

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

West Windsor is a small, rural community that faces many complex economic, social, and environmental issues associated with its evolution from an agricultural and farming-based town to a resort town, a second home community, and a bedroom community for Dartmouth College and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. The purpose of this plan is to provide the town with a means of anticipating and influencing the implications of these important issues for our community. While a Town Plan is not a law, it is a legal document upon which regulations may be developed. It provides benchmarks by which new development and planning projects may be measured and serves as an integral component of the Act 250 process. The Town Plan may also encourage exploration of other, non-regulatory measures, such as conservation easements and land acquisition, which may be useful in achieving town goals. In addition, the plan reviews the status of town services and the condition of town properties to assess and prioritize needs.

Since its adoption, town and school officials, highway department employees, emergency responders, and local citizens have made considerable progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 Town Plan. To maintain our road network in excellent condition, the town redesigned intersections, replaced bridges, repaved portions of the Brownsville-Hartland Road, stabilized roadside banks, and purchased a new loader. To protect public access to recreational trails, the town acquired 3.7 acres of land along Beaver Brook and accepted several trail easements. To improve public safety, the town purchased a new fire truck. To provide cost-effective service to local residents, the town switched dispatching services to Hartford Dispatch and ambulance services to Golden Cross. Comcast, Wavecomm, and a number of satellite companies have expanded the availability of high-speed internet since 2005. Albert Bridge School has a new playground. Alarm systems in the various municipal buildings have been upgraded and the Grange Hall is now handicapped accessible and ADA compliant. Advance planning and mutual aid agreements enabled our emergency service providers to respond to a major fire at the Ascutney Mountain Resort in January 2007, and a significant ice storm followed by a prolonged power outage in December 2008. Our FAST Squad was named “First Responder Service of the Year” in 2007.

In addition, the town has revised its zoning regulations and adopted subdivision regulations, which has resulted in West Windsor becoming “a ten-acre town” as far as Act 250 is concerned. Act 250 review is only triggered for commercial developments involving ten or more acres, and subdivisions involving ten or more lots. In 2008, all development review responsibilities were vested in a Development Review Board, which replaced the former Zoning Board of Adjustment. In 2009, the Selectboard appointed an Energy Committee.

Many changes have occurred over the past five years (i.e. since the 2005 Town Plan was adopted) that have affected the policies and recommendations included in the 2010 Town Plan. These changes include a town-wide property reappraisal, a significant increase in the acreage enrolled in the state’s Use Value Appraisal Program, the transfer of a major portion of the resort from Snowdance LLC to Orange Lake Resorts, the approval of a new resort Master Plan, a dramatic decrease in housing sales and new construction associated with a severe economic recession, changes in technology, changes in law enforcement training requirements, a decreasing school population in the neighboring town of Reading, pressure from the state for school consolidation, ancient roads legislation, fluctuating energy prices, increased interest in

energy conservation and alternative energy, and the continued vacancy of the former talc plant property.

During 2009 and 2010, the Planning Commission held a series of community forums to facilitate public input in the planning process and to discuss our values and vision. The Planning Commission also conducted a survey at the 2010 Town Meeting. The results of the forums and the survey (see Appendix B) form the foundation of our plan.

West Windsor has decided that its highly valued features are its scenic beauty, natural resources, wildlife habitat and recreational trails. The Town is committed to protecting these features for future generations in spite of mounting development pressures.

West Windsor residents are also concerned about having universal access to state-of-the-art telecommunications technology, including high-speed internet, and favor small-scale alternative energy projects that are in keeping with the rural character of the town.

## **HISTORY OF WEST WINDSOR**

*See Appendix A for additional information*

West Windsor originally was the West Parish of Windsor. On July 6, 1761, Josiah Willard of Winchester, New Hampshire "sued out" a six mile square grant for Windsor from Benning Wentworth, governor of New Hampshire, in the name of King George III of Great Britain. It was seven years later that the second division of house lots was mapped for the entire grant, setting the tone for dividing the township into two parishes.

It was not long before a crude church was built, and a cemetery was established high on a hill by the well-traveled track, which led west through the township. Settlers were "making pitches," buying land, and establishing their subsistence farms. The first central hamlet of the West Parish was the cluster of homes in the bowl of hills just west of the church. So many members of the Shedd family settled there, that the tiny community, with its tannery, potash works, blacksmith, store (complete with library), tavern, and school, has always been known as Sheddsville.

Settlers in the hills carved rough roads to sawmills and gristmills in the soggy valley along Mill Brook. By 1810 a fulling and carding mill was using waterpower to process the wool from sheep that were thriving on the rocky hillsides. As mills drew settlers to the valley, and Return Brown built his brick home with seven chimneys near where Potash Brook flows into Mill Brook, the community grew and thrived. By this time, children in the large families had the opportunity to get a basic education, for there were eleven one-room schoolhouses scattered throughout the township.

When Merino sheep were imported into Vermont by Consul-General William Jarvis of Weathersfield, local farmers began to enlarge and improve their flocks. As the more successful farmers bought out smaller farms, many families moved west to land that was more fertile and more easily cultivated.

Over the years there had been underlying friction between the urban East Parish on the river and the agricultural West Parish. Much of the problem had to do with money, roads and caring for the indigent and poor. By an act of the Vermont legislature, the two parishes were legally

separated November 4, 1814. Less than a year and a half later they made up their differences and were rejoined on March 1, 1816.

The sheep industry continued to flourish until the middle of the century when there were over 7,000 sheep denuding the once forested hills. Some of the farmers who were concentrating on breeding their sheep for even higher wool quality were selling prize rams not only to shepherds in our own western territories, but also to sheep-men in Australia and South Africa.

Friction continued between the two parishes. In 1848 they were again legally separated. Since that time they have remained two distinct townships. The first census taken after West Windsor was an independent township records the town as having 1,002 inhabitants.

In the late 1800's, as the sheep industry waned, the dairy business began to grow. A cheese factory bought milk from the local farmers. Several varieties of cheese were made and sent by rail to the Boston market. As refrigeration improved and more cows were taking over old sheep pastures, a creamery was established which also shipped milk to Massachusetts. By 1930, at the height of dairying, West Windsor's population had dropped to 512. There were 94 herds of cattle, and a total of 1,148 cows. That same year there were 91 students in the four existing schools.

In 1946, when skiing began to be a popular sport, a rope tow pulled avid skiers up a hill south of Brownsville at the base of Mount Ascutney. From that early start, a substantial family ski area was developed with tows, snowmaking, chair lifts, central lodges, and an ever-increasing number of trails. The operation changed hands a number of times, each time expanding until it had a hotel, fitness center, and many condominiums.

As of the 2000 U. S. Census, there were 1,067 residents in West Windsor. In the central village of Brownsville there is one church, one school, one general store, the town hall, and the West Windsor Historical Society, headquartered in the old grange hall. Though West Windsor is no longer considered an agricultural-farming community, there are many homeowners who have gardens and animals. There are many small businesses and cottage industries throughout the township. Most West Windsor workers commute to work in other towns. Many residents are retired. A number of second homes are owned by people from away. There are quite a few who have horses and have settled in the area because of the many dirt roads.

In 1991, the town took time to celebrate Vermont's Bicentennial in style. The yearlong celebration included creating a local Bicentennial Trail in the town forest on Mount Ascutney. The town was in transition to times when not everyone knew their neighbors.

During the early 1990's, the Mount Ascutney Resort went into bankruptcy. The town and school continued to budget and spend based on a Grand List that included all of the resort property. The town had been assured that the taxes due on the resort property, including related interest and penalties, would be given the highest priority by the bankruptcy court. The bankruptcy extended over several years and, when the court finally sold the property, the town only received a portion of the total amount due. This left the town deeply in debt. Local banks were reluctant to lend the town operating funds in anticipation of taxes. Bold action was taken by the Selectboard. The town raised the property tax rate enough to pay off the town's borrowing debt in a single year.

As a result, property values grew over the next few years and the town rebounded. As the town approached 1995 and the decade beyond, horse farms and high-value second homes continued to be built in many rural areas of the town. The last "milking" farm went out of business. The social impact of nearby Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center grew larger.

In 1998, the town celebrated its sesquicentennial in grand fashion.

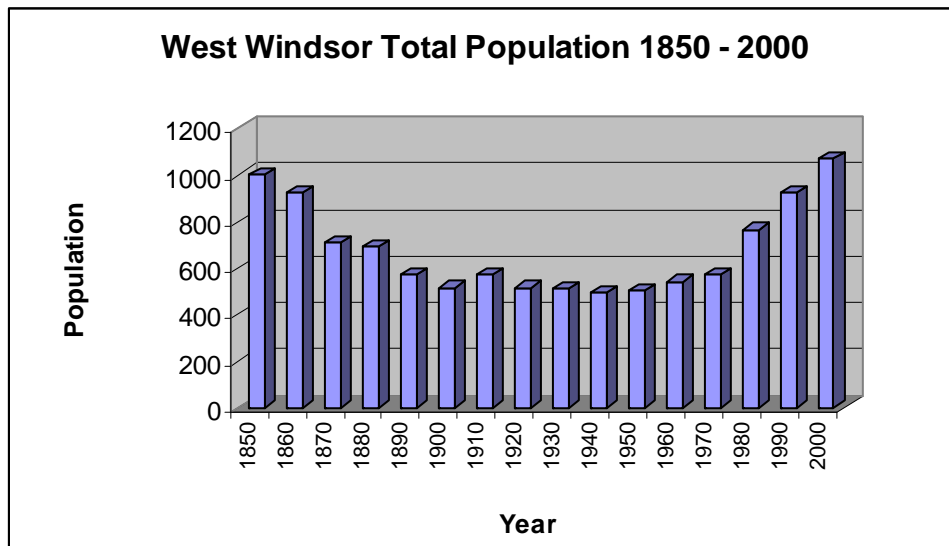
From 1993 until 2008, the Resort was owned by Snowdance LLC. In 2008, the fitness center and several of the hotel buildings at the Resort were sold to Orange Lake Resorts, a Florida-based timeshare company. The resort has the capacity to become a family-based ski area, an active convention center, and a multi-season vacation destination with hiking, biking, swimming, and tennis facilities.

The town's decision not to pave any additional roads has helped West Windsor retain its rural character and has helped property retain its value and desirability despite the recent economic downturn. The increase in the grand list, which has more than doubled over the past eight years, has enabled the town to maintain one of the lowest tax rates in the region while keeping its roads, buildings, and equipment in excellent condition.

## POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

### Population

The town of West Windsor experienced a high rate of population growth between 1970 and 2000. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the rate of growth between 1970 and 1980 was 33.6 percent. The rate of growth between 1980 and 1990 was 21.0 percent and the rate of growth from 1990 to 2000 was 15.6 percent. In other words, the total population of West Windsor almost doubled over the thirty year period from 1970 to 2000. Population information for 2010 is not available.

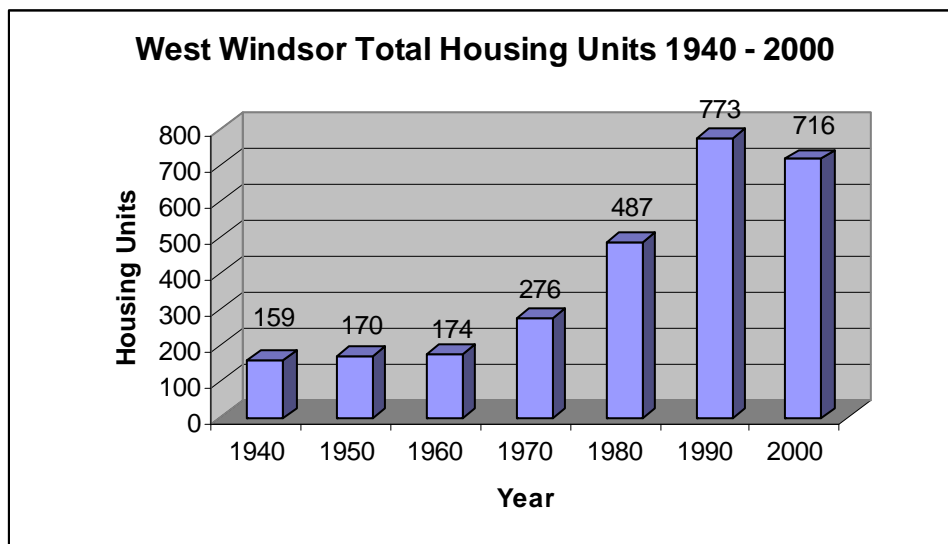


<sup>1</sup> Based on U.S. Census of Population and Housing (1850-2000), VT Department of Taxes, UVM Center for Rural Studies

YEAR	POPULATION	YEAR	POPULATION
1850	1002	1930	512
1860	924	1940	494
1870	708	1950	504
1880	690	1960	539
1890	570	1970	571
1900	513	1980	763
1910	569	1990	923
1920	514	2000	1067

## Housing

The total number of housing units from 1970-2000 grew 159.4 percent - the fastest rate of growth in the region. However, the total number of housing units decreased from 773 in 1990 to 716 in 2000. This decrease may relate to the bankruptcy of the ski resort in 1993.



The median value of an owner occupied housing unit in West Windsor tripled between 1980 and 2000, going from \$53,700 to \$173,700. In 2000, West Windsor also had the highest median rent in the area at \$744 per month. Between 2000 and 2008, median house value<sup>2</sup> increased an additional 60% to \$278,236.

## Economy

Information from the Vermont Tax Department indicates that West Windsor families have the highest median adjusted gross income in the region at \$72,033.

<sup>2</sup> As measured by the VT Dept of Taxes for homes belonging to families eligible for income sensitivity property tax adjustments.

TOWN	MEDIAN FAMILY ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME, 2008
ANDOVER	\$57,089
BALTIMORE	\$59,685
CAVENDISH	\$48,931
CHESTER	\$47,899
HARTLAND	\$62,027
LUDLOW	\$54,257
READING	\$55,659
SPRINGFIELD	\$48,435
WEATHERSFIELD	\$53,517
WEST WINDSOR	\$72,033
WINDSOR	\$49,352
WOODSTOCK	\$66,182

Source: VT Department of Taxes

In 2009, West Windsor also had the second lowest residential school tax rate in the area (\$1.15 per \$100), the second lowest municipal property tax rate (\$0.22 per \$100), and the lowest non-residential school tax rate (\$1.22 per \$100).

**EFFECTIVE PROPERTY TAX RATE (PER \$100) 2009**

TOWN	SCHOOL/ RESIDENTIAL	SCHOOL/ NONRESIDENTIAL	LOCAL AGREEMENT	MUNICIPAL
ANDOVER	1.14	1.31	0.0000	0.32
BALTIMORE	1.23	1.42	0.0000	0.53
CAVENDISH	1.25	1.27	0.0074	0.31
CHESTER	1.17	1.34	0.0041	0.61
HARTLAND	1.26	1.29	0.0023	0.33
LUDLOW	1.41	1.39	0.0052	0.21
READING	1.46	1.35	0.0000	0.32
SPRINGFIELD	1.28	1.33	0.0000	1.18
WEATHERSFIELD	1.51	1.40	0.0006	0.51
WEST WINDSOR	1.15	1.22	0.0000	0.22
WINDSOR	1.29	1.39	0.0039	1.08
WOODSTOCK	1.35	1.34	0.0104	0.29

Source: VT Department of Taxes

## GOALS

Our town plan is the expression of our community values and vision and our blueprint to promote and protect this vision and these values.

### **1. Protect the land uses which are so much a part of West Windsor's rural character by preserving open pastures intermixed with woodlands, wildlife habitats and village historical buildings and features.**

West Windsor can be described as possessing the pastoral beauty embodied in this reference to "rural character", however, ours is not a typical small Vermont town in this regard. There exists in West Windsor a major resort complex (Ascutney Mountain Resort) in the southeastern corner of town. It is an asset, important to the community, for which adequate provision must be made in this plan; but the resort also makes the protection of rural character a much more complicated task. The visual impact is one facet of this phenomenon, but secondary growth pressures stemming from the presence of a resort can run counter to a quest for maintenance of rural character. The village itself is one of the most prominent historical features of the town. Finding ways to address these pressures – strategies need to be devised that will protect the relatively passive nature of a rural life-style from the more dominant energies that emanate from commercial enterprises such as these – will be a principal focus of this plan.

