

In addition, the median age of residents of Windham is increasing. To the extent that older people are able to live on their own and not need significant care, their housing needs are not significantly different than the rest of the community. There is a noticeable increase in the special needs of older people. The ability for an elderly person to stay in their home depends on connections to the community and services.

Policy 1: Support a range of residential development to meet the diverse housing requirements of Windham, especially those of low and moderate incomes.

Actions

1. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to make accessory dwellings a permitted use as required by state statute enacted in 2004. Make information available to the public so that homeowners are aware of their ability to create an accessory dwelling unit.
2. Revise the Zoning Regulations to conditionally permit multi-family housing in the Hamlet, Recreation-Commercial, and Rural Residential districts.
3. Support the efforts of non-profit housing organizations, such as Windham and Windsor Housing Trust, and private developers to implement opportunities for affordable housing in Windham, including housing that meets special needs populations, such as the elderly or the handicapped.

Policy 2: Preserve the natural resources and rural qualities of Windham by siting new housing so as to respect the existing natural environment and preserve the greatest amount of open space.

Actions

1. Review Windham's existing Zoning Bylaw and make changes that encourage additional diversity of housing types including the following:
 - a. Promote housing development within the historic settlement areas of South Windham and Windham Center (designated as Hamlets in the Land Use Section of this Plan). Consider allowing smaller lot sizes to promote clustering and shared septic systems.
2. Encourage, through Planned Unit Development provisions in the Zoning Bylaw, creative site design which minimizes development costs while preserving natural resources and open land. Provide a density bonus in the Planned Unit Developments in the Zoning Bylaw.

Policy 3: Support homeownership and property upkeep efforts of citizens.

Action

1. Continue to promote the Housing Rehabilitation Program and other options for owners to rehabilitate housing structures so that they are safe and sanitary and more energy efficient and can remain active in the town's housing stock.

Policy 4: Continue to promote the benefits of energy conservation & efficiency to preserve our environment among both new and current Windham home owners and potential developers.

Action

1. Offer information in the Town Office pertaining to energy assistance initiatives e.g.; SEVCA and Efficient Vermont (Efficiency Vermont .com)
2. Provide information on those initiatives in the Windham News and Notes community newspaper.

CHAPTER IX LAND USE

A. EXISTING LAND USE

Windham's patterns of land use are clearly defined by the Town's existing transportation network and elements of the natural environment. The Town is situated in a high mountain valley. A portion of the western edge of Town has substantial areas of level topography and areas that are dominated by shallow soils.

Development in Windham has been overwhelmingly residential in nature. Most of this residential development is located along Windham Hill Road or on unpaved secondary roads. It is generally characterized as scattered, low density single family development. There are pockets of more dense residential uses in Windham Center, South Windham and near the former Timber Ridge Ski Area. Because residential properties in Windham do not have public sewer systems, residences tend to be located where soils are more suitable for individual wastewater disposal systems.

Other development in Windham consists of public and semi-public land uses and commercial uses. Public and semi-public land uses include schools, churches, and municipal government. With the exception of the Windham Elementary School, these uses are concentrated in the historic settlements of South Windham and Windham Center. A few commercial enterprises (bed and breakfasts, Tater Hill Golf Club) have been established in Town, though they are scattered and do not represent sufficient contiguous area to be considered as a separate existing land use for the purposes of this section of the Plan.

Forested land, most of which is undeveloped, is the predominant land cover in Windham. Overall, forested land covers nearly 15,610 acres, representing approximately 93% of the Town. Approximately 6% of land cover in Windham is classified as open space. These open spaces, some of which are in agricultural use, are primarily located along the roads of Windham, as shown on the Existing Land Use/Land Cover Map that is incorporated into this Plan. The Natural Resources chapter of this Plan contains a further discussion of forestry and agricultural uses in Windham.

B. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The following land use districts shall provide the basis for municipal land use regulations. While the zoning regulations specify use and dimensional standards for each district, the Town Plan sets the foundation. The locations of the districts are represented on the Future Land Use Areas Map that is incorporated into this plan.

