

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

A. OBJECTIVE OF THE WINDHAM TOWN PLAN

The Windham Town Plan provides for an understanding of where the Town came from, its current attributes and assets, and a clear direction that the property owners and residents of the Town desire to continue. It also provides planning approaches, Policies and in some instances standards to ensure that decisions made at the regional and state levels give proper consideration to and are compatible with our expressed wishes and intentions.

B. STATEMENT OF POLICY & PURPOSE

There are many factors which contribute to the current status of our community. The rural character is exemplified in many attributes of the Town, such as the vast amount of wooded and undeveloped areas, streams, ponds, abundant wildlife, absence of bright lights, low volume of traffic, and very low ambient noise levels. Windham contains unique natural topographic features that have allowed historic settlement patterns to occur near its hills and ridges while respecting their special features and attributes. The housing has traditionally been single family structures, normally on one or more acres of land. The one-acre sites were concentrated in the village areas and in the development surrounding the vacation homes at Timber Ridge. The buildings themselves have tended to be two stories or less, and be clustered in these areas. This results in the maximum amount of undeveloped land.

The Windham Town Plan reflects the Planning Commission's understanding of the trends and pressures affecting our Town and the prevailing standards of the property owners and voters of the Town. It is a blueprint to future growth and development of land. We commit to maintain Windham's natural resources and physical features and to preserve a community that is healthy and safe. Growth, which is good for the Town must not imperil or detract from the social, environmental, cultural, economic, health and aesthetic values of our rural community. The ability of taxpayers to support the Town on a sound financial basis must be taken into consideration. Guidelines and Policies set forth here within should be incorporated in our Zoning Bylaws. Refer to the Zoning Regulations for specifics; e.g., for Uses Prohibited see Zoning Regulations Section 204.

In order to attain these objectives, it is the policy of the people of the Town of Windham to:

1. Assure that the health, safety, education and housing needs of the community will be adequately fulfilled.
2. Encourage development that will ensure our social and economic well being and preserve and protect our natural resources, ridgelines, and headwaters.
3. Prohibit incompatible, uncoordinated, or uncontrolled development, which would result in adverse environmental impact, or undue increased in population which could cause

unreasonable demands on the Town's ability to provide public services, or result in unsafe and unhealthy living conditions for the people of Windham.

4. Identify and conserve both natural and man-made resources that have significant value to the citizens of Windham, such as mineral deposits, prime agricultural lands, water supplies, forests, significant fragile natural resource areas, significant views, vernal pools, forest districts and public facilities and infrastructure.
5. Appreciate the headwaters contained within the Town, the value of headwaters to both the Town and the surrounding communities and the need to protect headwaters for present and future generations.
6. The Town should remain alert for indications of unsuitable growth and anticipate actions that will be necessary to address the impacts.

C. STATE REQUIREMENTS

As required in the State Planning and Development Act (Title 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117), this Plan is based on several studies, including an analysis of current trends and probable social and economic consequences. Consideration was also given to population and employment characteristics, housing needs and types, patterns and rates of growth, efficient use of energy and development of renewable energy resources, classes of use of land, community finances, history, land suitability, and the location of future growth. The Plan contains all eleven required elements, addresses each of the goals stated in 24 VSA Section 4302, and is compatible with the Windham Regional Plan and with the approved plans of other towns in the region.

This Plan became effective upon adoption by the Selectboard after required public hearings held first by the Planning Commission and then by the Selectboard. As required by law, copies have been sent to bordering towns, the Windham Regional Commission, and the state Agency of Development and Community Affairs for review and comment and to any community or interested group or organization requesting a copy prior to the first hearing.

Under Vermont law, a town plan expires five years from the date of adoption. Thus the Town of Windham must review its Plan, revise where necessary, and readopt or replace it every five years.