### **2. Encourage agricultural and forestry activity in West Windsor.**

Although the fields and pastures that were once prominent features of a healthy agricultural economy are rapidly disappearing, there are many horse farms in West Windsor, as well as an alpaca farm. Town policies and recommendations can support this goal by protecting large, contiguous agricultural and forestry lands and working to ensure that those economic forces over which we have some influence support local agricultural and forestry enterprises. Managed woodlots, hay fields, and alternative (i.e. non-dairy) forms of agricultural land use should be encouraged. Vermont's use value appraisal program (aka "current use") has had a positive impact over the past five years. Additional means of protection are considered in Chapters 2 and 7 of this plan.

### **3. Manage the reasonable, compatible growth of the resort, the village, and low-impact non-residential uses in the locations where they currently exist, while limiting the potential for undesirable impacts from these enterprises on the rest of the town. At the same time, provide for the development of small, primarily home-based businesses in other areas of the town.**

Reference has already been made to the fact that large, capital intensive activities can be a mixed blessing to a community like ours. The balance can be a delicate one, easily disrupted unless the community establishes limits on the primary and secondary impacts of these industries. It is the town's policy to take a clearheaded look, with the help of the principals of local businesses, at how best to maintain our mutual interest in preserving this balance and to provide ample opportunity for the small, primarily home-based enterprise to flourish elsewhere in the town, as residents seek to initiate such entrepreneurial activities.

**4. Maintain the quality of municipal services commonly provided in rural communities, while avoiding the proliferation of other services more common in urban areas with their attendant capital and operating costs.**

Part of rural living implies coping with relatively limited municipal services. Historically, these have been largely limited to education and highway maintenance, with other services provided either on a part-time or voluntary basis (police and fire protection), or simply left to individual residents to provide (septic disposal and water supply). This is now the case in West Windsor, and it should remain so until a majority of residents perceive a need for change or changing circumstances require it. The town should continue to provide services based on the ability to be affordable and to not impact the rural character that makes West Windsor desirable and unique. In this Plan we try to sort out some of these issues and identify how growth should influence this goal.

## **CHAPTER 2. LAND USE**

Decisions about the appropriate use of public and private land in West Windsor should reflect the values and vision of our community of year-round and seasonal residents. These decisions must take into account the natural resources and environmental constraints that are unique features of our town. West Windsor's scenic beauty and recreational opportunities are valuable assets which attract both residents and visitors. Land use decisions must take these assets into consideration. Historic land use patterns, the efficient and cost-effective provision of public services, and housing that supports a diverse population are also important considerations. Together, these factors form the basis for West Windsor's land use plan.

### **CURRENT LAND USE**

West Windsor remains a small town with a traditional Vermont village surrounded primarily by rural areas. The unincorporated village of Brownsville has a limited mix of commercial, residential, and public buildings including a general store, library, post office, elementary school, historical society, and municipal offices. Most of the existing buildings in the village are small in scale, close to the roadway and to each other, and are architecturally compatible. Adjacent to the village is the Ascutney Mountain Resort, which includes a ski area, base lodge, health club, hotel and time-share units, restaurants, seasonal housing, and various ski services. The resort area is served by a private sewer system while the remainder of the town is served by on-site septic systems. Until it closed in 2003, the talc plant south of VT Route 44 at the Reading town line was the only active industrial site in West Windsor. The Light Industrial/Commercial district is now home to the Lucy MacKenzie Humane Society and the Evergreen Equine Veterinary Clinic. Outside the village and the Resort, West Windsor is characterized by low-density development.

Although it is located in three towns, West Windsor, Windsor and Weathersfield, Mount Ascutney is the prominent feature of the landscape. The Ascutney Mountain Resort is located entirely in West Windsor, on the northern side of the mountain. There are also telecommunications facilities located near the summit. In West Windsor, much of the remainder of the mountain is undeveloped and under town ownership – the West Windsor Town Forest. Recent residential development indicates that those who are building houses in the area have a strong preference for locations with scenic views.

The majority of the land area in town is undeveloped forest or open land, much of which is in the state's Use Value Appraisal Program (AKA "current use"). Steep slopes, undeveloped ridgelines and wetland areas add to the scenic beauty of West Windsor and provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. The pastures and fields along VT Route 44 and Mill Brook are among the most valued scenic resources in town.

Of West Windsor's 15,934 total approximate acres, 18.4 percent are agricultural lands, 7.1 percent are non-agricultural open space lands and 54.8 percent are forested. Nearly 11 percent is currently used for outdoor recreation, primarily consisting of the Ascutney Mountain Resort. Less than 9 percent is currently developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional uses. Public lands include West Windsor Town Forest (1,342 acres) and State-owned Little

Ascutney Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Little Ascutney WMA is 673.4 acres in total, with a majority of the land holding in Weathersfield.

## **FUTURE LAND USE**

In order to implement the goals, policies and recommendations of this Plan through zoning and other measures, the following land use categories are established and shown on the Future Land Use Map: Primary Growth, Secondary Growth, Resort/Residential, Resort/Conservation, Rural Residential, Light Industrial/Commercial, and Conservation. A half-acre district is proposed for the east end of the primary growth district, within 1,000 feet of the existing sewer line (see Map #2). Generally, land within the delineated areas is suitable for the uses and densities proposed in this Plan. However, the physical characteristics of certain individual properties may be such that environmental considerations could further limit development. Therefore, the descriptions of appropriate land uses and densities should be interpreted generally – individual properties may have additional limitations.

A 2004 survey and a series of public hearings on zoning in 2007 and 2008 indicate that protecting the rural character, open spaces, historic buildings, and natural and scenic resources of West Windsor is a priority for most residents. Public hearing participants made it clear, however, that respecting the rights of individual property owners is also important.

Along with the suitability of the land for development and the protection of valuable natural resources, the efficient provision and expansion of public services provide the basis for West Windsor's land use categories. Directing growth to areas most effectively and efficiently serviced by utilities, roads and schools will help the town maintain its rural character and control the cost of public services. Policies and regulations which encourage growth in or near the village area, especially in the vicinity of the existing sewer line, are consistent with these goals. In general, future growth shall be encouraged in high density areas first and rural areas last.

New development should blend into the existing landscape to the extent possible. Ridgeline development restrictions, siting and screening standards, building envelopes and conservation subdivision design should be considered for inclusion in West Windsor's zoning and subdivision regulations as a means of preserving the town's natural and scenic resources, rural character, and open spaces.

### ***Primary Growth Areas***

The primary growth areas, as shown on the Future Land Use Map, are where future commercial and higher density residential development should be encouraged. These areas include the village of Brownsville and the Ascutney Mountain Resort base area. In order to maintain the aesthetic value and historic character of the village, increased density must include open space.

Minimum lot sizes shall be determined by proximity to the sewer line, suitability for on-site septic systems, and ability to meet state regulations pertaining to water supply and waste disposal. Building scale, architectural style and setbacks of new development shall be consistent with the character of the area in which it is located. The village and ski resort areas shall maintain their separate and distinct appearances and character.

### ***Village***

The village of Brownsville currently has a mixture of moderate density residential, commercial and institutional uses. Low-impact non-residential development has historically been located in the village, and should remain in this area to respect historic settlement patterns. Because there are currently no public water or sewer services in the village center, a community wastewater system may be required to accommodate future development and protect water quality in this area. Commercial development in the village should be interspersed with higher density residential and institutional uses. This area should retain the appearance of a traditional Vermont village. Village development should be of moderate to high density depending on septic capacity and sewer availability, and the circulation system should accommodate pedestrians and other non-motorized travel. New development in the village should be consistent with its historic character and aesthetic qualities. Parking should be located behind, or to the side of, commercial and institutional buildings.

### ***Resort/Residential***

Ascutney Mountain Resort is open year-round and offers skiing, snowboarding, biking, tennis, swimming, restaurants, conference facilities, a health club, and special events. Accommodations include hotel, time-share, and condominium buildings. The base area of the Ascutney Mountain Resort currently has a mixture of high density ski resort accommodations and related commercial, recreational and residential uses. This area is served by a water and sewer system. Future resort housing development shall not be built adjacent to ski trails or at elevations higher than existing Resort development. Resort development shall not have an adverse impact on village aesthetics or water quality. Resort lighting shall be limited to the minimum required for safety and security and shall incorporate cut-off style fixtures wherever possible. Noise associated with Resort uses should be minimized or mitigated. Screening of new resort development with trees and other native vegetation may be required to limit visual impacts on the village and/or protect scenic views. Future resort development should provide a safe circulation system for bicycles and pedestrians.

### ***Secondary Growth Area / Residential***

The secondary growth area is where growth should take place after the primary growth area is built out. Moderate density residential uses shall be allowed in the area north of the village along Coon Club Road, Bible Hill Road, East Rowe Hill, Westgate Road, and the lower portion of Brownsville-Hartland Road, as shown on the future land use map. Facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists should be considered when planning new development in this area. This area is currently served by private wells and on-site septic systems.

### ***Rural Residential***

Rural residential areas can support a variety of uses including residential, forestry, and agricultural (e.g. livestock, tree farms and other horticultural uses). The designation of this area is based on its current uses and distance from town facilities and services. The primary concern in rural residential areas shall be to preserve open space, wildlife habitat, forest cover, and scenic resources, and to maintain low-density settlement patterns. Recreational resources should be preserved wherever possible. Particular consideration should be given to protecting, and maintaining public access to, the existing network of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding,

snowmobiling and other recreational activities. New residential development shall only occur in rural residential areas that are accessible from existing town or state highways.

### ***Conservation Area***

Conservation areas are lands that possess outstanding wildlife habitat, recreational or educational resources, fragile natural areas, economic assets (generating revenue from recreation or tourism) or scenic resource values. These areas include: Mount Ascutney, headwater areas, floodplains, vegetated areas next to surface waters, wetlands, vernal pools, Natural Heritage Inventory sites, critical deer wintering habitat and bear habitat as defined by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, locally and regionally significant historic sites, and other locally defined sensitive natural areas. Conservation areas also include existing private residences and public lands owned by the town and state. Conservation lands represent relatively pristine areas or special resource areas of the town, such as the Town Forest, that residents wish to preserve in their natural state for future generations, and that should, therefore, 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 forestry and agriculture.

### ***Resort/Conservation area***

The purpose of the Resort/Conservation area is to provide for the orderly growth of single-family residences affiliated with the Ascutney Mountain Resort in such a manner as to preserve, to the maximum extent possible, the important open space, scenic, agricultural/forestry and natural resource characteristics of the district. The preservation of Mile Long Field is of particular importance to the Town of West Windsor. All land uses in this area, other than forestry and agriculture, must be reviewed and approved by the Development Review Board before a zoning permit may be issued. There shall be no development, other than infrastructure, in Mile Long Field. Development of the acreage adjacent to Mile Long Field extending to the west toward Coaching Lane shall be given special consideration (see “Special Considerations” below) and shall be planned to protect the area’s natural features to the greatest extent possible.

### ***Commercial / Light Industrial***

Light industrial and commercial uses may result in noise, light, traffic, emission, or waste generation levels that are incompatible with typical residential or recreational uses and shall, therefore, be located in the Light Industrial/Commercial district. Redevelopment of the former talc plant could have a positive impact on the local economy and should be encouraged as long as any new industrial uses are appropriately conditioned to minimize traffic, noise, light, and environmental or aesthetic impacts on surrounding areas. New development or redevelopment in the Commercial/Light Industrial area shall not have an undue adverse impact on Mill Brook. Parking lots should be located away from the road and properly screened. To limit noise and light pollution, adequate screening from VT Route 44 and adjacent parcels shall be provided, and access management techniques shall be implemented. New development shall not adversely affect the aesthetics or scenic resources in this area, which serves as a gateway to West Windsor.

### *Special Considerations*

In addition, special considerations shall be observed with the following resources:

*Agricultural Areas* – Agriculture has historically been important to the town’s economy, food supply and cultural heritage. Lands currently being used for agricultural purposes and prime agricultural soils (as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture) located in open meadow areas that are large enough for an economically viable farming operation, should be protected for their contributions to the local economy and the scenic quality of the community.

*Floodplains* – To protect the natural function of floodplains and minimize property damage and loss of life during flooding events, new development should be strongly discouraged in Special Flood Hazard Areas as shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

*Forests* – Forests are lands currently dominated by a dense growth of trees and other plants. Forest land is an essential component of rural life. Forests protect air, water and wildlife resources that are vital to the town’s environmental, physical and economic health. Both by providing areas for recreation and by providing the basis for a sustainable forest products industry, forests directly support the local economy. All future development shall strive to preserve existing forest cover and minimize fragmentation of large forested areas.

*Headwater Areas* – Development in headwater areas, as defined in 10 V.S.A. 6086(a)(1)(A) shall be prohibited to avoid contamination of the headwaters of local streams, brooks and rivers, and the wildlife found in these areas.

*Mile Long Field* – Mile Long Field and adjacent acreage to the west extending toward Coaching Lane is highly valued by West Windsor residents for its many natural resources including, but not limited to, open space, prime agricultural soils, wetlands, wildlife habitat, headwaters, streams, and springs. If development (including infrastructure development) is proposed for the area, a natural resources inventory shall be performed and all significant natural features shall be mapped. Special consideration must be given to site plans to ensure that development is designed to protect the area’s natural features to the maximum extent possible.

*Ridgelines* — Any development along ridgelines should demonstrate that appropriate measures have been taken so the development is not visually obtrusive to surrounding neighbors or from public roadways.

*Scenic Resources* – West Windsor’s scenic resources make the town a desirable place to live, work and visit. Scenic resources should be inventoried and protected from future development.

*Steep Slopes and Shallow Soils* - Land with less than two feet of soil between the surface and the water table or between the surface and bedrock is poorly suited for development.

Special consideration with regard to drainage may be necessary for development proposed in areas with shallow soils. Likewise, development in areas with slopes over 20% may require special erosion and sedimentation control measures. Development in such areas must be accessible by emergency vehicles.

*West Windsor Town Forest* – The West Windsor Town Forest is highly valued by residents for its wildlife habitat and its trails, which are used frequently for low-impact, non-motorized recreational activities.

## **TIMING OF DEVELOPMENT**

In order to ensure that public infrastructure is built in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, efforts should be made to encourage growth in and around the village, the ski resort base area, and the commercial/light industrial area instead of in the more rural areas of town. In addition, to prevent sudden dramatic increases in population which would place undue stress on town facilities and services, the town may require phasing for new subdivisions or Planned Unit Developments.

## **LAND USE POLICIES**

In order to achieve the desired future land uses, as discussed in this chapter, the town should pursue the policies and recommendations listed below.

1. Promote orderly growth in a way that encourages compatibility among adjacent land uses, without the degradation of waterways, large forested or agricultural areas, wildlife habitat, scenic views, open space or public recreational facilities. Adverse impacts to these significant natural resources should be minimized or mitigated with appropriate techniques.
2. Encourage development to locate along existing roads, utility lines and services.
3. Support the use of compact development techniques to encourage less expensive municipal services, energy efficiency and the preservation of open space.
4. Ensure that the provision of municipal services and infrastructure doesn't place an undue financial burden on taxpayers and doesn't undermine the rural character of West Windsor.
5. Maintain historic settlement patterns by promoting moderate to high density residential and low-impact non-residential uses in the primary growth areas.
6. Support the redevelopment of the vacant talc plant property.
7. Ensure that important historic sites and structures are maintained.
8. West Windsor's recreational trails are an important asset. Maintaining access to them and connectivity among them should be a high priority.
9. Support programs that reduce the cost of resource protection for farm and forestland owners.