1. Forest

Windham has designated four Forest Districts. They are located in areas of steep slopes and contiguous forest. The land is characterized by the absence of development or improved roads. The following are the general description of the Forest Districts:

- the eastern slopes of Glebe Mountain and the Cobb Brook watershed
- the land area of the Stiles, Willie and Howe Brook watersheds that lie between Windham

- Hill Road and the Town's eastern boundary;
- the area located in between Popple Dungeon Road and White Road in the northeastern portion of Town; and
- the land around Turkey Mountain.

The purpose of the Forest Districts is to provide for forestry uses while protecting large, contiguous areas of timber and wildlife/natural resources. Appropriate uses in the Forest Districts include agriculture, commercial forestry, other forest uses (i.e., education, research, etc.) and seasonal camps. Industrial and commercial uses (other than forestry) and mineral resource extraction are prohibited. Uses such as single family dwellings, and non-intensive recreation may be allowed after careful review by the Windham Planning Commission to ensure that the viability of the timber resources or wildlife habitats will not be jeopardized. See Zoning Regulations Section 204 for uses prohibited. The minimum lot size shall be 27 acres.

2. Hamlet

South Windham and Windham Center are classified as Hamlets. These two areas represent distinct nodes of development with the following elements that are characteristics of these historic rural settlements: residences, government services, small businesses, civic uses, and fairly dense development when compared to the rest of the Town. The purpose of the Hamlet is to continue the historic development pattern of Windham by encouraging high density and mixed use development. The principles to be followed in the governing of land use in the Hamlet include:

1. Retain the mixed use zoning that already exists in these areas;
2. Remove barriers to multi-family housing development in the Hamlets;
3. Encourage community-scale commerce, e.g., general store;
4. Provide for a balance of communal open space and structures; and
5. Preserve the historic character of the Hamlets.

Appropriate uses in the Hamlets include residential dwellings, home industries and businesses, personal services, and professional offices. See Zoning Regulations Section 204 for uses prohibited. Lot sizes should be small so long as the capacity of the soil to handle wastewater is not exceeded and the required well isolation distances can be met. The goal is to encourage a compact pattern of development in the Hamlet.

3. Rural Residential

The Rural Residential area comprises areas which are already committed to rural development, are easily accessible from the existing road system, or which appear capable of being developed at a low to moderate density. Some of the lands in the rural residential district have slight to moderate physical limitations to development.

The purpose of the Rural Residential areas is to accommodate low to moderate density development that is consistent with existing land uses and sensitive to the limitations of the land. Residential uses and accessory uses (including home businesses or industries) are permitted. Multi-family housing increases Windham's mix of housing types and is supported in the Rural Residential area. Non-residential uses, including service businesses, professional offices, and inns are acceptable land uses for the Rural Residential area provided that such uses are planned to be relatively small in scale; are not primary or dominant uses in the area; do not unduly conflict with existing or planned residential, forestry, or agricultural uses; and do not unduly

affect rural character. In order to prevent commercial development that may be inconsistent with the rural character, consideration should be given towards developing rural standards that deal with size, scale, and development standards (i.e., no lighting, limited parking, soft surfaces, visual screening, etc.). See Zoning Regulations Section 204 for uses prohibited. Road construction should be carefully planned so as to respect the natural environment and to promote the clustering of houses on appropriate sites. Long roads, whether public or private, should be designed to serve more than one property.

4. Recreation-Commercial

The Recreation-Commercial areas are comprised of lands within the former Timber Ridge Ski Area that were formerly occupied by the original base lodge, accessory structures, and parking areas, as well as the Tater Hill Golf Course and some of the adjacent parcels. The purpose of the Recreation-Commercial area is to allow the development of commercial recreation facilities and commercial enterprises that are ancillary to recreational uses. Compact development is desired in this area to protect open spaces and to prevent a linear pattern of development.

Appropriate uses include dense residential development and recreational facilities. Other uses such as personal service, retail stores, restaurants, and hospitality-commercial uses such as inns and bed and breakfasts may be allowed after further development review. See Zoning Regulations Section 204 for uses prohibited. The minimum lot size shall be one acre with a density of one dwelling unit per lot. Higher densities should be allowed for development of multi-family housing.

