia, and also lost all Town offices held except that of Sealer of Leather.

A time of decision again arrived during the early 1800s when a rush of new arrivals into the Town, plus the furore of 1811, created a state of confusion and disorder beyond the control of local government. Demand for the relocation of schools and highways was so great, and so contradictory, that the Selectmen lost control over local government and the maintenance of Town records and finances became chaotic. Many inhabitants signed petitions to have the Windsor County Court assume authority with the Town.

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The voters of Weathersfield solved their difficulties by appointing planning committees under the leadership of William Jarvis. These committees resurveyed the school districts and the highway districts and recommended sites for bridges. They also reorganized the Town's system of maintaining records and bookkeeping. Some people were hurt, but the majority ruled and the Town was soon back in step with the times.

There were other times of decision. The controversy between the eastern and western sections of the Town over the location of the meeting house raged for many years before a more equal distribution of population made possible the compromise to locate the house at the Center. At later dates, the consolidation of the school districts and the highway districts into single units again called for planning committees and decisions by the voters. The final decisions were always for the betterment of the Town.

We have again reached a time of decision. We must try to look into the future and to plan the way in which we will meet the changing times. We cannot restore the pristine wilderness through which Major Hawks drove over the Crown Point Road, and we would not wish to. But we do not want to have our Town take on the appearance of urban sprawl. Neither do we wish to suffer the calamity of overdevelopment that has been visited on other parts of Vermont in recent years.

We must make a plan that will conform to the present conditions and still keep the rural character of our Town. And we must remember that if we do not make this decision, someone will make it for us, and we might not be happy with the results.

In April 2002, the Town of Weathersfield mailed a planning survey, Planning for the Future of our Town, to its residents as an insert in the April, 2002, Weathersfield Notes. A total of 1,459 surveys were mailed, and 122 responses were received. Additional copies of the survey were made available at the Town Office and the Proctor Library. The survey was an effort to obtain guidance for the update of this Town Plan and also an invitation for residents to help work on the update. Residents interested in helping with the update participated in focus groups dedicated to each chapter. References to the survey results are included throughout this document.

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### II. Why and How a Town Plan is Used

A town plan encourages people to think about different ways in which their town might change and records their ideas concerning what changes they would like and what changes they would not like. The plan also calls attention to decisions or choices which will probably have to be made and may estimate approximate timing for these decisions.

A town plan is a guiding document which can be very useful to the people and town officials trying to make sound decisions. It provides a carefully thought-out framework or checklist for analyzing problems and proposed solutions. It is not a dead document which could outlive its usefulness and become more of a hindrance than a help; it can be amended at any time and expires every five (5) years, unless readopted.

A town plan gives the people more power over matters which affect the nature of the town, including such things as appearance, crowding, and taxes. This is due to the fact that the State government must base some of its decisions on the plan of the town involved [for example – requests for development permits under Act 250]. The highway department, Army Corps of Engineers, and public utilities will also find it more difficult to ignore the people's wishes when these wishes are publicly recorded in writing in an official town plan.

A town plan increases the likelihood that a town will be what the majority of its residents wants it to be. The probability of this outcome is further improved by the adoption and enforcement of detailed regulations which clearly address the most common activities and uses that may occur within the town. Where general references are made in this plan to site specific constraints, and other such development standards, the reader is urged to consult the appropriate implementation document such as the zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations, etc..

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Two types of detailed regulations are zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations. Well thought-out zoning bylaws are designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Subdivision regulations provide assurances of the suitable layout of lots to minimize negative impact on surrounding landowners, on taxes, and on the environment; provide development standards for roads and utilities; assure that the burden of cost falls to the developer; and establish a process of negotiation between the developer and planning commission for determining the manner by which the town's policies and concerns may best be satisfied.

- A. Vermont law [24 V.S.A. § 4385] specifies that a town plan shall be adopted by vote of the selectmen after properly-warned public hearings. Zoning regulations do not automatically follow. Present Vermont law permits the adoption of zoning regulations only by a majority vote of those voting at a properly warned special or regular town meeting.
- B. At times a town will be faced with a new situation which either was not thought of at all when the town plan was prepared, or the applicable provisions in the town plan no longer seem valid as when originally planned. The selectmen, the planning commission, and the appropriate State agencies will try to determine the people's wishes by means of public hearings. When it appears that the people have selected a goal which either contradicts the town plan [because they have changed their minds] or which does not refer to the town plan [because it was not originally planned for], an amendment to the town plan could be submitted [if 5% of the voters petition for the amendment] for public hearings and adoption by the selectmen. This would accomplish two things: the wishes of the people would be recognized and used as a basis for decision, and the town plan would be kept current and in its role as a foundation for action [any town plan which is ignored by the Town itself would soon be ignored by State agencies and would not stand up in a court of law if the Town ever tried to use it there].

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- C. The Weathersfield Town Plan was originally adopted on August 27, 1973. The Weathersfield permanent Zoning Bylaws were originally adopted by the voters on March 5, 1974, and the Subdivision Regulations were adopted by the voters on March 7, 1989.
- D. All planning should provide for the appropriate development of lands and resources in existing towns, villages, and hamlets. These mutually dependent communities should protect residential, agricultural, and other resources by cooperating to draft and enact regulatory mechanisms which minimize, prevent, or eliminate undesirable development patterns. One answer to this challenge lies in establishing cooperative and coordinated planning efforts at federal, state, and regional levels.

### III. What is in a Town Plan?

Vermont law [24 V.S.A. §4382] states the following:

- (a) A plan for a municipality may be consistent with the goals established in section 4302 of this title and compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region and with the regional plan and shall include the following:
  - (1) A statement of objectives, policies and programs of the municipality to guide the future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment;
  - (2) A land use plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective land uses, indicating those areas proposed for forests, recreation, agriculture [using the agricultural lands identification process established in 6 V.S.A. § 8], residence, commerce, industry, public and semi-public uses and open spaces reserved for flood plain, wetland protection, or other conservation purposes; and setting forth the present and prospective location, amount, intensity, and character of such land uses and the appropriate timing or sequence of land development activities in relation to the provision of necessary community facilities and service;

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- (3) A transportation plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective transportation and circulation facilities showing existing and proposed highways and streets by type and character or improvement, and where pertinent, parking facilities, transit routes, terminals, bicycle paths and trails, scenic roads, airports, railroads and port facilities, and other similar facilities or uses, with indications of priority of need;
- (4) A utility and facility plan, consisting of a map and statement of present and prospective community facilities and public utilities showing existing and proposed education, recreational and other public sites, buildings and facilities, including hospitals, libraries, power generating plants and transmission lines, water supply, sewage disposal, refuse disposal, storm drainage and other similar facilities and activities, and recommendations to meet future needs for community facilities and services, with indications of priority of need, costs, and method of financing;
- (5) A statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources;
- (6) An educational facilities plan consisting of a map and statement of present and projected uses and the local public school system;
- (7) A recommended program for the implementation of the objectives of the development plan;
- (8) A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title;
- (9) An energy plan, including an analysis of energy resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems within the municipality, a statement of policy on the conservation of energy, including programs, such as thermal integrity standards for buildings, to implement that policy, a statement of policy on the development of renewable energy resources, a statement of policy on patterns and densities of land use likely to result in conservation of energy;

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- (10) A housing element that shall include a recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs as identified by the regional planning commission pursuant to section 4348a (a) (9) of this title. The program may include provisions for conditionally permitted accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly persons.
- (b) The maps called for by this section may be incorporated on one or more maps, and may be referred to in each separate statement called for by this section.
- (c) Where appropriate, and to further the purposes of section 4302(b) of this title, a municipal plan shall be based upon inventories, studies, and analysis of current trends and shall consider the probable social and economic consequences of the proposed plan. Such studies may consider or contain, but not be limited to:
- (1) population characteristics and distribution, including income and employment;
  - (2) the existing and projected housing needs by amount, type, and location for all economic groups within the municipality and the region;
  - (3) existing and estimated patterns and rates of growth in the various land use classifications, and desired patterns and rates of growth in terms of the community's ability to finance and provide public facilities and services.

While the Weathersfield Town Plan follows this outline fairly closely, it places emphasis on land use based on the belief that proper land use most directly affects the Town's ability to achieve its goals.

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### IV. Goals and Objectives

#### A. Preservation of pleasant living conditions:

1. Provide areas where people can live protected from excessive traffic, obtrusive noise, and unattractive surroundings by separating commercial and industrial activity from such residential areas.
2. Make certain that homes and people are reasonably safe from floods and that no unreasonable risks are taken with other hazards, such as fire, explosion, and hazardous materials.
3. Prevent health problems caused by faulty water or sewer systems or serious pollution.
4. Preserve historic sites and scenic areas.
5. Preserve open spaces, forests, farm land and wildlife habitats, significant wetlands, bodies of water and streams.
6. Protect rare or fragile land areas.
7. Protect the scenic beauty.
8. Retain the rural way of life.
9. Provide areas for industry and commerce, which will provide employment for local people.
10. Improve and maintain an aesthetically pleasing environment.

#### B. Maintenance of reasonable taxes:

1. Limit the rate of development activities, which may cost more tax money than they generate, thus outpacing the Town's ability to support them.
2. Avoid overloading Town facilities.
3. Plan so that Town services such as roads, schools, water, sewer, public safety services, and recreation can be initiated, enlarged, and sustained.

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4. Encourage desirable commercial and industrial activities, which are cost effective and operate for the public good because it would take a very high tax rate to operate the Town and schools on residential property taxes alone.
  5. Explore alternatives to current total reliance on property taxes for Town revenues.
  6. Establish a capital budget and program to define an acceptable rate of growth for Town services and facilities.
- C. Provide for future growth without compromising the values and lessons of the past:
1. Stay open-minded about new land uses such as campgrounds, greenways, planned residential developments, and snowmobile trails that compliment the goals and objectives of the Town Plan.
  2. Recognize the housing needs of all residents.
  3. Recognize the importance of a quality educational system.
  4. Conserve the many assets which make up our pleasant Town of Weathersfield.
  5. Cooperate with surrounding towns on matters that might be handled best on a regional basis.
  6. Plan for the future capital and service needs of the Town.

### V. Implementation Procedures

Implementation procedures covering the goals and objectives of the Town Plan are as follows:

- A. The Town has adopted comprehensive Zoning Regulations, which are frequently reviewed and revised by the Planning Commission. Amendments are periodically submitted for approval by the voters. The Zoning Regulations address many of the goals listed under paragraph A above.

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- B. The Town has adopted Subdivision Regulations, which address problems that could arise from uncontrolled subdivision development and burden taxpayers with unexpected expenses for Town services. Subdivision Regulations are subject to periodic review by the Planning Commission and approval by the voters of the Town.
- C. Ongoing capacity studies are required to avoid overloading of Town facilities. Capital budget and programs under development project such expansions of Town facilities.
- D. The Town has a municipal on-site sewage disposal ordinance in effect.
- E. The use of fuel tanks and the transportation of hazardous materials are currently under State regulation.
- F. The Town Conservation Commission has an inventory of historic sites, scenic areas, deer yards, land with conservation easements, prime farm land, streams, wetlands, and rare species and their habitat.
- G. The Natural Heritage program provides ongoing inventories of wildlife areas.
- H. The Town should consider the adoption of ordinances to regulate activities that detract from an aesthetically pleasing environment. The Town has amended its bylaws with regard to wireless communication facilities.
- I. The Town should consider protecting potential existing aquifer recharge areas in the villages of Ascutney and Perkinsville.
- J. The Town should consider planning for further growth in the village of Ascutney for roads, parking, sidewalks, and water and sewage services.
- K. The Weathersfield Preservation Association can assist the Town with land preservation through methods such as conservation easements.

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### VI. Relationship to Local and Regional Plans

In order to carry out its land use planning goals, the Town of Weathersfield must evaluate the Town Plan in relation to plans of neighboring municipalities and the region. Weathersfield is bordered on the north, west, and south by the towns of Windsor, West Windsor, Cavendish, Baltimore, and Springfield. The Connecticut River forms the Town's eastern boundary. Weathersfield is served by the District 2 Environmental Commission.

#### A. Neighboring Towns

While committed to maintaining a rural environment, Weathersfield residents depend on surrounding towns for shopping, banking, health care, employment, and recreational activities. This includes jobs and services offered in nearby New Hampshire towns such as Claremont.

Weathersfield is surrounded by towns which are faced with varying degrees of development pressure. All of the towns have town plans, and all have zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations with the exception of the Town of Cavendish. None of the town plans of these surrounding towns is in conflict with the Weathersfield Town Plan.

#### B. Southern Windsor County Region

The Southern Windsor County Regional Plan provides broad guidelines for planning, coordination and review of the natural, cultural, social and economic features of the Southern Windsor County region. The Southern Windsor County Regional Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, and Regional Bicycling and Walking Plan are companion documents to the Weathersfield Town Plan, providing a broader framework and context for local planning efforts. The Weathersfield Town Plan supports and complements the land use and development goals of these regional planning documents.

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ENERGY

W eathersfield residents and businesses are dependent on outside sources for most energy needs including hydroelectricity, propane gas, fuel oil, and gasoline. Some renewable energy, such as firewood and wind power, is available within the Town. Rising costs of imported energy and the need to assure a viable community necessitate efforts to conserve all energy resources and promote alternatives.

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### I. Goals

- A. Promote the development of renewable energy resources such as wood, solar, hydropower, and wind.
- B. Conserve energy in Town buildings through cost-effective measures such as weatherization and reduction of oil dependency; where feasible, promote the use of alternative energy and energy-efficient technology such as cogeneration.
- C. Encourage the use of cost-efficient alternative energy resources, including renewable resources, for both new homes and homes being renovated or enlarged.
- D. Implement land use patterns that promote the most efficient use of energy.
- E. Provide greater potential for pedestrian and non-motorized traffic.
- F. Promote carpooling, busing, and ride sharing to reduce fuel consumption.