10. Resort development shall make a demonstrable contribution to the viability of the Ski Area and shall not adversely impact the village or the town.
11. Development should be consistent with the intent of the future land use map and categories.

## **LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Revise the land use regulations so they are consistent with the purpose and intent of the Town Plan.
2. Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study, including technical, political and economic dimensions, to determine the costs and benefits of a community wastewater system in the village area.
3. Inventory and map open space, agricultural and forest lands, wildlife habitat, scenic views, ridgelines and other important resources in town, and establish appropriate methods for their protection.
4. Investigate the feasibility of redeveloping the commercial/light industrial area.
5. Review and strengthen West Windsor's outdoor lighting standards.
6. Investigate non-regulatory means for protecting natural and scenic resources, critical wildlife habitat, and recreational trails, including the creation of a dedicated funding source for the purchase of conservation easements or development rights.
7. Educate landowners about conservation incentive programs.
8. Investigate the possibility of applying for "Village Center" designation to allow property owners to get tax credits for renovating historic structures.
9. Allow ½-acre residential lots at the eastern end of the Primary Growth Village district, on parcels that are within 1,000 feet of the existing sewer line.
10. Consider including ridgeline development restrictions, siting and screening standards, building envelopes and conservation subdivision design in West Windsor's zoning and subdivision regulations as a means of preserving the town's natural and scenic resources, rural character, and open spaces.
11. Consider implementing density-based zoning to preserve large tracts of land and promote affordability.

## **CHAPTER 3. UTILITIES AND FACILITIES**

*Note: See Map #3 - Base Features*

Current utilities, facilities, and services in West Windsor are those that are characteristic of a small, rural Vermont town. Services found within the resort area are the exception. In some ways, the resort area is like another community within the town.

Public investment in new facilities and services, such as public sewer and water systems, or the enlargement of any public buildings, should occur when a need for such investments arises. It should be remembered that rural living implies fewer public services and less investment in capital facilities than are expected in more urban areas. Developers shall be required to pay for the additional utilities and facilities needed for new developments.

### **ELECTRIC UTILITIES**

Electrical service throughout most of West Windsor, including the resort and the industrial zone, is supplied by Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) from the Brownsville substation at the corner of VT Route 44 and Churchill Road. Power to that substation is supplied by a transmission line that runs north from Weathersfield. A small portion of the northeastern part of town is served from a Windsor substation.

### **WATER AND SEWER**

At this time, only the resort area contains properties that are served by a sewer system. Construction of the pipeline, which runs from the Ascutney Mountain Resort to the Windsor sewage treatment plant, was completed in 1987. Although the resort owns the pipeline, the Windsor/Ascutney Sewage Treatment Enterprise (WASTE) was established to oversee the operation of the pipeline following its completion. In April 1998, an amendment to the Act 250 permit for the pipeline shifted management of the pipeline from WASTE to the resort. Reference should be made to the Findings of Fact for Land Use Permit #2S0397-6B for a complete discussion of the issues related to this change. Although the majority of the buildings in the resort area are hooked up to the resort's sewer line, some residences have on-site systems.

Water is supplied to most buildings in and around the resort, and to the General Store, through one of three commonly owned water systems. The largest of these three systems was constructed during Phases I and II of the Ascutney Mountain Resort development and serves the hotel complex (including the 100 condo/hotel units), the health club, the Mountains Edge condo complex and the privately owned homes in the area known as the "Upper Loop." The two smaller systems are shared by homeowners on Sky Hawk Lane. The remaining residences in the resort have private, on-site water supplies. The main water system, constructed during the 1980s expansion of the resort, includes supply lines, hydrants, and a storage area for fire protection and snowmaking. Water for the fire protection system that serves the resort buildings comes from the same wells that provide domestic water to the buildings. The additional water needed to fight the January 2007 fire at the Mountain's Edge Condos came from a nearby fire pond and the snowmaking system. Water for the snowmaking system comes from Mill Brook, and is pumped from a pumping station located behind the town's firehouse. An underground storage tank,

located near the pumping station, holds water that is used for snowmaking and an additional water supply that may be used by the fire department for fire fighting in the village.

To accommodate the expansion of the school, a new bedrock well was drilled on the school grounds in 2003. The new well supplies the school, the town hall, and the church. Throughout the remainder of the town, all buildings are served by on-site septic disposal and water supply systems. Maintaining and improving the water quality of the brooks and streams in town, and assuring that quality groundwater supplies continue to exist, are priorities for the town. This is particularly true in the village of Brownsville which has the densest concentration of on-site systems. All buildings are located within close proximity to Mill and Beaver Brooks. Water quality assessments have not been completed on Mill Brook in recent years. Periodic testing would help detect any contamination that might affect water quality.

Groundwater resources are an often overlooked and under-valued asset, but one which a rural community like West Windsor should not take for granted. Reliance throughout most of the town on individual wells and springs for domestic water supply makes this an important planning consideration when contemplating development of any kind.

Future development may elevate the need to review the cost, feasibility and other ramifications of a community wastewater system. Any plans for development must not adversely impact the historic and scenic attributes of the village, which are highly valued by the residents of West Windsor.

## **WATER AND SEWER POLICIES**

1. Encourage the installation of innovative septic systems and alternative methods of waste disposal.
2. Encourage new utility lines to be buried.
3. Support efforts to educate owners about proper maintenance of on-site systems.
4. Maintain or improve the water quality of Mill Brook and its tributaries.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study, including technical, political and economic dimensions, to determine the costs and benefits of a community wastewater system in the village area.
2. To maintain the historic integrity of the village, consider forming a design review board and a design review district with the power to preserve historic structures and guide future development in keeping with the village aesthetics.
3. Assess the water quality of Mill Brook and its tributaries periodically, and address any situations that negatively impact water quality.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Recent years have seen rapid improvements in the technology employed to deliver phone, television and internet services. Unfortunately, in many areas of West Windsor, cutting edge telecommunications technology is not yet available. Substandard telecommunications technology is frustrating for residents and places severe limitations on economic development in underserved areas of town.

### **PHONE SERVICE**

Phone service for most residents of West Windsor is provided by FairPoint's Reading exchange: 484; others are served by FairPoint's Windsor exchange: 674. A handful of families in the northwestern section of town are served by Vtel's 436 exchange. All calls within the town, regardless of the exchange, are considered local calls, and towns in adjoining exchanges are also part of the local calling area. Numerous companies provide long distance service throughout the town. Aboveground telephone lines handle most of the telecommunications activity at this time. When considering the installation of any new lines, the town should require that, when possible, these lines be buried or co-located to enable the preservation of the canopy of trees along the roadways for aesthetic reasons.

The use of pagers and cellular phones has enhanced the communications capabilities of businesses and private citizens, and improved communications for emergency providers, which is an asset to all. Existing towers on Mount Ascutney provide telecommunications companies with the opportunity to share tower space ("collocation"). Over the past few years, several telecommunications companies have added capacity to the existing cell towers on Mt. Ascutney. Also, in 2008, Unicel installed an antenna "canister," capable of supporting up to six antennas, on the old base lodge at the Ascutney Mountain Resort. Although cell coverage has improved as a result, especially in the village area, there are still many areas of town where coverage is spotty at best.

### **INTERNET**

In 2006, Comcast installed cable in the resort area and the southeastern portion of West Windsor. As a result, residents in that area of town have access to cable television and high-speed internet services. In 2008, FairPoint also expanded its broadband service in parts of town. Wireless internet service is available through a number of providers, including Verizon and WaveComm, to residents who have an unobstructed view of Mt. Ascutney. Satellite service is also available. However, a majority of West Windsor residents are only able to access the internet through one of the many dial-up service providers.

In 2008, West Windsor joined with 22 other towns in East Central Vermont to create East Central Vermont Community Fiber (ECFiber), which is committed to making high-speed communication services available to all homes and businesses in participating towns. The ECFiber network will be owned by the participating towns and will consist entirely of fiber-optic cable, with the goal of providing fast and reliable internet, phone and TV service. With engineering designs in hand and contractors lined up, ECFiber is ready to proceed with the installation of the system as soon as financing can be secured.

## **TOWERS**

Communication towers are one of the most visible indicators of the technological age. These metal towers can stand 300 feet tall and the footprint can encompass up to two acres depending on road access. In 2005, West Windsor amended its zoning regulations to include specific standards for the review and permitting of proposed wireless telecommunications facilities. In addition, the State of Vermont relies on Act 250 to review the development of communication towers. Because towers often exceed 20 feet and are located above 2,500 feet in elevation, applicants are required to get an Act 250 permit. However, the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (TCA) allows the preemption of local zoning authority by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The town should be prepared to take advantage of growth in this industry to access emerging technologies for economic development potential. The town should be ready to emphasize its needs from a general public as well as an industrial viewpoint. This means paying attention to and having a voice in the location of existing and future infrastructure, and the needs of the community. Because communication towers have an immediate and negative visual impact on the aesthetics of the town, the development of these towers must be done with sensitivity and foresight.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICIES**

1. Require applicants to comply with all federal, state and town telecommunication ordinances, bylaws and/or regulations, including annual reporting requirements.
2. Preserve the historic character, appearance and natural resources of the town while encouraging up-to-date wireless telecommunications services to be developed.
3. Minimize tower and antenna proliferation by requiring the sharing of existing communications facilities, towers and sites where possible and feasible.
4. Continue to pursue state-of-the-art telecommunications services for town residences and businesses.
5. Encourage the location of towers and antennas in non-residential areas and away from sensitive areas, including schools.
6. Update zoning regulations, as necessary, to reflect advances in knowledge, experience, and technology.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Investigate specific means for developing the infrastructure needed to provide West Windsor residents and businesses with up-to-date telecommunications technology.

# **CHAPTER 4. MUNICIPAL SERVICES & GOVERNMENT**

## **FIRE, AMBULANCE AND POLICE SERVICES**

### **The West Windsor Volunteer Fire Department (WWVFD)**

West Windsor is served by a volunteer fire department. The department, in turn, is part of mutual aid, a system organized to enable neighboring towns to assist each other when needed. Initial dispatching for fires and all other emergencies is done in Hartford.

Local dispatching for the WWVFD is done by volunteers at West Windsor's firehouse at any time the department is called out. The fire department reviews and comments on land development proposals over which the town has jurisdiction. It is the belief of the department that the size and type of development should be carefully monitored to assure that the WWVFD is always able to provide adequate service within the town.

The original fire department building, constructed in 1962, is located in Brownsville village. (The building and the lot on which it sits are actually owned by the department, not the town.) Additions to the building were constructed in 1979 and 1984. The 1984 addition was built specifically to accommodate a ladder truck. Although the WWVFD's building and equipment meet the town's needs at this time, the type and size of future development will impact the adequacy of the current facility.

### **Emergency Medical Service**

First response emergency medical care is currently provided by members of the West Windsor Volunteer First Aid Stabilization Team (FAST) Squad. The FAST Squad is a separate organization from the fire department. Currently licensed by the state at the *Advanced* Life Support level, the squad is able to provide emergency defibrillation. All services are provided by a small core group of dedicated volunteers. Squad members use their own vehicles, and store equipment, etc. in their homes. Members have expressed an interest in acquiring both a rescue vehicle and a building of their own for meetings, training, and storage of equipment. Should activity in the town increase, these needs would become more pressing.

The town is fortunate that it is able to depend on volunteers who are continually receiving training and education in order to respond to the emergency needs of townspeople with the best emergency services possible.

### **Ambulance Service/DHART**

Ambulance service is currently provided by Golden Cross in Claremont, NH. A contract is renewed annually.

Officially designated landing areas for the Dartmouth Hitchcock Air Response Team (DHART) are located at the Ascutney Mountain Resort (in the parking lot) and at the former talc plant. The landing pad at the west end of VT Route 44 was constructed specifically for use by DHART.

## **Enhanced 911 Service**

Enhanced 911 services became operational in November 1998. Preparation included providing street addresses for all structures. Structure numbering is based on 1/1000th of a mile increments and will assist emergency services personnel in locating structures. When a caller dials 911, the geographic location of the caller appears on the call taker's computer screen, the "enhanced" aspect of Enhanced 911. This feature is especially helpful in communities such as West Windsor with its high percentage of seasonal housing.

## **Law Enforcement**

The town is currently served by an elected constable who is on call 24 hours a day. Law enforcement assistance is provided by the Vermont State Police Department and the Windsor Police Department. A change in state regulations regarding constable training requirements, which will become effective on July 1, 2012, has made it necessary for the Selectboard to consider alternative law enforcement arrangements. One likely alternative is for the Selectboard to appoint a certified special officer. The 2012 deadline allows adequate time for a transition from the current arrangement to the alternative. The Selectboard intends to retain an elected constable for non-law enforcement activities.

From experience, it is known that during times of peak activity at the resort, the local law enforcement system becomes stressed. Resort operators should arrange for private security within the resort area to complement the efforts of local law enforcement.

## **Emergency Planning**

Most disaster preparation and emergency response is done by local and regional organizations such as the fire department, the FAST Squad, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the County Sheriff and the State Police. The Town of West Windsor has an Emergency Management Officer to help coordinate town efforts with regional and state officials.

The town encourages emergency planning and disaster preparedness because it may help reduce the risk to life and health, the damage to public and private property and the environmental damage that often occurs during a disaster. Emergency planning enables the town to prepare calmly and realistically for likely emergencies, to know the location of resources and equipment that will be needed, to inform residents of potential dangers and ways to avoid those dangers, and to quickly arrange for help when it is needed. West Windsor has an Emergency Management handbook (nicknamed the "Green Book"), a Rapid Response Plan, a Pre-disaster Mitigation Plan, and mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns. West Windsor also participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING POLICIES**

1. Require that all new roads and driveways be properly constructed so that run-off does not damage town or state roads and so that vehicles can respond to emergency situations.
2. Encourage the improvement of existing roads, and design culverts and bridges to carry a 25-year flood event without damage.

3. Encourage the recruitment and training of new fire department and FAST Squad members.
4. Encourage the development and improvement of emergency evacuation plans and include plans for the protection of pets and livestock.
5. Annually ensure that the town is meeting the requirements for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Identify at-risk residents who may need assistance during an emergency and develop a comprehensive plan for the evacuation of disabled residents as well as pets and livestock.
2. Ensure that the town's "Green Book" and Emergency Operations Plan are updated annually by the Emergency Management Coordinator.
3. Inventory the town's current and historic assets and records to evaluate their vulnerability to, and determine potential loss from, disasters.
4. Evaluate flood hazard maps at least every five years, or after a flooding incident, and seek funding to mitigate areas prone to flooding.
5. Update the town's Pre-disaster Mitigation Plan every five years in conjunction with the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC), the Fire Chief, the FAST Squad Director, the Constable, and the Emergency Management Coordinator.
6. Consider appointing a Certified Special Officer to take over the law enforcement duties currently performed by the Town Constable.

## **TOWN GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Town Governance**

West Windsor is governed by a three-member Selectboard. The Town Clerk/Treasurer is the initial contact for those conducting town business and is responsible for the land records, town accounts, and general town business. The Zoning Administrator and a five-member Development Review Board (DRB) handle local permitting issues. A five-member Planning Commission drafts plans and regulations and makes recommendations on a wide variety of land use and economic development matters. An administrative support person provides assistance to the Selectboard, the DRB, and the Planning Commission.

Like most towns in Vermont, West Windsor has a Town Meeting every year on the first Tuesday in March. At Town Meeting, the registered voters discuss and act on the business of the town, which includes the annual operating budget. All business is conducted "from the floor" by voice vote unless the Moderator determines that the outcome is too close to call, in which case a paper ballot is required.

## **Town Owned Facilities**

### **Story Memorial Hall**

Built in 1915, the "town hall," as it is commonly known, serves the public in many ways. In addition to housing the town offices of West Windsor, the upper story is the central gathering place for town-wide meetings and other functions. Various groups, both public and private, use the hall for meetings and social gatherings. As the town continues to grow and government functions become more complex, the town office is again experiencing growing pains. A new vault was constructed in 2002 to preserve the resources located in the town offices, but additional vault space will soon be needed. The furnace used to heat the hall is outdated and the upper story windows are inefficient. Projects to make the town hall more energy efficient should be carefully considered.