5. Resource Protection Areas

Resource Protection areas are defined as the areas with special natural resources that contribute to Windham's rural character. They include, but are not limited to, areas within the Rural Residential areas that contain productive farmland, wetland chains, and significant wildlife areas or crossings. Also included are the Town's scenic areas (Chapter VI part C) as well as fragile resources that are significant resources within the Town including ridgelines, headwaters, watersheds and aquifers. In order to sustain Town and region's health and safety, and Windham's rural character, as well as fish and wildlife habitats, these landscapes must be preserved so that future generations can benefit from the natural resources environment that currently exists in Windham.

- Policy 1: Preserve the character, scenic landscape and environmental well-being of Windham through the designation of distinct zoning districts.**
- Policy 2: Preserve and protect Windham's headwaters and watershed areas as a high priority to help ensure the health and safety of the town and area residents.**
- Policy 3: Require that all development decisions, especially those involving land in the forest districts, at higher elevations and near surface water resources contain a review of possible stormwater runoff consequences for downstream settlements in Windham and neighboring Towns.**
- Policy 4: Regulate land use activities to ensure compatibility with the purposes of the districts.**

Actions

1. Maintain the Forest District for the purpose of protecting large contiguous forest land and natural and community value. To this end:
 - a. Consider whether future changes to the Forest District boundary are required.
 - b. Maintain provisions in the Zoning Bylaw that limit permitted uses within the Forest District to agriculture, forestry, individual recreational hunting and fishing camps, seasonal or occasional use camps, and accessory uses to the permitted uses on the same lot.
 - c. Maintain an overall density of one unit per 27 acres.
2. Maintain the Hamlet Districts for the purpose of continuing the areas of historic, high density, mixed use development. To this end:
 - a. Consider whether future changes to the Hamlet boundaries are required.
 - b. Maintain a mix of the following or like uses in the Hamlet Districts: residential, personal service, professional offices, bed and breakfasts and inns, government/community services appropriate in scale.
 - c. Review site design, parking, lighting, setbacks and related standards for development within and create standards that will protect and enhance the scale, pattern and character of development that defines the Hamlets.
 - d. Maintain a maximum density of one unit per ½ acre.
3. Maintain the Rural Residential District for the purposes of encouraging low density development, encouraging continued agricultural and forest management, continuing the historic residential settlement pattern of Windham. To this end:
 - a. Revise the Zoning Bylaw to conditionally permit multi-family housing in the rural residential district.
 - b. Continue to permit a mix of rural land uses, including agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, housing, and home businesses. Continue to conditionally permit a range of low-impact commercial uses such as retail, bed and breakfasts, inns, repair shops and other similar uses.
 - c. Evaluate the existing density of one unit per acre and lower the density if deemed necessary.
4. Maintain the Recreation Commercial District to promote development of commercial recreational facilities and support consistent uses around the Tater Hill Golf Course and the former Timber Ridge Ski Area. To this end:
 - a. Maintain a minimum lot size of 1 unit per acre (1/2 acre for planned unit developments).
 - b. Continue to conditionally permit a mix of commercial uses that include recreational facilities, garage and gas stations, restaurants, retail stores, and similar uses.
 - c. Amend the zoning bylaw to conditionally permit multi-family housing.
 - d. Consider amending the planned unit development standards to allow for greater density than 1 unit per acre.

Policy 5: Require that development projects integrate natural features and resources so that the losses of these are minimized.

Actions

1. Revise site plan review standards to ensure that overall site design is consistent with the purpose and character of the district within which a development is located. Standards and conditions should emphasize those considerations related to the internal layout of the site, the physical design, and the functional integration of the site with surrounding properties and uses.
2. Evaluate land uses that may require special considerations due to their scale, intensity or potential impact to neighboring properties or fragile features (e.g., timber harvesting, telecommunication towers, small-scale residential wind energy systems) and create specific performance standards that relate to site design and operation.
3. Develop standards in the Zoning Bylaw for development on steep slopes.

Policy 6: Encourage the maintenance of open land in order to provide a diversity of habitat.