D. ROLE OF THE TOWN PLAN

The Town Plan is a blueprint to both elected and appointed town officials, citizen boards, state and regional agencies, regulatory boards and commissions, developers, and residents in fulfilling the intended future condition of the Town. The Town Plan is not meant to discriminate for or against any segment of the Town's population, present or future, but rather to protect all citizens and allow for orderly growth. Under the State Planning and Development Act, a Town Plan also provides the policy foundation for implementing bylaws such as zoning. No bylaw or amendments thereto may be enacted unless the town has a duly adopted plan. Town Plans also serve as a source of information for which to pursue more detailed studies.

The Town Plan is unique in Vermont in that it also serves a role in state regulatory proceedings. For example, Act 250 requires development projects to conform to the Town Plan. Other state proceedings for utility and road projects must also consider the impact on the Town Plan.

Therefore, although the plan's recommendations may be for the long term, they shall also be used in a decision-making process at any time.

E. INTERPRETATION OF THE TOWN PLAN

Throughout the text of this Plan many of the policies and community action statements include imperative verbs. "Should" or "may" means that a requirement is encouraged but not mandated, whereas "shall" or "must" means that the Town intends that a requirement is accomplished. "Prohibited" means the subject is forbidden.

F. ORGANIZATION OF THE TOWN PLAN

The Town Plan is divided into chapters which contain descriptive material and policies concerning natural resources, energy, land use, community utilities/facilities and services, transportation, historic/recreational and scenic resources, housing and economic development.

Each chapter includes Policy Statements and in some instances standards which help define the direction the Town will take and Actions which provide the Town with steps which will make implementation of policies and standards possible.

CHAPTER II COMMUNITY PROFILE

A. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The Windham School Club of 1967 prepared a document entitled "The History of Windham, Vermont," by James H. Upham with a forward by Raymond A. Beardslee. "Excerpts from Historical Manuscripts written by Asahel Upham in 1902 and 1905." The following is a further abstract of these histories.

This manuscript history of Windham, Vermont, unsigned and undated, has long been preserved among the records of the Town. It was found between the front cover and the flyleaf of Volume I of the land records when Harry Hall became Town Clerk in 1946.

The Town of Londonderry, which embraced Windham, was chartered by the State of New York on February 13, 1700. It contained 84,590 acres. The first settlers came in 1774, three of the first five settlers located in the Windham territory. They made a small clearance and prepared for their family to return the following year. They returned to Londonderry to spend the winter. The records note that the first log cabin was built and a saw mill located at so-called "Derry Pond." Lumber for two houses was cut, but a fire destroyed the mill and lumber. Records of the settlements to 1793 are nearly all lost.

In 1795, a petition was presented to the Vermont Legislature to divide the Town of Londonderry to make a new town out of the eastern part. On October 22, 1795, an act passed in the legislature incorporating this new town of 16,870 acres which was called Windham.

In 1800, Windham had a population numbering 363. By 1810 the population had grown to 782, rising to 931 people in 1820. In 1830 the population was 847 and it continued to decrease to 757 in 1840 and 763 in 1850. During this period, the Town was dependent on its local merchants, saw mills, blacksmith shop, farming, grist mills, talc and marble mining, and sheep farming. The towns people begun building a Meeting House in 1802 and finished it in 1825. Today, this historic structure continues to satisfy the needs of the Town. Without easy travel modes, the Town was a typical rural area in which neighbors depended on each other. Several schools and churches were established.

The people of Windham encouraged education. Records show that the first formal school meeting was in 1796 in a log barn. In 1801, a decision was made to build a school. At 22 feet squared, the first school cost \$172.50. The record says "It cannot be said that Windham has raised no literary men." Let the record show "that 13 ministers went forth from the Town, and 2 physicians. Women, likewise have furnished many teachers, missionary workers, writers who have graced the columns of literary periodicals." Other school buildings followed.