### **The Town Highway Garage**

In 1998, the highway garage was replaced with a pre-fabricated steel building capable of housing the highway department's entire equipment inventory, with room to spare for future growth of the department. Environmental considerations, including testing of the drinking water supply and the various lines and tanks associated with the wastewater systems at the highway garage, have been and will continue to be addressed. Because the town sand pile is very close to Route 44, the town should continue to explore plans to relocate or contain the sand pile.

### **Sheddsville Cemetery and Daniel Cady Mausoleum**

Both the Sheddsville Cemetery and the Cady Mausoleum are under town ownership and jurisdiction, with the Selectboard serving as trustees. The mausoleum is located on a knoll northeast of the village of Brownsville. It is the final resting place of West Windsor native Daniel Cady, and represents a fascinating piece of history. Daniel Cady, who served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Courts of New York and New Jersey, was most famous for his poems about rural Vermont.

### **West Windsor Town Forest**

A total of 1,342 acres on Mount Ascutney are owned by the townspeople of West Windsor. The 1,042-acre Cross Woodlot was deeded to the town by the Cross family in 1979, and an advisory committee was formed in 1980 to oversee the property. The town forest, which includes the Cross Woodlot and a 300-acre Glebe Lot, is managed by the Town Forest Committee under a multiple use concept which includes preservation of wildlife habitats and scenic vistas, timber management, and the use of the land for low intensity recreation (hunting, hiking, fishing, bird watching, mountain biking, picnicking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing). A long-range Forest Management Plan was commissioned in 1986 and is available for inspection at the town clerk's office. This plan should be updated by the Town Forest Committee and reviewed by the Planning Commission, prior to approval by the Selectboard. In the fall of 1991, following more than a year of planning and preparation, the Vermont Bicentennial Trail was opened to the public. The new trail makes the town forest easily accessible to those wishing to use the area for the recreational uses listed above. A number of local organizations, including the town's Conservation Commission and the Town Forest Committee, have participated in maintaining the Bicentennial Trail.

In order to assure that the town forest serves the broadest variety of users, the advisory committee, in consultation with the Selectboard, other appropriate town boards/officials, and interested citizens, should regularly evaluate the public use of the forest.

## **Other Facilities**

### **Mary Blood Memorial Library**

Brownsville's public library, originally built in 1900, was refurbished during 1988-89. The hours during which the library is open are limited. There is sufficient room for expansion of the book collection within the existing building, although plans for any type of expansion must take into consideration the lack of plumbing facilities. The building is ADA compliant. Wireless high-speed internet service is accessible from inside or outside of the building.

### **The Brownsville Cemetery**

The Brownsville Cemetery, located north of the village on the Brownsville-Hartland Road, is under the jurisdiction of the Brownsville Cemetery Association, a private entity. There are burial sites available in the lower northeast section of the cemetery for the foreseeable future.

### **The West Windsor Historical Society**

In 1981, the Gleaner Grange Hall was deeded to the Historical Society with the provision that if the Historical Society ever ceased to exist, the property would be turned over to the town. In addition to serving as the headquarters of the Historical Society, the building is the home of the "Brownsville Baked Bean Suppers," that benefit both the local elementary school and the Historical Society. Many historic records pertaining to the town are housed in the historic records office while artifacts and memorabilia are displayed in the museum. The second floor of the building is accessible due to the installation of a lift in 2010.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Maintain permanent pedestrian access to the Daniel Cady Mausoleum.
2. Assess the need for energy efficiency upgrades, additional storage space (such as the vault) and other modifications to town buildings within two years.
3. Review and update the town's Forest Management Plan by the end of 2011 and every five years.
4. Assess the need to acquire additional land for municipal purposes such as relocating or containing the sand pile.

## **SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING**

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Waste Management, has implemented the Revised State of Vermont Solid Waste Management Plan. Under this Plan, Vermont municipalities are expected to work towards meeting the state's solid waste goals summarized in Title 10 V.S.A. Section 6604(a)(1). The priorities outlined in the plan include the following:

1. Implement reduction in the amount of waste generated;
2. Reuse and recycle waste to reduce, to the greatest extent feasible, the volume remaining for processing and disposal;
3. Process waste to reduce the volume or toxicity of the waste stream necessary for disposal, and dispose of residuals.

As part of the Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District (SW/WCSWMD), the town of West Windsor must be prepared to meet state and district requirements. In order to comply with State regulations, the SW/WCSWMD prepared a Solid Waste Implementation Plan. This Plan was submitted to the State in 2008 and has been approved. The SW/WCSWMD hired a recycling coordinator to assist district towns with solid waste issues and recycling efforts. The coordinator's position is contracted to and housed at the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, which manages the District.

All SW/WCSWMD member towns were members of the NH/VT Solid Waste Project until the Project was dissolved in 2008. At that time, the New Hampshire towns decided to go their own way. Thirteen of the fourteen Vermont towns chose to stay together as the Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District which provides solid waste management authority, services, and planning to its member towns.

Residents of West Windsor must arrange for disposal of their household waste. Much of the town's population relies on private haulers for waste pickup, while others utilize existing transfer facilities. Residents are allowed to purchase tickets and deposit their recycling and trash at the Weathersfield transfer station, or at the Windsor recycling drop-off center. Both facilities accept a broad range of items for recycling, helping to reduce the amount of waste sent for disposal. In this way, recycling can economically benefit the town by reducing fees for municipal waste disposal. In addition to direct cost savings, recycling is beneficial to the environment by conserving valuable energy and natural resources. For these reasons, local businesses, individual households, and institutions are encouraged to recycle and reuse materials. Both the financial and the environmental costs associated with waste disposal are reminders that source reduction and proper waste management make sense.

Twice a year, on the second Saturdays in May and September, the District hosts a household hazardous waste collection, which provides for free disposal of pesticides and other hazardous wastes. Homeowners are encouraged to participate in these events.

The textile shed at the Weathersfield Transfer Station diverts tons of materials from the landfill and incinerator. Residents may bring all types of clean and dry clothing, including ripped, stained, or out-of-fashion items. Blankets, sheets, towels, curtains, purses, belts, stuffed animals, fabric remnants, hats, mittens, coats and socks are all accepted. Shoes should be tied together and bagged separately. Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) services the shed; the materials are sold and the proceeds are used to fund community programs in the region.

## **SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING POLICIES**

1. Support efforts to reduce solid waste generation and incineration.
2. Support efforts to reduce the unnecessary use of toxic and hazardous materials.
3. Support recycling, composting, waste reduction, and reuse programs that are dynamic and productive.
4. Promote environmentally friendly and cost-effective disposal methods for all solid waste that cannot be recycled, composted, or otherwise reused.
5. Support the implementation of reasonable waste disposal fees that are accurately determined and charged to waste generators.
6. Support programs for the recycling of household, commercial and special wastes.
7. Promote cooperation among participating municipalities in the implementation of source reduction, recycling, and composting programs on a District-wide basis.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Work to achieve the goals and action steps outlined in the District's Solid Waste Implementation Plan.
2. Distribute recycling information to local households, businesses, institutions, and realtors through the Town Clerk's Office.
3. Educate residents of the benefits of home composting.
4. Support on-going educational campaigns for schools, youth, consumers, and businesses.

## **CHAPTER 5. EDUCATION**

West Windsor takes great pride in its elementary school, which is at the center of community life. Maintaining a viable school population in the face of challenging demographic trends requires town officials to consider expanding housing opportunities for teachers and young families.

The West Windsor School Board oversees the education of the town's kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The town is part of the Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union along with Hartland, Weathersfield and Windsor. West Windsor provides in-town education to its kindergarten through sixth grade students at Albert Bridge School (ABS). In June 2004, ABS brought all its programs into one space with a building project enlarging the school from 9,000 square feet to 18,000 square feet. The entire facility was renovated and enlarged and the playing fields were resurfaced. In 2007, the community removed the old playground equipment and erected several new play structures on the school grounds. Because the school's Water Supply/Wastewater Disposal Permit (WW-2-1104-1) does not allow for a cafeteria, students bring their own lunch to school. As a result of the expansion, the school has the capacity to accommodate 133 children and staff.

Students in grades seven through twelve receive their education on a tuition basis at various middle/high schools, both public and private. Because West Windsor does not have its own high school, state laws require that the town pay the cost of tuition to any approved public high school in Vermont or an adjoining state. If a family opts to send their children to an approved private secondary school, the town is obligated to pay Vermont state average tuition; the remainder of the payment is the family's responsibility.

The town has limited control over rising secondary tuition costs. In 2009-2010, public school tuition in our area averaged \$13,200. In 2008-2009, the state provided an average of \$10,920 for students attending private secondary schools. The town has consistently supported secondary school choice over committing students to a specific middle or high school.

West Windsor provides the town's elementary school students with an excellent education. In 2001, 2002 and 2003, the school was recognized by the Vermont Business Roundtable for excellence in education. Operating a small school of less than one hundred students is a financial challenge. Most of the school's enrichment programs are made possible through fundraising and volunteer support. The general sentiment of the town is that the benefits of operating a small school, with an emphasis on community involvement, outweigh the challenges, which include the possibility of future consolidation. According to the Vermont Department of Education, there were a total of 67 students enrolled in the Albert Bridge School during the 2008-2009 school year, and the student/teacher ratio was 11.17 students per teacher (10.69 is the state average student/teacher ratio).

**Albert Bridge School - General School Information**

School Participation Information	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	State of Vermont 2008-2009
Total School Enrollment	57	67	67	77	92,572
Student/Teacher Ratio	9.5	11.96	11.17	N/AV	10.69

Source: Vermont Department of Education

According to *Housing & Vermont’s School Enrollment*, Vermont has had the lowest birth rate in the nation for the last five years. Vermont’s birth rate is currently 10.6 births per 1,000 of population, compared to 14.1 for the United States. Considering the trend in Vermont’s birth rate, school enrollments are likely to continue to decline for the foreseeable future. Declining enrollment has led to a movement towards school consolidation in our region and statewide.

**EDUCATION POLICY**

1. Continue to provide high quality educational programs for students at Albert Bridge School.
2. Continue to provide secondary school choice for residents.
3. With school enrollment declining statewide and consolidation occurring throughout the state and our area, the town should stay involved in regional school facility discussions.

**CHILD CARE**

While the town is not required to provide child care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, ensuring the availability of safe and affordable child care is essential to all communities. Although there may be informal child care arrangements that take place in town, according to the Vermont Department for Children and Families, there are no registered child care homes or licensed child care centers in West Windsor as of June 2009.

**CHILD CARE POLICY**

1. Encourage and promote the availability of safe and affordable child care for all families.

## **CHAPTER 6. RECREATION**

### **RECREATION**

In the 1930's, the first ski trail was cleared on Mount Ascutney. Since that time, several factors have contributed to the emergence of West Windsor as a town known for its recreational opportunities. Some recreational activities, such as downhill skiing, swimming, and tennis, are available at the Ascutney Mountain Resort. Organized clubs or associations are available for snowmobilers, horseback riders, hikers, archers, and mountain bikers. For the most part, though, recreational activities occur outside of either a commercial setting or a formally organized group. Hunting, fishing, biking, cross country skiing, walking/hiking, and sight seeing are just some of the forms of recreation that are enjoyed throughout the town on publicly owned and privately owned land.

The recreational opportunities available in West Windsor, both of an organized and non-organized nature, have had a significant impact on shaping the town economically, visually, and in terms of the type of development that has taken place. The resort is the most obvious sign that recreation has come to play a major role in town. West Windsor has also become the town of choice for many vacation homeowners, equestrians, and people who value a life-style that includes the opportunity to enjoy various forms of recreation in a rural setting. This trend has noticeably affected the town's economy. Tourists visiting the town support the local economy, but have less impact on town services. Owners of vacation homes pay taxes, but do not send their children to school here. As important as it is to preserve the things that make West Windsor and the surrounding area attractive to part-time residents and visitors from out of town, it is equally important to guarantee that the townspeople have continued access to trails that serve different recreational interest groups, large tracts of contiguous land for hunting, clean streams and ponds for fishing, and are assured the opportunity to enjoy the natural and scenic qualities that make West Windsor a uniquely beautiful Vermont town.

#### **Mount Ascutney**

The mountain is a dominant physical feature in town and a popular area for recreation. West Windsor's own town forest on Mount Ascutney contains the Vermont Bicentennial Hiking Trail and parking. The town forest borders Ascutney State Park in Windsor and, at the highest elevations, contains sections of hiking trails that access the summit and connect with other trails in the state park and in the towns of Weathersfield and Windsor. The Ascutney Trails Association, a volunteer organization, maintains all trails on the mountain other than the Bicentennial Trail in West Windsor. A number of local organizations, including the town's Conservation Commission and the Town Forest Committee, have participated in maintaining the Bicentennial Trail.

Mount Ascutney is also the site of commercial recreational opportunities at the privately owned resort, the most notable of which are downhill skiing and snowboarding.

The towns of West Windsor and Weathersfield have worked cooperatively for nearly a decade to preserve land adjacent to the publicly owned properties on Mount Ascutney and Little Ascutney Mountain. The project has resulted in the public acquisition of a key parcel that was surrounded on three sides by state-owned wildlife management acreage, and protected additional adjacent

tracts through the acquisition of conservation easements. The result has been the creation of a sizable protected corridor between Mount Ascutney and Little Ascutney Mountain that provides thousands of acres of land for recreational purposes and an excellent habitat for wildlife.

## **Trails**

In West Windsor, the general term "trails" covers a variety of locations, uses, and ownerships. From the privately owned trails used for downhill skiing and snowboarding at the resort, to the remote hiking trail that follows an old town road, trails in town offer users very diverse recreational opportunities. There are two mapped and maintained snowmobile trails that run through West Windsor. Another network of trails has been established by and for the many horseback riders in town. In addition there are hiking and cross-country ski trails on Mount Ascutney, and old roads and logging roads throughout the town that are used for hiking, biking, horseback riding and skiing. Since 2005, Sports Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB) has been creating, improving, maintaining and mapping low-impact recreation trails. The town's Conservation Commission has made the identification, mapping, and maintenance of ancient roads and public recreational trails a top priority.

Critical to all trail systems, other than those located entirely on public lands, is the relationship between trail users and private property owners. By communicating with landowners, advocating responsible trail usage, and encouraging respect for private property, STAB helps ensure that trails remain open for public recreational uses.

Vermont statute (12 V.S.A. §5793) encourages owners to make their land available for public recreation by limiting landowner liability as follows: "An owner shall not be liable for property damage or personal injury sustained by a person who, without consideration, enters or goes upon the owner's land for a recreational use unless the damage or injury is the result of the willful or wanton misconduct of the owner."

## **Public Recreation Areas**

Although the town forest comprises the town's largest land area for public recreation, the school grounds, the Cady Trail, and Tribute Park are also commonly used by townspeople. Tribute Park, which is owned by the Brownsville Community Church, is located along Beaver Brook in the village. Picnic tables, stone fireplaces, and tall pine trees make the park an ideal setting for family and group get-togethers. Although serving the outdoor recreational needs of the students is the primary function of the school grounds, the playground and ball field at the school also provide an area for public recreation when school is not in session. There are no other public playgrounds or ball fields in West Windsor. The Cady Trail is located on a parcel of land just north of the school, between Beaver Brook and the Brownsville Cemetery. The land was purchased by the town in 2006.

## **Commercial Recreation Areas**

Many of the recreational opportunities found at the resort are those that would not ordinarily be available in a town the size of West Windsor. During the early years of commercial recreation on the mountain, only downhill skiing was available. The clientele was generally made up of area residents and the operation provided families a relatively affordable winter activity. The resort

now caters primarily to vacationers from outside the area to assure its economic viability, although many area residents do still utilize the resort's facilities. In addition to downhill, snowboarding, telemarking and cross-country skiing, recreational opportunities at the resort now include a health and fitness facility offering indoor and outdoor swimming, racquetball, tennis, weightlifting, and more.