Actions

1. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to create a Resource Protection Area Overlay District to preserve productive farmland, wetland chains, headwaters and significant wildlife crossing areas. Delineate overlay district boundaries and create development, clearing, and maintenance requirements.
2. Site structures to fit into the natural characteristics of the land, maintain vegetative buffers along scenic roads and parcel boundaries, and site development on the edge, rather than in the center, of open fields.
3. In order to preserve contiguous forest blocks and maintain wildlife corridors, evaluate areas suitable to provide connections between the Forest Districts and inventory property owners' interest in including their land in a Forest District and/or working with the Vermont Land Trust or other organizations or agencies to preserve open space in perpetuity.
4. Educate landowners on various ways to preserve scenic resources and open space.

Policy 7: Provide sufficient distance to development and populated areas to preserve and protect community health and safety, natural resources, fragile areas, ambient noise levels, air and water quality and property values.

Action

1. Any proposed development in the town shall be evaluated relative to the maps included in this Plan (Chapter XIV) with particular attention to those depicting settlement patterns relative to topography, steep slopes, watersheds, wetland and vernal pools, headwaters, earth resources, land use and viewsheds.
2. Town Selectboard and Planning Commission will undertake educational and out-reach efforts with counterparts in downslope communities regarding the implications of any potential developments in Windham which will impact headwaters or watershed areas.

CHAPTER X

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Objective:

Windham's objective is to maintain and sustain its traditional, small-scale business orientation and residential community character while encouraging economic enterprises which are appropriate to those traditions.

Economy:

Windham is a small, rural residential community comprised of 419 residents and 26 square miles and is one of the smallest towns in the Windham Region. The 2010 Census indicates Windham's population has grown 28% since 2000. This growth is primarily due to conversion of part-time residents to full time and to the construction of a few new residences in recent years. The town has long had a high percentage of second home to permanent residences. The 2010 Census reported approximately 198 seasonal homes and 167 owner-occupied, full time residences. There has been a 33% increase in the number of owner-occupied non-seasonal residences between 2000-2010.

The town is characterized by its remote geography, rugged terrain and high percentage of forest cover. These traditional aspects of Windham life encourage an emphasis on locally owned, independent small businesses. The 2010 Census shows 139 total workers, 93 (67%) of which work in one of 10 nearby towns while 18.6% of the town's workforce works at home.

Both Windham Center and South Windham at one time had small general stores, but both were closed by around 1950.

Commercial Businesses:

Today Windham is home to a variety of small businesses including a bed & breakfast, property rentals, seasonal caretaking, electrical contracting, small engine repair and sales, carpentry services, home construction and remodeling services, house painting, timberframe construction and restoration, excavation services, landscape maintenance, floor finishing, plumbing, firewood, woodstove and chimney servicing, logging, forest management and professional water quality testing. With the increasing availability of high speed internet (an ongoing process due for completion in 2013-14) other home-based businesses include consulting in marketing and communications, recruiting, foreign language translation, website development, and a growing amount of telecommuting. There is at least one artisan candle maker and a well respected producer of hand-dyed wools from local sheep.

Tater Hill Golf Course, owned and operated by Okemo Mountain Resort, is an 18 (eighteen) hole public golf course with a pro shop and on-site restaurant. Tater Hill has been managed by Okemo Mountain Resort since 2004 and was recently expanded from 9 (nine) to 18 (eighteen) holes.

Timber Ridge (formally an independently owned, local ski area) has been closed as a commercial enterprise and is expected to maintain this status. Recently, however, they have begun to host an annual, charitable, musical event known as The Friendly Gathering Music Festival which attracts several thousand people. Since there are no retail businesses in Windham there is little direct economic benefit to the town from such events, but the organizers have received the support of town officials in permitting and regulating the event; and there is some benefit to businesses in adjacent towns.

Farming:

There are several small farm operations in Windham including: two commercial hay operations (Corriveau and Dutton), an apple orchard (Dutton), a small perennial nursery (Griffin), a sheep and cattle operation (Partridge) and a small cooperative dairy (Merinoff). As is typical in small, rural towns in the region, many households have vegetable gardens and chickens, and several families in town raise pigs for their own use. Windham has a demonstrated commitment to local agriculture as evidenced by the participation of its citizens, as both vendors and buyers, in the local farmers market in West Townshend and Londonderry.

Forestry:

Although 95% of Windham's land area is forested and almost ten thousand acres are concentrated with two large owners, the economic impact on the town of forestry as an industry is difficult to measure. There are a total of 41 Windham properties enrolled in the State's Current Use Program in 2013 to help ensure responsible management of this resource.