### II. Recommendations

- A. Promote Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program to stimulate fuelwood production and improve forest management.
- B. Increase awareness among residents and businesses about incentives for energy conservation through programs such as Efficiency Vermont, which promote energy audits, weatherization, and upgrades to energy efficient appliances to reduce consumption.
- C. Encourage the reduction of energy consumption in new residential units by promoting standards as recommended by the Vermont Department of Public Service for building materials and construction techniques; standards for new construction should specify insulation, lighting, heating, and appliance performance levels.
- D. Where feasible, ensure the siting of new residential units to maximize energy benefits and utilize existing infrastructure.

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- E. Ensure that future Town and school district facilities will be renovated or designed and constructed for maximum energy efficiency.
- F. Promote the use of energy-efficient vehicles; encourage public vehicle maintenance to minimize energy costs and maximize efficiency.
- G. Assist and encourage car and vanpool programs; support the expansion of the Exit 8 Park-and-Ride lot.
- H. Where feasible, develop and maintain sidewalks and bicycle paths to encourage pedestrian and non-motorized traffic.
- I. Where feasible, promote the design and location of new roads that are compatible with existing and recommended land use patterns.
- J. Promote the use of the Town's Recycling Center.

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### EDUCATION

Weathersfield is served by the same two schools that have served it since 1954, Weathersfield Elementary School (WES), a grade K-3 facility in Perkinsville, and Weathersfield Middle School (WMS) in Ascutney, which serves grades 4-8. High school students are currently tuitioned out to 13 schools, with the majority attending Windsor and Springfield High Schools – less than ten students attended independent high schools in each of the past two years. The total K-12 student population of the Town has gone from 460 students in 1975 to 414 in 1996-97 and between 425–450 students in the years since 1997.

Preschool children in Weathersfield are served by a number of local facilities and programs. The Springfield Area Parent Child Center (SAPCC) provides a wide range of activities, ranging from parenting classes to playgroups for children. Sixty Weathersfield families were served by the SAPCC in 2001-02. Windsor Head Start offers preschool programs for three- and four-year olds, and Even Start, an intensive federally-funded program, provides a wide range of support for parents and children.

A number of regional resources are available for the adult learner. For adults working to study for the GED or improve their literacy or math skills, Vermont Adult Learning provides classes and individual tutoring at its Springfield office. During the 2001-02 school year, 29 Weathersfield residents were enrolled in this program. The Springfield Technical Center, now renamed the River Valley Technical Center, is located in the Howard Dean Education Center in Springfield. Currently under expansion, the facility will serve over 450 students for at least one period of course work per day and provide services for 600-1,000 adults in the southern Windsor County region. Services include a job training program which is contracted through Vermont Technical College.

Also relocating to the Howard Dean Education Center will be Community College of Vermont's Springfield Office, VT Interactive TV, and UVM Extension.

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**Table 1: Town of Weathersfield Adult Level of Education**

Level of Education	1990	2000
Less than 9th grade	11.8%	5.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	20.0%	8.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	35.7%	40.1%
Some College, no degree	10.7%	17.8%
Associate's degree	4.9%	8.5%
Bachelor's degree	11.1%	14.0%
Graduate or professional degree	5.8%	5.8%

Source: Vermont Department of Education School Report, Center for Rural Studies, <http://crs.uvm.edu/schrpt>

Weathersfield Elementary School has seven classrooms, including rooms in the 1879 building that is connected to the main structure by a covered walkway. A portable classroom houses the library. The roof section over the walkway and various lighting has been upgraded. WMS has eleven classrooms, with a recently-added double portable classroom for the band and music program. Other recent improvements at WMS include: roof repair, heating plant upgrade, and parking lot light extensions. A number of academic initiatives have been introduced in recent years. Both schools have been wired for the Internet, and the WMS computer lab has been upgraded. Spanish and Algebra classes are offered at WMS, and school and community service activities have been promoted. A math program has been introduced K-8 that provides support for problem-solving skills.

In the 2002-03 school year, enrollment at WES was 99 and at WMS was 170. Fluctuations in class sizes have a significant impact on facility capacity. For example, in 2001-02, WES was a bit cramped, with 121 students, however in 2002-03 student population is down to 99, due to the large third grade move to the Middle School. In 2003-04, it is projected that a new WMS classroom will be required as this bulge moves through the system and each grade level requires two separate classes. In 2003, only 25 grade 8 students will move on to high school, compared to 39 students in 2002, providing a fiscal benefit to the Town as less money is required for high school tuition.

Ongoing space problems persist, however. In WES, for example, the principal's office is in a converted closet, and the nurse shares an office with the school secretary. The long-standing problem of the basement cafeteria remains in WMS, and the gym is undersized. Neither facility has an art room.

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The Town currently runs a fleet of four buses regularly, with two others used for sports, handicapped students, and as spares.

**Table 2: Weathersfield Elementary School: General Information**

School Participation Information	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	State of Vermont 2002-2003
Total School Enrollment	143	118	113	93	99,978
Attendance Rate	95.4%	94.9%	95.7%	N/AV	N/AV
Retention Rate	1.4%	3.4%	3.4%	N/AV	N/AV
Estimated HS Cohort Graduation Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/AV	N/AV
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.9	11.2	13.8	7	11.7
Eligible Special Education	12.6%	15.3%	18.6%	17.2%	12.7%
11-12 Technical Education Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.8%
9-12 Dropout Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/AV	N/AV
Home Study (Number)	5	4	4	3	2,060

Source: Vermont Department of Education School Report, Center for Rural Studies, <http://crs.uvm.edu/schrpt>

**Table 3: Weathersfield Middle School: General Information**

School Participation Information	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	State of Vermont 2002-2003
Total School Enrollment	170	165	176	167	99,978
Attendance Rate	95.6%	95.1%	95.3%	N/AV	N/AV
Retention Rate	2.4%	0.0%	1.2%	N/AV	N/AV
Estimated HS Cohort Graduation Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/AV	N/AV
Student/Teacher Ratio	15.5	12.7	15.9	13.4	11.7
Eligible Special Education	21.2%	11.5%	11.4%	11.4%	12.7%
11-12 Technical Education Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.8%
9-12 Dropout Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/AV	N/AV
Home Study (Number)	6	2	4	2	2,060

Source: Vermont Department of Education School Report, Center for Rural Studies, <http://crs.uvm.edu/schrpt>

# TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

## TOWN PLAN

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### I. Goal

To ensure that all residents of Weathersfield have access to high-quality educational opportunities and services in facilities that meet or exceed State standards.

### II. Recommendations

- A. Address whether to consolidate the schools in light of broader community needs, including the role of each facility in defining the villages of Ascutney and Perkinsville.
- B. If maintaining the existing schools, prioritize the needs of each facility and prepare a plan and capital budget to address them. Special attention should be paid to the WES 1879 building, which is an important historic site in the Town.
- C. Plans to expand the Proctor Library in Ascutney should consider the needs of WMS and ways to improve the connection between the two institutions.

# TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

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### HOUSING

According to the U.S. Census in **Table 4**, the population of Weathersfield has increased from 2,674 in 1990, to 2,788 in 2000 (4.26%). Although the numbers have continued to increase over the last 30 years, the data reflects substantially diminished growth from that experienced during the 1970s. This slower growth is most likely due to the huge loss of manufacturing jobs in the region during that time.

**Table 4: Regional Population Trends**

Regional Population Trends: 1970-2000						
	Historic (CENSUS)					
Town	1970	1980	1990	1970-90 % Chg.	2000	1970-00 % Chg.
Andover	239	350	373	56.1%	496	107.5%
Baltimore	170	181	190	11.8%	250	47.1%
Cavendish	1264	1,355	1,323	4.7%	1,470	16.3%
Chester	2371	2,791	2,832	19.4%	3,044	28.4%
Ludlow	2463	2,414	2,302	-6.5%	2,449	-0.6%
Reading	564	647	614	8.9%	707	25.4%
Springfield	10063	10,190	9,579	-4.8%	9,078	-9.8%
<b>Weathersfield</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2,534</b>	<b>2,674</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>2,788</b>	<b>36.7%</b>
West Windsor	571	763	923	61.6%	1,067	86.9%
Windsor	4158	4,084	3,714	-10.7%	3,756	-9.7%
Region:	23903	25,309	24,524	2.6%	25,105	5.0%

**Table 5** shows that total households have increased by 10.3% since 1990, supporting national and State trends that indicate the nature of household size is changing. A 5.28% increase in total housing units could be linked to a decrease in seasonal, recreational or occasional use units that have been converted to year-round housing units. Additionally, data reveals that Weathersfield has more householders that are non-family, living alone, and over the age of 65 than ten years before, with the latter category increasing by nearly 50%.

The number of owner-occupied housing has grown at a faster rate than renter-occupied housing between 1990 and 2000, which is a trend that is consistent in the Southern Windsor County RPC region and the state. Fewer rental units are being built, whereas more houses are purchased for the purpose of becoming ownership properties.

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The number of mobile homes in Weathersfield has dropped from 324 in 1990 to 310 in 2000 or 23.6% of the present available housing units. This percentage is still twice as high as any other town in the region. Results of a Town planning survey in April 2002 indicate that residents favor fewer mobile home parks in Weathersfield.

**Table 5: Summary of Weathersfield Households and Housing Units 1990-2000**

(Dollar units in constant \$)	1990	% of 1990 Total	2000	% of 2000 Total	% Change 1990- 2000
<b>Total Households</b>	1058	100.00%	1167	100.00%	10.30%
Family households (families)	795	75.14%	831	71.21%	4.53%
Married-couple family	698	65.97%	719	61.61%	3.01%
Non-family households	263	24.86%	336	28.79%	27.76%
Householder living alone	208	19.66%	258	22.11%	24.04%
Householder 65 years and over	86	8.13%	128	10.97%	48.84%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	1249	100.00%	1315	100.00%	5.28%
Occupied Housing Units	1058	84.71%	1167	88.75%	10.30%
Owner Occupied	902	72.22%	1000	76.05%	10.86%
Renter Occupied	156	12.49%	167	12.70%	7.05%
Vacant Housing Units	191	15.29%	148	11.25%	-22.51%
Seasonal, recreational or occasional use	149	11.93%	108	8.21%	-27.52%
Mobile Homes	324	25.9%	310	23.6%	-4.32%
Total ownership units	916	73.34%	1006	76.50%	9.83%
Total rental units	163	13.05%	171	13.00%	4.91%
Vacant ownership units	14	1.12%	6	0.46%	-57.14%
Vacant rental units	7	0.56%	4	0.30%	-42.86%

Source: U.S. Census 1990-2000

### I. Housing Types

Construction of new housing has slowed dramatically in the last decade with the addition of only 66 units since 1990. Weathersfield housing stock is comprised mostly of single family dwelling units (72.8%). The remaining stock includes duplexes (1.9%), units of three or more (.7%), and mobile homes (23.6%).

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One mobile home park in Weathersfield consisting of 74-assisted units is listed in the Vermont State Housing Authority's Directory of Affordable Housing in Windsor County. Assisted housing is defined to include permanent rental subsidies, HUD Section 8 Certificates and Vouchers. The purpose of these programs is to insure that low income people do not pay more than approximately one-third (1/3) of their income toward their housing costs. Many communities provide no assisted housing for their residents. Weathersfield has 4.2% of Windsor County housing and offers a significant 5.4% of its assisted units.

### II. Wages and Income

Employers in Weathersfield pay average wages (\$23,745) compared to other towns in the Southern Windsor County region (**Table 6**). The median household income is also about average for the region, with five towns higher and four towns lower (**Table 7**). U.S. Census data shows that 64.8% of Weathersfield's population over the age of 16 is in the labor force, with 28.3% working outside of Windsor County and traveling an average of 23.4 minutes to their jobs.

**Table 6: Average Wages 1990 and 2000**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% Change 1990-2000</b>
<b>Andover</b>	\$17,991.00	\$31,414.00	75%
<b>Baltimore</b>	NA	NA	NA
<b>Cavendish</b>	\$15,473.00	\$23,651.00	53%
<b>Chester</b>	\$15,762.00	\$23,866.00	54%
<b>Ludlow</b>	\$14,664.00	\$21,766.00	48%
<b>Reading</b>	\$20,161.00	\$16,100.00	-20%
<b>Springfield</b>	\$20,730.00	\$29,477.00	42%
<b>Weathersfield</b>	<b>\$17,409.00</b>	<b>\$23,745.00</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>West Windsor</b>	\$16,799.00	\$22,559.00	34%
<b>Windsor</b>	\$19,609.00	\$24,919.00	27%

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**Table 7: Income by Type**

Location	Income by Type 1989 and 1999								
	Median Family Income (MFI)			Median Household Income (MHI)			Per Capita Income (PCI)		
	1989	1999	%Change	1989	1999	%Change	1989	1999	%Change
Vermont	\$34,780	\$48,625	39.8%	\$29,792	\$40,856	37.1%	\$13,527	\$20,625	52.5%
Windsor County	\$34,691	\$49,002	41.3%	\$29,258	\$40,688	39.1%	\$14,262	\$22,369	56.8%
Andover	\$31,250	\$50,625	62.0%	\$28,214	\$42,273	49.8%	\$13,882	\$21,744	56.6%
Baltimore	\$31,563	\$46,964	48.8%	\$31,563	\$44,375	40.6%	\$11,952	\$17,260	44.4%
Cavendish	\$28,698	\$41,591	44.9%	\$26,750	\$34,727	29.8%	\$13,170	\$18,420	39.9%
Chester	\$33,361	\$47,083	41.1%	\$27,083	\$39,417	45.5%	\$11,832	\$19,661	66.2%
Ludlow	\$31,929	\$44,375	39.0%	\$25,707	\$36,969	43.8%	\$12,208	\$24,708	102.4%
Reading	\$33,750	\$48,636	44.1%	\$30,729	\$44,306	44.2%	\$15,324	\$20,504	33.8%
Springfield	\$30,328	\$42,620	40.5%	\$24,655	\$34,169	38.6%	\$12,145	\$18,452	51.9%
Weathersfield	\$29,018	\$46,282	59.5%	\$27,181	\$42,057	54.7%	\$13,227	\$21,647	63.7%
West Windsor	\$41,154	\$63,456	54.2%	\$35,000	\$54,792	56.5%	\$18,643	\$28,360	52.1%
Windsor	\$36,518	\$43,551	19.3%	\$30,375	\$33,815	11.3%	\$13,536	\$17,640	30.3%

### III. Pressure on the Land

Generally, new houses being built follow the national trend of being larger than houses built a decade ago. Larger houses are usually built on larger lots. Weathersfield may become more attractive to workers from the Upper Valley who are priced out of the market there. This influx could put further pressure on the availability of “affordable housing” for lower and middle income Weatherfield residents. It is important that housing in Weathersfield be available to people at all income levels.

