TOWN OF CHESTER, VERMONT

TOWN PLAN

Adopted by the Chester Select Board on July 15, 2015
Expires on July 15, 2020

Introduction

About the Town Plan

In accordance with 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117 (the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act, or "the Act"), the purpose of the Chester Town Plan is "*to guide future growth and development of land, public services and facilities, and to protect the environment*" in the best interest of the citizens of Chester. This Plan is intended to include all ten elements required by § 4382 and to be consistent with state planning goals in § 4302.

This Plan shall be updated every five years or more often in order to meet the changing needs of the town as necessary. Updates to the Plan shall be prepared by the Planning Commission and adopted by the Selectboard (24 V.S.A. §§ 4384, 4385).

The Town Plan was updated in 2009 through the efforts of the Chester Planning Commission with the assistance of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission. The 2009 update is largely based on input from the townspeople compiled through a series of outreach efforts including: the Town Planning Survey in April 2008, a Community Values Workshop in October 2008, and a Planning Workshop in January 2009. The natural resources and land use chapters are heavily based on the results of these outreach efforts. The survey and workshop results are summarized in Appendices A, B and C.

History of the Town of Chester

Chester was one of the first towns in Windsor County to be chartered by New Hampshire's Governor Bennington Wentworth. The grant, dated February 22, 1754, divided 23,040 acres into sixty-four equal parts and named it Flamstead. The conditions of the Charter were forfeited by the original proprietors leading to the Charter of New Flamstead, dated November 3, 1761.

The original proprietors, mostly from Worcester, MA, held their first meeting on the third Tuesday of December 1761 in Worcester. The first town meeting held in Chester occurred in March 1765. This was also the last meeting held under the New Hampshire grant, for in July of 1766, a third charter was executed by Governor Tryon of New York. Under this charter Thomas Chandler and thirty-four of his associates became proprietors of the town, now called Chester. At the present time, these three original charters are displayed in the conference room of the Town Hall.

The New York charter also named Chester as the seat of Cumberland County making it the site of the county jail and courthouse with Judge Thomas Chandler presiding. This did not sit well with other residents of the county as Chester was referred to as "a distance from the Connecticut River" and "backward compared with other settlements." Judge Chandler attempted to squelch this argument by promising to build "a good and sufficient courthouse and jail" at his own expense. His efforts were a failure and in 1772 the county supervisors selected Westminster as the county seat. (Aldrich and Holmes, History of Windsor County Vermont, Syracuse N.Y., D Mason & Co., p. 667.)

Chester's next claim to fame occurred at a special Town Meeting held October 10, 1774 wherein the residents of the town:

"*Resolved,* firstly, That the people of America are naturally entitled to all of the privileges of freeborn subjects of Great Britain, which privileges they have never forfeited.

"*Resolved,* secondly, That every man's estate, honestly acquired, is his own and no person on earth has a right to take it away without the proprietor's consent, unless he forfeits it by some crime of his committing.

"*Resolved,* thirdly, That all acts of the British Parliament tending to take away or abridge their rights ought not to be obeyed.

"*Resolved,* fourthly, That the people of this town will join with their fellow American subjects in opposing in all lawful ways every encroachment on their natural rights."

Chester did not suffer directly from the Revolutionary War, although many soldiers from the Town served in the war. Its one brief experience occurred in August of 1777 when General Stark marched his troops from Charlestown, NH through Chester South Village on the way to the Bennington battlefield. (Aldrich and Holmes)

Chester's growth was probably predicated on its location at the intersection, first of important stagecoach lines, and later railroad lines. Green Mountain Turnpike, the major route from Boston to Montreal still runs through Chester, both under its own name and that of Route 103. In addition, the present Main Street was the route from Hanover, NH to Albany, NY. (League of Women Voter, This is Chester 1766 - 1966)

As a result of those thoroughfares three villages grew up in Chester: South Village along Main Street, Chester Depot and Gassetts, named for the stationmaster for the Burlington and Rutland Railroad. The Town expanded rapidly: the first census in 1791 listed it as having a population of 981, but by 1820 the population exceeded 2400. The Town included four grist mills, nine saw mills, three fulling mills, one oil mill, two woolen factories, five stores, six taverns, one distillery and four tanneries. During this period there was established the Chester Academy in addition to the nineteen school districts with school buildings, the poor farm and the Congregational, Baptist and Universalist churches.

Chester did its part in the Civil War. At a meeting in May of 1861 it was voted to equip the first volunteers with a $10.00 bounty, a Colt's revolver and a bowie knife. In 1884 the Town appropriated $2,000.00 to erect the soldier's monument in front of the cemetery on Main Street.

Unfortunately, one of the side effects of that war and the opening of the West was a drain on the population. By 1933, the Vermont Year Book lists Chester as having a population of 1,666 and a tax rate of $3.00 based on a grand list of $14,042.00.

Population and Demographics

An important aspect of any town plan is a good understanding of population and demographic trends and future projections. This analysis provides a broad overview of the demographics of the Town. In turn, it helps planners determine how much growth the Town may expect in a given amount of time, and how to plan for future educational, housing, utility, and facility needs.

Between 1970 and 2000 the population grew from 2,371 to 3,044 according to the 2000 census data. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates Chester's 2006 population at 3,055, a modest increase since 2000. The majority of this growth came between 1970 and 1980 with a 17.7%

increase. The census data indicates the 1990 to 2000 rate of population increase was 7.49%, from 2832 to 3044. In the last ten years the rate of population increase for Windsor County was 6.22%, and the towns of Cavendish and Ludlow increased by 11.11% and 6.39%, respectively. Springfield decreased in population -5.23% in that same period. Andover and Baltimore increased in population by more than 30% in the same period. Ludlow, Windsor and Springfield each lost population between 1960 and 2000 at the rate of -4.0%, -4.0% and -17.0%, respectively.

The age distribution also changed during this period. The number of school-age children in Chester fell between 1970 and 2000, while the number and percentage of persons between 18 and 65 and elderly (over 65) increased (Table 1). It is expected that the elderly population in Chester and statewide will continue to grow as a segment of the population.

Chester's density is at 50 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Compared to towns in the southern Windsor County region, the Town of Chester has remained above the median range in population density. The towns of Windsor and Springfield ranged between 230-235 persons per square mile, while smaller more rural communities averaged ranged between 9.5 for Andover to 73 for Ludlow.

Table 1 - Chester Population and Age Distribution – 1970 to 2000

	1970		1980		1990		2000	
Population	2,371		2,791		2,832		3,044	
Age	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
< 18	804	34%	793	28%	782	28%	731	24%
18 - 64	1,285	54%	1,659	59%	1,659	59%	1822	60%
> 65	282	12%	339	13%	391	13%	491	16%
Totals	2,371	100%	2,791	100%	2,832	100%	3,044	100%

In Chester during the period between the year 1980 and 2000, while the total number of housing units increased from 1,368 to 1,611, the number of housing units "for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use" decreased from 260 to 250 units, and now this type of housing is 15.5% of the total housing, down from 19% in 1980. These figures show the number permanent resident housing has grown faster than the seasonal, recreation, and occasional use housing. This trend may not continue given the expansion of Okemo Mountain Resort in the neighboring Town of Ludlow. The Town should watch seasonal, recreational, and occasional use housing numbers in planning for infrastructure and services. Whereas the educational facilities may not be impacted by second home growth, facilities such as roads and bridges, water and sewer systems may see expanded use.

Chester has experienced increasing levels of growth in recent years. Between 2006 and 2007, conditional use permits have increased 140%. While subdivision permits increased 58%, the number of lots created increased 80% in that same timeframe. Growth in Chester and the region as a whole has slowed considerably since the economic downturn in 2008.

Recent commercial growth has been in rural parts of the Town. Of the 24 conditional use permits issued in 2007 (which were primarily for commercial uses), only 10 were located in the village areas.

Goals and Objectives

The people of Chester desire to maintain the rural character of the community while encouraging the economic well-being of its residents. The rural character is exemplified by the many attributes of the Town; the vast amount of wooded and undeveloped areas; the unique villages and the streams and abundant wildlife. The Town of Chester illustrates a traditional village character. A mixture of residential and commercial uses exist in harmony. As development pressures increase upon the Town and less densely populated areas, it is vital that the unique characteristics of the Town be preserved. The Town wishes to continue a mixture of residential and commercial development.

Most residents indicate a preference for rural character rather than an urban or suburban community. They want growth to occur at a pace and in a manner which does not destroy the character of the community or result in significant tax increases. Growth deemed good for the Town should enhance the social, environmental, cultural, and economic values of the Town. It should not undermine the ability of the taxpayers to support the Town on a sound financial basis. The following goals and recommendations provide a general overview of the direction in which the residents of Chester would prefer to see the Town develop.

Goal 1: To encourage development so as to maintain the existing settlement pattern of compact village centers separated by rural countryside.

Recommendations:

1. Intensive residential development should be encouraged only in the areas of the Town serviced by sewer and water; strip development along the highways should be discouraged.
2. Residential development that occurs in designated rural areas should be designed so as to prevent negative impacts to natural, cultural and aesthetic resources.
3. Development should be discouraged on slopes greater than 15%.
4. Development on ridge lines should be limited.
5. Business and industrial growth should occur in areas adjacent to where business and industry now exist and where town water and sewer are available or plan to be made available.
6. Public investments, including the construction or expansion of the infrastructure, should reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area.
7. Development should be consistent with the existing density pattern of the area and consistent with an historic rate of growth.
8. Growth and development should occur at a rate which does not undermine the taxpayers' ability to support the town on a sound financial basis.

Goal 2: To encourage a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities.

Recommendations:

1. Economic growth should build upon expansion of existing businesses or encourage businesses that support the goals and aspirations of the community.
2. Economic growth should be encouraged in village centers and area designated for industry on the Future Land Use Map and should be employed to revitalize and rehabilitate existing village centers.
3. Home occupations are encouraged as long as they are appropriate to adjoining land uses, and do not adversely affect air, water or scenic resources or cause noise that is offensive to surrounding neighbors.
4. Businesses that employ sound environmental practices should be promoted.

Goal 3: To maintain and broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for all Town residents.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage development of educational and cultural opportunities for all residents.
2. Support community wide cultural events and activities.

Goal 4: To encourage and maintain a safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation network.

Recommendations:

1. Improvement or expansion of public utilities and transportation should occur along existing corridors to encourage desired development patterns.
2. Alternative forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling and public transportation should be encouraged.

Goal 5: To identify and protect important natural and historical features of the Vermont landscape, including woodland, wetlands, scenic and significant archeological sites, significant architecture, villages, wildlife habitats and agricultural land.

Recommendations:

1. Include important resource areas on Future Land Use Map and develop a conservation plan to protect and preserve those features.
2. Encourage the renovation and preservation of historic buildings in village centers.
3. Discourage development within flood plains to the extent that it will cause damage to natural or manmade resources.

Goal 6: To maintain or improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources.

Recommendations:

1. Discourage development in areas of natural, cultural and scenic significance.
2. Support state and federal policies and standard to protect the water quality of the Town's rivers, streams and groundwater supplies.
3. Support measures to encourage areas for habitat for wildlife.
4. Encourage the use of transportation systems that have minimal impacts on air quality.
5. Continue policies and practices that promote the extraction of minerals in a manner that ensures that land and water resources are minimally impacted.

Goal 7: To encourage the efficient use of energy through conservation and the use of renewable energy resources.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage the development of a transportation system that encourages the use of public transportation and ride-sharing and enables increased non-motorized vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Emphasize links between schools, stores, work and home.
2. Help to ensure that the design, location and maintenance of existing and future transportation systems are consistent with the land use patterns recommended in the Town Plan.
3. Encourage the location of community service structures, retail sites, public utilities, day care centers, state offices and other frequently visited sites within walking distance of residential areas.

Goal 8: To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and maintain good recreational plans and infrastructure to provide recreation opportunities for all residents and visitors.
2. Ensure public access to important natural and scenic resource areas for recreational use.

Goal 9: To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

Recommendations:

1. Forest and agricultural lands should be considered for their forest and agricultural potential prior to any non-forest or non-agricultural use.
2. Encourage businesses and industries that add value to locally produce agricultural or forestry products.

Goal 10: To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet present and future needs.

Recommendations:

1. Analyze current facilities and assess future needs to determine potential demands of infrastructure.
2. Enact a "Capital Program and Budget Plan" for public utilities and facilities.

Goal 11: To encourage availability of safe and adequate housing.

Recommendations:

1. Housing should meet the needs of diverse social and income groups.
2. New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.
3. All types of housing should be encouraged in the Town of Chester.

Chapter 1 - Land Use

The two most important considerations in determining desirable land uses are:

- Does it appear, from objective evidence, expert opinion, public opinion or common sense that the proposed use in the area proposed will be good for Chester and the majority of its residents?
- If it is good for Chester and most of its residents, is the proposed location compatible with the proposed use of the land?

The land use recommendations of the Town Plan should reflect both of these criteria in guiding the future growth of the Town. A use which will have an undue adverse effect on the Town should not be undertaken, even if the land is perfectly capable of supporting it. A use which the land cannot support should not be undertaken, even if it might otherwise be good for the Town.

The survey and public workshops indicate a preference for encouraging a vibrant village area and conserving the working landscape surrounding the village. Growth should occur at a pace and in a manner which does not destroy the rural character of the Town. Planning for growth and development should enhance the social, environmental, cultural and economic values of a rural community. The ability of the taxpayers to support the Town on a sound financial basis should remain as a basic consideration in future land use planning.

Current Land Use

Land use in the Town of Chester follows patterns of traditional Vermont villages. (See the Current Land Use Map.) The traditional village area includes Main Street, the Depot and Stone Village that feature a mixture of commercial, industrial, and residential uses, with services such as a post office, health care, the elementary school, bus stops, and municipal offices. The village center is served by municipal water and sewer service, while outlying areas are served by private wells and on-site septic systems. Residential areas outside the village centers are primarily rural in nature, and of low or moderate density.

The majority of the land area in the Town is forested land. Steep slopes, undeveloped ridgelines, rivers and large wetland areas not only add to the scenic beauty of the landscape, but are also important habitat areas for fur bearing wild game and birds. Open fields and agricultural lands are important assets to the Town and define its rural character.

The list below was compiled from the 2008 Chester Grand List. It illustrates the distribution of land parcels among the different Grand List use categories.

Of Chester's 33,892.31 acres of land (which does not include the area taken by state and local roads and highways), roughly 118.3 acres are state lands: 2.2 acres for the Agency of Transportation's garage, 8.1 acres of Department of Fish and Wildlife land, and 108 acres of the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation Lands, with the remaining lands being privately owned. An additional 694 acres of land are town lands, as discussed in more detail in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter.

Future Land Use

The population in Chester is increasing; the number of housing units has increased over the last ten years. The ongoing and planned growth of Okemo Mountain Resort and other ski areas may put some residential and commercial development pressure on the town of Chester. The current zoning map designates uses and areas of development that are sufficient to handle most of the development in the foreseeable future. The Town is currently developing a VT Route 103 Corridor Management Plan to address growth along the highway corridor in coordination with the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, VTrans and the Town of Rockingham.

The Future Land Use map is a representation of the basic land use patterns that the Town would like to see develop in the years to come. It is intended to show the types and relative concentrations of development that are most appropriate for different parts of Chester. This information is meant to: (1) help the Town to maintain and update effective implementation bylaws; (2) give clear guidance on local priorities in state planning and regulatory proceedings; and (3) provide landowners and developers with a tool that will help them locate and design projects in efficient and locally acceptable ways.