A description of a "desirable town community" included these words:

"A town consisting of a due mixture of hills, valleys, and streams of water, well fenced and cultivated, the roads and bridges in good repair, decent inns for the refreshments of travelers and for public entertainment. Manufacturers of a suitable proportion of handicraft workman and two or three traders. A physician and a lawyer. A clergyman of good understanding, candid disposition and exemplary morals, not a metaphysical nor a polemic but a serious, practical

preacher. A school master who should understand his business and teach his pupils to govern themselves. A decent Musical Society, no intriguing politician, horse jockey, gambler, or sot. Such a situation may be considered as the most favorable to local happiness of any which the world can afford.”

It concludes further with:

“Nearly all have comfortable dwelling with the property enough to procure necessities and even some luxuries. We are shielded from many of the distracting elements and destroyer influences which are working the ruins of older towns. We are surrounded by fortifications (hills and valleys) which have been raised by the hand of the Almighty which will forever exclude the idea that our Town will become the theatre of railroad scenes or that she will be noted for Manufacturers. Her glory depends upon the general intelligence of her town’s people.”

B. GEOPGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Town of Windham is comprised of three areas: North Windham, South Windham, and West Windham. The Town is located in a north/south orientation, between Route 11 to the Northwest and Route 30 to the South. A road running north/south through Town provides the major access to and from the community. Route 121 runs east/west from Route 11 to Grafton along the northern part of the Town. Route 121 is blacktopped on the western portion and a gravel road to the east. The intersection of Route 121 and Windham Hill Road is locally known as Lawrence Four Corners.

The major entry and exit routes are steep inclines, rising to the Town centers. The Town is at a relatively high elevation (all of Windham is above 1,500 feet) but even so, the surrounding areas to the east and west of the Town centers are still at higher elevations, with settlement concentrated in the “valley” running north and south. The result of this geography is that the main concentration of homes is located along this corridor with the outlying areas concentrated into large woodland areas on high rising land, often with ledge rock subsurface.

The elevation of the land gives rise to several headwaters which flow downstream to join the larger tributaries. Several large in-stream ponds have been developed and were used for waterpower. There are also wetland areas, many resulting from beaver activity, which are still present today. The western part of Town rises sharply up Glebe Mountain.

While much of Windham had at one time been cleared to an open landscape, much of the land has returned to a forested state. There are deposits of talc and marble, which at one time were mined but these operations have since been discontinued. An area in the valley of West Windham has long been used for farming and is currently being converted from milk production to orchards. Other suitable farm areas have been discontinued. A large potato farm was converted to a 9-hole golf course with a clubhouse during the 1960s and has since been expanded to 18 holes.