Concerned citizens are highlighting issues related to zoning and land use such as increasing the minimum lot size in rural areas and impacts to land and housing costs. More than 20 parcels totaling approximately 2,000 acres have been set aside in the past decade with conservation easements, usually through the Upper Valley Land Trust. While significant portions of this land – such as that on Mount Ascutney – would have been very difficult to build on, the land has been removed from possible development.

Finally, changes in the village areas of the Town may have an impact on the future of housing and land use. The closing of the general store and the relocation of the Post Office to Downers dramatically altered the nature of Perkinsville Village. Commercial development has been significant in Downers. In Ascutney, an article to construct a sidewalk was twice voted down, and water and sewer limitations remain barriers to growth. While the recent planning survey indicated a desire among residents to allow high density (smaller lot sizes) residential development in village centers, the Town must first address water and sewer issues before development can occur.

# TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

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### IV. Goals

- A. Ensure that residents of all income levels can find housing that is affordable and meets State and Federal standards of quality and livability.
- B. Promote a balance of residential and commercial properties to prevent an overload on the costs for educational, municipal, and infrastructure services.

### V. Recommendations

- A. Promote careful planning to keep Weathersfield attractive to a diverse population and to suitable commercial development to ensure an adequate tax base and a reasonable tax rate.
- B. Develop water and sewage systems for the village of Ascutney so that commercial and residential development can be supported.
- C. Encourage carefully planned commercial and residential growth in village areas. It should be shown, prior to approval, that the impact of growth from development projects can be absorbed by the Town.
- D. Encourage legislators to adopt and/or modify legislation that lessens the property tax burden (i.e. Act 60) on single family residences.
- E. Adopt a design control ordinance to preserve the integrity of historically significant structures, especially in village centers to enhance growth in those areas.

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### NATURAL, SCENIC, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The enhancement and protection of Weathersfield's natural, scenic, and historic resources will help to ensure the quality of life currently enjoyed and to protect and preserve the environment for future generations. This element of the Town Plan outlines the various natural, scenic, and historic resources in Weathersfield, presents some of the related issues to those resources, and provides goals and recommendations for their continued care and preservation.

#### I. Surface Waters

Surface water comes in many forms including rivers, streams, brooks, and ponds. It is vital to agriculture and wildlife habitat and provides recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and the important function of groundwater recharge. Protection involves stream bank management, oversight of point source discharges of waste, and control of non-point sources of water pollution and stormwater runoff from roads and impervious surfaces. The maintenance and enhancement of naturally vegetated buffers next to surface waters offers an effective means of protecting the many benefits and values associated with our water. Buffers help to filter pollutants, while providing food and shade for fish and habitat for birds and mammals.

Weathersfield lies within the Connecticut River Drainage Basin split almost equally between the smaller watersheds of the Black River (Basin #13) and Mill Brook (Basin #10). The Connecticut River is the Town's largest body of surface water and the focus of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. According to the Connecticut River Joint Commission Corridor Plan, the stretch of river from the mouth of the Ompompanoosuc River to Weathersfield Bow supports a rich constellation of plant and animal life. A major scenic and recreational resource, the Connecticut River has been designated an American Heritage River and Route 5 is part of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway. An effort was made in 2001 to acquire funding for the design and long-term maintenance plan for a car-top boat access at the end of Ferry Road in Weathersfield Bow. The site is scenic and historic and already used as an informal access, located off of Route 5. Funding was not secured, and the proposal is not currently active due to lack of public support. There is canoe and kayak access to the Connecticut River at Wilgus State Park.

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Other water resources in the Town include the Black River, Mill Brook, and a variety of streams, waterfalls and private and public ponds such as Stoughton, Cook's, and Beaver. Stoughton Pond is man-made, Beaver Pond was formed by a beaver dam, and Cook's is the only historically natural pond. There is a pond on Town-owned property in the Tenney Hill area.

The impoundment above the North Springfield Flood Control Dam was completed in the early 1960s and encompasses approximately 90 acres of water surface area. The water body formerly served as a secondary water supply for the Town of Springfield. Managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, it provides multiple outdoor recreation opportunities including boating, fishing, picnicking, hiking, swimming, nature study, and camping. The dam at the Springfield Reservoir on Wellwood Orchard Road has a 15-year-old crack that is checked daily by a member of the Springfield Town Crew. Although this area is quite scenic and hosts a variety of wildlife, it is posted to prevent entry. There are no plans to open this area to recreational activity.

Land prone to flooding is not very common in Weathersfield. In 1927, and to a lesser extent in recent floods, much of the land north of Amsden and east of Route 106 in Greenbush and the Stockin District experienced major flooding. Serious flooding also occurred during the summer of 1973. In Perkinsville, most flood prone land is unavailable for development because the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has taken it over. In Ascutney, two areas of concern are where Mill Brook meets the Connecticut River and on Mill Brook near Tenney Hill Road. Maintaining minimum development in flood plain areas is important for protecting water quality in rivers and streams. When a river has access to its flood plain, it has a better chance to reach a stable state, causing less erosion and damage to structures and property. Appropriate uses for land in flood prone areas include agriculture, due to the flatness and fertility of the soil, and recreational purposes.

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The Connecticut River flood plain has been mapped as part of the National Flood Insurance Program by the Federal Insurance Administration of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) became effective on December 4, 1979. They are in the process of being updated for availability in 2003. Where flood plain protection is not possible, buffer areas of native vegetation should be maintained wherever possible. Steeper slopes and unstable soils require larger buffer areas in order to prevent erosion and ensure the greatest amount of infiltration before overland flow reaches surface waters. The State of Vermont recommends 100-foot buffers next to larger rivers and ponds and 50-foot buffers next to smaller streams and wetlands.

## II. Wetlands

Wetlands are a unique and valuable natural resource in Weathersfield. Such areas are generally defined as permanently or seasonally wet areas, which exhibit saturated soils, support wetland plant species, and contain aquatic life. Marshes, swamps, bogs, vernal pools, and seasonally flooded fields are examples. Primary wetland values include fish, wildlife, and migratory bird habitat; flood and erosion protection; nutrient and pollution filtration; ground water recharge; aesthetics and open space; and sites for educational and recreational activities. The State of Vermont recognizes the importance of these values in 10 V.S.A. ' 905(7). In 1990, the Water Resources Board issued the Vermont Wetlands Rules, which classify all wetlands according to their function.

The Vermont Wetland Rules recognize three classes of wetlands; the functional values of Class I and Class II wetlands (those generally over five acres in size and identified in the National Wetlands Inventory) are protected by the rules, which require conditional use review prior to the issuance of a local zoning permit. Class III wetlands are smaller and are not protected under the Vermont Wetland Rules, but may be protected in an Act 250 review or by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (review required for large or federally funded projects).

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The total area of wetlands in Weathersfield is approximately 854 acres. The source for the wetland boundaries indicated on the Natural Resources map include National Wetlands Inventory Maps prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior and smaller wetlands mapped by the SWCRPC from aerial photos. (The NWI maps do not show all wetlands since the maps are derived from aerial photo interpretation with varying limitations. In particular, no Class III wetlands are identified. These areas play an important role in water recharge, stormwater runoff and flood control, and wildlife habitat.)

### III. Groundwater

Groundwater is Weathersfield's primary source of drinking water with most residents relying on wells and springs for their domestic water needs. Groundwater flows through water bearing strata of permeable rock, sand, or gravel called aquifers, traveling through a maze of cracks in bedrock formations for long distances or breaking out to the surface. This essential resource can suffer significant and sometimes irreversible damage from potential pollutants including septage from improperly designed or functioning septic tanks and leaching fields for waste water, leakage from underground gas and oil tanks, and improperly disposed of chemical or radioactive materials. The best way to ensure good quality groundwater is to prevent contamination in the first place, since control and abatement after the fact is extremely difficult and often impossible.

Water Supply Source Protection Areas, which include aquifer recharge and wellhead protection areas, should be carefully buffered and protected from development and other uses that would significantly reduce the quality of groundwater resources. These areas consist of the surface and subsurface area surrounding a well or well field supplying the public water system as defined by the Agency of Natural Resources. They are fragile areas that require proper management and protection to ensure a potable water supply.

### IV. High Elevations Unstable Soils, and Steep Slopes

Although the bedrock in Weathersfield was formed millions of years ago, and soils were distributed by glaciers ending over 10,000 years ago, natural processes such as the water cycle and photosynthesis continue to modify the land and sustain life. These processes are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts from human activities in sensitive areas with high elevation, steep slopes, or unstable, shallow or wet soils.

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Generally, in Vermont, land in excess of 2,500 feet in elevation is considered a fragile environment and development should be strictly discouraged. High elevations exist in Weathersfield, but only a small amount of land is involved: parts of Mount Ascutney, 2,600 feet (outside of the State Park); part of Hawks Mountain, 1,860 feet; Little Ascutney, 1,720 feet; Pierson Peak, 1,600 feet; Camp Hill, 1,560 feet; Eagleshead, 1,400 feet; Pikes Peak, 1,380 feet; and Goulden Ridge, 1,360 feet. On these higher elevations, rainfall tends to be greater, air and soil temperatures tend to be lower; soils are shallower, poorly drained, and lower in nutrients; slopes are often steep; and a smaller number of plant species exist. Highland areas are largely in forest land and contribute to the capture and filtration of clean water to lower elevations.

In general and based on what is known about Weathersfield's soils, elevations, and slopes, land that is below 1,200 feet elevation with less than 15% slope can support most normal uses. Special problems can exist even there, such as poor drainage, flood hazard, and possible loss of rare plant or animal life unless adequately protected. Land between 1,200 and 1,500 feet elevation can support limited development, but only after careful study and treatment of each area's individual characteristics. Above 1,500 feet elevation, the limitations are severe and probably the best use of such land is the collection of rain water.

Many areas of Weathersfield have steep slopes with soils that are unstable, shallow and/or wet. Potential for severe erosion should be considered when evaluating these areas for development. If shallow soils are disturbed, the potential for severe erosion is great, and natural healing processes are often unable to stop it. Unstable soils are not suitable for roads or building foundations. Steep roads are difficult to maintain and hard to negotiate in the winter. Subsurface sewage disposal systems shall not be constructed on slopes steeper than 20%. Developing land with slopes greater than 25% is inappropriate.

Construction related disturbances such as stream crossings and pond construction involving streams can wreak havoc on natural systems due to excavation, damming, and discharges. These disturbances create sedimentation, loss of stream flow, degradation of water quality, disruption of stream bottom, concrete spills, loss of fish and invertebrate habitat, the introduction of non-native fish species, and barriers to native fish passage spawning or refuge areas. Impacts of construction related disturbances to fish reproduction can be minimized by restricting instream construction to the period of June 1 to October 1 and by encouraging pond designs that eliminate the potential impacts mentioned above.

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### V. Agricultural Resources, Forest Land, and Open Space

Weathersfield is fortunate in the natural beauty of its varied scenery. The traditional working landscape, as a result of Vermont's agricultural heritage, can be seen in open pastures surrounded by woodlands, the undeveloped hillsides and ridgelines, and the picturesque roads lined by mature trees and old stone walls. These attributes give the Town its distinctive rural character and reflect the values of a community closely associated with its land. Weathersfield's wildlife habitat, outdoor recreational resources, and much of its scenic beauty depend on the intermixing of forests with field and pasture land, and the generosity of landowners who protect and allow public access to this property.

Residents agree on the importance of protecting and preserving Weathersfield's scenic beauty and rural character. In 1988, residents who responded to the Natural Resources Questionnaire sent out by the Conservation Commission indicated that agricultural land, forest land, and open fields are second in importance only to underground water supplies and key wildlife habitat in their need for protection. In preparation of the rewrite of this Town Plan, the Planning Commission sent out a survey in spring 2002, "Planning for Our Future," which showed that residents still feel strongly about the importance of protecting rural character. A majority of respondents felt that residential development in rural areas should be done in a way that does not harm natural, historical, or visual resources; that open space should be preserved; that a ridgeline policy should be created; and that the Town has special areas that should not be developed. The Weathersfield Land Preservation Association, a non-profit organization, was formed by residents in 2002 with the goal of facilitating land conservation.

According to Vermont's Department of Agriculture, there were only 1,565 dairy cow operations remaining in Vermont as of January 2001. Weathersfield has one dairy farm, compared to 8 in 1980, 18 in 1969, 36 in 1963, and 65 in 1953. There is also a commercial orchard in the Town. Since farmland often has flat topography with good soils, drainage, and access, it is highly desirable for development. Prime agricultural resources should be prioritized for protection. As discussed in more detail in the Land Use Chapter, cluster development, which maximizes open space, or conserving land through the assistance of a land trust are a few options that can help protect prime agricultural land.

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It is apparent to anyone traveling through Weathersfield, that its land cover is predominantly forest land. (See the Current Land Use/Land Cover Map included with this Plan.) The Little Ascutney Wildlife Management Area is State-owned, and the Mount Ascutney State Park, crosses the Town line just at the peak of the mountain. Of the park's total 3,131 acres, approximately 500 are in Weathersfield. The Town owns a few acres of forest around the transfer station. One commercial sawmill operation exists in Perkinsville, and a number of portable sawmills are operated throughout Weathersfield, as are several large and many smaller sugaring operations. Other forest-related businesses include a number of wood workers that use locally grown lumber and tree farms that grow Christmas trees and nursery stock.