It is based on historical development patterns, public input received in the 2008 planning survey and planning workshops, locations where public water and sewer infrastructure support dense mixed-use development, and rural areas that support low-density uses and a working landscape. Workshop participants cherish the historic village area and encourage future growth that will not diminish the historical character or vitality of the village. The most intensive development (commercial, industrial and higher-density residential) should occur in and around the village area. Outlying areas should grow at a slower pace, and should see relatively lower-intensity and lower-density uses.

The Future Land Use Map includes the following categories:

Forest

The majority of land in Chester is forested. The Forest areas support a variety of uses and encompass predominantly large parcels or tracts that are valuable for working landscape related uses, including forestry and extraction. In addition, these areas also contribute to the town's rural character, and serve as habitat for wildlife and outdoor recreational uses, including cross-country ski trails, snowmobile trails, hiking and hunting, with the cooperation of the owner of the land. The contiguity of large blocks of forest land is important for many types of wildlife, especially for large mammals such as deer, bear, and moose, as well as for forestry management and recreational activities. The forest areas designated on the Future Land Use Map include large, remote land parcels that support these valuable land uses. These also coincide with areas identified in the 2008 planning workshop by Chester residents as important resource areas that serve important functions as wildlife habitat, forest lands and recreational uses. Any development which occurs in forest areas should be designed so that these important recreational, forestry and habitat areas are maintained wherever possible. The ability of forest areas to provide these benefits should not be significantly impaired. Development in these areas should be undertaken in ways that protect their value and ensure the continued presence of healthy forest ecosystems in the Town. Applications for local zoning permits and Act 250 permits for extraction operations shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for positive benefits

for the town as well as negative impacts on the environment, infrastructure and adjacent land uses. Cluster development could be considered in these areas for the maximization of forest preservation.

Farmlands

Farms have historically been important to the Town's economy, food supply, and cultural heritage. There are only a few active farms in Chester now, but there are many other properties with hayfields or other open space that contribute to the land use patterns and aesthetic qualities that make the Town a desirable place to live, work, and visit. In addition, large, contiguous areas of prime agricultural soils (as defined by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) might be valuable for future farming. . The potential for agricultural use and production should not be impaired in designated agricultural areas. Cluster development could be considered in these areas for the preservation of open lands.

Public Lands

Outdoor recreation opportunities are a vital part of the Town's economy and quality of life. Public lands that support these activities – within the confines of the primary use – include the Williams River State Forest, Green Mountain Union High School lands, and the Water Department land off Reservoir Road, as discussed in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter. These areas should be conserved and efforts made to enhance publicly accessible recreation opportunities where possible. .

Rural

Rural areas can support a number of different uses, including low density residential, forest, agricultural (including tree farms and other horticultural uses), open, and transitional (scrub/shrub). The densities of existing development vary throughout the rural areas, ranging from no development to a cluster of homes surrounding the intersection of two roads (e.g. the intersections of Flamstead Road and Cummings Road, and Cavendish Road and Dean Brook Road). The primary concern in rural areas shall be to discourage sprawl and strip development, and to maintain existing, low-density settlement patterns. Growth is encouraged to follow the traditional patterns by concentrating in higher densities at these historic crossroad areas. Cluster development is encouraged wherever possible, as long as the overall density remains low. Open space and recreational resources should be preserved wherever possible.

Mixed Use Village

The village centers, that is, Main Street and the Green, Depot area, and Stone Village, currently have a mixture of high density residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses. These areas should remain as they are in character and settlement pattern. Commercial development has historically been located in the village centers, and is encouraged to occur in these areas because of the availability of Town water and sewage. Commercial development in mixed use areas should be surrounded and interspersed with high density residential, public and light industrial uses. These areas are intended to continue the long tradition of Vermont's village

centers. Development in these areas should be of the highest density in the Town, and should facilitate development of a circulation system that accommodates pedestrians and other non-motorized travel. New development should not detract from the historic character and aesthetic qualities of the village centers. Affordable housing, assisted living facilities and multi-family residential are encouraged in these areas, and discouraged in rural areas that are far from services available in the village.

Hamlet

The Hamlet area in Gassetts currently exhibits a mixture of moderate density commercial, industrial and residential uses. Density in Gassetts is limited due to soil limitations, as no public water or wastewater services are currently available. Development and redevelopment in this area should continue in the current moderate density, with a mix of commercial, light industrial and residential uses. Access management is a consideration as this location receives a lot of truck traffic and the intersection of VT Routes 10 and 103 is a high crash location.

Special Considerations

There are several important considerations within any of the land use categories above that merit special attention. These special considerations include:

Important Natural Resources - They include: floodplains; vegetated areas next to surface waters; wetlands; Natural Heritage Inventory sites; critical deer wintering habitat and bear habitat as defined by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; regionally significant historic sites; and other locally defined sensitive natural areas and scenic resources. Development should be planned as to minimize negative impacts to these resources, while ensuring the economic benefit to the owner of the land.

Industrial - Industrial uses are allowable under conditional use review within the mining and commercial zoning districts, and should be compatible with adjacent land uses with respect to traffic, noise, vibrations, or other impacts in conflict with residential and some commercial uses.

Hazardous Materials - Hazardous materials, either from within or outside the State of Vermont, shall not be imported to and/or disposed of within the boundaries of the Town of Chester, except in accordance with accepted business practices as permitted by State law.

Mineral Deposits - The mining or extraction of soil, sand, gravel, stone, bedrock, talc and other minerals and hydrocarbons within the Town of Chester should be encouraged within the zoning districts where these are allowed. Adequate regulations shall be established to protect the public health, safety, comfort, and welfare, to reduce negative impacts on essential wildlife habitat, and to control noise, dust, vibration, air and water pollution, and to assure the restoration of the land after mining is completed.

While residential development may be expected in almost all land use categories, higher densities should be concentrated in and around established village areas. Residential development should be compatible with the land use and housing goals of this plan, and should not conflict with the values defined in the land use categories of this plan.

Timing of Development

Chester is a rural community, which has historically seen family-by-family growth. Chester residents wish to continue this steady and well paced pattern of growth, and to the extent possible, prevent sudden large increases in population which would place undue stress on Town facilities and village character.

Land Use Goals

1. To preserve the historical development pattern or mixed-use village areas surrounded by open land, agriculture, forest, and low-density residential use.
2. To direct growth and development in Town where it will be most effective and efficient to provide the necessary public infrastructure and services.
3. To achieve the concentration of infrastructure development within the village area and areas identified in this chapter as areas desirable for growth.
4. To establish land uses and land use patterns that protect and enhanced the values defined in this chapter.
5. To provide a Town highway system that encourages and complements historic land use patterns.

Land Use Policies

1. Revitalization of village commercial, residential and mixed-use areas, including the appropriate use, maintenance and reuse of existing historic structures and other existing buildings whenever possible, should be encouraged.
2. Excessive commercial development along VT Routes 10, 11 and 103 (i.e., strip development) is discouraged. Access management and innovative commercial development that maintain the characteristics of the existing village areas and greens, is encouraged.
3. Maintaining the density pattern for residential development that protect or enhance the existing settlement patterns and resources is encouraged.
4. In order to maintain the existing settlement patterns, higher density residential, commercial, and industrial development should be located in the village areas of the Town, and within walking distance of most of the residents of the village.
5. Necessary transportation improvements, especially road and bridge maintenance, public transit options, car and van pooling, or other techniques to utilize existing infrastructure should be supported.
6. The Town should make efforts to attract and locate viable and appropriate businesses in areas targeted by the town for economic development.
7. Residential and mixed use development tailored to the tourist and ski industries

should be sited and designed to protect the settlement patterns, commercial development and natural resources of the Town.

8. Use of public funding for the maintenance or improvement of infrastructure, development of affordable housing, and conservation of natural resources is encouraged.
9. Development adjacent to significant natural resources (waterways, large forested areas, wildlife habitat, etc) should be compatible with the value of those resources and negative impacts on the natural resource should be mitigated with buffer strips or visual screening, where this will be effective mitigation and where possible.
10. The elimination or mitigation of the adverse effects of development on the natural resources that extend beyond Town borders or which are regionally significant should be considered and is encouraged.
11. The location of municipal and other government buildings should be in established village areas in order to maintain and encourage pedestrian access and the vitality of the village areas.
12. Programs that help owners of farm and forestland bear the burden of the mandated financial responsibility for resource protection should be supported.
13. Any proposed development should not place an undue burden upon Town facilities or services.
14. Preserve the historical development pattern of mixed-use village areas surrounded by open land, agriculture, mining, forest, and low-density residential use.

Land Use Recommendations

1. Develop effective land use regulations that are consistent with the purpose and intent of this Town Plan.
2. Evaluate proposed development projects for possible adverse effects to important natural resources, both within and beyond town borders.
3. Develop effective bylaws, including zoning and subdivision regulations that are consistent with the purpose and intent of this Town Plan and the needs and plans of abutting Towns and the Region.
4. Encourage, and communicate to the state and federal agencies, the necessity for notice to the town of plans for, or discussion of, the location or relocation of government buildings within the Town, to the Town, or from the Town.
5. Consider zoning provisions, such as access management, cluster development, planned unit developments and/or transfer of development rights, to better implement the vision established in this Town Plan.
6. Continue the development of the VT Route 103 Corridor Management Plan and incorporate the findings into the Town Plan.
7. Encourage efforts to revitalize the traditional village center and to develop an application for village center designation under 24 V.S.A. § 2793a.

Chapter 2 – Transportation

Chester has experienced a large increase in automobile and truck traffic in recent years, especially on VT Route 103 which is part of the National Highway System (NHS) and Vermont Truck Network (VTN). Recreational and commercial traffic travels down VT Route 103 causing seasonal weekend congestion and potentially dangerous conditions. Thus, for VT Route 103 as part of the NHS and VTN, mobility and convenience for regional travel are most important. However, it is also a local road for Chester residents for whom mobility and speed are reduced in importance, presenting the classical functional conflict between roadway uses. As a result mobility, convenience and safety all suffer. The residents of Chester feel this conflict and are faced with the challenge of balancing the need to provide for increased traffic on State and local roads while maintaining traffic safety and the rural character and quality of life that are some of the town's greatest assets.

Roadway Inventory

State Highways

State highways connect large population areas outside Chester. Those highways passing through Chester are VT Routes 10, 11 and 103. There are 19.1 miles of state highways in Chester.

VT Route 103 runs southeast to northwest from I-91 in Rockingham to Route 7 just south of Rutland. It has been part of the National Highway System (NHS) since 1997 and prior to becoming a part of the NHS this Route has served large trucks and oversized loads for years. The NHS roads are intended to be part of an "interconnected system of principal arterial routes" and "serve interstate and interregional travel." This Route is also designated as part of the Vermont Truck Network and this designation allows trucks that are 72 feet in overall length to travel on the Network without a permit from the Department of Motor Vehicles. Trucks of this length traveling on highways off of the Network are required to get a permit, which encourages more trucks to use VT 103. Truck traffic averages about 10 percent of the total traffic volume along VT Route 103 in southern Windsor County.

Running east to west across the southern section of Chester, VT Route 11 connects I-91 in Springfield to Route 7 in Manchester Center. Truck traffic is 7.6 percent of the total volume of VT Route 11 between Springfield and Chester.

VT Route 10 runs east to west from North Springfield to Route 103 in Gassetts. Truck traffic is 6.1 percent of the total traffic volume on Route 10, between North Springfield and Gassetts.

Town Highways

In the Town of Chester there are presently 2.559 miles of Class 1 town highways. VT Routes 11 and 103 become Class 1 town highways as they pass through the village. These sections of the state numbered routes are maintained by the town with funds being provided to the town through the State Aid Funding program; however, the Vermont Agency of Transportation is responsible for scheduled road resurfacing and center line pavement markings. The town has 12.609 miles of Class 2 town highways, formerly state aid highways or roads that connect town to town. Grafton Road (VT Route 35), Green Mountain Turnpike, Church Street,

Flamstead Road, and the Andover Road are examples of Class 2 Highways. There are 75.250 miles of Class 3 town highways, roads that the Selectboard has designated for year-round maintenance. There are more than 7 miles of known Class 4 town highways in Chester. Class 4 town highways are all other town roads, not including ancient roads or trails, and are not maintained by the town. Class 4 town highways are highly valued as recreational assets by residents.

Act 178, enacted in May 2006, established a new town highway classification for "unidentified corridors," and encourages towns to conduct research to inventory all ancient town roads. Prior to adoption of this legislation, there was never a reason to inventory Class 4 town highways; Chester – like many towns – does not have comprehensive records of where these legal roads still exist. The Town has hired a consultant to conduct the research to identify these old roads.

Trails, established as a public right-of-way under 19 V.S.A. § 302, are not maintained by the town but provide recreational opportunities for residents. There are no trails currently in Chester.

The State and Town Highways and the classification of each are shown on all Maps in this Plan.

A section of Popple Dungeon Road is eroding and sliding into the river. The Town has made arrangements with an adjacent land owner to move that section of road away from the river bank, and is seeking the financing to fund construction.

Based on the on-going VT Route 103 corridor planning efforts, the following intersections were identified as having safety and/or congestion problems. The town should work with the SWCRPC and VTrans to address these needs.

1. "The Triangle" consisting of the intersections of Main Street, Grafton Road and Maple Street; Depot Street and Maple Street; and Depot Street and Main Street;
2. Intersection of VT Route 103 and VT Route 11 East;
3. Intersection of VT Route 103 and VT Route 10.

Bridges and Culverts

The Town of Chester has 78 large drainage structures, including bridges with a 20 foot or greater span and culverts with a 6 foot or greater span. Based on regular inspections by VTrans and the federal sufficiency rating criteria, 13 structures are eligible for replacement and 27 for rehabilitation. Money spent now to rehabilitate those 27 bridges, can add life to the structures and save significant amounts of money to replace those same bridges later if no preventative maintenance is done.

There are approximately 600 other shorter bridges and smaller culverts in town. The Chester Highway Department maintains an inventory of these bridges and culverts.

The stone culvert under North Street in the Stone Village is failing and needs to be replaced. The Highway Department has secured funds to engineer the project and is seeking funding for construction.

Existing Traffic Conditions

Traffic on VT Route 103 in the Town of Chester, and especially in the Village of Chester,

is a growing concern to local residents. Given the lack of a limited access east-west highway in the state, traffic patterns in southern Vermont tend towards Route 103, which serves as a direct route between the north-south arteries of I-91 and US 7. In addition to supporting the travel needs of its local residents, Route 103 carries a large portion of truck traffic, seasonal tourist traffic and recreation related commuters.

Route 103 provides access to Okemo Mountain Resort in Ludlow, and also carries traffic destined for Killington via Route 100 and Route 4. There are inevitable conflicts between traffic trying to pass through Chester, and traffic that is trying to access service in the village, resulting in congestion and reduced traffic safety. This congestion is especially pronounced during ski season because of the very high, sharp peaks of traffic at the beginning and end of busy ski weekends. In particular during these high peaks of seasonal tourist and recreation related traffic and the nearly continuous weekday commercial truck traffic the intersection of Route 103/Route 11 and Maple St. becomes congested and safety is compromised. The turning radius for commercial vehicles is extremely tight. At this intersection the long trucks and the busses need to wait for traffic to clear the intersection before making the turn, thus blocking the traffic behind them, and temporarily block all lanes at this intersection during the turning movement.