## **RECREATION POLICIES**

1. Maintain ownership of town rights-of-way so that the trail system in town can be sustained or expanded.
2. Maintain the school grounds for both the students and the town as a whole.
3. Encourage low-impact and non-motorized recreation.

## **RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Focus development of commercial recreational activities within the existing Resort/Residential District.
2. Assure that the town provides people with the opportunity to enjoy non-commercial forms of recreation by developing a town Recreation Plan, which includes a comprehensive trail map.
3. Consider creating a dedicated funding source for the purchase of trail easements.

## **CHAPTER 7. NATURAL, SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**

West Windsor has abundant natural, cultural, historic, scenic, recreational and educational resources. These areas should not be overlooked and are important to consider and keep in the forefront during the planning process. (Note: Some of the cultural and/or educational resources in West Windsor are inventoried in *Chapter IV. Municipal Services and Government – Town Government and Administration* section of the Plan).

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The following natural areas warrant consideration for protection: agricultural soils, surface waters, wetlands, riparian zones, floodplains, wildlife habitat, and large contiguous tracts of undeveloped land, including Mount Ascutney, Ascutney Basin, Mile Long Field and Pierson's Peak. In addition, the VT Route 44 valley area, west of the village of Brownsville, is important for its prime agricultural land, flood hazard potential and scenic view of Mount Ascutney.

Much has already been done to preserve the natural condition of these areas. Several large tracts have been in public ownership for some time and additional lands, creating a corridor between Mount Ascutney and Little Ascutney Mountain, have been protected through public acquisition, conservation easements, and purchase of development rights. Efforts to preserve the natural beauty of these areas should continue. To the extent that regulatory measures can contribute to this objective, the town should maintain standards that will encourage low density, minimum impact development outside the primary and secondary growth areas. The town should also consider creating a dedicated funding source for the purchase of conservation easements or development rights on land with exceptional scenic beauty, significant natural resources, critical wildlife habitat, or important recreational trails.

#### **Surface Waters**

Surface waters (rivers, permanent and intermittent brooks, streams, ponds, vernal pools, and wetlands) are an abundant and valuable resource providing habitat, fishing, swimming, drinking water, irrigation, aquifer recharge, and scenic beauty. Measures to protect one of these uses may also protect others. For example, steps taken to assure that pollutants and turbidity do not exceed acceptable levels will protect these waterways for swimming and fishing.

Farm runoff, failing or nonexistent septic disposal systems, and stream bank erosion contribute to poor water quality in local ground and surface waters. Stream crossing structures (bridges and culverts), road run-off, and the presence or absence of vegetated buffer strips along rivers and streams also affect water quality, fish habitat, and scenic beauty.

The location of surface waters often influences both the location and form of development. Major waterways in West Windsor include the Mill Brook and its tributaries: Willow Brook and Beaver Brook. (See Map #4)

A number of studies have been conducted over the past 20 years to assess water quality and erosion in Mill Brook. The water quality assessments indicated the presence, though not the level, of e. Coli in the brook. The erosion studies identified areas where vegetated buffers would

reduce erosion. A 2003 geomorphic assessment on two sections of Mill Brook found that road and road fill encroachment in the floodplain, inadequately sized bridges that impair stream flow during high-water periods, and inadequate vegetated buffers are affecting the West Windsor Flats section of the brook, which is just west of the village. No studies have been conducted since 2003. The water in Mill Brook should be retested for pollutants, including e. Coli, and action should be taken to address any adverse test results.

### **Flood Hazard Areas**

Flood hazard areas are depicted on Map #4. These areas serve as flood storage areas during periods of heavy rains and spring snow melt, and may serve other important functions, such as agricultural fields, wildlife habitat and wildlife travel corridors. These areas also present limitations to development due to the hazards of flooding and related damage.

West Windsor adopted regulations that establish development standards for flood hazard areas identified by FEMA. Residents or business owners with buildings in the floodplain may purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Any development in the flood hazard areas requires local flood hazard review.

### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water sufficient to support vegetation and/or aquatic life that depend on saturated or seasonally saturated areas for growth and reproduction. Such areas include marshes, swamps, potholes, sloughs, vernal pools, mud flats, bogs and ponds. Wetland benefits include fish and wildlife habitat, flood and erosion protection, pollution filtration, ground water recharge, and sites for education, recreation and scenic enjoyment. Map #4 depicts inventoried Class 2 wetlands in West Windsor, but it does not include Class 3 wetlands or vernal pools. As part of a statewide mapping project coordinated by the Vermont Center for Eco Studies, the Conservation Commission is mapping vernal pools in West Windsor.

### **Riparian Buffers**

Riparian buffer zones are defined as the strip of land bordering a body of surface water, whether still or flowing. A vegetated buffer zone is meant, at a minimum, to provide a protective strip between a body of water and any adjacent land that has undergone human transformation to farmland, roadway, or other type of development and, at an optimum, to contribute to the well-being of the biota both in and adjacent to the body of water. Currently, West Windsor Zoning Bylaws require a minimum 50 foot buffer along wetlands, streams and rivers. Wider buffer widths may be required for adequate pollution and erosion protection due to the soil and slope conditions of each site. Narrower buffer widths may be allowed under certain circumstances. State regulations regarding wetlands and riparian buffers are currently being revised. Local regulations may need to be updated to comply with state regulations.

### **Agricultural and Forest Lands**

Steady population growth and second-home growth have increased development pressure in open, agricultural, and forested areas. Forestry plays an active role in the ecological, economic, and social health of the area. This type of land provides habitat for wildlife, contributes to water

and air quality, provides for a forestry industry and enhances recreation and the tourism industry. For these reasons, it is vital to maintain sound forestry practices, limit the spread of development and prevent fragmentation of large (generally 50 acres and larger) tracts of contiguous forested lands.

Agriculture plays an important role in defining the area's lifestyle and landscape and contributes to the stability and diversity of the economy and local communities. Although the amount of farmland in the State is decreasing, the number of small farms is actually on the rise. There is a growing demand for local retail products, including maple syrup, cheeses, fruits and vegetables, meat and wool. There are also many horse farms and active horse pastures located in town.

Map #5 shows the most likely productive agricultural soils as identified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Soils categorized by the NRCS as "prime agricultural soils" have the greatest potential for productivity and are important for current and future food production. Areas designated as having "soils of statewide significance" are also important, but limited in their productive capacity by slope or other mitigating factors. Development shall be designed to minimize, or reasonably mitigate, impact on these agricultural soils.

Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (AKA "current use") encourages landowners with 27 acres or more to use their property for farming or forestry by reducing the assessed value, and therefore the tax burden, on the property. The amount of land enrolled in "current use" in West Windsor has increased from 1,965 acres in 2004 (13.8% of the total acreage of the town) to 5,231 acres in 2009 (36.8% of the total acreage of the town). By providing tangible financial incentives to keep land open and undeveloped, current use helps maintain the rural character of the town.

### **Soils and Steep Slopes**

Soils vary greatly in their composition, which can determine what types of land use are most appropriate. Outside of the ski resort base area, which is served by the Windsor public sewer system, one of the major factors in determining the development potential of each site is its capacity for on-site wastewater disposal. (See Map #6) Water supply and wastewater disposal are currently regulated by the State of Vermont.

Steep slope areas may not be suitable for development due to limitations for septic systems, erosion and stormwater runoff problems and high construction costs. (See Map #5) All development on slope gradients in excess of 20 percent are required to provide erosion and sedimentation control plans to avoid these potential problems. Driveways over 15 percent in grade are generally considered too steep for safe emergency vehicle access.

## **STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES**

There are a number of threats to West Windsor's natural resources of which town officials and residents should be aware. Chief among those threats are poorly planned development, fragmentation of habitat by new roads, pollution in the form of farm and road runoff or failed septic systems, erosion, and invasive exotic plant and animal species.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to minimize these threats to our natural resources including regulations, buffers, monitoring, education, and incentive programs like current use. For example, existing zoning regulations protect wetlands, streams, floodplains, and critical wildlife habitat. Subdivision regulations protect agricultural soils, forest land, ridgelines, open space and threatened or endangered species. Buffers can be an effective means of separating scenic or natural resources from incompatible uses.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE POLICIES**

1. Encourage the protection of ground and surface waters, wetlands, steep slopes, shallow soils, areas supplying significant recharge waters to aquifers and watersheds for future water supplies.
2. The storage and transportation of hazardous chemicals should not pollute water resources.
3. Encourage landowners to establish and/or maintain appropriate undisturbed vegetated buffers along watercourses, ponds, wetlands, and vernal pools in order to protect shorelines, provide shading to prevent undue increase in stream temperatures, minimize effects of erosion, sedimentation and other sources of pollution, and maintain scenic, recreational, and habitat values.
4. Encourage the safe and sustainable use of forest land for fuel, wood products, maple syrup, recreation, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty.
5. Support the development of local industries which produce “value added” agricultural and forest products.
6. Maintain standards that will encourage low density, minimum impact development in the vicinity of Mount Ascutney, Little Ascutney Mountain, Ascutney Basin, Pierson's Peak, Mile Long Field and associated acreage, and the valley area along Route 44, west of the village of Brownsville.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Work with the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission and the West Windsor Conservation Commission to inventory and map current aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, and vernal pools.
2. Consider creating a dedicated funding source for the purchase of conservation easements or development rights on land with exceptional scenic beauty, significant natural resources, critical wildlife habitat, or important recreational trails.
3. Periodically review West Windsor’s Flood Hazard Regulations to ensure compliance with 24 V.S.A. §4424 and National Flood Insurance Program (44 C.F.R.) regulations.
4. Develop policies and regulations to encourage the preservation of farms and agricultural lands.

5. Provide information on identifying and controlling common invasive exotic species (e.g. purple loose strife).
6. Help identify and assess pollution problems caused by septic systems and other sources.
7. Sample water quality in Mill Brook on a regular basis and take action to address problems.
8. Update all local regulations, bylaws and ordinances to reflect current state rules as they relate to natural resources.
9. Coordinate with neighboring towns to maintain large tracts of undeveloped land.

## **WILDLIFE HABITAT**

Housing, resort and commercial development can severely diminish the ability of wildlife habitat to support wildlife populations. West Windsor has a variety of fish and wildlife resources including upland forested areas that provide cover and habitat for deer, bear, game birds, small mammals and other species; deeryards which provide a particularly important winter shelter area for deer; and open meadows that support a variety of bird species. (Map #4 shows deer wintering areas.) Water habitats support trout and other aquatic organisms and attract a variety of migratory waterfowl. Undeveloped riparian habitats support amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and rare vegetation. Wetland habitats support songbirds, game birds, beaver and otter, and are important breeding areas for a variety of species.

Many animal species rely on large contiguous areas of forests, fields and other undeveloped lands for habitat. The fragmentation of such land can result in decreases in the number of species and the size of populations of many species. Connections between large contiguous wildlife habitat areas may serve as wildlife travel corridors. Map #7 shows wildlife habitat suitability areas as mapped by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. These areas represent undeveloped areas most likely to support a broad spectrum of wildlife. These mapped wildlife habitat suitability areas serve only as a potential indicator of critical wildlife habitat, and more detailed inventories or site investigations should be used to determine the actual critical wildlife habitat areas and travel corridors.

West Windsor's zoning and subdivision regulations protect some critical wildlife habitat (e.g. deer wintering areas) and require buffers along streams and around wetlands. Strategies for protecting other habitats (e.g. open meadows) should be explored.

## **WILDLIFE HABITAT POLICIES**

1. Plan development to minimize impact on wildlife habitat and encourage retention and improvement of wildlife habitats using state maps and local resources.
2. Encourage responsible use of wildlife resources as an economic benefit to the town.
3. Protect riparian corridors for wildlife habitat, as well as water quality.

## **WILDLIFE HABITAT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Work with local citizens and state officials to identify and map information related to fish and wildlife habitats.
2. Work with the Conservation Commission to develop non-regulatory means to protect wildlife habitat, including open meadows, through education, easements, or land trusts, or by establishing a local conservation fund or purchasing development rights.

## **SCENIC AREAS**

The rural character of West Windsor is composed of a scenic natural landscape with traditional New England settlement patterns and architectural designs that are of great importance to the community. The natural landscape includes open space, working and non-working agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, and forest land. The town recognizes the irreplaceable value of all these resources and the need to protect them as they serve to preserve local heritage, while enhancing the rural environment, economy, and way of life for residents and visitors.

Few things exemplify the universal enjoyment of and appreciation for the Vermont landscape as much as the walk or drive down a country road, or the expansive view of that landscape from a hill or mountain top. These are aesthetic experiences that are difficult to quantify, yet so important to those who live in or visit Vermont. For example, the unobstructed, unlit view of the night sky as well as the presence of healthy and thick tree canopies while driving the rural roads of the town. West Windsor has managed to retain virtually every scenic quality that people consider valuable: open mowed fields outlined by stone walls and fencerows; actively cultivated farmland; large tracts of undeveloped forest land; streams and ponds; and, from countless vantage points throughout the town, the dominant presence of a singular large mountain. Enjoying the visual qualities of the land is a form of recreation in itself; one that has value and is worthy of attention when considering ways to direct the changes that will, without question, occur in West Windsor.

Important scenic resources that define West Windsor's rural character include:

- Mt. Ascutney
- Pierson's Peak
- Mile Long Field and associated acreage
- Best and Bowers Historic Covered Bridges
- Unpaved roads
- Ridgelines

Although "scenic beauty" and "views" are intangible qualities, held principally in the eyes of the beholder, townspeople should remember that the local economy is dependent, in large part, on tourism, and that these qualities are what commonly draw visitors to the area. The visual characteristics of the town also contribute to the quality of life that is appreciated and cherished by those who live in West Windsor.

## **SCENIC AREA POLICIES**

1. Maintain natural and man-made features that are of local scenic and historic significance and protect them from activities, which impair their integrity, character and/or quality.
2. Encourage landowners to consider the town's heritage and natural resources when developing their property through careful design and siting of all structures, accesses, parking lots, utility installations (including solar arrays and windmills), landscaping, and screening.
3. Encourage development patterns that prevent the fragmentation of larger parcels of land in order to retain open space and maintain habitat areas.
4. Encourage compatible and responsible use of lands adjacent to or including areas of scenic, historical, educational, architectural, or archaeological value.
5. In order to protect the view of the night sky undiminished by light pollution, lighting should be kept to the minimum necessary for safety and security.
6. Paving of roads should be avoided, not only to contain road maintenance costs, but also to retain the existing rural and scenic quality of the town's gravel roads.
7. Encourage preservation of existing tree canopies along town roads and mowing of unused pastures to maintain open space.

## **SCENIC AREA RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Identify locally significant scenic resources, including ridgelines, and develop strategies for their protection, including local ordinances.
2. Review the West Windsor Highway Department's Environmental Mission Statement, a non-regulatory set of road maintenance guidelines.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

West Windsor's historic resources include settlement patterns which feature a distinct village and lower density housing with more open space in the surrounding areas. The village of Brownsville is listed on the State Register of Historic Places by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. There are 15 sites listed on the Register of Historic Places. In addition, there are two covered bridges in town which are on the National Register, Best's covered bridge and Bowers covered bridge. Opportunities to protect important landmarks of the town's history, including individual buildings, settlements, cellar holes, cemeteries, ancient roads, or other important features and their environs, should be considered by the community when they arise. These are important resources in the town and deserve recognition and protection:

Raymond Spackman House  
Brownsville Historic District  
Lee Harlow House

Marcus Hurlburt House  
Lewis McMillen House  
Leigh Banister House  
Edward Langenback House  
Helen Culin House  
Hugh Tatlock House  
William Bryant House  
Catherine Riley House  
Howard Furnas House  
Charles McCullough House  
Richard and Stanley Saxl House  
Daniel Cady Mausoleum

## **HISTORIC RESOURCE POLICIES**

1. Help protect places of significant cultural, aesthetic, archeological and/or historical value from development that impairs their character and quality by educating the public about their importance to the community.
2. Encourage rehabilitation that preserves, and development that is compatible with, the historic, cultural and architectural character of the town.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Support the adaptive reuse of architecturally or historically significant structures that will allow continued value to the community with minimum impact to the resource.
2. Participate in the state Historic Sites and Structures Survey to further identify locally significant historic resources.
3. Map locally significant historic resources.
4. Consider the creation of a Design Review district in the historic village area.