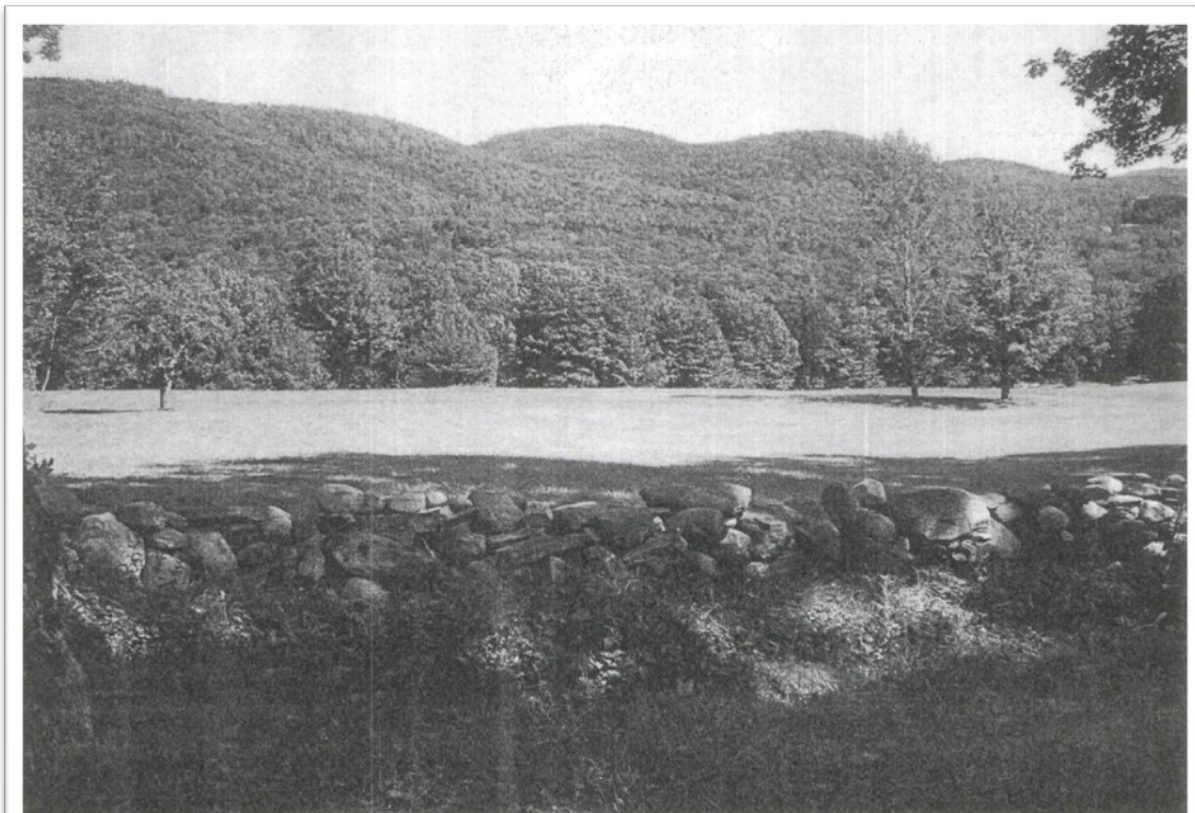
The topography of the Town does not lend itself to heavy through-traffic, nor does it attract large commercial or industrial development. A small private ski facility did operate in Windham during the 1960s and 1970s, however it has since been closed and most equipment associated with its operation has been removed.

C. HISTORIC REGISTRY

Windham Village received National Register of Historic Places designation in 1984. (ref. U.S. Dept of Interior – National Registry of Historic Places). The Nomination Form narrative includes the following fragments drawn from throughout the document; the full text of which can be seen at www.windhamvt.info/historicdesignations:

“In general context Windham preserves much of its early character, unaffected by modern development. . . . Overall, Windham is a rare and pristine place that has evolved to the present without losing its image of the past.”

“Well-preserved, wood frame, vernacular Greek Revival structures dating from the mid nineteenth century predominate and are positioned in a linear pattern amidst an environment of wooded and open hillsides and breathtaking views.”



Light House (#3); View looking east; Photograph 3

“It is distinguished by a large number of fieldstone terraces and fences and a number of impressive maple trees stand along the little traveled roadside.”

“Windham is fairly remote and isolated from the main developments of the lowlands surrounding it. The Town is thickly forested with both hard and soft woods spreading out over what were once open fields. A number of meadows remain open, however, particularly to the east of the district and do much to preserve the village’s early agricultural character.”

“Windham village is a rare and pristine example of an isolated, rural, nineteenth century hilltop village. (The Town of Windham has one of the highest altitudes of any locale in the state.) While similar Vermont villages have either been abandoned during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century’s and are now a collection of wooded cellar holes, or have suffered the detrimental consequences of the burgeoning tourist industry in Southern Vermont. Windham remains unaffected. Its small collection of vernacular Greek revival wood frame residences, later complimentary early 20th century residences, barns and a church and siting amidst a pastoral and wooded natural environment, honestly epitomize an historic northern New England agrarian village.”

Lucy Wood writing in Abbey Hemenway’s Vermont Historical Gazetteer in 1877 sums up Windham’s preceding pastoral years when she states: “There are few (in Windham) who are wealthy, and not many who are poor. They have enough to be comfortable and something to spare for the support of public institutions. There are few mechanics, but we live mostly by farming.” This description is truly reflected in the village buildings with their simple trim, and unpretentious appearance —“a rare symbol for the state and the nation of a golden, pre-industrial era.” “The town has been relatively free from 20th century intrusions.”