VT Route 11 west experiences heavy truck volumes as it connects Chester to I-91 in Springfield. In addition, it also connects VT Route 103 to VT Route 30 in Winhall and US Route 7 in Manchester. Tourist traffic on Route 11 west bound for Manchester and Magic and Bromley Mountains is also significant.

The following are the Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts (AADT), in 2006 or 2007, for the Town of Chester.

In Village of Chester

Route	Location	AADT
103	Between VT 11 East and Maple Street	8,500
	10 feet north of Marshall Road 6,700	
	200 feet south of Green Mountain Trnpk.	4,800
11	0.1 mile east of Cobleigh Street	5,200
Grafton Road (VT 35)	0.1 mile south of Main Street (VT 11)	1,300

Outside the Village of Chester

Route	Location	AADT
103	Near Chester - Rockingham line	5,200
	Just north of Goodrich Road	4,600
11	Near Chester - Springfield line	4,000
	0.2 miles east of Green Mountain Trnpk.	4,100
	Just west of Reservoir Road	4,000
	At Chester – Andover line	2,400
10	Near Chester - Springfield line	3,300
	Between Mineral Spring and Davidson Hill	3,100
Andover Road	0.1 mile east of Potash Brook Rd.	1,000

Chester traffic in relation to other Towns

The village of Woodstock, VT (sitting on the US Route 4 corridor), much like Chester, is perceived to be overburdened with traffic, specifically truck traffic. Much like Chester, Woodstock is home to a tourist intensive, pedestrian-friendly village center. Ludlow, VT (north of Chester on Route 103) is also home to high levels of truck traffic and receives heavy ski season traffic.

AADT east of the village of Woodstock in Hartford is 4,900, with 8.7 percent of that traffic being in the form of trucks. West of Woodstock village traffic is 5,900, of which 8 percent is trucks. Within the Village of Woodstock AADT is 12,900 with 7.8 percent of the traffic being trucks.

AADT south of the Village of Ludlow is 9,200, of which 7.9 percent is truck traffic. Once in the Village, just south of the Okemo Mountain access road, traffic increases to 10,000, of which 9 percent is trucks. North of the Village the AADT is 8,500.

Because Route 4 in Woodstock, like Route 103, serves as an east-west corridor between I-91 and Route 7 in Rutland, truck traffic in Chester and Ludlow is affected by restrictions on truck travel through the Village of Woodstock. The more restrictions on use by trucks through Woodstock, the more truck traffic will use Route 103 and impact Chester and Ludlow with a higher number of trucks using the Route 103 corridor. Truck traffic levels on VT Route 103 is similar to the statewide average for state highways of the same functional classification (principal arterials), but it remains a concern for the residents of Chester and Ludlow.

Seasonal Traffic

Ski resorts pose special challenges to Vermont's road system. Ski areas are typically connected to the interstate highways by older, narrow two-lane rural and village roads and bridges. The number of ski resorts in Vermont has been declining since 1970; conversely, the remaining resorts are currently undergoing significant expansion. While this smaller number of ski resorts have undergone moderate to high levels of growth, the roads and bridges that service those resorts have not seen appreciable improvement since the early 1970's.

With Killington and Okemo becoming four season resorts, the traffic during spring, summer and fall may increase significantly, causing short term peaks in other seasons of the year. While Chester struggles with the added traffic from the recreation generated traffic using the narrow rural roads, it benefits economically from those passing through the Town availing themselves of the goods and services provided by the business community of Chester. It is important for the economic life of the Town that future maintenance and road construction take into consideration the economic benefit of continuing the flow of through traffic through the commercial areas of the village of Chester.

In 2001, a *Ski Corridor Traffic Management Study* was developed by the Southern Windsor County RPC, Rutland RPC, and Two Rivers Ottauquechee RPC working with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Killington and Okemo Mountain ski resorts. The purpose of the study was to identify short-, mid- and long-range strategies to assess the impacts of and to mitigate traffic generated by the region's ski resorts. The report contains roadway mitigation strategies, such as control and design of curb cuts to manage access, turning lanes to channelize traffic and prevent traffic backup, roadway realignment, zoning controls on setbacks and use, and enhancement of pedestrian and bike facilities to all for alternative access for town residents during peak traffic periods. It also includes mitigation strategies for the resorts and

destination facilities, which the Town may desire to require of the resorts and facilities in mitigation of the effects of traffic generated by expansion or improvement of the resort. A corridor travel time model was also developed as part of this study in order to measure the traffic impacts of ski resort expansion along the ski corridor, including VT Route 103 through Chester. The intersection of Main Street and Maple Street (VT Routes 103 and 11 West), experiences significant congestion during the peak traffic on Friday evenings, Sunday afternoons and holiday weekends. Town traffic control, paid for by Okemo Mountain Resort, used during peak times at this intersection improves congestion significantly.

Commuter Patterns

The implications of commuting patterns relate to all aspects of transportation planning. Of particular concern are traffic flow, peak hour traffic patterns, and the capacity and maintenance of the infrastructure. It is important to take into account the size, density and location of population and employment when planning for infrastructure improvements and public transportation needs.

According to 2000 U.S. Census data, Chester had the fourth highest number (537) of workers in the region who worked within their town of residence. Springfield, Ludlow, Rockingham, Hartford, Brattleboro are the other top work destinations (respectively) for Chester residents.

Forty-four percent of people that work in town are Chester residents. Nine percent of Chester workers commute from Springfield, with 7 percent from Rockingham. Twenty-seven percent of Chester workers commute from the towns directly surrounding Chester.

Peak hour commuting times for Chester residents increased by 35 percent, from an average of 15.9 minutes in 1990 to 21.4 minutes in 2000. Though the majority of Chester's commuters drive to work alone (76%), seven percent indicated that they carpool to work. There are currently no Park & Ride facilities in Chester. Almost 8 percent said they bicycled or walked to work, and eight percent worked at home.

Public Parking Facilities

Other than on-street parking, public parking in Chester is very limited. Public parking is limited to the establishments that provide parking for their customers or patrons. There are no facilities for a Park and Ride in the Town. For the economic health and for commuters to and from the Town public parking facilities should be planned and developed.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities take a wide variety of forms. A bicycle facility can be as simple as a road with no additional width beyond the travel lane or as elaborate as a separated path for exclusive use by cyclists. A pedestrian facility can range from a stable, gravel shoulder on a rural road to a paved sidewalk separated from travel lanes by a curb and planted green strip.

The 2006 Regional Bicycling and Walking Plan for southern Windsor County outlined several improvements to existing bike and pedestrian network of Chester. The plan identified Bridge #8 on VT Route 103, the Mountain View Bridge, to be in need of improvements for cyclists. This bridge provides a critical point of access to the village area, but is currently too

narrow to allow bicyclists and/or pedestrians to share the bridge with automobile and truck traffic. Preliminary plans for improvements to Bridge #8, scheduled to be replaced by VTrans in 2011 or 2012, include wider shoulders for cyclists and a sidewalk on the north side of the bridge.

VT Route 103 from Gassetts to Chester Village (approximately three miles) has very narrow shoulders. VTrans maximized the existing shoulders during a repaving project in 2007, however, the shoulders remain very narrow. The stretch of road is winding and has several road side obstacles such as the Williams River, ledges, guardrails, loose gravel and debris on the paved shoulder. This stretch of roadway has high speeds and high volumes of traffic. Widening the shoulders by 18 inches to three feet on each side would provide continuity on Route 103 and enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety

VT Route 11 westbound out of the village is narrow and the shoulders are almost non-existent. Horizontal curves limit site distance and the pavement is in poor condition. Levels of traffic, especially large trucks, are heavy and present obstacles for cyclists. Adding or widening the shoulders by 18 inches to three feet on each side would enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Two sections of VT Route 10 between North Springfield and the junction of Route 103 have shoulders that are less than three feet wide and traffic volumes tend to be around 4,000 AADT. This route is also very popular among bike touring groups. Widening the shoulders by 18 inches to three feet on each side would provide continuity on Route10 in these narrow sections and enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Sidewalk Inventory

During the summer of 1999, SWCRPC staff conducted a sidewalk inventory for the village of Chester. The inventory showed Chester to have over 23,000 linear feet (LF) of sidewalk. Fifty-seven percent of the existing sidewalk network was ranked as being in "good" condition, 36 percent was in "fair" condition and another seven percent was ranked as "poor." The overwhelming majority of the sidewalk network, 91 percent, was between four and six feet in width. The remaining nine percent was less than four feet in width.

Twenty percent of Chester's existing sidewalks have a curb to help separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Over 80 percent of the sidewalk network is accompanied by a planting strip.

The longest stretch of complete sidewalk (sidewalk, curbing, and planting strip) was from Grafton Street (TH 3) to Lover Lane (TH 43). A stretch of sidewalk, with curbing, runs from Main St. south on Grafton Rd to the intersection of River St. Another small segment of "good" sidewalk with a planting strip exists near the Chester Depot area, at the intersection of the Elm Street and Depot Street. 100 feet of "good" sidewalk with planting strip runs north along the west side of Route 103/North Street. Near the end of the sidewalk on the west of North St., a section of "good" sidewalk with planting continues on the east side of the street and continues another 1000 feet. There is about 800 LF of "good" sidewalk with planting strip running north along Church St. to its intersection with Main St.

A stretch of sidewalk in "fair" condition runs along the north side of Route 103/Main St. from Pleasant Street to the junction of Depot St. This section of sidewalk is accompanied by a planting strip. 300 feet of sidewalk runs along the south side of Maple Street from Main Street to Depot Street. Another of 250-300 foot section of "fair" sidewalk with curb runs along the west side of Main Street from Maple St. to Grafton Rd. There is also a small stretch of fair sidewalk along School Street.

A stretch of sidewalk, which runs easterly 1000 LF from the intersection of Route 103 along the south side of Pleasant St./Route 11, was reconstructed in 2000.

There is a need for improved sidewalks along the Depot and School Streets, the existing network is not continuous, traffic is relatively high, existing roadways are wide and lack defined crosswalks in these areas.

Residents at the 2009 planning workshop identified a desire for new sidewalks along VT Route 103 south, connecting the Green Mountain Union High School with existing sidewalks in the village.

Public Transportation, Rail, and Air

Public Bus Service

Public bus service by Connecticut River Transit (CRT) is available in the Town of Chester. In the winter months only this service provides transportation from Springfield and Chester to Ludlow up VT Route 103. This route serves as the main route for Okemo employees who ride for free as an incentive to reduce automobile traffic in Ludlow. Dial-A-Ride transportation services are available in Chester for shopping, medical appointments and general public transportation. CRT also offers weekend service to travelers on the Green Mountain Flyer and residents, connecting the train depot to various stores and restaurants around Chester.

Green Mountain Railroad

The town of Chester is serviced by Green Mountain Railroad. The railroad runs from its terminal in Bellows Falls through Chester north to Rutland.

Primarily a freight line, the tracks do host tourist excursions on the Green Mountain Flyer during the summer and fall months between Bellows Falls and Chester and on special occasions on to Ludlow. Okemo Mountain is also hoping to expand this service in winter to bring skiers to their resort, and thus eliminate some of the peak winter weekend traffic of Route 103. This could have an adverse impact on the economy of Chester unless stops at Chester Depot were included in the scheduling to allow for travelers to use the train and find lodging, restaurants and opportunity to shop in Chester, as well as access the ski resort from Chester. Expansion of the passenger service to include commuter transportation would benefit the Town and residents.

An increase in the transport of freight would potentially benefit Chester by reducing the amount of the through truck traffic on VT Route 103, which parallels the track from Bellows Falls to Rutland. Improvement to the track and signaling would be necessary to allow for greater speed along the corridor, which would increase the potential for use for time-sensitive freight shipments. The most common goods shipped efficiently by rail, however, are long distance hauls of bulk goods, such as talc, coal, grain, pulp/paper, wood and minerals, which are not time-sensitive and the loading and unloading are more efficiently done in bulk shipments. Green Mountain Railroad ships such bulk items, and had an increase in carloads is anticipated with the completion of the project expanding the vertical clearance of the Bellows Falls railroad tunnel. The use of rail for these bulk goods has already had the effect of reducing truck traffic on Chester through roads. Improvement of the tunnel at Bellows Falls on the New England Central line would allow for the use on multi-modal rail cars and stacked rail/truck cargo vans, and could

potentially allow for more of the trucked goods to be shipped by rail not only through Chester but throughout the region. Efforts by Chester to encourage the improvements to the rail facilities and thus expansion of rail use could potentially reduce auto and truck traffic on VT Route 103, resulting in less congestion and improvement in traffic safety and convenience to local travel.

Road Policy and Maintenance

Maintenance

Maintaining a safe and efficient highway system is important but can be very costly. The town should continue to maintain the existing highway network in good condition, which can greatly limit the long-term roadway maintenance costs.

Costs for materials have increased dramatically in recent years making the costs for doing the proper road maintenance difficult to impossible. For example, winter sand has increased nearly 45% in cost from 2008 to 2009, and asphalt has increased about 60% in the last five years. However, not keeping up with routine maintenance can result in the need to rebuild roads in the future, which will be extremely expensive.

A capital budget and program could help to plan for road projects and other capital expenses. A capital reserve fund to generate local funds over time to pay for the necessary road and bridge work can help to reduce dramatic one time impacts to the local budget.

A Road Surface Management Plant has been developed by the Town Manager and Selectboard. 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. The department should also continue to keep costs down by doing their own bridge maintenance work, as appropriate. Culverts and drainage ditches should allow for an adequate flow of stormwater so as to protect infrastructure from damage during typical large snowmelt and rain events.

New Highways

All new roads must comply with the Town Highway specifications for subdivision approval and/or zoning permits, and before they will be considered for acceptance by the Selectmen as a Town Highway. On May 20, 2009, the Town adopted Road and Bridge Specifications. Before new roads are accepted as town roads the Selectmen must judge if the public good, or the necessity, or the convenience of individuals require such a highway to be laid out. The capital costs of road construction or improvement of existing town roads to service new residential and commercial development should be borne by the developer. Ample off street parking should be provided and all accesses to lots should be limited to one curb cut.

Access Management

A key component to keeping traffic flowing through a downtown/main street area is being able to balance the number of access points (i.e. driveways or access roads). Access Management balances mobility and access. The logic behind Access Management usually becomes obvious after conditions on a transportation corridor become a problem. The presence

of a large number of accesses results in a high level of turning movements and points of conflict, thus increasing the likelihood of traffic accidents. Unlimited curb cuts also contribute to sprawl, and result in dangerous conditions for bicycles and pedestrians. The goal of access management is to ensure that curb cuts, or access points, are properly planned to avoid the above mentioned complications.

Controlling accesses along VT Route 103 south and north of the village is important. In 2008-9, the Town of Chester is working with the SWCRPC, WRC, Town of Rockingham and VTrans to develop a VT Route 103 Corridor Management Plan to address access management and other issues.

The Residential 40,000 zoning district currently allows many commercial uses along VT Route 103 south, which may result in unwanted strip development.