### VI. Land Enrolled in Current Use

In Vermont's Use Value Appraisal (or Current Use) Program, enrolled land is taxed at its "use value" rather than its development or fair market value, providing an effective incentive for landowners to manage their lands for forest or agricultural purposes. According to the table below, approximately 23.3% of Weathersfield's total land area was enrolled in this program in 2002, with 5.2% enrolled as agriculture and 17.7% enrolled as forest. Large, contiguous areas managed in this way provide critical habitat areas and wildlife corridors while preserving agricultural and forest resources.

**Table 8: Southern Windsor County Current Use Program**

Town	Total Acres	Productive Forest	Non-Productive* Forest	Agricultural	Total Enrolled Acres	% of Total Acres
Andover	18,432	2,995.7	45.75	316.03	3,357.48	18.2%
Baltimore	3,002	997.8	4	146.7	1,148.50	38.3%
Cavendish	24,832	2,934.03	67.26	390.2	3,391.49	13.7%
Chester	23,040	11,463.11	140.59	1,101.61	12,705.31	55.1%
Ludlow	21,704	2,458.52	20.55	194.89	2,673.96	12.3%
Reading	26,624	8,187.88	147.1	705.41	9,040.39	34.0%
Springfield	31,557	7,270.33	148.21	2,080.09	9,498.63	30.1%
<b>Weathersfield</b>	<b>29,292</b>	<b>5,189.71</b>	<b>113.95</b>	<b>1,519.63</b>	<b>6,823.29</b>	<b>23.3%</b>
West Windsor	15,808	1,318.59	39.9	362.47	1,720.96	10.9%
Windsor	12,544	1,799.02	58.7	656.46	2,514.18	20.0%

\* Conditions which cannot adequately support that use due to steep slopes, ledge, or wet soils.

Source: State of Vermont, Division of Property Valuation and Review, 2002

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### VII. Conserved Land

Open space can also be preserved through fee simple acquisition by local, state, or Federal government or through the sale or donation of development rights to local government or a nonprofit conservation organization. Of the ten towns in the Southern Windsor County Region, Weathersfield stands out as having one of the highest percentages of conserved land.

Table 9: Conserved Land in Southern Windsor County

Town	Total Acres	Acres Conserved*	% of Total
Andover	18,432	1,448.2	7.9%
Baltimore	3,002	n/a	n/a
Cavendish	24,832	202.9	.82%
Chester	23,040	230	1.0%
Ludlow	21,704	29	.13%
Reading	26,624	951.59	3.6%
Springfield	31,557	390.8	1.2%
Weathersfield	29,292	2,074.63	7.1%
West Windsor	15,808	741.41	4.7%
Windsor	12,544	768.04	6.1%

Source: State of Vermont Tax Department, Property Valuation and Review, 2003

\*Includes development rights and fee simple transactions

### VIII. Critical Habitat Areas

There can be no question that diversity of wildlife contributes significantly to Weathersfield's rural character and improves the quality of life. Primary threats to wildlife are human activities including habitat encroachment, fragmentation, and water pollution. The key to maintaining and enhancing diverse fish and wildlife populations is to ensure the protection of habitat that supports them. A good planning resource for towns is *Wildlife Considerations in Local Planning: A Vermont Review*, September 2000, prepared for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department by Burnt Rock, Inc., Associates in Community Planning.

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Information regarding fish and wildlife species and important habitats is gathered through inventories by state, federal, and local efforts. Weathersfield volunteers participate in the “Keeping Track Wildlife Monitoring Program,” which provides training to detect, identify, interpret, and record the track and sign of certain target species. It also provides training on the issues of habitat fragmentation and conservation biology. Volunteers can use data to discover and document important wildlife travel corridors that require protection.

Contiguous forestland and travel corridors are relied upon by large mammals such as moose, bear, deer, and bobcat, as well as a variety of songbird species for food, shelter, breeding grounds, and migratory stopovers. The Connecticut River Valley is a flyway for migrating songbirds, so maintaining a wide buffer next to the River is crucial for this travel corridor. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has mapped the boundaries of existing winter deer yards, which are subject to change due to fluctuations in environmental conditions. Deer migrate annually from fall habitats to wintering areas for relief from harsh climatic conditions. These areas provide protection from deep snow, cold temperatures, and wind chill, and are characterized by a high degree of softwood cover, favorable slope, usually southerly or westerly aspects at moderate elevation, and low levels of human disturbances in winter. These areas must be protected from indiscriminate logging, residential and commercial development, and intensive winter recreation. Vermont’s Act 250 offers some protection under Criterion 8(A) – Wildlife Habitat and Endangered Species. Town zoning regulations offer some protection as well.

The Natural Heritage Inventory points for threatened or endangered plant and animal species are identified on the Natural Resources Map. Rare plants and animals are important for a variety of reasons. Some are indicators of unusual habitats, changing climate, or declines in environmental quality. Some species may provide compounds for medicines and agricultural or industrial products. Many uncommon species will disappear if not recognized for protection. Endangered Dwarf Wedge mussels have been found along the Connecticut River in Weathersfield, the rare plant *Physotegia virginiana* (also known as Lion’s Head) has been located within the Town, and historic nesting sites of the Peregrine falcon exist on Little Ascutney Mountain and Hawks Mountain.

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### IX. Invasive Species

Invasive species include plant species and other organisms, such as zebra mussels, that threaten surface waters as well as forest and wildlife habitat. Invasive, non-native species alter habitats by displacing native species on which organisms depend, while being of little use to those organisms themselves. This can be particularly detrimental to rare, threatened, and endangered species, which often require specialized environments to ensure their survival. Recreational opportunities may also be impaired by the proliferation of invasive species.

Most invasive plants seem to be concentrated around roads, rivers, streams, and wetlands in the area. Eurasian water milfoil is an aquatic species, which can be found in the Connecticut River. Purple loosestrife, the familiar beautiful flowering perennial plant of wetlands, is invading cattail marshes along the Connecticut and elsewhere. On the stream banks and along roadsides, Japanese knotweed, commonly referred to as bamboo, is quite widespread.

Exotic honeysuckles, barberries, and buckthorns are all invasive shrubs or small trees that monopolize the understory of forests, both along the streams and farther upland, especially where the ground has been disturbed, as in logging. Buckthorn is considered to be a major threat to the survival of future timber stands. Invasive insects, such as the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, pose a serious threat to forested riparian zones and deer wintering areas that are often comprised of significant quantities of eastern hemlock.

### X. Air Quality

Weathersfield does not have a population or industrial base to create air quality problems and therefore enjoys good air quality. Threats to Weathersfield's air quality include automobiles, snow machines, all terrain vehicles, the Central Vermont Public Service emergency generating station, wood and coal burning stoves, and the open burning of trash. Regional threats include the Claremont Waste to Energy Plant and Interstate highway truck traffic, and it is nationally-recognized that Vermont is the unwilling recipient of acid rain deposition from mid-west power plants and industry.

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Weathersfield's ambient air quality should be maintained, and the Town should do what it can to prevent pollution through radiation, excessive noise, odor or air-borne contamination. Town equipment should meet emission standards. Complaints about open air burning or other activities that violate State air pollution control regulations should be dealt with expeditiously. Federal legislation to reduce mercury deposition and acid rain originating from out-of-state coal-burning power plants should be vigorously supported.

### **XI. Earth Resources**

Earth resources are used for building construction, road improvement, drainage, and for export. Earlier in its history, Weathersfield was a source for granite and marble. Soapstone was mined until 1910 for use by the Vermont Soapstone Company in Perkinsville. Currently, the only active quarrying operations in the Town are for sand, gravel, and crushed rock, which are abundant along the Connecticut River and its tributaries.

Mineral extraction that is excessive or poorly managed can permanently damage natural and aesthetic resources, impacting groundwater quantity and quality, destroying archaeological sites, and displacing wildlife. Mineral and earth resources extraction requires an Act 250 permit under Criterion 9 (D) and (E). Such operations bring noise, dust, heavy truck traffic, and negative impacts on local aesthetics, which often trigger local challenges by neighboring property owners. Criterion 8(A) – Wildlife Habitat and Endangered Species must also be taken under consideration.

In order to guide the District Environmental Commission in permitting decisions, mineral extraction in Weathersfield might be allowed if all of the following conditions are met:

- A. The site is located outside of villages and hamlets.
- B. The site is reasonably distant from homes of persons objecting to the proposed activity.
- C. No serious road traffic or road dust problems would result.
- D. No adverse effects such as noise, water, or air pollution would result.

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- E. The operation site is either well-hidden from view or is worked a small section at a time with each section rehabilitated with topsoil and successful seeding before the next section is more than 5% extracted, until the whole area is reclaimed.
- F. A bond is posted for a sum sufficient to assume the cost of rehabilitation of the amount of land permitted to be in process at any one time.
- G. The applicant submits ample proof that the operation will not harm the surroundings through erosion or sedimentation during or after extraction.
- H. No significant wildlife habitat, wetlands, and rare, endangered or threatened species will be disturbed.

### **XII. Aesthetic Resources**

Hilltops, hillsides, and ridgelines contribute significantly to the rural character and aesthetic beauty of Weathersfield. Mount Ascutney dominates the local landscape and can be seen by our Vermont neighbors as well as those in New Hampshire. The Connecticut River plays a similar role on our eastern border. Economic and development pressures have made it more difficult to preserve these treasured vistas and landscapes. In addition, excessive outdoor lighting in residential areas diminishes the view of the night sky, and noise levels from activities such as those at the Springfield Hartness Airport, especially during summer weekends, disrupts the rural tranquility.

Aesthetic resources are protected by Criterion 8 of Vermont's Act 250, which does not relegate scenic beauty to pristine areas alone, but to settled areas and farmlands as well. Natural beauty, visual harmony, and peace and quiet have all been addressed by the Environmental Board as aesthetic values.

Recognizing the need for a formal body charged with the oversight of unique and historical characteristics, the Town has established a Conservation Commission. The Commission deals with the following "special cases:"

- A. The acquisition of open spaces and scenic views (ridgeline protection);
- B. The preservation of recreation, agricultural, and aesthetic value of the Connecticut River;

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- C. Historical sites and structures;
- D. Mineral extraction;
- E. Environmental problems of acid deposition, drainage/stormwater runoff, smog, noise, light pollution, etc..

The Conservation Commission maintains an inventory of vistas and viewsheds designated as important by the residents of Weathersfield and consults this inventory when reviewing subdivision applications. Responses to the 2001 Planning Survey showed strong support for the protection of visual resources through the continued maintenance and expansion of the scenic viewshed inventory and the development of a ridgeline policy to prohibit development in those areas. Favorite scenic views currently identified are:

- A. View of Mount Ascutney:
  - ~ from Route 131 near the Joe Stoughton house
  - ~ from the Weathersfield Center Road near the Kamel residence
  - ~ other viewpoints around Town;
- B. View from the Weathersfield Center Road, looking west, near the Hunter residence;
- C. View from Skyline Drive at the height of the land, looking east;
- D. View of the Center Church and Memorial Grove.

### **XIII. Historic Resources**

A community is held together and strengthened by a sense of history and cultural pride. Cherished historic sites enhance the built environment, which, along with scenic beauty and rural character, creates an attractive, interesting, and desirable place to call home. Archaeological resources remind us of earlier denizens of this area, the life they lived, and the sacrifices they made. Historic homes, mills, bridges, cemeteries, quarry sites, stone walls, farm complexes, barns, foundations, ferry sites, lime kilns, and old roads are typical of the visible historic record to be found in Weathersfield.

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Two prehistoric events, the formation of Mount Ascutney and the drainage of ancient Lake Hitchcock, affected the history of the area now known as Weathersfield. The mountain and the Connecticut River defined the northern and eastern bounds of this area and influenced the activities of humans moving in, which began 12,000 years ago according to archaeological remains. Native populations lived here in small groups that moved through the region depending on the season. River basins, especially that of the Connecticut River, provided fishing and hunting grounds, water supply, agricultural lands, and transportation. In the early 1760s, rivers played an important role in white settlement as well. They furnished access to the area; rich farmland in the flood plains; and waterpower for mills and tanneries.

A second important access for white settlers was the Crown Point Military Road, begun in 1759 during the French and Indian War. During early settlement, all Weathersfield roads intersected with the Crown Point Road, and today it remains an intact trail through Town.

Weathersfield has rich archaeological and historic sites. The Crown Point Road, the Upper Falls Bridge, the Weathersfield Center Historic District, and Wilgus State Park are on the National Register of Historic Places. Many more are listed in the Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey which is maintained by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. The Weathersfield Historical Society maintains a list of significant historic sites in Weathersfield.

As with any resource, increasing awareness and education of the Town's historic and archaeological treasures is a good way to help preserve them for future generations. Whether protecting old cellar holes from disturbance by creating buffer zones around them or explaining the significance of the crash site of a B-29 bomber on the northeast end of Hawks Mountain, community pride and stewardship is an important tool.

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Several important resources document the history of Weathersfield and inventory historic sites. These include John Hurd's Weathersfield Century One and Weathersfield Century Two; Ernest Butterfield's The Inhabitants of Weathersfield, which inventories historic sites and locations of early inhabitants and Weathersfield's Burying Grounds, which documents cemeteries and gravestones; and Historic Sites and Structures Survey, Weathersfield, Vermont (December 1993), which was produced by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation with assistance from the Weathersfield Conservation Commission and the Weathersfield Historical Society. Some archaeological remains have been inventoried by the Division for Historic Preservation.