D. POPULATION

The 2010 US Census reported Windham with a population of 419 residents. The Town ranks as the fourth smallest town in the Windham Region, which encompasses 27 towns. Table 1 illustrates the decennial populations beginning in 1900. After experiencing a decrease of over 50% during the first half of the 20th Century, Windham began to experience population growth. From 1970-2010, Windham’s population has more than doubled.

Table 1: Windham Population Trends

<i>Year</i>	<i>Annual Population</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
2010	419	28%
2000	328	31%
1990	251	13%
1980	223	28%
1970	174	29%
1960	135	-8%
1950	146	-20%
1940	183	-28%
1930	254	-3%
1920	261	-24%
1910	345	-3%
1900	356	-6%
1890	379	-29%
1880	536	-1.5%
1870	544	-20%
1860	680	-11%
1850	763	+8%
1840	757	-10.6%
1830	847	-9%
1820	931	+19%
1810	782	+83%
1800	427	NA
1791	NA	NA

(Source: U.S. Census, UVM Center for Rural Studies)

Population trends are of interest in projecting future housing, facility, and service needs. One method of predicting population trends is to assess demographic trends over the past two decades and make assumptions in regards to future fertility, mortality, migration trends, and group quarters population. These projections are subject to a degree of uncertainty because it is impossible to predict future trends, especially those related to migration. The population projections for Windham are shown in Table 2. The data suggest that Windham will continue to experience a steady rate of population growth in the immediate near term.

Table 2: Windham Population Projection 2000-2015

<i>2000 US Census</i>	<i>2005 Projection</i>	<i>2010 Projection</i>	<i>2015 Projection</i>	<i>% Change 2000-2005</i>	<i>% Change 2005-2010</i>	<i>% Change 2010-2015</i>
328	351	370	393	7%	5%	6%

(Source: VT Department of Aging & Independent Living, MISER Population Projections 2003)

Table 3 shows Windham's growth as compared with data from neighboring towns in Windham and Windsor Counties. Windham was the fastest growing town when looking at the percent change in the population, and all of the neighboring towns but Chester had smaller increases in

the actual population numbers than Windham. It should be noted that from 2000 to 2010 Windham's actual population growth was from 328 to 419, an increase of 28%. The decade from 1990 to 2000 had growth of 31%. In the absence of any real change in the commercial or industrial profile of the community over those 20 years, this cannot be considered the result of economic development. The fact is that Windham has attracted this growth by virtue of its quiet and pristine rural beauty. The growth has been due to a fairly constant trend of seasonal homeowners becoming full time residents and to new landowners building permanent homes. The years 2000 to 2010 have shown a marked increase in the number of residents aged 45 – 64. (Table 4)