Transportation Goals

1. Ensure that future development of transportation related facilities in the town of Chester are designed to maintain the beauty, integrity and rural characteristics of the town.
2. Keep the existing transportation network in good repair to avoid costly replacement in the future.
3. Reduce the impact of truck traffic on the village center.
4. Reduce the adverse impacts of current peak traffic volumes.
5. Expand the use of public and rail transportation as an alternative to automobile and truck traffic on Route 103.
6. Encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation through maintenance and expansion of existing facilities.
7. Limit access points (curb cuts) wherever possible to discourage sprawl and maintain safe travel conditions for all roadway users.
8. Widen and realign the intersection of Routes 103/11 and Maple to accommodate the turning radius of trucks and busses.
9. Provide more parking for commercial uses and provide parking for Park & Ride.
10. Encourage the expansion of public transit within Chester and between it and regional towns.

Transportation Policies

1. Involve citizens in planning processes concerning the long range structure and viability of Chester's transportation network.
2. Work with Green Mountain Railroad to expand the capabilities of its rail corridor.
3. Work with Town and Village Bus to expand its local service and schedule.
4. Continue to expand the sidewalk network while at the same time maintaining those segments that are in "good" and "fair" shape.
5. Maintain ongoing communication and coordination with the regional planning commission concerning state and federal funding opportunities to expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities and other enhancements to Chester's transportation network.
6. Work with other towns along the Route 103 corridor to coordinate mitigation efforts

aimed at alleviating the effects of truck and peak ski/tourist traffic.

7. Obtain the property necessary to widen the intersection or Routes 103/11 and Maple Street to provide adequate, or better, turning radius for commercial vehicles.
8. Obtain the property necessary to provide more parking for commercial properties and Park and Ride.
9. Promote access management techniques along VT Route 103 south in order to balance growth with highway mobility.

Transportation Recommendations

1. Create a time-line for replacement of sidewalk sections that are in "poor" shape and expansion of pedestrian facilities to those areas of town that need them.
2. Work with the regional planning commission to develop the capabilities to monitor traffic volumes/patterns on an internal basis.
3. Identify properties for acquisition by the Town for parking and Park & Ride facilities
4. At the intersection of Routes 11/103 and Maple St., acquire the parcel on the northeasterly corner for widening and realignment of the intersection.
5. Obtain representation of the Town of Chester on the Public Bus Service Board.
6. Continue working with SWCRPC, VTrans and other partners to develop the VT Route 103 Corridor Management Plan. Consider incorporating the Corridor Management Plan, or portions of it, as a component of the Town Plan.
7. Examine options to address potential access management problems along VT Route 103 South and allow growth that does not detract visually or economically from the Village.

Chapter 3 - Utilities and Facilities Plan

The development of public utilities, facilities and services should be based upon a projection of reasonably expected population increase and economic growth, and should recognize the limits of the Town's human, financial and natural resources. In addition, any proposed public facilities should recognize the Goals and Objectives set forth in the Town Plan. The plan recommends the enactment of a Capital Budget and Program for the Town of Chester as authorized by V.S.A. Title 24 Chapter 117, Section 4430, thereby enabling Chester to plan for its future capital investments. This step will provide Chester with a formal defined statement about Chester's own growth capacities and limits. It would serve as a legal tool in Act 250 proceedings under criterion 9a (1) "Impacts of growth."

Town Administration

The Town of Chester is under the Town Manager system of Government. Five elected Selectmen have the responsibility for general supervision of the affairs of the Town. This responsibility is carried out by an appointed Town Manager who administers all Departments of Town Government. The Town Manager system of Government should be sufficient for the foreseeable future.

A Development Review Board (DRB) was established in 2007, replacing the previous Zoning Board of Adjustment. The DRB is responsible for all local development review, with the exception of zoning permits for permitted uses which the Zoning Administrator issues. The Chester Planning Commission performs planning functions for the Town in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4325.

Emergency Services Departments

The Town of Chester is served by an Ambulance service, Fire Department and a full time Police Department. These three departments serve side-by-side to provide the medical assistance and safety needs that Chester residents require.

The Chester Ambulance service is operated by one Ambulance Coordinator and several ambulance attendants. These attendants are paid a stipend for their performance on the ambulance service. Recruitment of volunteers is difficult due to training requirements and responsibilities of the attendants along with other outside commitments.

The Chester Ambulance service has one ambulance vehicle which services both the towns of Chester and Andover. With the increased call volume by more than double over the last 20 years, the average ambulance for the Town of Chester has a life expectancy of 12 years. The current ambulance was purchased in 1998, leaving its replacement date in approximately 2010.

Equipment needs for the Ambulance service are paid for through tax revenue, grants and fees for service. The ambulance service is not a for-profit institution and only bills patients what is required to cover operational expenses.

The Springfield Dispatch Center dispatches for the Chester Ambulance Service. There is an informal mutual aid relationship between the Chester Ambulance and the Area Ambulance Services, which is facilitated by the use of the same dispatcher.

In addition to the quality ambulance service that is provided to Chester residents, the town is also served by an on-call Fire Department. The Chester Fire Department is located in the same facility as the Chester Ambulance service located at the Town Garage building. The growing needs of the Fire Department, along with the increased federal requirements, are creating a demand for a new facility.

The Chester Fire Department is operated by 1 Fire Chief, 1 Deputy Fire Chief and 1 Assistant Fire Chief and several fully trained, volunteer firefighters. These volunteers are paid based on the number of hours worked for the Chester Fire Department in a one year period. As is similar with the Ambulance service, recruitment of volunteers is difficult due to training requirements and responsibilities of the attendants along with other outside commitments.

The Chester Fire Department owns and maintains 2 Class A pumper/tankers, 1 Utility Truck, 1 Tanker which has a capacity of 4000 gallons, and 1 Rescue Truck. In addition to this standard response equipment, the Chester Fire Department is also equipped with a snowmobile sled for use in emergencies on V.A.S.T. snowmobile trails in the area.

The Fire Department vehicles are not currently on a timed replacement rotation as is standard with other town owned equipment. These vehicles are reviewed and set for replacement as needed. However, the turn over schedule for these trucks has a direct effect on the ISO ratings for Chester. ISO Ratings, or Insurance Safety Organization. These ratings directly affect the insurance premium rates for Chester residents.

The Chester Fire Department is dispatched by Springfield Dispatch Center, which is manned twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week. The Mutual Aid Agreement is made with the Connecticut Valley Mutual Aid System and the Southwestern New Hampshire Mutual Aid System.

The Emergency Services Division of Chester would not be complete without the work of the Chester Police Department. The Police Department is currently located in the back portion of the Town Office Building located on Elm Street. As is similar with both the Fire Department and the Ambulance Service, the Chester Police Department has outgrown its current location. Increased federal requirements along with an upswing on drug related crime trends have created a need for a new facility.

The Chester Police Department is operated and managed by 1 full time Police Chief, 3 full time officers and several part time officers. All Police Officers have graduated from the Police Academy and are cross trained as EMTs.

The Chester Police Department owns and maintains 3 police cruisers. These vehicles are rotated every 4 years due to the high mileage and rough roads that are traveled by these officers. Other equipment needs such as bullet proof vests, ammunition, firearms, technology needs, etc are all funded through the general budget and Homeland Security Grants.

The Chester Police Department is dispatched through the Vermont State Police located in Rockingham, Vermont. Due to the lack of security at its current location, all arrests for the Chester Police Department are processed at the Rockingham barracks as well as all background checks. The change in our economy has required that the Vermont State Police barracks in Rockingham will be relocated to the Town of Putney. This change in location will bring many changes to the town of Chester which will affect primarily the Police Department.

The Chester Fire Department, Police Department and Ambulance Service have been coordinating their efforts over the last 5 years to design a new Emergency Services facility for the Town of Chester. The town voted in 2005 to purchase a 4.2 acre parcel of land located on Pleasant Street in Chester which is intended to house this new facility.

This new facility has been designed with the future of Chester in mind. The building has a life expectancy of a minimum of 50 years, and has been designed keeping the new "green" and renewable energy initiatives in mind. As call volumes and demands increase, there is the potential for the need for a full time Fire Department and Ambulance Service. This new building will meet the requirements necessary to achieve this future demand.

Emergency Services Policies

1. Provide the residents of Chester the best possible Ambulance, Fire and Police service by supporting improvements to these services that are prudent and necessary.
2. Any housing development in Chester should contain provisions for adequate fire protection.
3. Support the continued cross training of police officers as Emergency Medical Technicians.

Emergency Services Recommendations

1. Provide for a new facility for housing the Chester Ambulance Service, Chester Fire Department and the Chester Police Department.
2. Support continued cooperation with the Vermont State Police and Springfield Dispatch Center.

Water

The Village in the Town of Chester is served by the Chester Water Department. A major renovation and expansion program was completed on the Water System in 1982. Chlorine contact facilities were added in September of 1990. The Town of Chester has adopted a Source Protection that prohibits certain development and uses within the source protection area. The Water System is in compliance with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The system currently serves 555 buildings containing 736 units. During the last decade the number of units served has increased by 5%. The current daily use is approximately 164,000 gallons per day. The Jeffrey well is supplied with water from an aquifer, which contains more water than it is anticipated would be required or used by the Town. The system is designed to satisfy the Towns water needs for the foreseeable future.

In 1980, the Town of Chester purchased a 1 acre lot located behind the Green Mountain Union High School. This land is to be used for the placement of an additional reserve tank which will be used to offset the excessively high water pressure found in Chester's municipal system. This high pressure creates water hammers which, over time, will cause existing piping to break, thereby creating the need for costly line replacements.

The Water System contains two (2) wells. The Jeffrey Well Station, which is located on 17 acres at 391 Route 103 North, is capable of producing 576,000 gallons of water per day and is

the primary well. The secondary source is the Canal Street Well, located in the middle of the meadow at the end of Canal Street, which is capable of producing 288,000 gallons per day. The Canal Street Well is put online once every two weeks to keep it operational. The daily consumption is about 200,000 gallons per day, or about 25% of capacity. The wells are pumped during off peak hours for the best electrical utility rates and the water is stored in and drawn from the 1,000,000 gallon precast, pre-stressed concrete tank, located off Reservoir Road.

The Water System serves the needs of the community well and correlates well with the Land Use Regulations and the planned future development of the Town.

Water System Policies

1. Provide the Chester Village water customers with a pure, clean water supply.

Water System Recommendations

1. Upgrade public water system as needed to maintain quality, efficiency and environmental soundness.
2. Purchase and install a reserve tank to be located on the Town of Chester property behind the Green Mountain Union High School.
3. Upgrade the public water system to meet future State and Federal water quality requirements.

Sewage

The Town of Chester constructed a new Wastewater Treatment Plant which was completed in 2006. With a cost of nearly $3 million dollars, the new facility is one of the largest construction projects that the Town of Chester has undertaken in a number of years.

The Sewer Ordinance requires pre-treatment by users when necessary. Currently two commercial users are pre-treating: Newsbank and Drews All Natural.

The system currently serves 469 buildings containing 645 units. During the last decade the number of units served has increased by 5%. With the new sewer plant completed, the system is sufficient to serve the needs of Chester through 2028. The sewer capacity of the new plant is 175,000 gallons per day, 500,000 per day in an emergency situation. The average daily use is 90,000 to 100,000 gallons per day.

However, during the Spring thaw, the capacity has reached a high of approximately 400,000 gallons, putting the Town of Chester in a State violation scenario. When the ground thaws in the Spring months and the accumulation of the spring rains, basements are filling with ground and surface water. Home owners are naturally using sump pumps to clear out their basements and distributing this water into the Town's sewer system, illegal in the State of Vermont. In order to solve this issue, a storm drain system needs to be installed throughout the area of town covered by the Sewer Plant. A properly designed drainage system for the Town will appropriately direct the ground and surface water to a designated location, therefore bypassing the sewer plant.

Sewage System Policies

1. Provide the Chester Village residents with a safe and efficient sewage treatment system.

Sewage System Recommendations

1. Design a storm drainage system for the area of the Town of Chester serviced by the Sewer Plant in order to properly dispose of ground and surface water.

Solid Waste District

After twenty years in existence, the NH/VT Solid Waste Project was formally dissolved on June 30, 2007, with the result that the fifteen participating New Hampshire towns split off from the fourteen Vermont towns. No longer bound by the contractual requirements of the Project, each town was free to choose how to manage its trash. In Vermont, thirteen of the fourteen towns decided to continue together as members of the Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District (SWWCSWMD): Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Grafton, Ludlow, Plymouth, Reading, Rockingham, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor, and Windsor.

Under 24 V.S.A. §2202a, solid waste disposal and recycling is the responsibility of the Town of Chester. Chester residents, businesses, industries, and institutions can choose to contract with commercial haulers for these services or transport their own trash and recyclables to the Springfield (Vermont) Transfer Station and Recycling Center.

The SWWCSWMD Board of Supervisors (one appointee and one alternate from each member town) solicited proposals for the transportation and disposal of waste from District transfer stations. The Board signed a three-year contract, with two one-year optional extensions, with Gobin/Casella Waste Management of Newport, New Hampshire, effective July 1, 2007.

To manage the District, the Board engaged the services of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission. The District also adopted a Waste Management Ordinance, effective February 1, 2008, that included licensing commercial haulers. They pay a five-dollar-per-ton surcharge on municipal solid waste, construction and demolition waste, and bulky wastes generated within the District. This fee helps pay District expenses. The District maintains a website, www.vtsolidwastedistrict.org, which contains information about reducing, reusing, and recycling.

Solid Waste Policies

1. The recycling program should continue to be supported and expanded in order to reduce the need for landfills.
2. Pursue regional solutions to solid waste issues through continued membership and active participation in Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District

Recreation

The Town of Chester is fortunate to have some of the finest recreation facilities in the area. The operation of the Pinnacle and Memorial Fields, also known as Cobleigh Street Fields, are under the direction of a full-time Recreation Director. These facilities should continue to

receive the financial and volunteer support necessary to maintain the facilities and to provide program leadership and should be sufficient, with the recommendations set forth herein, serve the needs of the community for recreation facilities for the next 25 years.

Athletic Fields

1. Green Mountain Union High School - The high school has a soccer field, baseball field, track and other land areas used in school recreation and sports programs.
2. Chester-Andover Elementary School - The elementary school has a playground and athletic field used for school recreation and sports programs.
3. Pinnacle Recreation Area - The Pinnacle Recreation area contains 25 acres and is the hub of summer and winter recreation for the towns sports program. The area includes an outdoor swimming pool, skateboard park, volleyball courts, two tennis courts, two Little League baseball fields. The hillside is also used for sledding, tobogganing and snowmobiles, and the area is a snowmobile access area.
4. Memorial Fields, also known as Cobleigh Street Fields - The Memorial Fields recreation area contains an ice skating rink and a ball field used for softball and soccer.
5. Green Mountain Softball facility - This privately owned facility has volleyball courts and two softball fields, which are used for annual softball tournament events and are made available for Green Mountain High School softball games.

The Recreation Department has expressed a need for a new Soccer Field. All recreation fields are utilized to full capacity and the Soccer Program is growing rapidly.

Swimming

The swimming pool located at the Pinnacle Area is the most highly utilized recreation program for the Town. There are approximately 200 children per year receive swimming lessons through the recreation department. In addition, the swimming pool averages 50 to 60 kids per day during the summer months. The current pool was recently relined, which is designed to extend the life of the pool for 20 years. Grants were received in 2009 to start renovations to the existing bathhouse, which is over 30 years old. There are still renovations and improvements that need to be made to the bathhouse. An additional area is also needed for the snack shack which operates at the pool location as well.

Walking Paths

The residents of Chester have expressed a desire for a walking path in the Town of Chester. Chester currently has many hiking trails available to the public. However, they are not suitable for all of the public. Many residents would prefer a walking path that is level ground and adequate for everybody.