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### XIV. Goals

- A. Protect and enhance the quality of surface waters and groundwater, including their sources, especially from impacts of development.
- B. Protect and preserve wetlands so that they may serve the functions defined in the Vermont Wetland Rules.
- C. Identify and protect rare, endangered, and threatened species and their habitat areas.
- D. Maintain and improve the diversity of native wildlife populations and protect critical habitat areas, such as deer wintering areas, from encroachment and fragmentation.
- E. Identify and protect important scenic resources for future generations.
- F. Develop and maintain high standards for air quality and other aesthetic values such as lighting, noise, odor, and dust.
- G. Preserve historic and archaeological resources, which enhance Weathersfield's rural character and cultural inheritance.

### XV. Recommendations

- A. Development on open lands or important forestland should occur in locations, patterns and densities which should not substantially reduce the productivity or fragment the area of these lands. Highway, utility, or building construction on the edges of these lands is recommended, unless critical wildlife habitat, historic sites, wetlands, or other sensitive areas are threatened by such building.
- B. Prime land identified by the Natural Resources Conservation Services as "P – prime" or "S – significant" is land to be preserved. Land uses other than agricultural or forestry should be conditional so as to guarantee its preservation. Highways, utilities, or building construction should be located on the edges of these lands.
- C. Nothing in this Plan is intended to limit agricultural activities in rural, hamlet, or village areas.

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- D. In areas of historic or architectural significance, such as near the Weathersfield Center Historic District, future development should be limited to activities and architectural styles which are compatible with the existing styles of the areas. Encourage the creation of additional Historic Districts, as for example the Village of Perkinsville, and the hamlets of the Bow and Amsden. Design Control Districts are another designation that might be used to protect historically-significant neighborhoods. An approved inventory of historic sites and a map are available at the Town Office.
- E. When development is planned, encourage prior identification and subsequent preservation of any significant historic aspects of the land and structures, including houses, cellar holes, barns, barn foundations, farm complexes, mill sites, dams, bridges, abutments, quarry sites, stone walls, old roads including the Crown Point Road, ferry sites, lime kilns, and Native American sites.
- F. If any structure or site identified in the Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey as having significant historic value is to be demolished or otherwise disturbed, the owner should notify the Conservation Commission and the Weathersfield Historic Society so that any historic values can be recorded and, if indicated, an attempt made to purchase or otherwise preserve the structure or site.
- G. Slopes steeper than 25% are best left undisturbed in their original forest cover. Development on these areas should be permitted only if it can be demonstrated to cause minimal impact to the environment. Lands with high elevation or combinations of elevation, poor soil conditions, and steep slopes are highly susceptible to erosion and should be protected from any development.
- H. Subsurface sewage disposal should not be permitted where soil conditions are such as to cause a likelihood of a health hazard. Usually, the probability can be greatly reduced by limiting the density of development. Greater density should be permitted when subsurface sewage disposal is not used and/or it can be proved that such a development density will not damage the environment or cause a public health hazard.

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- I. Development on flood prone land should be discouraged. Agriculture and suitable recreation uses should be encouraged.
- J. Wetlands should be protected from development by maintaining an undisturbed buffer strip of naturally occurring vegetation around the wetland edge and no development should be permitted within the wetland. **Note:** The Town is expected to comply with Vermont Wetland Rules adopted February 7, 1990.
- K. Activities that kill or injure bank vegetation should be avoided. The Town should limit activities such as the following near waters: housing and commercial development, road construction, cultivation, livestock grazing, dumping, filling, mowing and herbicide application. Protective buffer strips of a minimum of fifty (50) feet of undisturbed, naturally-occurring vegetation should be established or maintained along the borders of all bodies of water. Subsurface sewage disposal and development should not be permitted in these strips. Setbacks along the Connecticut River should be established at 100 feet from mean high water level. **Note:** Some of these strips of land might become part of the scenic acquisitions or easements recommended elsewhere in this Plan. Near bodies of water, cluster development would be preferred because it allows many people the pleasure of living near water, and at the same time, leaves much of the shore in its natural, undeveloped state as common land.
- L. The impacts on aquatic life by stream crossings associated with development should be minimized by maintaining fish passage, preserving or enhancing habitat, and limiting in-stream disturbance. Proper erosion control procedures should be applied to all construction activities in or near streams. Stream alteration permits, from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, are required for work, including crossing, on streams with a watershed of ten square miles or greater at the project site.

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- M. Proper pond designs should be encouraged that eliminate potential negative impacts to streams. Such designs include free-standing points which obtain water from groundwater and/or overland drainage. Underground storage tanks are another preferred alternative design for situations, such as fire ponds, which simply require water storage. In-stream ponds should be avoided. For off-stream ponds, minimum stream flow requirements below the pond inlet are necessary. Pond discharges into a stream may be possible provided they do not violate the Vermont Water Quality Standards from temperature, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity of the permanent stream or pond receiving the discharge. Any pond that impounds more than 500,000 cubic feet of water requires a permit from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.
- N. Deer wintering areas should be protected from development and other uses that threaten the ability of this habitat to support deer. Commercial, residential, and industrial development should not occur within the deer winter area or within 300 feet of the edge of the deer yard. Developments may be permitted adjacent to deer wintering areas if consultation with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife determines that the integrity of the winter areas has been preserved. Landowners adjacent to winter areas should keep their dogs under control especially during the winter season when the deer are most vulnerable.
- O. Rare and endangered plants and animals and their habitats should be protected and preserved by an approved protection plan developed by the landowner with cooperation from the Town and the Vermont Natural Heritage Program.
- P. Aquifer recharge and wellhead areas should be protected from uses which would significantly reduce their permeability or endanger the quality of ground water supplies.
- Q. Reference Liz Thompson's 1992 Biological Natural Areas of Weathersfield survey and maps when reviewing zoning permits and sub-divisions.

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- R. Inventory important Class III wetlands, develop policies for their protection, and educate landowners on their significance.
- S. Identify the sources of current and future drinking water supplies and aquifers in Weathersfield and develop and implement a long-range plan to monitor and protect them.
- T. Develop regulations that include an overlay district for aquifer protection areas.
- U. Prohibit any activity that will adversely affect drinking water supplies, such as development in headwaters of watersheds or areas supplying groundwater recharge.
- V. Adopt Aquifer Protection Regulations from the New Hampshire Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act as referenced in the Mount Ascutney Region of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions Corridor Management Plan.
- W. Avoid storing road salt near aquifers and adopt ordinance restricting salt use; avoid the practice of dumping salt-laden snow in or near rivers and streams.
- X. Encourage landowners to control invasive species and prevent new infestations through approved methods and public education regarding species being sold for landscaping purposes and awareness of the State of Vermont noxious weeds regulations.
- Y. Development should be sited in a manner that will cause a minimum of disturbance to the natural landscape and should be discouraged on land 1,500 feet or above elevation, steep slopes or shallow soils.
- Z. Encourage the Town to acquire open spaces and scenic views, either outright or by easement, by purchase or gift.
- AA. Recommend that an article be placed on the ballot to ascertain if voters are willing to appropriate funding to purchase and conserve land to preserve scenic views and open space. Sixty-eight percent of responses to the 2001 Planning Survey showed support for this.

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- BB. Encourage the Conservation Commission to continue its work maintaining and expanding the scenic viewshed inventory.
- CC. Preserve certain lands along the Connecticut River as a greenway for the future use of the public, either through easement purchase or restricted zoning, and evaluate any development along the river for the impact it will have on the scenic, recreational, ecological, and agricultural value of the Connecticut River.
- DD. Encourage the highest quality maintenance and upkeep of its cemeteries.
- EE. Develop management plans for Town-owned properties.
- FF. Encourage landowners and highway departments to use vegetative bank stabilization and minimize use of riprap and other “hard” solutions where bank erosion is a problem.
- GG. Encourage cooperation and local partnerships among private landowners and non-profit organizations which can provide assistance in preserving and maintaining natural communities.
- HH. Utilize the Connecticut River Joint Commissions’ Corridor Management Plan as a reference to guide the protection of resources of the Connecticut River Valley.

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### LAND USE

#### I. Current Land Use

Land use in the Town of Weathersfield generally follows the traditional Vermont settlement pattern of villages and hamlets surrounded by forestland, farmland, and open space. Historically, development has occurred in a manner that recognizes resident preference for a rural rather than urban community. The rate at which the population has grown has not placed an undue burden on Town services and school facilities, nor on the environment, primarily because the majority of development has been for single-family homes or for small subdivisions. There is small-scale and scattered industrial use in Weathersfield.

The largest concentration of development is found in the village of Ascutney near the Connecticut River. The location is especially well-served by its proximity and access to Interstate 91 and other major roadway systems connecting it to New Hampshire and surrounding towns. Due to heavy traffic flow and the potential for an increase in services for interstate travelers, thoughtful planning will be needed in the Exit 8 interchange area on Route 131.

Ascutney village includes a Post Office, Town offices, the Proctor Library, a middle school, churches, service stations and other commercial uses, and single-family homes interspersed with some historic structures. Ascutney is currently not served by a public water and sewer system, and future development will depend on the planning for this infrastructure. The Village of Perkinsville is the next largest concentration of development, which includes the Weathersfield Elementary School and a beautiful common surrounded by historic structures and single-family homes. Limited commercial use exists in Perkinsville; however, the Village no longer hosts a general store and Post Office. The Perkinsville Post Office was moved to Downers Corners in the spring of 1998.

The majority of land cover in Weathersfield is forest, which provides habitat for a variety of species such as deer, bear, moose, and a multitude of birds. Forestland provides employment and recreational opportunities as well. Agricultural land is scattered throughout the Town along river valleys and other areas where the best soils and slopes are found. There are a few active quarrying operations for sand, gravel, and crushed rock. The Current Land Use/Land Cover map, which is included with this Plan, is an illustration of existing development patterns.

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### II. Future Land Use

Two prime considerations in determining desirable land uses are: “What can the land support?” and “What do the people want?” Each of these considerations has a reciprocal “veto” power over the other. A use which the land cannot support should not be undertaken, even if the people wish it were possible. A use which the people do not want should not be undertaken, even if the land is perfectly capable of supporting it.

#### A. Villages

Villages are defined as high-density populated centers having local governmental or business activity that serves outlying areas as well. A village may become a municipal corporation for the purpose of raising funds by taxation for local services such as water, sewer, street lights, fire protection, etc.. Perkinsville is an incorporated Village. Ascutney, although not incorporated, is a village and it is also the seat of Town government. Villages should be considered predominantly residential communities that allow home occupations and business activities. Business activity shall be low impact in nature and in a scale that is compatible with the traditional activities of a particular village. Traditional uses, such as a general store for example, shall be a permitted use.

Existing village centers should be encouraged to grow at higher densities than current patterns, depending on conditions and allowable technology for water and septic. Planning for village water and sewer systems is needed in order to allow higher density growth in villages. Diversity in growth should be encouraged such that a mixture of low impact business activities and residential homes are created. Multi-family dwellings should be encouraged in villages. When a real need is foreseen for low cost housing, the Town should welcome any reasonable opportunity for making it available. (For more information, see the Housing Chapter of this Plan.) Development of village areas should occur evenly around existing village cores and strip development along roads radiating from the village centers should be discouraged.

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The Town should consider the adoption of an official map that includes proposed streets, drainage ways, and other public facilities, thereby restricting development which would conflict with these proposed facilities. Weathersfield's Health Regulations for subsurface sewage systems should be enforced and kept up-to-date.

### B. Hamlets

Hamlets are defined as small, high-density population centers without public water or sewer service and with limited business activity, such as small retail establishments and agricultural support businesses. Both Amsden and Weathersfield Bow are hamlets.

Hamlets should be encouraged to grow at their present densities. Based on the 2002 survey results, the Downers Corners/Amsden area should be considered a future growth center. Development of hamlet areas should occur evenly around existing hamlet cores and should not be limited to narrow strips along roads radiating from the hamlet centers. Commercial activity and retail establishments such as small businesses and services, as well as agricultural support businesses, should be permitted.

### C. Rural Areas

Rural areas are defined as those parts of Weathersfield developed with lower densities in order to encourage preservation of farmland, forests, scenic land, open space, and natural habitat. Less fragmentation of open space means greater environmental integrity. The maximum density of development in rural areas should be determined by the general desire to retain a rural rather than suburban or urban atmosphere. Commercial and industrial activity other than farming and home occupations/industries should not be permitted except in those areas designated in the Commercial and Industrial section later in this chapter.

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In a Town where both the tax base and the demand for services are primarily from single-family homes, undeveloped land plays a significant role in keeping property taxes lower. Agricultural lands and forestlands require virtually no Town or school services supported by taxes. As these areas are developed, the need increases for school expansions, road construction, and other major Town expenditures. Weathersfield taxpayers may find their tax bills will remain lower by keeping land in agricultural and forest use, rather than by expanding the grand list with increased single-family home development.

The Town should evaluate any proposed development in light of all recommendations made elsewhere in this Plan. Any development which could overload Town facilities, such as schools, should only be permitted on a schedule which would permit the facilities to be provided when needed.

All sewage disposal sites in rural areas must meet the current requirements of Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources. On-site septic systems should be located only on lands with adequate soil and slope given the current and allowed technologies. Although developing land with slopes up to 25% is allowed in Weathersfield, Vermont's current septic regulations require sewage disposal sites to be installed on slopes 20% or less.

Cluster development, or "conservation subdivisions," is recommended. Such development consists of arranging a number of dwellings in such a way as to build more densely on a few of the acres and designating the remaining areas as common forestland and fields, possibly including some recreation facilities on a portion of the common land. Such groupings of houses still respect the overall rural densities recommended above. This method of development preserves the open and forestland scenery so characteristic of Weathersfield, while simultaneously insuring economic feasibility of house and road construction. The soil limitations must still be taken into account and are often met conveniently and economically by central water and sewage systems invisibly utilizing some of those many acres of common land set aside in the development. Condominium ownership is often used in cluster development; all the land is owned in common with others, and only the house or the apartment is owned individually.