Two private enterprises currently own and manage sizeable forested areas in the Town of Windham. These areas are owned, in absentia, by Meadowsend Timberlands LLC (referred to locally as the Stiles Brook Tract) to the East of town and McGraw Family Partnership LP which owns much of the land on Glebe Mountain to the West. Meadowsend Timberlands LLC is a New Hampshire company primarily engaged in the hardwood lumber industry and owns or manages other large tracts in Vermont and New Hampshire. Timber harvesting appears to be a sideline for the McGraw Family Partnership LP, driven principally by the requirements of the current use program.

Vermont has no provisions at the town level for either permitting or reporting on logging activities in terms of the nature, volume or value of timber harvested. The County Forester gathers data which is summarized and reported on a county-wide basis. It appears that relatively little of the logging in Windham's woodlands is done by Windham residents. The direct economic impact of forestry as an industry is therefore virtually impossible for the town to accurately measure.

Windham values our heritage as a community rich in forest resources, and is committed to working with landowners to insure sustainable land and timber management practices.

Economic Development Policies:

Policy 1: The town prohibits any commercial or industrial operations on its ridgelines other than forestry and will not support any commercial or industrial activity that exceeds the capacity of its public infrastructure including emergency response assets.

Policy 2: The town recognizes there are certain challenges inherent in encouraging economic development activity which will also preserve the natural environment that has for so long characterized the area.

Actions

1. Continue to encourage the startup and support of Small Businesses appropriate to the rural and isolated nature of the area.
2. Foster and encourage development of cottage industries (home-based businesses) which

are in keeping with and preserve the rural character of Windham and have no negative impact on its environment and infrastructure.

Policy 3: The town will strive to nourish and expand our array of traditional occupations while supporting the development of new home-based businesses which can utilize our expanding telecommunications resources.

Action

1. Identify and actively promote the opportunities for internet based businesses and telecommuting services made possible by the recent widespread availability of high speed internet.

Policy 4: The Town will work actively to identify and publicize local business opportunities.

Actions

1. Encourage the reissuance of the Windham Directory of Skills, Knowledge and Services available from residents and property owners. This is a means of letting residents know what services are available from members of the immediate community.
2. Encourage the formation of a local task force to explore means of promoting Windham as a place friendly to entrepreneurs interested in creating businesses that will capitalize on our much improved communications infrastructure.

Policy 5: All commercial and industrial development must adequately control its wastes, including noise and light pollution and stormwater runoff, relate satisfactorily to existing land uses, and not result in the degrading of valued views and vistas.

Action

1. Permit only types of economic development that protect and enhance the traditional assets of Windham. Development which will create excessive noise, light pollution, large traffic volumes, and hazardous wastes or damage air purity and quality or degrade scenic views shall be prohibited.

Policy 6: The town shall encourage the development and local support of small businesses which sell and add value to local agricultural products.

Action

1. Encourage Windham residents to support and participate in the West Townshend Market, which, although located in West Townshend, is owned by Windham landowners. The West Townshend Market has created a location where community baking and local farm produce are offered and where a small dairy co-operative is starting up. They also operate a popular thrift shop and host regular events.

CHAPTER XI

IMPLEMENTATION

The Windham Town Plan is a comprehensive guide concerning the manner in which the town wants to accommodate future growth as well as maintain the features that make the community special. Implementation of the Town Plan is a local responsibility and must be accomplished through a continued commitment on the part of the community. This Plan will be used to form the framework of the Planning Commission's work during the duration of the Plan.

Zoning regulations are the most common method of implementing and enforcing the policies and programs set forth in a town plan. This Town Plan provides direction for zoning changes and the Windham Planning Commission will evaluate these policies and recommendations to propose changes as necessary. We are mindful that it is State policy, that if an Act 250 commission in researching findings whether a proposed project is in conformance with a duly adopted local plan, finds applicable provisions of the Town Plan to be ambiguous, the district commissions, for interpretative purposes, shall consider bylaws, but only to the extent that they implement and are consistent with those provisions. For interpretative purposes, other state agencies such as the Agency of Natural Resources, Public Service Board, Department of Public Service, and VTrans, should also consider the Town bylaws if they believe there is any ambiguity in the Plan.