Recreation Policies

1. To provide recreation programs to the Town of Chester residents that meet the recreation needs of all residents regardless of age.

Recreation Recommendations

1. Research and provide an additional area for a new soccer field to be managed by the Recreation Department.
2. Continue renovations and improvements to the bathhouse and snack shack area located at the Pinnacle property.
3. Construct a new walking path for use by residents of all ages and abilities.

Winter Recreation

The Chester Snowmobile Club, which is a private organization, in cooperation with Vermont Association of Snowmobile Travelers (VAST) and with the participation of private landowners, plans, lays out and maintains snowmobile trails throughout the Chester Town area and connecting to the VAST state-wide trail system. This system of trails provides recreational opportunities for residents of Chester as well as visitors, attracts tourists in season, and is beneficial economically to the Town of Chester and its tourist industry. The Snowmobile Club has assisted the Chester Fire Department to provide a machine and sled for use in medical emergencies on the local trails.

Forest Lands

The State of Vermont, Department of Forests and Parks owns 130 acres of Forest land called the Williams River State Forest which is located in the Southwestern corner of Town or better known as the Popple Dungeon area.

The Water Department of the Town of Chester owns 550 acres of land off the Reservoir Road in the center section of Town. This forest land was purchased for the watershed area and holds an 11 acre reservoir, which is used for recreational purposes only. The reservoir previously served as the Town drinking water source and should be preserved for use during an emergency, for instance, when the Jeffrey and Canal wells are not available. This 550 acre site is a managed forest with a ten year Forest Management Plan prepared by the State Forester, who also manages the forest in accordance with the Plan. This Forest Management Plan was first adopted in 1983 and is revised annually. Under this plan and careful management the Town Forest provides income to the Water Department.

Doctor Adams land is Lot 3, Map 52. This parcel contains 30.53 acres and is Town owned. This land is valuable as wildlife habitat and is available to the environmental class at Green Mountain Union High School (GMUHS) and other students for field studies.

Forest Lands Policies

1. Maintain the 550 acres of Town Forest as a managed forest and continue access to it for field studies, fishing and hunting.
1. Maintain the Doctor Adams land for wildlife and scientific field studies for GMUHS students and others.

Forest Lands Recommendations

1. Expand the opportunities for the use of the Town Forest and the Doctor Adams land for scientific research and use by classes of the town schools and other students.
2. Maintain the reservoir as a backup potable water source for the town.
3. Maintain the town forest to protect water quality in that watershed.

Hunting and Fishing

At the present time, Chester's extensive woodlands provide hunting for fur-bearing wild game and birds. The Town Forest is open in season for hunting as provided under State Regulations.

Rivers and streams available for fishing are the south, middle and north branches of the Williams River and the streams that feed into them. Within the Town Forest lands, the reservoir pond has in the past been stocked with trout and provides good fishing.

The Chester Rod and Gun Club, which is a private organization, provides the only gun range facility for Chester and is unique in Vermont in that it allows nonmembers, as well as members, to use the facility. Furthermore the Chester Rod and Gun Club provides Hunter Safety classes, which are required for those wishing to obtain hunting licenses, and the only shotgun and rifle range facility in Chester.

Hunting and Fishing Policies

1. Continue the use of the public lands as resources for hunting and fishing and encourage private owners to do the same.

Hunting and Fishing Recommendations

1. It is recommended that town officials and the Recreation Committee work with the local sportsmen's organizations and the State Fish and Game Department to assure a continuing program of stocking to maintain an adequate supply and proper management of fish and game.

Electric Utilities

The Town of Chester is served by one electric utility provider, namely Central Vermont Public Service. Electric transmission service is provided by the Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO). Power lines can be unsightly. Underground utilities would help to protect the integrity of valuable scenic areas and historic villages.

Electric Utilities Policies

1. Provide residents with safe, effective and efficient utility service.
2. Utility lines should be placed in areas designated for growth.
3. New utility lines should be placed along existing corridors whenever possible; multipurpose use of utility corridors is encouraged.
4. Aesthetic and natural resource impacts should be considered when placing utility lines.

5. Encourage common use of utility poles for telephone, electric, cable and fiber optic lines whenever possible.
6. Promote underground electric lines where possible and practical.

Electric Utilities Recommendations

1. Encourage the utility to move the power poles and service in the area of Main Street and the Town Green underground.

Telephone and Computer

The telephone and data lines for the Town of Chester are provided by VTel, and include the opportunity to communicate quickly with DSL high speed internet connections. In addition, the local facility provider has installed high speed fiber optics in the Town for cable service, which is capable of being used to access the internet. It is vital for the residents, businesses and the Town of Chester to have the opportunity to communicate freely and efficiently via landline with businesses and persons throughout the world. Technological improvements to landline telephone and internet access enable people to work efficiently at home, thus providing employment opportunities to those who would otherwise not be able to avail themselves of employment, and reducing commuting traffic and benefiting the environment of the Town. The Town of Chester welcomes these improvements and encourages the development of highly efficient communications to better serve the residents and businesses of the Town of Chester.

Communications Towers and Structures

The maintenance of a modern and accessible telecommunications network is essential to the public welfare. Public safety agencies, such as emergency medical services, fire and police departments, rely on broadcast and communications facilities to provide essential services. In addition, a modern and accessible telecommunications network provides communities with economic, social and cultural benefits.

At the same time, network infrastructure should be developed in an efficient, safe and thoughtful manner. Possible impacts upon scenic and cultural resources, aesthetics, and public health and safety should all be considered during the planning process.

The field of wireless communications and telecommunications is undergoing rapid change. Advancements in this technology have and will continue to affect growth in the Town of Chester. Technological improvements will enable people to work at home and telecommute to work or to other remote or central offices more readily.

The major planning issue with wireless communications technology today is the siting and construction of new communications towers and supporting network infrastructure including power lines, access corridors and support buildings. These include towers* for wireless communications facilities** and wireless telecommunication facilities***. In the hilly topography characteristic of this Region, towers and related facilities need to be located on the hilltops or higher elevation points in order to provide the broadest service area coverage. These towers and their supporting infrastructure can alter mountaintops and ridge lines in ways that negatively impact scenic resources vital to the Region's economic future and cultural richness. Aesthetic concerns will increase as more mountains and ridge lines are developed. The towers and network infrastructure must be developed in an efficient, safe and thoughtful manner.

Possible impacts upon scenic and cultural resources, aesthetics, and public health, and alternative tower designs that mitigate these impacts, should all be considered during the planning process.

Definition of terms:

* **Tower** - Any structure that is designed and constructed primarily for the purpose of supporting one or more antennas, including self-supporting lattice towers, guy towers, or monopole towers. The term includes radio and television transmission towers, microwave towers, common-carrier towers, cellular, personal communication service (PCS) and similar service towers, alternative tower structures, and the like.

** **Wireless Communication Facility** - A tower, pole, antenna, guy wire, or related fixtures or equipment intended for the use in connection with transmission or receipt of radio or television signals or any other electromagnetic spectrum-based transmission/reception and the construction or improvement of a road, trail, building or structure incidental to a communications facility. Wireless Communication Facilities include Wireless Telecommunication Facilities.

*** **Wireless Telecommunication Facility** - A facility consisting of the structures, including the towers and antennas mounted on towers and buildings, equipment and site improvements involved in sending and receiving telecommunications or radio signals from a mobile communications source and transmitting those signals to a central switching computer which connects the mobile unit with land-based or other telephone lines.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 restricts the authority granted under Vermont law to municipalities, such as the Town of Chester, to prohibit wireless telecommunication facilities by zoning. Municipalities may not prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting efforts to provide wireless telecommunication facilities, and must provide reasonable opportunities for location of such facilities. [Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, Section 704, (a),(7), (B),(i),(ii)] Other wireless communication towers such as towers for radio and television are not covered by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, leaving communities with greater authority to regulate these facilities. The Town of Chester should assess where these facilities may be located within the municipality and enact conditions under the zoning authority to implement that policy decision.

The Federal Communications Commission retains jurisdiction over the public airwaves and the communications industry in general. Additionally, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) exercises control over the location and height of wireless communication towers and similar structures to prevent interference with airport operations.

The Town of Chester has addressed the wireless communications facilities issue in order to prevent the installation of unnecessary multiple towers. In 1997 US Cellular was looking for a tower site in Chester. The Town approached them and agreed to allow them to site the tower on top of the Pinnacle where the Town's low band tower already existed. The agreement provided that US Cellular would build the tower for the Town, the Town would guarantee US Cellular a twenty year lease, and the Town could add additional users as deemed necessary. The intent was and remains to control the site of the wireless telecommunications facility as an existing use with existing infrastructure. Since then space at this facility has also been leased to Cellular One.

Telecommunications Goals:

1. Provide residents with the benefits of an integrated and modern telecommunications network while minimizing the economic, aesthetic and cultural costs of its development.

2. Support the enhancement of integrated and modern wireless communications networks when such facilities do not have significant adverse environmental, health or aesthetic impacts.
3. Enable new economic opportunities through the use of wireless communications technology.

Telecommunications Policies:

1. New communications towers and supporting infrastructures detract from the beauty of the Town and should be sited and constructed only as necessary to meet the Town's changing needs. New towers, access corridors and utility poles serving towers should not be sited or constructed where adequate communication coverage can be obtained through use of existing structures. The use of existing structures, such as water towers, farm silos, church steeples and buildings, to support the wireless communications broadcast equipment is encouraged whenever it will not have a negative impact on significant historic or aesthetic resources.
2. Existing tower space and supporting infrastructure on, and at the site of, the Town wireless communications facility on the Pinnacle should be utilized to the fullest extent possible.
3. New wireless communications towers, access corridors, and utility poles serving towers should not be sited or constructed as long as the existing site is viable. Those wishing to provide new or expanded communications services must utilize the existing Town tower and supporting infrastructure, unless it can be demonstrated that the sharing or collocation is prohibitive due to frequency interference, adverse aesthetic impacts or risk to public health. The Town should facilitate the sharing of space to the fullest extent possible. Those building new towers or support infrastructure shall not prohibit the sharing of those facilities by other users for reasons other than frequency interference or avoiding a demonstrated risk to public health, in that the public exposure to Radio Frequency (RF) radiation will exceed the applicable FCC standards for human exposure. If the Town tower cannot be utilized, the use of existing structures, such as water towers and buildings, to support telecommunications broadcast equipment is encouraged wherever appropriate and where it will not have a negative impact on significant historic or aesthetic resources nor a risk to public health.
4. There is an Act 250 permit for the construction and use of the Town tower on the Pinnacle. Those installing new transmission facilities on that tower shall comply with that permit.
5. Siting and design of new communications towers and facilities (including any support and maintenance structures, necessary access corridors and utility lines) shall minimize impacts on natural, scenic, wildlife habitats and corridors and aesthetic resources. The use of the ridges for communications towers and related facilities needs to be undertaken in a manner that will neither unduly detract from nor adversely affect Chester's scenic values.
6. To minimize conflict with scenic values, facility design and construction for new communication towers and accessory facilities should adhere to the following principles:

a. Where feasible, new towers should be sited in areas not highly visible to the traveling public and not visible from residential areas, historic districts and public use areas or outdoor recreation areas;

b. New towers should be located in forested areas or be sufficiently landscaped to screen the lower sections of towers and related ground fixtures from public vantage points, such as trails, roads or water bodies;

c. New towers should use materials, architectural styles, color schemes, lighting fixtures, mass and other elements to promote aesthetic compatibility with surrounding uses and to avoid adverse visual impacts;

d. Where prominent views of a site exist, new towers should be located downgrade of the ridge so as not to exceed the elevation of the immediate ridge;

e. Where new access roads are proposed, they should be located to follow the contours of the land and to avoid open fields or meadows in order to minimize their visibility;

f. New towers should not be sited on peaks and ridges that function as regional focal points;

g. Existing tree cover should be maintained to the maximum extent possible, with tree removal allowed only to clear the footprint area of the tower structure and accessory facilities; and

h. A blue or black color balloon shall be raised to indicate the height of the tower for at least one day before a hearing is held provided it is in compliance with all local, state and federal regulations, including FAA restrictions on height limitations.

7. An applicant for installation of new transmission facilities shall demonstrate that public exposure to Radio Frequency (RF) radiation will not exceed the applicable FCC standards for human exposure. Assessment of possible health effects shall be based on the cumulative effects of all RF emissions at any given location, and should include both preconstruction and post-construction monitoring.

8. In the event that use of a tower is discontinued, the site should be restored to its natural condition, or to the condition that existed prior to construction, as appropriate. The developer of a new tower should provide the Town of Chester with a site restoration and reclamation plan at the time of application for the new tower site in the event the tower and accessory facilities are abandoned in the future. This site restoration and reclamation plan should include provisions for removal of the tower and accessory facilities, regrading, revegetation, a time frame for accomplishing the site restoration, and adequate security, such as a letter of credit or a performance bond, including anticipated inflation, to provide funds necessary for completing the site restoration and reclamation plan.

9. The Secretary of Administration of the Office of the Governor of Vermont, pursuant to under 30 V.S.A. Section 227b, should notify the Planning Commission of the Town of Chester in order to conform with this Plan before allowing the use of state or private property in the Town for a new or expanded communication facility.

10. The Vermont Public Service Board should notify the Planning Commission of the Town of Chester in order to conform to this Plan before allowing the use of

state or private property in the Town for a new or expanded communication facility.

11. The Agency of Natural Resources in its capacity as managers of State Lands should notify the Planning Commission of the Town of Chester in order to conform to this Plan before allowing the use of state property in the Town for a new or expanded communications facility on state land in the Town.

Telecommunications Recommendations:

1. The Town of Chester, its officials and Planning Commission should develop and incorporate wireless communication policies and elements into the Town's zoning Regulations, and adopt the provisions of Title 24, V.S.A., Chapter 117, Section 4407, Subsection 17, into Chester Zoning Bylaws. This subsection provides that any proposed tower developer pay the reasonable costs to the Town of a technical study of how the tower would affect the Town. The development of alternative technologies to serve the industry, such as satellite technology that would eliminate the need for towers should be encouraged.

Chapter 4 - Natural and Cultural Resources

Some of Chester's greatest assets are natural and cultural resources as identified during the extensive public outreach in 2008 and 2009 to update this Town Plan. Residents value the historic charm of the village surrounded by open fields, rivers, hills and large tracts of forested lands. This plan seeks to encourage future growth that also protects these natural and cultural resources articulated in this chapter.

Earth Resources

Topography and Soils

Soils vary greatly in their composition, which will determine where water impoundments occur, the kind and amounts of vegetation, and what types of land use are most appropriate. Outside of the village area, where public water and sewer services are not available, the development potential of each site will be determined by the on-site septic suitability of the soils.

The Town no longer has authority to issue on-site septic permits, but can require developments to use public water and wastewater services. In 2002, the Potable Water Supply and Wastewater regulations (10 V.S.A. Chapter 64) were amended by the Vermont Legislature. As of July 1, 2007, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) has universal jurisdiction over on-site septic and potable water permits. ANR developed new rules on September 29, 2007, which allow for innovative or alternative systems (Subchapter 10 of the *Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules*). These new rules may allow for development on areas of steep slope, where it was not allowable before.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), all types of construction should be avoided on lands with slopes over 25 percent. However, some uses – such as hiking or ski trails – may be suitable. Slopes between 15 and 25 percent may not be suitable for development due to limitations for septic systems, erosion and stormwater runoff problems, and high construction costs. Development in these areas may require engineering or other special design techniques to avoid these potential problems. Driveways over 10 percent in grade are generally considered to be too steep for safe emergency vehicle access, and difficult for maintenance and any vehicle access in the winter months. All roads and driveways should meet the appropriate town highway standards, as adopted by the Selectboard, in terms of steepness of grade and drainage techniques.