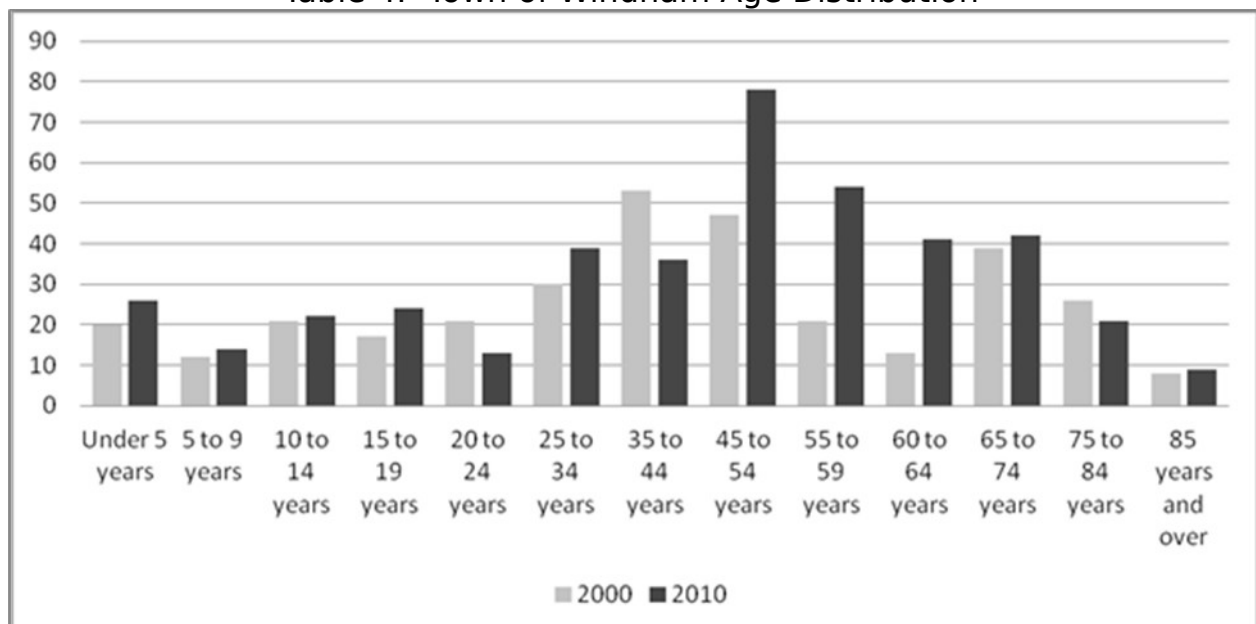
Table 3: Population Trends in Nearby Towns

<i>Town</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>	<i>Actual Change</i>
Windham	328	419	28%	91
Londonderry	1,709	1,769	4%	60
Jamaica	946	1,035	9%	89
Townshend	1,149	1,232	7%	83
Grafton	649	679	5%	30
Chester	3,044	3,154	4%	110
Andover	496	467	-6%	-29

(Source: 2000 & 2010 U.S. Census, UVM Center for Rural Studies)

Table 4 shows the age distribution of Windham residents is changing over time, reflecting two population trends. The more dramatic of the two is the aging of the Baby Boomer cohort, an unusually large segment of the United States' population who were born following World War II. They are now approaching the ages of 50 to 70. The second trend is the growing proportion of residents 65 years of age and over. They currently represent approximately 17% of the town's population, a number sure to grow significantly over time as the Baby Boomers continue to age. Also evident in this data is the decline in younger (ages 20-24) and middle (ages 35-44) segments.

Table 4: Town of Windham Age Distribution



(Source: 2000 & 2010 US Census)

E. HOUSING

Windham had a total of 396 housing units in 2010. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the number of housing units by type existing in the given year. According to the US Census, over the last twenty years, Windham has consistently had more seasonal units than owner occupied units although the gap is closing. Annual Town Reports provide further evidence of the fact that the majority of homes in Windham are for seasonal use. Table 6 shows the distribution of parcel types in Windham and the number of parcels with vacation homes have historically outnumber the number of parcels classified as residential. Data for 2012 indicates Windham is increasingly becoming a town of full-time residents.

In 2010, of the 187 occupied housing units, 89% were owner-occupied, with the remaining 11% being renter occupied. The number of owner occupied and renter occupied housing increased from 1990 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2010. This is an indication that there was growth in the year round residential population of the town. From 1990 to 2000 there was a decrease and then from 2000 to 2010 an increase in seasonal housing.

Table 5: Housing by Unit Type

<i>Unit Type</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>% Change 1990-2000</i>	<i>% Change 2000-2010</i>
Owner Occupied	86	126	167	47%	33%
Renter Occupied	15	24	20	60%	-17%
Seasonal	198	182	198	-8%	9%
Vacant	35	22	11	-37%	-50%
Total Units	334	354	396	6%	12%

(Source 1990, 2000 & 2010 U.S. Census)

Table 6: Parcel Ownership

<i>Parcel</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2012</i>
Residential	121	117	126	128	183
Vacation Home	209	226	222	225	183
Mobile Home	19	18	18	16	14
Woodland	152	144	143	143	132
Commercial	n/a	8	7	7	6
Farms	3	3	3	2	3
Other	17	7	7	7	-

(Source: Windham Town Plans and 2004 & 2012 Windham Town Report)

Windham is predominantly a community of single-family detached homes. Table 7 shows the number of housing units by the number of units in the structure.