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### D. Commercial and Industrial

1. Conventional – Many of the Town’s residents earn their living in the industries and businesses located in surrounding towns. Weathersfield has some commercial and industrial activity and can benefit from carefully planned additions in the future. Different types of industrial and commercial activity need different kinds of locations to be most efficient, and in some cases, to avoid undesirable effects on their neighbors. A look at present activities verifies this.

Motels, inns, and service stations are on main roads to serve the traveling public. The Connecticut River Byway may further the potential for growth in tourism and supporting businesses. Small grocery stores are in or near the village and hamlet population centers. Campgrounds are located where there is enough land and possibly water for recreation. The following activities usually do not draw customers by being near main roads or population centers: contractors, printers, metal recycling and used auto parts, soapstone fabricator, and apple orchard store. The last two do relate to the tourist business and, therefore, derive some benefit from being on or near main roads.

Experience with nightclubs has indicated that traffic and noise can be local problems. Poorly designed and excessive exterior lighting, such as that from outdoor signage and service station canopies, can contribute to the growing concern of light pollution.

2. Home Occupations/Home Industries Distinguished from Conventional Industries – Weathersfield has a number of home industries such as antique, woodworking, and repair shops. These are not considered to be full-blown commercial or industrial enterprises.

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3. Future Industry and Commercial Establishments – The benefits of home occupations/industries, together with the problems of some types of home occupations/industries out of character with residential neighborhoods, points to the need for the provision of more areas within the Town available for industrial or commercial development.

At present, commerce is spotted along most of Route 5 from Wilgus State Park north to the Windsor town line. The Interstate 91 and Route 131 interchange area is a major attraction to future commercial establishments and, therefore, requires careful planning and control to avoid unwanted changes. Commercial development should be directed to off-the-highway plazas and access roads by drastically limiting the number of curb cuts permitted. The Town may find it necessary to lay out a road parallel to Route 5 to accommodate this development and facilitate traffic flow.

Route 106 has somewhat similar spotting of commercial development, though sufficiently less dense to permit maintaining some residential areas. Along Route 106, the Downers Corners area is best suited for commerce. Commercial development should be directed to plazas and access roads to avoid dangerous and unsightly strip development. (See Transportation Chapter for more information on “sprawl,” especially in the Exit 8 interchange area.)

Flat land between Route 5 and the Connecticut River seems ideal for industrial purposes unless its agricultural qualities are so good as to justify reserving it for farming. Development of industry along the Route 5 Connecticut River corridor should take into account the visual impact from the river. In addition, there is a Water Supply Source Protection Area in this location, which requires special attention and review. For more detail regarding future development concerns around this aquifer, refer to the Water and Sewer Engineering Feasibility Study for Ascutney Village and Town of Windsor, May 1999, prepared by Dubois & King, Inc.

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4. Commercial and Industrial Site Plans – Commercial and Industrial site plans should show the methods that will be used to collect drainage and stormwater runoff in accordance with State and Federal stormwater discharge regulations. Consideration must be given to where roof, driveway, parking lot, and road runoff will travel and infiltrate. Good planning can prevent surface water, wetland, and drinking water pollution. Site plans should take into account the proximity to Water Supply Source Protection Areas.
5. Aesthetics – The proper siting of tall structures such as telecommunications facilities, wind turbines, and transmission lines should be done in a manner that preserves scenic views.
6. Access Management – In areas which are prone to strip development, access management can alleviate some of the negative effects that otherwise unregulated development would create. Shared driveways and parking, adequate provision for pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access, and parking behind buildings wherever possible would contribute to more desirable development. Long-term planning and monitoring of these developments should be encouraged to ensure adequate traffic flow and concentration of economic activity.

### III. Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map included in this Plan is a basic tool for resource management and planning purposes. The land use designations described below correspond with the designations included on the Future Land Use Map and are intended to provide a broad, overall vision of future development. They are meant to serve as a guide to the types and intensities of uses appropriate for each area by describing the values, or “function,” that it provides for the Town. The boundaries of different areas are not meant to be detailed representations of present conditions, nor are they intended to be precisely bounded areas of completely segregated land uses for the future.

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Several important resources may occur within any of the land use categories, which merit special attention and protection: Public Water Supply Source Protection Areas; floodplains; steep slopes; prime agricultural land; vegetated areas next to surface waters; wetlands (as defined by the Vermont Wetland Rules); Natural Heritage Inventory sites; critical deer wintering habitat and bear habitat as defined by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; regionally significant historic sites; and other locally defined sensitive natural areas and scenic resources. Development should minimize negative impacts to these resources.

#### IV. Future Land Use Categories

- A. Open and Agricultural –The open and agricultural designation includes a variety of forest and agricultural uses, open fields, and fields experiencing transitional growth (shrub brush). Agricultural uses include tree farms and other horticultural uses. Development on these open lands shall occur in patterns that minimize fragmentation of the land and preserve the aesthetic and rural nature of the area. Locating buildings, utilities, and driveways on the edge of these lands whenever possible is strongly recommended. Cluster development is strongly recommended when more than one single-family dwelling is proposed by the developer of a property that falls under this designation.
  
- B. Forest – These areas include State-owned land and/or other forested areas where access is limited due to difficult terrain and other environmental factors. Logging and other forestry practices should predominate in these areas, although low-density residential uses and appropriate outdoor recreational uses could be interspersed with forest uses. The contiguity of large areas of forestland is important for many types of wildlife, especially for large mammals such as deer, bear, and moose. The Agency of Natural Resources has identified several large areas within the Town as deer wintering areas.

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- C. Institutional – This land is reserved for continued use by government and civic institutions. Examples include schools, cemeteries, churches, airports, etc. Institutional land may also be found interspersed throughout mixed-use areas and, occasionally, in residential and other areas.
- D. Conservation – Conservation areas are lands that possess outstanding value or potential as agriculture land, wildlife habitat, recreation areas, educational resources, fragile natural areas, economic assets (generating revenue from recreation and tourism), or aesthetic resources. Conservation lands represent relatively pristine areas that residents wish to preserve in their natural state for future generations and should receive the highest level of protection from development. Special care should be taken in any resource management or extraction plans to maintain the character and value of these areas. Conservation areas are especially beneficial when surrounded by compatible uses such as forest and agriculture. In addition, areas with unique environmental characteristics, such as wetlands, shorelines, rare and endangered plant and animal species and aquifer recharge areas, are designated for preservation.
- E. Recreation – Publicly accessible recreation opportunities should be enhanced where possible and should not be significantly diminished. Designated recreation areas should retain their recreational value to the public; where development would reduce recreational opportunities, alternatives should be provided whenever feasible.
- F. Rural Residential – Rural residential areas can support a number of different uses, including low-density residential, forest, and agricultural (including tree farms and other horticultural uses). They have been designated based on their current uses and accessibility from existing roads. The primary concern in rural areas shall be to discourage poorly planned development such as “spaghetti” lots or “sprawl” (as discussed earlier in this Chapter), and to maintain existing, low-density settlement patterns. Cluster development is encouraged wherever possible, as long as the overall density remains low. Open space and recreational resources should be preserved where possible.

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- G. Mixed Use (Growth Center Districts) – The two village centers of Perkinsville and Ascutney and the Town-designated future growth center of Downers Corners/Amsden currently have a mixture of high-density residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses. These areas should remain as they are in character and settlement pattern. Commercial development has historically been located in village centers and is encouraged to continue in these areas. Commercial development in mixed-use areas should be surrounded and interspersed with high-density residential, public, and light industrial uses. These areas are intended to continue the long tradition of Vermont’s downtown and village centers. Development in these areas should be of the highest density and should facilitate development of a circulation system that accommodates pedestrians and other non-vehicular travel. New development should not detract from the historic character and aesthetic qualities of the village centers.

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### V. Goals

- A. Preserve the historical development pattern of mixed-use village areas surrounded by open land, agriculture, forest, and low-density residential uses.
- B. Direct development toward areas the Town has defined as desirable for growth and to where it will be most effective and efficient to provide the necessary public infrastructure and services. Results of the 2002 survey indicated support for the Downers Corners/Amsden area as a future growth center and the revitalization of Perkinsville as a Village center.
- C. Develop a diverse commercial and industrial base, which will provide economic opportunities to homeowners.

### VI. Recommendations

- A. Plan for municipal water and sewer to allow higher densities and commercial development in Ascutney village and consider installing stormwater collection systems at the same time.
- B. Encourage open space planning and "conservation subdivisions" to maintain the Town's rural character and scenic beauty.
- C. Maintain and improve adequate buffers along the Connecticut River and Water Supply Source Protection Areas. Develop regulations that include an overlay district to limit development in these areas.
- D. Discourage development in all flood prone areas.
- E. Increase recreational uses of Town-owned land in a manner that is sensitive to adjoining property owners.
- F. The Town should plan to acquire more land for recreational purposes.
- G. Establish a Design Review Board to maintain the historic integrity of village centers.
- H. Preserve scenic views from the indiscriminate siting of structures such as telecommunication facilities, wind turbines, and transmission lines.

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- I. Encourage recreational-commercial development such as golf courses and campgrounds, which can be compatible with residential, vacation, and farm uses provided proper provisions are made for traffic and sufficient distance and screening are planned to avoid noise problems.
- J. Certain uses, such as auto body shops and auto sales lots, should be considered fully commercial or industrial because of their impact on the neighborhood.
- K. Structures and exterior areas should be illuminated only at levels necessary to ensure safety and security of persons and property. Encourage exterior lighting that is designed to project light downward and is shielded from public roads, nearby residences, and distant vantage points.
- L. Office space is a desirable use in Commercial and Industrial Districts. It is likely to attract and increase existing and future support/service industries. Consequently, office space should be a permitted use in all Commercial and Industrial Districts.
- M. Encourage future industry and large commercial establishments in designated areas that are in harmony with the Town's rural character and contribute to the growth, income, and employment needs and tax base of the community.
- N. Do not permit residential uses in Industrial zones.
- O. Commercial growth, other than recreation, should be located near established population centers, concentrating services where they are most needed and reducing the pressure on rural land, which is better used for open space, agriculture, and recreation.
- P. The Town should institute an impact fee system premised on the cost of the increased services caused by development. The ratio of the cost of additional Town services divided by the value of the additional taxable property should also be considered.
- Q. Commercial buildings and parking lots need to have adequately planned systems for managing stormwater runoff.

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- R. Encourage tourism-related businesses where appropriate in order to take advantage of this existing economic opportunity. Tourism in the Connecticut River Valley is expected to increase in the future due to a variety of factors including the bi-state (Vermont and New Hampshire) designation and promotion of the Connecticut River Byway.
  
- S. The Town should consider the adoption of an official map to identify the location of all existing and proposed roads, streets, drainage areas, schools, and other public facilities.

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### TRANSPORTATION

The earliest non-native settlers arrived here after weeks of following ancient footpaths, the Connecticut River, or early road and turnpike systems in southern New England. By 1810 “public roads” were mapped by the State of Vermont following a survey by James Whitelaw. The survey noted several roads still in use today as well as the Connecticut River Turnpike, a toll road that stretched from Bellows Falls to Thetford. Utilizing a series of other connecting turnpikes, a traveler in 1807 could take one of three stagecoaches per week from Hanover to Boston for \$6.00. The 1810 survey notes the existence of the Center Road, several east/west roads, a road roughly in the path of Interstate 91 from Ascutney to the Springfield line, and one approximately along the path of VT Route 131. Most primary roads were built along ridges and through the upland regions of town. Crossing the Connecticut River into New Hampshire was accomplished by ferry at one or more locations. By 1809, a toll bridge had been built between Windsor and Cornish; soon after, a similar bridge was built between Ascutney and Claremont. By 1930, with the widespread use of the automobile, Weathersfield maintained 108 miles of public road with the section of US Route 5 paved clear to White River Junction.<sup>1</sup> Increased ownership of automobiles, as well as long and short haul trucks, gave way to more widespread paving and widening of Town and State roads.

Interstate 91 is Vermont’s primary north-south highway along the eastern side of the state. Built in stages during the 1960s, the four-lane highway is considered by some a blessing to the local economy and to others, the root of much of what is wrong with Vermont today. Transportation in present-day Weathersfield relies on a system of well-maintained paved and gravel roads subsidized by local, state, and Federal tax revenues.

We take for granted the system of roads that increasingly dominate the landscape. Often we assume that more roads are better and that wider roads are better still. Pressure on the land from increased development forces us to take stock of how highways and country roads can dissect and reshape the landscape. These decisions should be made with a maximum of consideration and public input.

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Fisher Wilson, “Roads of Windsor,” *The Geographical Review: Vol. 23.No. 3* (July 1931)

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### I. The Present Road System

A town's road system plays a major role in its efficiency and vitality as well as general resident satisfaction with Town services. From high road maintenance costs, safety hazards, and poor traffic flow to the unnecessary clearing of stone walls and stately tree stands, roadway decisions can be controversial and require careful forethought.

- A. Regional or Arterial Highways – These roadways connect large population areas outside of Weathersfield. Their main function is to carry traffic through the Town although some of the traffic does begin and end in the town. Currently, the regional or arterial highways in Weathersfield are I-91, US 5, and VT 106, all north-south; and VT 131, which is east-west. There appears to be no reason to recommend any additional regional or arterial highways in the foreseeable future.
- B. Collector Roads – These roadways collect local traffic from smaller roads and feed it to the regional highways or simply connect smaller roads with other smaller roads. The primary function of collector roads is to connect Weathersfield's villages and hamlets with each other and possibly with neighboring villages and hamlets in adjacent towns. They can also help reduce the amount of traffic, sometimes traveling too fast, on small residential roads. Depending on Weathersfield's future growth, more collector roads may be needed in the future. At present, collector roads in Weathersfield are: Center Road and Goulden Ridge Road; the combination of Bowen Hill, Downer Hill, Skyline Drive, Perkins Hill, Cady Hill, and Stoughton Pond Road; and the combination of Reservoir Basin, Plains and Piper Roads.
- C. Local Roads – Local Town roads connect individual properties to each other and to the collector and regional roads. They carry some through traffic, but the through traffic should be discouraged in order to preserve the rural appearance and way of life in Weathersfield. Although the nature of these roadways should discourage high speed travel, dangerous curves and intersections should be adequately marked by signs.