Farmlands

The number of working farms in Chester has been decreasing over the years. Farms provide open space and contribute to the rural qualities that people enjoy about Chester. Forest and farmland provide habitat requirements for a variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. This patchwork of fields, forests, and the viewsheds among them constitute an aesthetic resource that deserves recognition and protection. The farms along the Williams River are considered especially scenic for residents and visitors traveling on VT Route 103 before entering the village of Chester. Many of these farms are also located within floodplains, serving another important function: flood storage capacity.

The NRCS has identified the most productive agricultural soils (see the Natural Features Natural Features Map that shows NRCS agricultural soils in Chester). The NRCS category of "prime agricultural soils" has the greatest potential for productivity and is important for current

and future food production. "Soils of statewide significance" are also important, but limited in their productive capacity by slope or other mitigating factors. Once these soils are disturbed for construction, their potential for farm productivity is lost. Preserving large contiguous areas of these important agricultural soils is important for future food production for the town.

Forest Lands

Forests serve a variety of functions and uses, and contribute significantly to the town's rural character. Forests protect air and water quality and support biological diversity. Woodlands provide critical habitat for many species of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, moose, black bear, wild turkey and a variety of songbirds. The larger the blocks of contiguous forestland, the greater the number of wildlife species it supports. Connections between large blocks of forest land allow for larger habitat areas and greater biodiversity.

Forests are also important to the local economy by providing products such as lumber, pulpwood, fuel wood, and maple syrup. Vermont and the rest of the New England states have been deforested three times since the settlement of America by early colonialists. Yet, the majority of land in Chester is in woodland or forest. The predominant canopy species have changed since pre-settlement. The forests and woodlands of Chester are currently a mix of broadleaves and conifers. Sugar Maples are important part of Vermont's, and Chester's, cultural heritage, providing colorful foliage and maple syrup.

Outdoor recreation is enjoyed by many of the Town's residents and is an attraction for tourists. Woodlands support a variety of recreational pursuits including hunting, trapping, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and nature and foliage viewing. Forestland in Chester also supports some low-density residential uses.

Most of the forests in Chester are under private ownership. Currently, 14,360 acres of land in Chester is enrolled in the current use (or Use Value Appraisal) program. The program provides reduced property tax assessment for qualifying owners of forest and agricultural land. The State of Vermont reimburses communities for some of the tax revenue that is lost due to enrollment of land under the program. In addition, nearly 734 acres are protected under a private easement.

However, a few important forests are publicly owned, including the Williams River State Forest, the Town Forest and Doctor Adams' land, as discussed in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter.

Forests are threatened by fragmentation caused by roads and residential development, and irresponsible logging practices. Development in forested areas should be encouraged to occur at the periphery where access can be provided by existing roads.

Mineral Resources

Granite, gravel and sand are the only local earth resource extraction operations at this time, but other resources such as soapstone and talc, as well as minerals, precious stones and metals, such as gold, are present. Mining provides jobs and is a valuable source of income for rural communities. Resources from mining make activities such as building construction, road development, and a variety of other manufacturing processes possible. There are few local sources for sand, gravel and stone for local highway and construction uses. The Town Highway Department's current source has an estimated 4 to 5 years supply. After that, the nearest source is more than three times as far away, significantly increasing the costs for these materials. Therefore, local production of these materials could benefit the taxpayers. However, mining and mineral extraction can also adversely affect the roads, rural landscape, essential wildlife habitat, and the peace and quiet of the rural community. Residents participating in the public outreach

efforts value a working landscape, including mining, but also expressed a desire for strict regulations to protect the environment and adjacent land uses. These adverse impacts can and should be mitigated by conditional use, site plan review and performance.

Earth Resources Goals

1. To promote the continued use of agricultural and forested lands in a manner which helps to maintain or preserve the natural beauty, function and productivity of the lands.
2. To encourage sustainable uses of Chester's marketable natural resources.
3. To encourage the extraction and processing of mineral resources in a manner that is appropriate and consistent with Chester's rural character.

Earth Resources Policies

1. Primary agricultural lands, as defined by the USDA, should be devoted to the production of agricultural products, or to uses that will maintain or preserve such lands for future agricultural operations.
2. Any development planned for agricultural or forested lands shall locate to the periphery of these resources in order to avoid fragmentation and encourage the natural productivity of these lands.
3. All logging and forest-related activity should be done in accordance with Best Management Practices (BMP) and Acceptable Management Practices (AMP) as established by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR).
4. The extraction of any earth resource shall be permitted only when the present and future effects of such extractions or related processing are not unreasonably damaging to the surrounding properties, essential wildlife habitat, and the environment.
5. Special interests shall not override the health and integrity of the entire environment.
6. Require that earth resource extraction activities do not adversely affect surrounding properties and mitigate adverse impacts on essential wildlife habitat, and that extraction sites be restored to viable condition in a timely manner.
7. Roads and driveways shall meet town standards and shall provide adequate, safe emergency vehicle access.

Earth Resources Recommendations

1. Promote, through education, the correct management practices for agriculture and forest-related activities by using the expertise of professionals.
2. Work with area land trusts, in cooperation with land owners and the community, to educate people on the different methods available to preserve important forested and agricultural lands.
3. Identify areas of significant aesthetic value to the entire community.
4. Review local and state regulations to assure that the public interest is protected. Amend local regulations to conform to any revised state regulations.
5. Consider land use regulations to restrict developments in steep slope areas

Water Resources

Water Bodies and Watercourses

The majority of land area in Chester is within the Williams River watershed, but the northeast corner of the Town surrounding the Great Brook is in the Black River watershed. The village of Chester is located at the confluence of the north, south and middle branches of the Williams River, which meet and form the mainstem of the Williams River just southeast of VT Route 11 near Green Mountain Turnpike. The Williams River forms a broad, fertile valley through Chester. There are a few small ponds in Chester; most notable is the Chester Reservoir located in the Town Forest, which is discussed in the Utilities and Facilities Chapter.

Water bodies and watercourses serve a variety of important functions, including scenic beauty, recreation, wildlife habitat, food supply, commercial and industrial uses, and drinking water supplies. The rivers and many of the streams contain healthy populations of native fish. The middle and north branches and the mainstem of the Williams River offer good whitewater boating opportunities. Rivers and streams are sensitive to change, and land uses can affect water quality and river stability further downstream.

In June 2008, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) adopted a Basin 11 Management Plan, which includes the Williams River watershed. The primary water quality problems for the basin include water temperature warming, siltation and sedimentation, and altering the physical habitat. The primary causes of those problems include removal of riparian vegetation, streambank modification and destabilization, and channelization. The North Branch of the Williams River is prone to ice jams and flooding in the late winter and early spring.

Due to the significance of these surface waters, it is important that they be protected. Protection of surface waters involves stream bank management, overseeing point source discharges of wastes, and controlling non-point sources of water pollution (for example, agricultural runoff, erosion from logging or construction, and stormwater runoff from roads and impervious surfaces). Naturally vegetated buffers next to surface waters can help to filter pollutants, provide shade for fish, and habitat for birds and mammals. In addition, wider buffers (over 100 feet) can provide natural greenways and wildlife corridors.

Wetlands and Vernal Pools

A number of wetlands are also located throughout Chester, many of which are included in the National Wetlands Inventory. Wetlands) are biologically productive ecosystems and serve a variety of functions: retaining stormwater runoff, reducing flood peaks, protecting groundwater quality, filtering eroded sediment, and providing habitat for a wide diversity of plants and animals. They also provide open space and contribute to Chester's scenic landscape. According to the Vermont Wetlands Rules, Class 1 and 2 wetlands (those identified in the National Wetlands Inventory) require conditional use review by ANR prior to the issuance of a local zoning permit. Class 3 wetlands are not included in the National Wetlands Inventory and are not protected by the Wetland Rules.

Vernal pools are temporary bodies of water which usually occur in woodland depressions and provide important breeding areas for a variety of amphibian and insect populations. Most vernal pools in Vermont are filled by spring rains and snow melt and are dry during the summer. They provide safe breeding grounds for insects and amphibians because they do not support fish populations. Most vernal pools in the state occur in forested habitats, but they may also be found

in meadows, sand flats, and river flood plains. Because of their small size and temporary nature, vernal pools are not protected under the Vermont Wetland Rules.

The Town may wish to inventory Class 3 wetlands and vernal pools and consider protections in local regulations as well.

Groundwater

Groundwater is Chester's primary source of drinking water. It moves underground through aquifers, which are water-bearing strata of permeable rock, sand, or gravel. Maintaining good quality and adequate quantities of groundwater are important considerations for preserving the public health and safety. Potential groundwater pollutants include septage from improperly designed or malfunctioning septic tanks and leaching fields for wastewater, leakage from underground gas and oil tanks, and improperly disposed of chemical or radioactive materials. Once contamination occurs, control and abatement are extremely difficult, if not impossible. The key is to prevent pollution from entering rock fractures in the first place. Chester's Zoning Ordinance established two aquifer protection districts to protect the public water supply.

Effective June 9, 2008, Section 1 of Vermont Act 199 sets forth the General Assembly's finding that groundwater resources of the state are held in trust for the public.

Flood Hazard Areas

In the 2006 Chester Predisaster Mitigation Plan, flooding is identified as the most probable hazard event in Chester. This is true especially given the proximity of infrastructure and the village area to flood hazard areas, and the large number of river and stream crossings in Chester. Chester has flood hazard regulations in effect and is in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). These regulations establish development standards for areas within floodway and floodplain areas as discussed below. Chester residents or business owners with buildings in the floodplain may purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Through the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS), a town which exceeds the minimum requirements may qualify for a special classification which would reduce flood insurance rates for its policy holders. Any development in the flood hazard areas requires local flood hazard review.

Chester flood hazard regulations pertain to both floodway and floodplain areas as mapped by FEMA. These represent land areas in Chester which in any given year have at least a one percent chance of being inundated by flood waters. This is known as a 100-year flood event. Floodways are the river channels during a 100-year flood event. The floodway fringe is the adjacent areas where 100-year flood waters pond, but are not flowing as in the floodway channel. They serve as storage areas for water during periods of heavy rains and spring snow melt, agricultural fields, wildlife habitat and travel corridors. These areas also present limitations to development due to the hazards of flooding and related damage.

Development outside of these FEMA-designated flood hazard areas does not guarantee safety from potential flooding. Flash flooding is also a possibility along smaller and seasonal streams. These flood prone areas are not inventoried at this time. Since Chester is in the NFIP, owners of buildings in areas that might be subject to flash flooding may choose to buy flood insurance.

Water Resources Goals

1. Maintain or enhance the integrity and functions of Chester's surface waters and wetlands.
2. Protect the quality and quantity of groundwater for Chester residents.
3. To encourage flood resilient communities.

Water Resources Policies

1. Continuous areas of undisturbed vegetation along rivers and streams should be encouraged, thereby protecting shorelines, wildlife habitat and scenic quality.
2. New development adjacent to streams or rivers must be designed to cause minimal damage to the stream environment. Any such development should be planned so that surface waters do not become silted, contaminated or otherwise degraded.
3. Natural vegetated buffer strips between development and surface waters should be maintained.
4. Any storing or transporting of chemicals or other hazardous material should be done in such a manner so as to have no adverse effects on streams or other sources of water.
5. The use of road salts and other chemicals adjacent to sensitive areas such as wetlands, stream crossings, and steep slopes should be minimized.
6. Any alterations to ponds and wetlands must be in compliance with local zoning and all State and Federal laws.
7. Restrict development within the aquifer protection districts in order to protect the public drinking water.
8. Adopt *Chester's All Hazard Mitigation Plan (AHMP)*, as most recently approved under 44 C.F.R. §201.6, to serve as the flood resilience element for *Chester's Town Plan*, including the flood resilience-related strategies identified in the *AHMP*.

Water Resources Recommendations

1. Review zoning regulations to protect rivers and streams, ponds and wetlands not already protected under state law.
2. Include high elevation streams and buffer areas in a plan for open space conservation.
3. Consider conducting an inventory of class 3 wetlands and/or vernal pools.

Wildlife Resources

Wildlife Habitat and Travel Corridors

Chester's landscape includes a variety of natural resources such as rivers, streams, forests and wetlands that provide habitat for numerous wildlife and aquatic species. Chester residents value watching wildlife in their backyards, hunting, fishing, as well as supporting efforts to preserve open spaces and riparian areas for both recreational uses and preserving wildlife habitat. The abundance and diversity of wildlife provide both economic and recreational opportunities for residents. In addition, lands that are left undeveloped to provide for wildlife habitat also contribute to the rural character of the Region.

A diversity of habitat types is needed for the continued existence of the various fish and wildlife species that inhabit the town. Many animals rely on large contiguous areas of forests, fields and other undeveloped lands for food, shelter, breeding grounds and migratory stop-overs. The fragmentation of such land can result in decreases in the number of species and the sizes of populations of many species. Moose, whitetail deer, black bear, bobcat and wild turkey are a few of the animals that can be found in Chester. A variety of songbirds reside in wooded areas that are characterized by less intense human use. Although most development in Chester is done on a relatively small scale, cumulative development can combine overtime to have a major impact on wildlife habitat. These cumulative impacts can cause fragmentation of these habitat areas, potentially diminishing or eliminating the land needed to support some species. Conservation of a diverse mix of natural areas and attention to connections between large tracts of wildlife habitat is necessary in order for a diverse and healthy wildlife population to survive and flourish.

The Wildlife Habitat Map 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 should be used as an indicator, and more detailed inventories or site investigations should be used to determine the actual critical wildlife habitat areas.

Based on state wildlife/vehicle crash data and the proximity of large blocks of wildlife habitat suitability areas, the following approximate areas appear to have potential value as wildlife travel corridors:

- Grafton Road south of Popple Dungeon Road
- Ingraham Hill Road
- Old Stage Road south of Popple Dungeon Road
- Smokeshire Road west of Miner Road
- VT Route 11 between Shady Grove Lane and Swett Road
- VT Route 103 between Jewett Road and Brooks Road
- VT Route 103 between Cavendish Road and Wyman's Falls Road
- Williams Road
- Wyman's Falls Road (Class 4 section)

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

The Wildlife Habitat Map also shows the approximate locations of rare, threatened and endangered species. According to the Vermont Non-game and Natural Heritage Program, these include two vascular plants occurring along the North Branch of the Williams River. The DRB should contact the Department of Fish & Wildlife to evaluate the potential impacts of any proposed development in these areas.

Wildlife Resources Goals

1. Encourage the biodiversity and population of wildlife, including natural predators, by minimizing development impacts on large blocks of habitat and wildlife travel corridors.
2. Protect rare, threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

Wildlife Resources Policies

1. Develop strategies to protect areas containing rare species, exemplary natural communities and necessary wildlife habitat. Strategies may include public and quasi-public ownership or conservation easements protecting such lands.
2. Encourage the conservation of contiguous properties and discourage practices which fragment wildlife habitat.
3. Development should be designed and sited in a manner to preserve contiguous areas of active or potential wildlife habitat by clustering, building to the periphery of habitat areas and/or planned unit developments.
4. Corridors connecting habitat areas for large mammals must be incorporated in plans for management and conservation of forested areas.
5. Fragmentation of significant and necessary wildlife habitat should not be approved.
6. Development shall protect rare, threatened and endangered species.