Table 7: Number of Units in Structures

<i>Units in Structure</i>	<i>Actual Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1-unit, detached	324	89%
1-unit, attached	2	0%
2 units	6	2%

3 or more units	10	3%
Mobile Home	15	4%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	9	2%

(Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Yr Estimates)

F. ECONOMY

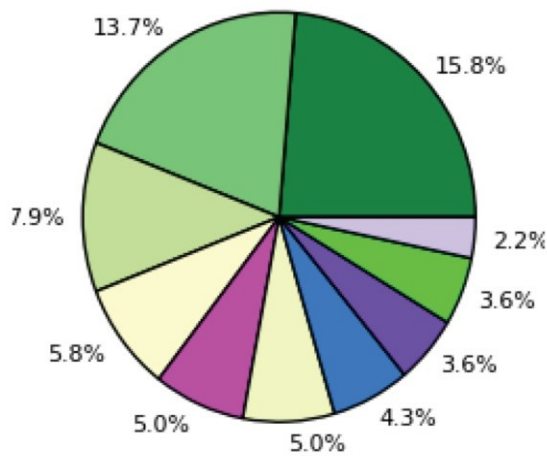
At the time of the 1990 Census, 96 Windham residents aged 16 and over were employed in the regional work force, compared to 178 in the 2000 Census, and 285 in the 2010 Census. Most of this increase is likely a reflection of the increased population in the Town over that period.

Windham residents are employed in a variety of industries. The 2000 Census indicated that the largest percentage (26%) of Windham residents were employed in the education, health and social service fields. For 2012, the Vermont Department of Labor reported a figure of 29%. (For further discussion of this subject see Chapter X of the Plan: Economic Development.)

Figure 1: Place of Work (Source: US. Census OnTheMap, <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>)

Percentage of Job Counts by Town, 2011

Legend

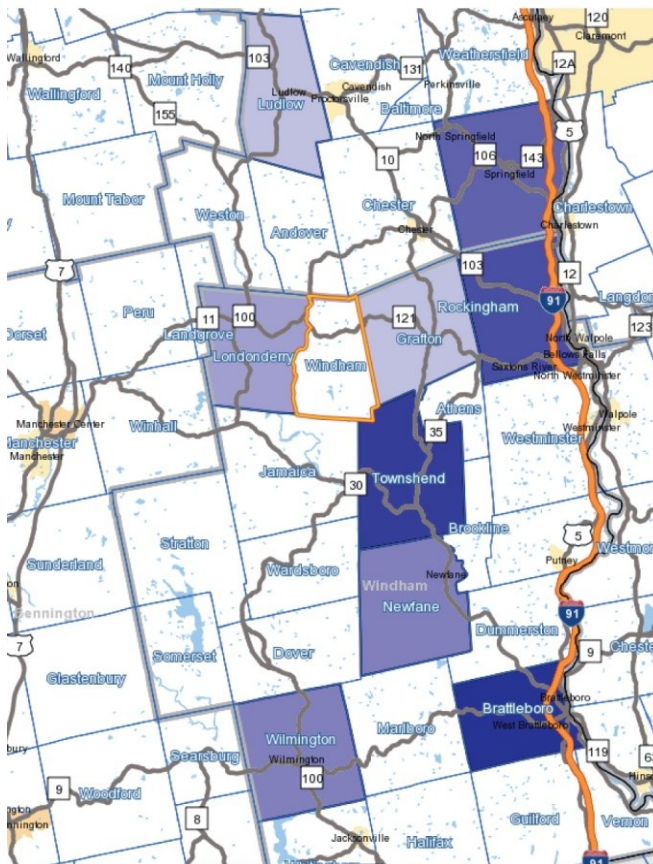


Note: Jobs in All Other Locations (33.1%) are not shown in chart.