## **CHAPTER 8. TRANSPORTATION**

West Windsor is a rural community located at the base of the northwestern slope of Mount Ascutney. The road network consists of one paved, secondary state highway and 47 miles of mostly unpaved local public roads.

### **TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY**

#### **Regional Highways**

Regional highways, including state highways and Class 2 town highways, connect to large population areas and other state highways outside West Windsor. These paved roads include VT Route 44, Brownsville-Hartland Road and Ski Tow Road. VT Route 44 connects West Windsor to Windsor, and to Reading and Woodstock, via VT Route 106. Brownsville-Hartland Road is a Class 2 town highway that connects Brownsville to Hartland. These roads provide access for businesses in West Windsor and to broader job opportunities in other towns for residents. VT Route 44 is the primary access into town and provides access to the Ascutney Mountain Resort. Ski Tow Road, off VT Route 44, is the only road into the Resort.

#### **Town Highways**

Town highway classifications, as defined in 19 V.S.A. §302, indicate the hierarchy of the local road system, as determined by the prevailing use of each road. West Windsor maintains nearly six miles of paved Class 2 town highways, including Brownsville-Hartland Road and Ski Tow Road, which serve as “regional highways” that connect to other towns or destination areas. Class 2 town highways are considered the most important local roads in town.

There are over 41 miles of Class 3 town highways in West Windsor. Class 3 town highways consist of all other year-round traveled roads in town. With the exception of a few paved roads near Brownsville, the remainder of these roads consists of a network of gravel roads, the quality of which is unrivaled in the surrounding area. Portions of Seems Road and Pierce Hill Road are paved due mainly to the steepness of grade.

### **West Windsor Highway Miles by Classification**

<b>Highway Classification</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Total Miles</b>
Interstate Highways	0	0
State Highways	5.044	5.044
Town Highways		
Class 1 Town Highway	0	
Class 2 Town Highway	5.931	
Class 3 Town Highway	40.980	
Total town-maintained highways		46.911
Class 4 Town Highway*	4.180	
Legal Trails	0.330	
Private Roads	10.334	
Total <b>not</b> maintained by town		14.844
Total rights-of-way		66.799

Source: VTrans, VCGI

\* Class 4 mileage may be underestimated because accurate inventories are not maintained

There are approximately four miles of Class 4 town highways in West Windsor. Class 4 town highways are all town highways that are not Class 1, 2 or 3 town highways or unidentified corridors, and that are not regularly maintained by the town. The Selectboard determines which highways are designated as Class 4. 19 V.S.A. §302(a)(4). Class 4 town highways are important resources for recreation, forestry access, and agricultural activities.

Legal Trails are public rights-of-way, but are not considered highways. The town is not responsible for the maintenance of trails. A Class 4 road can be reclassified as a Legal Trail to retain the public right-of-way but eliminate the burden on the town to provide maintenance.

The Conservation Commission began investigating West Windsor's ancient roads in 2005. Recognizing the recreational value of ancient roads and Class 4 highways, the town should discourage development on these roads and consider reclassifying them as Legal Trails, following required procedures and negotiations with adjacent land owners.

There are over 10 miles of privately-maintained roads in West Windsor. It is important that private roads and driveways provide adequate and safe access for both residents and emergency vehicles. Private roads, which serve three or more residences, should be held to the same standard as class 3 town highways for safety reasons and to protect the town's interest in the event that a private road is reclassified as a Class 2 or 3 town highway. Driveways, which serve one or two residences, shall be held to standards for residential drives to allow vehicular access from the adjacent street and emergency vehicle access to properties.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

There are no formal bicycling facilities in West Windsor except for the existing road network. VT Route 44 has very little in the way of shoulders to accommodate bicycle or pedestrian travel. The highway is very scenic with many sharp curves, and steady or declining traffic volumes.

Town roads provide additional bicycle access. Because many town roads are unpaved and some are quite steep, younger, less experienced cyclists and cyclists on touring bikes may be reluctant to use them.

The village of Brownsville has five-foot wide sidewalks primarily on the north side of Main Street. The sidewalks were constructed in 1964 and are in need of maintenance. Existing sidewalks on Route 44 in the village provide access from:

- Brook Road to the town offices;
- The intersection of Brownsville-Hartland Road and Route 44 to Seems Road;

There is also a four-foot wide pedestrian bridge owned by Ascutney Mountain Resort crossing Mill Brook behind the West Windsor Fire Station, providing access to Ascutney Mountain Resort via an unimproved path connecting to Hotel Road.

At this time, there are no crosswalks or signalized intersections in West Windsor. However, the town should consider establishing a crosswalk across Ski Tow Road to allow safe circulation between the Old Base Lodge and the day skier parking lot.

Future improvement to the pedestrian facilities should include walking path and sidewalk connectivity throughout Brownsville, to facilitate walking along Route 44 between Seems Road and the Post Office, as noted in the 1999 Pedestrian Master Plan for West Windsor. Services in Brownsville include the library, post office, town hall and general store.

### **Public Transportation, Rail and Air**

Currently there are no rail or air services in West Windsor. Connecticut River Transit (CRT), based in Bellows Falls, VT, is the primary transit provider in the region and offers “on demand” service in West Windsor. Volunteers in Action also provide “on demand” service, primarily for elderly residents.

Dartmouth Coach and Greyhound provide long-distance bus service connecting the Upper Valley to many northeast metropolitan areas. Both transit companies also provide service from White River Junction to Logan airport and limited service to Manchester airport.

Amtrak stops at the train station in Windsor, providing West Windsor residents good access to passenger rail service.

Numerous airports – including Rutland; Burlington; Lebanon, NH; Manchester, NH; Hartford, CT; and Logan Airport in Boston – provide West Windsor residents with options for commercial air service. Hartness State Airport in Springfield offers general aviation services.

### **EXISTING TRAFFIC CONDITIONS**

Existing traffic volumes are relatively light on VT Route 44 in West Windsor. The table below shows annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes at select locations. AADT represent the combined two-way traffic volume at each location. The data have been adjusted to correct for seasonal variation. Road segments in adjacent towns have been included due to a lack of local data.

***Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) in West Windsor and Surrounding Towns***

Town	Route/Road	Location	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)		
			2008	2007	2006
Hartland	Brownsville-Hartland Rd	0.4 miles east of Hampton Rd		1,400	
Reading	VT 44	0.2 miles east of VT 106	970		1,200
Reading	VT 106	Between Tyson/Benjamin Dr		1,400	
West Windsor	Brownsville-Hartland Rd (TH 1)	0.1 mile north of VT 44		1,000	1,000
West Windsor	Ski Tow Road	200 feet south of VT 44			680
Windsor	VT 44	0.1 mile west of Estey Ln		1,900	
Windsor	VT 44A	0.1 mile south of I-91 Bridge		1,100	

Source: Vermont Agency of Transportation

Vehicular traffic speed and truck traffic on VT Route 44 are concerns regularly raised by residents, especially in the village area. The town should seek to identify appropriate traffic calming measures along VT Route 44 through Brownsville in order to slow traffic speeds in the village. Trucks account for approximately 7% of the traffic volume on VT Route 44 at both locations described in the AADT Table above. On Brownsville-Hartland Road, trucks are about 6% of the total traffic volume. Traffic speed data are not currently available for the Brownsville area.

A left turn lane into the Resort, for vehicles heading west on Route 44, would improve safety conditions at the intersection. Likewise, the construction of an island on Ski Tow Road, where it intersects with Route 44, would keep left-turning vehicles on the right side of the road. The lack of a second entrance into the Resort could prove problematic if Ski Tow Road were ever shut down between Route 44 and Hotel Road.

**Seasonal Traffic**

Traffic volumes can vary significantly from season to season, with heavier traffic volumes on VT Route 44, Ski Tow Road, and the Brownsville-Hartland Road during the winter, due to ski traffic generated by Ascutney Mountain Resort. Statewide, average traffic volumes in the vicinity of ski resorts are 2.4 times higher during the peak winter season.

**COMMUTER PATTERNS**

Commuter travel patterns are an important consideration for the transportation network. According to a local survey conducted in 2004, nearly 46 percent of survey respondents do not commute either because they work from home or are retired. For those residents who do commute, 65% have a commute time of 30 minutes or less, and 35% have a commute time of more than 30 minutes.

Transportation connections to surrounding towns and major travel corridors are important for the local economy. According to the most recent census data available, the data from the 2000 U.S. Census, only 29% of local working residents are employed in West Windsor.

The predominant mode of transportation for commuters is by automobile. In 2000, only 4% of resident workers commuted by bicycle, walking or motorcycle; no one used public transportation. The number of residents who worked from home decreased by nearly 16 percent between 1990 and 2000; however, home-based employment remains important in West Windsor. Home-based employment opportunities should increase with the expansion and improvement of broadband technology in town. The number of residents who carpooled increased by 96% from 1990 to 2000; one third of that increase is due to an overall increase in the number of workers in town and two thirds is due to an increase in the percentage of workers who carpool (7% in 1990 and 11% in 2000).

## **ROAD POLICY AND MAINTENANCE**

The town should continue to maintain the existing highway network in good condition, which can help reduce long-term roadway maintenance costs. Development of additional town roads, widening of existing Class 3 roads, and removal of scenic features, such as tree canopies and stone walls, should be discouraged, except where necessary for public safety.

Respondents to the 2004 survey indicated a preference for all existing gravel roads to remain unpaved. The town should continue to use geotextiles where needed, and consider reconstructing the road sub-base or employing other engineering techniques to help prolong the life of unpaved roads.

The highway department should continue to inspect and evaluate the condition of bridges and culverts, and replace deficient or undersized drainage structures annually as funding allows. Culverts and drainage ditches should allow for an adequate flow of stormwater so as to protect infrastructure from damage during typical snowmelt and rain events.

The town should continue to use best management practices for road construction and maintenance activities to facilitate road drainage, minimize erosion and water quality degradation, avoid incremental road widening, and protect trees and other scenic resources.

The two covered bridges in West Windsor, the Best Bridge on Churchill Road and the Bowers Bridge on Bible Hill Road, are important scenic and historical resources and should be protected and maintained.

According to West Windsor Zoning Regulations, all new development, including development on Class 4 town highways, private roads and driveways, is required to meet appropriate road and driveway standards. Coordination among town officials, including the Selectboard, the Development Review Board, the Highway Department, and Emergency Services, is important in reviewing development proposals for potential transportation impacts.

## **Access Management**

Access management refers to the systematic control of the location, spacing, design, and operation of driveways, median openings and street connections to a roadway. The purpose of access management is to provide vehicular access to land development in a manner that preserves safety and efficiency. Access in terms of highway capacity is not a big concern today in West Windsor, however, the safety of access points and their impacts on the public highway infrastructure are concerns. Driveway permits are required in West Windsor. All driveways must meet Agency of Transportation B-71 Standards for Commercial and Residential driveways. Driveways may not have negative safety or drainage impacts on town highway infrastructure.

## **Scenic Roads**

On the recommendation of the Scenery Preservation Council, the transportation board may designate or discontinue any state highway, or portion of a state highway, as a state scenic road per 19 V.S.A. §2501. The corridor that includes VT Route 44A to VT Route 44 to Ascutney Mountain Resort is designated as a scenic byway and is part of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway.

Towns in Vermont are enabled to designate municipally-maintained roads as “town scenic roads,” as established by 19 V.S.A. §2502. Local scenic roads are subject to the standards established by the State Transportation Board, which address appropriate minimum roadway widths, alignment, landscaping and traffic control methods, pursuant to 10 V.S.A. §425. Although there are no town scenic roads in West Windsor at this time, the scenic qualities of local roads, including tree canopies and stone walls, are highly prized by residents, and should be preserved.

## **TRANSPORTATION POLICIES**

1. Ensure that future transportation related facilities in the town of West Windsor are designed to maintain the beauty, integrity and rural character of the town.
2. When considering roadway widening on gravel roads, town officials should use construction and maintenance techniques that balance cost effectiveness, public safety and aesthetic considerations, especially with regard to the preservation of the tree canopy.
3. Maintain the existing quality of the transportation network to provide for the safe, efficient and cost effective movement of people, goods and services, and to avoid costly replacement in the future.
4. Maintain reasonable standards for road and driveway construction to ensure safe access by emergency vehicles to homes and other buildings.
5. Preserve existing covered bridges.
6. Retain undeveloped Class 4 town highways and legal trails as recreational resources for West Windsor residents.

7. Encourage coordination among town officials, including the Selectboard, Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Highway Department and Emergency Services, in reviewing development proposals for potential transportation and safety impacts.
8. Continue using best management practices during highway maintenance activities in order to minimize erosion, protect water quality, contain costs, and preserve the scenic qualities of local roads.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Periodically review local highway, driveway, road construction and maintenance standards and policies to ensure a balance between public safety and the protection of scenic resources and rural character.
2. Review the West Windsor Highway Department's Environmental Mission Statement, a non-regulatory set of road maintenance guidelines.
3. Review and update, if necessary, the 1999 Pedestrian Master Plan for West Windsor.
4. Ask the Agency of Transportation to consider safety improvements to the intersection of Route 44 and Ski Tow Road.
5. Consider amending the subdivision regulations to require a second entrance for subdivisions that exceed a certain size.
6. Facilitate the safe use of the transportation network by pedestrians, bicyclists and horseback riders by maintaining or expanding existing facilities in the village area and improving or widening shoulders along paved roads, especially between Seems Road and the Post Office.

## CHAPTER 9. ENERGY

Worldwide concerns about global warming, the impact of wars in the oil rich Middle East, “peak oil” predictions, electricity shortages and blackouts, and fluctuating energy prices have led to heightened awareness that the sources of energy that we have become so dependent on are not limitless. Planning carefully for our energy future and how it will affect our day-to-day lives is, therefore, becoming an essential priority. While energy policy is, and will continue to be, a national and international issue, local action by individuals and municipalities can have an important impact.

Municipalities can play a role in energy development and energy conservation by outlining strategies that will reduce local dependence on outside energy sources and reduce overall energy demand. In 2009, West Windsor’s Selectboard appointed an Energy Committee to help develop such strategies for our town. At the urging of the Energy Committee, West Windsor voters passed a resolution at the 2010 Town Meeting to exempt from property taxes renewable energy systems, as defined by Vermont statute (32 V.S.A. §3845). Alternative energy structures should be installed with sensitivity for aesthetic concerns and rural character.

Local planning efforts should encourage land use that conserves energy. Zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations, and the Act 250 process are some of the means by which municipalities can promote energy efficient development on the local level.

### SUMMARY & ANALYSIS OF CURRENT ENERGY USE

Vermonters and local residents use a variety of fuel sources to meet their energy needs, but the predominant fuel used is petroleum. West Windsor residents use the following fuel sources to heat their homes: fuel oil (60.5%), propane (21.1%), wood (13.2%), electricity (3.7%), solar (1.1%), and utility gas (0.4%).<sup>3</sup> Vermont’s electricity comes from 35.5% VT Yankee nuclear power, 28.2% Hydro Quebec, 9.2% Vermont hydro power, 4.9% McNeil Generator (wood-fired), 1.2% New York Power Authority, 0.6% Vermont thermal, and 20.4% other sources (New England Grid power).<sup>4</sup> The top three energy sources for the New England Grid are gas (30.1%), nuclear (28.6%), and coal (10.2%).<sup>5</sup> Some significant aspects of these figures are as follows:

1. Although Vermonters are not heavily dependent on non-renewable carbon-based fuel for electricity, we are dependent on carbon-based fuels for heating and transportation.
2. New England has some coal and gas-fired base load generating plants, but Vermont does not.
3. Without Hydro Quebec, Vermont’s renewable energy supply would be minimal.