Many of the Actions are, in and of themselves, a way to implement this Plan. Furthermore, the Town will:

1. Participate in regional and state planning activities such as Act 250 hearings and Section 246 and 248 Public Service Board hearings.
2. Participate in any reclassification hearings involving waters in the Town of Windham.
3. Hold quarterly meetings of all town officers to facilitate communications on issues and matters of mutual interest.
4. Continue to maintain a central filing system for all town records and publish in one booklet all town ordinances, regulations and standards.
5. Plan in advance for the expansion or creation of those town facilities or services which will be required by future development.
6. Improve understanding of and compliance with town ordinances and regulations.
7. Implement this plan by example.
8. Coordinate planning with surrounding towns.
9. Consider the Town Plan when designing public work budgets and capital improvements.
10. Encourage citizen involvement.
11. Continue to encourage participation in workshops and seminars to update and expand knowledge of all facets of town government.
12. Seek grants as a means for funding actions discussed in the Town Plan. State funding opportunities include, but are not limited to, Municipal Planning Grants, Community Development Block Grants, VTrans Transportation Alternative Grants, and Vermont Recreational Trails Grants. In addition, there are several private foundations and federal government entities that finance projects.

CHAPTER XII

COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER PLANS

Windham shares borders with the Windham County towns of Grafton, Jamaica, Londonderry, and Townshend as well as Andover and Chester in Windsor County. When Vermont's Growth Management Law, Act 200, was passed in 1988, Vermont set up a system for communities to work in concert with their neighbors, and with agencies of state government, to shape the future. This chapter seeks to examine the development patterns as proposed in the Windham Town Plan with those proposed in the neighboring Towns.

A. COMPATIBILITY WITH NEIGHBORING TOWN PLANS

1. Grafton

The entire eastern boundary is shared with the Town of Grafton. The Grafton Town Plan designates the area along the border with Windham as primarily Conservation lands with the area along Route 121 as Rural Residential. On the Windham side of the border, the land is designated as Forest with Rural lands along the Route 121 travel way.

2. Jamaica

The Town of Jamaica shares much of Windham's southern boundary. Windham Hill Road, Old Cheney Road, West Windham Road, and Under the Mountain Road lead into Jamaica. The Windham Town Plan designates three land use areas along the border: Rural Residential in West Windham and surrounding South Windham; Hamlet in South Windham; and Forest along Turkey Mountain. Jamaica has designated the area bordering West Windham and South Windham as Rural Resource with the remaining land area as Conservation. The Jamaica Town Plan describes Rural Resource as areas suitable for low-density residential development that protects the resource value of the land. Windham is advocating for denser development in the historic settlement area of South Windham.

3. Londonderry

Windham shares a boundary with Town of Londonderry to its west. Most of the boundary is dominated by Glebe Mountain ridgeline, which both towns value as a natural resource as well as a scenic resource. The area on Glebe Mountain has been identified by Londonderry as Resource Conservation the purpose being the protection of significant forest areas, scenic resources, headwaters and Class A streams and wildlife habitat at higher elevations. Further to prevent the development on ridgelines, steep slopes, and shallow soils and in areas with poor access to public roads, municipal services and commercial centers. Windham's designation as Forest is compatible with Londonderry's desired land use. Windham and Londonderry also share a boundary along Route 11. Some of this area has been designated as Residential in Londonderry. Similarly, Windham has designated a portion of that boundary area as Rural Residential.

4. Townshend

The southeastern tip of Windham is adjacent to the Town of Townshend. The only road access directly from one town to the other is along Chase Road. Townshend has designated the area along the boundary as Resource Land. Windham has designated some of the lands as Rural Residential with a Resource Protection Area overlaying Chase Road. A portion of the land has also been designated as Forest.

5. Andover

The majority of the northern boundary of Windham is shared with the Town of Andover. Route 11, Howard Hill Road, and Christmas Tree Road travel into Andover. Andover has designated the lands bordering Windham as Forest, with the exception of the area around Tater Hill. Windham has designated a portion of the land surrounding the Tate Hill Golf course as Recreation-