	Count	Share
All County Subdivisions	139	100.0%
Brattleboro town (Windham, VT)	22	15.8%
Townshend town (Windham, VT)	19	13.7%
Rockingham town (Windham, VT)	11	7.9%
Springfield town (Windsor, VT)	8	5.8%
Newfane town (Windham, VT)	7	5.0%
Wilmington town (Windham, VT)	7	5.0%
Londonderry town (Windham, VT)	6	4.3%
Grafton town (Windham, VT)	5	3.6%
Ludlow town (Windsor, VT)	5	3.6%
Rutland city (Rutland, VT)	3	2.2%
All Other Locations	46	33.1%

Job Counts on the Map by Town 2011

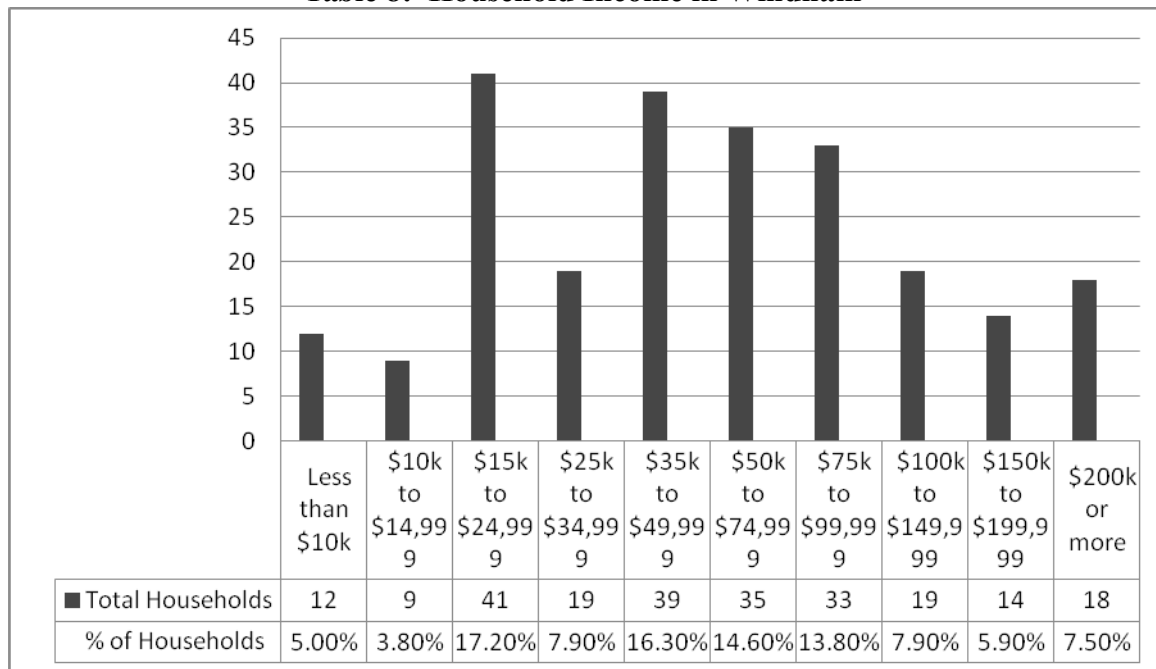
Legend



The Vermont Center for Geographic Information's website shows that the median household income in Windham, adjusted to 2009 dollars, rose from \$27,441 in 1979 to \$48,060 in 1989, then declined to \$40,141 in 1999, and rose back up to \$42,750 in 2009.

Table 8 shows the greatest percent (17.2%) of Windham households earn between \$15,000 and \$25,000, and a larger percentage of households (44.7%) fall in the combined income brackets between \$35,000 and \$100,000. Data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates reveal there has been an increase in the number of residents falling below the poverty level, with 10% of Windham residents below the federally defined poverty status in 2009 compared to 6.3% of the population below that income level in 1990.

Table 8: Household Income in Windham



(Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Yr Estimates)