Wildlife Resources Recommendations

1. Request that the Regional Planning Commission create and update maps indicating the locations of state regulated natural resource constraints.
2. Consider conducting a local inventory of wildlife habitat areas.
3. Review subdivision regulation to ensure conformity with wildlife habitat policies.
4. Seek input from the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife on the potential impacts of development on identified rare, threatened or endangered species.

Air Quality

Chester does not have a heavy industrial base or concentrated population that has led to an air quality problem. Accordingly, the Town's good air quality constitutes an environmental resource that has aesthetic as well as human health benefits. Elements that could negatively affect air quality include: smell, light, particulate matter (from dust, smoke or fumes), radiation, chemical vapors, motor vehicle exhaust and power plant emissions.

Chester's ambient air quality should be maintained. Town equipment should meet emission standards. The town should take an active role in the review of development proposals or plans that could adversely affect air quality.

Light Pollution

Chester residents who participated in the 2008 Community Values Workshop identified the dark night sky and rural character as some of the things they love about Chester. Light pollution from development can negatively impact the rural character and quality of life enjoyed by Chester residents. The Chester Zoning Bylaws establish standards to reduce glare from illuminated signs and regulate lighting through site plan review and under performance standards for conditional use review. Lighting levels should be a balance between aesthetics, security, energy efficiency, reducing adverse impacts on the night sky, and safety (i.e. reducing glare).

Air Quality and Light Pollution Goals:

1. To maintain Chester's good ambient air quality and clear night sky.

Air Quality and Light Pollution Policies:

1. Town equipment should meet emission standards.
2. Proposed new lighting should avoid glare and other unnecessary light pollution.
3. The DRB should take an active role in reviewing development proposals for air or light pollution.

Air Quality and Light Pollution Recommendations:

1. Review land use regulations to ensure conformance with air quality and light pollution policies.

Ridgelines and Scenic Views

Several areas in Chester are known regionally for their scenic views and landscape. In the 2008 Town Planning Survey, a high percentage of respondents answered that scenic views, rural character, ridgelines, wildlife habitat, important farmlands and water resources should be preserved. The following specific resources were identified as "scenic" at the 2008 Community Values Workshop:

- Wyman's Falls
- Wyman's Falls Road
- The Pinnacle
- Town Forest
- Williams River
- Farms along the Williams River

Prominent hills and ridgelines are valued by Chester residents. Chester has several hills or ridges that rise above 1,500 feet in elevation, including Steadman Hill (2,309 feet), Ingraham Hill (1,948 feet) and Butternut Hill (1,715). These areas are not only fragile due to high elevation and steep slopes, but are also valued for their scenic attributes, wildlife habitat and forestry. Development in these areas should be discouraged, but if allowed should take precautions to minimize negative impacts, including establishing no-cut zones or requiring landscaping.

Ridgeline and Scenic View Goal:

1. Preserve the scenic views and ridgelines that most contribute to Chester's rural character.

Ridgeline and Scenic View Policies:

1. Development is discouraged in identified scenic areas and ridgelines. Any development in these areas should minimize negative visual and environmental impacts.

Ridgeline and Scenic View Recommendations:

1. Consider land use regulations to restrict developments along ridgelines and in scenic areas.

Cultural Resources

The Chester Village Historic District (entered in the National Register on August 8, 1985) corresponds to the village center, focused on the Green together with related historic development along Main Street between Maple Street and Lovers Lane, including seven side streets. The Chester Village Historic District occupies the flat bottomland along the north side of the Middle Branch of the Williams River. The river flows along the base of a ridge whose abrupt slope provides a south backdrop for the village. A similar juxtaposition defines the valley bottom on its north side where a small brook flows essentially parallel to the Middle Branch, also flowing along the foot of a low ridge. There are 156 principal buildings in the district, among which only 17 buildings do not contribute to the district's historic character. The architectural styles represented include the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne/Eastlake, Colonial Revival, and Georgian Revival. Most are of wood-frame construction and the buildings generally share the temple form and domestic scale with gable facades oriented toward the street. There are three examples of the "snecked ashlar" construction (which is prevalent in the buildings of the Stone Village Historic District). Although a few intrusions have appeared in the recent decades, Chester Village Historic District retains to an extraordinary extent the integrity of its nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural environment. The description of the district and of the various individual buildings can be found in the National Register under the Chester Village Historic District.

The Stone Village Historic District (Entered in the National Register on May 17, 1974) lies northerly of the Village District, on either side of Route 103 between the bridge over the Williams River northerly to the "Tavern" building, a distance of about 0.6 of a mile. The Stone Village is set in the Williams River Valley, where the river's alluvial plane opens to the west of the community and provides an expansive view to the opposite bluff about a quarter-mile away. The base of Mt. Flamstead is near the rear of the structures on the east side of the two-lane, tree-lined, paved VT Route 103, and the hillside provides a striking backdrop to the village. Of the 18 buildings that comprise this Historic District, 13 of the buildings are fine, well-maintained examples of "snecked ashlar" construction . The buildings described in this historic district are a church, a school, a tavern, a barn and 14 residences. The description of the district and of the various individual buildings can be found in the National Register under the Stone Village Historic District.

Other important historic resources identified at the 2008 Community Values Workshop include cemeteries, the Academy building, Yosemite Fire House and historic school houses. Important cultural resources include the town center and "village charm," Village Green, railroad and train station, Player's Guild, Ellsworth medical clinic, public transportation services, community events sponsored by local businesses, and a sense of community.

Future development, including road and bridge projects, should be sited so as to preserve these historic and cultural resources for future generations.

Cultural Resources Goals

1. Protect and preserve the structures recorded in the state and national registers of historic places.
2. Protect and preserve the cultural resources as they are identified by the residents of Chester.
3. Protect and preserve the physical setting and aesthetics of the area within which the historic villages are set.

Cultural Resources Policies

1. The demolition of historically significant structures should be discouraged.
2. Property owners of historic structures seeking inclusion in the State or National Registers should be encouraged and assisted in their efforts.
3. Encourage the preservation of historic buildings.

Cultural Resources Recommendations

1. Review bylaws to strengthen protection of historic structures and the aesthetics of the surrounding area.
2. Cooperate with local Historical Societies and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to build a public consensus for the value of historic structures.
3. Inventory cultural resources as identified by the residents of Chester.
4. Consider applying for Village Center Designation.

Chapter 5 – Education and Child Care Facilities

Education

The Town of Chester is a member of two school districts: Chester-Andover Elementary School District, which includes grade K-6, and the Green Mountain Union High School District No. 35, which includes grades 7-12.

The Chester-Andover Elementary School, which was built in 1955, had a year 2000 enrollment of 317 students, with 287 students being residents of Chester and 30 students residing in Andover.

Prior to the construction of the Chester-Andover School in 1955, students attended one of six (6) smaller schools in town. The present locations of the former schoolhouses are: the American Legion Hall, Stone School on School Street, Chester Elementary School (which now houses the Chester Historic Society Building), St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the Elementary School in Gassetts, and the Simsbury School in West Chester.

Historically, the number of students enrolled in the Chester-Andover Elementary School has ranged between a high of 373 students in 1960 to a low of 296 in 2006-2007. This is illustrated in the chart below.

Table 1 – Chester-Andover Elementary School Enrollment

1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006-07*
373	330	340	353	317	296

Source: Offices of Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union,
* Vermont Department of Education School Report, 2007.

The Green Mountain Union High School (7-12), which was built in 1971, has students from the Towns of Andover, Cavendish, and Chester and, in 2000-2001, 38 tuition students from the Towns of Baltimore, Grafton, Londonderry, and Weathersfield. The Town of Chester has the largest number of students attending with 260, Cavendish 102, and Andover 24.

Since 1980 the enrollment has fluctuated between a high of 479 in 1980 to a low of 416 in 2006-2007.

Table 2 -Enrollment History of Green Mountain Union High School

1960*	1970*	1980	1990	2000	2006-07
141	288	479	450	424	416

Source: Offices of Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union
***Chester High School**

Green Mountain Union High School students may receive vocational and technical training at the Howard Dean Educational Center, in Springfield, VT.

Continuing education programs are offered through Community College of Vermont and Johnson State College External Degree Programs in Springfield.

There are homes providing day care for the Chester area. The Head-Start Program is being offered at Green Mountain Union High School. There is a pre-school/daycare presently in the planning stages for Chester to be housed with and run in conjunction with Headstart.

Opportunities In Learning, an alternative educational program, is offered at Cavendish Town Elementary School, in Proctorsville, VT.

Capital needs are currently being studied and addressed by the Town and the School Trustees.

Child Care Facilities

Child care is an important consideration for employers and families with young children. Chester has 1 licensed child care facility and 2 registered family child care homes in town. There are an additional 14 licensed providers and 27 registered homes in the surrounding towns. To date, there has not been an analysis of the need for additional child care providers in the area and support the efforts of licensed providers or registered homes to open facilities within the town itself.

Education and Child Care Goals:

1. Maintain and broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities to the youth of the Town.
2. To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care for residents and workers in Chester.

Education and Child Care Policies:

1. The Town should continue to provide high quality, cost effective educational opportunities and amenities to all students residing in Chester, as well as those attending Chester schools, who reside in other Towns.
2. Any new development which results in significant increases in the number of school-age children should not place a significant burden on Chester's taxpayers or existing school facilities.
3. Support the development and operation of child care facilities within the town

Education and Child Care Policies:

1. The Town should continue to work with the school board on capital development programs for buildings and other structures.
2. Zoning Bylaws and other town regulations should facilitate the creation and retention of licensed and registered child care facilities in the town.
3. Survey local families that need child care to determine the availability of facilities and need for additional facilities or services within the town itself.

Chapter 6 - Energy

Careful, efficient use, and conservation of energy is in the best interest of Chester and its residents. The influence of the Town on energy use and conservation pales in comparison with the effects of state and federal policies, yet the polices of a small town and its residents can affect energy consumption through encouraging such measures as carpooling, conservation, use of renewable energy resources, walking or cycling to work or store, and proper insulation and siting of buildings for passive solar heat. The Town has an interest in conserving energy to the greatest extent possible in order to preserve local environmental quality, save money, and be an active participant in the state and national efforts to conserve energy.

Wood, propane and heating oil are among some of the more common types of fuel used to heat homes in Chester. As a result of increasing fuel oil costs, home heating costs are on the rise throughout New England, which in turn increases the demand for cheaper sources of fuel such as cord wood. Home heating costs can be significantly lowered by proper solar siting, and using modern insulation and building techniques to achieve higher "R" ratings. Vermont Residential Energy Code requires builders of new homes to complete a Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards Certificate.

Many Chester residents travel to surrounding towns for employment. High fuel costs have increased the cost of transportation for commuters. The Town should seek solutions to decrease the number of commuter miles, including planning for and providing for facilities for the use of carpooling, including Park & Ride lots, and an expansion of public transportation between Chester and the neighboring towns for work and shopping. Employers in Chester and the neighboring Towns should encourage with incentives to employees, greater use of carpooling and the existing public transportation, and seek expansion of public transportation to better serve their employees.

Energy Goals

1. To encourage energy saving measures that can be adopted by local residents.
2. To reduce local demand for non-renewable energy resources.
3. To encourage the construction of energy efficient buildings, both in renovation of existing buildings and new construction.
4. To encourage and promote the most efficient use of electricity, and heating and cooling equipment in all municipally owned buildings.
5. To encourage the development of a transportation system that encourages the use of public transportation and ride-sharing and enables increased non-motorized vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Emphasize links between schools, stores, work and home.
6. To encourage the location of community service structures, retail sites, public utilities, day care centers, state offices and other frequently visited sites within walking distance of village residential areas.
7. To encourage new development to take place in areas most easily served by existing and future public utilities.
8. To support the use of locally-produced energy sources such as wood, provided that they are supplied and used in ways that protect air quality and are compatible with this Plan's Natural Resource and Land Use policies.

Energy Policies

1. New construction and renovation shall be encouraged to use modern building materials (insulation with a high "R" factor) and techniques in order to conserve energy and lower home heating costs.
2. Cooperate regionally to hold educational events encouraging citizens to adopt energy saving measures, thereby lowering living expenses.
3. Amend subdivision regulations and/or adopt site plan review procedures for review of the building and insulation materials, and the siting of new homes (for passive solar).
4. Strive to obtain the cooperation of the builders of new homes to comply with the Vermont energy standards and to complete and file with the Town a Vermont Residential Building Energy Standards Certificate.
5. The Town should adopt policies ensuring the most efficient use of municipal equipment and vehicles.
6. The Town should adopt procedures for ensuring the most efficient use of heating and cooling equipment in municipal buildings.
7. The Town should investigate the possibility of including energy-efficiency standards in local land use regulations.
8. The Town should include land use regulations that encourage locally-produced energy sources such as wood for heating, with provisions to ensure the protection of air quality and compatibility with this Plan's Natural Resource and Land Use policies.
9. For large employers in conditional use reviews and in Act 250 proceedings the Town should request that the employer encourage their employees to reduce fuel consumption, as well as traffic conditions, with programs that encourage employees to use public transportation and carpooling for their commute to and from work.

Chapter 7 – Housing

There were total of 1,611 housing units in Chester, according to the 2000 US Census. Of this number, 950 units were specified in the 2000 Census as owner-occupied, 346 were rented, and 315 were seasonal, vacant ready to rent or sell, or otherwise vacant. The Census reported there were 116 mobile homes in Chester, accounting for 07.2% of the total housing units.

Housing Analysis

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Table 1, there were 1,292 Households and the Median Household Income (MHI) in Chester was $39,417. MHI for Windsor County was $40,688.

Table 1. – Chester Household Income

Household Income	Number	Percentage	Percentage of Households at or above this Income level	30% of Annual Household Income	30% of Monthly Household Income
Less than $10,000	103	8.0	100.0	Less than $3,000	Less than $250
$10,000 to $14,999	81	6.3	92.0	$3,000 to $4,500	$250 to $375
$15,000 to $24,999	201	15.6	85.7	$4,500 to $7,500	$375 to $625
$25,000 to $34,999	195	15.1	70.1	$7,500 to $10,500	$625 to $875
$35,000 to $49,999	231	17.9	55.0	$10,500 to $15,000	$875 to $1,250
$50,000 to $74,999	312	24.1	37.1	$15,000 to $22,500	$1,250 to $1,875
$75,000 or more	169	13.0	13.0	$22,500 or more	$1,875 or more
Median $39,417					
Totals	1292	100.0	-		

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 861 Families and the Median Family Income was $47,083. [See analysis of family income census data in Table 2.]