Because much of this energy is produced outside of our region, most of the money spent on that energy is exported from our local economy. Local energy sources (wood, wind, solar, and hydropower) offer distinct economic and conservation advantages over nonrenewable energy sources. For every dollar spent on fuel wood, 80-82% of that dollar stays in the region. On the other hand, for every dollar spent on non-renewable energy sources, only 15% of that dollar stays in the region.

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<sup>3</sup> 2000 U.S. Census

<sup>4</sup> VT Department of Public Service, *Vermont’s Power Supply, 2003*

<sup>5</sup> ISO New England, *Energy Sources in New England*

The Town of West Windsor should resolve to take every reasonable opportunity to create a sustainable energy future: one that minimizes environmental impact, supports our local economy, and emphasizes energy conservation, efficiency and the increased use of local and regional renewable energy sources.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Energy chapter of the Town Plan is to guide West Windsor and its residents toward a sustainable future while minimizing adverse impacts on the community. To achieve the goals of this chapter of the Plan, West Windsor's newly formed Energy Committee recommends focusing on three main elements: educating the public about energy saving techniques and programs, finding solutions that fit, and developing plans that will result in action. The ultimate goal is to save taxpayer dollars by investing in capital improvements that result in long-term energy and operating cost savings.

## **ENERGY POLICIES**

1. Encourage cost-effective energy conservation and efficiency measures, especially in municipal buildings.
2. Support local and regional initiatives for the sustainable development of renewable energy resources.
3. Consider incorporating cost effective energy efficiency measures in transportation planning where possible.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Conduct periodic energy audits of all town and school buildings to reduce energy consumption and save tax dollars, and encourage homeowners to conduct energy audits.
2. Educate residents about energy issues and options.
3. Include energy issues on West Windsor's website.
4. Develop a capital budget with improvements that result in long-term energy and cost savings.
5. Collect and evaluate data on local energy usage.
6. Engage in long-range energy planning.
7. Promote energy efficient lighting, residential home weatherization, and reduced idling of motor vehicles.
8. Educate the public about energy efficient transportation, including ridesharing, bicycling, and walking.

## CHAPTER 10. HOUSING

*Note: Please see I. Introduction, Population and Demographics for more housing data*

Housing is a key element of any sustainable community. The supply of housing should be adequate to house those who work in the community and should expand at a rate that can accommodate economic growth. In addition, a variety of housing options should be available for the region's expanding elderly population and to maintain a population of families that bring students to area schools. Housing issues in the Southern Windsor County Region vary dramatically from one town to another. While towns on the northern end of the region are beginning to feel the effects of an extreme housing shortage in the Hanover/Lebanon area, Springfield is experiencing economic challenges, a declining population and deteriorating housing stock. In resort areas and towns with a large percentage of seasonal housing, such as West Windsor, high housing costs have created a shortage of affordable housing.

The amount and type of housing available for sale and for rent can have a direct impact on the landscape and the costs of municipal services. With careful planning and use of available resources, housing that is both affordable and attractive can serve area residents and can enhance the character of a community.

West Windsor's housing stock consists of 607 single-family homes with an average "house site value" of \$314,257; 128 condominiums with an average value of \$243,930; and 10 mobile homes with an average value of \$114,690. There are a handful of duplexes and multi-family homes and approximately 17 accessory dwelling units (AKA apartments). 52.6% of all West Windsor housing units (single-family, duplex, multi-family, mobile homes and condos) are "owner-occupied," while 11% are renter-occupied and 36.4% are vacant, seasonal, or second homes.

Vermont statute, 24 V.S.A. §4412(1)(E), allows all owner-occupied single-family dwellings to include a one-bedroom apartment provided that the property has sufficient wastewater capacity, the unit does not exceed 30% of the total habitable floor area of the single-family dwelling, and applicable setbacks, coverage and parking requirements are met. State statute also allows local bylaws to be less restrictive of accessory dwelling units. With 367 owner-occupied single-family dwellings in West Windsor and only 17 apartments, there is clearly an opportunity for increasing the supply of affordable housing with bylaws that reduce restrictions on accessory dwelling units.

Other than in the Resort/Conservation and Light Industrial/Commercial districts, two-family dwellings are allowed in all districts on the same size lot required for a single-family dwelling as long as all required permits (e.g. wastewater) are obtained. Allowing single-family homes to be converted to two-family homes creates the potential for additional affordable housing.

A shortage of affordable housing persists in the Upper Valley, centered in the core communities of Hanover and Lebanon, NH. Those who work in the Hanover/Lebanon area must go farther to look for housing, and make longer commutes. This has led to expanding residential growth in surrounding towns, including West Windsor.

The town of West Windsor recognizes that housing that is affordable to working residents is important for a successful community. Housing is considered affordable if rent or mortgage, taxes, and insurance costs are no more than 30 percent of a household's annual income. Affordable housing is necessary to attract and sustain permanent residents who will send their children to school and participate in community affairs.

According to the Vermont Department of Taxes, the median adjusted gross income for a West Windsor family in 2008 was \$72,033. Assuming a 30-year mortgage with a fixed interest rate of 5%, a property tax rate of 1.5%, an insurance rate of 0.5%, a \$10,000 down payment, and no other monthly debt (e.g. car payments, student loans, or credit card balances), a family with the median income could afford a house with a price tag of approximately \$246,000. Of the 607 single-family homes in West Windsor, there are currently 206 (34%) that are appraised at \$246,000 or less. In addition, 46 (36%) of the 128 condos in town are appraised at or below \$246,000.

The results of a 2006 town-wide reappraisal in West Windsor were shocking to most residents with some experiencing ten-fold increases in the appraised value of their property. Many found themselves suddenly land-rich and cash-poor, which made it difficult to pay their property taxes. Initially there was concern that farms, which had been in the same family for generations, would be broken up and sold, but so far that hasn't happened. The primary result of the reappraisal has been a dramatic increase in the amount of land enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal Program (AKA "current use"). In 2004, prior to the reappraisal, there were 1,965 acres (13.8% of the total acreage of the town) enrolled in the program. In 2009, there are 5,231 acres (36.8% of the total acreage of the town) enrolled in the program. Enrollment in the program has almost tripled.

While the current use program is beneficial in many respects, it does shift some of the property tax burden from those with large land holdings to those with small holdings, who are not eligible for the program. The net effect is to make small parcels less affordable.

A 2008 study of West Windsor's Grand List found twenty-three lots, between 0.5 and 1.99 acres in size, with an average assessed value of \$56,500. There were seven lots between 2 and 2.99 acres in size with an average assessed value of \$75,934 and six lots between 3 and 3.99 acres in size with an average assessed value of \$106,033. With land running at about \$25,000 per acre, one way to increase affordability is to allow smaller lot sizes in those areas of town with the infrastructure to accommodate greater density.

Despite the town's comparatively low tax rate, costs for housing in West Windsor generally exceed those deemed "affordable." Many young people who grew up in West Windsor are only able to settle in town with their own families because property was made available to them by parents or other relatives.

In West Windsor and other towns throughout the region, many seasonal homes have been converted to year-round homes as the demand for year-round homes continues to grow. U.S. Census data shows that the number of seasonal units in West Windsor dropped from 374 to 226 units between 1990 and 2000 because of this conversion to year-round use.

Another factor which puts upward pressure on property values in West Windsor is the town's attractiveness to the equestrian community.

## **HOUSING POLICIES**

1. Encourage housing development in West Windsor that meets the needs of residents of all income levels.
2. Encourage the improvement or rehabilitation of existing units, and consider converting older, larger homes to multi-family, senior or special needs housing, especially in the village district.
3. Encourage the development of cluster housing with covenants for long-term affordability of some units.
4. Support regional affordable housing programs, such as the Rockingham Area Community Land Trust, which offers assistance with affordable housing development, housing rehabilitation, homebuyer education, financial counseling and down payments and closing costs.
5. Promote the use of innovative construction and design techniques as developed by "Efficiency Vermont" that enhance the affordability, energy efficiency, and environmental suitability of housing for all residents.
6. Site new rural housing development so as to preserve the greatest amount of open space and blend harmoniously with the natural environment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Allow ½-acre residential lots at the eastern end of the Primary Growth Village district, on parcels that are within 1,000 feet of the existing sewer line, with additional restrictions (if necessary) to keep new housing units affordable at moderate income levels.
2. Encourage the conversion of single-family dwellings to two-family dwellings in districts where two-family dwellings are allowed.
3. Reduce size restrictions on accessory dwelling units (apartments).
4. Require developers to include affordable units when developing a new subdivision or a new multi-unit housing project.

# **CHAPTER 11. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Until the early 1900's, the economy of West Windsor was centered around agriculture. Most residents made their livelihood by farming or in businesses that were associated with the farm industry. Mills of various types could be found along the brooks throughout the town, and factories that made everything from woolen clothing to cheese prospered. Smaller, home-based businesses and industries completed the picture of a town that appears to have had a solid economic base and low unemployment.

In the mid-1900's, West Windsor's economy began to shift away from agriculture. Residents in town left the farm to work in the large machine shops and factories in Windsor and Springfield. These jobs were attractive because they provided an excellent salary, benefits and other amenities that weren't provided in an agricultural economy. The manufacturing sector remained strong until the 1970s. Beginning in the mid-1970's the manufacturing sector started to decline due to industry consolidation, overseas competition and a host of other financial factors. Cone Blanchard Machine Co., the last large machine tool plant located in the precision valley, closed its doors in 2000. Since the mid-1990s, the primary employment areas are in government, technology, light manufacturing, health care and services. While the economy seems to transform itself every twenty five years or so, there still remains a close relationship to agriculture in West Windsor. Although the farms are now smaller and there are more horses than cows, the residents in West Windsor still enjoy and feel strongly about the importance of a working landscape in town.

In 2004, a town-wide survey was performed that looked at quality of life, growth and development, housing, town services and regulations. The overwhelming response to the survey was that people want the town to retain its rural character with historic buildings, open land, scenic roads and beautiful views. Therefore, any future development should consider these natural, historic and visual resources if they want to be successful in their development endeavors.

As we look to the future, townspeople should consider the implications of the following issues:

## **ENCOURAGING HOME-BASED AND SMALL BUSINESSES**

The town's policy is to support home-based and small businesses. Although high-speed internet service is available in some sections of West Windsor, availability should be expanded to make working out of one's home a realistic and attractive alternative to employment options that require a commute. Home-based businesses should expand as high-speed internet service expands. West Windsor's zoning regulations were revised in 2008 to include performance standards which address some of the potentially adverse impacts associated with home-based businesses such as excess light, noise, dust, etc. Home-based businesses that create high volumes of traffic should be encouraged to locate along the major routes in West Windsor.

## **AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY BUSINESSES**

It is unlikely that West Windsor will ever return to what would be considered a traditional farming town. In the 1930s, there were 94 dairy operations in town, today there are none. Yet agricultural enterprise is cyclical. Historically, sheep production boomed and then declined and was replaced by dairy farming. It is possible that smaller, more diversified agricultural enterprises will develop to take the place of dairy farms. This diversity can be seen in town today. There are beef cows, horses, llamas, alpacas, sheep, market gardens, tree farms and sugaring operations throughout the town. This type of diversity has the best chance of succeeding.

Over the past decade, and especially since West Windsor's 2006 town-wide reappraisal, Vermont's use value appraisal program has dramatically increased the number of acres being used for farming and forestry. In 2000, West Windsor had 1,470 acres (or 9.2% of the total acreage of the town) enrolled in the program. In 2009, West Windsor had 5,231 acres (or 32.7% of the total acreage of the town) enrolled in the program. Most of West Windsor's enrolled land is forest land (78.6%) as opposed to agricultural land (21.4%).

## **TOURISM/VACATION HOME DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism has become an increasingly important part of the town's economy. Towns like West Windsor, with its mountain, open fields, farmland, scenic vistas and traditional village area are an increasingly sought after place for vacationers looking for respite from ever expanding urban and suburban environments. Tourism can provide opportunities for residents who want to open Bed and Breakfasts, Inns and others forms of lodging. Services provided to second home owners can create additional jobs. These jobs may include maintenance, carpentry, snow plowing, electrical, plumbing and heating services, etc.

A potential result of vacation home development is the possibility of vacation units being converted to year-round family residences, particularly in the resort area. Nearly 50 percent of housing units within the town are considered seasonal. A shift in this percentage from seasonal or vacation use to year-round use by families with school age children could create demands that might exceed the present capacity of school and town facilities.

## **ASCUTNEY MOUNTAIN RESORT**

The first ski operation on Mount Ascutney began in the 1940s with the installation of a rope tow, which offered local families an affordable recreational pastime. In the 1980s there was rapid expansion of the area, including a marked increase in lodging and other forms of on-site accommodations. These changes were driven in part by ski industry market forces which compelled many ski areas, such as Ascutney Mountain Resort, to develop their real estate in order to try to remain profitable. However, this strategy did not prevent the Resort from declaring bankruptcy in the early 1990s. In 1994, the Plausteiner family purchased the Resort out of bankruptcy. Over the past fifteen years, the Resort owners have installed a high-speed quad chairlift, expanded the number of trails, built a skier bridge over Ski Tow Road, and made a number of other improvements to the Resort. In 2008, three of the five hotel buildings and the fitness center were sold to Florida-based Orange Lake Resorts.

The Ascutney Mountain Resort is the largest taxpayer in town and provides the town with many amenities, such as a restaurant and fitness center, not typically available in a town the size of West Windsor. The Resort also makes its facilities available for community programs and events, such as the Albert Bridge School's winter sports program.

As the ski industry changes and the resort responds to those changes, it is important that the resort and the town discuss potential projects that may impact the town, as early as possible, to avoid potential conflicts during the permitting process.

## **COMMERCIAL-INDUSTRIAL AREAS**

The Light Industrial/Commercial district is located at the west end of Route 44, near its intersection with Route 106. The five parcels of land in the Light Industrial/Commercial district include a single-family residence, a helicopter landing area, a veterinary clinic, the Lucy MacKenzie Humane Society, and the former talc plant.

In the mid-1960s, the talc plant was developed for the purpose of processing ore mined in nearby towns. In 2003, the talc plant ceased operations and Windsor Minerals, Inc. agreed to reclaim the 260-acre tailings disposal area south of the plant. The area will be made available to the public, for recreational purposes, after the reclamation has been completed. In 2004, Williams & Co. Mining purchased the 12-acre parcel containing the former talc plant building complex. In 2009, the Development Review Board granted conditional use approval to convert the facility to a wood pellet plant but a reduction in oil prices reduced the projected profitability of that venture and the plant remains closed.

Because of West Windsor's desire to remain rural and conserve its natural features and resources, any new industry in town should be located in the Light Industrial/Commercial district. Any new industry considering the town for its location would be evaluated based on its compatibility with those goals and its potential effects on the environment.

The primary areas for low-impact non-residential development are in the village of Brownsville (the area between the bridges) and in the resort base area.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

1. Support local businesses that provide well paying, sustainable jobs that support the local economy and are compatible with West Windsor's rural character.
2. Encourage compatible economic growth that includes mixed use and residential development in the area between the bridges in the village.
3. Encourage responsible Resort development that is sensitive to the town's limited services, rural character and conservation ethic.
4. Encourage home-based businesses as long as they consider adjacent land uses, traffic, noise, and other issues that may be offensive to neighbors in the area.
5. Support agricultural enterprises in the town that do not adversely impact ground or surface

water quality, harm natural resources or degrade the quality of life of adjacent property owners.