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Many local roads in Weathersfield are unpaved. Recent attention has focused on gravel roads and driveways as potential sources of sediment and phosphorus to lakes and streams. Every road or driveway can become a conduit for rainwater or snowmelt, which erodes the road material. State programs such as “Vermont Better Backroads” educate communities on proper road construction, access policies, and road and bridge standards. They focus on the inventory and maintenance of local roads and advocate practices and techniques to preserve the integrity and vitality of roads as well as bridges, culverts, drainage, and ditching. The Regional Planning Commission has resources to provide bridge and culvert inventories to municipalities.

- D. Trails and Unused Roads – Trails and unused roads do not serve as part of the road network at present, even though they are still owned by the Town. At one time, they served the many small hill farms which were active during the sheep farming period and were gradually abandoned as people moved west. From time-to-time, these roads have been used by farmers to reach remote pastures or mowings, loggers, hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts. Some have been reactivated because people have built homes on them. Reactivation can be very expensive to the town, especially if the road is in poor condition and requires upgrading to accommodate automobiles, as well as ongoing regular maintenance and snow removal.
- E. Scenic Byways – Route 5 is part of the state-designated Connecticut River Scenic Byway. Scenic viewsheds along these roads should be identified and protected in order to preserve them for the enjoyment of present and future generations of residents and visitors.

## II. Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

The increase in Weathersfield’s population, two-job commuter families, and improved roads (both gravel and paved) has created a significant increase in the number and speed of vehicles traveling the Town’s roadways. At the same time, there has been a great increase in the popularity of bicycle touring as well as local riders. Pedestrian traffic is also increasing. All share the same highway system with vehicular traffic; therefore, safety is of great concern.

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The Southern Windsor County Regional Commission Bicycling and Walking Plan states: "Car and car-based urban planning are destroying our public spaces and unraveling our bonds of community." The same transportation network that allows residents of Weathersfield to easily shop in West Lebanon and have the UPS truck deliver packages to their door daily also encourages the demise of local village stores and post offices within walking distance of population centers.

In October 1997, Dubois & King was hired to perform an Ascutney Village Sidewalk Feasibility Study. The report found, "Based on the review of the project site, natural and cultural resources, utility and other existing infrastructure, and public input regarding the proposed sidewalk, this project is feasible and will be a good expenditure of public funds." An engineering firm was selected to design a plan for a proposed sidewalk along Route 5. However, in November 2000 and again in May 2001, Weathersfield residents rejected the plan. Opponents to the project cited concern over increased taxes, winter maintenance costs, and negative impact on the rural character of Ascutney.

An engineering firm was hired in 2002 to analyze traffic calming and the feasibility for sidewalks along Route 106 in the Village of Perkinsville. Based on the review of the project site, natural and cultural resources, utility and other existing infrastructure, and public input regarding the proposed sidewalk, the project was determined to be feasible and a good expenditure of public funds. The public hearings that followed revealed that most residents were generally in favor of calming traffic; however, there was little support for pedestrian facilities.

### III. Exit 8 Interchange

According to a regional study of Interstate exits conducted by the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, future traffic projections based on current trends suggest significant increases in volume at Exit 8. Any further development along the principal roads of this area will complicate this condition. The study establishes a baseline of land-based environmental data for the interchange area. Information pertaining to buildable land and current zoning were combined to identify the amount and type of future development that could take place, for example, along Cemetery Road and Route 131, which are areas of prime concern. Currently, the Land Use Chapter of this Plan does not address future development of the interchange area in any great detail.

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The Weathersfield interchange is in close proximity to Ascutney, an established village center, which is identified by the Town as a growth center. With one-acre minimum lots, the village is located less than a mile from Exit 8. The ability to develop on these smaller lots creates a more densely settled land use pattern near the interchange. Local and regional land use goals state that future development should be concentrated in “growth centers” such as villages and designated downtown areas. Any policies created for Exit 8 should carefully address the fact that this growth center is within a mile of the interchange and acknowledge that both rural and more settled components to the landscape exist there.

The present zoning of “Highway Commercial” around Route 131 and US Route 5 could actually promote commercial strip-development or sprawl in these areas. Results from the April 2002 Planning Survey indicate that future development in the Exit 8 interchange area might include retail and light industrial/commercial; however, fast food chains were opposed.

#### **IV. Access Management and Traffic Calming**

Communities that allow commercial development along long stretches of major highways may soon discover that they have a traffic problem from all the businesses that spring up along a corridor – each with its own access. Towns can manage traffic flow and safety and preserve the carrying capacity of roads through the proper design and spacing of driveways and curb cuts to public roadways and businesses. This focus on the connection between transportation plans and land use reduces congestion and promotes more desirable land use patterns.

Access management principles have been a part of roadway design for many years. Freeways function to move large volumes of traffic at high speeds for long distances because access is limited. In contrast, residential streets function primarily to provide access to homes at low speeds. The key to effective access management is linking appropriate access design to roadway function. Successful access management protects and enhances property values and potential land use, while preserving public investment.

Traffic calming is the use of self-enforcing, physical measures to reduce speed, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for non-motorist street users. Examples include the use of striping to clearly define pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, lighting, and raised pavement. Traffic calming can achieve increased pedestrian safety, lower traffic speeds, and more livable village centers.

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### **V. Exit 8 Park-and-Ride**

Park-and-ride lots are effective in reducing single-occupant vehicle use when they are located along routes that are used by the majority of commuters in a given area and combined with stops by the local and inter-community public transit providers. A survey of park-and-ride users, taken by the local Regional Planning Commission at the Ascutney facility at Exit 8 in August and September of 1999, showed the majority of the park-and-ride users arrived alone at the lot and then left with one other person. Sixty-one percent of respondents were bound for the White River Junction/Hanover/Lebanon area and just under 44 percent began their trip from Weathersfield. Expansion plans for the Exit 8 Park-and-Ride have been placed on hold due to funding uncertainties.

### **VI. Upper Falls Covered Bridge**

The Upper Falls Bridge, which crosses the Black River near Route 131 in Perkinsville, is one of 75 historic covered bridges in Vermont eligible for Federal funding for repairs under the National Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Act, which was sponsored by Senator James Jeffords and became law in 1999. Approval of funding for the preservation and repair of the Upper Falls Covered Bridge and three other historic covered bridges in Vermont was announced in July 2003.

### **VII. Hartness State Airport**

Hartness State Airport, which is in both the towns of Springfield and Weathersfield, offers some of the best facilities in Vermont. Built in the 1920s, Hartness was host to Charles A. Lindbergh shortly after his Trans-Atlantic flight in 1927. Hartness is the home of the first Vermont Civil Air Patrol Squadron, founded in 1941 and until recently had regularly scheduled airline service. The airport's primary runway at 5,498 feet is the second longest runway in the state, following Burlington International Airport. Hartness is served by a crosswind runway of 3,000 feet. The airport accommodates corporate jets.

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VTrans has recently spent more than \$2 million for the refurbishing of the runways and has in excess of \$1.3 million of capital improvements earmarked for Hartness over the next 5 years, including \$770,000 for apron resurfacing in 2003. Plans also include marketing to jet charters (business, tourism, and ski enthusiasts), providing pads for the construction of more private hangars, and card-lock fuel available 24 hours a day. State and Federal funding is prioritized among ten airports based on points awarded for meeting various criteria. One criterion is the existence of an Airport Zone in local zoning regulations. Weathersfield should consider such a zone for the benefit of the Town and the airport. Major air traffic patterns can negatively affect Weathersfield residents. Current use of the airport usually produces acceptable noise levels, but regular jet traffic or increased use of the airport could have a negative effect on the adjacent community.

There are approximately 30 aircraft, mostly small, single-engine craft, with a few twin engine aircraft based at the airport. It is estimated that approximately 50% of the annual flight operations are business-related. The airport supports medical emergency flights (both helicopter and fixed wing), on-call organ transplant flights, State Police drug enforcement operations, Springfield Police operations, Air National Guard helicopter operations, search and rescue operation of the Civil Air Patrol and State Police. Soaring clubs operate at the airport all summer and host an annual soaring competition. The facility is used for various community sponsored events. In addition, aviation fuel (including jet fuel) air mechanic services, and flight school are available.

Hartness has experienced fluctuating periods of usage over the years, and although it is not utilized to its full capacity, it remains a significant resource and economic asset to the area.

### **VIII. Other Aspects of Transportation**

Weathersfield is too sparsely populated to make public transportation within the Town economically practical. Connecticut River Transit stops at Ascutney Hospital in Windsor and the Exit 8 Park-and-Ride in Ascutney and will stop in Downers Corners/Amsden if flagged down. Vermont Transit Lines buses to major population centers are available in the village of Ascutney, Springfield, and Claremont, New Hampshire. There is school bus service, which will need to expand as the Town grows. Taxi service is available from surrounding towns, though it is expensive because of the distance. A local business provides shuttle service to Bradley, Logan, and Manchester airports.

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Vermont Transit Lines, United Parcel Service, Federal Express, and the major trucking firms all supply Weathersfield with parcel and freight transportation service. Rail freight service is available in Chester and Windsor, and Amtrak has rail passenger service between Washington, D.C. and St. Albans with stops in Bellows Falls, Windsor, White River Junction, and Claremont, NH. Air service is available from commercial lines in Rutland, and Lebanon and Keene, NH to major connecting points such as Burlington, Hartford, Boston, Albany, and New York City. Private and business planes also use these local airports, plus a small one in Claremont, NH.

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**IX. Goals**

- A. Preserve, maintain, and improve the existing system of transportation facilities and services and expand the system only if there is a clearly demonstrated and defined need and no other alternative is feasible.
- B. Implement access management and traffic calming strategies to lessen the adverse effects of congestion and vehicle movements, especially in village centers and areas of dense commercial development.
- C. Encourage increased use of public transportation and ride-sharing to lessen the number of single-occupant vehicles.
- D. Develop a closer relationship with the Hartness State Airport to stay connected and informed about this important area resource.

**X. Recommendations**

- A. In the administration of present and future regulations, provide sufficient distance between entering roads or driveways or curb cuts of any kind to permit safe travel at fairly high speed on as much of these regional or arterial roads as possible.
- B. Encourage shared driveways to eliminate access points in areas such as that around the Exit 8 interchange that are particularly susceptible to increased commercial or strip development, also known as sprawl. Another area of concern is located along Route 5 north of Ascutney village.
- C. Make any absolutely necessary improvements of all roads in such a way as to do a minimum amount of damage to water quality, aesthetics, trees and other plant life and wildlife areas.
- D. Encourage road design and maintenance practices and techniques that protect the environment, including the quality and quantity of surface water, and help to manage stormwater runoff.
- E. Keep most of the roads as local Town roads. Improve them only as needed for safety, negotiability in winter, protection from washout and economy of maintenance. Keep speed limits low, since pedestrians, children, horses, etc., also use these roads.

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- F. Keep those trails and unused roads which might serve the Town in the future either as worthwhile parts of the road network or for recreation purposes. Determine which roads might be reclassified as trails, or discontinued through proper legal procedures. Keep in mind the cost of reactivation of neglected roads and the need to preserve undeveloped open spaces in Weathersfield. The use of Class 4 unmaintained roads for recreation should be encouraged.
- G. To prevent clogging of roads by parked cars, all forms of land development should include adequate off-street parking space. Existing and historic uses may require special parking need consideration.
- H. All new roads should conform to Town highway specifications. All private roads must conform to Town specifications before they can be taken over as Town roads.
- I. The Town should encourage private/voluntary efforts to maintain and enhance the visual appearance of all Town roads such as Green Up days, restoration of stone walls, and maintaining stands of trees.
- J. Encourage non-motorized transportation such as biking and walking; and study which roads are most used by bike and pedestrian traffic both within our Town and connecting with other towns in the region.
- K. Plan for either sidewalks or paved and marked pedestrian/bike shoulders on major roads in the villages and near the schools. This would include Route 106 through Perkinsville and Routes 5 and 131 in Ascutney.
- L. When major high speed roads are resurfaced, study the practicality of expanding road width enough to include a designated paved shoulder that could accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. These might include portions of many of the regional and collector roads in Weathersfield.
- M. Rail passenger service should be encouraged to reduce the need for highway system expansion and to reduce air pollution.
- N. Efforts by regional agencies to provide transportation for the elderly or handicapped should be supported.

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- O. The Selectboard should be involved in decisions regarding increased airport usage, and major changes in airport usage should be brought to public attention via public meetings or hearings.
- P. Consider guiding the size and design of signage so that it does not detract from the character of the area.
- Q. Discourage the location of uses that would require the transportation of hazardous materials near water bodies.

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**UTILITIES AND FACILITIES**

The development of public utilities, facilities, and services should be based upon a projection of reasonably expected population increase and economic growth, and should recognize the limits of the Town's human, financial, and natural resources. Any proposed public facilities should recognize the goals set forth in the Town Plan. Certain development patterns, such as village centers, will dictate where the strongest demands are for more services. This Plan recommends a Capital Program and Budget Plan as authorized by V.S.A. Title 24 Chapter 117, Section 4426, which would enable the Town of Weathersfield to plan for future capital investments and operational needs. It would also serve as a legal tool in Act 250 proceedings under Criterion 9(A) – Impact of Growth.

**I. Water and Sewer**

Weathersfield does not have any public water or sewer facilities. According to the Agency of Natural Resources, the Town has one privately-owned "public community system" with its well located near Route 131 and the Connecticut River, which serves approximately 400 persons with 200 connections, including Ascutney Middle School. The system has a maximum daily demand of 0.030 million gallons per day and a Water Supply Source Protection Area. This system is currently operating at capacity, placing a restriction on any new development that does not have its own water supply. The storage and distribution system is not adequate for any kind of fire protection. There is one non-transient, non-community water supply serving the Perkinsville Elementary School and nine transient, non-community water systems serving motels and campgrounds. Water Supply Source Protection Areas for these systems are critical, and development in these areas should be discouraged.