Table 2. - Family Income

Family Income	Number	Percentage	Percentage of Families at or above this Income level
Less than $10,000	25	2.9	100.0
$10,000 to $14,999	24	2.8	97.1
$15,000 to $24,999	104	12.1	94.3
$25,000 to $34,999	139	16.1	82.2
$35,000 to $49,999	172	20.0	66.1
$50,000 to $74,999	250	29.0	46.1
$75,000 or more	147	17.1	17.1
Totals	861	100.0	-

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The value of residential units from the Chester Lister Records and the 2000 Census Data, as well as, mortgage status and selected monthly owner costs, and those costs as a percentage of Household Income are set forth respectively in the following Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Table 3 - Value of residential units

Value	Number	Percentage	Percentage at or below this value
$50,000 or less	160	11.3	11.3
$50,001 to $75,000	236	16.7	28.0
$75,001 to $100,000	335	23.7	51.7
$100,001 to $125,000	250	17.7	69.4

$125,001 or more	432	30.6	100.0
Totals	1413	100.0	

Source: Town of Chester Lister Records of 2001

Table 4 shows, according to the 2000 Census data, 50% of the owner-occupied homes have a value under $100,000. 82.4% are under $150,000. Table 6, below, shows the values from the Lister's Records, showing all residential units and their values, and those values are very similar to, and support the values reflected in, the Census data.

Table 4 - Value of "Specified owner-occupied units"

Value	Number	Percentage	Percentage at or below this value level
Less than $50,000	18	3.0	3.0
$50,000 to $99,999	286	47.0	50.0
$100,000 to $149,999	197	32.4	82.4
$150,000 to $199,999	63	10.4	92.8
$200,000 to $299,999	36	5.9	98.7
$300,000 or more	8	1.3	100.0
Totals	608	100.0	-
Median Value (Dollars)	$100,000		

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Table 5 shows that most owner-occupied homes with mortgages (58.8%) have monthly costs for housing, including mortgage of less than $1,000.00.

Table 5 - Mortgage status and "selected monthly owner costs" on Owner-occupied units

	Mortgage and Selected Costs per Month	Number (Total 608 Units)	Percentage	Percentage of Mortgaged Units at or below this level
With a Mortgage		388	63.8	100.0
	$300 to $499	10	1.7	2.6
	$500 to $699	64	10.5	19.1
	$700 to $999	154	25.3	58.8
	$1,000 to $1,499	133	21.9	93.1
	$1,500 or more	27	4.4	100.0
Median $932		-	-	
Not Mortgaged		220	36.2	
Median $386	Totals	608	100.0	

And finally, Table 6 shows that for 75% of the owner-occupied homes the monthly costs, including mortgage, are less than 30% of monthly Household Income.

Table 6 - Selected monthly owner costs as a percentage of Household Income in 1999 - 681 owner-occupied units

Percentage Costs/Income	Number	Percentage	Percentage at or below this level
Less than 15.0 percent	176	28.9	28.9
15.0 to 19.9 percent	136	22.4	51.3
20.0 to 24.9 percent	85	14.0	65.3
25.0 to 29.9 percent	59	9.7	75.0
30.0 to 34.9 percent	46	7.6	82.6
35 percent or more	102	16.8	99.4
Not computed	4	0.6	100.0
Totals	608	100.0	-

Affordable Housing based on value and cost of purchasing a home in Chester.

The U.S. and Vermont State Housing goals for affordable housing include the achievement of housing costs at or below 30% of Household Income (including utility expenses) for households at or below the county median income level. Chester's 1999 median Household Income level ($39,417) was less than the 2000 Windsor County's median income level ($40,688), which includes the incomes of those near Dartmouth in Hanover, NH and the business center of the Lebanon, NH. region. Using the 1999 Windsor County Median Household Income of $40,688, no more than $1,017 per month would go toward mortgage payments or rent, heat, electricity, water, housing related taxes or fees, and other similar housing expenses.

The 2000 Census data, supported by the Chester Listers' data, shows that at least 50% of the owner-occupied homes are $100,000 or less in market value.

A 30 year mortgage at 7.0% mortgage interest rate for an 80% mortgage on a home costing $100,000 would result in $532 of monthly mortgage costs. One of the largest monthly payments for homeowners is property taxes. Property tax rate for Chester is $2.32 for 2001. For a home costing $100,000, the annual tax rate would be $2,320, costing $193 monthly. With $725 required for mortgage and taxes, of the $1017 (30% of the monthly Median Housing Income), there would remain $292 for utilities, heat, electricity, water, similar fees. A comparison of property value and affordability for the purchase of a home in Chester is shown in Table 7. It would appear from the calculations in Table 7, which are based on 2000 Census data, that there remains approximately 30% (Table 1) of the households in Chester, that is, those with an annual Household Income less than $24,000, are not able to purchase a home in Chester. Stated another way, based on the known data, in order to purchase a home in Chester, the purchaser at a minimum must have the $10,000 down payment on a $50,000 home and have an income of $24,000 or more. Approximately 70% of the Households in Chester have the income to pay the $40,000 mortgage and selected costs for the purchase of such a home. Of those owner-occupied homes in the 2000 Census, of those with a mortgage 75% spent 29.9% or less of the Median Household Income on selected housing costs. [See Table 6]

Table 7 – Mortgage Amortization Cost and Property Taxes; Percent of Properties available at the cost and percent of Households which can afford to purchase the property.

Value	Mortgage *	Mortgage (Mo.)	Taxes **	Taxes (Mo.)	Mortgage + Taxes (Mo.)	Other home related expenses (Mo.) ***	Number / Percent of Properties Available at of below this value****	Monthly Income / 30% needed to Afford Purchase	Approximate Percent of Household at MHI is Able to Afford *****
$100,000	$80,000	$532	$2,320	$193	$725	$290	731 / 51.7%	$3,383 / $1,105	45%
$75,000	$60,000	$399	$1,740	$145	$544	$270	396 / 28.0%	$2,713 / $814	60%
$50,000	$40,000	$266	$1,160	$97	$363	$250	160 / 11.3%	$2,043 / $613	70%

*Calculation based on 80% mortgage
**Based on 2001 Town Property Tax Rate, including School
***Insurance, fuel, electricity, water, sewer, estimated, as there is no hard data in the Census
**** Based on 2001 Lister Records from Town Of Chester [Table 3]
*****Based on 2000 Census of Household Income (HI) for Chester and 30% of HI available for housing. [See Table 1.]

For comparison to Towns in the Southern Windsor County Region, Table 8, below, contains the number and value of various residential properties in the area.

Table 8 - 1996 Residential Counts and Average Fair Market Values (FMV) and differ from the 2000 Census*

TOWN	R1** count	R1 avg. FMV	R2** count	R2 avg. FMV	MHU** count	MHU avg. FMV	MHL** count	MHL avg. FMV
Andover	65	$108,478	75	$164,798	82	$5,556	12	$50,608
Baltimore	31	$63,775	28	$120,790	1	$13,752	13	$39,423
Cavendish	308	$74,730	117	$151,593	94	$7,915	54	$35,423
Chester	646	$87,386	233	$160,863	22	$9,711	99	$48,158
Ludlow	572	$100,466	124	$167,201	100	$17,283	66	$60,515
Reading	115	$90,753	109	$208,479	2	$6,079	22	$41,435
Springfield	2,554	$76,934	301	$150,222	132	$11,984	79	$47,989
Weathersfield	501	$89,866	304	$132,840	180	$19,906	124	$53,278
West Windsor	182	$123,629	155	$200,565	1	$21,118	12	$53,849
Windsor	895	$76,253	82	$139,932	41	$8,691	37	$48,504
REGION Median		$86,127		$164,634		$13,337		$47,969
REGION Average	5,870	$83,247	1,530	$160,535	655	$13,298	518	$49,292

* Figures based on data from the Division of Property Valuation and Review

**Property definitions are as follows:

R1 - Residential on less than 6 acres

R2 - Residential on greater than 6 acres, not including working farms

MHU - Mobile home - unlanded (set up on land not owned by the owner of the mobile home, as in mobile home parks)

MHL - Mobile home - landed (set up on land owned by the owner of the mobile home)

Affordable Housing based on cost of renting a residential unit in Chester.

According to the 2000 Census, 87.7% of residential units rented in Chester cost less in Gross Rent than 30% of $1017, which is the Median Household Income for the County of Windsor. [Table 9]

Table 9 – 2000 Census, Gross Rent on household units in Chester

Gross Rent	Number (Total 323)	Percent	Percent at or below this level	Percent at or above this level
Less than $200	34	10.5	10.5	100.0
$200 to $299	28	8.7	19.2	89.5
$300 to $499	79	24.5	43.7	80.8
$500 to $749	124	38.4	82.1	56.3
$750 to $999	18	5.6	87.7	17.9
$1,000 or more	12	3.6	91.3	12.3
No cash rent	28	8.7	100.0	8.7
Median (in $)	($512)	-		
Totals	323	100.0		

However, 2000 Census data reports that, in 1999, just 57.2% of renting households paid rent that was 29.9% or less of the Median Household Income. 33.2% paid 30% or more of the MHI. [Table 10]

Table 10 – 2000 Census, Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (HI) in 1999

Gross Rent as a % of HI in 1999	Number (Total 323)	Percent	Percent at or below this level	Percent at or above this level
Less than 15.0 percent	45 (45)	13.9	13.9	100.0
15.0 to 19.9 percent	46 (91)	14.2	28.1	86.1
20.0 to 24.9 percent	46 (137)	14.2	42.3	71.9
25.0 to 29.9 percent	48 (185)	14.9	57.2	57.7
30.0 to 34.9 percent	31 (216)	9.6	66.8	42.8
35.0 or more percent	77 (293)	23.8	90.6	33.2
Not calculated	30	9.4	100.0	9.4
Totals	323	100.0		

It is difficult to explain from the available data how 87.7% of the rentable housing units could be affordable, yet 33.2% paid gross rent above the affordable level. Data from the 1990 Census was reported in a different format. The following look at the 1990 data could shed light on the 2000 Census data.

The 1990 Census reported, in 1989, of the 301 families renting, 276 paid rent (Note: The 2000 Census reported 323 household renting with 295 paying rent.). Of the 276 families paying rent, 178 (or 64.5%) used less than 30% of their Family Income for the rent of the unit, and 98 (35.5%) used more, as follows: Of the 69 families earning $10,000 or less, 30 paid more than 30% of their Family Income for the rental (17 paid no rent). Of the 93 families earning $19,999 or less, 53 paid more than 30% of their Family Income for the rental (2 paid no rent). Of the 102 families earning $34,999 or less, 15 paid more than 30% of their Family Income for the rental (5 paid no rent). All families earning $35,000 or more paid less than 24% of their Family Income for the rental (1 paid no rent).

The 1990 Census Data shows that those paying more than 30% of the MHI were:

- 43.5% (30/69) of those earning less than $10,000.
- 57% (53/93) of those earning less than $19,999.
- 14.7% (15/102) of those earning less than $34,999.

If the data from the 2000 Census were reported in the same format as the 1990 Census, it is logical to believe that the spread of affordability of rental housing over the income spectrum would be similar. In any case, the 2000 Census data show the affordability of the rental housing in Chester has not changed significantly. There are 22 more units reported, and 19 more are paying rent. The percentage of households in rental units, which the U.S. and Vermont standards deemed not affordable, increased very slightly from 1990 to 2000, that is, 98 of 276 (32.5%) to 108 of 295 (33.4%).

Accessory Dwelling Units

In 2004, the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development law (24 V.S.A., Chapter 117) was amended to provide for the equal treatment of housing and allows for affordable housing in Vermont. In accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ 4382(a)(10) and 4412(1)(E),

homeowners have the opportunity to add one accessory dwelling (an efficiency or one-bedroom apartment unit that is clearly secondary to the owner-occupied house and that the apartment would include all the amenities needed for independent living) as long as they meet the following conditions:

- The homeowner must reside in the residence;
- The property has the capacity to handle the additional demand for wastewater disposal;
- The size of the accessory dwelling unit equals no more than 30% of the total square footage of the house.
- The property meets any applicable setback, coverage, and parking requirements contained in the Zoning Bylaws.

Municipalities can require a conditional use permit for accessory apartments that involve building a new structure, increasing the height or floor area of the house, or expanding the size of the parking area. The new law is an opportunity for communities to create additional rental housing while providing homeowners with supplementary income.

Housing Goals

1. To guide housing development in Chester to meet the needs of residents of all income levels.

Housing Policies:

1. Allow for multi-family housing or higher density development of single family housing in some areas of town in order to provide for the housing needs of lower income residents.
2. Continue to monitor and review the housing needs of Chester.

Housing Recommendations:

1. Continue to review Chester's and the region's job market and economy.

2. The Town should provide for accessory dwelling units in the Zoning Bylaws and establish a streamlined review process in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4412(1)(E).

Chapter 8 - 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 that developers 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 regulated natural resource constraints.
6. Review and amend Capital Program and Budget Plan.
7. Work with the Regional Planning Commission on meeting local housing needs.
8. Identify areas of significant aesthetic value to the entire community.
9. Inventory cultural resources as identified by the residents of Chester.

Chapter 9 - Relationship to Local and Regional Plans

In order for the Town of Chester 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. Chester is bordered by the Towns of Grafton, Rockingham, and Windham in Windham County, and by Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Ludlow, and Springfield in Windsor County. Chester is located in the south-central area of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission's 10-town region. Chester is served by the District 2 Environmental Commission, and is located in Vermont Agency of Transportation District 2, and shares borders with VAOT Districts 3 and 4.

Neighboring Towns

Chester is surrounded by towns which share many similar planning concerns and are faced with varying degrees of development pressure. All of the towns abutting Chester have town plans and zoning regulations, except Cavendish, which has a town plan, but no zoning regulations. The Chester Town Plan does not conflict with the plans of the above towns.

Some neighboring towns share similar concerns to those in Chester with regard to development and traffic. The towns of Chester, Cavendish, Ludlow, and Rockingham, for example, see a significant increase in traffic flow during the winter months, due to the operation of five ski resorts in the area, namely, Okemo, Killington, Bromley, Magic and Stratton. The expansion plans of Okemo Mountain Resort and Killington Resort will cause further increases in traffic through Chester, Cavendish, Ludlow, and Rockingham once they are implemented. The increase in truck traffic and truck size along Route 103 is also a shared concern amongst the towns of Chester, Cavendish, Ludlow, and Rockingham.

According to the Southern Windsor County Regional Transportation Plan, VT Routes 10, 11 and 103 are identified as important roads in the regional transportation network.

Chester shares the watershed of the Williams River and its branches with the Towns of Andover, Cavendish, Grafton, Rockingham, and Windham.

The land use and conservation plans of the neighboring Towns are compatible with those of Chester.

Southern Windsor County Region

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

The 2003 Regional Plan was readopted in 2008. It designates the village area of Chester as a "Town Center," that is characterized by having localized services, including shopping, employment, government, schools, libraries, and clinics. The village areas of Cavendish and Proctorsville are also identified as Town Centers in the Regional Plan. The Regional Plan

encourages future growth to focus within the higher density village areas where sewer and water infrastructure already exists. This section is compatible with the Chester Town Plan, which designates the village areas as mixed use area, where a mix of commercial, civic and high-density residential development should occur.

While maintaining Chester's uniqueness and independence of thought and planning, the Chester Town Plan is compatible with 2003 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.

Chapter 10 – Economic Development

Economic Development Goals

1. To promote a vibrant local economy that provides or expands satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards.

Economic Development Policies

1. The Economic Development Chapter of the *2014 Southern Windsor County Regional Plan*, including all applicable policies and recommendations, is hereby adopted to serve as the economic development element for *Chester's Town Plan*.

ADOPTION DATE:

This Town Plan was adopted by the Selectboard of the Town of Chester this 15th day of July, 2015.

John DeBenedetti

Thomas Bock

Arunas Jonynas

William Lindsay

Heather Chase

EXPIRATION DATE:

This Town Plan expires the 15th day of July, 2020