6. Balance future tourism and vacation home development against the impacts that such development may have on the qualities that draw people to West Windsor in the first place.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

1. Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study, including technical, political and economic dimensions, to determine the costs and benefits of a community wastewater system in the village area.
2. Continue a dialogue with the owners of Ascutney Mountain Resort (including Orange Lake Resorts) regarding their development plans.
3. Continue to actively support the propagation of high-speed internet services throughout the town.
4. Periodically review zoning regulations with regard to home businesses and home occupations to determine whether they adequately address the needs of both business owners and neighboring residents.

## **CHAPTER 12. RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL & REGIONAL PLANS**

In order for the town of West Windsor to carry out its land use planning goals, the town must evaluate the Town Plan in relation to plans of neighboring towns and the region. West Windsor is bordered by the towns of Windsor, Hartland, Woodstock, Reading and Weathersfield in Windsor County. West Windsor is located in the northern area of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission's 10-town region. West Windsor is served by the District 2 Environmental Commission, and is located in Maintenance District 4 of the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

### **NEIGHBORING TOWNS**

West Windsor is surrounded by towns that share many similar planning concerns and are faced with varying degrees of development pressure. All of the towns abutting West Windsor have Town Plans and zoning regulations, except Hartland, which has a Town Plan, but no zoning regulations. According to the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, none of these plans appear to be in conflict with the West Windsor Town Plan.

Some neighboring towns share West Windsor's concern for the protection of natural resources. West Windsor shares the watershed of the Mill Brook and its branches with the towns of Reading and Windsor. Based upon a review of current town plans from neighboring towns, the land use and conservation plans of the neighboring towns appear to be compatible with those of West Windsor.

### **SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY REGION**

The 2009 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 and 2006 Regional Bicycling and Walking Plan are companion documents to the West Windsor Town Plan, providing a broader framework and context for local planning efforts. The Town Plan supports and complements the land use and development goals of these regional planning documents.

The 2009 Regional Plan identifies the village area of Brownsville as a "Village Center," that is characterized by having a small area of concentrated development with a mix of residential, commercial and civic uses. The Future Land Use section of the Regional Plan indicates that Brownsville cannot sustain a large amount of growth based on its rural setting and limitations of available services. Growth pressure in Woodstock and the Upper Valley is already affecting the growth pressure in West Windsor, Hartland, Weathersfield, Reading and Windsor. The Regional Plan states that this anticipated growth should be directed within the higher density village area. This section is compatible with the West Windsor Town Plan, which has designated the village area as a mixed use area, containing commercial development and higher-density residential development.

While maintaining West Windsor's uniqueness and independence of thought and planning, the West Windsor Town Plan is compatible with 2009 Regional Plan of the Southern Windsor

County Regional Planning Commission in the concerns and goals expressed in Transportation, Land Use, Community Utilities and Facilities, Natural and Cultural Resources, Energy Resources, Housing and Economic Development.

According to the Southern Windsor County Regional Transportation Plan (which is a component of the 2009 Regional Plan), VT Route 44 and the Hartland-Brownsville Road are both identified as regionally important transportation corridors. VT Route 44 between Brownsville and US Route 5 in Windsor is a spur on the designated Connecticut River Scenic Byway.

## **CHAPTER 13. TOWN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation of the goals, policies and recommendations outlined in this Plan depends on the combined efforts of town residents and local officials, as well as the resources of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, and other regional, state, federal and private entities involved in land use planning activities.

At the state and federal levels, the Plan can be used to justify and prioritize the use of federal funds for community development, transportation improvements, natural resource protection and management, and other investments. In addition, Act 250 requires developers to show that projects conform to local and regional plans.

At the regional level, the Regional Planning Commission can review the Town Plan for compliance with the requirements of Act 200. Act 200 approval makes the town eligible to apply for implementation funding from the State in the form of Municipal Planning Grants.

At the local level, the town may take some of the following actions to implement the goals of this Plan:

1. Review and amend, if necessary, zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations so that they are based on the goals, policies and recommendations outlined in the Town Plan.
2. Refer to the Town Plan when planning additions and improvements to local infrastructure such as local roads and public utilities. Such additions or improvements should be used to plan for appropriate growth and development.
3. Work with public and private entities to help them design development or resource management plans in ways that will further the goals of this Plan.
4. Continue to plan and work to conserve important resource lands.
5. Request that the Regional Planning Commission create and update maps indicating the locations of state recognized natural resource areas.
6. Work with the Regional Planning Commission on meeting local housing needs.

### **TOOLS**

To implement and protect our values and vision, the Town should review, consider and adopt when appropriate the following tools:

- A comprehensive Capital Budget and Program for improvements to town property and infrastructure (to supplement the town's existing capital equipment budget);
- An inventory of natural areas, open space, agricultural and forest lands, aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, vernal pools, wildlife habitat, scenic views, historic sites, ridgelines and recreational trails;

- A Conservation Fund for the purchase of easements or development rights on land with exceptional scenic beauty, significant natural resources, critical wildlife habitat, or important recreational trails;
- A Recreation Plan & Trail Map;
- An updated Forest Management Plan;
- An Energy Plan;
- A Design Review Board and Design Review District for the village;
- A feasibility study on the costs and benefits, including technical, political and economic dimensions, of a community wastewater system in the village area;
- “Village Center” designation to allow property owners to get tax credits for renovating historic structures;
- A ½-acre residential district within the Primary Growth Village district;
- Relaxed size restrictions on accessory dwelling units (apartments);
- Stronger outdoor lighting standards;
- Ridgeline development restrictions, siting and screening standards, building envelopes and conservation subdivision design standards.

## APPENDIX A

### WEST WINDSOR STORY

*By Mary B. Fenn*

Looking north from the Brownsville Rock, high on Ascutney mountain, one can view the hills, valleys, fields and forest of the West Windsor township. Deep in the valley below is the tiny village of Brownsville with its white steepled church, yellow brick Town Hall and the large red brick, seven chimneyed home. It is a snug clutch of buildings which has changed little in the last 150 years. Tight to the base of the mountain is the Ascutney Resort, a complex of gray structures. Ski trails sprawl down the steep slopes, merging together by a main lodge. A recently enlarged school/community building makes its own statement on the north edge of the village. One can make out a blacktop highway which threads east and west, between Windsor and Reading. Another one runs north from the village toward the township of Hartland. A few of the houses by the dirt roads that wind through the folding hills date back over 200 years.

West Windsor was organized as an independent township October 26, 1848. Previous to that time it had been the West Parish of Windsor.

It was July 6, 1761 that Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire issued a charter to Colonel Josiah Willard of Winchester, New Hampshire, which "sued out" the grant for Windsor. Parcels of land were sold to settlers from New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut --to men and families who were anxious to move into this undeveloped country. Land was surveyed, roads laid out, trees were cut and homes were built, as a small community was cleared out of the wilderness.

The first recorded meeting of the proprietors was held November 3, 1767. It was noted that "New York lays claim to all lands west of the Connecticut River that were granted by the governor of New Hampshire." This was a confusing period in the history of what was later to become the state of Vermont. By 1769 early pioneers were making their "pitches" in the western part of the Windsor grant. Three years later the first map was drawn up. Lots and Ranges were laid out. A rough road/track was cut west from the settlement by the river, over several ridges through what was later to become the hamlet of Sheddsville, and on westward over more ridges.

At a July, 1778 town meeting the town of Windsor was officially divided into two equal parts. The East Parish, close to the river, was developing into a thriving commercial village. Self-sufficient farms were scattered through the hills of what was to become the West Parish. In 1783 the Vermont Legislature established the Parishes as two Ecclesiastical Societies.

Sheddsville, where several Shedd families settled, became the center of the West Parish. A meeting house was built and a cemetery laid out high on the hill above the tiny hamlet. A store, school and a blacksmith followed. A road led to the valley where water from Mill Brook produced power for a sawmill and gristmill. Annual Town Meetings were held alternately in the East and West Parishes.

Not only did the family lifestyles in the two parishes differ but there was friction. It was difficult to determine where problems lay. Traveling back and forth over the several steep hills was difficult. Much of the conflict had to do with the roads, and caring for the poor. Disagreements developed. November 4, 1814 a law was passed by the Legislature of the State of Vermont recording, "An act dividing the East and West Parishes of Windsor into separate and distinct towns." Almost a year and a half later, March 1, 1816, that act was formally repealed.

It was in 1810 that Consul-General William Jarvis of Weathersfield had introduced the Spanish merino sheep into Vermont. Both the people-population and the sheep-count in the parishes were growing steadily as old problems kept surfacing. Education didn't seem to be an issue. In 1823 there were 425 students registered in the 11 West Parish one-room schools. Large families were the rule. By 1847 the population in the West Parish had reached over 1000 people. The festering separation difficulties finally came to a head. On October 26, 1848 the Governor of Vermont approved and signed the House Bill # 69 entitled, "An Act to Divide the Town of Windsor, It is hereby enacted by the general assembly of the state of Vermont, as follows: ..." A line was drawn north and south between seventh and eighth ranges of lots. The portion east of said line was to be known as Windsor, and that portion lying westerly was to be known as West Windsor.

Water power and the mills attracted settlers to the valley. A second village, Brownsville, sprang up. A fulling and carding mill by the brook helped take care of the sheep farmers' wool processing needs.

Many farmers were motivated by the growing sheep industry. More trees were cut. Miles and miles of stone walls were built. The bare hills of West Windsor were dotted with over 7020 heavily jowled merino sheep. 1860 was the height of the sheep era in West Windsor. It was about that time that the American west was opening up and families were being lured to land that was far better for agriculture than the hills of Vermont.

As the sheep bubble started to burst many local farmers who didn't head west were switching their farming efforts from sheep to cows. Cheese and butter were profitable products. The men did the farming. Women made the cheese. In 1850 153 farmers had 506 milch cows which turned out 18,512 pounds of butter, while 72 of them turned out 20,800 pounds of cheese. Thirty years later records show that 114 farmers with 232 cows were producing 41,233 pounds of butter and only 5,652 pounds of cheese.

With the advent of railroads which reached up through Vermont it became possible to ship dairy products to Boston. Late in the 1800s a cooperative cheese factory was built at the west end of the village of Brownsville -- close to Mill Brook. Large barrels of cottage cheese, as well as Neufchatel and other soft cheeses, were shipped to Boston. A few years later a cooling plant for milk was built where the West Windsor Volunteer Fire Department building stands today. After the milk was processed it was poured into 40 quart, heavily jacketed milk cans, packed in ice, and shipped to Windsor where it was loaded on a train for the big city.

For several decades the dairy business remained fairly static. Barns were built, pastures fenced in, hay fields cleared, plowed, fertilized and planted. Milk was cooled and processed before

being shipped to the cities. The Gleaner Grange #282 was the organization which supported the farm community with agricultural education, cooperative buying opportunities, and fun social activities. However, families kept leaving the area for "greener pastures." By the turn of the century the population had dwindled to half of what it once was. When automobiles came on the scene men looked for jobs in surrounding towns. Some of them worked in Windsor's machine tool shops --often keeping a subsistence farm at home. They still kept shipping milk.

1915 was a special year for West Windsor. Members of the Gleaner Grange #282 had raised enough money and given enough of their personal hard labor to build their own hall. Saturday, August 16 the Hall was dedicated with great celebration.

When Dr. Darwin Story, from Proctorsville, died he left money to have a town hall built in the center of Brownsville, in memory of his father, Dr. Dyer Story. It was almost across the road from the Mary Blood Library, which had been given to the community in 1901 by Benjamin Blood. Dr. Dyer Story had cared for the people of West Windsor for over 50 years. At noon October 27, the day of the Town Hall dedication, a dinner was served at noon to 450 souls. It was an all day celebration with plenty of food and many speeches. It is said that 600 enjoyed dancing the night away.

West Windsor dairying reached its peak in 1930. 94 herds. 1706 cows.

For the next several decades times were not easy. Farms began to lose their value. The "depression" somewhat affected the area, though many families had their gardens, chickens and other animals to sustain them. West Windsor felt the impact of World War II as 62 of their men and boys enlisted or were drafted. Only one was killed but many others, knowing that jobs were scarce at home, did not return to the hills and life on the farms. State requirements for dairy farms had becoming more stringent. Pay was low for hired hands.

The complexion of the township was changing. When skiing became a growing sport, a woman who had moved into the area, installed a rope ski-tow at the base of Ascutney mountain. It was a beginning. Trails were cut, slicing the face of the mountain. Bob Ely, back from the war, invented snowmaking. The white stuff helped cover the rocks and steep pitches. Over the years improved lifts were installed. Housing for the skiers was made available as a succession of owners enlarged and upgraded the area.

In 1963 the local selectmen agreed it would be beneficial to the town to have Eastern Magnesia Talc Co. build their talc ore processing plant in the western part of town. Though the ownership changed several times over the next 50 years, the talc plant was a quiet, clean asset to West Windsor. It closed in 2004.

West Windsor had always been a likable, attractive, rural community. Interstate 91 made it reachable for people from "down-country" -- not only to ski, but to stay a while. Some bought old houses; others bought land and put up new houses. Some young people from suburbia and the cities wanted to bring up their children in a small country town. There were those who had a "second home" in the hills. Some folks came and stayed. Others, after a few years, returned from whence they came or moved on. There was a core of families whose forebears dated generations

back, to the early days. In the 1960s land values began to rise. Because of the proximity to Woodstock, home of the Green Mountain Horse Association, and some 58 miles of dirt roads, old barns were shored up, new barns built, and a few large horse arenas broke the line of scenic beauty. Property values continued to rise as large parcels were divided into smaller housing lots.

Today, most of those who are employed locally have jobs with the school, the General Store or in their own homes, thanks to computers and the internet. Others have employment in surrounding towns: Windsor, Claremont, Hanover, Lebanon, Woodstock, Springfield. At the end of the day they return to their homes in West Windsor, a wonderfully warm, friendly community -- a community with a white steepled church, a bustling little library, a Town Hall where, on the first Tuesday in March many residents gather for the annual Town Meeting, to have their say in how their town is run.

There are always big doings on the Fourth of July: a flea-market, a fantastic parade, games for the kids, barbecue cookout and a chance to see and enjoy the day with friends in town. And there are always the Bean Suppers in the summer for the benefit of the Historical Society and the School. In the winter months there are the roast beef suppers at the Methodist Episcopal community church. The residents of the town feel safe and protected knowing the high quality of the West Windsor Volunteer Fire Department, the FAST squad and our dependable constable.

## APPENDIX B

### Results of Community Survey on Town Plan Recommendations

**There are 781 registered voters in West Windsor. 92 voters (12%) completed the survey, which was conducted on March 2, 2010. Voters were asked to choose the 3 recommendations that they consider most important to accomplish in the next 5 years.**

1. Actively encourage the development of the infrastructure needed to provide up-to-date telecommunications technology, including high-speed internet access. (59)
2. Create a dedicated funding source for the purchase of conservation easements or development rights on land with exceptional scenic beauty, significant natural resources, critical wildlife habitat, or important recreational trails. (31)
3. Encourage small-scale residential alternative energy projects that are in keeping with the rural character of the town. (28)
4. Develop a town Recreation Plan, which includes a comprehensive trail map. (26)
5. Conduct energy audits of all town and school buildings and develop a capital budget for improvements that result in long-term energy and cost savings. (26)
6. Preserve existing tree canopies and stonewalls along town roads. (23)
7. Form a Design Review Board with the power to preserve historic structures and guide future development in keeping with the village aesthetics. (21)
8. Identify locally significant scenic resources, including ridgelines, and develop strategies for their protection, incl. development restrictions & screening standards. (20)
9. Strengthen the lighting standards in the zoning regulations to preserve the view of the night sky undiminished by light pollution. (20)
10. Assess the water quality of Mill Brook and its tributaries and address any situations that negatively impact water quality. (14)
11. Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to determine the costs and benefits of extending the sewer line into the village area. (7)
12. Allow ½-acre lots at the eastern end of the Primary Growth Village district, on parcels that are within 1,000 feet of the existing sewer line. (5)
13. Consider safety improvements to the intersection of Route 44 & Ski Tow Road. (4)
14. Reduce the size limits on accessory dwellings (apartments) to allow larger units. (3)