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**Table 10. Weathersfield Water Supplies**

Name of System	Type of Water Supply	Approx. Population Served
Country Estates Water Co.	Community	400
Crown Point Camping	Transient, non-community	340
Getaway Mountain & Campground	Transient, non-community	200
Crown Point Country Club	Transient, non-community	95
Weathersfield Elementary	Non-transient, non-community	130
Ascutney State Park	Transient, non-community	200
Wilgus State Park	Transient, non-community	100
Yankee Village Motel	Transient, non-community	40
The Inn at Weathersfield	Transient, non-community	71
Windsor Motel	Transient, non-community	25
Country Creemee	Transient, non-community	40

Source: Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Supply Division, 1998 (Community – serves more than 25 year-round residents; Non-Transient – serves schools, factories, etc.; Transient – serves hotels, campgrounds, etc.)

A report prepared in 1999 by Dubois & King, Inc., Water and Sewer Engineering Feasibility Study for Ascutney Village and Town of Windsor, identified a potential source for a public water supply on the “Kelly property.” The Water Supply Source Protection Area for this supply and Country Estates encompasses much of the land north of Riley Drive to the Windsor line. This area includes many residential septic systems and presents a potential health problem in the future.

There are no public waste water systems in Town, all houses and businesses are on private septic systems, which limit the growth in the villages to lots that are of a sufficient size to allow both a well and septic. In the case of a public facility, this would require a 200-foot protective radius around the well. The Dubois & King study identified several waste water alternatives for the village of Ascutney including connecting with the Town of Windsor’s system. The Village of Perkinsville is on all private wells and on-site septic systems, although there are several shared systems. This situation severely limits growth in Perkinsville.

## II. Electric Utilities

Electrical service is provided throughout the Town by Central Vermont Public Service Company (CVPS). Power is fed from surrounding towns and from a substation located in Ascutney, which is tied into the New England power grid. CVPS also has an oil-fired generating facility in Ascutney used during periods of high demand.

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As a result of the electric power substations, Weathersfield has been crisscrossed by a number of electric power transmission lines. These lines disfigure the landscape and the required easements decrease the value of private land. Electromagnetic fields (EMF) emitted by electrical transmission lines may have adverse biological effects and are suspected of contributing to human health problems. It is possible that additional electrical generating or transmission facilities or distribution lines and fuel pipelines will be planned and constructed in the future.

### III. Communications

The maintenance of a modern and accessible communications network is considered essential to the public welfare. Countless economic, social, and cultural benefits are available to a community with free and open access to people and ideas in other parts of the world. At the same time, the infrastructure of this system must be developed in an efficient, safe, and thoughtful manner. Impacts upon scenic and cultural resources, aesthetics, and human health should all be considered during the planning process.

Weathersfield is served by at least six telephone exchanges provided from surrounding towns. It is also served by one cable company (including a public access channel), operating out of both Springfield and Claremont to the Perkinsville and Ascutney areas. These services share the same rights-of-way as the power company. Cellular telephone service is provided by several carriers from towers located in surrounding towns.

One subject of particular concern is the siting and construction of wireless communications facilities. These structures can alter mountaintops and ridgelines in ways that negatively impact scenic resources vital to the Town's economic future and cultural richness. There are aesthetic concerns, particularly as the number of undeveloped mountains and ridges decrease. In addition, there are unanswered questions about health effects from the electromagnetic fields generated by these facilities on the people and animals living near them.

Any proposed wireless communications facilities must utilize existing facilities before new sites are considered. New sites should blend into the surrounding landscape in both size and appearance. As less intrusive designs evolve through technological advances, those designs should be utilized.

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### IV. Town Facilities

Weathersfield conducts its business from the Town Hall in Ascutney, shared by Martin Memorial Hall, a public multi-purpose room downstairs. This building was renovated around 1990, making both floors ADA accessible and adding new vault and office space. Because of the filing requirements by State agencies and lending institutions, additional vault space may be needed in the future.

Weathersfield owns a Town garage in Perkinsville, constructed around 1970, which houses all of the trucks and equipment to maintain the road system. The Town's school buses are also parked and maintained there. Weathersfield owns and operates several gravel and sand pits.

There are two volunteer fire departments, each with their own fire house and equipment. Weathersfield is part of the regional mutual aid system. The Town operates a police department from the Town office with a chief and one part-time officer. Emergency medical services are provided by Golden Cross Ambulance in Claremont, NH.

Weathersfield is part of the Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District (SWCSWMD), which has prepared a Solid Waste Implementation Plan. This Plan has been submitted to the State and is currently in the review process. The SWCSWMD has hired a Solid Waste Program Coordinator to assist District towns with solid waste issues and recycling efforts. The Coordinator's position is contracted to and housed at the Regional Planning Commission. All SWCSWMD member towns are also members of the bi-State agreement under the NH/VT Solid Waste Project. Member towns are entered into a contract requiring all municipal waste to be tipped at the Wheelabrator incineration facility in Claremont, NH. The Project's contract with Wheelabrator is scheduled to expire in 2007, at which time the Town of Weathersfield must seek alternative options for waste disposal. It is important for Town officials, District Representatives, and local residents to contribute to the planning process in anticipation of these changes. With regard to recycling in Weathersfield, great strides have been made because of the model transfer station located in Amsden. Townsfolk have become increasingly aware of the benefits of recycling.

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Weathersfield is served by two new post offices, one at Downers Corners and one at Ascutney, each providing local postal services. Delivery routes are served from post offices in surrounding towns. The closing of the Perkinsville Post Office in 1998 made a significant negative impact on the Village; residents could no longer walk to the Post Office, which had become a local gathering place, and the general store went out of business soon after.

The Proctor Library, located in Ascutney near Martin Hall, has been serving the Town for a century as its public library. State-accredited, it has a collection of over 6,000 volumes and a yearly circulation of over 7,000 books and other materials. In addition, the Library has five high-speed public access computers and hosts art exhibits and public meetings. Unchanged in its physical plant for 100 years, the Library is still 1,200 square feet and has become too small to accommodate the collections, services, and programs the Library seeks to offer as an active, modern community resource.

Four home-based, registered childcare facilities in Weathersfield are currently listed with the State of Vermont. In addition to these four (4) facilities, residents rely on informal childcare arrangements within the Town or regional resources outside of Town that are either licensed or registered. The child care resource and referral agency for Weathersfield is the Springfield Area Parent Child Center, which is located in North Springfield.

### **V. Cemeteries**

There are 13 cemeteries in Weathersfield. Ten of these are maintained by the Town, which means even though some may be on private land, they are not maintained by the owner, and the Town has taken over this responsibility. The remaining cemeteries are privately-owned and maintained. This Plan encourages the highest quality maintenance and upkeep of the Town's cemeteries in order to preserve their historical significance.

### **VI. Recreation**

Consistent with the goal of keeping Weathersfield a pleasant place in which to live, it has been suggested that one of the Town's primary assets is recreation. Weathersfield has a wealth of recreational facilities.

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The Stoughton Recreation Pond area is part of the North Springfield Flood Control Area, operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It provides the only public swimming in Town. Picnicking, boating, fishing, and nature areas are available there. The Ascutney Mountain Audubon Society and the Army Corps of Engineers have developed the Springweather Nature Area, on the Springfield/Weathersfield border. Careful planning can make the area attractive to people having different interests, without causing conflicts between them and without placing serious burdens on the Town.

Hoisington Field is a privately-owned recreation field under the stewardship of Trustees of Public Funds. It is located behind the Perkinsville School and has several playing fields for summer use and a skating rink for winter use. The playground at the Ascutney Middle School also has a variety of playing fields.

The Town owns the pond and adjacent land next to the Tenney Hill development in Ascutney. Currently, it is not suitable for swimming and its only use is for fire protection. In 2002, a proposal to develop the "Tenney Hill Recreation Area" was abandoned because it was not well-received by residents in the area.

The Connecticut River, which forms the eastern boundary of Town, has limited access for boating and fishing. There is access to the river in Springfield, VT, and across the river in Cornish and Claremont, NH. The Town owns the road to the Old Ferry Landing, which has limited access for small boats. Wilgus State Park has sites for camping along the river and also a canoe launch area. This reach of the river is in the power pool at Bellows Falls, making it very quiet. Ongoing efforts to upgrade the water quality of the river and restore the Atlantic salmon and shad fisheries will increase the value of land adjacent to the river. Now is the time to evaluate the need for preserving and possibly expanding public access and recreational uses of the river compatible with its existing character.

The Black River runs through the southwestern section of Town and provides excellent white water canoeing and kayaking during spring runoff. It also provides excellent fly fishing upstream of the Upper Falls covered bridge.

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The Ascutney Trails Association maintains the Weathersfield Trail, which ties into the trail system on Mount Ascutney from the trailhead parking lot on Cascade Falls Road. The historical Crown Point Military Road, which was a main thoroughfare during pre-Revolutionary Vermont, traverses the Town from the Country Club to the Cavendish town line, primarily across private properties and is currently not well marked. The Crown Point Road Association has published a guide: Historical Markers on the Crown Point Road: Vermont's First Road. And finally, the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) maintains a network of snowmobile trails connecting the local trails to the State network of trails.

There are currently three (3) private campgrounds in Weathersfield, offering over 300 campsites and other amenities to campers and travelers.

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**VII. Goals**

- A. Support strong village centers with water and sewer planning for the future.
- B. Maintain and improve Water Supply Source Protection Areas.
- C. Maintain all buildings, utilities, and facilities on a regular schedule.
- D. Maintain the highway system in a safe condition and to the Vermont Local Road and Bridge Standards as adopted by the Town.
- E. Maintain sidewalks, bridges, guardrails, and all other accessory infrastructure in a safe and economic manner through scheduled maintenance and replacement.

**VIII. Recommendations**

- A. The Town should anticipate the inevitable need for central water and sewage systems in Ascutney and Perkinsville and plan to acquire the land necessary.
- B. Future utility expansions should occur only when proven necessary. Natural and cultural resource areas shall be avoided, wherever possible, in the location or routing of new substation or transmission facilities.
- C. Underground placement of electric distribution lines where possible and economically practical are encouraged in order to promote the enhancement of the area. The use of wood support structures, appropriate conductor colors for the background, and landscape compatibility techniques are encouraged.
- D. Siting of new electrical transmission facilities should minimize public EMF exposure in areas presently developed or planned for future development. Public exposure to EMF should not be increased where a practicable alternative exists.

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- E. Because transmission lines disfigure the landscape, particularly where they cross ridges, no lines should be constructed except within current transmission corridor rights-of-way. Existing corridors should be maintained to minimize soil erosion, maximize wildlife habitat, and be landscaped to minimize the negative impact on scenic and aesthetic qualities of the landscape. Application of biocides within utility corridors should be performed in strict accordance to State regulations.
- F. In the siting of electrical generating and transmission facilities, every practicable attempt should be made to minimize impacts on scenic and aesthetic resources. Placement of these facilities should be evaluated in terms of their impact on the overall environment.
- G. The siting and design of wireless communications facilities (including any support and maintenance structures and necessary access corridors) should minimize impacts on natural, scenic, and aesthetic resources to the fullest extent possible.
- H. New wireless communications facilities should not be sited or constructed where a practicable alternative exists. New facilities should utilize existing tower space whenever possible and to the fullest extent possible. The use of existing structures such as water towers and buildings to support antennae is encouraged where appropriate.
- I. In the event that the use of a tower or other equipment is discontinued, the site must be restored to its natural condition, or to the condition that existed prior to construction or installation, as appropriate, within 180 days of discontinuance. The Planning Commission may require an applicant to secure a bond ensuring removal and site rehabilitation.
- J. The Town should develop a capital budget and program. The adoption of this program will allow the Town to levy an impact fee on any new developments as necessary.
- K. The Town should consider the adoption of an official map identifying the location of all existing and proposed roads, streets, drainage areas, schools, and other public facilities.

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- L. The resources and location of the Proctor Library need to be given greater exposure and public awareness. The Library needs to offer public computer access to its borrowers.
- M. The Proctor Library building should be expanded to accommodate a larger collection, new technologies, and a growing population in a plan that will better serve citizens while preserving the essential character of the Library.
- N. The Proctor Library facility should meet life safety code and be ADA accessible.
- O. Town officials should work closely with the Library Trustees and Planning Commission to fund and support a plan to address current and future needs.
- P. The Town should work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide increased recreation uses at the North Springfield Dam and Stoughton Pond Recreation Areas.
- Q. The Town should plan to acquire more land for recreational purposes.
- R. The Town should work to increase recreational uses at Town-owned lands consistent with the wishes of neighboring property owners.
- S. The Town should investigate methods of preserving, either through easement, purchase, or restricted zoning, certain lands along the Connecticut River as a greenway for the future use of the public. Development along the river should be evaluated for the impact it will have on the scenic, recreational, ecological, and agricultural value of the Connecticut River.
- T. The Town should encourage the maintenance of trails by private organizations for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter. Roads should be converted to trails in lieu of discontinuance.
- U. Town officials should work with the local sportsmen's organizations and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife to assure a continuing program of stocking to maintain an adequate supply of game fish and proper stream management to provide desirable fish habitat, and also maintain open lands for hunting.

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- V. The Town should establish car top boat access and primitive campsites on the Connecticut River and discourage power boat access and marina development.
- W. The Town should control roadside and riverbank dumping and discourage littering and vandalism through public education and awareness.
- X. The Town should plan for the future demand for childcare services that are safe and affordable and integrate child care issues into the planning process as appropriate.
- Y. The Town should work to achieve the goals and action steps outlined in the District's Solid Waste Implementation Plan.
- Z. The Town should promote cooperation among participating municipalities in the implementation of source reduction, recycling, and composting programs on a District-wide basis.

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**M**aps

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**A**ppendix

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